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Brian Wolfel  
*Syracuse University*

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## Abstract

I construct Thomas Carlyle's political philosophy in the contexts of twentieth-century and contemporary political philosophy by dialoging and contrasting Carlyle with the work of John Rawls, Alasdair MacIntyre, Jacques Ellul, and Sayyid Qutb, among others. I also focus my attention on Carlyle as a philosopher who is an intermediary between ancient Platonism and nineteenth-century American Transcendentalism. Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* is a Platonic text that provided a foundational inspiration for Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and American Transcendentalism writ-large. Despite Carlyle being a chief source of inspiration for American Transcendentalism, his political theory did not inspire the development of a widely adopted political ideology to compete alongside other prominent twentieth-century ideologies such as liberalism, Marxism, fascism, and Islamism. It is in this context that Carlyle is also relevant in the philosophical inquiry of the "end of history," or the ascertaining of the last stage of human political development. I argue that this is because Carlyle's philosophical account of transcendentalism in *Sartor Resartus* can be constructed as "post-liberalism," an ideology that reforms liberalism by seeking to stem its facilitation of increasing levels of economic inequality and increasing levels of political conflict on the bases of race, class, religion, etc. I apply Carlyle's philosophy to build on literature that theorizes about post-liberalism by authors such as Patrick Deneen, John Milbank, and Adrian Pabst, who argue that liberalism is on a hazardous trajectory and there is a need to conceive of post-liberalism as an alternative to the trend of increasing authoritarianism.

AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISM CONTRA CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY:  
APPLICATIONS OF THOMAS CARLYLE AND RALPH WALDO EMERSON TO LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC  
CAPITALISM, PLATONISM, ISLAMISM, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE “END OF HISTORY”

by

Brian Michael Wolfel

B.A., Cornell University, 2009  
M.P.H., University of Arizona, 2012  
M.A., Syracuse University, 2017

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## Preface

Thomas Carlyle provided a revolutionary critique of liberal democracy and capitalism in the context of their modern emergence and ascendancy in nineteenth-century Victorian England. Rather than being rooted in materialism, as Karl Marx's critique was, Carlyle's critique largely embodied Romanticism, a European tradition that refuted Enlightenment rationalism and industrialization by elevating nature, spirituality, and aesthetics.<sup>1</sup> Carlyle's political philosophy is cryptic and grounded in a philosophy of negation, so much so that his political philosophy must be constructed and pieced together using analysis and synthesis. A critical examination of Carlyle's multiple books and articles yields the conclusion that his overarching assessment of politics and political economy is that dogma and materialism *eventually* yield diminishing returns.

Carlyle indicts dogma through the voice of the protagonist, Professor Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, in *Sartor Resartus*:

Which of your Philosophical Systems is other than a dream-theorem; a net quotient, confidently given out, where divisor and dividend are both unknown? What are all your national Wars, with their Moscow Retreats, and sanguinary hate-filled Revolutions, but the Somnambulism of uneasy Sleepers? This Dreaming, this Somnambulism is what we on Earth call Life; wherein the most indeed undoubtedly wander, as if they knew right hand from left; yet they only are wise who know that they know nothing.<sup>2</sup>

In short, dogma is a "dream-theorem" that precipitates perpetual conflict with other "dream-theorems," and it is only those who are wise who recognize this and eschew dogma. Carlyle offers a pathway to end the vicious cycle of conflict, or "what we on Earth call Life."

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<sup>1</sup> My definition of Romanticism has been informed by Löwy and Sayre's treatment of Romanticism. See Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, ed. Kerry McSweeney and Peter Sabor (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 43.

Carlyle indicts materialism as a particular dogma that defines Enlightenment rationality and engulfs humanity in a hegemony of anti-Platonism. Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* stands as a counter to materialism, which can be defined as a wholly non-spiritual devotion to economic and technological development and the pursuit of increasing levels of consumption by the individual in the context of an economy.<sup>3</sup> The insatiability of consumption, and by that token also technological development, means that materialism is bound to eventually yield diminishing returns due to the scarcity of resources. Through the voice of Teufelsdröckh, Carlyle attempts to illustrate that every individual who subscribes entirely to materialism has no chance of being satisfied until he or she has consumed personally the universe in its entirety.

Carlyle writes:

Will the whole Finance Ministers and Upholsterers and Confectioners of modern Europe undertake, in joint-stock company, to make one Shoebblack HAPPY? They cannot accomplish it, above an hour or two; for the Shoebblack also has a Soul quite other than his Stomach; and would require, if you consider it, for his permanent satisfaction and saturation, simply this allotment, no more, and no less: *God's infinite Universe altogether to himself*, therein to enjoy infinitely, and fill every wish as fast as it rose. Oceans of Hochheimer, a Throat like that Ophiuchus! Speak not of them; to the infinite Shoebblack they are as nothing. No sooner is your ocean filled, than he grumbles that it might have been of better vintage. Try him with half of a Universe, of an Omnipotence, he sets to quarrelling with the proprietor of the other half, and declares himself the most maltreated of men. –Always there is a black spot in our sunshine: it is even, as I said, the *Shadow of Ourselves*...So true is it, what I then said, that *the Fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator, as by lessening your Denominator*. Nay, unless my Algebra deceive me, *Unity* itself divided by *Zero* will give *Infinity*. Make thy claim of wages a zero, then; thou hast the world under thy feet. Well did the Wisest of our time write: 'It is only with Renunciation (*Entsagen*) that Life, properly speaking, can be said to begin.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> I construct this definition of materialism and it is inspired by Versluis's treatment of materialism in *Platonic Mysticism*. See Arthur Versluis, *Platonic Mysticism: Contemplative Science, Philosophy, Literature, and Art* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 144-145.

It may be an ironic contradiction that such a call for economic renunciation, rather than indefinite insatiable consumption, is likely to be most salient and credible in the context of a developed economy rather than a developing economy. Nonetheless, Carlyle's view can be applied in the context of a developed economy to refine and moderate such an economy so that it could be stable and sustainable rather than burnout quickly due to overconsumption, resource depletion, and/or the onset of irregularities (such as climate change, cyberattacks, pandemics, etc.) manifesting from technological and economic complexities that have surpassed their optimal levels.

In the context of Carlyle's critique of dogma and materialism, it is important to reflect on the fact that the era Carlyle was composing his philosophy and social criticism was an era, at a minimum more so than the early twenty-first century, defined by the hegemony of Christianity and the advent and *ascendancy* of industrial capitalism in Western Europe and the United States. In the twenty-first century, Carlyle's philosophy can be re-assessed from a social vantage point of a rapidly waning hegemony of Christianity, so much so that the twenty-first century can be characterized as "post-Christian" and defined by its secularism, agnosticism, and religious pluralism as much as it is defined by Christianity. The waning of Christianity's hegemony is particularly significant in the study of politics and society in that it provides a stimulus for increasing contention on the bases of dogmatic ideology and religion. The Great Recession and the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic have harmed the prospects of legitimately being able to cast capitalism as perpetually ascendant and capable of yielding increasing economic returns indefinitely. Such recessions may be indicative of the need to sustain developed economies through the adoption of renunciation rather than a perpetual



commitment to economic growth and consumption. It is in this unprecedented social, economic, and political environment of the twenty-first century in which Carlyle's political philosophy can be re-constructed and applied as a normative tool for political inquiry.

Carlyle can also be cast as an intermediary between Platonism and American Transcendentalism, a nineteenth-century intellectual and reform movement he inspired. Platonism, though a very abstract term that encompasses a large tradition, can be defined as a spiritual philosophy inaugurated by Plato that seeks to ascertain and realize archetypal conceptions of truth, justice, and beauty by drawing on intuition derived from intellectual discernment.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* embodies an intermediary between Platonism and American Transcendentalism, so much so that American Transcendentalism can be defined as a modern adaptation of Platonism partly and to a significant extent via Carlyle's philosophical construction of transcendentalism in *Sartor Resartus*.<sup>6</sup> Although *Sartor Resartus* takes the form of a satire, the format Carlyle chose to communicate about the limitations of materialism and dogma in the context of the nineteenth century should not preclude further construction and application of transcendentalism in the context of the twenty-first century.

Carlyle's *transcendentalism* in *Sartor Resartus* can be defined, much as American Transcendentalism in its totality can be, as a philosophy that espouses that the universe is enchanted and that dogma and materialism, eventually, yield diminishing returns.<sup>7</sup> It is in this way that both Carlyle's transcendentalism and American Transcendentalism are immaterialist

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<sup>5</sup> I have constructed this definition of Platonism drawing principally on Arthur Versluis's construction of Platonism. See Versluis, *Platonic Mysticism*.

<sup>6</sup> American Transcendentalism is a highly abstract term in that it embodies an intellectual tradition influenced by many antecedent traditions in addition to Platonism such as Hinduism and American indigenous culture, among others.

<sup>7</sup> I construct this definition based on my reading of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* and Versluis's *Platonic Mysticism*.

and anti-dogmatic. Additionally, each can be cast as a post-Christian final “reformation” of Christianity and, as such, a type of dialectical synthesis of pre-Christian Platonism.<sup>8</sup> This is why Carlyle’s transcendentalism, and American Transcendentalism writ-large, can each be cast as a “philosophico-religion” in that each borders between being a philosophy and a religion, thus amounting to a type of hybrid of philosophy and religion.<sup>9</sup> Of course, applying the term “dialectical synthesis” is an appropriation of a Hegelian conception for the purpose of situating both Carlyle’s transcendentalism and American Transcendentalism within the contexts of Platonism and Christianity as philosophical and religious traditions, respectively.

Carlyle’s relevance to political science and political philosophy in the twenty-first century is on the basis that his conception of transcendentalism has yet to be constructed and applied in the context of politics as a type of political ideology. In *Sartor Resartus*, Teufelsdröckh discovers transcendentalism as a philosophy that serves a personal and private purpose. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that Teufelsdröckh embraces renunciation of materialism and embraces the pursuit of social solidarity as a consequence of first subscribing to the non-dogmatic spiritual worldview that the universe is enchanted.<sup>10</sup> In this way, I will argue that

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<sup>8</sup> Arthur Versluis defines American Transcendentalism as such by drawing on Orestes Brownson and Sydney Ahlstrom as sources. Versluis writes: “In fact, the individualism that the Transcendentalists shared was a development out of Protestantism—it was, as the prolix Orestes Brownson recognized, a kind of final logical result of Protestantism. Separation from Catholicism, then dissent from the resulting organization, in a process of sectarian division, would result, finally, in a church of one. And that, the criticism goes, is Transcendentalism. Historian Sydney Ahlstrom describes the development of American Protestantism through Unitarianism into Transcendentalism as *An American Reformation*. This American reformation, he argues, derives from two primary sources: Hellenism (in particular, Platonism) and Scottish realism, derived from Aristotelianism. Ahlstrom locates the tradition of Plato and Plotinus as vital for the later development not only of Unitarianism, but also of Transcendentalism....” See Arthur Versluis, *American Gurus: From American Transcendentalism to New Age Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 18-19.

<sup>9</sup> Versluis casts Platonism as a “philosophico-religion” and I apply this term to characterize American Transcendentalism as a modern adaptation of Platonism. See Versluis, *Platonic Mysticism*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> See chapter “The Everlasting Yea” in Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*.

transcendentalism can be cast as a non-dogmatic, non-sectarian, objective spirituality that is *instrumental* in facilitating a social purpose, namely the facilitation of renunciation and social solidarity. Since it is non-dogmatic and non-sectarian, transcendentalism can be classified as an “objective spirituality” that is merely opposite to, but yet on the same plane as, atheism.

It is on this basis that Carlyle’s conception of transcendentalism can be constructed in the context of contemporary political philosophy and in the context of social, economic, and political environments increasingly being defined by atomization, alienation, social disintegration, and economic inequality. Moreover, Carlyle’s transcendentalism can be applied to inform ideological and religious political contention. It is in this context that Carlyle can be aptly applied to Alasdair MacIntyre’s critique of liberalism, namely that liberalism manifests interminable conflict among incommensurable political views, thus precipitating liberalism’s vulnerability to dissolution in the long-term as a function of the disintegrating effect of conflict on a liberal political system.<sup>11</sup>

It is in this light that it can be concluded that a liberal political system/culture defined by the hegemony of Christianity and the ascendancy of capitalism is of a different nature entirely from a liberal political system/culture defined by the non-existence of a spiritual hegemony and a capitalism increasingly delivering diminishing returns rather than indefinite economic growth. It is in this context that Carlyle’s transcendentalism can be applied to academic conceptions of post-liberalism as a prospective model for post-liberalism. I define post-liberalism as a political ideology that seeks to sustain liberalism’s commitments to democracy and a free-market

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<sup>11</sup> I summarize MacIntyre’s critique of liberalism that he develops in *After Virtue*. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

economy by seeking to stem its facilitation of increasing levels of economic inequality and increasing levels of political conflict on the bases of ideology, race, class, religion, etc. Post-liberalism thus is an alternative to the trend of liberalism becoming increasingly eclipsed by authoritarianism and the prospects of such an eclipse unfolding further.

In dialoging Carlyle with contemporary political philosophy, it is important to recognize how Carlyle is intertwined with American Transcendentalism. Ralph Waldo Emerson was integral to Carlyle in that he saw to it that *Sartor Resartus* was published in book form in America, when Carlyle could not find a publisher for it in book form in England. The popular reception of *Sartor Resartus* in the form of multiple reprintings within a short time of its initial publication fueled American Transcendentalism as a movement and *Sartor Resartus* inspired Henry David Thoreau personally in addition to Emerson.<sup>12</sup> Without Emerson and Thoreau, it is unlikely Carlyle's account of transcendentalism in *Sartor Resartus* would have been able to have any place in the marketplace of ideas, much less have wide resonance in an American intellectual and social movement. It is for these reasons that the political application of Carlyle's transcendentalism takes place in the context of this dissertation as a construction that recognizes and builds on Emerson's construction on and promotion of Carlyle during the, albeit narrow and brief, era of American Transcendentalism. To the extent that Emerson was influenced by Carlyle and Carlyle was promoted by Emerson, it can be said there is no Carlyle without Emerson and no Emerson without Carlyle. At a minimum, in the absence of the other,

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<sup>12</sup> See Andrew Hook, "United States of America," in *The Carlyle Encyclopedia*, ed. Mark Cumming (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2004), 474; Sharon Gravett, "Ralph Waldo Emerson," in *The Carlyle Encyclopedia*, ed. Mark Cumming (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2004), 145.

the legacies of both Carlyle and Emerson would be fundamentally different, and one could easily say, in hindsight, much more limited.<sup>13</sup>

In Chapter 1, I situate Carlyle in the history of political thought and illustrate his unique perspective that diverges from the political philosophies of Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and Karl Marx. I also contextualize Carlyle's transcendentalism as being within the Platonic tradition and provide an exposition of how transcendentalism can be applied within the context of politics.

In Chapter 2, I discuss Carlyle's reactionary turn with his publication of *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, in which he criticizes democracy and the political culture of Victorian England. Carlyle explicitly grounds his critique in Plato as an influence and his diatribes against aspects of liberal political culture such as parliament and stump-oratory provide fodder for his appropriation by the Nazis in the twentieth century. Carlyle is "reactionary" in the most literal sense of the word in that he reacts to what he takes to be negative political developments without articulating a coherent alternative platform for progress. It is crucial to acknowledge this, since it is the determining factor that alters and ossifies Carlyle's brand and legacy as associated with authoritarian fascism. Carlyle's transcendentalism is thus left in a blind spot, as his reactionary streak essentially delegitimizes him in both the academic and popular spheres.

In Chapter 3, I discuss Carlyle in relation to Islam and Islamism. Carlyle's deliberations about Islam and his public lecture on Muhammad as "Hero as Prophet" is a foundation to acknowledge the parallels between transcendentalism and Islam. It may be possible, though

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<sup>13</sup> I make these characterizations of the relationship of Carlyle and Emerson in the context of constructing Carlyle's transcendentalism and American Transcendentalism in the context of politics and contemporary political philosophy.

not without debate and controversy, to be able to cast transcendentalism as a branch in the Islamic tradition. Doing such allows for transcendentalism to be seen as a modern dialectical synthesis of Platonism since transcendentalism is a post-Christian and post-Islamic philosophy that borders on being a religion in its own right. I contrast the lack of political application of transcendentalism with Sayyid Qutb's political application of Islam in the twentieth century, such that he became a preeminent Islamic political theorist. The relatively recent political appropriation of Islam provides a basis to acknowledge that a political application of transcendentalism is possible in the contemporary context. Although controversial, the construction of transcendentalism in the contexts of Islam and Islamism is essential in order to *distinguish* transcendentalism from Islam and Islamism so that the political application of transcendentalism is not conflated with the political application of Islam in the form of Islamism.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I contrast Carlyle with John Rawls, an influential liberal political philosopher of the twentieth century. I acknowledge how the philosophical conclusions espoused by each are incommensurable in that they arrive at different conclusions with respect to justice by constructing different premises. In *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle, as a Romantic, seeks to discern social justice from the vantage point of alienation and non-ideal theory. In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls, as a rationalist, seeks to discern social justice from the vantage point of what he calls a "veil of ignorance." Moreover, I dialogue Carlyle with Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, which acknowledges Rawls's limitations in that Rawls offers a philosophy that is incommensurable with Robert Nozick's rebuttal to Rawls. Carlyle informs such a theory of incommensurability in pluralist political discourse and also informs MacIntyre's view that

modern political philosophy comes down to a choice between Nietzsche's nihilism and Aristotle's virtue ethics. Carlyle's Platonic transcendentalism offers a third way to these polar choices just as it offers a third way to the polar choices promoted by Rawls and Nozick.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I relate Carlyle's sociological critiques of modernity with those offered by Jacques Ellul in the twentieth century. Carlyle and Ellul are compatible in that they seek to demonstrate that the expansion in size and scope of technological innovation and industrial capitalism embodies an unsustainable pursuit in that the amassed technical civilization becomes increasingly vulnerable to diminishing returns and eventual dissolution. In short, the materialist and technological accumulation of an advanced technological society and developed economy facilitates irregularities that can neither be foreseen nor prevented, due to the inherent complexity and vastness of what Ellul terms "the technological society." The dissolution of such a society, which Carlyle refers to as a "phoenix," provides a basis for the emergence of transcendentalism as a successor to the hegemony of liberal democratic capitalism. Carlyle and Ellul also expose what they take to be the illusory mirage that is politics, given the momentum and weight behind such an autonomous trajectory that modernity is on. I discuss Carlyle's transcendentalism in light of recent literature that conceives of post-liberalism as being a necessity to resolving the irregularities inherent within liberalism.

In Chapter 8, the concluding chapter, I grapple with the prospects of Carlyle's transcendentalism being applied in the context of politics as a post-liberal possibility and alternative to not only liberalism but Islamism, fascism, and communism as well. It also has the capacity to ameliorate the growth in ideological contention and mutually antagonistic identity politics in the United States. In the midst of revising a final draft, the coronavirus pandemic

struck, a global catastrophe the likes of which has not been witnessed since World War II. I acknowledge the pandemic's relevance to this dissertation's subject matter and its potential impact and ramifications on what had been an increasingly globalized, technological, and market-driven world order.

In summary, I seek to construct Carlyle's cryptic political philosophy that spans multiple books and articles into a coherent political philosophy. I also construct Carlyle's political philosophy by contrasting it with and integrating it with contemporary political philosophy, principally the work of John Rawls, Alasdair MacIntyre, Jacques Ellul, and Sayyid Qutb. By doing such, I seek to offer Carlyle's political philosophy as an analytical framework for the study of politics, particularly for the study of the outsized roles played by dogma and materialism in politics. Such a framework inherently offers a normative application of Carlyle, in which the validity, utility, and sustainability of dogma and materialism are examined with a critical lens.



## Introduction

When Thomas Carlyle died in 1881 he, as biographer David Alec Wilson put it, “commanded the veneration of the civilized world [and] was esteemed and honoured wherever the English language was spoken.”<sup>1</sup> Wilson even went on to characterize Carlyle as the Confucius of the English-speaking world: “I may or may not be mistaken in believing Thomas Carlyle to be the Confucius of the English-speaking races; but it is beyond dispute that he was one of the greatest and most interesting men in Europe in the nineteenth century.”<sup>2</sup> Wilson continues his profile: “there are few things rarer than the apparition of a man of genius of any kind, to say nothing of a great spirit like Carlyle. Centuries may pass before we see another like him.”<sup>3</sup> Carlyle was recognized as a moral force to be reckoned with in Europe and a man of international importance in many respects:

He made it possible for Englishmen and Germans to understand each other. The Muslims openly rejoice to this day at his vindication of Mohammed, and the Chinese and the Japanese are loud in their appreciation. He is the greatest of our historians, and the greatest of our peacemakers, as well as the greatest man of letters whom men now alive can boast that they have seen.<sup>4</sup>

In 1898, Wilson wrote prophetically about the influence Carlyle’s ideas would wield in later *centuries*:

Already [Carlyle’s] influence can be traced even in political history, both foreign and domestic; and where the tendencies of the moment seem most hopelessly at variance with what he advised, there are signs of change. For example, his contempt for parliaments as governing bodies and for stump-orators as administrators are sentiments that do not appear so very

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<sup>1</sup> David Alec Wilson, *The Truth About Carlyle: An Exposure of the Fundamental Fiction Still Current* (London: Alston Rivers, Ltd., 1913), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, *The Truth About Carlyle*, 23.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, *The Truth About Carlyle*, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Wilson, *The Truth About Carlyle*, 26.

peculiar now as when first expressed. But centuries must pass before the full effects of his teaching can be visible.<sup>5</sup>

In his biography of Carlyle, James Anthony Froude prophesied: “It may be, and I for one think it will be, that when time has leveled accidental distinctions, when the perspective has altered, and the foremost figures of this century are seen in their true proportions, Carlyle will tower far above all his contemporaries, and will then be the one person of them about whom the coming generations will care most to be informed.”<sup>6</sup> Froude remarked further: “A hundred years hence, the world will better appreciate Carlyle’s magnitude. The sense of his importance, in my opinion, will increase with each generation.”<sup>7</sup> On Carlyle’s popularity in his own time, David Masson comments as to how Carlyle’s “name was running like wildfire through the British Islands and through English-speaking America; there was the utmost avidity for his books wherever they were accessible, especially among the young men; phrases from them were in all young men’s mouths and were affecting the public speech...”<sup>8</sup>

These biographical accounts of Thomas Carlyle demonstrate the weight of influence an outsider, observer, and commentator can have on politics both in one’s domestic sphere and in the international sphere. Carlyle wrote in his journal on his awkward position vis-à-vis the political domain: “Politics confuse me—what my duties are therein? As yet I have *stood apart*, and till quite new aspects of the matter turn up, shall continue to do so.”<sup>9</sup> Carlyle comprehended his limitations when it came to changing the minds of his readers. In a

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<sup>5</sup> David Alec Wilson, *Mr. Froude and Carlyle* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1898), 347.

<sup>6</sup> James Anthony Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London, 1834-1881*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1897), 4.

<sup>7</sup> James Anthony Froude, *My Relations with Carlyle* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), 39.

<sup>8</sup> David Masson, *Carlyle Personally and in His Writings* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1885), 67.

<sup>9</sup> James Anthony Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of the First Forty Years of His Life*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1882), 249.

conversation with Froude a few days before Carlyle's death, he remarked as to how "they call me a great man now, but not one believes what I have told them."<sup>10</sup>

Carlyle addressed what he takes to be the purpose of political philosophy in an August 5, 1829, journal entry:

Political philosophy? Political philosophy should be a scientific revelation of the whole secret mechanism whereby men cohere together in society; should tell us what is meant by "country" (*patria*), by what causes men are happy, moral, religious, or the contrary. Instead of all which it tells us how "flannel jackets" are exchanged for "pork hams," and speaks much about "the land last taken into cultivation." They are the hodmen of the intellectual edifice, who have got upon the wall and will insist on building as if they were masons.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, he remarked on political philosophy in 1837 in *The French Revolution*:

Theories of Government! Such have been, and will be; in ages of decadence. Acknowledge them in their degree; as processes of Nature, who does nothing in vain; as steps in her great process. Meanwhile, what theory is so certain as this, That all theories, were they never so earnest, painfully elaborated, are, and, by the very conditions of them, must be incomplete, questionable, and even false? Thou shalt know that this Universe is, what it professes to be, an *infinite* one.<sup>12</sup>

Carlyle's profile as a political philosopher is idiosyncratic in that he committed his energies largely to the negation of the theories of other political philosophers, yet his own constructivist political thought is cryptic and in many ways accessible only through inference. Carlyle's theory is in need of explication, refinement, and application, particularly in the context of the twenty-first century, since his theory informs the critique of liberalism in political philosophy writ large.

The contrast between Carlyle and Karl Marx and their political philosophical accounts deserves special consideration. Carlyle and Marx can be contrasted such that, according to

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<sup>10</sup> Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of the First Forty Years of His Life* vol. 2, 386.

<sup>11</sup> Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of the First Forty Years of His Life* vol. 2, 64.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution* (Boston, MA: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1838), 52.

Philip Rosenberg, Marx used the Hegelian dialectic to theorize as to how liberal political economy would turn against itself and yield communism, while Carlyle levelled against liberal political economy (as the status quo) only a flat repudiation.<sup>13</sup> Carlyle offered a non-dialectical account of how society would transition from a liberal political economy to a new and indeterminable economic and political order. Such a non-dialectical repudiation of liberal political economy, according to Rosenberg, left Carlyle “with no conception of how one would get from the discredited system to a new social, economic, and moral order.”<sup>14</sup> This dissertation will seek to amend such an assessment by Rosenberg in part through a critical analysis of *Sartor Resartus*, a text in which Carlyle embeds his own theory of communitarian living in the context of his larger theory of transcendentalism. I will expound upon and define Carlyle’s conception of transcendentalism after laying the foundation as to how Carlyle came to construct transcendentalism.

In this way, Carlyle and Marx each had different “end of history” theses, a conclusion that has gone heretofore largely unrecognized and unexplored. Carlyle’s account of the dissolution of liberal democratic capitalism as the hegemonic political and economic order that organically yields a new political economy (the attributes of which cannot be forecasted) stands in contrast with Marx’s account of political revolution yielding communism once capitalism has come to its full fruition and can no longer sustain itself.

Carlyle, though he never explicitly devoted an essay or any writing at length on Hegelian philosophy, nonetheless made known in passing his dissatisfaction with Hegel. In *Sartor*

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<sup>13</sup> Philip Rosenberg, *The Seventh Hero: Thomas Carlyle and the Theory of Radical Activism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 166.

<sup>14</sup> Rosenberg, *The Seventh Hero*, 166.

*Resartus*, Carlyle writes of his fictional alter ego Professor Teufelsdröckh: “a man devoted to the higher Philosophies, indeed; yet more likely, if he published at all, to publish a Refutation of Hegel and Bardili, both of whom, strangely enough, he included under a common ban; than to descend, as he has here done, into the angry noisy Forum, with an Argument that cannot but exasperate and divide.”<sup>15</sup> Carlyle further expressed his view with respect to the limitations of Hegelian philosophy in *Sartor Resartus* when he quotes Teufelsdröckh as saying:

The man who cannot wonder, who does not habitually wonder (and worship), were he President of innumerable Royal Societies, and carried the whole *Mecanique Celeste* and *Hegel's Philosophy*, and the epitome of all Laboratories and Observatories with their results, in his single head,—is but a Pair of Spectacles behind which there is no Eye. Let those who have Eyes look through him, then he may be useful.<sup>16</sup>

Emery Neff characterizes Carlyle's political philosophy vis-à-vis Hegelian philosophy: “Carlyle's transcendentalism was not a Hegelian ‘bloodless ballet of categories.’ It ramified into no elaborate system [but] was stripped for action.”<sup>17</sup>

If Carlyle had ever encountered Marx's theory of economic determinism yielding a proletarian revolution, he would have found it, as Lea forecasts it, to be “something devilish beyond his worst forebodings [and] it is hard to imagine the terms he would have applied to it.”<sup>18</sup> Lea entertains how it is hard to imagine how Carlyle would have reacted to Marx on the basis that Carlyle provided such a condemnation of Benthamism, which he had “considered to have carried the spirit of materialism to its logical and ultimate end.”<sup>19</sup> Essentially, Marxism takes Bentham's utilitarianism to a further end, an end that prizes materialism and therefore is

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<sup>15</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 54.

<sup>17</sup> Emery Neff, *Carlyle and Mill: Mystic and Utilitarian* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), 322.

<sup>18</sup> F. A. Lea, *Carlyle: Prophet of To-day* (London: Routledge, 1943), 97.

<sup>19</sup> Lea, *Carlyle: Prophet of To-day*, 97.

inherently non-transcendentalist. Lea provides a pertinent comparison of Carlyle and Marx from the vantage point of 1943, in the midst of the conflagration of World War II:

Marx and Carlyle are both, in the first place, men of religious genius. Marx may be called the last great representative of the German Romantic revolt, which was predominantly philosophical in expression; Carlyle of the English, which was predominantly literary....Native to both men, furthermore, is the faith that justice will be triumphant on earth and that history is a meaningful process: native, no doubt, but incalculably strengthened by the habit of mind derived from the Old Testament. The same eighteenth century rationalism which leads them to reject Christianity, however, prevents them from adopting the simple formulation of their faith acceptable to the Hebrew prophet or the Cromwell-Puritan. They are driven to deify the historical process itself, as they have deified nature: and the instrument by which this deification is accomplished is in each case the Hegelian dialectic. Not that either Carlyle or Marx simply took over the dialectic from Hegel. On the contrary, Carlyle probably never heard of it; but the process of growth through the resolution of contradictions was, as we have seen, a fact of experience to him, as to all the Romantics; and it had been applied to the growth of society long before Hegel discovered it to be the universal law of becoming....That nothing which was truly creative in the past will be lost; that the positive achievements of feudalism, therefore, will be combined with those of capitalism in a new and higher synthesis: this is common ground to Carlyle and Marx....<sup>20</sup>

Carlyle recognized the limitations of being able genuinely to reconstruct politics and, as a function of that, recognized the limits of political philosophy. In *The French Revolution*, Carlyle made known his view that "all things are in revolution; in change from moment to moment, which becomes sensible from epoch to epoch: in this Time-World of ours there is properly nothing else but revolution and mutation, and even nothing else conceivable!"<sup>21</sup> Carlyle writes, openly embracing the merits of change and evolution: "In Change, therefore, there is nothing terrible, nothing supernatural: on the contrary, it lies in the very essence of our lot and life in this world. Today is not yesterday: we ourselves change; how can our Works and Thoughts, if

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<sup>20</sup> Lea, *Carlyle: Prophet of To-day*, 94-95.

<sup>21</sup> Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, 204.

they are always to be the fittest, continue always the same?"<sup>22</sup> Essentially, an inference can be made that political philosophy cannot ossify an ideal political order because mutation and evolution are higher laws that govern the world.

S. Law Wilson, writing in the late nineteenth century, characterized Carlyle this way:

Perhaps no writer was ever a cause of greater perplexity to that type of mind which will insist on classifying than Carlyle. He does not lend himself easily to any such process. He has not taken sides on any of the great theological issues or debates which have agitated and divided the modern mind. He had not ranged himself under any particular flag, nor shouted any of the usual religious shibboleths or war-cries. You can identify him with no *ism* or *ology*. He is too universal for you to label or ticket him, or assign him a place in your cabinet of specimens. He stubbornly refuses to fit into any of those little pigeonholes into which classifying minds find it so exceedingly convenient to thrust all sorts of men and things. We defy you to distil his essence and bottle it up, and put it on the shelf, duly catalogued, marked, and numbered. He is too massive to be classed, too vast to be tabulated.<sup>23</sup>

The problem with Carlyle is his informal approach to philosophy and his devotion to commentary rather than systematic philosophy. Like Emerson, Carlyle can be characterized as a Platonic mystic (a term synonymous with transcendentalist), and this philosophical tradition has gone out of vogue and largely has been displaced by analytical philosophy and materialist dogmatism since the eighteenth century.<sup>24</sup> Such a devotion to commentary and social criticism cast him more as a social critic than a social theorist, and more a political commentator than a political philosopher. Carlyle's social theory and political philosophy have to be ascertained through inference and application to other philosophical tracts in order to synthesize its explicit contribution to political philosophy. Though Carlyle dealt with philosophical themes, he offered

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas Carlyle, "Characteristics," in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. III (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), 39.

<sup>23</sup> S. Law Wilson, *The Theology of Modern Literature* (Folcroft Library Editions, 1976), 141-142.

<sup>24</sup> Versluis places Emerson in the tradition of what he terms "Platonic Mysticism," and I cast Carlyle in this tradition because he draws on it in *Sartor Resartus* and *Sartor Resartus* itself was a foundational influence on Emerson. See Versluis, *Platonic Mysticism*, 23-26.

very little in the way of a systematic analysis of such concepts as rights or justice.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, Carlyle's political thought can be constructed in a systematic manner so that it speaks to political and social theory, and this just has not been undertaken yet.

Carlyle was a philosopher who drew from both reactionary and progressive ideas, but he was a loyal supporter of neither the reactionary side of the political spectrum nor the progressive side. Carlyle has little in common with conservative ideology and extended the meaning of his pejorative term "mechanism" to include established traditions whether they be in the political or ecclesiastical realms.<sup>26</sup> By doing this, Carlyle cut himself off from the conservative fold in English politics, for such an ideology insisted on the value of "establishments" as a resource for society to preserve and draw on.<sup>27</sup> Reflecting on his unique political profile and lamenting the alienation that it yielded him, Carlyle wrote to Ralph Waldo Emerson: "I care not a doit for Radicalism, nay I feel it to be a wretched necessity, unfit for me; Conservatism being not unfit only but false for me: yet these two are the grand Categories under which all English spiritual activity that so much as thinks remuneration possible must range itself."<sup>28</sup> Froude provides a valuable description of Carlyle's profile: "He had offended Tories by his Radicalism, and Radicals by his scorn of their formulas....Yet all had acknowledged that here was a man of extraordinary intellectual gifts and of inflexible veracity."<sup>29</sup> Carlyle remarks in a letter to Emerson of his reservations about founding a new ideology as a means to resolve the deficiencies of the conservative and progressive categories:

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<sup>25</sup> Michael Levin, *The Condition of England Question: Carlyle, Mill, Engels* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 36.

<sup>26</sup> Rosenberg, *The Seventh Hero*, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Rosenberg, *The Seventh Hero*, 39.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle*, ed. Joseph Slater (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 116.

<sup>29</sup> Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London, 1834-1881* vol. 1, 246.



Sect-founders withal are a class I do not like. No truly great man, from Jesus Christ downwards, as I often say, ever founded a Sect,--I mean willfully intended founding one. What a view must a man have of this Universe, who thinks "*he* can swallow it all," who is not doubly and trebly happy that he can keep it from swallowing him!<sup>30</sup>

Yet, in an 1848 journal entry Carlyle bemoans his struggle with being taken seriously:

I am wearied and near heartbroken. Nobody on the whole "believes my report." The friendliest reviewers, I can see, regard me as a wonderful athlete, ropedancer whose perilous somersets it is worth sixpence (paid into the Circulating Library) to *see*; or at most I seem to them a desperate half mad, if usefullish fireman, rushing along the ridge tiles in a frightful manner to quench the burning chimney. Not one of them can or will *do* the least to help me.<sup>31</sup>

Carlyle was an Enlightenment thinker in his fierce criticism of past customs and what he took to be flaws in theology, but in no way did he have faith in *reason* alone to liberate humanity to a higher plane. Christopher Lasch captures Carlyle's position that lies beyond the scope of the conventional political spectrum, particularly that of the nineteenth century, by recognizing that "Carlyle advocated neither a working-class revolution (though his criticism of the 'cash nexus' appealed to Marx) nor a revival of custom, organic solidarity, and paternalism (though his contrast between medieval unity and modern disorganization appealed to paternalists like John Ruskin, George Fitzhugh, and Henry Adams)." <sup>32</sup>

Carlyle challenges us to see the multiplicity of ideologies and political parties in politics as being individually and collectively deficient. John MacCunn suggests with respect to Carlyle's idiosyncrasy: "For at first sight his politics puzzle. He is not Tory, nor Whig, nor Radical (in the ordinary sense of the word), except indeed in so far as he may be made to fill office admirably

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<sup>30</sup> Carlyle, *The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle*, 333.

<sup>31</sup> Qtd. in Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life In London, 1834-1881* vol. 1, 421.

<sup>32</sup> Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 231.

in all of these parties as ‘Devil’s advocate.’”<sup>33</sup> In Carlyle’s words, “radicalism goes on as fast as any sane man could wish it, without help of mine [and] conservatism I cannot attempt to conserve, believing it to be a portentous embodied sham, accursed of God and doomed to destruction, as all lies are.”<sup>34</sup> In his dissatisfaction with the political left and right, Carlyle stood and continues to stand as unique among political philosophers.

Another of Carlyle’s profound contributions has been the recognition of the difficulty and near-impossibility of altering the historical trajectory that the development of modernity is on. This is underscored when, through Teufelsdröckh’s voice, Carlyle asks, “‘who is there that can clutch into the wheel-spokes of Destiny, and say to the Spirit of the Time: Turn back, I command thee?—Wiser were it that we yielded to the Inevitable and Inexorable, and accounted even this the best.’”<sup>35</sup> Such a sentiment acknowledges the magnitude of history’s destination, a destination so grand that it shows the smallness and automatized nature of human action in the ephemeral present.

Carlyle emphasizes the importance yet near-impossibility of locating and empowering the best political leadership possible. He emphasizes that political theory has been unsuccessful in deriving a means of elevating those who are most capable to positions of authority. In “Chartism,” Carlyle says: “for this now is our sad lot, that we must find a *real* Aristocracy, that an apparent Aristocracy, how plausible soever, has become inadequate for us.”<sup>36</sup> Neff poignantly describes Carlyle’s search for the ideal political leaders in the context of Carlyle’s *On*

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<sup>33</sup> John MacCunn, *Six Radical Thinkers: Bentham, J.S. Mill, Cobden, Carlyle, Mazzini, T.H. Green* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), 142.

<sup>34</sup> Qtd. from Emery Neff, *Carlyle and Mill: Mystic and Utilitarian* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), 22.

<sup>35</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 178.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Carlyle, “Chartism,” in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. V (London: Chapman and Hall, 1891), 374.

*Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* as a form of political theory: "Like a Messianic prophet, Carlyle waited on the coming of one of these Heroes to restore an efficient government."<sup>37</sup> But the natural and obvious question arose: how could he (or anybody else) recognize the hero? In response to this question Carlyle could never provide an unambiguous answer.<sup>38</sup>

Carlyle's philosophy had shades of populism in that he recognized that unless there was a change in the behavior of the wealthy classes they would be vulnerable to being the targets of a revolutionary uprising on the part of the laboring classes.<sup>39</sup> Froude synthesizes Carlyle's position with respect to the deficiencies inherent in both conservative and progressive ideologies:

He was never a Conservative, for he recognised that, unless there was a change, impossible except by miracle, in the habits and character of the wealthy classes, the gods themselves could not save them. But the Radical creed of liberty, equality, and government by majority of votes, he considered the most absurd superstition which had ever bewitched the human imagination—at least, outside Africa.<sup>40</sup>

In an obituary, Leslie Stephen articulated a common perception and criticism of Carlyle:

Some writers complain that Carlyle did not advance a new doctrine, or succeed in persuading the world of its truth. His life failed, it is suggested, in so far as he did not make any large body of converts with an accepted code of belief. But here, as it seems to me, the criticism becomes irrelevant. No one will dispute that Carlyle taught a strongly marked and highly characteristic creed, though one not easily packed into a definite set of logical formulae.<sup>41</sup>

In writing a dissertation on Thomas Carlyle, I seek to perform a critical engagement of Carlyle's texts for the purpose of bringing them into conversation with and informing contemporary

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<sup>37</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 225.

<sup>38</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 225.

<sup>39</sup> Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London, 1834-1881* vol. 1, 311.

<sup>40</sup> Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London, 1834-1881* vol. 1, 311.

<sup>41</sup> Leslie Stephen, "Thomas Carlyle," *Cornhill magazine*, March 1881, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/6906985/A5599BCD65CD46C8PQ/6?accountid=14214>.

political philosophy through the vantage point of the early twenty-first century. In so doing, I will seek to demonstrate how Carlyle also informs the zeitgeists, among them populism, inequality, authoritarianism, and polarization, that grip politics on the global stage in the early twenty-first century. I will explore Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*; *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*; *Latter-Day Pamphlets*; *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*; and *Past and Present* through a contemporary lens to determine the extent to which Carlyle has been vindicated or disproven. In particular, I will engage *Sartor Resartus* to unpack Carlyle's theory of transcendentalism and re-theorize it in the context of global politics in the early twenty-first century. *Sartor Resartus* has been called the "highest achievement of the Romantic movement in Europe" and I will seek to construct Romanticism as a political ideology (with *Sartor Resartus* as a foundational text) by contextualizing it with liberalism, communism, and Islamism.<sup>42</sup> "Romanticism" is a nebulous construct but it connotes the European reaction to Enlightenment rationalism and science by seeking to prioritize what is beyond the scope of rigid scientific positivism, such as intuition, nature, spirituality, and aesthetics.<sup>43</sup>

Carlyle's approach to philosophy is in many ways a type of conformity to Plato's philosophy in that both cast the role of the philosopher to be that of ascertaining the true nature of the world by seeking to perceive beyond the merely material appearances of the physical and external world. Carlyle does not explicitly acknowledge the extent to which he is indebted to Plato, but Plato's influence is acknowledged by Carlyle cryptically and in passing.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Lea, *Carlyle: Prophet of To-day*, 30.

<sup>43</sup> My definition of Romanticism has been informed by Löwy and Sayre's treatment of Romanticism. See Löwy and Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*.

<sup>44</sup> See Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 325 and Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 52, 157.

Carlyle's philosophy matches that of Plato in the sense that in both philosophies all actual and perceptible phenomena imperfectly represent perfect, infinite ideas.<sup>45</sup>

Plato is deeply relevant to the construct of Carlyle's philosophy of clothes. Carlyle describes the "philosophy of clothes" and defines its scope as such: "in this one pregnant subject of CLOTHES, rightly understood, is included all that men have thought, dreamed, done, and been: the whole external Universe and what it holds is but Clothing; and the essence of all Science lies in the PHILOSOPHY OF CLOTHES."<sup>46</sup> The material appearances, or phenomena that are perceptible, thus are ephemeral and finite symbols—clothing--of what lies imperceptibly and exists infinitely beyond the surface. From the "philosophy of clothes" Carlyle theorizes transcendentalism. He describes the means by which Teufelsdröckh becomes a transcendentalist: "In a word, he has looked fixedly on Existence, till one after the other, its earthly hulls and garnitures, have all melted away; and now to his rapt vision the interior, celestial Holy of Holies, lies disclosed."<sup>47</sup> At this point, according to Carlyle, the "Philosophy of Clothes attains to Transcendentalism; this last leap, can we but clear it, takes us safe into the promised land, where *Palingenesia*, in all senses, may be considered as beginning."<sup>48</sup>

*Palingenesia* refers to a type of rebirth that takes place when transcendentalism is attained.

The implications of such a *Palingenesia* have gone unexplored in the context of the hypothetical consideration of transcendentalism's (universal) adoption as not only a philosophy but also as a political, social, and religious creed that as such manifests as a comprehensive doctrine.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Brian Cowlshaw, "Symbols," in *The Carlyle Encyclopedia*, ed. Mark Cumming (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2004), 460.

<sup>46</sup> Carlyle includes all-caps in the original text. See Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 57-58.

<sup>47</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 193.

<sup>48</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 193.

<sup>49</sup> By using the term "comprehensive doctrine," I am doing so in the context of Rawls's usage of the term.

By making such an inference, a corollary inference is that Carlyle's theory of transcendentalism has the potential to embody an end-of-history narrative, one that has not been entertained at all, much less to the extent other end-of-history narratives such as those offered by Weber, Nietzsche, Fukuyama and the Hegelian-Marxist dialectic have been entertained. The implication, with respect to political philosophy, is that transcendentalism, by melting away all earthly hulls and garnitures, also melts away all philosophies, ideologies, and theologies that are not themselves transcendentalism. Transcendentalism, by resolving and consuming all previous, alternative, and incommensurable philosophies, ideologies, and theologies, yields a social rebirth as a function of embodying a singular and universal creed. This is how transcendentalism is itself an end-of-history narrative whereby, according to Carlyle, it "takes us safe into the promised land, where *Palingenesia*, in all senses, may be considered as beginning."<sup>50</sup>

Carlyle himself prophesied that study of the philosophy of clothes will precipitate applications of practical importance. In this way, Carlyle cast the philosophy of clothes as a branch of political philosophy and even as a political *science*. Carlyle asks of his readers a rhetorical question:

Must it not also be admitted that this Science of Clothes is a high one, and may with infinitely deeper study on thy part yield richer fruit: that it takes scientific rank beside Codification, and Political Economy, and the Theory of the British Constitution; nay, rather, from its prophetic height looks down on all these, as on so many weaving-shops and spinning-mills, where the Vestures which *it* has to fashion, and consecrate, and distribute, are...mechanically woven and spun?<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 193.

<sup>51</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 205.

The basis for this dissertation rests in large measure on this passage, and I seek to argue that Carlyle's statement in particular--that the "science of clothes" (as transcendentalism) "may with infinitely deeper study on thy part yield richer fruit"--has gone unacknowledged and forgotten, and as such has been underappreciated since the publication of *Sartor Resartus*. Carlylean transcendentalism remains a heretofore untapped reservoir for political science and, in particular, normative political philosophy. Moreover, Carlylean transcendentalism has yet to be positioned among other political ideologies that have dominated political science. Why has Carlyle's theory of transcendentalism gone undeveloped, unrefined, and unbranded in mainstream political discourse, while liberalism, communism, fascism and Islamism have been studied and articulated at such great lengths both in academic and non-academic discourses? Carlylean transcendentalism has yet to be applied to become a practical political philosophy and as such the "richer fruit" that may have been otherwise yielded has gone unyielded.

I will seek to engage, critically examine, and display Carlylean transcendentalism in the context of contemporary political philosophy, specifically political philosophy that has captivated widescale attention since Carlyle's passing, or, more specifically, since the publication of *Sartor Resartus*. Such an engagement of Carlylean transcendentalism vis-à-vis developments in contemporary political philosophy will seek to illustrate the persistent applicability of transcendentalism to political philosophy and global politics. By so doing, transcendentalism may become illustrative of Carlyle's sentiments "that no province of Clothes-Philosophy, even the lowest, is without its direct value, but that innumerable inferences of a practical nature may be drawn therefrom."<sup>52</sup> Carlyle cryptically prophesies that the application

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<sup>52</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 205.

of the philosophy of clothes offers “pregnant considerations” toward political and ethical questions.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the philosophy of clothes as a science offers “‘architectural ideas’ which, as we have seen, lurk at the bottom of all Modes, and will one day, better unfolding themselves, lead to important revolutions...”<sup>54</sup> This is an extraordinarily cryptic statement in the history of political thought and is a testament that is quite literally a rationale for the composition of this dissertation. Carlyle, in the penultimate paragraph of *Sartor Resartus*, also enigmatically insinuates that Teufelsdröckh’s influence as a philosopher is to be continued and may only be just beginning: “So that Teufelsdröckh’s public History were not done, then, or reduced to an even, unromantic tenor; nay, perhaps, the better part thereof were only beginning?”<sup>55</sup>

On such bases, this dissertation seeks to derive inferences of a practical nature by positioning Carlylean transcendentalism in political philosophy and global politics and using it to inform philosophical questions deliberated on by Rawls, Ellul, MacIntyre, and Qutb, among others. As such, I argue that Carlylean transcendentalism provides an alternative solution to the conclusions derived by Rawls, Ellul, MacIntyre, and Qutb.

Carlyle’s “philosophy of clothes,” culminating in the “everlasting yea,” is the philosophical conclusion that the entire universe, all living and non-living matter, all time, space, human speech, etc., symbolizes or connotes a universal divinity and Carlyle cast the “philosophy of clothes” as the divine idea of the world. I would suggest that this philosophical conclusion can compete with the conclusions derived from “competitor” ideologies, doctrines,

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<sup>53</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 205.

<sup>54</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 205-206.

<sup>55</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 225.



and theologies and, if accepted, would logically expose all other ideologies, doctrines, theologies as subsumed within transcendentalism. This is because Carlylean transcendentalism casts the other ideologies, doctrines, and theologies not itself as “clothing.” What is more, Carlylean transcendentalism is the only ideology that embodies a *consciousness* that the other ideologies, doctrines, and theologies are clothing. By not being Carlylean transcendentalism, all other ideologies and theologies are *unconscious* of the “philosophy of clothes” that supersedes them by casting all of them uniformly as clothing. Prior to consciousness of the “philosophy of clothes,” all other ideologies and theologies are seen as unique, mutually exclusive, and collectively “poly-chromatic.” The “philosophy of clothes” casts ideologies and theologies that are not transcendentalism as uniform or collectively “mono-chromatic,” in that they are collectively and universally not the “philosophy of clothes.” It is the philosophical conclusion inherent in the “philosophy of clothes” that allows it to uniquely supersede other ideologies and theologies on a different plane than the other ideologies and theologies. Another inference is that ideologies and theologies previous to the consciousness of the “philosophy of clothes” typify constructs that came into being randomly over the course of history in unconscious pursuit of the ultimate discovery of the “philosophy of clothes.”

Carlylean transcendentalism thus can account for prominent ideologies espoused by prominent thinkers within the purview of contemporary political philosophy. Carlylean transcendentalism can be applied to inform Rawls’s theories of justice and political liberalism, MacIntyre’s critique of liberalism and promotion of Aristotelian virtue ethics, and Qutb’s theory of the political nature of Islam. It also informs Jacques Ellul’s theory of technology, namely that

technology embodies the hegemonic and autonomous force that dominates and guides all other sociopolitical attributes of globalized society.

I have specifically chosen these philosophers to dialogue with Carlyle because I cast them as having the most influence on twentieth-century political and social theory. They have each fostered either protracted debates in the academic literature or behavior in the political sphere or have influenced both academia and the political sphere. Though it is deeply unscientific, I cast each philosopher as being a principal/founder of the respective philosophies they posit in the context of the twentieth century, meaning that they capture their respective philosophical accounts in a “hegemonic” manner (that is more deeply influential) relative to the influence of other philosophers in their respective schools of thought. In this way, Carlyle can be contrasted most efficiently with these other philosophical traditions that have emerged since his passing. I will posit that Carlyle is a principal philosopher of European Romanticism, Rawls of liberalism, MacIntyre of the critique of liberalism, Qutb of Islamism, and Ellul of the critique of technology. I fully acknowledge that such casting is obviously subjective and qualitative in that it cannot be quantified in an objective sense.<sup>56</sup> The idea for such a comparison came from Hansen and Kainz’s comparison of Qutb, Marx, and Hitler, in which they cast them as the “three major founders” of Islamism, Marxism, and National Socialism, respectively.<sup>57</sup> Qutb’s attachment to being *the* founder of Islamism is debatable more so than Marx’s and Hitler’s association with their respective ideologies. Nonetheless, Hansen and Kainz

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<sup>56</sup> This is especially the case when it comes to determining who the principal philosopher is with respect to the critique of liberalism since criticism of liberalism in the twentieth century encompasses such a wide and diverse field of philosophers.

<sup>57</sup> Hendrik Hansen and Peter Kainz, “Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology: A Comparison of Sayyid Qutb’s Islamism with Marxism and National Socialism,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 1 (March 2007): 55, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14690760601121648?needAccess=true>.

offer a valuable template that is replicable to compare philosophers, and I replicate it in the context of this dissertation. I also retain their casting of Qutb as the principal founder of Islamism and will seek to demonstrate why he should be designated as such in the context of the broad tradition of Islamism in the twentieth century.

Carlylean transcendentalism can be cast as an “end-of-history” ideology in that it can be compared and contrasted with liberalism and communism, both of which have been cast as “end-of-history” ideologies by Fukuyama and Marx, respectively. Carlyle’s theory of transcendentalism also inherently embodies an implicit and cryptic contrast to Sayyid Qutb’s conceptualization of Islamism as representing the *final* doctrine for humanity to live by as an “end of history” ideology. Such a contrast can be made in the context of how Qutb claims that a Muslim is “superior and eminent in the comprehension of the universe as compared to others, for the belief in Allah and the theory of unity of God, as presented by Islam, is the master-key for gaining acquaintance of the great reality of the universe.”<sup>58</sup> Carlylean transcendentalism, I will argue, can be seen as the master-key for acquainting with the great reality of the universe in that it both accounts for Islam and builds on Islam as a post-Islamic ideology. In this way, the claim can be made that Carlylean transcendentalism supersedes Islam in a way that in so doing neutralizes all other -isms from being prospective “end of history” ideologies the way Islamism was theorized as being capable of doing.

Qutb defines Islam’s unique value as a political religion in a manner that is not only applicable to but also perfectly transferable to Carlylean transcendentalism:

The picture of the universe which the concept of unity of God presents is so shining, white, beautiful and proportionate that when we compare it with those heaps of concepts and beliefs

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<sup>58</sup> Syed Qutb, *Milestones*, trans. S. Badrul Hasan (Karachi, Pakistan: International Islamic Publishers, 1981), 248.

comprised of the impressive theories of the past and present about the universe, or those born as a result of polytheistic religions and interpolated divine religions or which have been engendered by repulsive materialistic movements, the grandeur and sublimity of the Islamic faith comes before us in full blaze....When a believer takes stock of all the religions and system of life fabricated by man right from old ages to the present day and compares them with his own Shariah and system of life, he comes to the conclusion that these human efforts spanning over thousands of years appear no more than a child's play or a blind man's staggering, before the solid Shariah and comprehensive system of Islam. Hence when he looks with affectionate and compassionate eyes at the helplessness and adversity of the misguided humanity from his elevated stand point, he sees no other way but to come forward to do something to overcome the misfortune and aberration of man.<sup>59</sup>

From this passage, the inference can be made that Carlylean transcendentalism is a "religion" that is "fabricated by man" in a manner distinct from all other religions and systems of life "fabricated by man." Qutb's passage could be applied to define Carlylean transcendentalism and serve as a synopsis of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* because Carlylean transcendentalism does not offer a theological narrative that is incommensurable with the narratives of other theologies. Carlylean transcendentalism adds Islam to "those heaps of concepts and beliefs comprised of the impressive theories of the past and present about the universe," unlike how Qutb excludes Islam from such heaps and casts it as exceptional. Qutb does not acknowledge that Islam, as a dogmatic theology within the Abrahamic tradition, shares much more in common with Judaism, Christianity, and all other dogmatic theologies than transcendentalism does as a non-dogmatic philosophy of spirituality. The conclusion follows that Carlylean transcendentalism is a philosophy that could itself not be characterized as being a religion or system of life "fabricated by man" on the basis that it is a philosophy that recognizes *all* philosophy as "fabricated." It also follows that Carlylean transcendentalism is a philosophy that could expose the futility of economic, religious, social, and political conflict if it

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<sup>59</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 248-250.

is recognized as *the* “end-of-history” ideology. This illustrates how Carlylean transcendentalism can be understood as post-Islam while being also post-Christianity. Similarly, it shows how Carlylean transcendentalism can be cast as post-liberalism while also being post-communism, post-fascism, and post-Islamism.

*Carlylean transcendentalism is universally post-ideology and post-theology.* On this basis, an inference can be made that Carlylean transcendentalism can be conceived of as the last stage of human political development. By synthesizing all other ideologies and theologies that are not Carlylean transcendentalism, Carlyle’s theory of transcendentalism embodies a philosophy that subsumes all ideologies and theologies within it by “reweaving” each of their distinct, mutually exclusive, and incommensurable fabrics into a new singular and universal philosophy.

I will argue that Islam is integral to providing a constructivist account of Carlylean transcendentalism because I will make the claim that Islam is closest to Carlylean transcendentalism and is merely one step removed from itself being Carlylean transcendentalism. By dialoging Qutb’s account of Islam with Carlyle’s account of transcendentalism, transcendentalism can be positioned as an ideology that supersedes Islamism while also embodying it.

Carlyle himself promised his readers a sequel to *Sartor Resartus* that would have the purpose of applying the philosophy of clothes to practical political and social problems. Carlyle called this potential sequel *On the Palingenesia, or Newbirth of Society*, “which volume, as treating practically of the Wear, Destruction, and Re-texture of Spiritual Tissues, or Garments, forms, properly speaking, the Transcendental or ultimate Portion of this my Work *on Clothes*,

and is already in a state of forwardness.”<sup>60</sup> Such reference to a sequel that Carlyle never wrote serves a dual purpose of being 1) a fictional construct internal to the plot of *Sartor Resartus* and 2) a covert means of communicating to his readers that the philosophy of clothes/transcendentalism will need to be revisited in the future to be further refined/theorized/applied so that it can evolve from a theoretical philosophy to a practical philosophy. The phrase “newbirth of society” could be interpreted in multiple ways, as it is a highly cryptic phrase. Nonetheless, the most obvious inference would likely be that the “newbirth of society” would take place when transcendentalism emerges as the *sole* comprehensive doctrine such a society lives by following the wear, destruction, and re-texture of all the ideologies and theologies that transcendentalism itself supersedes. The “Wear, Destruction, and Re-texture of Spiritual Tissues, or Garments,” as Carlyle phrases it, can be theorized to mean simply the appearance and destruction of all ideologies and theologies until the appearance and adoption of transcendentalism as the final comprehensive doctrine incapable of being superseded and as such incapable of being destroyed and re-textured like all previous mutually incommensurable ideologies and theologies.

That Carlyle never released it in no way means that such a sequel is impossible but, rather, indicates merely the limits of how far and to what extent Carlyle could apply transcendentalism in the context of living in the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century. There is, hypothetically, an optimal point in the context of historical political development for Carlylean transcendentalism to emerge, gain favorable reception, and establish a hegemony as an ideology. Carlylean transcendentalism offers compelling prospects for the “newbirth of

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<sup>60</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 164.

society” because it is inherently the recognition that society will eventually need to be reborn as a result of the incapacity of all other ideologies and theologies to provide a comprehensive doctrine capable of resolving incommensurable debates in the political, social, and religious arenas. Teufelsdröckh explains how religion is constantly “weaving for herself new Vestures” and it is inquired by Teufelsdröckh’s editor as to whether Teufelsdröckh himself is “one of the loom-treaddles?”<sup>61</sup>

Just as Marxists and Islamists viewed and view communism and Islam, respectively, to be something wherein all contradiction is solved, Carlyle’s political philosophy provides the basis for the conclusion that it is in, and only in, transcendentalism where all contradiction is solved. The Carlylean “newbirth of society” would be one in which, by resolving all contradiction, transcendentalism would emerge as the only comprehensive doctrine whereby subscribers to other doctrines heretofore would be able to come to terms with the limitations and contradictions of their doctrines by fully comprehending the philosophy of transcendentalism.

I will argue that transcendentalism has yet to be applied because it has yet to be popularized as a legitimate means of resolving the problems inherent in liberal democratic capitalism and socialism/communism as political economies. Transcendentalism has yet to mobilize itself in the manner of the twentieth century’s most profound and influential, albeit materialist and compromised, illiberal ideologies—namely communism, fascism, and Islamism. I will argue that Carlylean transcendentalism should be conceived of as being neither “liberal” nor “illiberal,” as its viability as a political ideology must be determined by whether it is capable

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<sup>61</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 179.

of mobilizing a coalition of support in the sociopolitical contexts of regimes that span the spectrum of “liberal” and “illiberal” regimes. For example, a hypothetical emergence of political support for Carlylean transcendentalism via institutional/electoral political channels or a social movement need not mean that Carlylean transcendentalism has to be accepted through coercion as a comprehensive doctrine to displace liberalism, an ideology that allows the liberty for individuals to subscribe to his or her own ideology/theology of one’s choosing. Carlylean transcendentalism is compatible with liberalism because it can be conceived as one more ideology/theology to compete against others for support. This dissertation merely seeks to cast Carlylean transcendentalism as an ideology/theology through a normative lens as being a choice in the marketplace of ideologies and theologies.

It should be noted that, as the theorist of transcendentalism, Carlyle offered a philosophy that drew on Islam as an influence while Carlyle was himself eventually appropriated by both Marxism and National Socialism.<sup>62</sup> Carlyle’s transcendentalism has been obscured by Marxism and National Socialism as more dominant ideologies and, as such, has not been developed or tried. Thus, Carlylean political philosophy offers a type of cryptic nexus among Marxism, National Socialism, and Islamism as illiberal ideologies, yet Carlyle’s transcendentalism has gone un-theorized and unnoticed in the context of political theory.

Carlyle’s writings can be placed in conversation with some of the most renowned and influential political and social philosophers that span intellectual history, such as Plato, John

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<sup>62</sup> See Jonathan McCollum, “The Nazi Appropriation of Thomas Carlyle: Or How *Frederick* Wound Up in the Bunker,” in *Thomas Carlyle Resartus*; Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 53; and Karl Marx, “Latter-Day Pamphlets, Edited By Thomas Carlyle—No. I, The Present Time, No. II, Model Prisons—London, 1850,” in *Collected Works* (Volume 10) (New York: International Publishers, 1978).



Stuart Mill, Sayyid Qutb, Jacques Ellul, Alasdair MacIntyre, and John Rawls, among others.

Emerson commented, with respect to Carlyle, that “He is a man of the world. He does not belong to this or that country only, but by his broad genius and talent of satire, which he throws about him, he is cosmopolitan; but his aims are as good as can be.”<sup>63</sup>

Victor Basch provides a valuable basis and pretext for what my dissertation sets out to do when he reflects on the enormity of Carlyle’s relevance more than a century after his publications:

But what struck me, even more than his prodigious eloquence, fraught with a biblical sense of the sublime, all grandiose ugliness and barbaric vehemence, was the extraordinary topicality of so much of Carlyle’s writing. It is more than a century since *Signs of the Times* (1829) was written. It could have been yesterday. The perils to culture that he identifies are the very ones denounced today by many contemporary thinkers. Mechanization, the same mechanization which the twentieth century has so diabolically perfected, triumphing over dynamism: that is the disease of his times, which the Craigenputtock loner never tires of diagnosing. Isn’t it that of ours?...Reading so much of *Past and Present* and of the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* on the distress of unemployed miners and textile workers, and the un pitying egoism of the propertied classes, one could almost believe oneself transported into the midst of the post-war economic crisis.<sup>64</sup>

Carlyle’s comments on the nineteenth century in his essay “Signs of the Times” in many ways are more applicable to the twenty-first century since mechanization has grown in scale exponentially during the period of time since the nineteenth century:

Were we required to characterise this age of ours by any single epithet, we should be tempted to call it, not an Heroical, Devotional, Philosophical, or Moral Age, but, above all others, the Mechanical Age. It is the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of that word; the age which, with its whole undivided might, forwards, teaches and practises the great art of adapting means to ends. Nothing is now done directly, or by hand; all is by rule and calculated contrivance. For the simplest operation, some helps and accompaniments, some cunning abbreviating process is in readiness. Our old modes of exertion are all discredited, and thrown aside. On every hand, the living artisan is driven from his workshop, to make room for a

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<sup>63</sup> Quoted from William Howie Wylie, *Thomas Carlyle: The Man and His Books* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1909), 183.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted from Catherine Heyrendt, “ ‘My books were not, nor ever will be popular’: Reappraising Carlyle In and Through France,” in *Thomas Carlyle Resartus*, eds. Paul E. Kerry and Marylu Hill (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2010), 178-179.

speedier, inanimate one. The shuttle drops from the fingers of the weaver, and falls into iron fingers that ply it faster....There is no end to machinery.<sup>65</sup>

Carlyle also acknowledged how “wealth has more and more increased, and at the same time gathered itself more and more into masses, strangely altering the old relations, and increasing the distance between the rich and the poor, [and it] will be a question for Political Economists, and a much more complex and important one than any they have yet engaged with.”<sup>66</sup>

This dissertation argues that Carlyle has been largely overlooked as a theorist who fertilized the social and political thought of pertinent philosophical traditions including Marxism and American Transcendentalism. Moreover, it seeks to show that Carlyle’s conception of transcendentalism, as a political philosophy of practical import, has yet to be fully formulated, much less attempted and practiced. In this way, Carlylean transcendentalism is an elusive and untapped alternative to liberalism, communitarianism, and the failed totalitarian Marxist and fascist regimes of the twentieth century. Individualist political philosophy—the tradition of Hobbes, Locke, Mill and Rawls—gained strength in the twentieth century because the only alternative to individualism seemed to be totalitarianism in the form of Soviet communism.<sup>67</sup> Carlylean transcendentalism, once adequately refined and articulated, could provide another alternative to individualist political philosophy in the twenty-first century.

The basis for conceiving Carlylean transcendentalism as a prospective practical political philosophy is that political societies both in domestic and global contexts have the capacity of not only adopting Carlylean transcendentalism, but adopting Carlylean transcendentalism as an

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<sup>65</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 316-317.

<sup>66</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 318.

<sup>67</sup> R.F. Stalley, “Introduction,” in *Politics*, by Aristotle (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), xxxi.

optimal and convenient solution to various and emergent political crises. *Political societies* have the potential to adopt Carlylean transcendentalism as a function of and as a product of the capacity of *individual citizens* to adopt Carlylean transcendentalism as a coherent political creed to espouse ideologically. Essentially, Carlylean transcendentalism has the potential to be adopted because individuals have the potential of adopting the conclusions Carlyle's transcendentalist character, Teufelsdröckh, reaches in the context of *Sartor Resartus*. Individuals can uphold Teufelsdröckh's philosophical conclusions as their own not on the basis of having lived his life but on the basis of reflection on his biography and the conclusions constructed on the basis of his personal socialization into politics.

Aristotle theorized how "moral goodness will ensure that the property of each is made to serve the use of all, in the spirit of the proverb which says 'Friends' goods are goods in common.'" <sup>68</sup> Aristotle makes known his view that "the better system is that under which property is privately owned but is put to common use; and the function proper to the legislator is to make men so disposed that they will treat property in this way." <sup>69</sup> Carlyle, through Teufelsdröckh, exemplifies such a "legislator" who came up with a means to make humanity disposed so as to treat property in such a manner. Teufelsdröckh illustrates how such "moral goodness" can come to fruition, at least theoretically, on the basis of the construction of a philosophy that facilitates such mutual solidarity coming to fruition on a collective scale. Members of a political community can adopt Teufelsdröckh's vantage point and philosophy, both theoretically and realistically, both as individuals and as a collective political community.

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<sup>68</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Ernest Barker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 47.

<sup>69</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 47.

I will argue that Teufelsdröckh's philosophy, transcendentalism, and the concurrent values and principles it espouses, has the capacity as well to assume the role of embodying the Aristotelian conception of the good, or *telos*, more generally both for the individual and the community. Communitarianism has been seen as attractive due to how it "offers a picture of the citizen as a member of a community seeking the common good."<sup>70</sup> The notion of what exactly the "common good" entails has remained nebulous and indefinable, whereas Carlyle's conception of transcendentalism puts forward a largely coherent conception of the common good.<sup>71</sup> What transcendentalism and communitarianism share is that each offers an alternative to individualist values that are largely based on the maximization of consumption in the economic sphere in the context of liberal democratic capitalism. In both transcendentalism and communitarianism, competition as an economic value is modified considerably through the import of mutual solidarity as a corollary, if not additive or alternative, principle.

R.F. Stalley presents a compelling critique of Aristotle that can also be entertained in the context of Carlyle's philosophy of transcendentalism when considering whether it is a viable *comprehensive* doctrine to apply to politics: "we may also question whether a society based on a common conception of what constitutes the good life for a human being can grant its members the freedom, which most of us would cherish, to develop their own lifestyles and personalities."<sup>72</sup> This poses as a critical test for Carlylean transcendentalism and I will seek to demonstrate how Carlylean transcendentalism does indeed offer a conception of what

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<sup>70</sup> Stalley, "Introduction", xxxi.

<sup>71</sup> It must be noted that Carlyle's conception of the good must be ascertained using critical analysis and inference with respect to *Sartor Resartus*. He does not explicitly define what the "common good" should be for the individual and the community, but Teufelsdröckh, as the protagonist, offers a conception of an ideal human biography that yields values and a philosophy that can be essentially replicated by all.

<sup>72</sup> Stalley, "Introduction", xxxii.

constitutes the good life that simultaneously enhances individual liberty and enhances the prospects for human flourishing. A common conception of the good need not be mutually exclusive from freedom but, if constructed properly, they can be compatible.

Rawls inaugurated the term *comprehensive doctrine* in *Political Liberalism* and defined it as a doctrine that “applies to a wide range of subjects, and in the limit to all subjects universally,” and “includes conceptions of what is of value in human life, and ideals of personal character, as well as ideals of friendship and of familial and associational relationships, and much else that is to inform our conduct, and in the limit to our life as a whole.”<sup>73</sup> Rawls’s conception of the gradation of comprehensive doctrines with respect to their “comprehensiveness” is particularly noteworthy in the context of delineating Carlylean transcendentalism’s application to politics as a prospective political doctrine and ascertaining the degree to which it fulfills the notion of a comprehensive doctrine:

A conception is fully comprehensive if it covers all recognized values and virtues within one rather precisely articulated system; whereas a conception is only partially comprehensive when it comprises a number of, but by no means all, nonpolitical values and virtues and is rather loosely articulated. Many religious and philosophical doctrines aspire to be both general and comprehensive.<sup>74</sup>

As a loosely articulated doctrine due to the highly cryptic presentation of transcendentalism in the context of *Sartor Resartus*, it is difficult to pinpoint the *exact* degree to which transcendentalism can be characterized as a comprehensive doctrine. Rawls coined and defined the term “political liberalism” such that it “assumes that, for political purposes, a plurality of reasonable yet incompatible comprehensive doctrines is the normal result of the

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<sup>73</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 13.

<sup>74</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 13.

exercise of human reason within the framework of the free institutions of a constitutional democratic regime.”<sup>75</sup> Moreover, Rawls articulates the “problem” of political liberalism: “How is it possible that there may exist over time a stable and just society of free and equal citizens profoundly divided by reasonable though incompatible religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines?”<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, Rawls conceives of and defines the term *overlapping consensus* as a means to ensure the stability of political liberalism that allows for a multiplicity of contrasting comprehensive doctrines.<sup>77</sup> Such a consensus is what adherents of opposing religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines would agree upon as a shared political conception of justice.<sup>78</sup> Rawls proposes his theory of “justice as fairness” as a prospective conception of justice to gain the support of an overlapping consensus, whereby “justice as fairness” would be embodied in two principles of justice:

First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.

Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all.<sup>79</sup>

I assert and will seek to demonstrate how Carlyle’s conception of transcendentalism embodies an alternative and is in many ways a “third way” to Rawls’s conceptions of, first, a comprehensive doctrine and, second, an overlapping consensus in the context of political liberalism. I will argue Carlyle’s transcendentalism does so by offering an idiosyncratic doctrine

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<sup>75</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xvi.

<sup>76</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xviii.

<sup>77</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 15.

<sup>78</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 15.

<sup>79</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 15; Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 60.

that inherently supersedes other comprehensive doctrines. I will also argue that Carlyle's transcendentalism shows us why an overlapping consensus within political liberalism is in some ways both unsatisfying and naturally unstable.

This dissertation is motivated in part by Paul E. Kerry and Marylu Hill's 2010 edited volume, *Thomas Carlyle Resartus: Reappraising Carlyle's Contribution to the Philosophy of History, Political Theory, and Cultural Criticism*. Their edited collection of essays seeks to begin to engage Carlyle in the context of the twenty-first century. Kerry and Hill define Carlyle in a compelling manner from the vantage point of the early twenty-first century as a unique contributor to political theory in terms that are largely synonymous with the characterizations of Carlyle's contemporaries:

In a world that prefers to keep its labels straight—where liberals are liberals and conservatives are conservatives—Thomas Carlyle presents a distinctly awkward fit. Just when he seems to prove himself a conservative, he speaks up on the part of revolutionaries...He speaks movingly of the plight of the poorer classes, and then he advocates strong central rulers; he denounces capitalism and yet seeks to woo the new leading class, 'the captains of industry.'...He is a communitarian who prefers a curmudgeonly solitude; a political thinker who prefers to avoid actual politics; a revolutionary and rebel who longs for the stability of a good and noble tradition.<sup>80</sup>

I seek to advance the thesis that embedded in Carlyle's political philosophy is a noble tradition that can only be ascertained by synthesizing Carlylean philosophy with contemporary political philosophy. By so doing, I offer a theory of transcendentalism as a synthesis of Carlyle with the philosophical contributions of Ellul, MacIntyre, and Qutb, among other post-Carlylean philosophers.

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<sup>80</sup> Kerry and Hill, *Thomas Carlyle Resartus*, 13-14.

Carlylean philosophy is compatible with the important conclusions Ellul and MacIntyre contribute in their work and I will seek to demonstrate how Ellul and MacIntyre offer philosophical accounts in the twentieth century that largely recite what Carlyle had already theorized in the nineteenth century. Like Carlyle, MacIntyre and Ellul are “negators” in the sense that they each offer theories that discredit predominant and hegemonic theories but, in so doing, offer solutions that are nebulous. Bringing the work of MacIntyre and Ellul into conversation with Carlylean philosophy, in particular with Carlylean transcendentalism, underscores the conclusion that Carlylean transcendentalism is a compelling theory that can resolve the deep-seated and seemingly intractable problems MacIntyre and Ellul theorize to be associated with modernity.

James Anthony Froude provides an account of Carlyle’s place in the history of political thought that sheds light on the fact that the time has yet to come when a determination can be made with respect to whether Carlyle’s political philosophy can be either vindicated or invalidated:

[Carlyle] has told us that our most cherished ideas of political liberty, with their kindred corollaries, are mere illusions, and that the progress which has seemed to go along with them is a progress towards anarchy and social dissolution. If he was wrong, he has misused his powers. The principles of his teaching are false. He has offered himself as a guide upon a road of which he had no knowledge; and his own desire for himself would be the speediest oblivion both of his person and his works. If, on the other hand, he has been right; if, like his great predecessors, he has read truly the tendencies of this modern age of ours, and his teaching is authenticated by facts, then Carlyle, too, will take his place among the inspired seers, and he will shine one, another fixed star in the intellectual sky.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> James Anthony Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of the First Forty Years of His Life*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1882), xvi-xvii.



Carlyle's political philosophy piques interest in liberal democracy and the recent debates over whether it in fact represents the end of political development. While Fukuyama's end-of-history thesis proclaimed liberal democracy to be the endpoint of a long evolution in political history whereby liberal democracy is the culmination of evolution (alongside a corresponding defeat of democracy's external enemies), Carlyle causes us to re-think such a view by pointing out the vulnerabilities inherent in liberal democracy.<sup>82</sup> At a minimum, an appreciation of Carlyle's contributions is a dramatic reminder that the question of liberal democracy's sustainability has yet to be answered with full confidence, is still being answered as time unfolds, and will continue to be answered into the future. Fukuyama questions the prospects of liberal democracy as follows:

But the deeper and more profound question concerns the goodness of liberal democracy itself, and not only whether it will succeed against its present-day rivals. Assuming that liberal democracy is, for the moment, safe from external enemies, could we assume that successful democratic societies could remain that way indefinitely? Or is liberal democracy prey to serious internal contradictions, contradictions too serious that they will eventually undermine it as a political system? <sup>83</sup>

In 1939, to introduce her *Thomas Carlyle and the Art of History*, Louise Merwin Young wrote, "[Carlyle's] political and social criticism, in many respects too advanced for his own day, has been winning increasing attention as the perspective of time has revealed its constructive value."<sup>84</sup> For Young, "the disintegration of modern governmental authority and the rise of a dictator class Carlyle would probably regard less as a vindication of his theories of authority (though they are that), than as a fulfillment of his prophetic warnings regarding the

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<sup>82</sup> See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 2006)

<sup>83</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, xxi.

<sup>84</sup> Young, *Thomas Carlyle and the Art of History*, 1.

shortcomings of democracy.”<sup>85</sup> F.A. Lea investigated Carlyle and published *Carlyle: Prophet of To-day* in 1943, in the midst of World War II. Such a project was an account of Carlyle’s philosophy coming to a realization long after his death. The title itself connotes that Carlyle prophesied what the world would be like in the future, and in so doing was vindicated.

Fukuyama himself conceded in a 2006 afterword to a second edition of *The End of History and the Last Man* that there are “many challenges to the optimistic evolutionary scenario” of liberalism’s predominance, among these “the unanticipated consequences of technology.”<sup>86</sup> Technology poses as a possible internal contradiction to liberalism since “the historical process that is driven by technological advance [could] ultimately be consumed by it [and] there are an endless variety of scenarios by which this could happen.”<sup>87</sup> This dissertation will account for Carlyle’s early criticism of technology and how Jacques Ellul’s criticism of technology in the twentieth century embodies largely a re-articulation of Carlyle’s earlier claims.

For example, Carlyle asserts the following about technology and industrialism: “By our skill in Mechanism, it has come to pass, that in the management of external things we excel all other ages, while in whatever respects the pure moral nature, in true dignity of soul and character, we are perhaps inferior to most civilised ages.”<sup>88</sup> He insists that, if we look deeper, “we shall find that this faith in Mechanism has now struck its roots down into man’s most intimate, primary sources of conviction” and that “men have lost their belief in the Invisible,

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<sup>85</sup> Louise Merwin Young, *Thomas Carlyle and the Art of History* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939), 88.

<sup>86</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 347.

<sup>87</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 353.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. II (London: Chapman and Hall, 1889), 332.

and believe, and hope, and work only in the Visible; or, to speak it in other words: This is not a Religious age.”<sup>89</sup> Carlyle concludes with a bold proclamation: “Only the material, the immediately practical, not the divine and spiritual, is important to us. The infinite, absolute character of Virtue has passed into a finite, conditional one; it is no longer a worship of the Beautiful and Good; but a calculation of the Profitable.”<sup>90</sup> This fundamental and all-encompassing indictment of industrial materialism serves as the central basis for Carlyle’s criticism of modernity.

Carlyle, Ellul, and MacIntyre are each prolific philosophers whose work can be synthesized and collectively applied to inform a comprehensive view of the vulnerabilities of modern political society that is defined largely by the hegemony of liberal democracy and capitalism. For example, Carlyle’s transcendentalism provides a potential solution to the predicament MacIntyre theorizes modernity finds itself in. MacIntyre theorizes on the bleak nature of contemporary moral and political debates:

Moral philosophy, as it is dominantly understood, reflects the debates and disagreements of the culture so faithfully that its controversies turn out to be unseizable in just the way that the political and moral debates themselves are.

It follows that our society cannot hope to achieve moral consensus.<sup>91</sup>

I will argue that Carlyle’s conception of transcendentalism, as theorized in *Sartor Resartus*, offers a means by which moral consensus has the potential to be achieved, in that transcendentalism inherently embodies a resolution to political and moral philosophical debates. Carlyle’s philosophy of transcendentalism is not merely another thread in

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<sup>89</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 332-333.

<sup>90</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 333.

<sup>91</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 235.

philosophical debates but rather offers intrinsic resolution by sowing together rival and disparate philosophical accounts into a singular and comprehensive philosophy. In so doing, transcendentalism accounts for the shortcomings of all preceding disparate philosophies. In short, the political prospects of transcendentalism have been grossly unrecognized and unappreciated.

Moral consensus has the potential to be achieved if the viewpoint of Teufelsdröckh naturally becomes the viewpoint adopted by *all*. Unlike other philosophies, Carlyle provides a constructivist account as to how transcendentalism could be adopted by all as a moral consensus in the wake of the prospective diminishing returns of dogmatic and materialist ideologies. Such a construction has simply not yet been refined or applied within the context of politics so as to be readily apparent. MacIntyre concludes that “modern systematic politics, whether liberal, conservative, radical or socialist, simply has to be rejected from a standpoint that owes genuine allegiance to the tradition of the virtues; for modern politics itself expresses in its institutional forms a systematic rejection of that tradition.”<sup>92</sup> Moral and political philosophy, mired in incommensurable and interminable debates, is representative of a rejection, or at a minimum ignorance, of the prospects of transcendentalism to provide a singular comprehensive doctrine just as transcendentalism itself can be cast as the rejection of and termination of all previous debates.

G.B. Tennyson, in the preface to his 1965 book *Sartor Called Resartus*, commented with respect to Carlyle’s reputation: “a new Carlyle may be palingenetically stirring in the ashes of

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<sup>92</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 237.

the old.”<sup>93</sup> He also acknowledged that “as we survey the history of the time since Carlyle wrote, we should be more inclined to acknowledge his prophetic gifts than we have been.”<sup>94</sup> On this basis, Carlyle’s political philosophy and prophesy should be acknowledged in the context of the twenty-first century, whereby his philosophy can be brought into dialogue with important developments in contemporary political philosophy.

Eric Bentley, in “The Premature Death of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1945): An Obituary and a Footnote,” offers a timeline of the evolution of Carlyle’s political reputation and persona. Bentley reflects on Carlyle’s unpopularity and fall from grace as a result of how he was illegitimately associated with and appropriated by the National Socialist regime and thus branded as a guilty party for the catastrophe of World War II. It should be acknowledged that Carlyle did in certain instances demonstrate bigotry and illiberalism when it came to issues such as slavery and racial equality, and this provided fodder for linking Carlyle to the Nazis.<sup>95</sup> Numerous German publications in the Nazi era sought to associate Carlyle with Nazism.<sup>96</sup> Yet what is especially noteworthy, some more incisive studies by Nazi scholars tended to separate Carlyle from National Socialism.<sup>97</sup> For example, Theodor Deimel, in *Carlyle und der Nationalsozialismus*, expounds on Carlyle’s fundamental philosophical differences with National Socialism:

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<sup>93</sup> G.B. Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus: The Genesis, Structure, and Style of Thomas Carlyle’s First Major Work* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), vii.

<sup>94</sup> Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus*, 299.

<sup>95</sup> For a discussion of the Nazi appropriation of Carlyle, see David R. Sorensen, “‘The Great Pioneer of National Socialist Philosophy’: Carlyle and Twentieth-Century Totalitarianism,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2012), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2152659464?pq-origsite=summon>. Jonathan McCollum acknowledges, “unfortunately, scholars have done little to address Carlyle’s relation to Nazism, whether veritable or false, and have relied upon superficial similarities to demonstrate Carlyle’s complicity in the formation of Nazi ideology.” See McCollum, “The Nazi Appropriation of Thomas Carlyle,” 188.

<sup>96</sup> McCollum, “The Nazi Appropriation of Thomas Carlyle,” 193.

<sup>97</sup> McCollum, “The Nazi Appropriation of Thomas Carlyle,” 196.

With this it must be pointed out with emphasis, how Carlyle's thought separates from that of National Socialism. Despite all commonality, the foundations of both worldviews are different. Carlyle makes a personally shaped religious idea into the origin and end of all criticism and reform. National Socialism, on the other hand, as a *weltanschaulich* political movement begins with the *völkisch* idea and establishes this as the basis of its entire politics. With this profound difference...it is mistaken despite all the similarities, to designate Carlyle, as has been done, as the "first National Socialist."<sup>98</sup>

The magnitude of this passage cannot be overstated, in that it may be one of only a few instances in the intellectual history of Thomas Carlyle whereby his theory of transcendentalism is constructed as a function of differentiating it from another ideology, in this case National Socialism. Deimel noted how National Socialism began with the *völkisch* idea and this became the basis of its entire politics that are literally rooted in racism and nationalism. In contrast, Carlyle made a "religious idea into the origin and end of all criticism and reform." While Deimel likely is referring to the "philosophy of clothes" or, more specifically, the "Everlasting Yea" as the "religious idea" he has in mind, what must be underscored is the realization that National Socialism departed on a political project other than Carlyle's from a starting position not shared by Carlyle. The Nazis could have undertaken Carlylean transcendentalism as their political project, but they simply did not do so. While it is not entirely clear as to why the Nazis did not adopt Carlyle's transcendentalism as the basis for their political project, the Nazis used race, racism, and nationalism as the bases for their populist rallying cry against liberalism and communism.

Despite the gaping mutual exclusivity that exists between Carlyle and Nazism, Carlyle's reputation was degraded by being associated with the Nazi brand, and this relegated him to becoming largely a defunct philosopher after World War II in the sense that he was no longer

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<sup>98</sup> Quoted in McCollum, "The Nazi Appropriation of Thomas Carlyle," 197.

called upon in either popular or academic discourse with the exception of a small cadre of devoted Carlyle scholars. McCollum has concluded that academicians who interpret Carlyle through the lens of his appropriation by the Nazis are in essence perpetuating Nazi propaganda as it was disseminated in the Nazi era of reckless scholarship.<sup>99</sup> What is more, “a veritable maelstrom of geopolitical catastrophes surrounds Carlyle and impairs our judgment on his works....”<sup>100</sup>

McCollum cites two instances that confirm Carlyle’s influence on Hitler, and these instances play an outsized role in tarnishing Carlyle’s reputation by tying him directly to the highest levels of the Nazi regime. During Hitler’s trial for treason for his involvement in the Beer Hall Putsch, he repudiated the charges of treason to the judge by citing Carlyle’s biography of Frederick the Great: “It is wonderful, when the English historian Carlyle, speaking of Frederick the Great, emphasized that this great king only possessed a life of work in the service of his people. Do you now believe that that which in November 1918 rose to power in the German Reich possessed the pure hands, the authority of a Frederick, to conserve this state authority?”<sup>101</sup> By doing so, Hitler sought to de-legitimize the German government and legitimize his political project and couch it as being in the tradition of Frederick the Great.

Additionally, McCollum cites Joseph Goebbels’s reading from Carlyle’s *History of Frederick the Great* to Hitler in his Berlin bunker in the midst of the final days of the Nazi regime. McCollum writes that “those last inglorious days in the bunker mark not only the final defeat of Hitler’s Germany but the culmination of Thomas Carlyle’s degradation and

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<sup>99</sup> McCollum, “The Nazi Appropriation of Thomas Carlyle,” 200.

<sup>100</sup> McCollum, “The Nazi Appropriation of Thomas Carlyle,” 201.

<sup>101</sup> McCollum, “The Nazi Appropriation of Thomas Carlyle,” 191.

debasement from his once-dignified status in Victorian England.”<sup>102</sup> These confirmed instances of Nazi leadership drawing on Carlyle directly for inspiration have more than tainted his reputation and led to a drought of scholarship on Carlyle in the wake of World War II.

Bentley maintained that the philosophical “death” of Carlyle alongside the death of the Nazi regime is premature, since Carlyle’s illiberalism comprises only a fraction of his legacy. Bentley reflects on Carlyle’s profile so as to demonstrate that it is simply invalid to conclude the scope of Carlyle’s reputation and legacy should be entirely negative:

Germany has offended. But I believe there is another Germany. Carlyle has offended. But I believe there is another Carlyle. There is the Carlyle whom Friedrich Engels praised and translated, the Carlyle to whom Dickens dedicated *Hard Times* and Ruskin *Munera Pulveris*, the Carlyle who in America stirred the very different hearts of Emerson and Whitman, the Carlyle who in England was still able at the end of the century to spur on the young Havelock Ellis and the younger Patrick Geddes. There is the Carlyle who, for all his provinciality, made his presence felt in Paris, Madrid, Rome, and Berlin for at least half a century (excluding the use of Carlyle by the Nazis and the fascists). This was a man who said things that needed to be said, though nobody was saying them. Here was a man who clung tenaciously to truths that were being denied or forgotten. Here was a man whose life was one long tempestuous voyage through the dangerous currents of a revolutionary age. Here was a man who questioned not only the respectable ideas of the time, as every critic is expected to do as part of his regular routine, but also the most “advanced” ideas of the time. This takes courage.<sup>103</sup>

It cannot be said that Carlyle’s political philosophy is defunct, as there are indications that his philosophy is merely in the initial stages of being vindicated. In *Carlyle and the Idea of the Modern*, for example, Albert J. LaValley notes Carlyle’s criticisms of modernity in its facilitation of atomization of the individual, the alienation of the individual from his work and from his fullest self, the rapidity of social and technological change, and the unleashing of greed

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<sup>102</sup> McCollum, “The Nazi Appropriation of Thomas Carlyle,” 188.

<sup>103</sup> Eric Bentley, “The Premature Death of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1945): An Obituary and a Footnote,” *The American Scholar* 15, no. 1 (Winter 1945-46): 71, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41204760.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A4de591129b9144a89e4f49d5b1d3e329>.



in the anarchic pursuit of money.<sup>104</sup> Such grievances, rather than having been resolved or discounted, have been magnified over the course of nearly a century and a half since Carlyle levelled them. The evidence for this lies in growing economic inequality, the looming threat of cyberattacks or other forms of technological/environmental devastation, and increasing crime rates, among other forms of evidence. Rates of crime can be used as measures of social atomization and alienation.

In the introduction to a 2012 special issue of *Studies in the Literary Imagination* devoted exclusively to Thomas Carlyle's politics, Tom Toremans and Tamara Gosta report the impetus for such a compendium: "Far from a belated attempt at apologetic restoration, the issue results from a shared conviction among the contributors that there is at present an acute need to re-examine critically Carlyle's politics after the often uncritical assumption of his adherence to a totalitarian ideology that dominated the twentieth-century reception of his work."<sup>105</sup> This call for an academic re-examination of Carlyle is only one among many that seek to revisit Carlyle's political reputation by untethering him from twentieth-century totalitarianism.

Recent Carlyle scholarship such as edited volumes *Thomas Carlyle Resartus* and *Thomas Carlyle and the Idea of Influence* have embodied the spirit of the many calls to acknowledge Carlyle's prophetic forecasts and his rebirth in the contemporary era.<sup>106</sup> Carlyle informs discussions with respect to developments in the philosophy of liberalism, the rise of Islamism, and the resurgent critiques of democracy and technology alongside the recent resurrections of

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<sup>104</sup> Albert J. LaValley, *Carlyle and the Idea of the Modern* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 3.

<sup>105</sup> Tom Toremans and Tamara Gosta, "Introduction: Thomas Carlyle and the Totalitarian Temptation," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2012): v, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1435825423/fulltextPDF/36CA174D8CCD40CFPQ/1?accountid=14214>.

<sup>106</sup> See Kerry and Hill, *Thomas Carlyle Resartus* and Paul E. Kerry, Albert D. Pionke, and Megan Dent, eds., *Thomas Carlyle and the Idea of Influence* (Lanham, MD: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2018).

authoritarianism and populism on the global political stage. Specifically, Carlyle's philosophy informs the work of preeminent philosophers of the latter half of the twentieth century in these spheres, notably John Rawls, Sayyid Qutb, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Jacques Ellul. By dialoging Carlylean philosophy with the work of these philosophers, Carlyle's contributions become "reborn," in that they are not only more coherent and lucid but can be applied toward the derivation and synthesis of new philosophical conclusions.

Carlyle's philosophy offers radical insights when bringing it into conversation with contemporary political philosophy and political events of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. By making inferences and drawing conclusions from Carlyle, new political theory can be constructed on the foundations Carlyle laid in the nineteenth century. I will make a normative argument on behalf of the theory of transcendentalism that Carlyle established in *Sartor Resartus* by seeking to justify how it offers applications to seemingly intractable political problems in the twenty-first century.

Thoreau and Emerson were American Transcendentalists who built on Carlyle much as Lenin built on Marx. But, unlike in Marxism, Carlylean transcendentalism has yet to be attempted in practical politics to serve a collective political society. This may be because the theoretical work necessary to make Carlylean transcendentalism a viable and practical political program has not yet been conducted. Carlyle, Emerson, and Thoreau never sought to promote transcendentalism so as to proselytize those beyond their narrow intellectual community of transcendentalists to a popular audience. That may be why, as of the twenty-first century, Carlylean transcendentalism and the transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau are not seen

collectively as a coherent political ideology and remains instead a largely abstract, cryptic, historic, and impenetrable intellectual movement from the nineteenth century.

Carlyle stimulated not only Emerson and Thoreau but the wider American Transcendentalist movement, and Carlyle's American reception amounted to what was his largest, most concentrated, and most famous following.<sup>107</sup> Emerson was instrumental in seeing to *Sartor Resartus*'s initial publication in book form in Boston in 1836.<sup>108</sup> *Sartor Resartus* was especially popular in America, and by 1846 it had gone through five editions and multiple reprintings.<sup>109</sup> Thoreau's only literary criticism took Carlyle as its subject and he composed "Thomas Carlyle and His Works" during the beginning of his stay at Walden Pond.<sup>110</sup>

I will argue that Carlylean transcendentalism can be promoted and re-theorized as a practical political ideology to mitigate the social, economic, religious, and ethnic/racial conflict that grips liberal democratic capitalism and as such can inspire unity and tame division. Division and conflict show no signs of ceasing but rather show signs of growing in the context of liberal democratic capitalism. Post-liberalism has the potential to take the form of Carlylean transcendentalism in that transcendentalism can be cast so as to naturally gain support in liberalism's marketplace of ideas and ideologies. This project would likely need to take place over the course of decades and possibly generations. Liberalism can *evolve* naturally and gradually into Carlylean transcendentalism as post-liberalism, so that after the span of generations liberalism and Carlylean transcendentalism can become essentially fused together

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<sup>107</sup> See Hook, "United States of America," in *The Carlyle Encyclopedia*, 474; Gravett, "Ralph Waldo Emerson," in *The Carlyle Encyclopedia*, 145.

<sup>108</sup> Rodger L. Tarr, "Sartor Resartus: Composition and Publication," in *The Carlyle Encyclopedia*, ed. Mark Cumming (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2004), 415.

<sup>109</sup> Tarr, "Sartor Resartus: Composition and Publication," 415.

<sup>110</sup> See Sharon Gravett, "Carlyle's Demanding Companion: Henry David Thoreau," *Carlyle Studies Annual* 11.

and indistinguishable from one another. The prospects for the stream of political development taking this path rest on Carlylean transcendentalism itself, and its ability or inability to mobilize mass political support both at the intra-national and international political scales. Carlyle himself forecasted transcendentalism as embodying post-liberalism in *Sartor Resartus* in a fashion analogous to how Marx forecasted communism as embodying post-liberalism in his body of writings. I will also argue that Carlylean transcendentalism proves itself to be capable of preserving the achievements of liberalism while also resolving what liberalism itself cannot resolve, namely the unceasing growth in hyperpluralism, economic inequality, identity politics, consumption/consumerism, and environmental degradation.

Carlyle is among the earliest theorists of alienation. Carlyle put forward the phrase “destruction of moral force” and this is akin to what would later be known as “alienation.”<sup>111</sup> When Carlyle refers to humanity as having grown “mechanical in head and heart,” he means that their behavior is increasingly determined externally by invisible, abstract, social forces alien to their internal impulses.<sup>112</sup> Carlyle makes us question the legitimacy of political participation and whether political change can be led from outside of institutionalized settings. S. Law Wilson has characterized Carlyle’s place in the context of political history: “[Carlyle] was a prophet; and whilst we recognise in the prophet the true king of men, nevertheless it is not exactly to that high functionary we turn for help when in want of practical solutions of pressing everyday problems.”<sup>113</sup> Wilson continues his critique of Carlyle:

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<sup>111</sup> Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 176.

<sup>112</sup> Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 176.

<sup>113</sup> Wilson, *The Theology of Modern Literature*, 137.

He does not count for much as an emancipator who only takes his stand outside our dungeon gates to tell us how unfortunate is our lot, how dark is our prison, how fettering are our manacles, and how impossible it is to get out. Or, to vary the figure, if our national and social affairs are in a state of impending shipwreck, we poor wrestlers with the troubled sea will be glad of any hand of rescue reached out to us from the shore; but if our would-be deliverer, instead of bringing on the scene some life-saving apparatus, can only bring a Diogenes lantern from which to flash a lurid light upon the tragic spectacle, or a camera, it may be, with which to take snapshot views of it, or pencil and paper with which to take notes for a thrilling and picturesque description of it, we must be excused if we fail to see that such a one has wrought any real deliverance on the earth.<sup>114</sup>

The early twenty-first century has witnessed discussion of what post-liberalism might entail with such controversial texts as *Why Liberalism Failed*, by Patrick Deneen, and *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future*, by John Milbank and Adrian Pabst.

Carlyle seemingly undertook social inquiry and political philosophy in the manner Teufelsdröckh in *Sartor Resartus* examined humanity: “with a strange impartiality, a strange scientific freedom; like a man unversed in the higher circles, like a man dropped thither from the Moon.”<sup>115</sup> As such, Carlyle recognized the basis for philosophy but nonetheless

simultaneously bemoaned its failings:

ever, from time to time, must the attempt to shape for ourselves some Theorem of the Universe be repeated. And ever unsuccessfully: for what Theorem of the Infinite can the Finite render complete? We, the whole species of Mankind, and our whole existence and history, are but a floating speck in the illimitable ocean of the All; yet *in* that ocean; indissoluble portion thereof; partaking of its infinite tendencies: borne this way and that by its deep-swelling tides, and grand ocean currents;--of which what faintest chance is there that we should ever exhaust the significance, ascertain the goings and comings?<sup>116</sup>

Carlyle theorizes from the premise that philosophy, which encompasses political philosophy, has reached its limits:

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<sup>114</sup> Wilson, *The Theology of Modern Literature*, 140-141.

<sup>115</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 23.

<sup>116</sup> Carlyle, “Characteristics,” 25-26.

Once in destroying the False, there was a certain inspiration; but now the genius of Destruction has done its work, there is now nothing more to destroy. The doom of the Old has long been pronounced, and irrevocable; the Old has passed away: but, alas, the New appears not in its stead; the Time is still in pangs of travail with the New.<sup>117</sup>

I seek to formulate and construct Carlylean transcendentalism as a new political philosophy in a manner Carlyle himself fell short of accomplishing. The “Time” is no longer still in “pangs of travail with the New” as the passage of time has led to conditions favorable to Carlylean transcendentalism’s emergence. I seek to provide a normative argument as to why Carlylean transcendentalism should replace the hegemony of liberal democratic capitalism as a post-liberal solution to liberalism’s inherent shortcomings.

Almost two centuries have passed since Carlyle concluded in 1831 that “the Time is still in pangs of travail with the New.”<sup>118</sup> In this period of time, the modern ideologies of liberalism, communism, and fascism took shape. While liberalism has become hegemonic on the global stage (in particular since the end of the Cold War), recently there is significant evidence and speculation that liberalism cannot survive much longer. The basis for such a conclusion rests, I contend, principally on two texts that theorize of the shortcomings of liberalism that have only continuously grown more pronounced and more irresolvable by liberalism itself: MacIntyre’s *After Virtue* and Patrick Deneen’s *Why Liberalism Failed*.<sup>119</sup>

Lea reflects:

Carlyle’s doctrine certainly does not lie on the surface. To penetrate to the heart of it is no easy matter even for one not pre-convinced of its falsehood; for one who is, it is impossible. His books are full of brilliant intuitions, psychological, historical and social, brilliantly conveyed; the coherent world-view to which they belong is nowhere explicitly formulated. His quick-sketches

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<sup>117</sup> Carlyle, “Characteristics,” 32.

<sup>118</sup> Carlyle, “Characteristics,” 32.

<sup>119</sup> I devote a significant portion of later chapters engaging these two texts to demonstrate liberalism’s shortcomings and how such shortcomings can be a basis for the adoption of Carlylean transcendentalism as a post-liberal ideology.

are bursting with light and colour; the composition into which they might have been introduced is left largely to conjecture.<sup>120</sup>

I seek to inform and amend Harold Bloom's deeply un-nuanced account of Carlyle:

In [Carlyle's] profound anxiety to overturn the empirical view of the cosmos as a vast machine, Carlyle divinised nature and debased man. It is Carlyle, and not his critic Nietzsche, who is the forerunner of twentieth-century fascism, with its mystical exaltation of the state and its obliteration of compassion and the rights of the individual. That shadow cannot be removed from the later Carlyle,...uncritical idolater of those iron men, Oliver Cromwell and Frederick the Great. It is the Carlyle who wrote during the fifteen years from 1828 to 1843 who still matters to us. The author of "Signs of the Times" (1829) and "Characteristics" (1831), of *Sartor Resartus* (completed 1831) and *Past and Present* (1843) remains the sage who fathered Ruskin, inspired Emerson, and stimulated the social prophecy of William Morris. If time has darkened Carlyle, it has shown also that there is a perpetual remnant of vision in him, a voice that still rises out of the wilderness.<sup>121</sup>

I will argue that Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, in particular, still matters to us because it is the text in which he theorizes transcendentalism and that his transcendentalism is precisely *the* "perpetual remnant of vision in him" that still "rises out of the wilderness."

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<sup>120</sup> Lea, *Carlyle: Prophet of To-day*, vi.

<sup>121</sup> Harold Bloom, ed., *Modern Critical Views: Thomas Carlyle*. (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), 14-15.

## Chapter 1

### The Scope of Thomas Carlyle in the History of Political Thought

Thomas Carlyle is an enigma in the history of political thought. His autobiographical yet fictitious character Professor Teufelsdröckh in *Sartor Resartus* captures Carlyle's cryptic persona. Carlyle writes, "for the shallow-sighted, Teufelsdröckh is oftenest a man without Activity of any kind, a No-man; for the deep-sighted, again, a man with Activity almost superabundant, yet so spiritual, close-hidden, enigmatic, that no mortal can foresee its explosions, or even when it has exploded, so much as ascertain its significance."<sup>1</sup> Carlyle's own scope in the history of political thought can be characterized likewise, as he has been largely discounted as a "No-man" in both academic and popular philosophical discourse.<sup>2</sup> Carlyle's autobiographical sketch, first published in 1833 at age 38, captures his reputation as a philosopher and political theorist only more so ever since as a function of his influence and name-recognition becoming less salient during the latter half of the twentieth century and early part of the twenty-first. Yet, I will argue, Carlyle's significance remains "superabundant." Such significance, however, is difficult to make tangible and material and requires applying his philosophy in the context of the twenty-first century, a century whose politics Carlyle was not hesitant to forecast.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 78.

<sup>2</sup> While Carlyle is still studied by a comparatively small scholarly community that specializes in Carlyle studies, he is not particularly salient in political theory scholarship relative to other political philosophers. I will argue that this is partially because Carlyle did not advance and promote a coherent political doctrine of his own but rather advanced critiques of dogma and materialist philosophy (such as utilitarianism) emerging in his own time.

<sup>3</sup> Carlyle, in *Sartor Resartus*, forecasted "the phoenix" to take place in the twenty-first century, an alternative historical narrative to the Hegelian-Marxist dialectic or other prominent "end of history" accounts such as those offered by Fukuyama, Weber, or Nietzsche. Carlyle's conception of "the phoenix" is when the age of liberal



Carlyle, again just as he characterized Teufelsdröckh, was himself a “radical” in his adoption of German Idealism as opposed to British empirical philosophy and utilitarianism.<sup>4</sup> As a work of imaginative fiction based on Carlyle’s own biography, *Sartor Resartus*, via protagonist Professor Teufelsdröckh, offers a philosophical doctrine based on the themes of German Idealism as a contrast to the hegemonic eighteenth-century British empirical philosophy and nineteenth-century utilitarianism.<sup>5</sup>

What perhaps has gone most unacknowledged and unappreciated heretofore in the study of Carlyle is that he looked on politics, just as he did all of existence, from the perspective of a “philosophy of clothes.” According to John MacCunn’s synthesis of Carlyle’s political perspective, Carlyle’s orientation was such that “all ranks, dignities, institutions, creeds, are but the clothes, often threadbare enough, wherewith the human spirit patches its nakedness and masquerades in the world’s eye.”<sup>6</sup>

One statement from Carlyle in particular captures his all-encompassing social criticism while also implicitly capturing the essence of his theory of transcendentalism as a solution: “It is by tangible, material considerations that we are guided, not by inward and spiritual.”<sup>7</sup> Such a statement, from Carlyle’s 1829 essay “Signs of the Times,” not only diagnoses modernity but also in many ways negates modernity and its devotion to the comparatively pedestrian material when compared to transcendentalism’s devotion to the spiritual. The inevitable failure of being

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democratic capitalism, inaugurated by the industrial revolution, dissolves while a new ideology arises as the new hegemony. Carlyle vaguely mentions that transcendentalism serves as a prospective ideology to be the successor to liberalism. See Chapter 5 in Book III of *Sartor Resartus* called “The Phoenix.”

<sup>4</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 50.

<sup>5</sup> Kerry McSweeney and Peter Sabor, introduction to *Sartor Resartus*, by Thomas Carlyle (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), xxv.

<sup>6</sup> MacCunn, *Six Radical Thinkers*, 143-144.

<sup>7</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 338.

guided primarily by material considerations, I intend to demonstrate, will compel the adoption of Carlylean transcendentalism. Carlyle remarks further:

Self-denial, the parent of all virtue, in any true sense of that word, has perhaps seldom been rarer: so rare is it, that the most, even in their abstract speculations, regard its existence as a chimera. Virtue is Pleasure, is Profit; no celestial, but an earthly thing. Virtuous men, Philanthropists, Martyrs are happy accidents; their 'taste' lies the right way! In all senses, we worship and follow after Power; which may be called a physical pursuit. No man now loves Truth, as Truth must be loved, with an infinite love; but only with a finite love.<sup>8</sup>

Carlyle articulates a theory as to how modernity puts humanity in a cage, thereby preempting Max Weber's famous iron cage thesis at the conclusion of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* in 1905. In so doing, Carlyle also emphasizes the weight public opinion carries in determining human behavior in the context of modernity:

By arguing on the "force of circumstances," we have argued away all force from ourselves; and stand leashed together, uniform in dress and movement, like the rowers of some boundless galley. This and that may be right and true; *but* we must not do it. Wonderful "Force of Public Opinion"! We must act and walk in all points as it prescribes; follow the traffic it bids us, realise the sum of money, the degree of "influence" it expects of us, *or* we shall be lightly esteemed; certain mouthfuls of articulate wind will be blown at us, and this what mortal courage can front? Thus, while civil liberty is more and more secured to us, our moral liberty is all but lost. Practically considered, our creed is Fatalism; and, free in hand and foot, we are shackled in heart and soul with far straiter than feudal chains. Truly may we say, with the Philosopher, "the deep meaning of the Laws of Mechanism lies heavy on us;" and in the closet, in the marketplace, in the temple, by the social hearth, encumbers the whole movements of our mind, and over our noblest faculties is spreading a nightmare sleep.<sup>9</sup>

Such a diagnosis could perhaps be cast as a thesis that defines Carlyle's decades-long nineteenth-century intellectual career and is the fodder on which rests his multi-faceted antagonism to the hegemonic world order of liberal democratic capitalism that began to emerge during his lifespan.

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<sup>8</sup> Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 338.

<sup>9</sup> See Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 339 and Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 121.

Neff provides a narrative of the advent of modernity that Carlyle faced in Victorian England, which in many ways is an articulation of the rationalization and disenchantment of the world that Max Weber would later theorize:

Attempts to account for the development of genius, psychological explanations of poetic inspiration, and “natural histories of religion,” were not only destroying reverence for the sublime and mysterious elements of human life, but were also removing the inspiration to rise above mediocrity. Contemporary thought was being diverted from “moral science” to “physical science,” and morality, deprived of its divine content, was being treated as only the product of profit-and-loss calculation. These cumulative influences were drying up the fountains of national life; all that has been free, natural and spontaneous was cabined, cribbed, and confined. Through being treated as lifeless machinery, institutions were actually becoming it. “The time,” Carlyle summarized, “is sick and out of joint. Many things have reached their height.”<sup>10</sup>

The description of the zeitgeist of modernization that Neff offers illustrates that there was a growing void of spirituality as a function of the emerging hegemony of mechanized materialism. Carlyle sought to point this dynamic out by contesting the prioritization of materialism.

What is more, Neff also provides an abstract that characterizes Carlyle’s unique position as a critic of utilitarianism and rationalism that has wide implications for political theory in general:

So sure was Carlyle’s understanding of the springs of human action, that Professor Cazamian has justly called him the greatest of Utilitarians. Those who arrogated to themselves the name were utopian idealists who dreamed that men were ready to follow intellectual truth at all costs, and that the railroads, steamships, and trade which were bringing nations into ever closer contact would soon bind them in a league of perpetual peace. They expected the world to resign itself to the iron laws of Ricardian economics, to cast off without a murmur customs and beliefs shown to be irrational, and to accept the findings of a science which proclaimed the universe a soulless and relentless mechanism and man an animal. Carlyle knew that most men would call the truth an enemy when it threatened to belie their most cherished beliefs and check their habitual actions, and would discover in faith and intuition the comfort in self-justification which the intellect denied them...While the partisans of the greatest happiness principle were offering cold comfort, he strove continually to augment the sources of happiness; faith, hope, admiration, reverence, vigorous activity, colorful imagination, and

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<sup>10</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 163.

exuberant health....He saw with remarkable clearness the needs of the moment, and advocated the most direct means to satisfy them.<sup>11</sup>

Neff thus shows us how the contrast between rationalism and Carlyle's philosophy was broad and deep. As Neff characterized Carlyle's view, "the reform of society depended upon the individual's willingness to reform his own moral nature. And toward this end Carlyle, in his usual fervent peroration, urged each of his readers to strive."<sup>12</sup> Carlyle's concluding sentence in "Signs of the Times" reflects this: "To reform a world, to reform a nation, no wise man will undertake; and all but foolish men know, that the only solid, though a far slower reformation, is what each begins and perfects on *himself*."<sup>13</sup> It is in this context that I offer a normative argument for the adoption of Carlylean transcendentalism at the individual level as a means for social and political reform at the collective level. Carlylean transcendentalism, at least implicitly, calls on individuals to adopt and internalize transcendentalism so as to alter the collective political culture.

Despite his diagnosis of what he took to be the social ills plaguing Victorian England, Carlyle nonetheless maintained an optimistic tone and a progressive outlook:

Neither, with all these evils more or less clearly before us, have we at any time despaired of the fortunes of society. Despair, or even despondency, in that respect, appears to us, in all cases, a groundless feeling. We have a faith in the imperishable dignity of man; in the high vocation to which, throughout this his earthly history, he has been appointed. However it may be with individual nations, whatever melancholic speculators may assert, it seems a well-ascertained fact, that in all times, reckoning even from those of the Heraclides and Pelasgi, the happiness and greatness of mankind at large have been continually progressive. Doubtless this age also is advancing. Its very unrest, its ceaseless activity, its discontent contains matter of promise. Knowledge, education are opening the eyes of the humblest; are increasing the number of

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<sup>11</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 321.

<sup>12</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 163-164.

<sup>13</sup> Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 342.

thinking minds without limit. This is as it should be; for not in turning back, not in resisting, but only in resolutely struggling forward, does our life consist.<sup>14</sup>

Carlyle does not think merely reforming the structures of political institutions will be sufficient to yield ideal outcomes. He opposed reform that seeks to adjust what he terms “mere political arrangements” such as “a good structure of legislation, a proper check upon the executive, a wise arrangement of the judiciary” that in and of themselves are superficial and in no way lead to substantive changes.<sup>15</sup> He scoffs at those who think such reforms are “*all* that is wanting for human happiness,” as Carlyle again thinks the individual must change himself or herself at a personal level in order to yield change personally and by so doing collectively.<sup>16</sup>

Levin offers a valuable synopsis of Carlyle’s perspective on the modern era inaugurated as a function of industrialism in Victorian England: “‘The monster ‘UTILITARIA’ was breaking the social aggregate into individual fragments and then, having pitted one man in competition against the other, in effect declaring one man the enemy of another, goes on to pronounce that the object of life is the pursuit of the greatest happiness.’”<sup>17</sup> Such a critique of modernity exposes the inherent contradiction, or at the very least antinomic relationship, of an economy and society that prizes the pursuit of the greatest happiness as an end yet prizes unconsciously the declaration of men as enemies in competition as the means of attaining happiness.

In *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, Leo Marx frames Carlyle’s nexus with Karl Marx and Ralph Waldo Emerson by presenting the inherent compatibility of all three philosophers’ grievances with respect to the hegemonic world order.

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<sup>14</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 339-340.

<sup>15</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 325.

<sup>16</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 325.

<sup>17</sup> Levin, *The Condition of England Question*, 39.

He quotes Timothy Walker, who provides a valuable synopsis of Carlyle's position: "What worries Carlyle...[is that] mind will become subjected to the laws of matter; that physical science will be built up on the ruins of our spiritual nature; that in our rage for machinery, we shall ourselves become machines."<sup>18</sup> Leo Marx writes that Karl Marx uses language in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* describing the modern economic situation which gives rise to alienation that is "strikingly similar to Carlyle's."<sup>19</sup> For example, he references as evidence Karl Marx's general appraisal of the state of the modern economy: "The *devaluation* of the human world increases in direct relation with the *increase in value* of the world of things."<sup>20</sup> Leo Marx informs his readers that three years after Karl Marx's essay on alienation, Emerson wrote the following poem:

Things are in the saddle,  
And ride mankind.

There are two laws discrete,  
Not reconciled,--  
Law for man, and law for thing;  
The last builds town and fleet,  
But it runs wild,  
And doth the man unking.

This poem captures the sentiment that not only is humanity beholden to a state of alienation, but that materialism generates irregularities that will eventually have a tremendously negative impact on humanity.

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<sup>18</sup> Qtd. from Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 183.

<sup>19</sup> Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 177.

<sup>20</sup> Qtd. from Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 177.

In addition to his ruminations on economic alienation, Carlyle anticipates the post-Freudian version of alienation.<sup>21</sup> For example, Carlyle pre-figures a post-Freudian view when he speaks of “mechanism” as stifling the “primary, unmodified forces and energies of man,” or when he pits the machine in opposition to the “mysterious springs of Love.”<sup>22</sup> When Carlyle speaks of the “dynamical” as being subordinate to the “mechanical” in modern life, Leo Marx argues that he is congruent to Herbert Marcuse who, in *Eros and Civilization*, attributes psychic powerlessness on the part of individuals to the increasing repression of instinctual drives made necessary by a more and more complicated technological order.<sup>23</sup> Mechanized society requires humanity to endure an intolerable curbing of their spontaneous selves and this facilitates an alienation that is bound to grow as mechanized society becomes more dominant over human life.<sup>24</sup> Carlyle’s animus toward “industrial society” at the point of its advent in nineteenth-century Britain foreshadows later twentieth-century critiques of technology by Jacques Ellul and Theodore Kaczynski, Ellul’s unauthorized and criminal disciple, that are essentially mimicry of Carlyle’s original criticisms.<sup>25</sup>

Carlyle made significant contributions to political philosophy through his critique of Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarianism, providing a stark rebuttal to the theory of “the greatest good for the greatest number” in Victorian England, which Carlyle characterized as spreading like a

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<sup>21</sup> Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 178.

<sup>22</sup> Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 179.

<sup>23</sup> Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 178.

<sup>24</sup> Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 178.

<sup>25</sup> What is particularly noteworthy in this context is that Leo Marx, in *The Machine in the Garden* (pages 171 and 174), makes the claim that Carlyle is to be credited for coining the term “industrialism.” John Zerzan, in *Twilight of the Machines* (page 82), acknowledges the link between Kaczynski and Max Weber: “Unaware of Kaczynski’s central idea (*Industrial Society and Its Future*, 1996) that meaning and freedom are progressively banished by modern technological society, postmodernists would be equally uninterested in the fact that Max Weber wrote the same thing almost a century before.”

“dog-madness: till the whole World-kennel will be rabid.”<sup>26</sup> Carlyle complained that “the Philosopher of this age is not a Socrates, a Plato, a Hooker, or Taylor, who inculcates on men the necessity and infinite worth of moral goodness, the great truth that our happiness depends on the mind which is within us, and not on the circumstances which are without us; but a Smith, a De Lolme, a Bentham, who chiefly inculcates the reverse of this,--that our happiness depends entirely on external circumstances; nay, that the strength and dignity of the mind within us is itself the creature and consequence of these.”<sup>27</sup> Carlyle laments that “it is no longer the moral, religious, spiritual condition of the people that is our concern, but their physical, practical, economical condition” and “men are to be guided only by their self-interests.”<sup>28</sup>

Carlyle found Bentham’s chief fault to be:

that he can *affirm* nothing, except that money is pleasant in the purse and food in the stomach, and that by this simplest of all Beliefs he can reorganise Society. He can shatter it in pieces; no thanks to him, for its old fastenings are quite rotten: but he cannot reorganise it; this is work for quite others than he.<sup>29</sup>

Carlyle attacked Bentham’s utilitarianism as being closely allied to what he took to be the twin evils of “Atheism” and “Egoism,” and persisted in writing how he reckoned “Jeremiah Bentham no Philosopher, and the Utilitarian system little better than the gross Idol-worship of a generation that has forsaken and knows not the ‘Invisible God’.”<sup>30</sup> This statement epitomizes

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 100.

<sup>27</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 325.

<sup>28</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 325-326.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Carlyle to Macvey Napier, January 20, 1831, in *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, eds. Charles Richard Sanders et al., vol. 5, January 1829-September 1831 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1976), 212.

<sup>30</sup> Qtd. in Mark Cumming, “Jeremy Bentham,” in *The Carlyle Encyclopedia*, ed. Mark Cumming (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2004), 26.



Carlyle's yearning for a philosophy and politics that pursues the transcendental rather than merely the material.

Bentham's utilitarianism was a point of juncture between Carlyle and John Stuart Mill, and this juncture has persisted in the subsequent history of political philosophy. Political theorists subsequent to Bentham, most notably Rawls, have sought to refute utilitarianism with the use of analytical reasoning, while Carlyle, a theorist in the "romantic" fold, deemed utilitarianism to be simply unworthy of consideration and rejected it out of hand.<sup>31</sup> In his dual biographical account of Carlyle and John Stuart Mill entitled *Carlyle and Mill: Mystic and Utilitarian*, Neff vividly portrays Carlyle's aversion to utilitarianism:

[Carlyle] demanded a polarity of vice and virtue which precluded any calculation of the relative amounts of good and evil involved in a proposed act. Advocates of the hedonistic calculus seemed so base and vicious that he would not condescend to meet them with argument. His outraged conscience loosed on Utilitarian ethics the vials of its wrath; crudely abusive epithets, unfair caricature, and ugly sarcasm mingled strangely with rapt display of revered symbols which might lift men's gaze from the trough of sensualism. He had no patience with an analysis which tried to tear away the veil from that holy of holies, man's heart, wherein God's spirit was wont sensibly to dwell, and professed to exhibit only a mechanism for the weighing of pains and pleasures...The effect of these assaults on the popular mind was enormous. If to this day [1924] the epithet "utilitarian" retains a somewhat opprobrious connotation, it is to no inconsiderable degree the result of Carlyle's writings.<sup>32</sup>

Neff presented the paradoxes inherent in utilitarianism, paradoxes that can be used to show that Carlyle's "mysticism" seems rational in comparison to utilitarianism. Neff writes about the Bentham school of utilitarianism: "these cold rationalists were zealous for the welfare of humanity; these cautious skeptics were advocates of universal peace; these contemnors of religion had fanatic faith in the power of reason to perfect mankind."<sup>33</sup> In addition to Bentham,

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<sup>31</sup> For Rawls's discussion of utilitarianism, see Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 22-27.

<sup>32</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 285.

<sup>33</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 93.

Carlyle dismissed John Locke in that he commented that “his whole doctrine is mechanical, in its aim and origin, in its method and its results.”<sup>34</sup>

Carlyle’s rejection of Bentham and utilitarianism is accentuated by the comparison he undertakes of Bentham and Muhammad and Carlyle’s endorsement of Muhammad when pitting him against Bentham. In an 1840 lecture, “The Hero as Prophet,” Carlyle observed that Muhammad, unlike Bentham, did not reduce virtue to an arithmetical calculation in pursuit of discovering the chief end of humanity. Carlyle unpacks and defends his position that “enjoying things which are pleasant; that is not the evil: it is the reducing of our moral self to slavery by them that is”:

[Mahomet] does not, like a Bentham, a Paley, take Right and Wrong, and calculate the profit and loss, ultimate pleasure of the one and of the other; and summing all up by addition and subtraction into a net result, ask you, Whether on the whole the Right does not preponderate considerably? No; it is not *better* to do the one than the other; the one is to the other as life is to death,--as Heaven is to Hell. The one must in nowise be done, the other in nowise left undone. You shall not measure them; they are incommensurable: the one is death eternal to a man, the other is life eternal. Benthamite Utility, virtue by Profit and Loss; reducing this God’s world to a dead brute Steam engine, the infinite celestial Soul of Man to a kind of Hay-balance for weighing hay and thistles on, pleasures and pains on:--If you ask me which gives, Mahomet or they, the beggarlier and falser view of Man and his Destinies in this Universe, I will answer, It is not Mahomet!<sup>35</sup>

Carlyle invokes Plato by naming a collection of his essays critical of democracy *Latter-Day Pamphlets*. Carlyle makes the case that his contemporary Victorian era in England is indeed representative of what Plato had in mind—democracy taking hold in the latter-days of a political community’s existence as both a vehicle for and symbol of precipitous decline whereby political dissolution follows.

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<sup>34</sup> Qtd. in Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 172.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1840), 88-89.

Carlyle promoted the “philosophy of clothes”/transcendentalism as an entirely “new Branch of Philosophy” that would lead to “as yet undescried ulterior results.”<sup>36</sup> The discloser of such a philosophy, Teufelsdröckh, is described by Carlyle as a “quite new human Individuality, an almost unexampled personal Character.”<sup>37</sup> Carlyle, in this manner, is promoting not only the “philosophy of clothes” but also the philosopher of clothes as not only compelling but essentially as the most compelling development in philosophy by the most compelling philosopher. Teufelsdröckh is described as the philosopher whom “the secrets of man’s Life were laid open to...[who] sawest into the mystery of the Universe, farther than another.”<sup>38</sup> In such a characterization, Carlyle elevates Teufelsdröckh to a position higher than not only all other philosophers, but also a position higher than those persons in highest esteem in the context of divinity on the global and historical stages—namely Christ and Muhammad. Teufelsdröckh, a quite literal reading of Carlyle would assert, saw farther into the mystery of the Universe than either Christ or Muhammad or Plato, among others.

Carlyle’s “philosophy of clothes” is a construction whereby the *clothing* figuratively represents the institutions, beliefs, customs, and conventions of man and society.<sup>39</sup> Tennyson provides an insight into the purpose of *Sartor Resartus*:

Yet a further purpose of the painstaking identification of clothing with the practices of society is to strip the clothes off. Carlyle fashions the clothes metaphor less to apparel society than to denude it. Swift creates his clothes metaphor in *A Tale of a Tub* to comment on a particular set of beliefs, Christianity, and to show that one set of beliefs is superior to its rivals, that one suit of clothes fits man better than any other. Carlyle’s metaphor is both more intensive and more extensive. All of society’s old clothes are ill fitting and must be removed. *Sartor* abounds in allusions to nakedness, stripping away, disrobing—all designed to make us look at the

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<sup>36</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 8.

<sup>38</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 13.

<sup>39</sup> Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus*, 285-286.

fundamental object, man, so that we too see that he and his society are wearing tatters in this “Ragfair of a World.”...If we can but peer beneath the outer coverings, the “hulls,” “husks,” and “garnitures,” and other pejorative terms Carlyle employs to make these externals appear contemptible, we will see that a living unity lies revealed.<sup>40</sup>

It is along the lines of this narrative that the individual and society must examine themselves and “go back to the fundamentals to build up belief from the elementary qualities of existence.”<sup>41</sup> Transcendentalism might be defined as such a return to the fundamentals, whereby the ideal condition for living may be ascertained from the elementary qualities of existence, particularly in the context of humanity’s relations with nature. All such institutions, beliefs, customs, and conventions are discounted from each, individually and internally, providing a full and comprehensive doctrine to guide humanity because they are each paltry when compared to the articulation of the “philosophy of clothes” itself. In this regard, Carlyle is re-articulating, though not explicitly, Plato’s allegory of the cave. The institutions, beliefs, customs, and conventions are shadows on the wall and the “philosophy of clothes” is the *true* interpretation of the world.

In this way, Teufelsdröckh as “philosopher of clothes” is analogous to the dweller in Plato’s cave who leaves and sees sunlight for the first time:

And suppose someone were to drag him away forcibly up the steep and rugged ascent and not let him go until he had hauled him out into the sunlight, would he not suffer pain and vexation at such treatment, and, when he had come out into the light, find his eyes so full of radiance that he could not see a single one of the things that he was now told were real?<sup>42</sup>

Plato’s analogizing the cave to the world perceived by humans with their material senses offers an application to Carlylean transcendentalism in that a transcendentalist seeks to not merely

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<sup>40</sup> Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus*, 286-287.

<sup>41</sup> Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus*, 290.

<sup>42</sup> Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 229.

perceive and describe the “clothing” of the universe but to ascertain the intrinsic and higher meaning *embedded* within the “clothing”:

The prison dwelling [of the cave] corresponds to the region revealed to us through the sense of sight, and the fire-light within it to the power of the Sun. The ascent to see the things in the upper world you may take as standing for the upward journey of the soul into the region of the intelligible; then you will be in possession of what I surmise, since that is what you wish to be told. Heaven knows whether it is true; but this, at any rate, is how it appears to me. In the world of knowledge, the last thing to be perceived and only with great difficulty is the essential Form of Goodness. Once it is perceived, the conclusion must follow that, for all things, this is the cause of whatever is right and good; in the visible world it gives birth to light and to the lord of light, while it is itself sovereign in the intelligible world and the parent of intelligence and truth. Without having had a vision of this Form no one can act with wisdom, either in his own life or in matters of state.<sup>43</sup>

The analogy to Plato’s allegory of the cave is an applicable conclusion that can be drawn by also building on Tennyson’s own conclusion with respect to the philosophy of clothes: “once the clothes metaphor in its widest extension is firmly planted in the reader’s mind, Carlyle is able to play on the contrast between outer and inner, material and spiritual, real and ideal, dead and living, as on an instrument of which he is the designer and sole performer.”<sup>44</sup> This is because institutions, beliefs, customs, and conventions are not taken to be representative of a singular, transcendent, and immaterial divine idea of the world. And, unconscious of Carlyle’s theory of transcendentalism, this is why individuals transact in them. If Carlyle’s transcendentalism were to be widely diffused so as to enter the consciousness of the entirety of humanity, it is likely (or at least possible) that humanity would give up its incommensurable and interminable ideological, political, and religious conflicts and subscribe to Carlyle’s transcendentalism. In other words, they would give up their ways and their viewing of the

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<sup>43</sup> Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 231.

<sup>44</sup> Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus*, 287.

shadows and be convinced by Teufelsdröckh as the one who returns to the cave to inform them that they have been transacting their lives in shadows the whole time. Every person would become a transcendentalist and seek to ascertain the divine idea of the world that lies embedded in the philosophy of clothes as the *preliminary* divine idea of the world. This means that transcendentalists, upon accepting the philosophy of clothes as the divine idea of the world, would spend their efforts interpreting the clothing that comprises the universe for its inner and symbolic meaning. Essentially, this is the definition of what a Carlylean transcendentalist is.

The first step toward ascertaining the divine idea of the world is the negation of the possibility that ideologies and theologies apart from Carlyle's transcendentalism are themselves valid as comprehensive doctrines and the realization that Carlyle's transcendentalism is the only valid comprehensive doctrine because it is the only doctrine that accounts for, embodies, and terminates all other ideologies and theologies. Carlylean transcendentalism has the capacity to unite humanity and end ethnic, racial, religious, political, ideological, and international relations conflict by exposing the pettiness of squabbles that results from differences along the lines of race, nation, ideology, and religion.

Essentially, Carlyle suggests that philosophy will be forever altered as a result of the articulation of the "philosophy of clothes" and the proselytization that will, he forecasts, naturally follow. Carlyle explicitly sought to proselytize, describing "man" as "emphatically a Proselytising creature."<sup>45</sup> Carlyle asked, through the voice of the Editor as a character in *Sartor Resartus*, "How might [the philosophy of clothes] be imparted to others, perhaps in equal need

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<sup>45</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 8.

thereof” as Teufelsdröckh, the discoverer and discloser of the philosophy?<sup>46</sup> The question becomes, “how could the Philosophy of Clothes and the Author of such Philosophy be brought home, in any measure, to the business and bosoms of our own English nation?”<sup>47</sup> Carlyle characterizes Teufelsdröckh as being “not without some touch of the universal feeling, a wish to proselytise.”<sup>48</sup> Such statements illustrate how Carlyle intended for his philosophy of clothes not only to be taken seriously as a legitimate philosophical discourse, but also to serve a practical purpose and be lived by, “for if new-got gold is said to burn the pockets till it be cast forth into circulation, much more may new Truth.”<sup>49</sup>

Carlyle recognized the difficulties of proselytization that would confront him instantly, as the next sentence Carlyle writes after proclaiming the need for truth to be cast into circulation is literally such a recognition: “Here, however, difficulties occurred.”<sup>50</sup> Carlyle immediately came to terms with how radical his “philosophy of clothes” is and how it would be received as such by those whose interests would lie in upholding the status quo of all aspects of human society that are unconscious of the philosophy of clothes. Carlyle makes known to his readers that the “high Platonic Mysticism” of Teufelsdröckh is the “fundamental element of his nature.”<sup>51</sup> Carlyle characterizes Teufelsdröckh as someone who “exalted Spirit above all earthly principalities and powers, and worshipped it, though under the meanest shapes, with a true Platonic Mysticism.”<sup>52</sup> As such, Carlyle conceived of the philosophy of clothes as an antithesis,

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<sup>46</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 8.

<sup>47</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 8.

<sup>48</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 222.

<sup>49</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 8.

<sup>50</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 8.

<sup>51</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 52.

<sup>52</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 157.

in its purest form, to the human society dominated by dogma and materialism (and wholly bereft of and ignorant of the philosophy of clothes).

Upon contemplating the circulation of the philosophy of clothes as widely as possible in as many journals and newspapers as possible, the conclusion becomes:

But, on the other hand, was it not clear that such matter as must here be revealed and treated of might endanger the circulation of any Journal extant? If, indeed, the whole Parties of the State could have been abolished, Whig, Tory, and Radical, embracing in discrepant union; and the whole Journals of the Nation could have been jumbled into one Journal, and the Philosophy of Clothes poured forth in incessant torrents therefrom, the attempt had seemed possible.<sup>53</sup>

This conclusion is overwhelmingly consequential on two accounts. The first is that Carlyle identifies the resistance that the philosophy of clothes would meet with as a function of it being a heresy to not only some but *all* of the ideologies and political parties of England both individually and collectively. The political parties would not give up their ideologies and thus their prospects of attaining political power to a new-fangled and competitor philosophy of clothes hostile to their very existence. The second way in which Carlyle's account of the prospective resistance toward the philosophy of clothes is consequential is that he implicitly theorizes the totalizing/totalitarian nature of the philosophy of clothes. His account of how the philosophy of clothes could proselytize effectively is one in which all other parties are abolished and all come to embrace the philosophy of clothes in unison. Carlyle's phrase "embracing in discrepant union" must be interpreted, as it is highly cryptic. The phrase seems to connote how political parties would abandon their particular and limited platforms under different terms and embrace the philosophy of clothes in unity. Carlyle's description of all the journals "jumbled into one journal" also is illustrative of a totalizing measure he deems as a necessary

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<sup>53</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 8-9.



prerequisite to the possibility of converting readers to the philosophy of clothes. Essentially, the incessant competition that takes place in the context of pluralistic liberalism makes it such that the philosophy of clothes would ostensibly be incapable of gaining requisite traction in a political environment itself intrinsically inimical to the prospect of ceding legitimacy and authority to the philosophy of clothes. In short, a liberal political environment stands as anathema to the formation of a consensus in support of the philosophy of clothes, transcendentalism, and Platonic mysticism as synonymous concepts. As such, the philosophy of clothes, Carlyle thinks, would not gain a foothold, much less attract a consensus in an environment that does not promote the philosophy of clothes with anything short of a totalitarian approach. In other words, transcendentalism would be just one more ideology/theology that liberal pluralism allows for but resists as a potential successor to displace its own hegemony.

Carlyle highlights the broad distinction between the philosophy of clothes and other philosophies that fall under the conventional label of radicalism when he frames the philosophy of clothes as something far more radical than what is commonly defined as radical and whose advent is an altogether revolutionary moment in not only the history of philosophy but of world history. Teufelsdröckh, prior to his articulation of the philosophy of clothes, was thought to fit in the fold of conventional radicalism, as he is characterized as such: “if through the high silent, meditative Transcendentalism of our Friend we detected any practical tendency whatever, it was at most Political, and towards a certain prospective, and for the present quite speculative,

Radicalism....But, at all events, nothing Moral, still less any thing Didactico-Religious, was looked for from him.”<sup>54</sup>

Carlyle’s moral philosophy is new and idiosyncratic as he is a post-Christian who is in no way formally or explicitly an Aristotelian. Carlyle proposes transcendentalism ostensibly as an articulation of a new and final doctrine, which embodies a teleological purpose apart from all other non-Platonic political and religious doctrines. Carlyle *constructs* a moral philosophy with nuance and fine detail so as to be able to make appeal to its precepts *rational* and so the appeal does not appear as a mere instrument of arbitrary individual desire and will.<sup>55</sup>

Carlyle uses alienation as a basis for constructing transcendentalism. Without an ornate narration of Professor Teufelsdröckh’s biography that is defined by his alienation, his transcendentalism would have no “rational” basis and would be vulnerable to accusations of subjectivity. In this sense, Carlyle’s constructivism is through and on the basis of what might be called a “veil of alienation” that stands in contradistinction to Rawls’s veil of ignorance.<sup>56</sup> A *telos* offered by Carlyle’s transcendentalism is *renunciation* of the pursuit of insatiable consumption and materialistic pleasure, which stands in polar contrast to the *telos* offered by Bentham’s utilitarianism—maximum pleasure and absence of pain.<sup>57</sup> For Carlyle, renunciation is a prerequisite to living the highest form of life. Renunciation, or what Carlyle calls the “Annihilation of Self,” is “the first preliminary moral Act.”<sup>58</sup> It is necessary to achieve

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<sup>54</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 12.

<sup>55</sup> MacIntyre emphasizes the need for a moral philosophy to make appeal to it rational or else appeal to it will be viewed as a mere instrument of desire/subjectivity. See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 60.

<sup>56</sup> For Rawls’s discussion of a veil of ignorance, see Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 137.

<sup>57</sup> MacIntyre defines utilitarianism’s *telos* as “the prospect of the maximum pleasure and absence of pain.” See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 60.

<sup>58</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 142.

transcendence in the sense that the annihilation of self makes possible the recognition that the entire universe, including one's own self, is a transcendental phenomenon. Through the annihilation of self, the universe can be ascertained and accounted for to the highest degree possible that human sensory perception affords. Upon such an experience of the annihilation of self, Carlyle writes of Teufelsdröckh's transformation and how it fundamentally altered his outlook: "'my mind's eyes were now unsealed, and its hands ungyved.'"<sup>59</sup>

Carlyle provides an account as to how renunciation is actually rational and logical because one ultimately has to choose between either pursuing renunciation or pursuing insatiable consumption as their two options:

Man's Unhappiness, as I construe, comes of his Greatness; it is because there is an Infinite in him, which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury under the Finite. Will the whole Finance Ministers and Upholsterers and Confectioners of modern Europe undertake, in joint-stock company, to make one Shoebblack HAPPY? They cannot accomplish it, above an hour or two; for the Shoebblack also has a Soul quite other than his Stomach; and would require, if you consider it, for his permanent satisfaction and saturation, simply this allotment, no more, and no less: *God's infinite Universe altogether to himself*, therein to enjoy infinitely, and fill every wish as fast as it rose. Oceans of Hochheimer, a Throat like that Ophiuchus! Speak not of them; to the infinite Shoebblack they are as nothing. No sooner is your ocean filled, than he grumbles that it might have been of better vintage. Try him with half of a Universe, of an Omnipotence, he sets to quarrelling with the proprietor of the other half, and declares himself the most maltreated of men. –Always there is a black spot in our sunshine: it is even, as I said, the *Shadow of Ourselves*...So true is it, what I then said, that *the Fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator, as by lessening your Denominator*. Nay, unless my Algebra deceive me, *Unity* itself divided by *Zero* will give *Infinity*. Make thy claim of wages a zero, then; thou hast the world under thy feet. Well did the Wisest of our time write: 'It is only with Renunciation (*Entsagen*) that Life, properly speaking, can be said to begin.'<sup>60</sup>

Such a philosophical account has real-world relevance in the context of the twenty-first century and, indeed, in any time period. By not choosing renunciation, one is choosing to not be

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<sup>59</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 142.

<sup>60</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 144-145.

satisfied until they have consumed the entirety of the universe. Ostensibly, since the scarcity of resources precludes individuals and the collective from even the possibility of indefinitely pursuing insatiable consumption, renunciation is a necessity. In other words, the nature of the economy is such that it forces individuals to renounce because no economy has been able to allow for all individuals within its purview to achieve infinite consumption. Such consumption is merely what economic actors in the context of capitalism are pursuing—the continuous growth of income and capital—against the resistance of finite resources. Carlyle demonstrates how it is actually rational to pursue renunciation because diminishing returns and dissatisfaction will be the only products of not at a minimum incorporating renunciation as a virtue in one's personal philosophy.

Since renunciation is a virtue antagonistic toward and ignored in the context of liberal democratic capitalism it follows that, as liberal democratic capitalism persists into the future, it will yield diminishing returns and dissatisfaction. This is because capitalism is built on the perpetual increasing of consumption as a driver of profits and economic growth. Renunciation is absent from democracy in the sense that the persistence of identity/interest group/partisan politics illustrates individuals not renouncing but rather exerting their identity and interests to antagonize political competitors who embody a disparate identity/interest group/political party. It follows that if renunciation is not incorporated in the context of liberal democratic capitalism, at least to some extent, what it amounts to is that one must be satisfied with political clashes that will have no means to subside but rather maintain, if not increase, in their bitterness and hostility. An economy resting on the hegemonic mindset to continuously pursue growth while pursuing consumption can be sustained, but only for a time. Individual economic

actors and the collective economy cannot overcome the scarcity of resources in the long term by not adopting renunciation.

Carlyle provides a non-theological and non-doctrinal account of transcendentalism, whereby divinity is philosophized to rest in the universe as clothing: “The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres; but god-like, and my Father’s!”<sup>61</sup> The two mutually reinforcing premises of 1) renunciation in the form of Annihilation of Self and 2) recognition of the universe as clothing symbolic of a transcendent/divine order leads Teufelsdröckh to a grand conclusion that can be applied in the context of politics as an ideological viewpoint:

With other eyes too could I now look upon my fellow man; with an infinite Love, an infinite Pity. Poor, wandering, wayward man! Art thou not tried, and beaten with stripes, even as I am? Ever, whether thou bear the Royal mantle or the Beggar’s gabardine, art thou not so weary, so heavy-laden; and thy Bed of Rest is but a Grave. O my Brother, my Brother! why cannot I shelter thee in my bosom, and wipe away all tears from thy eyes.<sup>62</sup>

The universal adoption of this viewpoint, ostensibly, would yield a communitarian society based on mutual solidarity. If Carlylean transcendentalism achieved universal adoption, renunciation and mutual solidarity would replace insatiable competition and interminable conflict. Such a prospect is difficult to entertain because economic production has rested upon competition and competition has yielded valuable economic results to improve the quality of life of billions globally as a function of the advent of industrial capitalism in the nineteenth century. The challenge for the adoption of transcendentalism as post-liberalism would be in the *maintenance* of economic production which ensures a decent standard of living for the

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<sup>61</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 143.

<sup>62</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 143-144.

population while simultaneously incorporating renunciation as an ethos. Both would be necessary to preserve and “plateau” capitalism so that it does not burn out as a result of resource depletion and environmental degradation, both of which are externalities to the continuous increase in production and consumption. Such a passage from Carlyle also underscores how transcendentalism as an ideology would not be able to offer much in the context of a developing economy, such as Carlyle’s own Victorian England. In the climate of a developing economy, increasing production and consumption are necessities in order to cross the threshold of providing a decent standard of living to all of the population. In late, or latter stage capitalism, transcendentalism has an application in that it can “pump the brakes” on the sole pursuit of economic growth so as to preserve and plateau the hard-fought gains of industrial capitalism since the nineteenth century.

Carlyle’s conception of what he calls the “Everlasting Yea” is derivative of his philosophical construction, and the Everlasting Yea is a state “wherein all contradiction is solved; wherein whoso walks and works, it is well with him.”<sup>63</sup> The Everlasting Yea is simultaneously the nexus and product when renunciation, the philosophy of clothes, and mutual solidarity are combined. As such, the Everlasting Yea provides a comprehensive doctrine for individuals to live by as individuals and as individuals who are members of a collective populace. The Everlasting Yea is a conclusion derived from transcendentalism as a political doctrine that has gone unrecognized for its political application. This shows how Carlylean transcendentalism has gone untried, unimplemented, and unfulfilled as a prospective political ideology. Carlyle’s philosophical construction casts transcendentalism, it can be inferred, as a

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<sup>63</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 146.

competitor (that has gone unnoticed as a competitor) to liberal democratic capitalism, communism, fascism, and all other ideologies and doctrines existent in the history of political philosophy.

After laying out Carlyle's philosophical construction, the comparison of Carlyle's transcendentalism with Marx's communism is particularly noteworthy. Carlyle provides a philosophical construct for a communal society that stands not only in stark contrast to but essentially as the inverse of Marx's account. From Carlyle's perspective, the mutual solidarity of humanity is achieved as a function of individuals at their own individual and personal level assenting to Carlyle's transcendentalism and the conclusions (such as the concept of the Everlasting Yea) that are derivative from it. Mutual solidarity is established through renunciation and recognition of a divine/transcendent order. Marx's theory of mutual solidarity, or communism, is achieved not through a renunciation on the part of each and every individual, but rather through the climax of class antagonism in the form of a proletarian revolution. Moreover, Marx's philosophy is materialist and wholly unconscious of the philosophy of clothes and as such it is not transcendentalist. Much like capitalism, communism is bound within the limits of the pursuit of materialist consumption and both capitalism and communism are thus vulnerable to the inherent problem of the insatiability of material appetites that Carlyle theorizes. Carlyle thinks a transcendentalist mindset is not only necessary but is the only means possible to foster mutual solidarity among humanity: "for only in looking heavenward, take it in what sense you may, not in looking earthward, does what we can call Union, mutual Love, Society, begin to be possible."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 162.

Despite such dissonance between Carlyle and Marx, they agree in some particulars.

Marx uses language that is largely synonymous with that of Carlyle, particularly of Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus*, and even quotes Carlyle in *The Communist Manifesto* in what is perhaps Marx's most famous thesis. Carlyle laments human affairs being governed by the principles of "laissez-faire" and "cash payment":

Our life is not a mutual helpfulness; but rather, cloaked under due Laws-of-war, named "fair competition" and so forth, it is a mutual hostility. We have profoundly forgotten everywhere that *Cash-payment* is not the sole relation of human beings; we think, nothing doubting, that it absolves and liquidates all engagements of man. "My starving workers?" answers the rich Mill-owner: "Did not I hire them fairly in the market? Did I not pay them to the last sixpence the sum covenanted for? What have I to do with them more?"—Verily Mammon-worship is a melancholy creed.<sup>65</sup>

He bemoans the disintegration of the community that he sees taking place in another context:

From the "Sacrament of Marriage" downwards, human beings used to be manifoldly related, one to another, and each to all; and there was no relation among human beings, just or unjust, that had not its grievances and difficulties, its necessities on both sides to bear and forbear. But henceforth, be it known, we have changed all that, by favour of Heaven: "the voluntary principle" has come-up, which will itself do the business for us; and now let a new Sacrament, that of *Divorce*, which we call emancipation, and spout-of on our platforms, be universally the order of the day!—Have men considered whither all this is tending, and what it certainly enough betokens?<sup>66</sup>

Such passages can be compared with Marx's own:

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors," and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment." It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless and feasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom—

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<sup>65</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 183.

<sup>66</sup> Carlyle, "The Present Time," 30-31.



Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.<sup>67</sup>

This comparison leads to the question as to how much was Marx influenced by Carlyle? At a minimum, both offer criticism of the hegemony of liberalism and its facilitation of what they perceive as atomization and alienation of the individual.

Carlyle derives a narrative of the prospects of political development as a function of the Everlasting Yea that could be described at minimum as proto-Marxist/proto-communist. Teufelsdröckh contemplates and agrees with Rousseau's theory of property. In so doing, Teufelsdröckh concludes that just as property has grown into a human institution worldwide from one single person's initial claim to property, similarly the precepts of Teufelsdröckh's philosophy too could potentially grow into institutions entrenched and taken for granted.<sup>68</sup>

Teufelsdröckh's philosophy—elementally comprised of the philosophy of clothes (transcendentalism), renunciation, and the Everlasting Yea—consists of the necessary prerequisites to be able to construct a philosophical theory for the reversal of private property into communitarian/communal ownership. Capitalism and private property can be maintained, but the fusion of the ethos of the Everlasting Yea would amount to injecting a spirit of mutual solidarity such that cash-payment relations would take place in the context of an evolved ethos. Economic relations fused with a spirit of mutual solidarity would be a means to achieve Aristotle's conception of ideal property relations. Aristotle theorized how "moral goodness will ensure that the property of each is made to serve the use of all, in the spirit of the proverb

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<sup>67</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 150-151.

<sup>68</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 151.

which says 'Friends' goods are goods in common.'"<sup>69</sup> Aristotle then concluded, "the better system is that under which property is privately owned but is put to common use; and the function proper to the legislator is to make men so disposed that they will treat property in this way."<sup>70</sup>

The mindset individuals and collective society holds toward property can evolve if and when each and every individual recognizes, subscribes to, and practices renunciation and the Everlasting Yea.<sup>71</sup> Teufelsdröckh theorizes, much like Marx would, that property is an "Institution...not unsuitable to the wants of the time."<sup>72</sup> Though property is suitable to the nineteenth century, Teufelsdröckh provides a communitarian (and what also could be characterized as proto-communist) narrative that is a context under which property as an institution might evolve:

At a time when the divine Commandment, *Thou shalt not steal*, wherein truly, if well understood, is comprised the whole Hebrew Decalogue, with Solon's and Lycurgus's Constitutions, Justinian's Pandects, the Code Napoleon, and all Codes, Catechisms, Divinities, Moralities whatsoever, that man has hitherto devised (and enforced with Altar-fire and Gallows-ropes) for his social guidance: at a time, I say, when this divine Commandment has all but faded away from the general remembrance; and, with little disguise, a new opposite Commandment, *Thou shalt steal*, is every where promulgated,--it perhaps behoved, in this universal dotage and delirium, the sound portion of mankind to bestir themselves and rally.<sup>73</sup>

Carlyle thus provides a radical theory hostile to private property as an institution that bespeaks of a type of communal association as the successor to private property. The extent of Carlyle's influence on Karl Marx's theory of communism, in particular, is perhaps lost to

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<sup>69</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Ernest Barker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 47.

<sup>70</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 47.

<sup>71</sup> Carlyle does not explicitly state this but this is rather an inference that can be derived through a critical analysis of the philosophical elements presented in *Sartor Resartus*.

<sup>72</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 151.

<sup>73</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 151-152.

intellectual history. However, other passages from Marx's early writings, particularly in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, sound reminiscent of Carlyle. For example, Marx writes that "*communism is the positive expression of annulled private property...[and] the relationship of private property persists as the relationship of the community to the world of things.*"<sup>74</sup>

Carlyle asserts metaphorically: "'Hangmen and Catchpoles may, by their noose-gins and baited fall-traps, keep down the smaller sort of vermin: but what, except perhaps some such Universal Association, can protect us against whole meat-devouring and man-devouring hosts of Boa Constrictors?'"<sup>75</sup> Carlyle provides this curious statement that is proto-communist and a type of prophesy as to the context whereby the dissolution of property as an institution might come about out of the pure necessity for it to *have* to come about. It is a statement rich in meaning that needs to be unpacked, especially since Carlyle does not provide a further description of what he means specifically. His philosophy is different from that of Marx, in this instance, in that he conceives of economic parasites as being not only wealthy property-owners—the "boa constrictors"—but also what could be inferred to be the parasitic poor, whom Carlyle refers to as "the smaller sort of vermin." By his phrasing, Carlyle asserts that both groups will be problematic, but the wealthy, devouring property owners will be more problematic.

The inference can be made that Carlyle is also seeking to underscore the magnitude of the negative impact wealthy property owners will have when they accumulate and compound their wealth in a type of exponential fashion which entails squeezing all those in humanity who

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<sup>74</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Manifesto of the Communist Party*, trans. Martin Milligan (Blacksburg, VA: Wilder Publications, 2011), 70.

<sup>75</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 152.

are not the wealthy as their prey to consume the labor of and exploit the product of such labor. Private property can persist as a hegemonic institution that dominates political economy when all it has to do is guard against criminals who are by their nature petty compared with the wealthy “boa-constrictors.” Only what Carlyle calls “Universal Association” can protect us from the all-consuming wealthy, hellbent on squeezing and exploiting labor to increase their holdings. For Carlyle, the advent of “boa-constrictors” connotes the advent of association as a reaction to replace private property out of pure necessity as a safeguard from runaway inequality that is bound to take shape under a system of private property. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, Carlyle’s discussion of and use of the term “association” is reminiscent of Marx’s use of “association” in one of his most iconic descriptions of communism: “In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.”<sup>76</sup>

As can be seen from his philosophical construction of renunciation, the Everlasting Yea, and mutual solidarity, Carlyle seeks to advance his view that “it is the noble People that makes the noble Government; rather than conversely” and “on the whole, Institutions are much; but they are not all.”<sup>77</sup> Carlyle bemoans the fixation placed on creating institutions when such institutions would be unnecessary if the people were to be sufficiently what he terms “Dynamic.” Carlyle observes:

To judge by the loud clamour of our Constitution-builders, Statists, Economists, directors, creators, reformers of Public Societies; in a word, all manner of Mechanists, from the Cartwright up to the Code-maker; and by the nearly total silence of all Preachers and Teachers

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<sup>76</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 168.

<sup>77</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 330.

who should give a voice to Poetry, Religion and Morality, we might fancy either that man's Dynamical nature was, to all spiritual intents, extinct, or else so perfected that nothing more was to be made of it by the old means; and henceforth only in his Mechanical contrivances did any hope exist for him.<sup>78</sup>

In a critique deeply reminiscent of Carlyle, Weber opined: "This passion for bureaucracy...is enough to bring us to the point of despair....The key question is not how to further and stimulate this tendency, but how to oppose this machine-mentality and keep a part of humanity free from such fragmentation of the soul, from ultimate domination by the bureaucratic form of life."<sup>79</sup> In summarizing the technological contradiction inherent in liberalism from the point of view of liberalism's critics, Stephen Holmes argues in a fashion congruent to Carlyle: "science has set the stage for an endless explosion of appetites [and] since desires grow endlessly whenever they are satisfied, the whole 'modern project' [of liberalism] is absurdly Sisyphean—doomed from the start."<sup>80</sup> Such assessments of modernity described by Weber and Holmes were originally put forth by Carlyle and are only becoming increasingly evident in the twenty-first century.

In addition to comparing Carlyle's philosophy with that of Karl Marx, the dialogue of Carlyle with John Stuart Mill also proves valuable. Such a comparison with Mill's liberal philosophy is useful in further constructing transcendentalism as a political philosophy. John Stuart Mill's endorsement of Carlyle's philosophy, albeit partial, provides a valuable window into how Carlyle's political philosophy is at a minimum worthy of contemplation in the realm of liberal political philosophy. That Mill, one of the most if not *the* preeminent liberal political

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<sup>78</sup> Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 331-332.

<sup>79</sup> Qtd. from Michael Löwy, *Georg Lukacs—From Romanticism to Bolshevism* (London: NLB, 1979), 42.

<sup>80</sup> Stephen Holmes, *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 72.

philosopher, not only entertained Carlyle's philosophical views but conceded his own philosophical limitations when comparing himself to Carlyle demonstrates how Carlyle should not be exempted from consideration in the context of liberalism's criticism and discerning the prospects of post-liberalism.

Carlyle and Mill were both friends and adversaries. "Of male favorites, Mill stands at the top," wrote Carlyle in 1832.<sup>81</sup> Mill returned the regard to Carlyle, writing in a letter to Sterling about how his opinion of Carlyle rose the more he got to know him. He writes, "Carlyle passed the whole of a long winter in London and rose in my opinion more than I know how to express, from a nearer acquaintance. I do not think you estimate him half highly enough; but neither did I when I last saw you."<sup>82</sup> In another letter, Mill announced that "Carlyle has by far the widest liberality and tolerance (not in the sense that Coleridge justly disavows, but in the good sense) that I have ever met in anyone."<sup>83</sup> He reviewed Carlyle's *History of the French Revolution* favorably: "No work of greater genius, either historical or poetical, has been produced in this country for many years."<sup>84</sup> Mill wrote his praise of Carlyle to Carlyle himself:

You I look upon as an artist, perhaps the only genuine one now living in this country; the highest destiny of all lies in that direction; for it is the artist alone in whose hands Truth becomes impressive and a living principle of action....My vocation, as far as I yet see it, lies in a humbler sphere;...to make those who are not poets understand that poetry is higher than logic, and that the union of the two is philosophy.<sup>85</sup>

Carlyle saw a lot of common ground between himself and Mill, but also noted one key difference between them—that Mill was beholden overwhelmingly to logic and Carlyle was not.

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<sup>81</sup> Qtd. from Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 12.

<sup>82</sup> Qtd. from Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 13.

<sup>83</sup> Qtd. from Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 208.

<sup>84</sup> Qtd. from Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 27.

<sup>85</sup> Qtd. from Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 14.

Carlyle notes, “The creed you write down is singularly like my own in most points—with this single difference, that you are yet consciously nothing of a Mystic; your very Mysticism (for there is enough of it in you) you have to translate into Logic before you give it place.”<sup>86</sup>

Though Mill was indoctrinated into Benthamism by his father James Mill and Jeremy Bentham, once he encountered opposing viewpoints, he became convinced of the negative character inherent in the principles of liberty and equality and the necessity of new ideals for the reconstruction of society.<sup>87</sup> In a sentence that foreshadows Rawls drawing upon and amending Mill’s philosophy, Neff characterizes Mill’s view with respect to establishing the ideals to be used to reconstruct society: “But these ideals were to be sought, not by intuition, as Carlyle and the Germans proclaimed, but through a careful study of scientific laws, which would result in a stable science of society.”<sup>88</sup>

The compatibility of Mill and Carlyle was short-lived, as they began to part ways from one another philosophically. While Carlyle lamented the dysfunction of representative government and shallowness of institutions with the publication of *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, Mill advocated individualism in his *On Liberty* and advocated a modified democracy in his *Representative Government*.<sup>89</sup> For all of Carlyle’s differences with Mill, on hearing the news of Mill’s death, Carlyle exclaimed to Charles Eliot Norton: “I never knew a finer, tenderer, more sensitive or modest soul among the sons of men. There never was a more generous creature than he, nor a more modest.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Qtd. from Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 18.

<sup>87</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 8-9.

<sup>88</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 9. Rawls’ departure from Carlyle is evident from this sentence, as Rawls too opposes intuition and favors rather a constructivist (scientific) project to achieve a stable society.

<sup>89</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 37.

<sup>90</sup> Qtd. from Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 42-43.

Carlyle had a lasting impact and legacy in influencing Mill's political thought. In *Utilitarianism*, for example, Mill championed a spiritualized utilitarian ethical system that was compatible with Carlyle's criticism levelled in *Sartor Resartus* thirty years earlier.<sup>91</sup> As Neff characterized it, "it was a tribute to the weight and persuasiveness of Carlyle's objections, that Mill devoted the larger part of his space to an attempt to clear away these (as he styled them) misconceptions, which were the 'chief obstacle' to the favorable consideration of the Utilitarian ethics."<sup>92</sup> Mill gave ground to Carlyle on Carlyle's accusation of utilitarianism amounting to "pig philosophy" by acknowledging the qualitative difference in pleasures.<sup>93</sup> Though Mill drew on Carlyle to inform his philosophy, Mill stopped short of recognizing Carlylean philosophy—transcendentalism--as the basis for a new political doctrine to rival liberalism or utilitarianism.

As liberal, utilitarian, and mystic, Mill informs with respect to the limitations of Rawlsian political philosophy. F.R. Leavis writes:

The thinker [Mill] who could write these complementary appreciations of the two great opposites [Bentham and Coleridge] might call himself Utilitarian, and avow that in respect of the philosophical issue he stands with Locke as against the transcendentalists, but he was clearly no unqualified Benthamite. In fact, as we know, he spent his life in a strenuous endeavour, pursued with magnificent integrity, to justify his contention that the Benthams and the Coleridges, 'these two sorts of men, who seem to be, and believe themselves to be, enemies, are in reality allies': the side from which he inevitably worked having been determined by his upbringing, he worked indefatigably to correct and complete Utilitarianism by incorporating into it the measure of truth attained by the other side.<sup>94</sup>

The extent to which Mill was a Romantic is difficult both to ascertain and agree upon.<sup>95</sup>

As Glenn W. Olsen remarked, "there are deep contradictions in Mill's thought and it is not clear

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<sup>91</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 307.

<sup>92</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 307.

<sup>93</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 307.

<sup>94</sup> F.R. Leavis, "Introduction," in *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, 11-12.

<sup>95</sup> Glenn W. Olsen, *The Turn to Transcendence: The Role of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 232.



that his utilitarianism, his belief that happiness is the test of right and wrong, is at all compatible with his devotion to individual freedom.”<sup>96</sup> Mill noted the limits that obstruct the development of political philosophy as being a result of the limitations on the part of philosophers themselves. On the political philosopher, Mill comments:

If in his survey of human nature and life he has left any element out, then, wheresoever that element exerts any influence, his conclusions will fail, more or less, in their application. If he has left out many elements, and those very important, his labours may be highly valuable; he may have largely contributed to that body of partial truths which, when completed and corrected by one another, constitute practical truth; but the applicability of his system to practice in its own proper shape will be of an exceedingly limited range.

Human nature and human life are wide subjects, and whoever would embark in an enterprise requiring a thorough knowledge of them, has need both of large stores of his own, and of all aids and appliances from elsewhere. His qualifications for success will be proportional to two things: the degree in which his own nature and circumstances furnish him with a correct and complete picture of man’s nature and circumstances; and his capacity of deriving light from other minds.<sup>97</sup>

Mill’s charge that Bentham was deficient in imagination and life experience provides a basis for a litmus test to assess contemporary political philosophers and the philosophy generated by them. On Bentham, Mill ruminates that he should be disqualified from being considered a “philosopher” because he consciously disregarded (with contempt) other schools of thought and his mind was incomplete as a representative of universal human nature.<sup>98</sup>

Specifically, Mill charges:

In many of the most natural and strongest feelings of human nature [Bentham] had no sympathy; from many of its graver experiences he was altogether cut off; and the faculty by which one mind understands a mind different from itself, and throws itself into the feelings of that other mind, was denied him by his deficiency of Imagination....The Imagination which he had not, was that to which the name is generally appropriated by the best writers of the present day; that which enables us, by a voluntary effort, to conceive the absent as if it were

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<sup>96</sup> Olsen, *The Turn to Transcendence*, 232.

<sup>97</sup> John Stuart Mill, “Bentham,” in *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1950), 58

<sup>98</sup> Mill, “Bentham,” 61.

present, the imaginary as if it were real, and to clothe it in the feelings which, if it were indeed real, it would bring along with it.<sup>99</sup>

Mill attributes the shortcomings of Bentham's philosophy to Bentham's personal life experience and social constitution, shortcomings Mill attributes to his own life experience as well. It is crucial to appreciate how Mill adjudicates Bentham by engaging such deeply personal attributes:

By these limits, accordingly, Bentham's knowledge of human nature is bounded. It is wholly empirical; and the empiricism of one who has had little experience. He had neither internal experience nor external; the quiet, even tenor of his life, and his healthiness of mind, conspired to exclude him from both. He never knew prosperity and adversity, passion nor satiety. He never had even the experiences which sickness gives; he lived from childhood to the age of eighty-five in boyish health. He knew no dejection, no heaviness of heart. He never felt life a sore and a weary burthen. He was a boy to the last...He had never been made alive to the unseen influences which were acting on himself, nor consequently on his fellow-creatures...He saw accordingly in man little but what the vulgarest eye can see; recognised no diversities of character but such as he who runs may read. Knowing so little of human feelings, he knew still less of the influences by which those feelings are formed: all the more subtle workings both of the mind upon itself, and of external things upon the mind, escaped him; and no one, probably, who, in a highly instructed age, ever attempted to give a rule to all human conduct, set out with a more limited conception either of the agencies by which human conduct *is*, or of those by which it *should* be, influenced.<sup>100</sup>

Mill shines a spotlight on the lingering problem of incommensurability in political theory. He acknowledges his own incommensurability with Carlyle and the limits on his own political philosophy that this portends. In his autobiography, Mill discusses the extent to which Carlyle perplexed him:

I did not, however, deem myself a competent judge of Carlyle. I felt that he was a poet, and that I was not; that he was a man of intuition, which I was not; and that as such, he not only saw many things long before me, which I could only, when they were pointed out to me, hobble after and prove, but that it was highly probable he could see many things which were not visible to me even after they were pointed out.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Mill, "Bentham," 61-62.

<sup>100</sup> Mill, "Bentham," 62-63.

<sup>101</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1887), 176.

Neff characterized Carlyle's influence on Mill such that "the fire, the moral earnestness, the vivid verbal imagery of the Scotch mystic [Carlyle] were grateful to [Mill] who had been, not long since, a 'reasoning machine.'" <sup>102</sup> Carlyle believed that his writings had been the basis of Mill's conversion from a strict utilitarianism to a utilitarianism informed by romanticism. <sup>103</sup>

Writing to his brother, Carlyle instructed, "When you return to London, you must see Mill; he is growing quite a believer, *mystisch gesinnt*, yet with all his old utilitarian logic quite alive in him." <sup>104</sup>

Mill's commentary on both Carlyle and Bentham is valuable to synthesize in that he acknowledges the limits of Bentham's political philosophy while acknowledging his own limits as a result of his exposure to Carlyle's philosophy. Mill's engagement with and commentary on both Carlyle and Bentham also provides a foundation to discuss Carlyle's incommensurability with John Rawls. Mill's remarks on Carlyle and Bentham provide a framework to analyze Rawls's philosophy. A conclusion that can be made as a result of synthesizing Mill's views toward both Bentham and Carlyle, and accepting his views, is that Rawls's philosophy is lacking because it does not contend with Carlyle's philosophy or, at a minimum, any Romantic philosophical vantage point.

The synthesis of Mill's views on both Carlyle and Bentham can be applied to show that Rawls's theory of justice is susceptible to the same skepticism Rawls himself has toward

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<sup>102</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 10. This sentence is also thought-provoking with respect to a consideration of the antagonism, though they were not contemporaries, of Carlyle and Rawls. See my chapter "The Antagonism of Carlyle and Rawls" for this discussion. The phrase "reasoning machine", in quotes by Neff, is unattributed by him, but conveys a general critique of Utilitarians as "reasoning machines."

<sup>103</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 10.

<sup>104</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 15.

intuitionism: “not only are our everyday ideas of justice influenced by our own situation, they are also strongly colored by custom and current expectations.”<sup>105</sup> Mill critiques Bentham as possessing a mind that “contained so few and so poor types of individual character” and thus Bentham could not be relied upon to assess a collective’s, a nation’s, character.<sup>106</sup> Mill downplays the scale of Bentham’s contribution, relegating it to be something that merely “can teach the means of organizing and regulating the merely *business* part of the social arrangements.”<sup>107</sup> Mill’s acknowledgement that he was deficient compared to Carlyle when it came to having a talent for intuition provides a lens to view Mill’s critiques of Bentham. Such a lens can be applied to assess Rawls’s philosophy, especially since Mill was a preeminent liberal political philosopher like Rawls.

Mill’s assertion of the lack of moral philosophy underpinning Bentham’s philosophy is particularly striking: “whatever can be understood or whatever done without reference to moral influences, [Bentham’s] philosophy is equal to; where those influences require to be taken into account, it is at fault.”<sup>108</sup> What is more, according to Mill, Bentham “committed the mistake of supposing that the business part of human affairs was the whole of them; all at least that the legislator and the moralist had to do with. Not that he disregarded moral influences when he perceived them; but his want of imagination, small experience of human feelings, and ignorance of the filiation and connexion of feelings with one another, made this rarely the

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<sup>105</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 35.

<sup>106</sup> Mill, “Bentham,” 73.

<sup>107</sup> Mill, “Bentham,” 73.

<sup>108</sup> Mill, “Bentham,” 73-74.

case.”<sup>109</sup> The following critique of Bentham that Mill offers can supply a framework to assess

Rawls’s philosophy, particularly in the context of Carlyle’s philosophy:

[Bentham] could, with close and accurate logic, hunt half-truths to their consequences and practical applications, on a scale both of greatness and of minuteness not previously exemplified; and this is the character which posterity will probably assign to Bentham.

We express our sincere and well-considered conviction when we say, that there is hardly anything positive in Bentham’s philosophy which is not true: that when his practical conclusions are erroneous, which in our opinion they are very often, it is not because the considerations which he urges are not rational and valid in themselves, but because some more important principle, which he did not perceive, supersedes those considerations, and turns the scale. The bad part of his writings is his resolute denial of all that he does not see, of all truths but those which he recognises. By that alone has he exercised any bad influence upon his age; by that he has, not created a school of deniers, for this is an ignorant prejudice, but put himself at the head of the school which exists always, though it does not always find a great man to give it the sanction of philosophy: thrown the mantle of intellect over the natural tendency of men in all ages to deny or disparage all feelings and mental states of which they have no consciousness in themselves.<sup>110</sup>

Though he is scathingly critical of Bentham, Mill also comes around to showering him with praise. Although he previously would not bestow upon Bentham the title of “philosopher,” Mill holds nothing back in his acclaim of Bentham under certain respects: “He has swept away the accumulated cobwebs of centuries—he has untied knots which the efforts of the ablest thinkers, age after age, had only drawn tighter; and it is no exaggeration to say of him that over a great part of the field he was the first to shed the light of reason.”<sup>111</sup> In other words, Bentham’s materialist philosophy is valuable in negating what is untenable, such as a politics informed by dogmatic theological doctrines. But, by the same token, commitment to materialist utilitarianism is by itself philosophically shallow and in need of some form of a positivist moral

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<sup>109</sup> Mill, “Bentham,” 74.

<sup>110</sup> Mill, “Bentham,” 64.

<sup>111</sup> Mill, “Bentham,” 74.

philosophy. It is in this context that Mill's acknowledgement of Carlyle's talent for intuition may be most relevant.

Rawls's dissatisfaction with deriving a moral philosophy via intuition rather than through a rationalistic discourse anchors him to Bentham because both Bentham and Rawls are rationalists while being materialists. Unlike Carlyle, neither is willing to concede that things such as intuition, Romanticism, Platonism, or anything that bespeaks of the transcendental has much that is particularly valuable to offer political philosophy. For example, Mill's criticism of Bentham's neglect of the spiritual/transcendental can be applied to Rawls: "Man is never recognised by [Bentham] as a being capable of pursuing spiritual perfection as an end; of desiring, for its own sake, the conformity of his own character to his standard of excellence, without hope of good or fear of evil from other source than his own inward consciousness."<sup>112</sup> Ostensibly, Mill is advocating that philosophy that is transcendental and spiritual be seen intrinsically as on a higher plane than philosophy that deliberates on what is material and external from the flourishing of "man's" inward consciousness. *Sartor Resartus*'s plot can be summarized as Teufelsdröckh's pursuit of spiritual perfection as an end, and this underscores the contrast between purely materialist philosophy and Carlyle's Romantic and Platonic philosophy.

Rawls maintains that it is essential to assign weights to principles of justice in what amounts to a direct contradiction to Mill:

If we cannot explain how these weights are to be determined by reasonable ethical criteria, the means of rational discussion have come to an end. An intuitionist conception of justice is, one might say, but half a conception. We should do what we can to formulate explicit principles for

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<sup>112</sup> Mill, "Bentham," 66.

the priority problem, even though the dependence on intuition cannot be eliminated entirely.<sup>113</sup>

While Mill seeks to propose how Bentham missed important principles that connote intuitionism, Rawls maintains that “a refutation of intuitionism consists in presenting the sort of constructive criteria that are said not to exist.”<sup>114</sup> Rawls concedes, though, that “no doubt any conception of justice will have to rely on intuition to some degree.”<sup>115</sup>

The intuition relied on by Carlyle and Rawls are incommensurable, which leads them subsequently to incommensurable conceptions of justice. MacIntyre provides an insightful frame that can be applied to a consideration of the incommensurability of Carlyle and Rawls:

Our judgments on specific moral issues may be supported by the invocation of more general principles. But in the end our most general and ultimate principles, because they are that in terms of which all else is justified, stand beyond any rational justification. In particular, they cannot be justified by any appeal to facts, historical or otherwise...it follows that moral assertions cannot be backed up rationally at all by factual or any other non-moral assertions. And this has as its central consequences the view that on ultimate questions of morality we cannot argue, we can only choose. And our choice is necessarily arbitrary in the sense that we cannot give reasons for choosing one way rather than another; for to do this we should have to have a criterion in moral matters more ultimate than our ultimate criterion.<sup>116</sup>

I will use MacIntyre’s framework as one of the means to address the contrast and incommensurability between Carlyle and Rawls in chapters 4 and 5.

Rawls’s determination of the principles of justice that would be agreed to in the original position are principles wedded to utilitarian calculation and rational choice. He defines the original position as a hypothetical state in which those tasked with determining the principles of justice are blind to the particular attributes of their lives such that “no one should be

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<sup>113</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 41.

<sup>114</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 39.

<sup>115</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 41.

<sup>116</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, “Notes from the Moral Wilderness,” in *Alasdair MacIntyre’s Engagement with Marxism*, eds. Paul Blackledge and Neil Davidson (Boston, MA: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2008), 47-48.

advantaged or disadvantaged by natural fortune or social circumstances in the choice of principles.”<sup>117</sup> He articulates the following two principles of justice he believes would be chosen in the context of the original position:

First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.

Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all.<sup>118</sup>

Mill writes with respect to Bentham that “man, that most complex being, is a very simple one in his eyes” and such a sentiment could define the occupant of the Rawlsian original position who derives principles of justice drawing on utilitarian calculation and rational choice.<sup>119</sup>

Mill discusses Bentham’s disdain toward poetry and invokes Carlyle’s criticism of Bentham in so doing. Mill writes that poetry, “that which employs the language of words, [Bentham] entertained no favour. Words, he thought, were perverted from their proper office when they were employed in uttering anything but precise logical truth.”<sup>120</sup> Mill continues, invoking Carlyle:

Another aphorism is attributed to [Bentham], which is much more characteristic of his view of this subject: “All poetry is misrepresentation.” Poetry, he thought, consisted essentially in exaggeration for effect: in proclaiming some one view of a thing very emphatically, and suppressing all the limitations and qualifications. This trait of character seems to us a curious example of what Mr. Carlyle strikingly calls “the completeness of limited men.” Here is a philosopher who is happy within his narrow boundary as no man of indefinite range ever was: who flatters himself that he is so completely emancipated from the essential law of poor human intellect, by which it can only see one thing at a time well, that he can even turn round upon the imperfection and lay a solemn interdict upon it.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 18.

<sup>118</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 60.

<sup>119</sup> Mill, “Bentham,” 68.

<sup>120</sup> Mill, “Bentham,” 95.

<sup>121</sup> Mill, “Bentham,” 95-96.



Mill asks explicitly, "If Bentham's theory of life can do so little for the individual, what can it do for society?"<sup>122</sup> Mill answers his own question, "It will enable a society which has attained a certain state of spiritual development, and the maintenance of which in that state is otherwise provided for, to prescribe the rules by which it may protect its material interests."<sup>123</sup> The protection of material interests in the context of a society whose state of spiritual development is limited is a goal inimical to Carlyle's theory of transcendentalism as developed in *Sartor Resartus*. This is because transcendentalism, as a Platonic philosophy, seeks to foster spiritual development so as to pursue accounting for the reality of the universe, and minimize attention to what is comparatively material and mundane. Mill offers a conclusion with respect to Benthamism:

[it] will do nothing (except sometimes as an instrument in the hands of a higher doctrine) for the spiritual interests of society; nor does it suffice of itself even for the material interests. That which alone causes any material interests to exist, which alone enables any body of human beings to exist as a society, is national character: *that* it is, which causes one nation to succeed in what it attempts, another to fail; one nation to understand and aspire to elevated things, another to grovel in mean ones; which makes the greatness of one nation lasting, and dooms another to early and rapid decay.<sup>124</sup>

Mill holds that "a philosophy of laws and institutions, not founded on a philosophy of national character, is an absurdity."<sup>125</sup> Mill's assessment is particularly noteworthy in its similarity to Carlyle's own determination that spirituality, at least in some form, is essential for sustaining a political and social order:

For if Government is, so to speak, the outward SKIN of the Body Politic, holding the whole together and protecting it; and all your Craft-Guilds, and Associations for Industry, of hand or of head, are the Fleshly Clothes, the muscular and osseous Tissues (lying *under* such SKIN),

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<sup>122</sup> Mill, "Bentham," 72.

<sup>123</sup> Mill, "Bentham," 72-73.

<sup>124</sup> Mill, "Bentham," 73.

<sup>125</sup> Mill, "Bentham," 73.

whereby Society stands and works;--then is Religion the inmost Pericardial and Nervous Tissue, which ministers Life and warm Circulation to the whole. Without which Pericardial Tissue the Bones and Muscles (of Industry) were inert, or animated only by a Galvanic vitality; the SKIN would become a shriveled pelt, or fast-rotting raw-hide; and Society itself a dead carcass,--deserving to be buried. Men were no longer Social, but Gregarious; which latter state also could not continue, but must gradually issue in universal selfish discord, hatred, savage isolation, and dispersion;--whereby, as we might continue to say, the very dust and dead body of Society would have evaporated and become abolished.<sup>126</sup>

Mill and Carlyle call for a type of communitarian philosophy to resolve, and even pre-empt, the deleterious effects atomization has on a polity.

In *Carlyle and Mill: Mystic and Utilitarian* (published in 1924), Neff concluded that “Carlyle and Mill were ‘halves of a dissevered world.’”<sup>127</sup> Neff calls on his readers to ponder the commonality of Carlyle’s and Mill’s political philosophies and in so doing provides a vivid account of the views Carlyle as “mystic” shared with Mill, whose reputation is that of perhaps the most venerated “liberal” philosopher in the history of political thought:

If Carlyle’s firm grasp of actuality could have allied itself with Mill’s vision of potentiality, if Mill’s liberating ideas could have been clothed in the glamour and vitality of Carlyle’s art, which, as Mill said, could make truth “impressive and a living principle of action,” England might have answered many of the questions which divide her to-day. Such a union at first seemed possible, for they had good bases of agreement. Both saw that the economic problem underlay the political. They knew that the system of irresponsible private property and free competition, which enslaved the many and materialized the few, was impoverishing the nation physically, morally, and intellectually, and sowing the seeds of class war. Although they therefore sympathized with the demand by the exploited masses for the suffrage as a means of self-protection, they feared its misuse by men so ignorant and debased. They hoped to persuade them to rely upon the judgement of men of conspicuous talent until national education, juster laws and a humaner economic order would give them sufficient leisure and knowledge to participate wisely in the nation’s councils. Of this humaner economic order they had much the same vision. They wished to influence industrial and commercial practice by ethical and aesthetic considerations, to unite men by a closer tie than cash payment, and to substitute for

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<sup>126</sup> It is important to note Carlyle’s dissatisfaction with dogmatic and particular religious traditions when reading this passage. He is writing this as a post-Christian in the process of conceptualizing transcendentalism as post-Christianity since he does not consider Christianity to be a viable religion to hegemonically unite and guide society. See Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 163.

<sup>127</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 320.

the exploitation of man by man the exploitation of the forces of nature by a united humanity. This devotion to the welfare of humanity gave a decidedly practical turn to their thinking.<sup>128</sup>

Such a conclusion has broad implications for political theory and the trajectory of the history of political thought. It underscores romanticism and liberalism as being dichotomous rather than complementary, as Neff argues the fact that Carlyle and Mill “finally regarded one another as opposed rather than complementary was England’s loss and their own.”<sup>129</sup> Such a reflection speaks of the prospects of Carlyle’s philosophy being synthesized with other schools of political thought in order to yield both practical and philosophical results. This conclusion forms a basis for bringing Carlyle into dialogue with contemporary political philosophy.

Mill and Neff each articulate why it is misguided to discount Carlyle in pursuit of deriving solutions to seemingly intractable problems that confront political philosophy. In the remainder of my dissertation, I will seek to demonstrate that Carlyle not only should be drawn upon as a source to solve political problems, but can be applied to synthesize new political theory. Neff commented in a manner that corroborates the argument of this dissertation, namely that the political and social problems Carlyle and Mill took up to solve “remain our problems, and we have not notably improved upon the solutions which they offered for them.”<sup>130</sup> Neff’s conclusion also embodies the spirit of this dissertation in that he maintained in 1924 what is also still applicable in the early twenty-first century, that a more detailed study of the genesis and development of the solutions offered by Carlyle (and Mill) promises to provide “assistance in meeting the problems of our own day.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 322.

<sup>129</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 320.

<sup>130</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 46.

<sup>131</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 46.

In the next chapter, I will attempt to demonstrate how Carlyle's later reactionary political theory, embodied largely in his *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, derailed the prospects of applying and developing transcendentalism as a potentially viable school of thought to inform popular political discourse. Carlyle's brand increasingly departed from being associated with transcendentalism-- and as an inspiration for Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and American Transcendentalism--and more so became associated with the reactionary authoritarian regimes of the twentieth century, which appropriated and bastardized elements of Carlyle to serve their own purposes. Carlyle's legacy became that of a proto-Nazi on the basis of his turn toward the reactionary. More importantly, it extinguished any prospects for turning to Carlyle as a resource to construct and theorize transcendentalism in the twentieth century in a manner similar to how Marx's nineteenth-century theory of communism was further developed and theorized by so many in the twentieth century.

## Chapter 2

### Carlyle's *Latter-Day Pamphlets* and the Limits of Political Theory

An exposition of Carlyle's reactionary political thought is essential to be able to contextualize his theory of transcendentalism in a larger scope of his work. Ignoring Carlyle's reactionary thought would make it impossible to present a *full* picture of Carlyle as a political thinker. By presenting Carlyle's reactionary ideas, the evolution of his reputation can also be more fully understood. Carlyle's criticism of democracy and liberal institutions has overshadowed his brand as a theorist of transcendentalism and it is important to account for how and why this came to be.

In *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, John Gross claims that if Carlyle had been fortunate to have died at age fifty, before writing what Gross called the "diatribes" of his later years, he would have had an almost spotless reputation.<sup>1</sup> But Carlyle's later works, Gross points out, "bring the rest of his work into disrepute," particularly "after Hitler."<sup>2</sup> Carlyle's political persona is vividly captured by John McCunn, who holds nothing back when he states: "for beyond a doubt Carlyle is a radical of the first magnitude."<sup>3</sup> Carlyle's reactionary *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, more than any other work, is the basis on which such remarks rest and illustrate how his theory of transcendentalism has been obscured in his legacy, partly by his own doing and partly by the Nazi appropriation of his work.

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<sup>1</sup> John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters: Aspects of English Literary Life since 1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 30. See also McCollum, "The Nazi Appropriation of Thomas Carlyle," 187.

<sup>2</sup> Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, 30.

<sup>3</sup> MacCunn, *Six Radical Thinkers*, 143.

Nonetheless, Carlyle's discontent with the dysfunction of legislatures, the mesmerizing nature of stump oratory, and the ill-conceived nature of reform efforts make *Latter-Day Pamphlets* as much of a text to contend with in the early twenty-first century as it was in 1850. Carlyle provides a general indictment of liberal political economy that captures the essence of his broad political perspective and implies a communitarian solution will eventually be a necessity:

Certainly the notion everywhere prevails among us too, and preaches itself abroad in every dialect, uncontradicted anywhere so far as I can hear, That the grand panacea for social woes is what we call "enfranchisement," "emancipation;" or, translated into practical language, the cutting asunder of human relations, wherever they are found grievous, as is like to be pretty universally the case at the rate we have been going for some generations past. Let us all be "free" of one another; we shall then be happy. Free, without bond or connection except that of cash-payment; fair day's wages for the fair day's work; bargained for by voluntary contract, and law of supply-and-demand: this is thought to be the true solution of all difficulties and injustices that have occurred between man and man.<sup>4</sup>

Carlyle laid the groundwork for *Latter-Day Pamphlets* in his 1839 essay, "Chartism," in which he levelled a systematic critique of democracy and laid out what he took to be the intrinsic fallibility of what at the time was a newly emerging form of government:

Democracy, we are well aware, what is called "self-government" of the multitude by the multitude, is in words the thing everywhere passionately clamoured for at present. Democracy makes rapid progress in these latter times, and ever more rapid, in a perilous accelerative ratio; towards democracy, and that only, the progress of things is everywhere tending as to the final goal and winning-post. So think, so clamour the multitudes everywhere. And yet all men may see, whose sight is good for much, that in democracy can lie no finality; that with the completest winning of democracy there is nothing yet won,--except emptiness, and the free chance to win! Democracy is, by the nature of it, a self-cancelling business; and gives in the long-run a net result of *zero*. Where no government is wanted, save that of the parish-constable, as in America with its boundless soil, every man being able to find work and recompense for himself, democracy may subsist; not elsewhere, except briefly, as a swift transition towards something other and farther. Democracy never yet, that we heard of, was able to accomplish much work, beyond that same cancelling of itself. Rome and Athens are themes for the schools; unexceptionable for that purpose. In Rome and Athens, as elsewhere, if

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<sup>4</sup> Carlyle, "The Present Time," 30.

we look practically, we shall find that it was not by loud voting and debating of many, but by wise insight and ordering of a few that the work was done. So is it ever, so will it ever be....Democracy, take it where you will in our Europe, is found but as a regulated method of rebellion and abrogation; it abrogates the old arrangement of things; and leaves, as we say, zero and vacuity for the institution of a new arrangement. It is the consummation of No-government and *Laissez-faire*. It may be natural for our Europe at present; but cannot be the ultimatum of it. Not towards the impossibility, "self-government" of a multitude by a multitude; but towards some possibility, government by the wisest, does bewildered Europe struggle. The blesseddest possibility: not misgovernment, not *Laissez-faire*, but veritable government!<sup>5</sup>

In *Past and Present*, Carlyle critiques what he takes to be the fallacy of liberty: "the liberty especially which has to purchase itself by social isolation, and each man standing separate from the other, having 'no business with him' but a cash-account: this is such a liberty as the Earth seldom saw;--as the Earth will not long put up with, recommend it how you may."<sup>6</sup> Carlyle defines democracy as "the chase of Liberty in that direction" and thus as a modern political phenomenon that "shall go its full course."<sup>7</sup>

Carlyle aimed for *Latter-Day Pamphlets* to be a consummate articulation of his political philosophy. Such an articulation was "negative" in that it sought to negate the view that any *one* political sect or ideology manifest in England or elsewhere in Carlyle's contemporary era held the possibility of resolving entrenched political problems. While negating other political doctrines, *Latter-Day Pamphlets* simultaneously was reactionary in the sense that it offered no prospects of a new philosophical doctrine to be able to solve the problems of democracy. In this way, it neglected refining transcendentalism for popular political consumption into a solution for the ills of democracy. Essentially, *Latter-Day Pamphlets* underwrote Carlyle's contention that the most compelling political philosophy would merely make known that

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<sup>5</sup> Carlyle, "Chartism," 371-373.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1843), 271.

<sup>7</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 272.

democracy shall go its full course until the isolation and alienation liberty precipitates among individuals as atoms who have no bonds with their fellows becomes no longer sustainable.

Anticipating censure to be the reading public's response to *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, Carlyle came to terms with the negative response he in fact would go on to receive and wrote prophetically: "I shall be too happy if I can but get my say *said*, and so leave it [as] there will perhaps be more agreement upon it 20 years hence than can be now."<sup>8</sup> Such a forecast that prophecies *Latter-Day Pamphlets* reaching a type of maturity date, in which its claims will come to full realization, implies Carlyle himself viewed this collection of essays as requiring only a matter of time before it would be vindicated.<sup>9</sup> Bentley unpacks Carlyle's political theory by noting how democracy itself is quite aristocratic in its nature, as Bentley reminds us that as soon as government is merely representative and not inclusive of the whole populace, it can be argued that "democracy is impure or non-existent."<sup>10</sup> This is because, upon commitment to government by leaders rather than by direct democracy, finding the best leaders, as Carlyle noted, becomes a prime task.<sup>11</sup> Thus, locating the best leaders in the context of democracy can act to mitigate crises within democracy and sustain it as a political system.

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Carlyle to John A. Carlyle, February 7, 1850, in *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, eds. Clyde de L. Ryals et al., vol. 25, 1850 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 18.

<sup>9</sup> Lowell T. Frye engages a discussion of Carlyle's *Latter-Day Pamphlets* reaching a maturity date, but reports on the judgment of posterity as being negative toward this book in 2012 just as it was in 1850, and does not leave room for any possible change in public sentiment or vindication on the part of Carlyle. I contend that the reception of *Latter-Day Pamphlets* remains in flux and will reflect the reception of liberal democracy in the long term. See Lowell T. Frye, "'This Offensive and Alarming Set of Pamphlets': Thomas Carlyle's *Latter-Day Pamphlets* and the Condition of England in 1850," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 116, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1435825439/fulltextPDF/5E94969AD9DE4BDBPQ/1?accountid=14214>.

<sup>10</sup> Bentley, "The Premature Death of Thomas Carlyle," 73.

<sup>11</sup> Bentley, "The Premature Death of Thomas Carlyle," 74.



Reflecting on *Latter-Day Pamphlets* in 1943, 93 years after its publication and in the midst of World War II, F. A. Lea unpacked not only the interminable nature of Carlyle's critique of democracy but also its service in the perpetual cause of reform:

A democracy that took his criticism to heart and made it its own would either be killed or cured. It would either emerge from the ordeal purged, the element of truth in its claims shining free from impurities—if there is an element of truth; or, if there is not, it would be burned away entirely, and the sooner the better.<sup>12</sup>

Carlyle's *Latter-Day Pamphlets* were born from his despair at the condition of both England and Europe.<sup>13</sup> In seeking to ascertain as to whether liberal democracy is *intrinsically* good, Carlyle inquires: "But as to universal suffrage, again,—can it be proved that, since the beginning of the world, there was ever given a universal vote in favour of the worthiest man or thing?"<sup>14</sup> Carlyle answers his own question: "I have always understood that true worth, in any department, was difficult to recognise; that the worthiest, if he appealed to universal suffrage, would have but a poor chance."<sup>15</sup> In a critique that is as primordial as it is Platonic, Carlyle nullifies democracy's image of being inherently superior and legitimate by presenting a hypothetical dialogue whereby voting is under consideration:

"If of ten men nine are recognisable as fools, which is a common calculation," says our *Intermittent Friend*, "how, in the name of wonder, will you ever get a ballot-box to grind you out a wisdom from the votes of these ten men? Never by any conceivable ballot-box, nor by all the machinery in Bromwicham or out of it, will you attain such a result. Not by any method under Heaven, except by suppressing, and in some good way reducing to zero, nine of those votes, can wisdom ever issue from your ten.

"Why men have got so universally into such a fond expectation? The reason might lead us far. The reason, alas, is, men have, to a degree never before exemplified, forgotten that there is fixed eternal law in this Universe; that except by coming upon the dictates of that, no success is possible for any nation or creature. That we should have forgotten this,—alas, here is an abyss

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<sup>12</sup> Lea, *Carlyle: Prophet of To-day*, 113.

<sup>13</sup> Frye, "'This Offensive and Alarming Set of Pamphlets,'" 117.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Carlyle, "Parliaments," in *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1850), 291.

<sup>15</sup> Carlyle, "Parliaments," 291.

of vacuity in our much-admired opulence, which the more it is looked at saddens the thinking heart the more.

“And yet,” continues he elsewhere, “it is unavoidable and indispensable at present. With voting and ballot-boxing who can quarrel, as the matter stands? I pass it without quarrel; nay say respectfully, ‘Good speed to you, poor friends: Heaven send you not only a good voting-box, but something worth voting for!’”<sup>16</sup>

Carlyle delivers fundamental critiques of democracy that are difficult to dispute, though they are also difficult to prove with quantitative or qualitative data. For example, Carlyle takes up the role of oratory in candidates seeking to win votes from voters in a democracy. Carlyle reflects that “wisdom dwells not with stump-oratory; to the stump-orator Wisdom has waved her sad and peremptory farewell.”<sup>17</sup>

Can Carlyle’s fundamental claims against democracy be vindicated more so in the early twenty-first century than in 1850? If they can, this means that Carlyle speaks more to the sociopolitical condition of the twenty-first century than that of his own Victorian England and that his prophecies have needed time to mature. In other words, an extensive period of time is needed for democracy to fully cancel itself and eventually yield a sum of zero.

In his third latter-day pamphlet, “Downing Street,” Carlyle articulates what can be taken as his objective for all eight pamphlets, an objective that is prescient for the state of global politics and democracy in the early twenty-first century:

Let us brush the cobwebs from our eyes; let us bid the inane traditions be silent for a moment; and ask ourselves, like men dreadfully intent on having it *done*, “By what method or methods can the able men from every rank of life be gathered, as diamond-grains from the general mass of sand: the able men, not the sham-able;--and set to do the work of governing, contriving, administering and guiding for us!” It is the question of questions. All that Democracy ever meant lies there: the attainment of a truer and truer *Aristocracy*, or Government again by the *Best*.

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<sup>16</sup> Carlyle, “Parliaments,” 286-287.

<sup>17</sup> Carlyle, “Parliaments,” 288.

Reformed Parliaments have lamentably failed to attain it for us; and I believe will and must forever fail.<sup>18</sup>

In the twenty-first century, the task of locating and elevating the ablest, in the contexts of voting and legislative politics, remains an utmost challenge.

Carlyle sets a simple purpose for politics: "In Parliament and out of Parliament, and everywhere in this Universe, your one salvation is, That you can discern with just insight, and follow with noble valour, what the law of the case before you is, what the appointment of the Maker in regard to it has been."<sup>19</sup> According to Carlyle, parliament lacks "the art of getting work done" and "produces talk merely."<sup>20</sup> Carlyle unveils a prophecy with respect to the dysfunction of parliament:

My own private notion, which I invite all reformed British citizens to reflect on, is and has for a long time been, That this dim universal experience, which points towards very tragic facts, will more and more rapidly become a clear universal experience, and disclose a tragic law of Nature little dreamt of by constitutional men of these times. That a Parliament, especially a Parliament with Newspaper Reporters firmly established in it, is an entity which by its very nature cannot do work, but can do talk only,--which at times may be needed, and at other times again may be very needless.<sup>21</sup>

Carlyle goes on to elaborate his critique such that he portrays members of parliament as lacking earnestness when it comes to getting business done, and only being earnest when it comes to "making money each member of it for himself."<sup>22</sup> For Carlyle, the individual pursuit of money is the only earnest business that a member of parliament takes up, and parliament "will do no business except such as can be done in sport."<sup>23</sup> Carlyle's concluding thesis is that parliaments,

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas Carlyle, "Downing Street," in *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1850), 145.

<sup>19</sup> Carlyle, "Stump-Orator," 234.

<sup>20</sup> Carlyle, "Parliaments," 272.

<sup>21</sup> Carlyle, "Parliaments," 272.

<sup>22</sup> Carlyle, "Parliaments," 273.

<sup>23</sup> Carlyle, "Parliaments," 273.

“admirable as Advising Bodies, and likely to be in future universally useful in that capacity, are, as Ruling and Sovereign Bodies, not useful, but useless or worse.”<sup>24</sup>

Carlyle references the United States Congress as an instance of a parliament that could be an exception to his thesis:

Only perhaps in the United States, which alone of countries can do *without* governing,--every man being at least able to live, and move-off into the wilderness, let Congress jargon as it will,--can such a form of so-called “Government” continue, for any length of time, to torment men with the semblance, when the indispensable substance is not there....If indeed America should ever experience a higher call, as is likely, and begin to feel diviner wants than that of Indian corn with abundant bacon and molasses, and unlimited scope for all citizens to hunt dollars,--America too will find that caucuses, division-lists, stump-oratory and speeches to Buncombe will *not* carry men to the immortal gods; that the Washington Congress, and constitutional battle of Kilkenny cats is, there as here, naught for such objects; quite incompetent for such; and, in fine, that said sublime constitutional arrangement will require to be (with terrible throes, and travail such as few expect yet) remodeled, abridged, extended, suppressed; torn asunder, put together again;--not without heroic labour, and effort quite other than that of the Stump-Orator and the Revival Preacher, one day!<sup>25</sup>

For Carlyle, the stakes are high with respect to discovering the fixed external law of the Universe and governing in accord with it, such that it is the case that if one “get[s] this [law] out of one man, you are saved; fail to get this out of the most August Parliament wrapt in the sheepskins of a thousand years, you are lost.”<sup>26</sup> Carlyle underscores what he takes to be the importance of achieving a consensus in support of an ideal, as the consequences of not doing so manifest as disintegration of the polity into a state of discord.

Carlyle is persistent in his claim that ideal political leadership will not and cannot be found through the ballot box:

By ballot-boxes we alter the *figure* of our Quack; but the substance of him continues. The Valet-World *has* to be governed by the Sham-Hero, by the King merely *dressed* in King-gear. It is his;

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<sup>24</sup> Carlyle, “Parliaments,” 273-274.

<sup>25</sup> Carlyle, “Parliaments,” 274-275.

<sup>26</sup> Carlyle, “Stump-Orator,” 234.

he is its! In brief, one of two things: We shall either learn to know a Hero, a true Governor and Captain, somewhat better, when we see him; or else go on to be forever governed by the Unheroic;--had we ballot-boxes clattering at every street-corner, there were no remedy in these."<sup>27</sup>

In "The Present Time," Carlyle constructs an anecdote to dispel the notion that democratic voting is a cure-all:

Your ship cannot double Cape Horn by its excellent plans of voting. The ship may vote this and that, above decks and below, in the most harmonious exquisitely constitutional manner: the ship, to get round Cape Horn, will find a set of conditions already voted for, and fixed with adamantine rigour by the ancient Elemental Powers, who are entirely careless how you vote. If you can, by voting or without voting, ascertain these conditions, and valiantly conform to them, you will get round the Cape: if you cannot,--the ruffian Winds will blow you ever back again; the inexorable Icebergs, dumb privy-councillors from Chaos, will nudge you with most chaotic 'admonition;' you will be flung half-frozen on the Patagonian cliffs, or admonished into shivers by your iceberg councilors, and sent sheer down to Davy Jones, and will never get round Cape Horn at all! Unanimity on board ship;--yes indeed, the ship's crew may be very unanimous, which doubtless, for the time being, will be very comfortable to the ship's crew, and to their Phantasm Captain if they have one: but if the tack they unanimously steer upon is guiding them into the belly of the Abyss, it will not profit them much!—Ships accordingly do not use the ballot-box at all; and they reject the Phantasm species of Captains: one wishes much some other Entities,--since all entities lie under the same rigorous set of laws,--could be brought to show as much wisdom, and sense at least of self-preservation, the *first* command of Nature. Phantasm Captains with unanimous votings: this is considered to be all the law and all the prophets, at present.<sup>28</sup>

Carlyle offers the conclusion to be had from his example of a ship at sea:

A divine message, or eternal regulation of the Universe, there verily is, in regard to every conceivable procedure and affair of man: faithfully following this, said procedure or affair will prosper, and have the whole Universe to second it, and carry it, across the fluctuating contradictions, towards a victorious goal; not following this, mistaking this, disregarding this, destruction and wreck are certain for every affair.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, 257.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Carlyle, "The Present Time," in *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1850), 20.

<sup>29</sup> Carlyle, "The Present Time," 21.

This is a means by which, according to Carlyle, democracy is “by the nature of it, a self-cancelling business; and gives in the long-run a net result of *zero*.”<sup>30</sup> Voting’s stock has declined in that though it was “never a divine Apollo,” the voter was once in a “sane and sincere state,” that made him “worth consulting about several things.”<sup>31</sup> It must follow that the voter has *lost* his sanity and sincerity, as he is “enveloped now in mere stump-oratory.”<sup>32</sup> Carlyle persists in maintaining that votes are nonetheless valuable in conveying the instincts of the population.

When it comes to collecting votes, he reflects:

True, their opinions are generally of little wisdom, and can on occasion reach to all conceivable and inconceivable degrees of folly; but their instincts, where these can be deciphered, are wise and human; these, hidden under the noisy utterance of what they call their opinions, are the unspoken sense of man’s heart, and well deserve attending to. Know well what the people inarticulately feel, for the Law of Heaven itself is dimly written there; nay do not neglect, if you have opportunity, to ascertain what they vote and say.<sup>33</sup>

Carlyle takes up stump-oratory as inherently facilitating the ineffectiveness of democracy. He makes an ominous forecast with respect to the consequences of being entranced by oratory that is sham-excellent, a forecast that is the thesis of his latter-day pamphlet “Stump-Orator”: “My friend, if you can, as heretofore this good while, find nobody to take care of your affairs but the expertest talker, it is all over with your affairs and you.”<sup>34</sup>

Carlyle demarcates the dividing line that separates oratory from good governance by unveiling a succession of three principles. He holds in his first principle that “excellent speech, even speech *really* excellent, is not, and never was, the chief test of human faculty, or the

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<sup>30</sup> Carlyle, “Chartism,” 372.

<sup>31</sup> Carlyle, “Parliaments,” 286.

<sup>32</sup> Carlyle, “Parliaments,” 286.

<sup>33</sup> Carlyle, “Parliaments,” 289.

<sup>34</sup> Carlyle, “Stump-Orator,” 227-228.

measure of a man's ability, for any true function whatsoever."<sup>35</sup> Upon this first principle, he adds a second stipulation that really excellent speech

is terribly apt to get confounded with its counterfeit, sham-excellent speech! And furthermore, that if really excellent human speech is among the best of human things, then sham-excellent ditto deserves to be ranked with the very worst. False speech,--capable of becoming, as some one has said, the falsest and basest of all human things:--put the case, one were listening to *that* as to the truest and noblest! Which, little as we are conscious of it, I take to be the sad lot of many excellent souls among us just now. So many as admire parliamentary eloquence, divine popular literature, and suchlike, are dreadfully liable to it just now: and whole nations and generations seem as if getting themselves *asphyxiated*, constitutionally, into their last sleep, by means of it just now!<sup>36</sup>

Carlyle provides a compelling synthesis of his first two principles with his third principle. He puts forward what he takes to be a stark truth:

That in these times, and for several generations back, there has been, strictly considered, no really excellent speech at all, but sham-excellent merely; that is to say, false or quasi-false speech getting itself admired and worshipped, instead of detested and suppressed. A truly alarming predicament; and not the less so if we find it a quite pleasant one for the time being, and welcome the advent of *asphyxia*, as we would that of comfortable natural sleep;--as, in so many senses, we are doing!<sup>37</sup>

Carlyle reflects on his three principles by acknowledging what he takes to be the spiritual loss that is as a result of such unconscious fealty given to sham-excellent speech. He remarks that "the spiritual detriment we unconsciously suffer, in every province of our affairs, from this our prostrate respect to power of speech is incalculable."<sup>38</sup>

Michael Levin offers a concise synopsis of Carlyle's perspective on democracy that integrates and synthesizes Carlyle's quotes on the subject:

In echo of Burke, Carlyle finds all egalitarian creeds false and unavailing, for in every known society, however republican in intent, some form of aristocracy and priesthood had always

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<sup>35</sup> Carlyle, "Stump-Orator", 211.

<sup>36</sup> Carlyle, "Stump-Orator", 211-212.

<sup>37</sup> Carlyle, "Stump-Orator," 212.

<sup>38</sup> Carlyle, "Stump-Orator," 213.

emerged. The facts were massively inexorable. In its essence society clearly had to have leadership. Consequently “democracy is by the nature of it, a self-cancelling business”, an “emptiness” that always leads to something else. Democracy curbs and undermines authority. No wonder it fails to bring real leaders to the top! Yet “at bottom is the wish and prayer of all human hearts, everywhere and at all times: ‘Give me a leader; a true leader, not a false-sham leader’”. In this request, then, we have the essence of Carlyle’s proposed alternative to democratic politics.<sup>39</sup>

Such a description of the predicament of democracy also underscores the greater problem of replacing democracy with an alternative political arrangement. The fact that Carlyle offers no coherent alternative to democracy in this context does not resolve the problem of the internal destabilization of democracy as a political system.

James Anthony Froude provides a valuable synthesis of Carlyle’s indictment of liberal democracy:

In politics as in all else, Carlyle insisted always that there was a *right* way of doing things and a *wrong* way; that by following the *right* way alone could any good end be arrived at; and that it was foolish to suppose that the *right* way of managing the affairs of a nation could be ascertained by a majority of votes, as the right way of discovering the longitude, of cultivating the soil, of healing diseases, or of exercising any one of the million arts on which our existence and welfare depend.<sup>40</sup>

This passage can be applied to consider the fundamental conflict between Platonic idealism and voting since Platonic idealism holds that there is a *singular* ideal that needs to be ascertained and implemented while voting allows for a choice that is determined by the majority of the voting public.<sup>41</sup> Froude is casting Carlyle as a skeptic of democracy since there is no means of ensuring that voting will determine the *ideal* in all instances. At a more general level, Froude is describing how *political* science is more difficult of an undertaking than the natural sciences.

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<sup>39</sup> Levin, *The Condition of England Question*, 52.

<sup>40</sup> Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London, 1834-1881* (Volume I), 308-309.

<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of Platonism in this context, see Versluis, *Platonic Mysticism*, 9-33.



The inherent normative character of political science makes it different from the science that seeks to discover how to cultivate the soil or heal disease, but nonetheless, as Froude maintains, Carlyle thinks there is as much of a *right* way in politics as there is in agriculture and medicine.

In his fourth latter-day pamphlet, “The New Downing Street,” Carlyle devised what a reformed and robust government would entail. Carlyle has in mind that the “State in all European countries, and in England first of all, as I hope, will discover that its functions are now, and have long been, very wide of what the State in old pedant Downing Streets has aimed at.”<sup>42</sup> Carlyle continues, “The State is a reality, and not a dramaturgy; it exists here to render existence possible, existence desirable and noble, for the State’s subjects.”<sup>43</sup> Carlyle forecasts, in a Hegelian vein, on when the state will be a compatible partner and facilitator of civil society and ameliorator of economic plight. Carlyle theorizes: “In the course of long strenuous centuries, I can see the State become what it is actually bound to be, the keystone of a most real ‘Organisation of Labour,’—and on this Earth a world of some veracity, and some heroism, once more worth living in!”<sup>44</sup>

In a letter to Emerson two years after the publication of *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, Carlyle attempts to situate *Latter-Day Pamphlets* in the context of the larger Platonic political theory tradition: “I was much struck with Plato and his ideas about Democracy, mere *Loiter Day Pamphlets* saxa et faces refined into empyrean radiance and lightning of the Gods!”<sup>45</sup> Carlyle

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<sup>42</sup> Thomas Carlyle, “The New Downing Street,” in *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1850), 192.

<sup>43</sup> Carlyle, “The New Downing Street,” 197-198.

<sup>44</sup> Carlyle, “The New Downing Street,” 192.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1834-1872 (Vol. II)* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1894), 254.

employs the Latin phrase “*saxa et faces*” which translates to “rocks and torches” to characterize his own *Latter Day Pamphlets* when it is compared to the refinement of Plato’s critique of democracy. The magnitude of Carlyle’s critique of democracy cannot be overstated, as it has been poignantly articulated, “since Plato wrote the eighth book of the Republic there has been no such satirist of democracy as this ‘spiritual radical’ [Carlyle].”<sup>46</sup> Such a statement was offered by H.J.C. Grierson to introduce a lecture entitled “Carlyle and the Hero” that he delivered at the University of Manchester in 1930, a lecture later republished as *Carlyle & Hitler* in 1933, following Hitler’s rise to power.

I will argue that a review of both primary and secondary literature allows for the conclusion that Carlyle’s project is very similar to that of Plato’s in that both seek the best rulers, which amounts to rule by the wisest. Carlyle’s faith in aristocracy, like Plato’s, must be qualified, such that their endorsements of the natural aristocracies of wisdom and of worth are by the same token their rejections of the aristocracies of titles, pedigrees, sport and luxury.<sup>47</sup> Since both Plato and Carlyle also agree that human beings are fundamentally unequal, both discount democracy as being able to locate the best rulers. Put succinctly, Carlyle informs the criticism of democracy that the public prefers to be led by a person who “bamboozles” them rather than by one who is rigidly honest with them by telling them uncomfortable truths while trying to make them do what they ought to do instead of what appeals to their illogical

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<sup>46</sup> MacCunn, *Six Radical Thinkers*, 145-146.

<sup>47</sup> MacCunn, *Six Radical Thinkers*, 143.

sentiments.<sup>48</sup> A democracy is also inherently contradictory in that, according to its critics, it is only a plutocracy in disguise, and in a plutocracy the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.<sup>49</sup>

Carlyle's contempt for democracy was not facilitated by a natural aristocratic contempt for the lower classes, as he did not seek to win for himself a place among the privileged, whom birth and fortune allow to cultivate the splendors of life.<sup>50</sup> He exemplifies this, among other occasions, in a discussion of social class on how to determine who is equipped to be a member of Parliament: "Lord Tommy and the Honourable John are not a whit better qualified for Parliamentary duties, to say nothing of Secretary duties, than plain Tom and Jack; they are merely better qualified, as matters stand, for getting admitted to try them."<sup>51</sup> Carlyle extends such a view to claim that there is "no shadow of a reason...but rather there is quite the reverse" to assume that aristocrats will be better equipped to administrate the government compared to non-aristocrats.<sup>52</sup> With intelligence being equal, Carlyle actually favors the non-aristocrats over the aristocrats, "for Tom and Jack have been at least workers all their days, not idlers, game-preservers and mere human clothes-horses, at any period of their lives; and have gained a schooling *thereby*, of which Lord Tommy and the Honourable John, unhappily strangers to it for most part, can form no conception! Tom and Jack have already, on this most narrow hypothesis, a decided *superiority* of likelihood over Lord Tommy and the Honourable John."<sup>53</sup> These statements attest to the fact that Carlyle sought to emphasize the importance of locating

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<sup>48</sup> William Montgomery McGovern, *From Luther to Hitler: The History of Fascist-Nazi Political Philosophy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1941), 443.

<sup>49</sup> McGovern, *From Luther to Hitler*, 445.

<sup>50</sup> H.J.C. Grierson, *Carlyle & Hitler* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 10.

<sup>51</sup> Carlyle, "Downing Street," 141.

<sup>52</sup> Carlyle, "Downing Street," 141.

<sup>53</sup> Carlyle, "Downing Street," 141-142.

the most equipped to lead from *all* social classes so as to form a genuine and meritocratic class of leaders.

In fact, Carlyle engaged in a disparagement of the nobility when they were found to engage in hedonist dissipation by its nature immune from the social strife and poverty that engulfed society on an at-large basis. With respect to the Scottish nobility, Carlyle remarks on their “despicable behaviour” to metaphorically characterize them: “A selfish, famishing, unprincipled set of hyaenas...mischievous and greedy beyond limit.”<sup>54</sup> In fact, Carlyle took as his preoccupation the cause of the poor, but it did *not* make him a democrat or a philanthropist of the kind he saw around him.<sup>55</sup> Rather than being satisfied with charities and poor laws to resolve the poverty generated as a function of the liberal economy, Carlyle sought to emphasize the importance of facilitating social solidarity among what he took to be a natural hierarchy of social classes. Carlyle sought to teach his readers that “ ‘indolent *Laissez-faire* plus a *Poor-Law*’ is not, by any manner of means, the solution of Human Society; that actual *command* of the Foolish Multitude by the Wise Few is once more (in spite of all our modern philanthropies) becoming clearly, what it always from the beginning of the world till late times was, the indispensable necessity, if human beings would live together in any but the savage state.”<sup>56</sup>

Kenneth Marc Harris provides a valuable synopsis of Carlyle’s reservations about democracy such that Carlyle felt “democracy is the political analogue of laissez-faire economics

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<sup>54</sup> Qtd. from Grierson, *Carlyle & Hitler*, 10.

<sup>55</sup> Grierson, *Carlyle & Hitler*, 11.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Carlyle to Lord Clarendon, August 5, 1849, in *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, eds. Clyde de L. Ryals et al., vol. 24, *April 1849-December 1849* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 173.

and the cash nexus and is symptomatic of the breakup of the social family.”<sup>57</sup> Albert LaValley offers an insightful synopsis of Carlyle’s critique of modern society in that Carlyle fears the “atomization of the individual within the whirlpool of the city, the alienation of man from his work and from his fullest self, the giddiness of rapid social and technological change, the destruction of the classes, and the unleashing of greed in the anarchic pursuit of money.”<sup>58</sup> Lea asserts that Carlyle personally overcame all of these maladies: “In himself, Carlyle had overcome this bourgeois consciousness: its rationalism and its individualism, its materialism and its atomism.”<sup>59</sup> In so doing, Carlyle “had become capable of envisaging society as an organism.”<sup>60</sup> This is noteworthy because it illustrates Carlyle’s commitment to social solidarity as the only solution to what he took to be the unsustainable and anarchic nature of social atomization. The vision of society as an organism is one in which all of society’s constituent elements are integrated into a cohesive whole so that it can sustain its vitality.

The publication of *Latter-Day Pamphlets* in 1850 caused a storm of criticism in which Carlyle’s reputation took a hit. Reviewers complained that while he was good at pointing out defects and shortcomings, he seemed incapable of suggesting remedies.<sup>61</sup> Such criticism and the resulting diminishment of *Latter-Day Pamphlets* demonstrates Carlyle’s antagonism to the hegemonic status quo of political discourse. But what is most hidden and profound in *Latter-Day Pamphlets* is the notion of Carlyle having reached what may be called the “limits of political theory.” This phrase can be associated with Carlyle because Carlyle diagnosed the defects and

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<sup>57</sup> Kenneth Marc Harris, *Carlyle and Emerson: Their Long Debate* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 125.

<sup>58</sup> LaValley, *Carlyle and the Idea of the Modern*, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Lea, *Carlyle: Prophet of To-day*, 85.

<sup>60</sup> Lea, *Carlyle: Prophet of To-day*, 85.

<sup>61</sup> Wylie, *Thomas Carlyle: The Man and His Books*, 246.

shortcomings of democratic capitalism while he was unable to devise solutions toward achieving a next stage of political development or a new political economy.

The generally negative reviews toward *Latter-Day Pamphlets* did not distress Carlyle. As Leslie Stephen characterized Carlyle's view, in an obituary, "the fact that an opinion did not make its way in the world was not even a presumption against its truth and importance in a world daily growing more and more chaotic, plunging wildly over Niagaras, falling more hopelessly under the dominion of shams and pursuing wilder phantasms into more boundless regions of distracted bewilderment."<sup>62</sup> Such may be the terms in which to characterize the state of the world, only increasingly, since Carlyle's passing and the subsequent fading of his reputation from both popular and academic consciousness and contemplation.

Emerson had positive feedback to send Carlyle when he wrote in a letter: "Indeed I inferred so much from the sturdy tone of these wonderful 'Pamphlets,' all which I have duly read as they arrived."<sup>63</sup> Carlyle nonetheless maintained support in the wake of *Latter-Day Pamphlets*. Even after the publication of such a controversial text, Charles Dickens wrote in a letter to Carlyle: "I am always reading you faithfully, and trying to go your way."<sup>64</sup> Dickens wrote to Carlyle and told him that "no man knows your books better than I" while inquiring in the same letter as to whether he could dedicate *Hard Times* to him.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Leslie Stephen, "Thomas Carlyle," *Cornhill magazine*, March 1881, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/6906985/A5599BCD65CD46C8PQ/6?accountid=14214>.

<sup>63</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle*, 461.

<sup>64</sup> Charles Dickens, *The Letters of Charles Dickens* (Volume 10), ed. Graham Storey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 233.

<sup>65</sup> Charles Dickens, *The Letters of Charles Dickens* (Volume 7), ed. Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson, and Angus Easson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 367.

Carlyle's influence on Dickens is found in *A Christmas Carol* in which the theme of economic selfishness derives from Carlyle's description of the cash nexus, and the ghost of Christmas showing Scrooge the two wolfish children, Want and Ignorance, reflects Carlyle's warnings found in "Chartism" and the *History of the French Revolution*.<sup>66</sup> Carlyle advised Dickens during his composition of *A Tale of Two Cities* and Dickens praised Carlyle's history of the French Revolution which had been one of Dickens's principal sources.<sup>67</sup> Dickens credits Carlyle in the preface to the first edition of *A Tale of Two Cities*, writing specifically as to how "it has been one of my hopes to add something to the popular and picturesque means of understanding that terrible time, though no one can hope to add anything to the philosophy of Mr. Carlyle's wonderful book."<sup>68</sup>

Critics of Carlyle lambasted him as mad when he published *Latter-Day Pamphlets* but reviews lacked substantive criticism of Carlyle's arguments. Democracy's ascendancy in Europe and the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century naturally crippled any legitimate contemplation of Carlyle's criticism of democracy as a form of government that intrinsically embodies substantial faults and fallacies. This illustrates again, in a sense, how Carlyle was a political theorist who felt as though he reached the "limits of political theory," in that he theorized how democracy was ascendant in generating universal acclaim but that it would eventually (and naturally) devolve into another system of government that could not be explicitly forecasted or described.

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<sup>66</sup> Michael Goldberg, *Carlyle and Dickens* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1972), 6-7.

<sup>67</sup> Goldberg, *Carlyle and Dickens*, 101.

<sup>68</sup> Qtd. from Goldberg, *Carlyle and Dickens*, 101.

Carlyle's attack on the –isms swirling about him in Victorian times informs us about the vulnerabilities of all –isms and systems in any era, but in particular the modern era of the early twenty-first century, when the number of ideologies and doctrines competing for adherents has grown exponentially since Carlyle's era. The general critique of ideologies independent of a transcendentalist critique of ideologies illustrates there are multiple means of demonstrating the deficiencies inherent in doctrinal dogmas. In his contemporaneous review of *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, David Masson concludes: "In these *Pamphlets*, for example, not only is there a blow in the face all round for Democracy, Aristocracy, Monarchy, Political Economy, Protectionism, Mammon-worship, and such other recognized interests and social entities as have already been more or less accustomed to be girded at; but other interests and entities that thought themselves safe and consecrated from attack by the high guardianship of universal opinion, have found themselves ridiculed and made a mock of."<sup>69</sup> Masson also underscores the scope and seriousness of Carlyle's political theory project and it is immensely valuable to present Masson's well-articulated description of the magnitude of Carlyle's political philosophy in defense of the thesis that Carlyle's political philosophy remains relevant in the twenty-first century:

It is not Mr. Carlyle's aim in these *Pamphlets* to entertain his readers with a succession of agreeable thoughts and conceptions, each touched off just to that degree of fullness at which it can be easily apprehended; it is his aim to insist energetically on certain generalities of doctrine, to compel them into public belief, and to take care that they shall be too effectually taught to be readily forgotten. Hence he necessarily iterates and reiterates; rolls his main notions into view again and again, and, almost of set purpose, conveys them worked up into such profuse heaps of words, that there is induced in the reception of them a sense of surfeit and fatigue. As things may be intellectually a commonplace, long before it is morally familiar; and as boys used to be taught to remember facts of parochial consequence by receiving beatings contemporaneously with them, so one is none the worse for being belaboured with an

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<sup>69</sup> David Masson, "Latter-Day Pamphlets," *North British Review*, November 1850, 5.



important truth through many more sentences, and in much more ponderous language, than might suffice for its mere intellectual conveyance. If, when you have changed your lodging, the postman make a mistake in the delivery of your letters, it may not be sufficient simply to tell him once more the alteration you wish him to remember; but if you detain him in the street, hold him for ten minutes by the button, and punish him for his mistake by monotonously talking about the matter over and over again, till he actually perspires under your redundancy, you will have a sufficient security in the poor fellow's sensations against any similar blundering in future. And so sometimes with Mr. Carlyle. His pamphlets are, in fact, in many passages, exactly such street lectures to the postman. The reader would fain be off; like the postman he has his letters to deliver along the streets, and his other business to do; and he protests that he perfectly understands what Mr. Carlyle has been good enough to tell him, and that he will not forget it; but all in vain; again and again the information is repeated; the phrases 'justice,' 'the immensities,' 'the eternal fact of things,' are tumbled upon him with a frequency unexampled except in the Koran; and, when at last he is released, it is with a ringing in the ears, a universal sense of stupor, and knees absolutely knocking against each other for faintness. Nay, having laid aside, as Mr. Carlyle seems to have now done, the mere literary or artistic function altogether, the probability is that everything he may hereafter write will, to some degree, have this characteristic.<sup>70</sup>

Carlyle's critique of democracy is harsh and all-encompassing. He does offer an alternative to democracy: "Find in any country the Ablest Man that exists there; raise *him* to the supreme place, and loyally reverence him: you have a perfect government for that country; no ballot-box, parliamentary eloquence, voting, constitution-building, or other machinery whatsoever can improve it a whit."<sup>71</sup> Carlyle continues: "I say, Find me the true *Konning*, King, or Able-man, and he *has* a divine right over me. That we knew in some tolerable measure how to find him, and that all men were ready to acknowledge his divine right when found: this is precisely the healing which a sick world is everywhere, in these ages, seeking after!"<sup>72</sup>

Moreover, Carlyle critiques democracy for its manner of displacing a true commitment to social reform. For example, Carlyle is displeased that the "'Reform' movement" seeks the

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<sup>70</sup> Masson, "Latter-Day Pamphlets," 6-7.

<sup>71</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, 234.

<sup>72</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, 237.

extension of the suffrage as a panacea for social problems.<sup>73</sup> According to Carlyle, “Reformation” as a political movement in nineteenth-century England entailed nothing of amending one’s own “foul courses...no thought of that whatever, though that, you would say, is the one thing to be thought of and aimed at.”<sup>74</sup> Reform taking the shape of extending the suffrage is taken to be what will “clear away the universal rottenness, and quagmire of mendacities, in which poor England is drowning; let England only vote sufficiently, and all is clean and sweet again.”<sup>75</sup> This is precisely what Carlyle objects to. Carlyle fears the day when “England would have to take the Niagara leap of completed Democracy,” and compares a political community governed fully by democracy to shooting Niagara Falls in a barrel.<sup>76</sup>

Carlyle’s *Latter-Day Pamphlets* and Karl Marx’s review of *Latter-Day Pamphlets* brings to the foreground a contentious topic within the history of political thought: *if* democracy is doomed to failure, then what political system *should* and/or *will* claim authority as its successor either evolving or devolving from it? Carlyle’s chief criticism of democracy, succinctly put, is that in a democracy the will of the majority is determined to be infallible, in that the “Count of Heads [is] to be the Divine Court of Appeal on every question and interest of mankind” and that the majority opinion in a democracy is likely to be that of a ship of fools.<sup>77</sup> Carlyle’s major weakness is his inability to coherently formulate a political system that would replace

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<sup>73</sup> Thomas Carlyle, “Shooting Niagara: And After?,” in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. VI (London: Chapman and Hall, 1891), 348.

<sup>74</sup> Carlyle, “Shooting Niagara: And After?,” 348.

<sup>75</sup> Carlyle, “Shooting Niagara: And After?,” 348.

<sup>76</sup> Carlyle, “Shooting Niagara: And After?,” 341.

<sup>77</sup> Carlyle, “Shooting Niagara: And After?,” 339. Marx engages with Carlyle’s analogy that equates democracy with a ship of fools in his review of *Latter Day Pamphlets*. See Marx, “Latter-Day Pamphlets.”

democracy.<sup>78</sup> Though this is a significant shortcoming, it in no way discounts or delegitimizes the thesis that democracy is vulnerable to internal faults and weaknesses that keep it from being intrinsically and internally good.<sup>79</sup>

Marx's review of *Latter-Day Pamphlets* is valuable in that it highlights how Carlyle's social criticism shines a spotlight on the limits of the newly-emerging modern world order but yet lacks an accompanying alternative to displace liberal democracy. Engels commented as well that "[Carlyle] has sounded the social disorder more deeply than any other English bourgeois, and demands the organisation of labour."<sup>80</sup> Engels wrote an interpretive essay on Carlyle's *Past and Present* while Marx consulted Carlyle's works such as *Chartism* for statistical information on the condition of the English working class.<sup>81</sup>

Marx summarizes what he takes to be Carlyle's philosophy: "As for every individual, so for society it is just a matter of discovering the true regulations of the Universe, the everlasting laws of nature relative to the task in hand at each moment, and acting accordingly."<sup>82</sup> Marx continues his reflection on Carlyle's political theory with an inquiry: "Whoever reveals these eternal laws to us, him shall we follow, 'were it the Russian Autocrat or Chartist Parliament, the Archbishop of Canterbury or Grand Lama'. But how do we discover these eternal, divine

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<sup>78</sup> I seek to argue that Carlyle's conception of transcendentalism that he theorizes in *Sartor Resartus* could be such a system that democracy could transition towards. Carlyle neglects transcendentalism's prospects as a replacement for democracy because there is no evidence that he actively promoted it as a political creed to specifically replace democracy. To become practical, the transcendentalism Carlyle theorizes is in need of refinement and needs to be interfaced with other political ideologies and doctrines so that it can be conceived of as a prospective political ideology.

<sup>79</sup> Using the phrase "internally good," I am drawing from how Fukuyama considers whether or not democracy is "internally good" in *The End of History*.

<sup>80</sup> Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844*, trans. Florence Kelley Wischnewetzky (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1892), 294.

<sup>81</sup> Peter Zenzinger, "Karl Marx," in *The Carlyle Encyclopedia*, ed. Mark Cumming (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2004), 310.

<sup>82</sup> Marx, "Latter-Day Pamphlets," 305.

precepts?”<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Marx reflects on Carlyle’s skepticism to rely on universal suffrage: “At all events universal suffrage, which gives each man a ballot paper and counts heads, is the worst method of doing so. The Universe is of a very exclusive nature and has ever disclosed its secrets but to a few elect, a small minority of wise and noble-minded alone. That is why no nation was ever able to exist on the basis of democracy.”<sup>84</sup>

The tone of Marx’s review of (and rebuttal to) Carlyle becomes quite mocking. Marx challenges:

But how are the noble and the wise to be discovered? They are not revealed by any celestial miracle; they have to be looked for. And here the historical class distinctions which have been made into purely natural distinctions once more rear their heads. The noble man is noble because he is wise and knowledgeable. He will therefore have to be sought among the classes which have the monopoly of education—among the privileged classes, and it will be the same classes who will have to seek him out in their midst and to judge his claims to the rank of a noble and wise man. In so doing the privileged classes automatically become, if not precisely the noble and wise class, at least the “articulate” class; the oppressed classes are of course the “silent, inarticulate” and class rule is thereby sanctioned anew.<sup>85</sup>

Such a passage demonstrates Marx’s ignorance of Carlyle’s demands to find the best leaders from among all social classes and Carlyle’s own contempt toward the phenomenon of the wealthy class automatically assuming the mantle of leadership. It also demonstrates Marx’s neglect of transcendentalism as a prospective ideology to displace materialist class hostilities.

Carlyle emphasizes the need for personalities to promote and enact a political agenda as a means of departure from the malaise democracy can potentially foster and wants to make

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<sup>83</sup> Marx, “Latter-Day Pamphlets,” 305.

<sup>84</sup> Marx, “Latter-Day Pamphlets,” 305.

<sup>85</sup> Marx, “Latter-Day Pamphlets,” 307. It is not only Marx, but Carlyle himself, I will argue, who each do not recognize transcendentalism as being a means to discover and live by the “eternal and divine precepts” Carlyle and Marx refer to. I will discuss how transcendentalism meets Marx’s concerns that he elaborates on in later chapters.

known that politics will be stymied if compelling personalities do not emerge to assume the mantle of authority and lead. Carlyle inquires:

Who will begin the long steep journey with us; who of living statesmen will snatch the standard, and say, like a hero on the forlorn-hope for his country, Forward! Or is there none; no one that can and dare? And our lot too, then, is Anarchy by barricade or ballot-box, and Social Death?—We will not think so.<sup>86</sup>

Though a critic of democracy, Carlyle is also what may be defined as “supra-democratic” in that he sought government to achieve, if not the people’s “spoken wishes, yet their dumb wants, and what they would at last find to have been their instinctive *will*.”<sup>87</sup> Carlyle does not have faith in the “spoken wishes” of the people being as lofty and genuine as their unspoken wants, much less their “instinctive will.” That Parliament is incapable of enacting the “instinctive will” of the people necessarily implies that it is a compromised form of government, or at least a government that cannot credibly say that it is truly representative of the people.

Carlyle’s reactionary discontent with democracy and liberal political economy can be applied to discern both the present and future health of liberal democratic capitalism as the hegemonic social order that has lasted from Carlyle’s time thru the early twenty-first century, having withstood fascism and communism as rival external threats in the twentieth century. His scathing commentary provided fodder that was explicitly adopted and appropriated to some extent by both Marx and Engels and National Socialism. Though communism and fascism as external rivals proved to be themselves internally problematic and unsustainable, the critiques of liberal democratic capitalism’s own internal functioning maintain their relevance to at least

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<sup>86</sup> Carlyle, “The New Downing Street,” 203. It is curious that at this juncture Carlyle does not consider himself as the person cut out for leadership and does not consider advancing the transcendentalism he articulates in *Sartor Resartus* as a new ideology and comprehensive political doctrine to be adopted and lived by in the manner (or a similar manner) as how Marx advances communism.

<sup>87</sup> Carlyle, “Parliaments,” 259-260.

some extent because the long-term prospects of liberal democratic capitalism are yet to be seen.

In the next chapter, I turn to constructing transcendentalism as a unique and viable ideology that can be positioned in relation to and can inform MacIntyre's critique of liberalism and his Aristotelianism, Nietzsche's nihilism, and Qutb's Islamism. By doing this, Carlyle's transcendentalism can be discerned as a modern reincarnation of Platonism in that it is an embodiment of what may be characterized as a dialectical synthesis of Platonism. By dialoging Carlyle's transcendentalism with Islamism, a late twentieth-century and early twenty-first century rival to Western liberal democratic capitalism, I intend to illustrate how transcendentalism parallels Islamism in that they are both "transcendental" ideologies. Moreover, Carlyle himself praises Islam, which allows for the bold assertion to be made—that Carlyle's transcendentalism can be couched as a modern development *within* the Islamic tradition while also being an evolution from the Islamic tradition toward a dialectical return to Platonism.

### Chapter 3

#### Carlyle's Transcendentalism as a Platonic Political Philosophico-Religion: A Comparison of Transcendentalism with Islam and Islamism

Carlyle's transcendentalism needs to be differentiated from Islam and Islamism so as to pre-emptively resolve potential criticisms of transcendentalism. The *conflation* of transcendentalism with Islamism is a possible criticism of transcendentalism that needs to be refuted. This provides the rationale for why it is essential to discuss and situate transcendentalism in the contexts of Islam and Islamism. The prospective political application of transcendentalism may, at least at the surface, look quite similar to the political application of Islam, or Islamism. The charge may be levelled, like it is against Islamism, that transcendentalism embodies theocratic totalitarianism. It is at this juncture that the fundamental difference between transcendentalism and Islamism can be emphasized—that transcendentalism embodies *non-dogmatism* while Islamism embodies *dogmatism*. That Islamism competes politically on the plane of dogma against other political and theological dogmatic conceptions (i.e. Marxism and Christianity) is in contrast with transcendentalism's character as a non-dogmatism. By contrasting transcendentalism with Islamism, transcendentalism's non-dogmatism can be underscored. While transcendentalism and Islamism have a fundamental difference, they also share an important commonality in that both emphasize the value of spirituality and its social and political applications.

The difficulty in contrasting Carlyle's transcendentalism with Islamism is that Islamism cannot easily be defined. Islamism is a term that encompasses many different political

applications of Islam. There is no *singular* Islamism. Nonetheless, Sayyid Qutb's Islamic political thought can be compared with Carlyle's account of transcendentalism. As a principal and influential Islamic political theorist, Qutb's construction of and promotion of Islamism can be contrasted with transcendentalism. The comparison of transcendentalism with Islam/Islamism need not include a comparison of transcendentalism with Judaism and Christianity. This is because Islam has been appropriated to inform politics and governance as an ideology, while Judaism and Christianity have not been politicized to the same extent. For example, there are no viable Jewish or Christian political movements that seek to achieve a purely theocratic governance on the basis of either Jewish or Christian theology.

Carlyle proposes the power of transcendentalism as a philosophy to supersede *all* previous philosophies, beliefs and customs that have been constructed by humanity: "what is Philosophy throughout but a continual battle against Custom; an ever-renewed effort to *transcend* the sphere of blind Custom, and so become Transcendental?"<sup>1</sup> Thus, it can be inferred that Carlyle's transcendentalism is offered as an end-of-history narrative whereby all other competing philosophies would be simultaneously negated through and subsumed within transcendentalism. In other words, a turn toward transcendentalism would be a return to Platonism, since the ideologies and theologies that transcendentalism would both negate and subsume are developments subsequent to Plato and departures from Platonism. Transcendentalism serves as a type of dialectical synthesis of the decay of Platonism's hegemony *and* the subsequent vulnerability of pluralism, comprised of incommensurable

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<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 196.



ideologies and theologies, to yielding increasing levels of contention and destabilization in the political sphere.

The many parallels between Carlyle's transcendentalism and modern Islamism, most notably the Islamism theorized by Qutb, are the bases upon which the incommensurability of Islam/Islamism with other particularistic theological and ideological traditions could potentially be resolved in a "reformation" of Islam/Islamism toward transcendentalism. Such a proposal necessarily requires the differentiation of *Islam* and *transcendentalism*, as a religion and "philosophico-religion," respectively, from *Islamism* and *transcendentalism* as political ideologies.<sup>2</sup> I will contend that transcendentalism is compatible with Islam in the sense that it preserves Islam in the form of a *post-Islamic* philosophico-religion, and it cannot be said that transcendentalism is simply *anti-Islamic*. Just as Carlyle constructed transcendentalism as post-Christian in *Sartor Resartus*, transcendentalism can be constructed as post-Islamic as well. Such an acknowledgement intends to illustrate that it is possible for a Christian and a Muslim to maintain their respective faiths *while* adopting transcendentalism as an overlapping and shared consensus. What is more, a Muslim can maintain his/her faith while adopting transcendentalism as an alternative *political* doctrine to Islamism, or any other political doctrine that is subscribed to by a Muslim. Additionally, a Muslim could convert from Islam and Islamism to transcendentalism.

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<sup>2</sup> Versluis casts Platonism as a "philosophico-religion" and I apply this term to characterize American Transcendentalism as a modern adaptation of Platonism. American Transcendentalism can be characterized as a type of hybrid, between being a philosophy and a religion, since it conceives of spirituality, but does so while not offering a strict dogma. See Versluis, *Platonic Mysticism*, 5.

Carlyle's conception of transcendentalism can be cast as post-Islamic based on the method Carlyle uses to cast transcendentalism as post-Christian. Carlyle cryptically promotes transcendentalism by asserting that the Enlightenment successfully invalidated the theological claims of Christianity. Through the voice of Teufelsdröckh, Carlyle directs a question he would hypothetically ask of Voltaire: "Sufficiently hast thou demonstrated this proposition, considerable or otherwise: That the Mythos of the Christian Religion looks not in the eighteenth century as it did in the eighth....But what next? Wilt thou help us to embody the divine Spirit of that Religion in a new Mythos, in a new vehicle and vesture, that our Souls, otherwise too like perishing, may live? What! thou hast no faculty in that kind?"<sup>3</sup> Carlyle thus demonstrates his dissatisfaction with both Christianity as a dogmatic theology *and* Enlightenment atheism. Such dual dissatisfaction is the basis on which Carlyle innovates and inaugurates transcendentalism as post-Christian, and Carlyle's philosophical construction can also be applied to Islam so as to cast transcendentalism as post-Islamic. The relationship between Islam, Islamism, and transcendentalism needs to be parsed delicately and with nuance. Thus, I intend to get a conversation started while recognizing that much more scholarship is needed beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully elucidate the complex religious, philosophical, and political nexuses that exist between Islam, Islamism, and transcendentalism.

Carlyle's commitment to renunciation of materialistic consumption as perhaps the foremost and bedrock principle he offers to cure the social and political maladies afflicting society portrays an affinity with Islam and Islamic political thought. While Islam embraces materialism, its prioritization of spirituality inherently diminishes the emphasis placed on

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<sup>3</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 147.

materialism relative to the emphasis placed on it by purely atheistic capitalism or Marxism. Carlyle defines Muhammad as a “Hero as Prophet” in his public lectures collected in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* reads as if it is the embodiment of a non-theological and secularized version of Islam, an Islam translated from theology to philosophy with its principles intact. I contend that Carlyle offers, in *Sartor Resartus*, a comprehensive philosophy that is simultaneously a moral, social, and political philosophy in much the same fashion as how Islam has been converted into the political ideology of Islamism.

In addition to transcendentalism’s relationship with Islam and Islamism, transcendentalism can be situated in the context of contemporary Western moral philosophy that grapples with Aristotelianism, Christianity, and the Enlightenment. The thesis in Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* mirrors that of MacIntyre’s in *After Virtue* in that both contend that the Enlightenment has failed to provide justification for morality. MacIntyre suggests that, given the failure of the Enlightenment project for the justification of morality, it might appear that “an appropriate strategy would be to wait until some more powerful mind applied itself to the [project].”<sup>4</sup> Though Carlyle was a “romantic” rather than an Enlightenment philosopher, it should still be recognized that he applied himself to such a project. Carlyle’s justification for morality, just like the moral philosophy itself, has to be inferred from the cryptic presentation that so sweepingly characterizes *Sartor Resartus* in its entirety.

MacIntyre characterizes Enlightenment philosophers as constructing their divergent arguments in a manner that nonetheless follow the same approach. According to MacIntyre,

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<sup>4</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 49.

the philosophers Diderot, Hume, Kant, and Kierkegaard move from premises concerning human nature to conclusions about the authority of moral rules and precepts.<sup>5</sup> MacIntyre emphasizes that a project that employed such an approach “was bound to fail, because of an ineradicable discrepancy between their shared conception of moral rules and precepts on the one hand and what was shared—despite much larger divergences—in their conception of human nature on the other.”<sup>6</sup>

Carlyle’s philosophy and philosophical approach stand in stark contrast. Carlyle’s philosophy is premised on the failure of all previous philosophies to serve as comprehensive doctrines to guide humanity and provide answers to all moral and political questions. I will argue by inference from *Sartor Resartus* that Carlyle’s philosophy is constructed from three premises: 1) the Enlightenment failed; 2) Hegelian philosophy failed; and 3) the necessity to look upon the state of the world with a gaze of pure alienation in order to construct a means to seek to attain objective truth. Thus Carlyle constructs the biographical backstory of Professor Teufelsdröckh, the protagonist whom Carlyle seeks to prove embodies the viewpoint of a purely alienated individual. By being purely alienated, Teufelsdröckh has the highest capacity to be a philosopher in the purest way. Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* seeks to impart the notion that alienation is a valuable vantage point to be an objective social observer, social scientist, and philosopher.

*Sartor Resartus* implicitly provides an alternative narrative to the narrative Aristotelianism offers. MacIntyre summarizes Aristotelian ethics as “the threefold structure of

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<sup>5</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 50.

<sup>6</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 50.

untutored human-nature-as-it-happens-to-be, human-nature-as-it-could-be-if-it-realised-its-*telos* and the precepts of rational ethics as the means for the transition from one to the other.”<sup>7</sup>

Carlyle does not explicitly parallel such an Aristotelian philosophical account with the exposition of his “philosophy of clothes,” but the existence of such a parallel can nonetheless be inferred and applied to a discussion of how Carlylean philosophy contrasts with Aristotelian philosophy. The threefold structure of humanity in the context of Carlyle’s philosophy of clothes might consist of *humanity before its universal awareness of and acceptance of the “philosophy of clothes,” humanity after its universal awareness of and acceptance of the “philosophy of clothes,” and the romanticist/transcendentalist ethics as the means for the transition from one to the other*. The parallels between Carlyle’s “philosophy of clothes” and Aristotelian philosophy are quite precise in that one can infer that Carlyle viewed the “philosophy of clothes” as a radical break—*the ultimate break*—from humanity’s perception of itself, its world, and its history to humanity’s perception of itself, its world, and its history that it could have if it universally gained awareness of and accepted the “philosophy of clothes.”

The universal awareness of and acceptance of the “philosophy of clothes” could presumably connote the realization of collective humanity’s *telos* and in so doing also connote the end of history, philosophy, theology, and politics. What this amounts to is that humanity would come to a consensus that transcendentalism/Platonism stands as the highest form of philosophy. The pursuit of the transcendental rather than the material can also be a political ideal and could be undertaken within the context of a developed economy more easily than a developing economy. The acceptance of transcendentalism would connote a “dialectical

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<sup>7</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 51.

synthesis” of philosophy in the sense that Plato inaugurated transcendental philosophy, then materialist (communist and capitalist) and theological (Christian and Islamic) traditions arose to counteract Platonism, and a dialectical return to Platonism is rational as a function of diminishing returns within strict adherence solely to materialism and the incommensurable dogmatism inherent in both Christianity and Islam. In short, modernization has allowed for humanity to undertake discovering a true account of reality and collectively become transcendentalists/Platonic mystics in the mold of Teufelsdröckh himself.

I will assert that Carlylean transcendentalism is exceptional when compared to all other political and philosophical doctrines because it is the only one of them to intrinsically point out the same shortcoming—an indefensible and illegitimate claim of supremacy--that all other philosophies necessarily share in common. In this way, Carlyle’s transcendentalism is nihilistic but not fully nihilistic. This is because transcendentalism asserts that all philosophies other than transcendentalism are unprovable. Carlylean transcendentalism is concurrent with (Nietzschean) nihilism in the sense that Carlyle voids all other possible philosophies: “Which of your Philosophical Systems is other than a dream-theorem; a net quotient, confidently given out, where divisor and dividend are both unknown?”<sup>8</sup> Carlyle makes this claim on the basis that, it can be inferred, other philosophies have themselves not discerned the philosophy of clothes and not come to terms with it.

The “divisor” and “dividend” of any philosophical system are unknown because it is unknown what each ultimately symbolizes as “clothing.” Such a conclusion is analogous to the conclusion derived in Plato’s allegory of the cave in that each of the articles of clothing in the

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<sup>8</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 43.

universe, and thus the universe in its entirety, is analogous to the shadows on the wall of the Platonic cave. Carlyle asserts that philosophical wisdom of the highest order is that which concludes that the entire universe is clothing. Consequently, if everyone went from believing his or her particular philosophy to believing the philosophy of clothes, everyone would reach the highest philosophical summit possible. As an inference, I contend that they would undergo a conversion such that they would convert from believing their particularistic philosophy to believing that not only their previous philosophy but all other philosophies not the philosophy of clothes are by themselves insufficient and non-comprehensive “dream-theorems.” The philosophy of clothes, or the philosophy of “things-in-general,” is the only alternative to *all* other particularistic, narrow, and incommensurable philosophies that, by themselves and in the *absence* of transcendentalism, are fodder for incessant conflict. Carlyle asks:

What are all your national Wars, with their Moscow Retreats, and sanguinary hate-filled Revolutions, but the Somnambulism of uneasy Sleepers? This Dreaming, this Somnambulism is what we on Earth call Life; wherein the most indeed undoubtedly wander, as if they knew right hand from left; yet they only are wise who know that they know nothing.<sup>9</sup>

By asking this, Carlyle implicitly concludes that wars and revolutions, the climactic confrontations of all other particularistic and incommensurable philosophies, take place only because those participating are asleep to (and unconscious of) the philosophy of clothes. The inference can be made that wars and revolutions, just like political conflict of every sort, will persist *only* until the philosophy of clothes proselytizes all of humanity. If everyone were to be awake to the philosophy of clothes and thus be themselves transcendentalists, wars and revolutions would cease. Transcendentalists would conclude that wars and revolutions took

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<sup>9</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 43.

place in a prehistoric context to the advent of the philosophy of clothes—when humanity was sleepwalking--as wars and revolutions epitomize more greatly than any other constructs the non-discernment of the philosophy of clothes. Those antagonistic in the context of a war or revolution would reach accord through the philosophy of clothes and recognize that war and revolution are each instances of human behavior by humans wholly uninformed of the prospects of transcendentalism. I will assert that transcendentalism provides a means to achieve a shared consensus among otherwise conflicted ideologies and theologies. As such, it is possible for transcendentalism to co-exist alongside other ideologies and theologies and facilitate conflict resolution. It is important to recognize that there are multiple prospective scenarios, rather than a single scenario, as to how transcendentalism could be adopted in the context of practical politics.

The analogy to Plato's allegory of the cave is valuable in this context because the philosopher descending back into the cave to bring wisdom to the cave-dwellers can be seen as analogous to a transcendentalist informing the uneasy sleepers of their somnambulism:

You must go down, then, each in his turn, to live with the rest and let your eyes grow accustomed to the darkness. You will then see a thousand times better than those who live there always; you will recognize every image for what it is and know what it represents, because you have seen justice, beauty, and goodness in their reality; and so you and we shall find life in our commonwealth no mere dream, as it is in most existing states, where men live fighting one another about shadows and quarrelling for power, as if that were a great prize; whereas in truth government can be at its best and free from dissension only where the destined rulers are least desirous of holding office.<sup>10</sup>

An inference and conclusion from Carlyle (and Plato) is that a human who thinks the universe in its entirety is symbolic of a transcendent order (and universally embodying the

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<sup>10</sup> Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 234.



divine) does not wage war or partake in a revolution. It is in this light that one can entertain the consideration that Carlylean transcendentalism comprises a “Didactico-Religion.”<sup>11</sup> Carlyle’s conclusion that “they only are wise who know that they know nothing” underscores his view that transcendentalism is the apex of philosophy. Specifically, the conclusion that the entire universe is symbolic of a transcendent order is the highest point of philosophical wisdom that can be attained in philosophy. Carlyle defends such a proposition with the following argument:

Pity that all Metaphysics had hitherto proved so inexpressibly unproductive! The secret of Man’s Being is still like the Sphinx’s secret: a riddle that he cannot rede; and for ignorance of which he suffers death, the worst death, a spiritual. What are your Axioms, and Categories, and Systems, and Aphorisms? Words, words. High Air-castles are cunningly built of Words, the Words well bedded also in good Logic-mortar; wherein, however, no Knowledge will come to lodge.<sup>12</sup>

Transcendentalism departs from nihilism in that it claims the universe is symbolic and universally embodies the divine, whereas nihilism claims the universe is void of any meaning and purpose. As Nietzsche concludes, “if the universe had a goal, that goal would have been reached by now. If any sort of unforeseen final state existed, that state also would have been reached.”<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche simply has no evidence to support these positions, other than a religious devotion to materialism and nihilism, coupled with an unsubstantiated ignoring and/or dismissal of Platonic and Carlylean philosophy. In fact, the “goal of the universe,” to use Nietzsche’s phrase, could be to see that transcendentalism is adopted universally rather than nihilism, among an infinity of other as-yet-undisclosed possibilities. Nietzsche brushes aside Carlyle: “all attempts to *conceive of a new species* come to nothing (“romanticism,” the artist,

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<sup>11</sup> Carlyle frames the philosophy of clothes as “Didactico-Religious” when it is announced early in *Sartor Resartus* that “at all events, nothing Moral, still less any thing Didactico-Religious, was looked for from him.” See Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 43.

<sup>13</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2006), 487.

the philosopher; against Carlyle's attempt to lend them the highest moral values)." <sup>14</sup> In another critique of Carlyle, Nietzsche contends that he is simply confused: "psychological *confusions*: the *desire for belief* is confounded with the "will to truth" (for instance, in Carlyle)." <sup>15</sup> Though Nietzsche does not directly engage with Carlyle's conception of transcendentalism or with *Sartor Resartus*, these statements read as veiled swipes at Carlyle's dedication to the pursuit of a post-Christian and Platonic philosophy. After all, for Nietzsche, Plato "*placed appearance before Being! And therefore lies and fiction before truth! Unreality before actuality!*" <sup>16</sup> Such a statement confirms Nietzsche's commitments to materialism and nihilism and his avoidance of any form of spiritual construction of an ideal state of human affairs.

I contend that nihilism's assertion that the universe is *not* symbolic of a divine order is as much a positivist philosophical conclusion as that the universe *is* symbolic. The conclusion is ultimately unprovable in that there is no systematic evidence to either prove or disprove one side over the other and Plato/Carlyle and Nietzsche each choose the opposite position from the other more or less as a default. This is because they were the philosophers cast in such a mold to *discover* the possibilities of either spiritual or nihilist philosophical accounts. In other words, each offers a plausible position, and it is logical to assume each position would have naturally been derived over the course of the history of philosophy. I have illustrated the implications of transcendentalism's adoption to be valuable and, in so doing, have constructed Carlyle's transcendentalism as being *instrumental*. Have the valuable implications of nihilism been articulated or practiced?

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<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 220.

<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 274.

Just as there is no *irrefutable* evidence to support Nietzsche's nihilism, there is no *irrefutable* evidence to support Carlyle's theory of transcendentalism. Likewise, there is no *irrefutable* evidence to support Plato's conclusions derived from his allegory of the cave—namely that the visible world made visible to humanity by the sun is akin to being trapped inside a dark cave seeing shadows on the wall and mistakenly thinking them the extent of reality. In contrast to Nietzsche, Carlyle and Plato leave open the possibility of the conclusion that a meaningful “divine idea of the world” can eventually be ascertained as a function of being embedded intrinsically in their philosophical constructs which themselves are ostensibly “divine ideas of the world.” In other words, the inference is that by studying and perceiving the clothing of the universe (for Carlyle) and studying and perceiving the “shadows” that comprise the entirety of the visible world (for Plato), a higher meaning intrinsic to what is perceived as merely material can *eventually* be derived.

Transcendentalism is a comprehensive doctrine that will largely remain ineffective (as it currently is) so long as it remains merely one doctrine among many that exist in the context of liberalism. For it to be effective, it will have to be adopted more popularly as a movement, more than it was in the nineteenth century by a very limited number of American Transcendentalists. Transcendentalism offers the basis for a viable post-liberal order in that as a prospective successor to liberalism its philosophy is tailor-made to preserve the achievements of liberalism while transitioning humanity to a next stage of political development. The time has come when transcendentalism, heretofore representative of nothing more than abstract philosophy, can and should become practical.

The juxtaposition of Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones* with Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* is valuable in illustrating the deep political application that can be made of Carlyle's transcendentalism. Though there is no official representative of Islamism, Qutb can be cast as a principal representative of it. "Islamism" as a term describes the wide range of attempts to revive Islam's political legacy after the end of the Caliphate of Constantinople in 1924 that have taken the form of grassroots political organizing in the context of political parties/electoral politics as well as violent terrorism.<sup>17</sup>

Within Islamism, certain movements take the form of "radical Islamism" in that they begin with a radical critique of liberal western political thought, pursue a battle (sometimes violent) with "the West," and are determined to build an Islamic society obedient to the laws of the Quran.<sup>18</sup> Qutb was a leader of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and this group had influence on numerous radical Islamic groups.<sup>19</sup> Since al-Qaeda has been a dominant and important radical Islamist organization, and Qutb is considered to be the spiritual father of al-Qaeda, Qutb's philosophy is a valuable embodiment and representative of Islamism.<sup>20</sup> For example, Osama bin Laden studied at the University of Jedda in Saudi Arabia, where he was a student of Sayyid Qutb's brother Muhammad Qutb and introduced to the political philosophy of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>21</sup> While the exact amount of direct influence Sayyid Qutb had on

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<sup>17</sup> Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology," 56.

<sup>18</sup> Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology," 57.

<sup>19</sup> Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology," 57.

<sup>20</sup> Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology," 57. See also Paul Berman, "The Philosopher of Islamic Terror," *The New York Times Magazine*, March 23, 2003, 24-29, 57-59, 65-67.

<sup>21</sup> Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology," 57. See also Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda* (New York: Berkley Books, 2003), 22.

al-Qaeda is unclear, Qutb's political theory suggests the theoretical foundations of the organization's terrorism.<sup>22</sup>

Qutb's Islamic thought can be cast as a principal source for understanding Islamism, but with the recognition that he is by no means a singular foundational influence on all Islamism. Islamism is defined by a pluralism of intellectual and political actors, ranging from various Islamic philosophers, in addition to Qutb, to various political parties and politicians in the many countries that comprise the Islamic world. Such pluralism exists within the context of the multiple denominations of Islam that are practiced.

In this context, Carlylean transcendentalism can be applied as an intellectual lens to act against radical Islamism and Islamic terrorism to reduce the appeal and support of radical Islamism as an ideology.<sup>23</sup> The intellectual exposure of radical Islamism will largely be a task for Muslim religious leaders, since they have knowledge of Islamic belief and moral authority among their people.<sup>24</sup> By placing Islam in a larger context of philosophy and theology, such an intellectual effort can also take place in the form of a comparison of Qutb's Islamism with Carlyle's transcendentalism.

There is a nexus between Carlylean philosophy and Islam/Islamism in that Carlyle praises Muhammad on multiple occasions and in so doing makes possible the inference that Carlylean transcendentalism can both be cast as and situated as an evolutionary development within the context of the Islamic tradition. Though himself not a Muslim, Carlyle's praise of

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<sup>22</sup> Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology," 57.

<sup>23</sup> Hansen and Kainz conclude in their comparison of Qutb's conception of Islamism with Marx's conception of communism and Hitler's conception of National Socialism that an intellectual effort is necessary to act against Islamic terrorism in addition to a military, police, and intelligence action. See Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology," 71.

<sup>24</sup> Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology," 72.

Islam demonstrates a consensus between himself and Islam with respect to valuing the spiritual and divine over the material, earthly, and utilitarian. Thoreau equated Carlyle with Muhammad as a means of underscoring what he took to be the magnitude of Carlyle's influence: "[Carlyle] has the earnestness of a prophet. In an age of pedantry and dilettantism, he has no grain of these in his composition. There is no where else, surely, in recent readable English, or other books, such direct and effectual teaching, reproving, encouraging, stimulating, earnestly, vehemently, almost like Mahomet, like Luther."<sup>25</sup>

Carlyle never provided a systematic critical analysis of Islam as a theology and its prospects for supplying the foundation for governance. He did offer praise toward Muhammad and Islam in a manner that suggested he was in accord with what Islam embodied and offered, compared to other ideologies/theologies. For example, rather than offering a theory of justice and political liberalism, as Rawls did to counter utilitarianism, Carlyle instead sought to illustrate how Islam shed light on utilitarianism's weaknesses and its petty nature:

Benthamee Utility, virtue by Profit and Loss; reducing this God's world to a dead brute Steam engine, the infinite celestial Soul of Man to a kind of Hay-balance for weighing hay and thistles on, pleasures and pains on:--If you ask me which gives, Mahomet or they, the beggarlier and falser view of Man and his Destinies in this Universe, I will answer, It is not Mahomet!<sup>26</sup>

Carlyle also publicly lectured on Muhammad as "The Hero as Prophet" in the context of his lectures *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. Much as I seek to relate Carlylean transcendentalism and Islam so that Carlylean transcendentalism can be cast in evolution from Islam, Carlyle cast Islam as an evolution from paganism. According to Carlyle, the "advance to a

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<sup>25</sup> Henry David Thoreau, "Thomas Carlyle and His Works," in *Essays*, ed. Jeffrey S. Cramer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 113-114.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1840), 89.

very different epoch of religion” from paganism to Islam is a “great change” and Carlyle remarks “what a change and progress is indicated here, in the universal condition and thoughts of men!”<sup>27</sup> Casting Islam as “a change and progress” inherently casts it as merely a milestone in the continuous evolution of how humanity theorizes with respect to the divine. Rather than promoting Islam as the final form of religion, Carlyle’s characterization of Islam as “progress” can be inferred as illustrating that there are future stages of progress to be made in the construction of religion.

Carlyle characterizes Muhammad as “by no means the truest of Prophets; but I do esteem him a true one.”<sup>28</sup> Carlyle explicitly discloses the limits of the extent to which he will endorse Islam: “as there is no danger of our becoming, any of us, Mahometans, I mean to say all the good of [Muhammad] I justly can.”<sup>29</sup> Theorizing as to how Islam has lasted for twelve centuries and how as of the nineteenth century there are 180 million Muslims, Carlyle remarks how Muhammad’s Islam has conformed to the laws of nature in a sublime fashion so as to have such longevity and such a wide following: “A man must conform himself to Nature’s laws, *be* verily in communion with Nature and the truth of things, or Nature will answer him, No not at all!”<sup>30</sup> For Carlyle, a quack can prosper by spouting his “quackery,” but only for a day.<sup>31</sup>

Carlyle discusses the teachings of Islam, and their congruence with his description of transcendentalism in *Sartor Resartus* is evident. Carlyle himself never compares Islam with his conception of transcendentalism, but, nonetheless, such a comparison can be made. According

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<sup>27</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 51.

<sup>28</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 53.

<sup>29</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 53.

<sup>30</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 54.

<sup>31</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 54.

to Carlyle, it can be inferred, both Islam and transcendentalism are defined by their inherent mysticism. The element of mysticism is evident in how Carlyle discusses how both Islam and transcendentalism see humanity as symbolic and the embodiment of divinity. Teufelsdröckh reveals what he takes to be the mystical nature of humanity:

O Heaven, it is mysterious, it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future Ghost within him; but are, in very deed, Ghosts! These Limbs, whence had we them; this stormy Force; this life-blood with its burning Passion? They are dust and shadow; a Shadow-system gathered round our Me; wherein, through some moments or years, the Divine Essence is to be revealed in the Flesh.<sup>32</sup>

Carlyle describes the teachings of Islam in a similar manner:

[God] made us at first, sustains us yet; we and all things are but the shadow of Him; a transitory garment veiling the Eternal Splendour. "*allah akbar*, God is great;"—and then also "*Islam*," That we must *submit* to God. That our whole strength lies in resigned submission to Him, whatsoever, He do to us. For this world, and for the other! The thing He sends to us, were it death and worse than death, shall be good, shall be best; we resign ourselves to God.—"If this be *Islam*," says Goethe, "do we not all live in *Islam*?" Yes, all of us that have any moral life; we all live so....I say, this is yet the only true morality known. A man is right and invincible, virtuous and on the road towards sure conquest, precisely while he joins himself to the great deep Law of the World, in spite of all superficial laws, temporary appearances, profit-and-loss calculations; he is victorious while he cooperates with that great central Law, not victorious otherwise:--and surely his first chance of cooperating with it, or getting into the course of it, is to know with his whole soul that it *is*; that it is good, and alone good! This is the soul of Islam; it is properly the soul of Christianity;--for Islam is definable as a confused form of Christianity; had Christianity not been, neither had it been. Christianity also commands us, before all, to be resigned to God....<sup>33</sup>

On this basis, the inference can be made that Carlylean transcendentalism, as a post-Christian and post-Islamic philosophy, is nonetheless compatible with Christianity and Islam. Carlyle's "endorsement" of Christianity and Islam implies their preservation and embodiment in transcendentalism. Carlyle remarks that Christianity and Islam teach "to know that we know

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<sup>32</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 201.

<sup>33</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 67-68.



nothing” in his lecture on Muhammad and, in *Sartor Resartus*, in the context of theorizing transcendentalism, Carlyle remarks that “they only are wise who know that they know nothing.”<sup>34</sup>

In his lecture on Muhammad, Carlyle remarks that “Islam means in its way Denial of Self, Annihilation of Self [and] this is yet the highest Wisdom that Heaven has revealed to our Earth.”<sup>35</sup> In *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle similarly comments that “Annihilation of Self [is] the first preliminary moral Act” to attaining the Everlasting Yea, which he casts as the highest philosophical perspective.<sup>36</sup> Carlyle, in discussing Muhammad’s inspiration for the concept of annihilation of self, negates the importance of Islam’s *theological* narrative and underscores Islam as a contribution to philosophy: “[Muhammad] called it revelation and the angel Gabriel;- -who of us yet can know what to call it? It is the ‘inspiration of the Almighty’ that giveth us understanding. To *know*; to get into the truth of anything, is ever a mystic act,--of which the best Logics can but babble on the surface.”<sup>37</sup> Carlyle asserts that since Muhammad concluded he attained the highest wisdom, he attributed himself being chosen to receive the revelation as an act of god:

“Is not Belief the true god-announcing Miracle?” says Novalis.—That Mahomet’s whole soul, set in flame with this grand Truth vouchsafed him, should feel as if it were important and the only important thing, was very natural. That Providence had unspeakably honoured *him* by revealing it, saving him from death and darkness; that he therefore was bound to make known the same to all creatures: this is what was meant by “Mahomet is the Prophet of God;” this too is not without its true meaning.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 68; Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 43.

<sup>35</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 68.

<sup>36</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 142.

<sup>37</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 68.

<sup>38</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 68.

Carlyle's discussion of the resistance Muhammad initially faced in proselytizing converts is reminiscent of Plato's discussion of the freed prisoner returning to the darkened cave to convert those still in chains, while also being reminiscent of the difficulties Carlyle conceived the philosophy of clothes would face in proselytizing converts.<sup>39</sup> Carlyle remarks, "naturally [Muhammad] gave offence to everybody: Who is this that pretends to be wiser than we all; that rebukes us all, as mere fools and worshippers of wood!"<sup>40</sup> Carlyle recounts how Muhammad was advised against pursuing proselytism: "Could he not be silent about all that; believe it all for himself, and not trouble others, anger the chief men, endanger himself and them all, talking of it? Mahomet answered: If the Sun stood on his right hand and the Moon on his left, ordering him to hold his peace, he could not obey! No: there was something in this Truth he had got which was of Nature herself; equal in rank to Sun, or Moon, or whatsoever thing Nature had made."<sup>41</sup> Such a sentiment can be analogized to Carlyle's conception of transcendentalism and it is curious as to why Carlyle himself, or American Transcendentalist disciples such as Emerson and Thoreau, did not make such an analogy. Muhammad is to Islam as Teufelsdröckh (via Carlyle) is to transcendentalism, and just as there was something in the truth Muhammad had got which was of Nature herself, so too can it be said of the truth Teufelsdröckh had got.

Carlyle himself casts Muhammad as being a new philosopher in a long line of philosophers, a line of mysticism/romanticism on which Plato and Teufelsdröckh could both be included:

To [Muhammad's] eyes it is forever clear that this world wholly is miraculous. He sees what, as we said once before, all great thinkers, the rude Scandinavians themselves, in one way or other,

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<sup>39</sup> See Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 8-9.

<sup>40</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 70.

<sup>41</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 70.

have contrived to see: That this so solid-looking material world is, at bottom, in very deed, Nothing; is a visual and tactual Manifestation of God's power and presence,--a shadow hung-out by Him on the bosom of the void Infinite; nothing more. The mountains, he says, these great rock-mountains, they shall dissipate themselves "like clouds;" melt into the Blue as clouds do, and not be!...With our Sciences and Cyclopaedias, we are apt to forget the *divineness*, in those laboratories of ours. We ought not to forget it! That once well forgotten, I know not what else were worth remembering.<sup>42</sup>

The nexus between Carlyle and Islam is also informed by a liberal interpretation of Qutb when he asserts, "the establishment of Islamic society on the foundation of a movement and its taking the form of an evolutionary system, these twin virtues jointly contribute to render the Islamic society unique and a peerless type by itself."<sup>43</sup> I will assert that Carlylean transcendentalism informs and has relevance to Islamism in the context of Qutb's cryptic depiction of Islamic society as an "evolutionary system."<sup>44</sup> Within the context of Carlylean transcendentalism, Qutb's Islamism, just like every other ideology and theology, is preserved as a function of being "retailored" into transcendentalism. This indicates how transcendentalism can be conceived of as a type of "overlapping consensus," to apply the Rawls term, among disparate ideologies and theologies.<sup>45</sup> Such a consensus can be constructed theoretically such that it is possible for Muslims and Christians to retain their theological beliefs and identify as Muslims and Christians while *also* subscribing to transcendentalism and identifying as transcendentalists. I will suggest that it is the unyielding devotion to Islam as a singular, particularistic, ossified, and branded theological dogmatism on the part of Islamists that prevents the *realization* of what may be called "Islamic society" given that Islamists each

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<sup>42</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 82.

<sup>43</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 185.

<sup>44</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 185.

<sup>45</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 15.

adhere to their own particularistic version of Islam and themselves cannot agree with respect to the theology of Islam.

Islamists do share a consensus in that they are devoted to Islam as an ossified theology whose basis rests in Muhammad's reception of god's teachings. In other words, according to Islamism, god has spoken the final word and all that is left to do is *realize* god's revelations to Muhammad in the seventh century in the context of constructing "Islamic society" in modern times. Such a project is inherently problematic, if not contradictory, at least when taking Qutb's approach literally. This is because Qutb prescribes that Islamic society can be established *via evolution* on the basis of Muhammad's initial Islamic era which is *bounded* and unalterable. Allowing for an "evolutionary system" for Islamic society to come into its full form is making an allowance for such evolution to be inherently *unbounded*. There is thus a dissonance between faith in an *unalterable* theology and faith in an *alterable* "evolutionary system" to fully realize that theology's teachings in the context of a society. Hypothetically, given the unbounded nature of an "evolutionary system," Islam may have to evolve its brand so as to realize its social and political aims, all the while preserving its theological foundation.

I will make the radical and new claim that Carlylean transcendentalism, which can be cast as an evolution from Islam, fulfills Qutb's conception of Islam as an evolutionary system.<sup>46</sup> I recognize that the integration of Carlyle's transcendentalism in the context of Qutb's Islamism is a radical and unprecedented synthesis. Based on Qutb's stance in *Milestones* in which he

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<sup>46</sup> While Carlylean transcendentalism is freestanding and Carlyle never himself cast his theory of transcendentalism as the next stage after Islam (or as post-Islam), I offer such a conclusion to show that Carlylean transcendentalism can be positioned in the context of other ideologies and theologies. I seek to show the parallels between Carlylean transcendentalism and Qutb's account of Islamism.

casts Islam as the *only* option to provide a comprehensive doctrine to guide human affairs, it could be assumed that synthesizing Islam with Carlyle's transcendentalism would be met with hostility and considered a heresy by Qutb and other Islamists.<sup>47</sup> Yet such a synthesis is a valuable construct in the academic context and could potentially be supported by those sympathetic to the reform of Islam in the present and especially among future generations. It is unknown whether Qutb studied Carlyle and contemplated his views toward Islam and conception of transcendentalism. Nevertheless, it is evident that *both* Carlyle's views toward Islam and conception of transcendentalism necessarily need to be synthesized in order to be able to cast transcendentalism as an evolution from Islam.

Transcendentalism, much like Islam, is identified as a movement that took place in history. Qutb seeks to promote Islamism by making it known that "Islamic society does not only denote a historical stage which could be sought in the pages of the past history but in fact it is the demand of the modern age and an yearning for the future."<sup>48</sup> This is precisely the sentiment I seek to advance with respect to transcendentalism by identifying it as the demand of the modern age and a yearning for a post-liberal future whereby heretofore irreconcilable and incommensurable sociopolitical conflicts (among them economic, religious, ethno-racial, etc.) can finally be resolved. Transcendentalism identifies the rationale for the renunciation of conflict by identifying the virtue and logic of renunciation as a value in and of itself. Transcendentalism prioritizes renunciation and submission to a transcendent order from a

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<sup>47</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 233.

<sup>48</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 188.

philosophical vantage point without relying on a theological narrative susceptible to being incommensurable with competing theological accounts.

The comparison and synthesis of Carlylean transcendentalism with Qutb's Islamism demonstrates both their compatibility and differences. The difficulty in integrating Carlylean transcendentalism with Islamism lies in Carlyle's explicit recognition of the evolution of theologies over the course of history. In *Sartor Resartus*, Teufelsdröckh defines what he calls "Church Clothes" as "the Forms, the *Vestures*, under which men have at various periods embodied and represented for themselves the Religious Principle; that is to say, invested the Divine Idea of the World with a sensible and practically active Body, so that it might dwell among them as a living and life-giving WORD."<sup>49</sup> Qutb, on the other hand, is adamant that Islam is the *final* doctrine to serve *all* of humanity's needs both at the level of the individual and the collective and is the only viable totalizing doctrine to guide humanity both in the public and private spheres. He thus offers a basis for as to why we should reverse course from being engulfed in *jahiliyyah*, a state in which God's laws are rejected, to embrace Islam.<sup>50</sup> Jahiliyyah is a term taken from the Koran and is usually translated as the "age of ignorance," in reference to the pre-Islamic era on the Arabian peninsula.<sup>51</sup>

Carlyle invokes jahiliyyah conceptually to analogize it to the limitations of political philosophy:

The Dryasdust Philosophisms and enlightened Scepticism of the Eighteenth Century, historical and other, will have to survive for a while with the Physiologists, as a memorable *Nightmare-Dream*. All this haggard epoch, with its ghastly Doctrines, and death's-head Philosophies

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<sup>49</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 162.

<sup>50</sup> Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology," 58.

<sup>51</sup> Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology," 58.

‘teaching by example’ or otherwise, will one day have become, what to our Moslem friends their godless ages are, ‘the Period of Ignorance.’<sup>52</sup>

Carlyle, by invoking jahiliyyah, can be dialogued with Qutb’s political theory of Islamism. Carlyle uses “the period of Ignorance” ostensibly to describe the totality of political developments and political philosophy in his contemporary 1843 political civilization at the time *Past and Present* is published. As a non-Islamic theorist of transcendentalism, Carlyle’s casting of “Dryasdust Philosophism” as embodying a “period of ignorance” provides grounding to infer that Carlylean transcendentalism *can be* theorized as an -ism to supersede all other previous -isms. With such a lens that demonstrates the parallels between Carlyle’s transcendentalism and Qutb’s Islamism, the differences between Bentham’s utilitarianism and Rawls’s theory of justice are shown to be infinitesimally small.

In a section entitled “How Islam Confronted Jahiliyyah?”, Qutb seeks to show how Islam transcended all other religions by offering what other religions failed to offer:

Quran did not present the faith as a mere theory or theology. Nor did it adopt the style commonly found in scholastic writings on the Unity of God characterised by pedantic discussions. On the contrary Quran appeals to the human nature and relies for its arguments on the signs which are found in the human soul and the surrounding environment...A particular aspect of its revolutionary teachings was that it had practically initiated a struggle within the society on the basis of Oneness of God and was waging a war against the Jahili concepts and traditions under whose debris humanity lay entombed and human nature paralysed and suspended. Hence for confronting these particular conditions it was not appropriate for Islam to be presented in the form of theory.<sup>53</sup>

Qutb writes that Islam did not offer itself as a “theology” because it “presents a programme of practical life and enforces the same in the world of action [and] does not remain circumscribed

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<sup>52</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 299.

<sup>53</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 84-85.

within the limited and straitened circle of life like theoretical discussions and intellectual speculations of theology.”<sup>54</sup>

According to Qutb, Jahiliyyah in its modern incarnation “owes its existence to the putrid element of lordship of man over man, and which separates man from the all-embracing system of the universe.”<sup>55</sup> Qutb writes that the extermination of Jahiliyyah has been humanity’s grand project and that modern Jahiliyyah has been the condition of humanity’s existence since the dawn of civilization, in both the pre-Islamic and post-Islamic eras. Elementally, Jahiliyyah has persisted as a hegemonic social order largely unchanged throughout the entirety of human history.

What is particularly noteworthy and striking about Qutb’s theory of Jahiliyyah is his assertion that Jahiliyyah is a state that has been persistently antagonized by other theologies prior to the advent of Islam and that Islam is the culminating theological doctrine to *finally* terminate Jahiliyyah in its entirety. In this sense, the “Islamic message” of submission to the one god of the universe was prophesied by all prophets prior to Muhammad and Muhammad was the *last* messenger of God whose “sole purpose” was the extermination of Jahiliyyah.<sup>56</sup> Carlyle’s transcendentalism fits within this paradigm as his political philosophy sought to replace mutual hostility with a mutual solidarity in human society through a mutual recognition that there exists a transcendent divine order of the universe that lies beyond the material symbolic universe. Carlyle’s message of transcendentalism, as post-Islam, thus fits within the

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<sup>54</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 85-86.

<sup>55</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 97.

<sup>56</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 97.



Islamic tradition as an “Islamic” message that was offered after the advent of Islam, just as prophets prior to Muhammad offered “Islamic” messages.

Qutb theorizes on the prospects of a compromise with Jahiliyyah:

Islam does not accept any half-way compromise with Jahiliyyah. Whether it is the question of its concepts and ideology or the laws of life based on this concept, either Islam shall exist or Jahiliyyah. No third course is acceptable or agreeable to Islam in which Jahiliyyah and Islam share equally. Islam’s point of view in this regard is quite clear and bright. It says that Truth is a unit which cannot be analysed. If there will be no Truth, it shall be falsehood. Mutual intermixing and intermingling of Truth and Falsehood and their co-existence is impossible. Either the command of Allah will prevail or that of Jahiliyyah. Either the Divine code will operate or the desire of self-will rule.<sup>57</sup>

This passage illustrates Qutb’s strict adherence to dogmatic Islam and suggests there is no room for compromise or synthesis with those who may praise Islam yet not be as universally committed to its dogma. As such, it speaks to the tension that exists between Qutb and Carlyle.

Qutb describes the dynamics of the relationship between Islam and Jahiliyyah:

There is a wide yawning valley between Islam and Jahiliyyah which cannot be bridged for the purpose that both should be able to meet midway. If at all such a bridge could be built it could be for the purpose that the folk of Jahiliyyah should cross over and take refuge in the lap of Islam, whether they are the so-called Islam-professing residents of Islamic country or those residing outside it.<sup>58</sup>

The incommensurability that exists between Islamism and Carlylean transcendentalism should again not obscure their simultaneous compatibility in the context of Qutb’s quote.

Carlyle writes that the “Universe is but one vast Symbol of God.”<sup>59</sup> Qutb writes that the “prime mover [god], which is the cause of the dawning of the sun of the [Islamic] movement, does not make the human lives the centre of its sparks, nor any nook of the material universe is the

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<sup>57</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 228. The term “Jahiliyyah” refers to a state of ignorance in which Islam is missing from the consciousness of a society and as such Islam is not a guide for society to live by.

<sup>58</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 244.

<sup>59</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 166.

source of its heat and activity; rather just as we have mentioned that it descends from a source which is beyond the earthly sphere and above the human world.”<sup>60</sup> Carlyle and Qutb each articulate conceptions of the divine that are essentially equal with respect to their nebulousness and indefiniteness.

Qutb recognizes that in some respects there is a resemblance between Islam and Jahiliyyah, but “otherwise they are like separate trees, and the roots, trunks and branches of both are separate from each other.”<sup>61</sup> Such a sentiment fails to acknowledge the profound similarity of Carlylean transcendentalism and Islam and that Carlylean transcendentalism is a steep departure from other “Jahili” ideologies and theologies, especially those that are purely materialist such as capitalism or communism. Qutb’s omission of Carlylean transcendentalism is even more readily apparent when he describes Islam as a tree “cultivated by the Divine wisdom and irrigated by it” and Jahiliyyah as the “evil tree [that] has sprouted from the land of human desires.”<sup>62</sup> Carlylean transcendentalism is clearly a departure from such a broad definition of Jahiliyyah as the principles it espouses—renunciation and submission to the transcendent order—did not sprout from human desires but rather parallel Islam’s tenets in their nature.

Carlylean transcendentalism can be applied within the context of Islam to both theorize and inform Islam because there is no basis to *preclude* its application. Much like *liberalism* is a nebulous term that is difficult to define officially, *Islam* and *Islamism* are amorphous and imprecise. There is no such thing as a “standard Islam” in that Islam has no institution like the

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<sup>60</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 186.

<sup>61</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 230-231.

<sup>62</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 231.

Vatican and no authority equivalent to the Pope who is able to codify an official Islam.<sup>63</sup> It is not even possible to define Islam in a way that will be acceptable to the majority of Muslims and so Islam becomes a mental construction rather than a tangible, definable entity.<sup>64</sup> The division of Islam into numerous sects, rituals, and theological schools that each proclaim to represent the “true” Islam underscores the inherent variability to Islam and how it is an umbrella that captures such wide diversity.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Islamism is not a monolithic entity and there is mutual antagonism and hostility among Islamists who seek to institute Islam as the hegemonic political doctrine globally.<sup>66</sup> It is on these bases that Carlylean transcendentalism can be applied to Islam and Islamism as “projects” that are inherently non-ossified and evolutionary.

Mozaffari brainstorms as to whether Islam is capable of adaptation in a manner analogous to Christianity’s adaptation in the context of the Reformation. He concludes that Islam is unique when compared to Christianity in that it is a rigid monotheistic religion that offers no means to separate a public/secular sphere from the religious sphere.<sup>67</sup> Discounting the prospects of reform through the teachings of Islamic sacred scriptures, Mozaffari ponders as to whether a rupture exists within Muslim societies: “Is there any rupture that is calling Islam to challenge it? By rupture, I mean a profound substantial change that regenerates a new vision of the world, human beings, thoughts, art, nature, and so on.”<sup>68</sup> Mozaffari’s conclusion is that,

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<sup>63</sup> Mehdi Mozaffari, in *Islamism: A New Totalitarianism*, seeks to “provide a sustainable analytical tool that may help the reader to gain a better understanding of Islamism in its multiple and various colors and forms.” He seeks to “treat [Islamism] in the same way that one treats Marxism, liberalism, fascism, and all other ‘isms’....in the global framework of our modern world.” Mozaffari concludes that Islamism is a “new totalitarianism” and is a “problematic, with its multiple dimensions, [that] needs further investigation” beyond his book. See Mehdi Mozaffari, *Islamism: A New Totalitarianism* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2017), 7, 9, 20.

<sup>64</sup> Mozaffari, *Islamism*, 21.

<sup>65</sup> Mozaffari, *Islamism*, 21.

<sup>66</sup> Mozaffari, *Islamism*, 22, 31.

<sup>67</sup> Mozaffari, *Islamism*, 183.

<sup>68</sup> Mozaffari, *Islamism*, 183.

despite decolonization, revolutions, violence, terrorism, and war in the last decades of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, Islamic countries are not facing a rupture since the hegemonic views with respect to human rights, freedom of expression, the fate of women, art, literature, and music have gone unchanged.<sup>69</sup> Mozaffari then inquires as to where the rupture is to come from?<sup>70</sup>

By reflecting on how no religion can be changed, and acknowledging how the Reformation merely changed the thinking of some Christians and not the contents of Christianity's sacred scriptures, Mozaffari forecasts that a rupture in the context of Islam would have to involve a "reformation of some Muslims' way of thinking, and not a reformation of Islam as a religion or a revision of the verses of the Koran."<sup>71</sup> It is on this basis, he concludes, that an Islamic reformation is unlikely, since Islamists are looking *backward* to Muhammad's era in Medina as the original and ideal model and golden age of Islam to construct an idealized future.<sup>72</sup> It is under these auspices that the consideration of Carlylean transcendentalism could provide a means to adapt Islam since transcendentalism parallels Islam in so many ways and was conceptualized by Carlyle, a Westerner sympathetic to Islam yet someone who acknowledged the inadequacies of subscribing exclusively to Islam's theology as an ossified comprehensive doctrine.

Another difficulty in dialoging Carlylean transcendentalism with Islam is that although an *official* Islam has not been ossified among Islam's plural sects, Islam teaches that God has,

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<sup>69</sup> Mozaffari, *Islamism*, 184-185.

<sup>70</sup> Mozaffari, *Islamism*, 185.

<sup>71</sup> Mozaffari, *Islamism*, 185.

<sup>72</sup> Mozaffari, *Islamism*, 185.

once and for all, formulated the rules of justice.<sup>73</sup> The dual attributes of Islamic pluralism and yet a monolithic belief that God has established law and justice are another instance of contradiction, or at a minimum comprise an antinomic relationship such that there is tension between the two statements both being realized in the context of Islam. Carlyle provides a non-theological view that the laws of nature, which necessarily embody the divine and transcendent, must be followed. Carlyle's parameters for politics suggests that his views are in accord with Islam, again though he is not a believer in Islamic theology: "In Parliament and out of Parliament, and everywhere in this Universe, your one salvation is, That you can discern with just insight , and follow with noble valour, what the law of the case before you is, what the appointment of the Maker in regard to it has been."<sup>74</sup> Carlyle suggests that the laws of nature have to be ascertained, while Islam suggests laws have been transmitted from Allah to Muhammad and must be dutifully obeyed.

Mozaffari juxtaposes Islam's account of justice with Rawls's conception of justice.<sup>75</sup> Such a comparison is valuable in that it illustrates that those who subscribe to Islam's theological account of justice having been ossified through Allah's transmission to Muhammad and found within the teachings of the Quran will be closed to receiving other philosophical accounts of justice. Much like MacIntyre illustrated the inherent incommensurability between Rawls and Nozick with respect to their theories of justice, there is an incommensurability between the Islamic and Rawlsian accounts of justice.<sup>76</sup> This is valuable to acknowledge because it

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<sup>73</sup> Mozaffari discusses how Islam teaches that justice has been established. See Mozaffari, *Islamism*, 178.

<sup>74</sup> Carlyle, "Stump-Orator," 234.

<sup>75</sup> Mozaffari, *Islamism*, 178.

<sup>76</sup> For MacIntyre's discussion of incommensurability, see MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 229. MacIntyre theorizes that Rawls's theory of justice elaborated in his *A Theory of Justice* is incommensurable with Robert Nozick's libertarian conception of justice elaborated on in his *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*.

underscores how the purpose of juxtaposing Islam with other normative political philosophy is not to persuade those who will resist persuasion but rather to position Islam (and Islamism) in the larger context of philosophy. Carlylean transcendentalism can be related to Islam so as to inform the similarities and differences, both profound and nuanced, between the two much like how similarities and differences can be discovered between Rawls's theory of justice and Islam by relating the two. It is particularly useful to contrast Carlylean transcendentalism with Islam and Rawls's theory of justice as a means to construct transcendentalism as a coherent political philosophy and to show that it provides an alternative account of justice.

Moreover, how Carlyle and Qutb conceptualize the rewards for subscribing to their "theologies" can be contrasted. Carlyle casts belief in the philosophy of clothes, renunciation, and the Everlasting Yea as intrinsically good. The Everlasting Yea, achieved as a product of realizing the philosophy of clothes and renunciation, is a state "wherein all contradiction is solved; wherein whoso walks and works, it is well with him."<sup>77</sup> Someone who has reached the Everlasting Yea has reached the highest point of self-actualization that is achievable because he both recognizes the entirety of the universe as divine while simultaneously makes no claims upon the world beyond those that are materially necessary. Ostensibly, the only claims made are those for a minimal/sufficient sustenance.

In contrast, according to Qutb, the *jihadi*'s struggle on behalf of god to advance Islam is recognized by a reward in paradise.<sup>78</sup> The reward is depicted in the Quran in quite earthly terms such as pleasure and love.<sup>79</sup> The reward is thus earthly and material and if the driving

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<sup>77</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 146.

<sup>78</sup> See Qutb, *Milestones*, 264-266; Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology," 69.

<sup>79</sup> See Qutb, *Milestones*, 264-266; Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology," 69.

motivation behind the *jihad* is the promise of 72 virgins, Qutb is positioned badly for his criticism of Western political ideologies rooted in materialism.<sup>80</sup> Hansen and Kainz analyze the inherent empty destination of Qutb's Islamism:

Qutb therefore contrasts with the western materialism a concept of religion which reveals itself to be [empty]. Reducing Islam to a struggle of believers' self-assertion against external evil is basically reducing the spiritual struggle of man with his faith in God (and therefore with his *own* evil) to an earthly struggle between good and evil men (believers and unbelievers). The focus on this earthly struggle implies a rejection of transcendence....Qutb falls back on the position which he was so desperately fighting against: materialism.<sup>81</sup>

Qutb offers Islamism as a political religion, while Carlyle offers transcendentalism, though much more implicitly, as a political religion. Carlyle's transcendentalism is both theorized and presented in a cryptic manner to such an extent that it has gone unrecognized as a political religion. Carlyle, and his iconic American disciples Emerson and Thoreau, also did not promote Carlylean transcendentalism as a comprehensive political religion to proselytize converts. While Islamism adopted jihad as the most extreme tactic so as to lift the fog of ignorance and proselytize new converts, as did the Quran itself, American Transcendentalism as a movement influenced by Carlyle failed to resonate with the public outside of a small population in New England in the nineteenth century.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, Carlylean transcendentalism was never refined so as to be capable of offering a coherent platform for mainstream political discourse.

Islamic philosophy has promoted Islam as a practical political religion. Qutb promotes Islam's universal application and practicality when he remarks:

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<sup>80</sup> Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology," 69.

<sup>81</sup> Hansen and Kainz, "Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology," 69.

<sup>82</sup> See Qutb's discussion of jihad in *Milestones* pages 132-134. For a discussion of Carlyle's American reception, see Hook, "United States of America," in *The Carlyle Encyclopedia*, 474; Gravett, "Ralph Waldo Emerson," in *The Carlyle Encyclopedia*, 145.

We should make [people] thoroughly convinced that if they embraced Islam, their lives would be totally changed. Their actions, characters, principles and regulations would also undergo change and their concepts and attitude of thought would also be transformed owing to this modification. Islam would endow them with an abundance whose expanses cannot be conceived by human comprehension.<sup>83</sup>

Qutb emphasizes explicitly how necessary and critically important it is for Islam to be cast as a doctrine that supersedes all others. He calls on Muslims to inculcate upon the public that Islam is not “one of the man-made social theories and a system among self-devised systems which are found on the face of the earth under different names and banners.”<sup>84</sup> Qutb casts Islam as a “pure and uncompromising system.”<sup>85</sup> Transcendentalism lacked a coherent message and political program to be able to contrast itself with competing ideologies because its cryptic account in *Sartor Resartus* was never refined so as to be situated in popular political discourse. Qutb describes Islam as “characterised by an individuality of its own” and Carlylean transcendentalism has never been branded as such.<sup>86</sup>

Qutb remarked that “the purpose for which Islam stands for Jihad is to secure the real and complete freedom on man on this earth.”<sup>87</sup> Qutb defines Jihad as “striving for the establishment and supremacy of [Islam as a] Divine system.”<sup>88</sup> Qutb defines religion as “the system and way of life which brings under its fold the human life with all its details.”<sup>89</sup> Moreover, the problem religion confronts is “to banish all the fabricated gods through the establishment of the rule of God, Most High.”<sup>90</sup> It can be inferred that Qutb vindicates Carlyle’s

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<sup>83</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 232.

<sup>84</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 232-233.

<sup>85</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 233.

<sup>86</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 233.

<sup>87</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 134.

<sup>88</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 143.

<sup>89</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 119.

<sup>90</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 140.



philosophy of clothes/transcendentalism with his claim that *all* previous theological conceptions of god were “fabricated” while not suggesting precisely the rationale behind why he thinks all other gods were “fabricated” yet the Islamic god is an exception to the rule. Islam itself is a re-fabrication and evolution from Judaism and Christianity and yet Qutb calls on all “fabricated” gods to be banished and labels all Jewish and Christian societies as “Jahili” societies.<sup>91</sup> I will assert that such a contradiction can be resolved by subscribing to Carlylean transcendentalism.

Just as Christians advance the notion that Christianity is the divine system for human life, Qutb and Muslims advance that Islam is such a system, and the two faiths persist as being indefinitely incommensurable and irreconcilable without drawing on Carlylean transcendentalism to reconcile such incommensurability. I will put forward that Carlylean transcendentalism is a system which proves capable of reconciling both while it simultaneously reconciles *all* other competing ideologies and theologies as well. This is another context in which the inference can be made that Carlylean transcendentalism makes possible the viewpoint that all other ideologies and theologies (themselves not Carlylean transcendentalism) embody merely an unconsciousness of Carlylean transcendentalism. Such ideologies and theologies persist in incommensurable and irreconcilable conflicts out of not recognizing Carlylean transcendentalism as being supra-ideology and supra-theology, which itself informs that ideologies and theologies are “clothing” just like everything else in the universe that symbolizes a transcendent order. Carlylean transcendentalism is thus the ideology that

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<sup>91</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 153.

supersedes all other ideologies and theologies by inherently showing the inadequacy of such ideologies and theologies that are themselves not Carlylean transcendentalism.

Moreover, Carlylean transcendentalism is a political religion in that it has the capacity to provide a system for human life. Carlyle's theory of transcendentalism leads to the inference that Islam is an important milestone, but it is not the final milestone to ascertain a divine system for human life. What Qutb ascribes to Islam can be ascribed to Carlylean transcendentalism: "it is neither man-made nor a self-devised way of any human organisation or a particular human race."<sup>92</sup> Carlylean transcendentalism shows itself to be what Qutb has sought to point out about Islam, that Islam is "different in respect of its nature and reality from all concepts which have been rampant in the world so far."<sup>93</sup> In re-theorizing Carlyle's conception of transcendentalism, I seek to amend Qutb's claim that responsibilities and obligations which follow from Islamism are not traceable in any other concept and way of life of the world.<sup>94</sup> Qutb defines the purpose of Islam in a manner that could be applicable to Carlylean transcendentalism in that both seek to ascertain the transcendent order and create a social existence compatible with such an order:

If Islam builds its structure in such an incomparable manner which imparts it a unique status among human systems of history, it in fact becomes congruous with the "Central law" which circumscribes not only the human existence but the entire universe, and whose orbit of activity is not confined to the human system of life but embraces the whole order of existence.<sup>95</sup>

Qutb advances the assertion that there is a unitary transcendent order to the universe, much as Carlyle advances in *Sartor Resartus*. Qutb's concluding sentence in *Milestones* captures

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<sup>92</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 140.

<sup>93</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 170.

<sup>94</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 170.

<sup>95</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 162.

not only his sentiments but can be applied as a synthesis of Carlyle's own sentiments within *Sartor Resartus*: "These fabricators and deceiving people are liars."<sup>96</sup> Essentially, Carlyle and Qutb propose that the universe is a "mono-fabric" in that all the universe is made up of is representative of a transcendent order. According to Qutb, "behind the curtain of this universe an Intent is in action which resolves it; a Power which motivates it; and a Law which binds it in order."<sup>97</sup>

Qutb argues how the comprehensive nature of Islam can provide a lasting solution for the predicament humanity faces. Such an account informs a prospective explanation of as to how Carlylean transcendentalism might provide a lasting social order in its own right. According to Qutb, humanity must achieve a perfect harmony with the nature of the universe and such a harmony would naturally connote the "end" of human political development:

When man evolves an atmosphere of coordination and uniformity with nature, it results in the establishment of a state of concordance between the mutual relationship of man and the general struggle of life, for when man adopts an attitude of cooperation with nature it consequently follows in the birth of complete agreement between human life and the universe, and only one system prevails in the human life and the universe. Thus the collective side of mans' life becomes free from mutual clash and discord, and mankind is benefitted with total goodness. Thereafter various (mysteries) of the universe do not remain secret any more. Man becomes the knower of natures' secrets. Hidden powers of the universe become apparent to him, and he gets the trace of the hidden treasures in the spacious universe. He harnesses all those powers and treasures under the direction of God's laws for the total well-being and prosperity of mankind, leaving no room for any clash or conflict between man and the nature. Otherwise there is a constant struggle between them and the desires and carnal passions are raising their head against the Divine code.<sup>98</sup>

Qutb further remarks on the corollary implications of failing to recognize and discern a transcendent order and humanity's place in such an order:

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<sup>96</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 276.

<sup>97</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 163.

<sup>98</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 167.

Just as clash and conflict take place between man and his nature and between man and the universe, similarly these differences growing and expanding also take the shape of mutual discord between human beings, human groups, nations and communities and different human races. In consequence all the potentialities, stocks and treasures of the universe instead of being harnessed for the prosperity and advancement of mankind are converted into means of annihilation and causes of adversity for it.<sup>99</sup>

I contend that Carlyle theorized transcendentalism, in *Sartor Resartus*, to be a system which brings under its fold the entirety of human existence and calls on humanity to pursue renunciation and submission to the transcendent order as the only and necessary means of attaining social harmony and tranquility. Both Carlyle and Qutb theorize the renunciation of the individual as necessary for the elevation not only of the individual but humanity as a whole. According to both, renunciation needs to be pursued to such an extent that every individual commits himself to ascertaining the divine order and living in accord with it. In the absence of such renunciation and commitment, conflict among humanity in any and all forms will persist indefinitely. Qutb remarks that the Muslims of the first generation had received perfect training in the teachings of the Quran and thus “they had completely annihilated their individuality” and adopted the job of propagating the message of Islam.<sup>100</sup>

Such a dialogue with Islamism shows that Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* is something of a code that can only be decoded and applied to politics through deliberation on its political implications in the context of other competing doctrines and “end of history” perspectives. Carlyle does not explicitly articulate a political agenda in *Sartor Resartus*, nor does he articulate the steps to be taken whereby *Sartor Resartus* may be applied. Rather, Carlyle merely prophesies cryptically that the teachings in *Sartor Resartus* will be taken up and applied at a

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<sup>99</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 169.

<sup>100</sup> See Qutb, *Milestones*, 270. For Carlyle’s discussion of renunciation, see Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 144-145.

later date. Ostensibly, society will be reborn when the world in all it encompasses, including time, space, and all the ideologies and theologies previously advanced are viewed as monochromatic clothing that masks a latent, immaterial, and transcendent order. It can be inferred that Carlyle's account of transcendentalism is thus totalitarian in the one sense that it provides a comprehensive way for individuals to view their own individual lives in the context of an all-encompassing world history whose culmination is transcendentalism itself. In the absence of transcendentalism, one can make the inference that social and economic strife will persist indefinitely simultaneous to the persistence of conflict among incommensurable ideologies and theologies.

Qutb demonstrates much similarity with Carlyle in theorizing with respect to the deficiencies of such phenomena as nationalism and economic class warfare as cures to social ills. Qutb prescribes the ideal society as being a society not "in a condition that some are driven by greed while others burning with envy; that all of the affairs of the society are decided by the baton and sword, by threat, duress and violence; that the hearts of the population are desolate and their spirits broken, as is happening under the systems which are based on the authority of others than Allah's."<sup>101</sup> For Qutb, Islamic society suppresses "all the frivolous prejudices and weak associations of race, colour, language, country, material considerations and geographical boundaries."<sup>102</sup>

Carlylean transcendentalism points out the weaknesses of communism along the same contours Qutb used in theorizing Islamism vis-à-vis communism. According to Qutb:

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<sup>101</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 70-71.

<sup>102</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 103.

[Communism] claimed to demolish all the walls which were raised by colour and race, nation and country and geography. But the foundations of this society were also not erected on the all-embracing base of “human friendship” rather “class conflict” was made the basis of this society. Viewing from this angle, the communist society is another facet of the ancient Roman society. While the Roman society conferred distinction on the “nobility” the communist society imparts this status to the “Proletariate”, and the underlying emotion is the feeling of hatred, malice and envy. Such a degraded and malicious society cannot bear any other fruit except exciting the base human feelings.<sup>103</sup>

Carlyle’s transcendentalism is largely congruent with Qutb’s Islamism on these terms. Carlylean transcendentalism promises the resolution of the deficiencies in liberalism while also removing the basis of antagonistic class conflict (present in both capitalism and communism), ending racism, and ending religious conflict. Carlyle’s conceptions of renunciation and social solidarity, which he theorizes are embraced upon the acceptance of transcendentalism, illustrate the pathway by which class conflict, racism, and religious conflict may be progressively extinguished.<sup>104</sup> Transcendentalism prizes and prioritizes the immaterial and spiritual as a means to construct politically the ideal society whereas liberal democratic capitalism and communism both prize the material and economic.

Liberal democratic capitalism and communism each fail to leverage the immaterial/divine as a necessary construct to unite humanity and ameliorate conflict and division in all their forms. Without drawing on a transcendent/divine construct, conflict is likely to only persist and deepen, leading literally to the social *dis-integration* of individuals in the form of burgeoning inequality and disillusionment with materialist ideologies. Capitalism led to economic development spanning the centuries since its advent in the nineteenth century,

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<sup>103</sup> See Qutb, *Milestones*, 105. For Carlyle’s discussion of renunciation as a means of fostering social solidarity, see Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 143-145.

<sup>104</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 143-145.

but has the potential to increasingly lead to diminishing returns in the absence of a transcendental ethos that may be necessary to curtail inequality and achieve a type of communitarian consensus.

What sets Carlyle's transcendentalism and Qutb's Islamism apart from liberal democratic capitalism and communism is that they seek to *integrate* individuals into a shared solidarity on the basis of a divine/transcendent construct, while liberal democratic capitalism and communism are each premised on economic conflict. Transcendentalism seeks to eclipse the material and economic so as to elevate humanity to a higher spirituality where it will attain a higher purpose rather than perpetuate and recreate its purpose of achieving market equilibrium through production and consumption.<sup>105</sup>

A society based on the pursuit of greater and greater consumption, whose predominant priority is market equilibrium, is bound to be compromised in that ever-increasing consumption alongside ceaseless technological innovation is bound to be unsustainable. Such a social order burns itself out (either due to environmental degradation or by other means), as theorized by Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus* at the advent of the industrial age and recently in the 2010s by Milbank and Pabst in *The Politics of Virtue* and Deneen in *Why Liberalism Failed*. Even Jeff Bezos, the consummate capitalist of the early twenty-first century, corroborates these views in the context of advocating something as extreme as space colonization as a solution:

We humans have to go to space if we are going to continue to have a thriving civilization. We have become big as a population, as a species, and this planet is relatively small. We see it in

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<sup>105</sup> While transcendentalism is not discussed as a form for post-liberalism to take, Milbank and Pabst's *The Politics of Virtue* provides a valuable narration of market equilibrium being the definitive condition of liberalism. See John Milbank and Adrian Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

things like climate change and pollution and heavy industry. We are in the process of destroying this planet.<sup>106</sup>

This illustrates the profound tension that lies in a realization that the drive for economic growth as the hegemonic ethos was necessary for a time to achieve economic development, but that pursuing renunciation—or space colonization—as an “exit ramp” rather than growth provides an ethos to sustain and preserve such gains.

Milbank and Pabst succinctly delineate what they take to be the “metacrisis” of liberal democracy, in which liberalism falls short of producing a stable order marked by peace and prosperity:

Thus liberal democracy is undergoing a metacrisis (again, not a “final” crisis) whereby the modern oscillation between the sovereign power of the state on the one hand, and the sovereignty of self-possessed citizens on the other, removes people from their embeddedness in families, communities, and traditions. The attempted removal of substantive loyalty fraudulently legitimates the liberal claim that only the visible hand of government combined with the invisible hand of the market can save society from the anarchical “state of nature,” which liberalism really produces as its fantasised presupposition.<sup>107</sup>

Milbank and Pabst apply their political theory to international relations and conclude that “the simultaneous interdependence of national societies and the sundering of social, cultural and religious ties that bind together people within and across state borders suggest that liberal hegemony faces a metacrisis.”<sup>108</sup>

Qutb has documented the resistance Islamism has met with in a manner that could provide a window into the resistance transcendentalism would likely face if it were to be promoted as a post-liberal political doctrine:

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<sup>106</sup> Evan Niu, “Jeff Bezos Says We’re Destroying Earth, but Amazon Is the Slowest Tech Giant to Go Green,” *The Motley Fool*, July 19, 2019, <https://www.fool.com/investing/2019/07/19/jeff-bezos-says-were-destroying-earth-but-amazon-i.aspx>.

<sup>107</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 187.

<sup>108</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 319.



Man has in every period of history in the past, in the modern times, and perhaps in future also—tried to confront the true religion with diverse tactical feats to subdue it, because this religion sets human beings free from the lordship of others than Allah. That is why men placed all sorts of impediments and obstacles—political, social and economic in the way of this religion. They resorted to racial and class shibboleths.<sup>109</sup>

Qutb reflects on the difficulty of contesting a deeply entrenched hegemony:

Dominant thoughts and concepts have their particular influences and demands. It is difficult to get rid of them until man's relation is established with a supreme and sublime Reality whose protection reduces all these concepts and ideologies to triviality, making them pale into insignificance; and until energy is realised from such source which is more superior, more influential and more powerful than the source of those thoughts and concepts. A man who stands counter to the general flow of the society, challenging the dominating logic of the society, struggles against the common customs of the society, its current laws and values, thoughts and concepts and its aberrations and misguidedness, he will not only strongly feel his utter helplessness but also find himself alien and helpless in this fully crowded world, unless of course he seeks the support of a Being who is stronger than man, more steadfast than mountain and dearer than life.<sup>110</sup>

Qutb follows this passage with a conceptualization that parallels Carlyle's conceptualization of the "Everlasting Yea," couched in Islamic scripture. According to Qutb, god elevates those who accept the existence of a transcendent and divine order from the grief and anxiety of living in a secular society. Qutb quotes a Quranic verse that essentially mirrors Carlyle's message in his "Everlasting Yea": "Faint not nor grieve, for you will over come them if you are indeed believers."<sup>111</sup> Qutb remarks on this in a manner that is nearly perfectly synonymous with a plot summary of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*:

This instruction and guidance comes as a cure for both his grief and broken-heartedness. Both these sentiments generally take hold of man under inclement conditions. But a believing man overpowers these sentiments not merely by patience and steadfastness but by a sense of superiority and high vision. He is niched at such a high pedestal whence the Satanic and diabolical forces, dominant values, well-propagated thoughts and views, worldly constitutions

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<sup>109</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 116.

<sup>110</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 247.

<sup>111</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 247.

and laws, deeply pervading habits and customs and the common folk gathering around aberration appear low and degraded.

Only a believer is dominant and superior, both from the point of view of his support and origin. To him country and state have no significance nor big personalities carry any weight. Popular values and standards held in esteem within the country, appear inconsequential in his eyes. Views and concepts, popular and customary among the people cannot astound him. As such he is a supreme being. He always imbibes guidance from the eternal stream of God. He approaches God in every matter and always pursues the path directed by Him.<sup>112</sup>

Such passages from Qutb lay the foundation to realize that there is a mutual accord between Islamism and transcendentalism, since transcendentalism (in the Platonic, Carlylean, and Emersonian traditions) can be synthesized in a social and political context to merely replace Islamic theological dogma with an unbranded divinity and offer itself as the “true religion.” It also underscores the conclusions that Islamists should not be hostile to transcendentalism because transcendentalism embodies Islam just like Islam itself embodies and subsumes Christianity and Judaism. Islam was generated as a development from and resolution of the Christian and Judaic traditions and did not arise from nothing as a wholly free-standing independent and mutually exclusive tradition. Such is the same case for transcendentalism, as it builds on Islam and is a means to achieve Islamist aims.

Transcendentalism is “Islamic” because it supports renunciation and submission to the transcendent order just like Islam itself does and offers a political means of proselytization much like Islamism. According to Qutb, “the subject of [Islam] is ‘MAN’—the whole human species—and its sphere of activity is earth—the whole of it.”<sup>113</sup> Such a sentiment can be applied to transcendentalism, even though Carlyle, Emerson, Thoreau and the other American Transcendentalists met with limited success in initially conveying it. In dialoguing

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<sup>112</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 247-248.

<sup>113</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 117.

transcendentalism with Islam, it must be noted that the transcendent order, whether theorized through the Islamic tradition or transcendentalism, is the same order irrespective of how it is described, theorized, or branded.

Juxtaposing Carlyle with Qutb illustrates how each was a radical who espoused a radical philosophy as a means to fundamentally depart from and reconstitute the hegemonic political order. Both Carlyle and Qutb were immaterialists who sought to leverage the transcendent order as a means of yielding human solidarity and extinguishing human conflict. As James Anthony Froude has acknowledged, if by Radicalism was meant the view that modern society needed to be reconstituted from the root, then Carlyle was a thoroughgoing Radical.<sup>114</sup>

Transcendentalism embodies essentially what Qutb theorized that Islam embodies. Qutb calls Islam “the last link of the lengthy chain of invitation towards Allah, initiated under the leadership of noble messengers since the dawn of humanity.”<sup>115</sup> Islam is both literally and historically not such a last link, as Carlylean transcendentalism followed it in offering an invitation to the divine order. Islam has not offered an invitation to the divine order to a universal audience, as it is theologically intertwined with Judaism and Christianity and thus unable to breach the incommensurability it has with not only those two *other* religions but all *other* religions as well. Islam is the last *theological* invitation to the divine order vis-à-vis the other Abrahamic religions of Christianity and Judaism since it embodies the last distinct theological incarnation based on the Abrahamic theological tradition, and is thus not only closest chronologically but also philosophically to transcendentalism compared to Christianity

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<sup>114</sup> James Anthony Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London, 1834-1881*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), 19-20.

<sup>115</sup> Qutb, *Milestones*, 95.

and Judaism. It should be recognized that Carlyle's theory of transcendentalism as a philosophy was born at least in part, albeit neither directly nor explicitly, as a result of Islam's failure as a theology to represent and yield the end of history the way it set out to do and the way Qutb claims it is capable of doing. Essentially, if Islam represented the end of history, there would have been neither a need nor a capacity for Carlyle to theorize transcendentalism in *Sartor Resartus*, as Islam's hegemony would have precluded the possibility.<sup>116</sup>

Transcendentalism supersedes not only Islam but all other theological traditions because it recognizes them as arbitrary and fleeting, clothing that is worn by humanity for a time before it arbitrarily adopts a new theology to wear as its theological clothing. It is in this context—comparing Carlyle's transcendentalism with Islam as the last major Abrahamic theological incarnation—that Teufelsdröckh's definition of "Church Clothes" as "the Forms, the *Vestures*, under which men have at various periods embodied and represented for themselves the Religious Principle; that is to say, invested the Divine Idea of the World with a sensible and practically active Body, so that it might dwell among them as a living and life-giving WORD" is a particularly useful construct.<sup>117</sup>

In this chapter, I have begun to show how Carlyle's transcendentalism can be applied as an alternative to Nietzsche's nihilism, which I will build on in subsequent chapters. I have also demonstrated how transcendentalism can be constructed as an ideology in its own right by dialoging it with Islamism—a political ideology whose own advent was in the latter half of the

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<sup>116</sup> Versluis offers a discussion as to how transcendentalism is post-Christian in the sense that it embodies an evolution from Catholicism and Protestantism toward a Platonic non-dogmatism. This analysis can be applied in the context of situating transcendentalism with respect to Islam. Just as transcendentalism eclipses Catholicism and Protestantism, it can be constructed as eclipsing Islam. See Versluis, *American Gurus*, 18-19.

<sup>117</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 162.

twentieth century. In the next chapter, I will contrast Carlyle's political philosophy with the political philosophy of John Rawls, who is widely regarded as the most influential political philosopher of the twentieth century. Such a contrast further enables the construction of Carlyle's transcendentalism as a political doctrine. Just as Carlyle's transcendentalism is an alternative to Qutb's Islamism, it too is an alternative to Rawls's analytical-constructivist account of his liberal theory of justice.

## Chapter 4

### The Antagonism of Thomas Carlyle and John Rawls

John Rawls's twentieth-century philosophy stands in antagonism toward Thomas Carlyle's philosophy, albeit not explicitly. The contrast between Carlyle and Rawls in political philosophy has large-scale implications that transcend political theory and hold relevance not only to other subfields of political science but to large-scale conflicts in modern-day global politics. In the history of political thought, Carlyle and Rawls, even more than Carlyle and Mill, are polar and incommensurable. Carlyle epitomizes the intuitionist romantic and Rawls the constructivist rationalist. Though Carlyle and Rawls are disparate philosophers, bringing the two into dialogue is valuable because they each offered distinct insights into theorizing social justice. That they reached diverging conclusions with respect to justice, as a function of a) starting from different premises and b) constructing different arguments from their premises, provides a valuable mutual test of each philosopher's theory. In other words, the contrasting elements, and constructivism, of Carlyle's and Rawls's theories can be tested against one another. Contrasting Carlyle with Rawls also provides a lens through which to construct Carlyle's at times cryptic and scattered notions about justice into a coherent doctrine.

Although Rawls did not acknowledge Carlyle (or even American Transcendentalism) in his writings as offering a conception of justice to be contended with, Rawls in many ways emerged as a hegemonic influence on twentieth-century political philosophy from the ashes of Carlyle's own hegemonic influence during the nineteenth century. George Eliot described Carlyle's stature and prominence in the literary and academic spheres in 1855:

There is hardly a superior or active mind of this generation that has not been modified by Carlyle's writing; there has hardly been an English book written in the last ten or twelve years that would not have been different if Carlyle had not lived. The character of his influence is best seen in the fact that many of the men who have the least agreement with his opinions are those to whom the reading of *Sartor Resartus* was an epoch of their minds.<sup>1</sup>

And, in his 1965 study of *Sartor Resartus*, G.B. Tennyson remarked poignantly, "even today when Carlyle enjoys far from universal acclaim, there is general agreement that *Sartor Resartus* is a work of genius."<sup>2</sup>

*Sartor Resartus* has been described as "deliberately unsystematic" and a "philosophy of wonder and experience....With its intuitive, imaginative method, it attempts at every point to embrace a kind of totality."<sup>3</sup> Carlyle did not seek to construct a Kantian system.<sup>4</sup> As literature rather than pure (political) philosophy, *Sartor Resartus* epitomizes how Beenstock characterizes the relationship between romanticism and political theory:

The relationship between political philosophy and literature does not follow the direct, practical model of positive influence or application....It takes a complex, circuitous route that foregrounds conflict between the two forms. Literature impacts political theory from the bottom upwards in a relationship that cannot be conceived of as illustrative or clarifying....Romantic writers adopted a dissident approach to political philosophy that arises from philosophy's dissenting approach to literature.<sup>5</sup>

Carlyle presents Teufelsdröckh as the main character in *Sartor Resartus* as an alternative to social contract theory by way of Teufelsdröckh's philosophy of clothes.<sup>6</sup> Carlyle seeks a philosophy that brings justice to a higher level of metaphysical and spiritual abstraction than

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<sup>1</sup> George Eliot, *Essays of George Eliot*, ed. Thomas Pinney (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1963), 213-14.

<sup>2</sup> Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> LaValley, *Carlyle and the Idea of the Modern*, 70.

<sup>4</sup> LaValley, *Carlyle and the Idea of the Modern*, 71.

<sup>5</sup> Zoe Beenstock, *The Politics of Romanticism: The Social Contract and Literature* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Beenstock, *The Politics of Romanticism*, 187.

Rawls does.<sup>7</sup> While Rawls theorizes justice as confined to a relationship among humans in society, Carlyle theorizes justice as necessarily consisting of proper human relationships, but also as conformity to the metaphysical natural laws of the universe.<sup>8</sup>

Carlyle contrasted what he called “the man of logic and the man of insight; the Reasoner and the Discoverer, or even Knower.”<sup>9</sup> Carlyle was a “mystic” in the sense that he believed the deepest of all truths are known other than by reasoning.<sup>10</sup> As a corollary, Carlyle disbelieved in miracles, except in that deep sense in which all is miraculous, that nothing occurs as a result of blind forces, and that behind every scientific “explanation” there remains a mystery that no science can probe.<sup>11</sup> To Carlyle, the reasoner and discoverer are “quite separable,—indeed, for most part, quite separate characters.”<sup>12</sup> Carlyle ponders, “could you ever establish a Theory of the Universe that were entire, unimprovable, and which needed only to be got by heart; man then were spiritually defunct, the Species we now name Man had ceased to exist.”<sup>13</sup> Carlyle remarks on this paradigm, “but the gods, kinder to us than we are to ourselves, have forbidden such suicidal acts.”<sup>14</sup> Though Rawls’s theory of justice is by no means a “theory of the universe,” and there is no evidence that he sought to advance a “theory of the universe,” he nonetheless sought to advance a theory of justice that would be universal within the “universe” of justice.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Beenstock, *The Politics of Romanticism*, 187. Beenstock comments on Carlyle’s perspective toward social contract theories in a way that is useful to considering the contrast between Carlyle and Rawls’s own social contract theory. Beenstock writes, “These [social contract] theories open up a spiritual wasteland in Carlyle’s view as they place value within the human, rather than the abstract or metaphysical.”

<sup>8</sup> See Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 7-12.

<sup>9</sup> Carlyle, “Characteristics,” 5-6.

<sup>10</sup> Stewart, “Carlyle’s Place in Philosophy,” 173.

<sup>11</sup> Stewart, “Carlyle’s Place in Philosophy,” 174.

<sup>12</sup> Carlyle, “Characteristics,” 6.

<sup>13</sup> Carlyle, “Characteristics,” 38.

<sup>14</sup> Carlyle, “Characteristics,” 38.

<sup>15</sup> See Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 7-12.



According to Rawls's conception of the first feature of what he calls rational intuitionism, the order of moral values "does not depend on, nor is it to be explained by, the activity of any actual (human) minds, including the activity of reason."<sup>16</sup> Carlyle propounds the validity of this feature of rational intuitionism:

Practically men have come to imagine that the Laws of this Universe, like the laws of constitutional countries, are decided by voting; that it is all a study of division-lists, and for the Universe too, depends a little on the activity of the whipper-in. It is an idle fancy. The Laws of this Universe, of which if the Laws of England are not an exact transcript, they should passionately study to become such, are fixed by the everlasting congruity of things, and are not fixable or changeable by voting!<sup>17</sup>

Carlyle elaborates further:

My friend, do you think, had the united Posterity of Adam voted, and since the Creation done nothing but vote, that three and three were seven,--would this have altered the laws of arithmetic; or put to the blush the solitary Cocker who continued to assert privately that three and three were six? I consider, not. And is arithmetic, think you, a thing more fixed by the Eternal, than the laws of justice are, and what the right is of man towards man? The builder of this world was Wisdom and Divine Foresight, not Folly and Chaotic Accident. Eternal Law is silently present, everywhere and everywhen. By Law the Planets gyrate in their orbits;--by some approach to Law the Street-Cabs ply in their thoroughfares. No pin's point can you mark within the wide circle of the All where God's Laws are not. Unknown to you, or known (you had better try to know them a little!)—inflexible, righteous, eternal; not to be questioned by the sons of men.<sup>18</sup>

These passages capture how Carlyle views justice as something fixed, established, and in need of discovery. As such, Carlyle holds that reason cannot by itself *decide* what justice is without taking into account a larger (spiritual) context. Likewise, voting cannot by itself definitely determine what justice entails.

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<sup>16</sup> John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 91.

<sup>17</sup> Carlyle, "Parliaments," 282-283.

<sup>18</sup> Carlyle, "Parliaments," 284.

The second feature Rawls theorizes as characterizing rational intuitionism is that moral first principles are derived “by a kind of perception and intuition, as well as organized by first principles found acceptable on due reflection.”<sup>19</sup> Rawls further elaborates on this feature that intuitionists compare moral knowledge with knowledge of mathematics and that according to intuitionism the order of moral values is said to lie in God’s reason and to direct the divine will.<sup>20</sup> The conclusive feature of rational intuitionism, then, is that it “conceives of truth in a traditional way by viewing moral judgments as true when they are both about and accurate to the independent order of moral values [and] otherwise they are false.”<sup>21</sup>

In Carlyle’s many philosophical tracts, he never entertains what Rawls theorizes as the first feature of political constructivism, that “the principles of political justice (content) may be represented as the outcome of a procedure of construction (structure).”<sup>22</sup> Carlyle’s relationship to the other features of political constructivism (as theorized by Rawls) demonstrates Carlyle’s philosophical approach as clearly non-positivist (and non-idealist) in the context of moral, social, and political philosophy. The second feature of political constructivism is that the “procedure of construction is based essentially on practical reason and not on theoretical reason, [whereby] practical reason is concerned with the production of objects according to a conception of those objects—for example, the conception of a just constitutional regime taken as the aim of political endeavor—while theoretical reason is concerned with the knowledge of given objects.”<sup>23</sup> Carlyle’s political philosophy contrasts with this second feature because

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<sup>19</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 92.

<sup>20</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 92.

<sup>21</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 92.

<sup>22</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 93.

<sup>23</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 93.

Carlyle largely pursues social criticism and a philosophy of negation of what he takes to be the flaws in the *existent* political culture and social order.

Moreover, Carlylean philosophy is inimical to the third feature of Rawls's conception of political constructivism, namely that it views the person as belonging to political society understood as a fair system of social cooperation, and that persons possess the moral powers of a capacity for a sense of justice and for a conception of the good.<sup>24</sup> The basis upon which Carlyle composes *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, for example, is that he considers the sociopolitical environment in Victorian England to have reached such a point of injustice that it cannot persist much longer in its current state.<sup>25</sup> Carlyle argues that citizens lack what Rawls defines as a "capacity for a sense of justice that enables them to understand, apply, and to act from the reasonable principles of justice that specify fair terms of social cooperation."<sup>26</sup> While Rawls takes this as a premise, a starting-point, a given of sorts according to his ideal theory project, Carlyle takes this to be the *end* of politics and political philosophy from a "non-ideal" perspective. Thus, an inference from Carlylean philosophy could be that there would be no need to deliberate on an ideal society if such a society was already a fair system of social cooperation and persons possessed the moral powers of a capacity for a sense of justice and for a conception of the good, because such a society would already be *the* ideal society.

In "Characteristics," Carlyle remarks on the limits of philosophical inquiry, as such inquiry only emerges out of a recognition that society is unhealthy.<sup>27</sup> In a state of health,

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<sup>24</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 93.

<sup>25</sup> Carlyle, "The Present Time," 3-4.

<sup>26</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 103-104.

<sup>27</sup> Carlyle, "Characteristics," 1-3.

inquiry does not take place as there is no need to discover the ailment and its proper remedy.

Carlyle contended that philosophy, particularly conducted as a science, could reach no positive result.<sup>28</sup> After reaching no positive result, philosophy's futility would be demonstrated, and the way would be clear for a reassertion of the healthy intuitions of humanity that had prevailed prior to its fall from grace.<sup>29</sup>

Carlyle offers an argument that can be applied to counter the difference principle, Rawls's second principle of justice, and shows how the original position is a specious construction.<sup>30</sup> Rawls's second principle of justice is that social and economic inequalities are just if they are "to everyone's advantage."<sup>31</sup> Carlyle makes the case that an individual whose material existence improves may not end up being content. Carlyle argues that even with abundance, a laborer's discontent or real misery may be great.<sup>32</sup> Carlyle maintains, "the labourer's feelings, his notion of being justly dealt with or unjustly; his wholesome composure, frugality, prosperity in the one case, his acrid unrest, recklessness, gin-drinking, and gradual ruin in the other,--how shall figures of arithmetic represent all this?"<sup>33</sup> Carlyle is suggesting that the *tenor* of an economic relationship, particularly that of one between employer and employee, is of utmost importance when it comes to achieving justice. The application to Rawls's difference principle is that if the poor hypothetically gain financially as a function of

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<sup>28</sup> See Carlyle, "Characteristics," 38; Stewart, "Carlyle's Place in Philosophy," 162.

<sup>29</sup> Stewart, "Carlyle's Place in Philosophy," 162.

<sup>30</sup> Rawls defines the original position as a hypothetical state in which those tasked with determining the principles of justice are blind to the particular attributes of their lives such that "no one should be advantaged or disadvantaged by natural fortune or social circumstances in the choice of principles." Rawls's second principle of justice is as follows: "social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all." For a discussion of the original position and principles of justice, see Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 18, 60.

<sup>31</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 60.

<sup>32</sup> Carlyle, "Chartism," 335.

<sup>33</sup> Carlyle, "Chartism," 335.

growing inequality, this does not necessarily mean that the bonds of social solidarity among rich and poor are growing stronger. The persistence of exploitation, and the poor laborer viewing himself as being exploited, may supersede the laborer's own financial gains as a function of growing inequality.

Carlyle indirectly counters Bentham's utility principle, and in a manner that can be applied to counter Rawls' difference principle, with the argument that happiness is inherently insatiable.<sup>34</sup> Though directed at utilitarianism, such an argument can be applied to Rawls in the sense that "benefits to the least well-off" are also insatiable and that the least well-off cannot attain spiritual satisfaction merely by being beholden to external materialism derived from wealthier members of society. Carlyle's views with respect to the insatiability of desires are similar to Aristotle's, in which on the issue of ownership of property Aristotle attests that "it is more necessary to equalize people's desires than their properties."<sup>35</sup> Aristotle defends such a claim with the following reasoning:

The wickedness of human beings is insatiable: at first two obols were a sufficient allowance, but now that this has become the tradition men are always wanting something more, and are never contented until they get to infinity. It is the nature of desire to be infinite, and most people live for the satisfaction of desire. The source from which a remedy for such evils may be expected is not the equalization of property, but rather a method of training which ensures that the better sort of people have no desire to make themselves richer while the poorer sort have no opportunity to do so.<sup>36</sup>

Like Aristotle, Carlyle provides a philosophical justification for why he thinks it is optimal to renounce and minimize desires as opposed to maximize desires in pursuit of unattainable,

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<sup>34</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 144-145.

<sup>35</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 58. Carlyle does not reference Aristotle but it is noteworthy that their views parallel one another on this subject and others. Since Carlyle does not explicitly reference Aristotle in his writings, it is unknown how much he is influenced by Aristotle. Nonetheless, the parallels between Carlyle and Aristotle are noteworthy and demonstrate that Carlyle's views are not without precedent.

<sup>36</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 60.

infinite, and insatiable consumption. Carlyle philosophizes with respect to human nature through the voice of Teufelsdröckh in a manner that is largely synonymous to what Aristotle articulated in *Politics* on the insatiability of desires:

Man's Unhappiness, as I construe, comes of his Greatness; it is because there is an Infinite in him, which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury under the Finite. Will the whole Finance Ministers and Upholsterers and Confectioners of modern Europe undertake, in joint-stock company, to make one Shoeblack HAPPY? They cannot accomplish it, above an hour or two; for the Shoeblack also has a Soul quite other than his Stomach; and would require, if you consider it, for his permanent satisfaction and saturation, simply this allotment, no more, and no less: *God's infinite Universe altogether to himself*, therein to enjoy infinitely, and fill every wish as fast as it rose. Oceans of Hochheimer, a Throat like that Ophiuchus! Speak not of them; to the infinite Shoeblack they are as nothing. No sooner is your ocean filled, than he grumbles that it might have been of better vintage. Try him with half of a Universe, of an Omnipotence, he sets to quarrelling with the proprietor of the other half, and declares himself the most maltreated of men. —Always there is a black spot in our sunshine: it is even, as I said, the *Shadow of Ourselves*.<sup>37</sup>

Carlyle follows this theory of insatiability with an application to a more realistic condition, namely the universal recognition on the part of humanity that scarcity indeed exists and that it is impossible for every person to consume the infinite Universe. He maintains, again through the voice of Teufelsdröckh:

But the whim we have of Happiness is somewhat thus. By certain valuations, and averages, of our own striking, we come upon some sort of average terrestrial lot; this we fancy belongs to us by nature, and of indefeasible right. It is simple payment of our wages, of our deserts; requires neither thanks nor complaint: only such *overplus* as there may be do we account Happiness; any *deficit* again is Misery. Now consider that we have the valuation of our own deserts ourselves, and what a fund of Self-conceit there is in each of us,—do you wonder that the balance should so often dip the wrong way, and many a Blockhead cry: See there, what a payment; was ever worthy gentleman so used!—I tell thee...it all comes of thy Vanity; of what thou *fanciest* those same deserts of thine to be.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 144-145.

<sup>38</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 145.

Carlyle concludes on this basis that renunciation is a rational solution to the infinite nature of human desires. He articulates a thesis, again through Teufelsdröckh, that goes uncontemplated by both Bentham and Rawls:

So true is it, what I then said, that *the Fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator, as by lessening your Denominator*. Nay, unless my Algebra deceive me, *Unity* itself divided by *Zero* will give *Infinity*. Make thy claim of wages a zero, then; thou hast the world under thy feet. Well did the Wisest of our time write: 'It is only with Renunciation (*Entsagen*) that Life, properly speaking, can be said to begin.'<sup>39</sup>

Carlyle's theory of consumption and renunciation thus aligns to a large extent with that of Aristotle. Carlyle advances renunciation more strongly on the basis of the positive rewards it makes possible, while Aristotle emphasizes the rewards that come with moderation in the satisfaction of one's appetites. According to Aristotle:

for in an irrational being the desire for pleasure is insatiable even if it tries every source of gratification, and the exercise of appetite increases its innate force, and if appetites are strong and violent they even expel the power of calculation. Hence they should be moderate and few, and should in no way oppose the rational principle—and this is what we call an obedient and chastened state—and as the child should live according to the direction of his tutor, so the appetitive element should live according to reason. Hence the appetitive element in a temperate man should harmonize with reason; for the noble is the mark at which both aim, and the temperate man craves for the things he ought, as he ought, and when he ought; and this is what reason directs.<sup>40</sup>

Aristotle articulates a conception of distributive justice that Carlyle himself affirms, although without citing Aristotle. For Aristotle, "a just distribution is one in which there is proportion between the things distributed and those to whom they are distributed."<sup>41</sup> Aristotle maintains that those who contribute equally to the function of society should receive equal compensation, while those who are superior or inferior should receive compensation that is

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<sup>39</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 145.

<sup>40</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 59.

<sup>41</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 103.

correspondingly superior or inferior.<sup>42</sup> From this Aristotle draws the following conclusion: "If all are thus treated proportionately to the contribution they make, all are really receiving equal treatment; for the proportion between contribution and reward is the same in every case. The sort of equality which justice involves is thus proportionate equality; and this is the essence of distributive justice."<sup>43</sup> Carlylean philosophy lies counter to Rawls's difference principle with a conception of economic justice that parallels Aristotle's conception:

"A fair day's-wages for a fair day's-work:" it is as just a demand as Governed men ever made of Governing. It is the everlasting right of man. Indisputable as Gospels, as arithmetical multiplication-tables: it must and will have itself fulfilled;--and yet, in these time of ours, with what enormous difficulty, next-door to impossibility! For the times are really strange; of a complexity intricate with all the new width of the ever-widening world; times here of half-frantic velocity of impetus, there of the dearest-looking stillness and paralysis; times definable as showing two qualities, Dilettantism and Mammonism;--most intricate obstructed times! Nay, if there were not a Heaven's radiance of Justice, prophetic, clearly of Heaven, discernible behind all these confused world-wide entanglements, of Landlord interests, Manufacturing interests, Tory-Whig interests, and who knows what other interests, expedencies, vested interests, established possessions, inveterate Dilettantisms, Midas-eared Mammonisms,--it would seem to everyone a flat impossibility, which all wise men might as well at once abandon. If you do not know eternal Justice from momentary Expediency, and understand in your heart of hearts how Justice, radiant, beneficent, as the all-victorious Light-element, is also in essence, if need be, an all-victorious *Fire*-element, and melts all manner of vested interests, and the hardest iron cannon, as if they were soft wax, and does ever in the long-run rule and reign, and allows nothing else to rule and reign,--you also would talk of impossibility! But it is only difficult, it is not impossible. Possible? It is, with whatever difficulty, very clearly inevitable.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, in his exposition of his account of economic justice, Carlyle seeks to demonstrate how "a fair day's-wages for a fair day's-work" is "no rhetorical flourish; it is an authentic, altogether quiet fact."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 112.

<sup>43</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 112.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 23-24.

<sup>45</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 24.



Carlyle exclaims: "To reward men according to their worth: alas, the perfection of this, we know, amounts to the millennium!"<sup>46</sup> According to Carlyle, poverty is a deep social malfunction and "Pauperism is the poisonous dripping from all the sins, and putrid unveracities and godforgetting greedinesses and devil-serving cants and jesuitisms, that exist among us."<sup>47</sup>

As Carlyle maintains:

For Pauperism, though it now absorbs its high figure of millions annually, is by no means a question of money only, but of infinitely higher and greater than all conceivable money. If our Chancellor of the Exchequer had a Fortunatus' purse, and miraculous sacks of Indian meal that would stand scooping from forever,--I say, even on these terms Pauperism could not be endured; and it would vitally concern all British Citizens to abate Pauperism, and never rest till they had ended it again. Pauperism is the general leakage through every joint of the ship that it is rotten. Were all men doing their duty, or even seriously trying to do it, there would be no Pauper. Were the pretended Captains of the world at all in the habit of commanding; were the pretended Teachers of the world at all in the habit of teaching,--of admonishing said Captains among others, and with sacred zeal apprising them to what *place* such neglect was leading,--how could Pauperism exist?<sup>48</sup>

While Rawls takes poverty and inequality more or less for granted as staples of liberal society to be reckoned with accordingly in the original position, Carlyle contemplates a permanent solution to poverty:

We may depend upon it, where there is a Pauper, there is a sin; to make one Pauper there go many sins. Pauperism is our Social Sin grown manifest; developed from the state of a spiritual ignobleness, a practical impropriety and base oblivion of duty, to an affair of the ledger...Not one idle Sham lounging about Creation upon false pretences, upon means which he has not earned, upon theories which he does no practice, but yields his share of Pauperism somewhere or other.<sup>49</sup>

Carlyle communicates the high stakes that are involved with respect to the plight of the least well-off:

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<sup>46</sup> Thomas Carlyle, "Model Prisons", 91.

<sup>47</sup> Carlyle, "The New Downing Street," 191.

<sup>48</sup> Carlyle, "The New Downing Street," 190.

<sup>49</sup> For Rawls's discussion of the "veil of ignorance," premised on no one knowing his class position, see Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 137. See Carlyle, "The New Downing Street," 191.

The Idle Workhouse, now about to burst of overfilling, what is it but the scandalous poison-tank of drainage from the universal Stygian quagmire of our affairs? Workhouse Paupers; immortal sons of Adam rotted into that scandalous condition, subter-slavish, demanding that you would make slaves of them as an unattainable blessing! My friends, I perceive the quagmire must be drained, or we cannot live. And farther, I perceive, this of Pauperism is the corner where we must *begin*,--the levels all pointing thitherward, the possibilities lying all clearly there. On that Problem we shall find that innumerable things, that all things whatsoever hang. By courageous steadfast persistence in that, I can foresee Society itself regenerated.<sup>50</sup>

Rawls and Carlyle are in agreement with respect to the need for the organization of labor. In language that at a minimum approaches Carlyle's, Rawls cites the organization of labor as one of five institutions necessary to ensure the stability of society:

Society as employer of last resort through general or local government, or other social and economic policies. Lacking a sense of long-term security and the opportunity for meaningful work and occupation is not only destructive of citizens' self-respect but of their sense that they are members of society and not simply caught in it. This leads to self-hatred, bitterness, and resentment.<sup>51</sup>

The sentiments of Carlyle and Aristotle stand in contrast to those of Karl Marx with respect to the consideration of private property. Marx does not view renunciation as necessary for the evolution of private property to communal ownership:

In order to abolish the *idea* of private property, the *idea* of communism is completely sufficient. It takes *actual* communist action to abolish actual private property. History will come to it; and this movement, which in *theory* we already know to be a self-transcending movement, will constitute in *actual fact* a very severe and protracted process.<sup>52</sup>

Marx's conception of economic justice does not consider Carlyle's emphasis on just wages and renunciation of material appetites. Marx's theory of economic justice in the form of communism embodies a revolutionary transformation of norms whereby there is a radical transition from private property to communal ownership.

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<sup>50</sup> Carlyle, "The New Downing Street," 191-192.

<sup>51</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, lvii.

<sup>52</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 88.

Carlyle articulates his approach to the benefit of the least well-off through a scene in *Sartor Resartus* with Professor Teufelsdröckh:

Well do we recollect the last words he spoke in our hearing; which indeed, with the Night they were uttered in, are to be forever remembered. Lifting his huge tumbler of *Gukguk*, and for a moment lowering his tobacco-pipe, he stood up in full coffeehouse (it was *Zum Grünen Gänse*, the largest in Weissnichtwo, where all the Virtuosity, and nearly all the Intellect, of the place assembled of an evening); and there, with low, soul-stirring tone, and the look truly of an angel, though whether of white or of a black one might be dubious, proposed this toast: *Die Sache der Armen in Gottes und Teufels Namen* (The Cause of the Poor in Heaven's name and -----'s)! One full shout, breaking the leaden silence; then a gurgle of innumerable emptying bumpers, again followed by universal cheering, returned him loud acclaim.<sup>53</sup>

Such a passage underscores the need for a spirited empathy with the poor and has a different tenor from Rawls's rationalistic constructivism of the difference principle.

Moreover, Carlyle in many ways offered an "original position" that would come prior to the original position offered by John Rawls.<sup>54</sup> In "Characteristics," Carlyle calls on his audience to examine the "spirit" of society that in turn manifests itself in the material condition of society and its members:

let us rather look within, into the Spiritual condition of Society, and see what aspects and prospects offer themselves there. For after all, it is there properly that the secret and origin of the whole is to be sought: the Physical derangements of Society are but the image and impress of its Spiritual; while the heart continues sound, all other sickness is superficial, and temporary. False Action is the fruit of false Speculation; let the spirit of Society be free and strong, that is to say, let true Principles inspire the members of Society, then neither can disorders accumulate in its Practice; each disorder will be promptly, faithfully inquired into, and remedied as it arises. But alas, with us the Spiritual condition of Society is no less sickly than the Physical. Examine man's internal world, in any of its social relations and performances, here too all seems diseased self-consciousness, collision and mutually-destructive struggle. Nothing acts from within outwards in undivided healthy force; everything lies impotent, lamed, its force turned inwards, and painfully 'listens to itself.'<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 12-13.

<sup>54</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Carlyle, "Characteristics," 22.

Carlyle was disappointed with the failure of Victorian society's governing classes to awaken to their duties and, in so doing, both abandon their reckless pursuit of wealth and replace the "cash-nexus" with an ethos of social cooperation.<sup>56</sup>

That Carlyle's moral philosophy, like Rawls's, is presented to contest utilitarianism should be recognized to compare their approaches. To Carlyle, justice entails striving toward the perfectibility of all human interrelationships, both economic and non-economic. As he sees it, "cash never yet paid one man fully his deserts to another; nor could it, nor can it, now or henceforth to the end of the world."<sup>57</sup> Such a viewpoint offers a broader scope to social justice than what is offered through Rawls's difference principle, in that it requires more than the difference principle as a means of attaining justice.<sup>58</sup> Carlyle persists, "for all human things do require to have an Ideal in them; to have some Soul in them, as we said, were it only to keep the Body unputrefied."<sup>59</sup> He takes issue with how "we construct our theory of Human Duties, not on any Greatest-Nobleness Principle, never so mistaken; no, but on a Greatest-Happiness Principle."<sup>60</sup> In this way, he seeks to break from Bentham (and in a manner that can be contrasted with Rawls) and overcome thinking of justice in utilitarian *or* redistributive terms. Carlyle ponders, "Oh, if you could dethrone that Brute-god Mammon, and put a Spirit-god in his place! One way or other, he must and will have to be dethroned."<sup>61</sup> He doubles down:

"Happy," my brother? First of all, what difference is it whether thou art happy or not! Today becomes Yesterday so fast, all Tomorrows become Yesterdays; and then there is no question whatever of the 'happiness,' but quite another question. Nay, thou hast such a sacred pity left at least for thyself, thy very pains, once gone over into Yesterday, become joys to thee. Besides,

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<sup>56</sup> David R. Sorensen, "'The Great Pioneer of National Socialist Philosophy'?", 50-51.

<sup>57</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 236.

<sup>58</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 60.

<sup>59</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 237.

<sup>60</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 192-193.

<sup>61</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 237.

thou knowest not what heavenly blessedness and indispensable sanative virtue was in them; thou shalt only know it after many days, when thou art wiser!<sup>62</sup>

Carlyle and Rawls depart from utilitarianism and go in opposite directions philosophically. Carlyle departs toward romanticism while Rawls departs to rationalism and this results in the incommensurability between Carlyle and Rawls. Carlyle's philosophy is romanticist to such an extent, I argue, that Rawls's philosophy looks nearly synonymous to utilitarianism if viewed through a Carlylean lens. Carlyle writes, elevating intuition over reason and rationalism: "what a time of it had we, were all men's life and trade still, in all parts of it, a problem, a hypothetic seeking, to be settled by painful Logics and Baconian Inductions!"<sup>63</sup> Both utilitarianism and Rawls's philosophy are each in pursuit of economic and material gains as the basis on which each deliberates and as the primary goal that is unconsciously taken for granted, while for Carlyle consumption is merely necessary to meet a threshold of sustenance.<sup>64</sup> Carlyle espouses a philosophy of renunciation as a means toward achieving wisdom and non-material riches while Bentham and Rawls never breach the boundaries of economy into the realms of the immaterial, ideal, Platonic, or transcendental and thus are purely materialist philosophers.

According to Rawls, critics of utilitarianism failed to "construct a workable and systematic moral conception to oppose it. The outcome is that we often seem forced to choose between utilitarianism and intuitionism."<sup>65</sup> Such a statement underscores Rawls's lack of

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<sup>62</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 193-194.

<sup>63</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 204.

<sup>64</sup> For a discussion of Rawls's principles of justice, see Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 60. For Rawls's discussion of utilitarianism as the idea that "society is rightly ordered, and therefore just, when its major institutions are arranged so as to achieve the greatest net balance of satisfaction summed over all the individuals belonging to it, see Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 22-27.

<sup>65</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, viii.

engagement with the nature of Carlyle's objections to utilitarianism.<sup>66</sup> A "systematic moral conception" is anathema to the nature of Carlyle's critique of utilitarianism, as Carlyle has been characterized as a philosopher who "laboriously built up a system to prove that systems are impossible."<sup>67</sup>

Carlyle defines "Benthamee Radicalism" as the "gospel of 'Enlightened Selfishness,'" which begs the question as to what he would have made of Rawls's difference principle, in which Rawls asserts it would be agreed to by an individual in the original position because behind a veil of ignorance an individual would want to maximize his minimum.<sup>68</sup> Carlyle was in no way immune to the pursuit of material sustenance and himself enjoyed the compensation attained via market economy, but his philosophy does not fixate on the pursuit of material gains as being the sole or primary means to attain a philosophical ideal or enlightenment and definitely does not cast the material as the primary end of his philosophy. This is why Rawls's difference principle is inimical to Carlylean philosophy.

Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* offers premises and conclusions that are opposed to and thus incommensurable with the premises and conclusions Rawls offers in *A Theory of Justice*. Each text provides a constructivist approach as a means to defend a theory of social justice. *Sartor Resartus* typifies and epitomizes Carlyle as someone whose "great labor was to be ascertaining what ailed the world and then broadcasting his findings."<sup>69</sup> *Sartor Resartus* magnifies the

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<sup>66</sup> Carlyle is not mentioned in *A Theory of Justice* and is only mentioned in passing in Rawls's *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy* when Rawls acknowledged that Mill responded to Carlyle's objections to utilitarianism. See John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Samuel Freeman (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 263.

<sup>67</sup> Herbert L. Stewart, "Carlyle's Place in Philosophy," *The Monist* 29, no. 2 (April 1919): 186, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/27900736.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A9259d6177ee831669ac924ab12a781f1>.

<sup>68</sup> See Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 36; Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 152-157.

<sup>69</sup> Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus*, 10.

adversity, tribulation, and alienation of human experience with a fictitious account of Professor Teufelsdröckh's search for social justice. *A Theory of Justice* offers a new theory of justice as fairness through a constructivist approach that seeks to undermine utilitarianism by deriving justice through a controlled social experiment, whereby individuals deliberate about justice behind a veil of ignorance in the original position.

In many ways, Carlyle's fictitious character Teufelsdröckh embodies implicitly what Rawls explicitly sought to achieve in the original position, whereby, according to Rawls, "to see our place in society from the perspective of this position is to see it *sub specie aeternitatis*: it is to regard the human situation not only from all social but also from all temporal points of view."<sup>70</sup> Teufelsdröckh's search for and discovery of social justice is in fact *commensurable* with justice as fairness with respect to the aim that both Carlyle and Rawls seek to achieve.

According to Rawls in his last sentences of *A Theory of Justice*:

The perspective of eternity is not a perspective from a certain place beyond the world, nor the point of view of a transcendent being; rather it is a certain form of thought and feeling that rational persons can adopt within the world. And having done so, they can, whatever their generation, bring together into one scheme all individual perspectives and arrive together at regulative principles that can be affirmed by everyone as he lives by them, each from his own standpoint. Purity of heart, if one could attain it, would be to see clearly and to act with grace and self-command from this point of view.<sup>71</sup>

Rawls acknowledges that deriving a theory of justice requires a constructivist approach and that "without a definite structure of this kind the question posed is indeterminate."<sup>72</sup> Rawls acknowledges this to defend himself from contract theorists who question whether a theory of justice can be derived in the context of an original position where persons know nothing at all

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<sup>70</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 587.

<sup>71</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 587.

<sup>72</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 159-160.

about themselves or their world.<sup>73</sup> This is the basis for perhaps the most fundamental point of incommensurability between *Sartor Resartus* and *A Theory of Justice*, as Carlyle casts his protagonist as *the* person who knows as much as can be known about the world in that he is able to formulate the philosophy of clothes as a function of this knowledge.<sup>74</sup> Rawls's justification for his constructivist approach is thus contestable by applying Carlyle's philosophy.

*Sartor Resartus* stands inimical to the following remarks Rawls makes:

From the point of view of contract theory it amounts to supposing that the persons in the original position know nothing at all about themselves or their world. How, then, can they possibly make a decision? A problem of choice is well defined only if the alternatives are suitably restricted by natural laws and other constraints, and those deciding already have certain inclinations to choose among them. Without a definite structure of this kind the question posed is indeterminate.<sup>75</sup>

Rawls's open restriction of Carlylean transcendentalism (as it is theorized in *Sartor Resartus*) from being a plausible alternative account of social justice is particularly problematic precisely on account of how those deciding on justice know nothing about themselves or their world. In light of *Sartor Resartus*'s conclusions that are in diametric opposition to those of *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls's characterization of "natural laws and other constraints" restricting alternatives and those in the original position having "certain inclinations" become all the more nebulous and ill-defined.

Carlyle almost foreshadows someone like Rawls coming along in political theory's future. He begins his chapter entitled "Morrison Again" in *Past and Present* speaking of how new Morrison's Pills, new cure-calls, will be promoted to solve the weightiest of political

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<sup>73</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 159.

<sup>74</sup> For a discussion of Carlyle's construction of Teufelsdröckh's omniscience, see Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus*, 209.

<sup>75</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 159-160.



problems, all of which are condemned to failure. Carlyle writes, "Nevertheless, O Advanced-Liberal, one cannot promise thee any 'New Religion,' for some time; to say truth, I do not think we have the smallest chance of any!"<sup>76</sup> Thus, he is using "religion" with a secular connotation, as a secular creed whose purpose and intent would be to solve all of the social maladies and injustices that plague the world. While not articulating definite elixirs to the problem of justice, Carlyle offered a theory as to how all definitive prescriptions will fall short. He discounts all cure-alls:

It seems to be taken for granted, by these interrogative philosophers, that there is some "thing," or handful of "things," which could be done; some Act of Parliament, "remedial measure" or the like, which could be passed, whereby the social malady were fairly fronted, conquered, put an end to; so that, with your remedial measure in your pocket, you could then go on triumphant, and be troubled no farther. "You tell us the evil," cry such persons, as if justly aggrieved, "and do not tell us how it is to be cured!"

How it is to be cured? Brothers, I am sorry I have got no Morrison's Pill for curing the maladies of Society.<sup>77</sup>

Carlyle's humble admission that he has no *exact* cure-all in the form of *exact* principles for the maladies of society is a foundational attribute of his as a political philosopher. In this regard, he differs from political philosophers such as Marx and Rawls, who commit to specific means of curing social ills, only to see their philosophies never transpire according to the ideal they had theorized. This underscores Carlyle's view that individuals must act as individuals to actuate and approximate justice at the collective level, and that a top-down remedy cannot take the place of individuals acting with the proper spirit and inspiration to improve the world as a whole. In this way, Carlyle unveils a strategy for curing the maladies of society when he

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<sup>76</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 280.

<sup>77</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 29.

theorizes about the radical change that will need to be undertaken in order to resolve what plagues modernity:

It were infinitely handier if we had a Morrison's Pill, Act of Parliament, or remedial measure, which men could swallow, one good time, and then go on in their old courses, cleared from all miseries and mischiefs! Unluckily we have none such; unluckily the Heavens themselves, in their rich pharmacopoeia, contain none such. There will no "thing" be done that will cure you. There will a radical universal alteration of your regiment and way of life take place; there will a most agonising divorce between you and your chimeras, luxuries and falsities, take place; a most toilsome, all-but "impossible" return to Nature, and her veracities and her integrities, take place: that so the inner fountains of life may again begin, like eternal Light-fountains, to irradiate and purify your bloated, swollen, foul existence, drawing nigh, as at present, to nameless death! Either death, or else all this will take place. Judge if, with such diagnosis, any Morrison's Pill is like to be discoverable!<sup>78</sup>

Carlyle expands on his conception of Morrison Pills in a way that illustrates how they are synonymous with dogmatic theologies and ideologies that are inherently unsubstantiated and ineffectual:

But indeed, when men and reformers ask for "a religion," it is analogous to their asking, "What would you have us to do?" and suchlike. They fancy that their religion too shall be a kind of Morrison's Pill, which they have only to swallow once, and all will be well. Resolutely once gulp-down your Religion, your Morrison's Pill, you have it all plain sailing now: you can follow your affairs, your no-affairs, go along money-hunting, pleasure-hunting, dilettanteing, dangling, and miming and chattering...: your Morrison will do your business for you. Men's notions are very strange!—Brother, I say there is not, was not, nor will ever be, in the wide circle of Nature, any Pill or Religion of that character. Man cannot afford thee such; for the very gods it is impossible. I advise thee to renounce Morrison; once for all, quit hope of the Universal Pill. For body, for soul, for individual or society, there has not any such article been made. *Non extat*. In Created Nature it is not, was not, will not be. In the void imbroglios of Chaos only, and realms of Bedlam, does some shadow of it hover, to bewilder and bemock the poor inhabitants *there*.<sup>79</sup>

Rawls's theory of justice as fairness, underwritten by his two principles of justice, embodies perhaps the most compelling "remedial measure" in contemporary political philosophy to the persistent philosophical and practical problem of injustice given the

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<sup>78</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 29-30.

<sup>79</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 282-283.

magnitude of its impact and influence since *A Theory of Justice*'s initial publication. Yet, it has not proven itself to have conquered or cured injustice as a social malady, much less to have been acted upon or implemented in a universal manner given the persistent problems of economic inequality and poverty.

As such, Rawls's theory of justice cannot escape being an ideal theory that is a "Morrison's Pill" when looked at through the lens of Carlylean philosophy. This is because Rawls neglects to stipulate the necessity of improving, or making more virtuous, the human "regiment and way of life" in any context beyond the two principles of justice.<sup>80</sup> Rawls neglects to elevate the virtues/values of renunciation, fraternity, and mutual solidarity in any informal or formal sense beyond the two principles of justice. Mutual solidarity, it might be said, is intrinsic to the difference principle (Rawls's second principle of justice), yet the difference principle is derived from the individual behind a veil of ignorance looking out for his/her own self-interests and seeking to maximize his/her minimum rather than as a means to cultivate mutual solidarity and fraternity in a genuine spirit irrespective of one's self-interests. The two principles of justice, it might be inferred from Carlyle, cannot undo and cure individuals living unvirtuous lifestyles, such as engaging in exploitation or the pursuit of infinite consumption as a means to satisfy insatiable appetites.

Carlyle, moreover, identifies the need to empower proper political leadership, and how to go about doing so, as a problem to solve in political theory of paramount importance:

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<sup>80</sup> Rawls articulates the following two principles of justice he believes would be chosen in the context of the original position: "First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others. Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all." See Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 60.

But oppression by your Mock-Superiors well shaken off, the grand problem yet remains to solve: That of finding government by your Real-Superiors! Alas, how shall we ever learn the solution of that, benighted, bewildered, sniffing, sneering, godforgetting unfortunates as we are? It is a work for centuries; to be taught us by tribulations, confusions, insurrections, obstructions; who knows if not by conflagration and despair! It is a lesson inclusive of all other lessons; the hardest of all lessons to learn.<sup>81</sup>

The question of political leadership is necessary to solve both in ideal and non-ideal political theory and went largely unacknowledged by Rawls. Carlyle recognized the critical importance of empowering the best leaders and the important (though often overlooked) distinction between the genuinely best leaders and what he refers to as “sham” leaders.<sup>82</sup> He identifies this as critically important for his native England and demonstrates what the stakes are. He maintains how “England will either learn to reverence its Heroes, and discriminate them from its Sham-Heroes...or else England will continue to worship new and ever-new forms of Quackhood,--and so, with what resiliences and reboundings matters little, go down to the Father of Quacks!”<sup>83</sup>

Alasdair MacIntyre’s articulation of the incommensurability between Rawls and Robert Nozick can be applied to theorize of the grander incommensurability and polar antagonism between Carlyle and Rawls.<sup>84</sup> Incommensurability manifests when philosophers share no consensus with respect to not only the conclusions they reach but the assumptions, starting points, and methods they employ to arrive at such conclusions.<sup>85</sup> MacIntyre conceives of

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<sup>81</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 272.

<sup>82</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 273.

<sup>83</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 273.

<sup>84</sup> MacIntyre conceives of incommensurability in the context of Rawls and Robert Nozick’s libertarian rebuttal to Rawls in his *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*.

<sup>85</sup> Brad S. Gregory provides his own definition of incommensurability as “when rival protagonists present internally coherent arguments, they rely on incompatible assumptions that cannot but yield disagreement. Dialogue and rational discussion are themselves destined to be frustratingly fruitless so long as antagonists maintain their respective, underlying presuppositions.” For a compelling synthesis of MacIntyre’s philosophical project see Brad S.

incommensurability as taking place when divergent arguments with respect to a political, philosophical, and/or moral problem are logically valid, the conclusions follow from the premises, yet “the rival premises are such that we possess no rational way of weighing the claims of one as against another.”<sup>86</sup> According to MacIntyre, “there seems to be no rational way of securing moral agreement in our culture.”<sup>87</sup> The contrast between Rawls and Nozick exemplifies this in that Nozick frames his conception of justice in an account of acquisition and entitlement while Rawls frames his conception of justice in an account of the equality of persons in their claims to basic needs.<sup>88</sup> After comparing the two, MacIntyre arrives at a conclusion:

But our pluralist culture possesses no method of weighing, no rational criterion for deciding between claims based on legitimate entitlement against claims based on need. Thus these two types of claim are indeed, as I suggested, incommensurable, and the metaphor of “weighing” moral claims is not just inappropriate but misleading.<sup>89</sup>

MacIntyre points out that Rawls and Nozick each neglect to “make any reference to *desert* in their account of justice, nor could they consistently do so.”<sup>90</sup> For example, in Nozick’s account, acquisition could be either just or unjust, based on desert or not. Rawls’s difference principle is wholly exclusive from desert in that desert is in no way a necessary justification for the distribution of resources from the wealthy to the least well off. Rawls invokes Mill to invalidate the legitimacy of any call for a proper compensation for one’s work as necessary for the attainment of economic justice. Rawls concludes, reiterating Mill:

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Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 125-126, 180-181.

<sup>86</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 8.

<sup>87</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 6.

<sup>88</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 229.

<sup>89</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 229. For MacIntyre’s discussion of the metaphor of ‘weighing claims see p. 227—229.

<sup>90</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 232.

In the case of wages, the precepts to each according to his effort and to each according to his contribution are contrary injunctions taken by themselves. Moreover, if we wish to assign them certain weights, they provide no way to determine how their relative merits are to be ascertained. Thus common sense precepts do not express a determinate theory of just or fair wages.<sup>91</sup>

Carlyle can be contrasted to Rawls when Rawls remarks that a “higher principle” such as the two principles of justice as fairness are necessary in order to derive a determinate theory of just wages.<sup>92</sup> By omitting a higher principle, Carlyle charges intuition with the task of deriving just wages as compensation for work, as there is no scientific means of deriving just wages that does not call on intuition. As it is impossible to *scientifically* apportion just wages, Carlyle calls for the pursuit of achieving an *approximation* such that the approximation will grow more and more just over time rather than less and less just.<sup>93</sup> By moving in the direction of justice, solutions to the problems of exploitation, inequality, and poverty will be more and more within reach and consciously enacted. This illustrates, just as MacIntyre does with Rawls and Nozick, that Rawls and Carlyle are incommensurable.

Rawls bases his theory of justice on the assumption that alienation and exploitation will persist in perpetuity and that they cannot be solved under free market conditions. This embodies a tense dissonance in that Rawls presents his ideal theory of justice by upholding implicitly, or at least assuming, that alienation, exploitation, and poverty are non-ideal attributes/products of the free market that cannot be solved by individuals at the level of individual action. If individuals are incapable of altering their economic behaviors of production and consumption (and the compensation of labor that corresponds accordingly) at the

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<sup>91</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 304-305.

<sup>92</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 305.

<sup>93</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 25-26.

individual level as a means to attain economic justice, why should it be assumed that they would assent to the difference principle as a means to attain economic justice? Rawls reflects that “competition is at best imperfect and persons receive less than the value of their contribution, and in this sense they are exploited.”<sup>94</sup> Yet, such exploitation arises only in an economy in which individuals behave unjustly at an individual level in apportioning compensation based on the value of labor. Rawls’s solution to exploitation is a “competitive economy with the appropriate background institutions [as] an ideal scheme which shows how the two principles of justice might be realized.”<sup>95</sup> However, this means of attaining justice requires intuition and is indeterminable as a function of embodying a retroactive *correction* of market forces.

Like Carlyle in a different application, Rawls uses the term “approximate” to describe the extent to which justice is attained, or can be attained, using his two principles of justice.<sup>96</sup> Rawls maintains that, calling on the two principles of justice, “we are in a better position to assess how serious the existing imperfections are and to decide upon the best way to approximate the ideal.”<sup>97</sup> Rawls does not elaborate on the specifics of how to go about assessing existing imperfections or even how to properly recognize imperfections. He also neglects any discussion of what is necessary “to decide upon the best way to approximate the ideal,” as this phrase offers no systematic means of either approximating the ideal or ascertaining the conditions to attain the ideal.

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<sup>94</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 309.

<sup>95</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 309.

<sup>96</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 309.

<sup>97</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 309.

Rawls maintains that distributive justice in the form of “fair day’s wages for fair day’s work” would not be chosen as a principle of justice in the original position. Rawls writes:

There is a tendency for common sense to suppose that income and wealth, and the good things in life generally, should be distributed according to moral desert. Justice is happiness according to virtue. While it is recognized that this ideal can never be fully carried out, it is the appropriate conception of distributive justice, at least as a *prime facie* principle, and society should try to realize it as circumstances permit. Now justice as fairness rejects this conception. Such a principle would not be chosen in the original position. There seems to be no way of defining the requisite criterion in that situation. Moreover, the notion of distribution according to virtue fails to distinguish between moral desert and legitimate expectations....A just scheme, then, answers to what men are entitled to; it satisfies their legitimate expectations as founded upon social institutions. But what they are entitled to is not proportional to nor dependent upon their intrinsic worth. The principles of justice that regulate the basic structure and specify the duties and obligations of individuals do not mention moral desert, and there is no tendency for distributive shares to correspond to it.<sup>98</sup>

Rawls discounts heavily the fact that economic relations are the relations of individuals who make choices in the free market and that individuals determine supply and demand and production and consumption when he seeks an argument for why the difference principle is more just than merely the conscious pursuit of ameliorating exploitation *within* the free market. Carlylean philosophy calls on *individuals* to act justly so that justice can be achieved collectively (or at least more increasingly approximated), whereas Rawls relies on the difference principle to correct the *collective* market injustice ex post facto that results from the injustice of the *collection* of individual economic actors who operate at the individual level.<sup>99</sup>

Rawls maintains, “surely a person’s moral worth does not vary according to how many offer similar skills, or happen to want what he can produce.”<sup>100</sup> The difference between Carlyle and Rawls is that Carlyle thinks economic justice can be achieved within the economy by

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<sup>98</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 310-311.

<sup>99</sup> See Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 25-26; Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 60.

<sup>100</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 311.



economic actors only when they consciously choose to transcend the laws of the marketplace and recalibrate wages so they increasingly approximate a just distribution of wages for work.<sup>101</sup> Such a view demonstrates that Rawls's difference principle is an admission that the market is unjust and can *only* be made just beyond the scope of the market itself. Rawls does not offer a discussion of why we should not seek to achieve a *greater approximation* of desert on the basis of worth in the marketplace as a primary means of pursuing justice. Rawls's view that a person's worth does not depend on how many people happen to want what he can produce is effectively a wholesale negation of the free market, since this is the only means a market allows for the compensation of labor. If individuals should be held to no liability to satisfy the demands of the marketplace, the marketplace is cast as being not viable and its legitimacy as an economic system is voided universally.

Carlyle's theory of economic justice is discounted only, or at least primarily, for its perceived lack of attainability.<sup>102</sup> However, through a conscious commitment on the part of individual economic actors, Carlyle's vision of economic justice could be attained. Just compensation for goods, services, and labor's value can likely be more consciously approximated via consumption behavior rather than retroactively as a means to increasingly approximate economic justice. In other words, consumers can be proactive in furthering the cause of economic justice by patronizing firms that have a record of compensating their employees in a just manner. Carlyle derided capitalism in the nineteenth century as being the culprit for economic injustice, remarking how "the world, with its Wealth of Nations, Supply-

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<sup>101</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 25-26.

<sup>102</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 24.

and-demand and suchlike, has of late days been terribly inattentive to that question of work and wages.”<sup>103</sup> The proper apportionment of wages to work so that they are in parity is antithetical to capitalism, since capitalists seek primarily, if not only, to accumulate capital and maximize profits via exploitation of workers. Carlyle provides a compelling illustration of the atomization, depersonalization, and alienation that capitalism produces:

We will not say, the poor world has retrograded even here: we will say rather, the world has been rushing on with such fiery animation to get work and ever more work done, it has had no time to think of dividing the wages; and has merely left them to be scrambled for by the Law of the Stronger, law of Supply-and-demand, law of Laissez-faire, and other idle Laws and Un-laws,-saying, in its dire haste to get the work done, That is well enough!

And now the world will have to pause a little, and take up that other side of the problem, and in right earnest strive for some solution of that.<sup>104</sup>

He recognizes how his conception of economic justice is cast aside with mockery because it is easy and convenient to simply cast it aside as being nothing more than a rhetorical flourish. Carlyle acknowledges how cheap criticism would likely unfold: “Fair day’s-wages for fair day’s-work! Exclaims a sarcastic man: Alas, in what corner of this Planet, since Adam first awoke on it, was that ever realised?”<sup>105</sup> He maintains that the just apportionment of wages to work affirms justice to such an extent that he remarks:

Give me this, you have given me all. Pay to every man accurately what he has worked for, what he has earned and done and deserved...what more have I to ask?....This *is* the radiance of celestial Justice....A thing ever struggling forward; irrepressible, advancing inevitable; perfecting itself, all days, more and more,--never to be *perfect* till that general Doomsday, the ultimate Consummation, and Last of earthly Days.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 26-27.

<sup>104</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 27.

<sup>105</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 24.

<sup>106</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 25-26.

Carlyle thus acknowledges that the achievement of a *perfectly* just society is impossible, but yet provides a means to pursue justice so that it is increasingly approximated and achieved.

Carlyle also makes known the contrast between the pursuit of justice and the consequences of injustice. He observes, “imperfect Human Society holds itself together, and finds place under the Sun, in virtue simply of some *approximation* to perfection being actually made and put in practice.”<sup>107</sup> He underscores his concept of “approximation” as regards the attainment of “truth” in another passage:

As Phlogiston is displaced by Oxygen, and the Epicycles of Ptolemy by the Ellipses of Kepler; so does Paganism give place to Catholicism, Tyranny to Monarchy, and Feudalism to Representative Government,—where also the process does not stop. Perfection of Practice, like completeness of Opinion, is always approaching, never arrived; Truth, in the words of Schiller, *immer wird, nie ist*; never *is*, always *is a-being*.<sup>108</sup>

Carlyle strikes what might be characterized as a proto-Marxist chord when he ultimately concludes:

*This* is the supportable approximation [workers] would rest patient with, That by their work they might be kept alive to work more!—*This* once grown unattainable, I think your approximation may consider itself to have reached the *insupportable* stage; and may prepare, with whatever difficulty, reluctance and astonishment, for one of two things, for changing or perishing! With the millions no longer able to live, how can the units keep living? It is too clear the Nation itself is on the way to suicidal death.<sup>109</sup>

Such an account illustrates the broad spectrum of justice/injustice that wages naturally fall on.

Workers can either be exploited to the point at which they literally can no longer achieve subsistence with the wages they are allotted, or exploitation can be entirely voided if all

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<sup>107</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 26.

<sup>108</sup> Carlyle, ‘Characteristics,’ 38.

<sup>109</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 26. For Carlyle’s extended proto-Marxist/proto-communist theory, see Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 216-217.

individual economic actors demand the riddance of exploitation and the just compensation of wages for work.

Rawls overlooks economic consumption as a variable to come to terms with in his difference principle. He does so by neglecting a discussion of how those who are impoverished came to be impoverished and whether among the destitute some might have more defensible justifications for their situation than others. Whether one spent a trust fund they inherited and thus are poor, or whether one was a family-less, disabled orphan who faced extreme resistance and thus is poor, is not deliberated upon. As MacIntyre analyzes, “for Rawls how those who are now in grave need come to be in grave need is irrelevant; justice is made into a matter of present patterns of distribution to which the past is irrelevant.”<sup>110</sup> The least well-off could perpetually remain the least well-off as a function of their economic consumption which would perpetuate inequality. Rawls does not provide parameters for what could be defined as morally defensible consumption and, thus, he neglects acknowledging what runaway consumption could entail.

Consumption is a plausible topic to emerge in the original position, particularly in the context of the difference principle. If the least well-off benefit equally from the wealthy it will be the case that the least well-off will commit their resources in different ways. Hypothetically, some would spend and others would save. Would the difference principle be philosophically defensible if it did not stipulate savings and renunciation from consumption? After all, if it did not stipulate that, it would in fact be incentivizing consumption and a perpetuation of poverty. Ralph Waldo Emerson provides an account of why consumption is not only a legitimate but

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<sup>110</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 231.

necessary subject to entertain in the context of discussions of economic justice and economic inequality:

For the whole value of the dime is in knowing what to do with it. One man buys with it a land-title of an Indian, and makes his posterity princes; or buys corn enough to feed the world; or pen, ink, and paper, or a painter's brush, by which he can communicate himself to the human race as if he were fire; and the other buys barley candy. Money is of no value; it cannot spend itself. All depends on the skill of the spender.<sup>111</sup>

John Milbank and Adrian Pabst, in their criticism of liberalism and deliberations upon post-liberalism in 2016, echo Carlyle on the need to attain just wages as a necessity to the attainment of a just society. They emphasize the need to transcend the law of supply and demand by proposing a collectively imagined shared scale of priority in what is economically desired.<sup>112</sup> Consumption and production could be stabilized as a type of “third way” that departs from both a market and command economy.<sup>113</sup> Milbank and Pabst thus propose a means to overcome “the divorce of the meaning of material market ‘growth’ from its root meanings of organic, moral and spiritual growth.”<sup>114</sup> A shared scale of desires at the level of the collective “would tend to infuse into transactions—prices, wages, shares—a greater sense of its natural justice, over and above prevailing market conditions.”<sup>115</sup> In this way, Milbank and Pabst normatively argue on behalf of a market that embodies social justice in its functioning. An economy that itself is representative of social justice stands counter to Rawlsian justice

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<sup>111</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Young American,” in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. I (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1903), 383.

<sup>112</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 149.

<sup>113</sup> Milbank and Pabst do not define the solution they offer as a “third way,” but I frame it as such on the basis that a “mutualist” solution stands in contrast to either market or command economies since it essentially is a synthesis of both.

<sup>114</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 149.

<sup>115</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 149.

achieved ex post-facto via the difference principle. Milbank and Pabst's conception of social justice would take place such that:

We could then have some sense of a "proper" price paid for a thing of such and such moral as well as economic value; of a "proper" wage or salary paid for such and such a social task involving different degrees of talent, labour, scope, risk and need for a strenuous exercise of virtue; of "proper" shares in a firm as between the appropriately weighed contributions of owners, managers and workers.

All these things need first and foremost to become habitual through the growth of a new ethos.<sup>116</sup>

Moreover, Milbank and Pabst explicitly cite Carlyle's clarion call in *Past and Present* on economic elites to subordinate their ownership and direction of resources to the needs of workers so as to recreate feudal solidarity in the context of a free-market political economy.<sup>117</sup> They theorize that such a mutualistic solidarity would take place in a *post-liberal* political economy wherein wages, prices, and profits among owners, workers, shareholders and consumers are negotiated *ethically* in addition to *economically*.<sup>118</sup>

Milbank and Pabst articulate policy solutions so as to foster a mutual solidarity in the context of the economy they view as increasingly deteriorating as a result of growing asset and income inequality, and the de-professionalisation and the proletarianisation of the workforce.<sup>119</sup> In this context, they argue on behalf of the wider distribution of the ownership of capital through employee-ownership and stake-holding whether of property and plant capacity or of financial investment in one's own or other firms.<sup>120</sup> A genuine "living wage," they argue, is perhaps the most essential and intuitive economic policy prescription so as to foster a

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<sup>116</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 149.

<sup>117</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 151.

<sup>118</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 160.

<sup>119</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 160.

<sup>120</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 160.

mutualistic economy.<sup>121</sup> Milbank and Pabst also call for an index between wages and productivity growth so that prosperity may be shared and not accumulate only among a few owners or executives.<sup>122</sup>

Brad S. Gregory, a critic of liberalism due to its manifestation of hyper-pluralism, captures the essence of incommensurability when he writes that “given the manifest vulnerability of their respective assumptions and starting points, the preferences of [philosophers] are ultimately and literally arbitrary—that is, a function of the will.”<sup>123</sup> Emotivism, the doctrine that all judgments are nothing but expressions of preference, attitude, or feeling, is pervasive.<sup>124</sup> MacIntyre asserts that the only means to achieve moral agreement is by “producing certain non-rational effects on the emotions or attitudes of those who disagree with one.”<sup>125</sup>

I will make the claim that, as the “highest achievement of the Romantic movement in Europe,” *Sartor Resartus* produces, or at least Carlyle seeks to produce, non-rational effects on emotions and attitudes so as to proselytize his audience to transcendentalism from the philosophical vantage point they had prior to reading it.<sup>126</sup> What is more, *Sartor Resartus* provides a means to articulate transcendentalism in a “rational” manner in the sense that its conclusions are logically derived from premises that are themselves logically constructed with strict attention to detail.

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<sup>121</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 160.

<sup>122</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 161.

<sup>123</sup> Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 125.

<sup>124</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 11.

<sup>125</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 12.

<sup>126</sup> Lea calls *Sartor Resartus* the “highest achievement of the Romantic movement in Europe.” I build on this view to conclude that *Sartor Resartus* constructs transcendentalism as a philosophy that can be applied in the contexts of politics and religion. See Lea, *Carlyle: Prophet of To-day*, 30.

As I have shown, Carlyle's transcendentalism simultaneously typifies "non-rationalism" from the perspective of Enlightenment materialist discourse in that it is Platonic, asserting that there is a divine and transcendent order that can be neither ascertained through theological nor empirically scientific means.<sup>127</sup> The "philosophy of clothes" is the basis from which Carlyle's philosophical solutions are derived. Carlyle's transcendentalism supersedes incommensurable ideologies and theologies and by doing such supersedes incommensurability conceptually in the manner that MacIntyre had said universally defined moral, political, and philosophical discourse. I draw this conclusion because inherent to transcendentalism is the view that all other ideologies *not* transcendentalism are "clothing" and ideologues devoted to such ideologies are not cognizant of the "philosophy of clothes," which rests on a different plane.

Both Carlyle and Rawls seek to appeal to independent impersonal criteria. Carlyle premises his conclusions from the vantage point of the most alienated human perspective, while Rawls premises his conclusions from the vantage point of an original position behind a veil of ignorance. Carlyle's premise derives the "philosophy of clothing" while Rawls's premise yields the two principles of justice. The views Carlyle seeks to impart to his audience are *both* expressions of personal preference *and* evaluative expressions whereby Carlyle proposes conclusions that any and all can, might, and should assent to, based on the constructivist basis on which such conclusions rest. In the contrast between Carlyle and Rawls, each seeks to win support for his philosophical conclusions based on the premises he constructs and from which his conclusions are derived. The question becomes, in order to generate non-rational effects:

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<sup>127</sup> This is the means by which "transcendentalism" as a term is largely synonymous and can be used interchangeably with terms like "romanticism" and "mysticism."



whose premises are more compelling and provide a more compelling conclusion? This, I contend, is the chief question to be asked in juxtaposing Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* with Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*. That this question cannot be answered purely objectively does not undermine the capacity of Carlyle's philosophy to challenge the supposed objectivity of the original position/veil of ignorance on which Rawls's two principles of justice are constructed from.

Carlyle's transcendentalism, in light of MacIntyre's conceptualization of incommensurability and emotivism, suggests that those who do not agree with both its premises and conclusions are not only unwilling to accept transcendentalism as a philosophy that supersedes and literally *transcends* their own philosophical, ideological, and/or theological perspectives, but are also unwilling to accept it as a philosophy that supersedes and *transcends all* other philosophical, ideological, and theological perspectives. Those who are willing to entertain the merits of transcendentalism yet are unwilling to part from their own ideologies and theologies are left with the task of demonstrating why their views should not be characterized as emotivist, or based on arbitrary subjectivity and emotion. As such, refusal of Carlylean transcendentalism, in the context of incommensurability and emotivism, is again a type of modern confirmation of Plato's allegory of the cave, as narrated in *The Republic*.<sup>128</sup> Those who are imprisoned in the cave are those who see ideologies and theologies (that are not transcendentalism) and the incommensurable and interminable disagreement they precipitate as something other than "clothing."

It can be inferred from *Sartor Resartus* that Teufelsdröckh seeks to tell the world that all ideologies and theologies are mere clothing and that the realization of such a view would be

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<sup>128</sup> Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 231.

the equivalent of gaining enlightenment as to how the world truly is. Subscribers to the diversity of ideological and theological persuasions would realize that their upholding of a particular ideology, at the personal level, was for the purpose of humanity as a collective to eventually discover transcendentalism as the means to resolve incommensurable ideologies and the interminable conflict that would persist in a scenario in which transcendentalism is perpetually absent.

It is in the *diversity* of ideologies and theologies that provides fodder for the recognition that they are mutually incommensurable and the antagonism between them is interminable. Thus the diversity of ideologies and theologies was a necessary historical construct, hypothetically, to the eventual construction and attainment of transcendentalism as a theoretical next stage of development. *Sartor Resartus*, in this way, leads to the inference and conclusion that all ideologies and theologies are themselves streams, each following the path of least resistance to the same confluence, which is transcendentalism. Such is the confluence that informs that transcendentalism is naturally positioned as the philosophy that terminates heretofore incommensurable and interminable antagonism among all other ideologies and theologies. However, in the context of emotivism and incommensurability, transcendentalism will by default be seen as merely one more arbitrary viewpoint among many. Such an account parallels MacIntyre's own account that his advocacy of Aristotelianism as a salve to the problem of the incapacity of attaining moral consensus will be found hollow:

It is important to note that I am not claiming that Aristotelian moral theory is able to exhibit its rational superiority in terms that would be acceptable to the protagonists of the dominant post-Enlightenment moral philosophies, so that in theoretical contests in the arenas of modernity, Aristotelians might be able to defeat Kantians, utilitarians, and contractarians. Not only is this evidently not so, but in those same arenas Aristotelianism is bound to appear and

does appear as just one more type of moral theory, one whose protagonists have as much and as little hope of defeating their rivals as do utilitarians, Kantians, contractarians.<sup>129</sup>

MacIntyre's discussion of the nature of philosophical disagreement illustrates that such disagreement can be overcome through the adoption of transcendentalism:

But if those who claim to be able to formulate principles on which rational moral agents ought to agree cannot secure agreement on the formulation of those principles from their colleagues who share their basic philosophical purpose and method, there is once again *prima facie* evidence that their project has failed, even before we have examined their particular contentions and conclusions. Each of them in his criticism offers testimony to the failure of his colleagues' constructions.<sup>130</sup>

I will assert again, in the shadow of MacIntyre's claim, that Carlyle's transcendentalism is a construction that is universal in that it subsumes all other philosophies within it and while doing so discounts all of them as being incapable of being themselves universal comprehensive philosophical doctrines. In this way, Carlyle's transcendentalism again proves itself to be a means to overcome the otherwise interminable conflict between incommensurable and irreconcilable ideologies and theologies. Subscribers to the diversity of ideologies and theologies would theoretically be capable of uniting in their adoption of transcendentalism as a type of consensus to resolve such conflict.

Carlyle's "philosophy of clothes" is a constructivist philosophy that provides readers of *Sartor Resartus* a means to themselves view the world from Teufelsdröckh's vantage point. Both Carlyle and Rawls each seek to premise their philosophical conclusions on impersonal constructs as a means to legitimate the conclusions they draw. Carlyle's philosophy is constructed from an impersonal viewpoint of what he seeks to characterize as that of

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<sup>129</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, "Prologue," in *After Virtue* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011), x.

<sup>130</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 20.

*alienation*, while Rawls's philosophy is constructed from an impersonal original position behind a *veil of ignorance* (not knowing how we would be constituted or if we would or would not be alienated). Such a stark contrast and incommensurability in the impersonal premises Carlyle and Rawls each devise may indicate that there is no *single* impersonal premise that can be genuinely appealed to as *the* valid impersonal premise. The question might then become: between Carlyle and Rawls, whose constructivist philosophy is the more, or most, compelling and whose impersonal premise is the most compelling?

Teufelsdröckh offers his "philosophy of clothes" as a finality for philosophy in the sense that the learning that comprises the basis for his philosophy symbolizes the intellectual condition humanity finds itself in as of the nineteenth century.<sup>131</sup> Thus, while embodying a maximum level of alienation, Teufelsdröckh also embodies a maximum of knowledge and wisdom because he is able to view the world from an unbiased standpoint as a function of his alienation. Such knowledge of the world is also derivative of Teufelsdröckh's travels and the experiences that derive from wandering the world in pursuit of philosophy. Teufelsdröckh's level of learning and insight symbolizes "the condition of European man after centuries of learning, wars, art, and religion."<sup>132</sup> As such, Carlyle has invested Teufelsdröckh with a "representative quality designed to render his lesson applicable to a large number of men."<sup>133</sup> For Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* is "an attempt to bring the innumerable facets of modern life together in a meaningful order, an attempt that had engaged Carlyle's energies from the time

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<sup>131</sup> Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus*, 209.

<sup>132</sup> Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus*, 209.

<sup>133</sup> Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus*, 209.

he turned from religion to science.”<sup>134</sup> Rawls similarly sought in *A Theory of Justice* to answer the question of what a human political community in all its innumerable facets of ethnic, racial, religious, and socioeconomic diversity, to name but a few markers of diversity, would ascertain and assent to as the embodiment of “justice.”

Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* leads one to inquire along the same lines as MacIntyre in *After Virtue*: “What then would the social world *look* like, if seen with emotivist eyes?”<sup>135</sup>

Teufelsdröckh views the world with emotivist eyes by making the determination that the universe is entirely clothing. By viewing the world as entirely clothing, all other ideologies and theologies, each of which asserts itself as the *one* true account compared to all other inferior accounts, are just confirmation that all ideologies and theologies that are not transcendentalism are arbitrary and based on attitude, preference, and feeling. MacIntyre further inquires, “And what would the social world *be* like, if the truth of emotivism came to be widely presupposed?”<sup>136</sup> The result would plausibly be the adoption of a philosophy very similar to Carlyle’s “philosophy of clothes.”

If everyone were to consciously acknowledge emotivism, then such a premise could naturally lead to the choice to adopt either Nietzsche’s nihilism or Carlyle’s transcendentalism. Carlyle serves as an antagonist to Nietzsche and is an antagonist who is mutually exclusive from Aristotle’s antagonism. MacIntyre proposes that humanity must face a choice between Nietzsche or Aristotle, as Nietzsche more than any other represents the failure of the Enlightenment to provide a definable and rationally defensible means to resolving any political

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<sup>134</sup> Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus*, 235.

<sup>135</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 23.

<sup>136</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 23.

question for collective political society.<sup>137</sup> MacIntyre poses the choice between Aristotle and Nietzsche along the following terms:

What then the conjunction of philosophical and historical argument reveals is that *either* one must follow through the aspirations and the collapse of the different versions of the Enlightenment project until there remains only the Nietzschean diagnosis and the Nietzschean problematic *or* one must hold that the Enlightenment project was not only mistaken, but should never have been commenced in the first place. There is no third alternative and more particularly there is no alternative provided by those thinkers at the heart of the contemporary conventional curriculum in moral philosophy, Hume, Kant and Mill. It is no wonder that the teaching of ethics is so often destructive and sceptical in its effects upon the minds of those taught.<sup>138</sup>

As MacIntyre has made known, "Nietzsche succeeds if all those whom he takes on as antagonists fail. Others may have to succeed by virtue of the rational power of their positive arguments; but if Nietzsche wins, he wins by default."<sup>139</sup> MacIntyre asserts that Nietzsche does not win on the basis that the Aristotelian tradition succeeds by virtue of the rational power of its positive arguments.<sup>140</sup> In so claiming, MacIntyre ignores Carlyle as not only an antagonist to Nietzsche but also as an antagonist to Aristotle. That Nietzsche fails does not automatically mean that Aristotle succeeds. MacIntyre's binary choice between Nietzsche or Aristotle shuts out Carlyle in much the same fashion that Rawls does in ignoring Carlyle in the original position. In both cases, Carlyle is not considered, ostensibly because his political philosophy was neither refined nor promoted and his profile as a political philosopher was likewise not developed in the manner Nietzsche's and Aristotle's were.

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<sup>137</sup> See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 110-111.

<sup>138</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 111-112.

<sup>139</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 239

<sup>140</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 239.

MacIntyre outlines a valuable context whereby Carlyle's transcendentalism could be inserted and entertained as a viable alternative to both Aristotle and Nietzsche:

Hence the defensibility of the Nietzschean position turns *in the end* on the answer to the question: was it right in the first place to reject Aristotle? For if Aristotle's position in ethics and politics—or something very like it—could be sustained, the whole Nietzschean enterprise would be pointless. This is because the power of Nietzsche's position depends upon the truth of one central thesis: that all rational vindications of morality manifestly fail and that *therefore* belief in the tenets of morality needs to be explained in terms of a set of rationalisations which conceal the fundamentally non-rational phenomena of the will. My own argument obliges me to agree with Nietzsche that the philosophers of the Enlightenment never succeeded in providing grounds for doubting his central thesis; his epigrams are even deadlier than his extended arguments. But, if my earlier argument is correct, that failure itself was nothing other than an historical sequel to the rejection of the Aristotelian tradition. And thus the key question does indeed become: can Aristotle's ethics, or something very like it, after all be vindicated?

It is an understatement to call this a large and complex question.<sup>141</sup>

MacIntyre acknowledges critics of his who would agree with his assessment of liberal individualism but who would deny not only that the Aristotelian tradition is a viable alternative, but deny as well that it is in terms of an opposition between liberal individualism and Aristotelianism that the problems of modernity ought to be approached.<sup>142</sup> While such a brand of criticism rests on the view that the key intellectual debate in modernity is between liberal individualism and some version of Marxism, this brand of criticism leaves room for Carlylean philosophy, as Carlylean philosophy falls into the broad category of proto-Marxist/communitarian criticism. MacIntyre discounts Marxism on the basis that a Marxist who took Trotsky's last writings seriously "would now see no tolerable alternative set of political and economic structures which could be brought into place to replace the structures of advanced capitalism."<sup>143</sup> Such a Marxist, enlightened to Carlyle's theory of transcendentalism, might

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<sup>141</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 111.

<sup>142</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 242.

<sup>143</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 244.

plausibly conclude that though the structures of advanced capitalism may not be replaced, the *values* that define economic and political behavior in advanced capitalism would have to evolve so that renunciation and mutual solidarity (as Carlylean values) at a minimum would need to modify the hegemonic values of consumption and mutual competition in order for advanced capitalism to be sustainable.

MacIntyre is adamant that Marxism “is exhausted as a *political* tradition...[and] this exhaustion is shared by every other political tradition within our culture.”<sup>144</sup> Carlyle’s transcendentalism is not exhausted in this fashion because, although it had the capacity to develop as a coherent political tradition and gain wide currency in the popular political culture, it has gone unrefined and unrecognized in this regard. As such, transcendentalism has not been exhausted; rather, it has not been formulated and proposed as a legitimate doctrine beyond Carlyle’s satirical conception of it, much less attempted. Carlyle has gone unappreciated as a political philosopher who offered a practical philosophy—not only by Rawls and MacIntyre in the twentieth century, but by Carlyle’s own disciples in the nineteenth century. Carlyle himself did not actively *promote* his political philosophy as a practical comprehensive doctrine to the resolution of political conflict, because to do so would have required him to provide a nonfiction account of how transcendentalism supersedes other competitor ideologies and theologies.

After neutralizing Nietzsche, MacIntyre resolves that “it is therefore after all the case that the crucial moral opposition is between liberal individualism in some version or other and

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<sup>144</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 244.



the Aristotelian tradition in some version or other.”<sup>145</sup> Carlyle’s philosophy of transcendentalism may typify “some version or other” of both a reconciliation and resolution of the antagonism between liberal individualism and the Aristotelian tradition. In constructing his theory of transcendentalism in *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle constructs an ideal and explicitly remarks that he is seeking to proselytize. Carlylean transcendentalism can be cast as a type of Aristotelian *telos* for humanity to strive to achieve both at the level of collective society and the level of the individual.

The contrast between Aristotle and Carlyle is incommensurable and irresolvable in much the same way MacIntyre poses that the opposing views of Rawls and Nozick are incommensurable and irresolvable. As MacIntyre contends, for Nietzsche or the Nietzscheans to succeed, the case for Aristotelianism would have to be rebutted.<sup>146</sup> This is also the standard for Carlyle in that for Nietzsche or the Nietzscheans to succeed, Carlylean philosophy would have to be rebutted. This would precipitate a clash between Carlylean and Aristotelian philosophy whereby who would prevail has heretofore been a topic untouched by political philosophy.

Passages from Aristotle indicate how his philosophy clashes with Carlylean transcendentalism by setting anti-Platonic parameters that exclude transcendentalism from being a subject to deliberate upon. Teufelsdröckh typifies the “fool” or “madman” Aristotle speaks of perhaps in an archetypal fashion:

Do we deliberate about everything, and is everything a possible subject of deliberation, or is deliberation impossible about some things? We ought presumably to call not what a fool or a madman would deliberate about, but what a sensible man would deliberate about, a subject of

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<sup>145</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 241.

<sup>146</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 239.

deliberation. Now about eternal things no one deliberates, e.g. about the material universe or the incommensurability of the diagonal and the side of a square...but the things that are brought about by our own efforts, but not always in the same way, are the things about which we deliberate, e.g. questions of medical treatment or of money-making.<sup>147</sup>

In another passage discussing what is worthy of deliberation, Aristotle offers an account in contrast to that offered by Teufelsdröckh, who is Professor of “Things-in-General”:

We deliberate not about ends but about means. For a doctor does not deliberate whether he shall heal, nor an orator whether he shall convince, nor a statesman whether he shall produce law and order, nor does any one else deliberate about his end. Having set the end, they consider how and by what means it is to be attained....<sup>148</sup>

In such a context Teufelsdröckh—his unique biography and radical philosophy—has no place.

Alienated from the specialization that defines the division of labor into doctors, orators, statesmen, etc., Teufelsdröckh became a Professor of Things in General naturally as a matter of course (and not as a matter of choice after having set his end) and ostensibly sought to impart his “philosophy of clothes” to the doctors, orators, and statesmen uninformed of the philosophy’s tenets as a function of their incapacity to attain it on their own.

Aristotle leaves out the important consideration of how a doctor becomes a doctor or a statesman a statesman, and a study of Teufelsdröckh informs us that they do so as a function of *not* becoming a philosopher of clothes (aka not being alienated). If each had become a philosopher of clothes, each would *plausibly* still recognize the inherent necessity of medicine in the same way they would without having been informed of the philosophy of clothes, but oratory and statesmanship would be seen in an entirely different light as a function of looking at such pursuits through the lens of the “philosophy of clothes.” Oratory and statesmanship

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<sup>147</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 43.

<sup>148</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 44.

would plausibly be viewed as petty and as activities undertaken prior to and bereft of the ascertainment of “the philosophy of clothes” and its implications. This means that the orator uninformed of the philosophy of clothes would stand in stark contrast to the orator who came to terms with the philosophy of clothes--and likewise for the statesman. The statesman and orator who are simultaneously philosophers of clothes, it can be inferred, would view statesmen and orators unfamiliar with the philosophy of clothes as petty, paltry, and limited in the scope of their viewpoints.

Teufelsdröckh’s biographical background that allows for him to ascertain “the philosophy of clothes” is compatible with Aristotle’s ruminations on “intuitive reason” as the basis for acquiring the “first principles” from which “scientific knowledge” may be derived. Carlyle unpacks Teufelsdröckh’s account of his first principles at the beginning of *Sartor Resartus*, which correlate with Aristotle’s philosophy of science. In proposing the “philosophy of clothes,” Carlyle seeks to radically alter our perspective of science by providing the “philosophy of clothes” as a new lens to examine it with. The conclusions drawn in *Sartor Resartus* and the method from which they are drawn are compatible with Aristotle’s philosophy of science, in which Aristotle ruminates:

Scientific knowledge is judgement about things that are universal and necessary; and the conclusions of demonstration, and all scientific knowledge, follow from first principles (for scientific knowledge involves demonstration). This being so, the first principle from which what is scientifically known follows cannot be an object of scientific knowledge, of art, or of practical wisdom; for that which can be scientifically known can be demonstrated, and art and practical wisdom deal with things that are variable. Nor are these first principles the objects of philosophic wisdom, for it is a mark of the philosopher to have *demonstration* about some things. If, then, the states of mind by which we have truth and are never deceived about things invariable or even variable are scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, philosophic wisdom, and intuitive reason, and it cannot be any of the three (i.e. practical wisdom, scientific knowledge,

or philosophic wisdom), the remaining alternative is that it is *intuitive reason* that grasps the first principles.<sup>149</sup>

Aristotle's view that no one deliberates upon his end is particularly incongruent to his definition of wisdom, whereby he defines wisdom as either excellence in one's art such as sculpting or the state of being wise in general.<sup>150</sup> With respect to the latter definition, Aristotle reflects such that:

we think that some people are wise in general, not in some particular field or in any other limited respect, as Homer says in the *Margites*,

Him did the gods make neither a digger nor yet a ploughman  
Nor wise in anything else.

Therefore wisdom must plainly be the most finished of the forms of knowledge. It follows that the wise man must not only know what follows from the first principles, but must also possess truth about the first principles. Therefore wisdom must be intuitive reason combined with scientific knowledge—scientific knowledge of the highest objects which has received as it were its proper completion.<sup>151</sup>

Such parameters beg the natural question: how, in the context of incommensurable and irresolvable moral and political debates, can one resolve the philosophical conflict between Carlyle and Nietzsche? Both Carlyle and Nietzsche start from the same implicit initial principles and premises that they do not explicitly state, namely that neither Aristotle nor Christianity nor the Enlightenment has been successful in providing a comprehensive doctrine to resolve moral and political conflict. They nonetheless derive disparate conclusions. This is precisely why Carlyle should be examined as a viable alternative to Nietzsche that is separate from Aristotle because the claim can be made that it is the lack of recognition accorded to Carlyle that has at

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<sup>149</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 107.

<sup>150</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 107.

<sup>151</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 107-108.

least partially enabled Nietzsche's "success" as a negator of Aristotle, Christianity, and the Enlightenment. Such a choice would be between siding with Nietzsche and his view that the world is devoid of meaning and any transcendent divinity or Carlyle and his view that the world is a material construct that symbolizes a transcendent and divine order. Since it requires just as much faith to be a nihilist as it does to be a transcendentalist, Carlyle offers an alternative to Aristotle, Christianity, and the Enlightenment "equal" to the one that Nietzsche does. Theoretically, the nihilist position may be attractive only as a function of the current disenchanted state of modernity such that nihilism negates the prospects of *another* divine idea of the world to be discovered *embedded within* the divine idea of the world, which is itself the "philosophy of clothes."

In the next chapter, I will further engage Carlyle and Rawls with respect to their disparate philosophical constructions of *justice*, one of if not the most important, contestable, and controversial subjects in the context of political philosophy. I will also seek to illustrate the bold contrasts between Carlyle and other political philosophers such as Nietzsche and MacIntyre, contrasts that I have heretofore addressed but did not fully flesh out. This will be done so as to cast transcendentalism as a coherent prospective ideological construct in the context of both the history of political thought and contemporary political philosophy.

## Chapter 5

### Carlyle's Construction of Justice and Contemporary Political Philosophy

Carlyle offers unique insights into theorizing the nebulous and intangible concept of *justice* within the context of political philosophy. Carlyle's conception of justice acknowledges that his transcendentalism is a philosophical opposite to Nietzsche's nihilism. In this chapter, I seek to present evidence whereby Carlyle's transcendentalism can be defended in light of what I contend are the shortcomings of ideologies in competition with transcendentalism. In this way, I begin to lay the groundwork to cast Carlyle's transcendentalism as a prospective "post-liberal" doctrine. Transcendentalism can be integrated and synthesized with liberalism so that liberalism evolves into what may be described as "post-liberalism."

The contrast between Carlyle and Nietzsche is between the two "characters" Carlyle and Nietzsche construct—Teufelsdröckh and the Übermensch, respectively. The Übermensch epitomizes the nihilist, while Teufelsdröckh epitomizes the transcendentalist. For Alasdair MacIntyre, the Übermensch "represents individualism's final attempt to escape from its own consequences. And the Nietzschean stance turns out not to be a mode of escape from or an alternative to the conceptual scheme of liberal individualist modernity, but rather one more representative moment in its internal unfolding."<sup>1</sup>

If the truth of emotivism came to be widely presupposed in the context of political philosophy, such truth might be the basis of the final division in philosophy whereby some

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<sup>1</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 241.

might adhere to nihilism and others to transcendentalism.<sup>2</sup> The social world would then be a dichotomy between Nietzschean *Übermenschen* and Carlylean *Teufelsdröckhs*, and there would be no other choice than the two. *Übermensch* would live by values that each individual sets for himself, which could only mean the perpetuation of hyperpluralist judgments based on feeling, attitude, and a concomitant will to power. MacIntyre debunks the plausibility of the *Übermensch*, writing that it belongs “in the pages of a philosophical bestiary rather than in serious discussion” and concludes that Nietzsche is most powerful in the negative aspect of his philosophy.<sup>3</sup> The *Teufelsdröckhs*, or transcendentalists, would each accept the “philosophy of clothes” and consciously seek to perceive and interpret the clothing that is the universe in pursuit of attaining spiritual development and a meaningful existence. The transcendentalists would do this alongside applying the principles of the “philosophy of clothes,” such as renunciation and the Everlasting Yea, toward the larger spiritual rebirth of society at a collective level, as Carlyle does himself in the concluding chapters of *Sartor Resartus*.

By acknowledging Nietzsche and MacIntyre’s treatment of Nietzsche as a liberal individualist, I will seek to make the claim that liberalism (as the enabler and stage for plural ideologies and theologies) represents a stage in political development *before* an evolution toward transcendentalism. I do so because the constructivism and synthesis of MacIntyre and Nietzsche allow for transcendentalism to be established as a political ideology in its own right. This is the case because transcendentalism recognizes such pluralism of non-transcendental ideologies and theologies (in the context of liberalism) as comprising a type of mono-fabric.

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<sup>2</sup> Emotivism is the doctrine that all judgments are nothing but expressions of preference, attitude, or feeling. See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 11.

<sup>3</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 21.

Conscious recognition of such would, or at least could, transition a pluralist environment into the singular and universal acceptance of transcendentalism.

I argue that liberalism and Islamism, as opposing ideologies with respect to their allowance for pluralism, each come to a confluence in transcendentalism because transcendentalism proves itself as the only doctrine that resolves their otherwise irreconcilable and interminable conflict. This is because a liberal and an Islamist can each be cast as a liberal individualist *Übermensch* pitted against one another in irreconcilable incommensurability. In this context, transcendentalism, not nihilism or liberalism or Christianity, can offer a means to resolve such conflict. It is in this light that the polarized ideological tension between the liberal United States and Islamist Iran, for example, may have a chance of being resolved by their reaching an ideological consensus that supersedes both liberalism and Islamism. In this way, such a consensus would not take the form of a *modus vivendi* but rather the form of what may be referred to as a “supra-consensus,” as I have just laid out. Such a discussion of transcendentalism’s prospects in the context of international relations underscores its prospects for achieving consensus within the context of a single nation-state as an embodiment of social justice and means to resolve otherwise incommensurable and interminable moral and political debates.

Essentially, as MacIntyre argues and Gregory rearticulates, reason has been unable to effectively provide an answer to life questions over the last four centuries and in contemporary philosophy: “What should I live for, and why?” “What should I believe, and why should I believe it?” “What is morality, and where does it come from?” “What kind of person should I be?”



“What is meaningful in life, and what should I do in order to lead a fulfilling life?”<sup>4</sup> Gregory concludes that reason *alone* is unlikely to answer the life questions.<sup>5</sup> As Gregory eloquently concludes, “those who reject MacIntyre’s analysis of irreconcilable moral disagreements must explain why sophisticated moral philosophers today continue to argue in trajectories that are now more than two centuries old without approaching any nearer to a resolution of their disagreements, and how anyone could possibly devise a rational, consensual means to resolve their differences.”<sup>6</sup> A discussion of the incommensurability of Carlyle and Rawls suggests that reason alone is unlikely to be able to define justice. Carlyle’s romanticism is nearly a pure converse to Rawls’s rationalism and such antagonistic incommensurability leads to skepticism that *either* reason or intuition can alone provide an answer to the question of justice.

The Rawlsian original position does not account for the evolution and evanescence of liberal society. The original position is static and calls for static principles of justice, while liberal society and economy is continually experiencing an autonomous alteration of the means of production. Rawls also does not account for criticisms of the scientifically unverifiable faith in unending progress. As Christopher Lasch notes in *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics*, the founders of modern liberalism in the eighteenth century were the first to argue that “human wants, being insatiable, required an indefinite expansion of the productive forces necessary to satisfy them.”<sup>7</sup> Zygmunt Bauman rearticulates this sentiment in *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?*: “While consumer society rests its case on the promise to

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<sup>4</sup> These questions are drawn from Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 74.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 126.

<sup>6</sup> Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 220.

<sup>7</sup> Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 13. Lasch draws on Carlyle frequently throughout this book and articulates Carlyle’s critique of progress within his larger project. He also cites Jacques Ellul’s *The Technological Society* as having influenced his thinking.

gratify human desires like no other society in the past could do or dream of doing, the promise of satisfaction remains seductive only so long as the desire stays *ungratified*.”<sup>8</sup> Bauman remarks, “for the consumerist economy, the first and now abandoned focus of consumption (appeal to the needs) portends ill: the suspension of shopping. The second (appeal to forever-elusive happiness) bodes well: it augurs another round of shopping.”<sup>9</sup> Gregory synthesizes the antagonism that exists between constructing ethics and the culture of consumerism in that “consumerist ideology succeeds through the inculcation of a manipulative, contradictory message: endless acquisition is the highway to human happiness, *and* one should be *unhappy* with whatever one has just been persuaded to purchase, no matter what it is.”<sup>10</sup>

Carlyle’s philosophy, particularly as espoused in *Sartor Resartus*, would not endorse the view that inequality is justified so long as it benefits the least well off because at a certain point, at which absolute poverty has been eliminated and relative poverty might persist, Carlyle would advocate renunciation of any further material enrichment, in contrast to the utilitarian economic creed of (enslavement to) pursuing the satisfaction of infinite and insatiable appetites for material wealth.<sup>11</sup> Rawls neglects to stipulate how the difference principle might be practiced differently when every member of the political community attains a satisfactory amount of minimum goods yet still some remain in a state of relative poverty.

Bauman and Gregory have introduced, albeit without citation, Carlyle’s call for renunciation of material consumption to be heard by a twenty-first century audience in the

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<sup>8</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 169.

<sup>9</sup> Bauman, *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?*, 157.

<sup>10</sup> Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 236-237.

<sup>11</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 144-145.

context of the twenty-first century. They are, essentially, purely Carlylean sentiments in that they are representative of Carlyle's *inaugural* social criticism. Bauman reiterates as his thesis in 2008 what Carlyle already sought to teach in his 1833 publication of *Sartor Resartus*, namely that infinite consumption is not the road to infinite happiness.<sup>12</sup> According to Bauman's thesis, succinctly phrased:

The case for rising consumption, in its plea to be recognized as the royal road to the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers, has not been proved, let alone closed: it stays wide open. Indeed, as deliberations of the facts of the matter proceed, the evidence in favor of the plaintiff grows thinner and more dubious. In the course of the trial, more serious doubts have been raised: is it not, rather, the case that, in opposition to the plaintiff's argument, a consumption-oriented economy actively promotes disaffection, saps confidence, and deepens the sentiment of insecurity....<sup>13</sup>

Bauman argues that consumerism as an ideology has been unsuccessful in yielding happiness because 1) it is up to only a certain threshold (that coincides with providing for essential needs) that the sentiment of being happy grows with increasing the increments of income, and 2) "there is no evidence whatsoever that with the overall growth of the volume of consumption, the number of people reporting that they 'feel happy' grows."<sup>14</sup> Bauman's conclusions are able to serve as the foundation for a grander conclusion: that a society that does not embrace renunciation effectively embraces consumerism, and consumerism that pursues insatiable consumption is seeking what is not only unattainable but unsustainable.

A point of consensus between Carlyle and Rawls is in their skepticism about majority rule alone being able to achieve justice. Rawls re-affirms Carlyle (and Plato) when he states that

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<sup>12</sup> Bauman, *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?*, 167-168.

<sup>13</sup> Bauman, *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?*, 169.

<sup>14</sup> Bauman, *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?*, 168.

“there is nothing to the view, then, that what the majority wills is right.”<sup>15</sup> Rawls breaks from Carlyle and Plato when he affirms that the justification for majority rule rests on the two principles of justice.<sup>16</sup> Rawls himself acknowledges that the theory of justice has its limitations and “many aspects of morality [are] left aside.”<sup>17</sup> Carlyle can be applied to shed light on Rawls’s own acknowledgement of justice as fairness’s limitations when Rawls remarks that “any list of conceptions of justice, or consensus about what counts as reasonable conditions on principles, is surely more or less arbitrary. The case presented for justice as fairness, so the contention runs, does not escape these limitations.”<sup>18</sup> In this sense, Carlyle and Rawls clash when Rawls maintains, in contradiction to his acknowledgement of his theory’s arbitrariness and limitations, that “being designed to reconcile by reason, justification [for justice as fairness] proceeds from what all parties to the discussion hold in common.”<sup>19</sup> Carlyle and Rawls are again incommensurable on the basis of Rawls’s conception of justification: “proofs become justification once the starting points are mutually recognized, or the conclusions so comprehensive and compelling as to persuade us of the soundness of the conception expressed by their premises.”<sup>20</sup> On these terms, Carlyle and Rawls exhibit an incommensurability with respect not only to their starting points but also to the conclusions that are derived from their premises.

Rawls’s disregard of and incommensurability with romanticism is most evident in his acknowledgement of the possible limitations of his theory of justice:

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<sup>15</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 356.

<sup>16</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 356.

<sup>17</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 512.

<sup>18</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 580.

<sup>19</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 580.

<sup>20</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 581.

Certainly the argument for the principles of justice would be strengthened by showing that they are still the best choice from a more comprehensive list more systematically evaluated. I do not know how far this can be done. I doubt, however, that the principles of justice (as I have defined them) will be the preferred conception on anything resembling a complete list. (Here I assume that, given an upper bound on complexity and other constraints, the class of reasonable and practicable alternatives is effectively finite.) Even if the argument I have offered is sound, it only shows that a finally adequate theory (if such exists) will look more like the contract view than any of the other doctrines we discussed. And even this conclusion is not proved in any strict sense.<sup>21</sup>

Rawls leaves open the possibility that justice as fairness would not be chosen in the original position and is open to competing accounts of justice to be aired:

Ideally of course one would like to say that [those in the original position] are to choose among all possible conceptions of justice. One obvious difficulty is how these conceptions are to be characterized so that those in the original position can be presented with them. Yet granting that these conceptions could be defined, there is no assurance that the parties could make out the best option; the principles that would be most preferred might be overlooked. Indeed, there may exist no best alternative: conceivably for each conception of justice there is another that is better. Even if there is a best alternative, it seems difficult to describe the parties' intellectual powers so that this optimum, or even the more plausible conceptions, are sure to occur to them...Thus although the two principles of justice may be superior to those conceptions known to us, perhaps some hitherto unformulated set of principles is still better.<sup>22</sup>

While Rawls demonstrates his openness to alternative conceptions of justice in the context of the original position, he subsequently narrows down the list of possible alternatives whereby a Carlylean conception of justice goes unrecognized. He entertains what he calls "a short list of traditional conceptions of justice" alongside "a few other possibilities suggested by the two principles of justice."<sup>23</sup> The possible conceptions of justice that would be entertained by the parties in the original position are limited because Rawls firmly establishes that there are only a certain defined number of possibilities that would be contemplated. Rawls limits the

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<sup>21</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 581.

<sup>22</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 122.

<sup>23</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 122.

scope of the original position by merely defining a scope: “I then assume that the parties are presented with this list [of alternative conceptions of justice] and required to agree unanimously that one conception is the best among those enumerated.”<sup>24</sup> Rawls reflects in a manner that lacks specificity when he concludes: “Thus justice as fairness moves us closer to the philosophical ideal; it does not, of course, achieve it.”<sup>25</sup>

Rawls defines rationality as each individual “tr[ying] as best he can to advance his interests.”<sup>26</sup> Carlyle and Rawls are incommensurable at this juncture because Rawls’s stipulation neglects contemplation of Teufelsdröckh’s biography and Carlyle’s theory of transcendentalism. Teufelsdröckh illustrates the newfound values one derives in the face of adversity in the advancement of one’s interests. Such values speak to the pettiness of being beholden to seeking *merely* to advance one’s own interests. Carlyle’s construction of Teufelsdröckh’s biography implicitly leads to the conclusion that renunciation, mutual solidarity, and generosity should be prioritized and should replace self-interestedness and that it is in fact *rational* to do so.<sup>27</sup> When considering Carlyle’s opposing view, Rawls’s definition of rationality is also a conception of the good. As a conception of the good, this definition of rationality contradicts Rawls’s framing of the veil of ignorance, in which he states that no one “know[s] his conception of the good, the particulars of his rational plan of life, or even the special features of his psychology such as his aversion to risk or liability to optimism or pessimism.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 122.

<sup>25</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 50.

<sup>26</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 142.

<sup>27</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 144-145.

<sup>28</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 137.

Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* is in essence a fictitious biographical profile of an individual who lives behind his own veil of ignorance. It is defined by Teufelsdröckh's *search* for a conception of the good, as well as his *search* for the particulars of his rational plan of life. Teufelsdröckh's biographical construction embodies a compelling counterargument to Rawls, since Rawls states that "we can view the choice in the original position from the standpoint of one person selected at random [and] if anyone after due reflection prefers a conception of justice to another, then they all do, and a unanimous agreement can be reached."<sup>29</sup> Teufelsdröckh also undermines Rawls's claim that *all* those behind a veil of ignorance in the original position "know that they have some rational plan of life."<sup>30</sup> Teufelsdröckh's life experiences lead him to principles fundamentally inimical to the two principles of justice Rawls asserts *anyone* would arrive at in the context of the original position behind a veil of ignorance.<sup>31</sup> Rawls is ostensibly unfamiliar with Teufelsdröckh's philosophical conclusions and unfamiliar with *Sartor Resartus*'s foundational influence on Emerson, and American Transcendentalism more generally.

Rawls acknowledges and concedes that once the veil of ignorance is removed, some may not want more primary social goods either for religious or other reasons.<sup>32</sup> However, this does not invalidate the other dimensions associated with Teufelsdröckh's persona, namely the resistance he faces in discovering a conception of the good and rational plan of life. His lack of a conception of the good and lack of a rational plan of life are intertwined with and necessary

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<sup>29</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 139.

<sup>30</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 142.

<sup>31</sup> For Teufelsdröckh's biographical construction, see Book II in *Sartor Resartus*.

<sup>32</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 142.

prerequisites to his determination that renunciation is superior to alternatives such as the difference principle in what should define moral and political philosophy.

While Rawls laid out the parameters of the original position and sought to derive a superior conception of justice by comparing a set number of alternatives against one another, he nevertheless admits that following such a procedure is less than ideal. Rawls reflects that “admittedly this is an unsatisfactory way to proceed.”<sup>33</sup> Rawls remarks that it would be better to “define necessary and sufficient conditions for a uniquely best conception of justice and then exhibit a conception that fulfilled these conditions.”<sup>34</sup> Carlyle did this, in *Sartor Resartus*, though in neither an explicit nor a systematic way. This in many ways is the point at which Carlyle and Rawls diverge most markedly, whereby Carlyle illustrates justice in a manner shrouded by romanticism that is inherently incommensurable with Rawls’s approach that embodies systematic rationalism.

There are multiple instances in which statements Rawls makes in *A Theory of Justice* are explicitly opposite to and incommensurable with those offered by Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus*. For example, Rawls makes the simple and highly intuitive claim that conflict arises in society because each member prefers a larger to a smaller share of the benefits made possible by collaboration.<sup>35</sup> Though reasonable, such an account is nonetheless contestable, given Carlyle’s alternative normative account, which provides a rationale whereby the renunciation of attaining larger and larger shares of benefits would become obvious.<sup>36</sup> Carlyle’s philosophy in

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<sup>33</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 123.

<sup>34</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 123.

<sup>35</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 126.

<sup>36</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 144-145.



*Sartor Resartus* shows that it is simply not the case that *each* prefers a larger to a smaller share without qualification. In so doing, Carlyle demonstrates that he is attempting to solve the problem that is the basis for conflict as a means to resolve conflict. A philosophical construction that illustrates why individuals should pursue renunciation of consumption as their default yields mutual solidarity as a replacement for conflict. In this context, it is valuable to acknowledge the philosophical construction by which Carlyle is able to conclude that it is actually *irrational* to prefer a larger to a smaller share *without qualification*:

Man's Unhappiness, as I construe, comes of his Greatness; it is because there is an Infinite in him, which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury under the Finite. Will the whole Finance Ministers and Upholsterers and Confectioners of modern Europe undertake, in joint-stock company, to make one Shoeblick HAPPY? They cannot accomplish it, above an hour or two; for the Shoeblick also has a Soul quite other than his Stomach; and would require, if you consider it, for his permanent satisfaction and saturation, simply this allotment, no more, and no less: *God's infinite Universe altogether to himself*, therein to enjoy infinitely, and fill every wish as fast as it rose. Oceans of Hochheimer, a Throat like that Ophiuchus! Speak not of them; to the infinite Shoeblick they are as nothing. No sooner is your ocean filled, than he grumbles that it might have been of better vintage. Try him with half of a Universe, of an Omnipotence, he sets to quarrelling with the proprietor of the other half, and declares himself the most maltreated of men. –Always there is a black spot in our sunshine: it is even, as I said, the *Shadow of Ourselves*...So true is it, what I then said, that *the Fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator, as by lessening your Denominator*. Nay, unless my Algebra deceive me, *Unity* itself divided by *Zero* will give *Infinity*. Make thy claim of wages a zero, then; thou hast the world under thy feet. Well did the Wisest of our time write: 'It is only with Renunciation (*Entsagen*) that Life, properly speaking, can be said to begin.'<sup>37</sup>

Rawls skips the crucial and necessary step of providing a normative defense or justification for why each member of a society should or should not prefer a larger to a smaller share. He takes this for granted, because it is so hegemonically engrained in the context of modern liberal and individualized capitalism that there is a blindness to any other alternative. Taking for granted a preference for a greater to a lesser share by not contesting it merely reinforces the problem of

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<sup>37</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 144-145.

inequality that Rawls directs the difference principle to resolve. It should be noted that the application of the difference principle in the resolution of the problem of inequality is done retroactively in the sense that the difference principle corrects for inequality after the free market's initial distribution of resources.

The fact that Carlyle provides a normative theory for renunciation can be applied to negate the need for a veil of ignorance in the original position. Renunciation is inherently at odds with the basis upon which Rawls maintains that a veil of ignorance is necessary, namely to insure that those deliberating on principles of justice do not exploit their circumstances to construct principles of justice that are to their own advantage. A normative theory of renunciation breaks down the veil of ignorance in that everyone can adopt it while knowing one's place in society as a result of the philosophical arguments made on behalf of its adoption. This means that whether or not someone adopts renunciation is not dependent on whether one is wealthy or poor but simply on whether one can be convinced that renunciation is optimal and actually beneficial. Just as an individual can adopt renunciation, as Teufelsdröckh did, so too can every individual and thus the hegemonic mindset of a population of any size can also be altered toward such a direction.

Rawls establishes the scope of his project for formulating a theory of justice by setting boundaries whereby Carlyle's approach to discovering justice lies outside its scope. Rawls has such confidence in the two principles of justice he formulates that "the acceptance of the two principles constitutes an understanding to discard as irrelevant as a matter of social justice much of the information and many of the complications of everyday life."<sup>38</sup> On the contrary,

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<sup>38</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 88.

*Sartor Resartus* provides an account of the complications of everyday life and how they are the context for discovering a philosophy of social justice.

Would Teufelsdröckh be able to alter the decision-making in the original position if, hypothetically, he were the only person enabled to present an argument before the decider behind the veil of ignorance? Such a thought experiment underscores the incommensurability inherent between *A Theory of Justice* and *Sartor Resartus*. If, hypothetically, Teufelsdröckh were to be able to present his case either (a) during the deliberations taking place in the original position to derive principles of justice or (b) as a response (or rebuttal) to the parties after they agreed on the two principles of justice, it is possible, if not highly probable, that the parties would be unable to agree on principles of justice. The incorporation of romanticism into the context of the original position is amenable to Rawls's commitment to constructivism. Such an amendment to the original position would in no way invalidate the neutrality of the original position and veil of ignorance. It would merely be a test of the veil of ignorance and original position as philosophical constructs whereby Carlyle's conception of justice could interface and thus either synthesize with and confirm Rawls's theory of justice or yield deadlock as a result of their incommensurability.

The charge may be levelled, in amending the original position to pose Carlyle's philosophy as an alternative, that doing so would taint the original position—that it would then become impure and invalidated based on the intentions Rawls had in mind. A charge may be levelled (and it may already have been) that, in order to attain the principles of justice, one must assemble the wisest philosophers, rather than those who know nothing about themselves and their conceptions of the good, in order to do so. Also, it may be charged, why should any

one philosopher get to enjoy the privilege of *making a case to the jury*, so to speak? If one person (i.e. Teufelsdröckh) should be given such a privilege in such an arbitrary fashion, why shouldn't others? Such a question underscores the potential vulnerability of Rawls's theory of justice if there are potentially multiple philosophies on the topic of justice that stand in contradistinction to Rawls's philosophical account. And if others are allowed to compete to persuade the "jury" to adopt certain principles of justice, then does this not nullify the spirit of the original position as being the sole basis for a social contract theory?

Carlyle deliberates on and defines justice using a variety of criteria worthy of attention. For example, he maintains that "it is not what a man outwardly has or wants that constitutes the happiness or misery of him... [but] it is the feeling of *injustice* that is insupportable to all men."<sup>39</sup> Carlyle defines injustice as "another name for *disorder*, for unveracity, unreality; a thing which veracious created Nature, even because it is not Chaos and a waste-whirling baseless Phantasm, rejects and disowns."<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Carlyle has faith in the realization of justice. He theorizes of such a realization:

An ideal of right does dwell in all men, in all arrangements, actions and procedures of men: it is to this ideal of right, more and more developing itself as it is more and more approximated to, that human Society forever tends and struggles. We say also that any given thing either *is* unjust or else just; however obscure the arguings and strugglings on it be, the thing in itself there as it lies, infallibly enough, *is* the one or the other. To which let us add only this, the first, last article of faith, the alpha and omega of all faith among men, That nothing which is unjust can hope to continue in this world.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Carlyle, "Chartism," 356.

<sup>40</sup> Carlyle, "Chartism," 356.

<sup>41</sup> Carlyle, "Chartism," 366.

In this context, Carlyle offers the view that the pursuit of justice is evolutionary, whereby injustice is progressively negated. For him, justice can be distinguished from injustice through intuition and feeling. In another passage, he theorizes justice this way:

No man at bottom means injustice; it is always for some obscure distorted image of a right that he contends: an obscure image diffracted, exaggerated, in the wonderfulest way, by natural dimness and selfishness; getting tenfold more diffracted by exasperation of contest, till at length it become all but irreconizable; yet still the image of a right. Could a man own to himself that the thing he fought for was wrong, contrary to fairness and the law of reason, he would own also that it thereby stood condemned and hopeless; he could fight for it no longer.<sup>42</sup>

In this way, Carlyle contends that the pursuit of justice is a universal pursuit that is applicable to all. Individuals may have different perceptions of what justice entails, but each nonetheless strives toward achieving justice.

Martin Luther King, Jr. communicated Carlyle's commitment to an eventual achievement of a just society through evolution and a process of elimination of attributes impeding realization of such a society. "I am convinced we shall overcome," said King, "because the arc of a moral universe is long but it bends toward justice. We shall overcome because Carlyle is right—no lie can live forever."<sup>43</sup> King's citation of Carlyle indicates their agreement that the pursuit of justice is a project that is progressive and cumulative over an extended period of time. Rawls's conception of justice, by contrast, is derived in the context of ideal theory in that it is the "first virtue of social institutions."<sup>44</sup> At least in the context of politics, Rawls constricts justice to be tested in laws and institutions, but shows common ground with Carlyle in that he views justice as "uncompromising" as a first virtue of human activities.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Carlyle, "Chartism," 330.

<sup>43</sup> Clayborne Carson, ed., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Volume VI) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 277.

<sup>44</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 4.

James Anthony Froude summarizes Carlyle's conception of justice at the meta-level:

God's law was everywhere: man's welfare depended on the faithful reading of it. Society was but a higher organism, no accidental agreement of individual persons or families to live together on conditions which they could arrange for themselves, but a natural growth, the conditions of which were already inflexibly laid down. Human life was like a garden, 'to which the will was gardener,' and the moral fruits and flowers, or the immoral poisonous weeds, grew inevitably according as the rules already appointed were discovered and obeyed, or slighted, overlooked, or defied. Nothing was indifferent. Every step which a man could take was in the right direction or the wrong. If in the right, the result was as it should be; if in the wrong, the excuse of ignorance would not avail to prevent the inevitable consequence.<sup>46</sup>

Froude expounds on Carlyle's position by describing how Carlyle felt modern political thought and modern humanity believes in things such as expediency, the rights of "man," and government by majorities, all rudiments that reflect as if humanity could make laws for itself.<sup>47</sup>

Froude further clarifies Carlyle's position, which was that "the law, did they but know it, was already made; and their wisdom, if they wished to prosper, was not look for what was convenient to themselves, but for what had been decided already in Nature's chancery."<sup>48</sup>

Carlyle theorizes of the exponential growth of injustice that results from not discerning and practicing justice at the individual and collective levels:

Justice, Justice: woe betides us everywhere when, for this reason or for that, we fail to do justice! No beneficence, benevolence, or other virtuous contribution will make good the want. And in what a rate of terrible geometrical progression, far beyond *our* poor computation, any act of Injustice once done by us grows; rooting itself ever anew, spreading ever anew, like a banyan-tree,--blasting all life under it, for it is a poison-tree! There is but one thing needed for the world; but that one is indispensable. Justice, Justice, in the name of Heaven; give us Justice, and we live; give us only counterfeits of it, or succedanea for it, and we die!<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of the First Forty Years of His Life* (Volume 2), 5.

<sup>47</sup> Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of the First Forty Years of His Life* (Volume 2), 5.

<sup>48</sup> Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of the First Forty Years of His Life* (Volume 2), 5-6.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Carlyle, "Model Prisons," in *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1850), 82.

Posing a fictional conversation between two persons on the topic of justice, Carlyle quoted one as admitting the difficulty of adhering to what nature prescribes as just:

“Well, I have no pocket-definition of Justice,” said he, “to give your Lordship. It has not quite been my trade to look for such a definition; I could rather fancy it had been your Lordship’s trade, sitting on your high place this long while. But one thing I can tell you: Justice always *is*, whether we define it or not. Everything done, suffered or proposed, in Parliament or out of it, *is* either just or else unjust; either is accepted by the gods and eternal facts, or is rejected by them.”<sup>50</sup>

Froude condenses and rephrases Carlyle’s view: “In politics as in all else, Carlyle insisted always that there was a *right* way of doing things and a *wrong* way; that by following the *right* way alone could any good end be arrived at.”<sup>51</sup> According to Carlyle, it was imperative to find the *right* way of managing the affairs of a nation, just as it was imperative to find the right way when it comes to such things as cultivating the soil, healing diseases, or of exercising any one of the million functions on which society depends.<sup>52</sup>

An apt analogy to describe the philosophical contrast between Carlyle and Rawls (and their divergent critiques of Bentham’s utilitarianism) could be the notion of two people travelling from the equator in search of a more temperate climate. Carlyle travels north (in the direction of transcendentalism/romanticism), while Rawls travels south (in the direction of liberalism/rationalism), both doing so as a matter of course dependent on factors out of their control that socialized them into such divergent philosophical paths. Carlyle and Rawls were socially constituted differently in that they lived not only in different eras and different places, but had different personal backgrounds that informed their normative political philosophies. As

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<sup>50</sup> Carlyle, “Model Prisons”, 87-88.

<sup>51</sup> Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London, 1834-1881* (Volume I), 308-309.

<sup>52</sup> Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London, 1834-1881* (Volume I), 308-309.

with any comparison between two philosophers, the fact that they were not the same and did not embody the same philosophy must be a question of social constitution in which all philosophers are socially constituted or predisposed to espouse a unique philosophy in contrast with all existent philosophy. Upon arriving at his own philosophical destination, each has no real consciousness of what lies in the philosophical domain each did not travel to, in contradistinction to his own. Each does not even know that the other side exists.

To return to the analogy, one conceivably might discover a dense jungle while the other a vast open desert. The dichotomy in flora and fauna between a jungle and desert is the equivalent of the analogy between Carlyle and Rawls as philosophers. Each cannot speak on the other's terms because they have no means of doing so, let alone the talent to be able to do so. In political and moral philosophy, the contrast between Carlyle and Rawls informs us that a romantic cannot be a rationalist and a rationalist cannot be a romantic. They each see the world through a different lens and their philosophies embody ideals and worldviews that share little if anything in common.

Rawls defines his ideal theory of justice as fairness as being “realistically utopian” in that “it probes the limits of the realistically practicable, that is, how far in our world (given its laws and tendencies) a democratic regime can attain complete realization of its appropriate political values—democratic perfection, if you like.”<sup>53</sup> Carlyle's non-ideal theory, espoused in *Sartor Resartus*, in many respects was a pursuit of an ideal in a similar fashion to Rawls such that transcendentalism could be cast as a realistically utopian doctrine that all might hypothetically subscribe to and adopt. According to Rawls, ideal theory deals with the paradigm of a society in

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<sup>53</sup> John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 13.



which everyone “is presumed to act justly,” whereas Carlyle, it can be inferred, would take everyone acting justly as the end, rather than the premise, of any valid political theory.<sup>54</sup>

According to Carlyle, politics would end when everyone acts justly, as there would be nothing more to achieve or prove. As Lea characterizes him, “[Carlyle] cannot conceive of a society united in loyalty and sincerity, even for a moment: for these are the chief conditions of a just choice in policies and men.”<sup>55</sup> Yet, Lea follows this statement with an inquiry that foreshadows Rawls. Lea asks, if it is impossible to conceive of or realize such a society united in acting justly, “in what way are we to imagine a society coming to consciousness of itself, or transcending its own atomism and individualism?”<sup>56</sup> Carlyle’s non-ideal theory is thus in pursuit of what Rawlsian ideal theory presumes, as Rawls defines non-ideal theory as dealing in “principles that govern how we are to deal with injustice...the pressing, urgent matters...in everyday life.”<sup>57</sup> While Rawls takes up justice as what he considers to be the pre-eminent question that faces political theory, Carlyle “does not deny the existence of any transcendent criterion of justice...but he quite refuses to discuss a question that has no bearing on the immediate problems of life.”<sup>58</sup>

As Carlyle maintains, “innumerable ‘Philosophies of Man,’ contending in boundless hubbub, must annihilate each other, before an inspired Poesy and Faith for Man can fashion itself together.”<sup>59</sup> In a statement that almost explicitly foreshadows MacIntyre, Carlyle remarks “that ages of Heroism are not ages of Moral Philosophy; Virtue, when it can be philosophised

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<sup>54</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Lea, *Carlyle: Prophet of To-day*, 114.

<sup>56</sup> Lea, *Carlyle: Prophet of To-day*, 114.

<sup>57</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 8.

<sup>58</sup> Lea, *Carlyle: Prophet of To-day*, 61.

<sup>59</sup> Carlyle, “Characteristics,” 32-33.

of, has become aware of itself, is sickly and beginning to decline.”<sup>60</sup> Moreover, “to the popular judgment, he who talks much about Virtue in the abstract, begins to be suspect.”<sup>61</sup> Carlyle captures MacIntyre’s sentiments in a passage that reads nearly as a condensed plot summary of MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*:

Goodness, which was a rule to itself, must now appeal to Precept, and seek strength from Sanctions; the Freewill no longer reigns unquestioned and by divine right, but like a mere earthly sovereign, by expediency, by Rewards and Punishments: or rather, let us say, the Freewill, so far as may be, has abdicated and withdrawn into the dark, and special nightmare of a Necessity usurps its throne; for now that mysterious Self-impulse of the whole man, heaven-inspired, and in all senses partaking of the Infinite, being captiously questioned in a finite dialect, and answering, as it needs must, by silence,--is conceived as non-extant, and only the outward Mechanism of it remains acknowledged: of Volition, except as the synonym of Desire, we hear nothing; of ‘Motives,’ without any Mover, more than enough.<sup>62</sup>

Carlyle himself discusses what will take place “after virtue.” He remarks on how virtue and moral philosophy are inimical to one another in that virtue is unconscious while moral philosophy is merely an “account” of the death of virtue. He writes: “as the last stage of all, when Virtue, properly so called, has ceased to be practiced, and become extinct, and a mere remembrance, we have the era of Sophists, descanting of its existence, proving it, denying it, mechanically ‘accounting’ for it;--as dissectors and demonstrators cannot operate till once the body be dead.”<sup>63</sup> Since the unconsciousness of virtue cannot be reclaimed once virtue has become extinct, we are left in a state in which moral (and political) philosophy is unable to make claims based on any grounds other than those that are subjective. According to Carlyle, moral and intellectual genius are ““ever a secret to itself”” and “in the Body Politic, as in the

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<sup>60</sup> Carlyle, “Characteristics,” 8.

<sup>61</sup> Carlyle, “Characteristics,” 8.

<sup>62</sup> Carlyle, “Characteristics,” 9.

<sup>63</sup> Carlyle, “Characteristics,” 10.

animal body, the sign of right performance is Unconsciousness.”<sup>64</sup> Emery Neff describes

Carlyle’s views in what can be taken as a type of MacIntyrean terms:

Each man was sent by his Creator into the world with a special duty to perform. In the performance of this duty all claims for happiness should be renounced. Virtue was its own reward, and should be practiced unhesitatingly, in obedience to the voice of God.<sup>65</sup>

Rawls articulates the problem of political liberalism: “How is it possible that there may exist over time a stable and just society of free and equal citizens profoundly divided by reasonable though incompatible religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines?”<sup>66</sup> Rawls’s conception of a stable society, it can be argued, is largely synonymous with a static society and a society in which an individual is merely an instrument who fits within the scope of a comprehensive doctrine alongside other individuals who facilitate the eternal existence of other comprehensive doctrines. While Rawls contends that the requirement that all citizens affirm the same comprehensive doctrine is “unrealistic” and “utopian,” he does so in the belief that a society divided by a multiplicity of doctrines is effectively the greatest normative ideal and comprises a political utopia most worthy of eternal preservation.<sup>67</sup>

Rawls’s philosophy presents his version of liberal society as being an approximation to a utopia, and an inference that can be made from Carlylean philosophy is that such an outlook epitomizes not only a stagnant and stationary society, but one entirely bereft of Carlylean transcendentalism. Though it can be presumed that the level of support for individual comprehensive doctrines within a population waxes and wanes over time and that the

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<sup>64</sup> Carlyle, “Characteristics,” 10,13.

<sup>65</sup> Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 10.

<sup>66</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xviii.

<sup>67</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 39.

doctrines to choose from on the “menu” also evolve, such a process merely reinforces the argument that a liberal society is utopic *only* if it is characterized by this eternal pluralism with *never* any emergent resolution/consensus among incompatible religious, philosophical, and moral comprehensive doctrines. Hypothetically, should an emergent comprehensive doctrine gain an overwhelming majority of popular support so that citizens seek to supersede political liberalism by replacing it with this comprehensive doctrine, Rawls’s conception of political liberalism would not allow for it to take place because it would not allow itself to be superseded. This illustrates how political liberalism itself is a comprehensive doctrine. Despite such promotion of what would amount to be merely an ossified or static society characterized by a perpetual division on the basis of religion, philosophy, and morality, Rawls persists that his “political liberalism is not comprehensive liberalism.”<sup>68</sup>

Rawls is adamant with respect to two features of liberal society: 1) the diversity of reasonable comprehensive religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines found in modern democratic societies is not merely a historical condition but rather a permanent feature of the culture of democracy and 2) a political society as a community united in affirming one and the same comprehensive doctrine requires the oppressive use of state power for the maintenance of political community.<sup>69</sup> A consideration of Carlyle informs us that both claims, though evident in the present, are highly speculative in the long term, since they fail to account for the possibilities of evolution taking place within the context of liberal democratic society. In this

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<sup>68</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xxvii.

<sup>69</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 36-37.

light, Rawls has little basis on which to deliberate on the *permanency* of the features of democratic society.

The pluralism of moral, religious, and philosophical doctrines can be winnowed down and consolidated without an explicit abolition of liberalism being the ultimate political mission. A winnowing can take place through natural evolution, whereby certain doctrines become negated over time even to the point where, hypothetically, Rawls's conception of justice could eventually become a comprehensive doctrine accepted by all. It need not follow that such a unity behind a single comprehensive doctrine *necessarily* should require the oppressive use of force by a state. A grassroots social movement in support of a comprehensive doctrine could, at least theoretically, grow to the point of having support universally so as to be called a universal consensus rather than an overlapping consensus, if it is compelling *enough* to be able to attain such a status. That comprehensive doctrines which displaced liberalism in the past, such as fascism and communism, assumed authority against the spirit of liberalism in largely top-down fashion (with limited social/political movements) by usurping power through political channels does not preclude the possibility of a universal consensus emerging "organically" within the context of liberalism's natural evolution. Such a consensus need not be illiberal nor undemocratic merely by disallowing adherence to other opposing comprehensive doctrines.

Rawls demonstrates his antagonism toward the Hegelian project of synthesizing a universal doctrine dialectically. He uses the example of society in the Middle Ages as one that was united in Catholicism.<sup>70</sup> Rawls maintains that the Inquisition's suppression of heresy was

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<sup>70</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 37.

needed to preserve that shared religious belief.<sup>71</sup> Such an example is historical and does not account for the potential of a new comprehensive doctrine to arise as a product of the negation of past doctrines, with such past doctrines having become defunct via evolution.

In this light, liberal society could be theorized as a *means* to the end of discovering *the* comprehensive doctrine to succeed it. Liberal society can be cast as a laboratory in which experiments are attempted to discover the comprehensive doctrine to satisfy the next stage of political development and possibly inaugurate the “end of history.” Carlyle exemplifies the process whereby political theory has the potential to negate virtually *all* existing religious, moral, and philosophical doctrines and, in so doing, synthesize a new doctrine as a type of dialectical product.

While Rawls’s “intention is not to replace” comprehensive doctrines, Carlyle instead seeks to discredit and negate the capacity of any and all existing comprehensive doctrines from providing hegemonic political governance on normative grounds.<sup>72</sup> Rawls promotes a doctrine of political liberalism rooted in the two principles of justice achieving an overlapping consensus among adherents of incompatible comprehensive doctrines as legitimate and philosophically defensible. According to Rawls, such an overlapping consensus supersedes all other past, present (and possibly future?) comprehensive doctrines because no past, present, or future comprehensive doctrines would ever be able to supersede it as embodying the fullest conception and definition of political justice.

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<sup>71</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 37.

<sup>72</sup> See Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xviii and Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 43.

Carlylean philosophy, as can be inferred from Carlyle's conceptualization of transcendentalism in *Sartor Resartus*, allows for disagreement with Rawls's account of pluralism as being "the natural outcome of the activities of human reason under enduring free institutions."<sup>73</sup> Carlyle's transcendentalism, as I have theorized, supersedes the incommensurability and incompatibility inherent in the pluralism of moral, religious, and philosophical doctrines. In this way, a pluralism of incompatible comprehensive doctrines that maintain themselves indefinitely would only connote a lack of progress toward the attainment and validation of the one true comprehensive doctrine. Rawls's conception of political liberalism illustrates a society that would merely be "treading water" in a status quo and embodies an ideal that does not account for the realities of liberal society in which comprehensive doctrines are constantly either gaining adherents or losing them in the competitive marketplace of ideas.

Rawls' assessment of democratic society is myopic because, while the democratic society of the twentieth century was characterized by a pluralism of comprehensive doctrines, democratic society in no way disallows the evolution to a state of affairs in which democratic citizens rally around fewer and fewer comprehensive doctrines. Such evolution potentially could occur within the context of democracy until just one comprehensive doctrine remained viable and emerged as a type of universal consensus rather than overlapping consensus. As Carlyle has illustrated, there is no such thing as a stable society, as societies are in constant evolution/devolution toward or against justice based on the actions of individuals who

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<sup>73</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xxiv.

comprise the collective political community.<sup>74</sup> Stability may be inherently the most inimical attribute that could be assigned to liberal society, as everything in liberal society is in constant flux, including levels of mutual racial, economic, religious, and ideological antagonism.

By reverting to political liberalism from comprehensive liberalism, not only does Rawls move away from Carlyle, he also moves away from the larger tradition of philosophy (i.e. Hegel and Marx) that avidly pursued the discovery of a *singular* comprehensive doctrine.<sup>75</sup> In “Signs of the Times,” Carlyle wrote disparagingly of philosophers held in high esteem: “Our favourite Philosophers have no love and no hatred; they stand among us not to do, nor to create anything, but as a sort of Logic-mills to grind out the true causes and effects of all that is done and created.”<sup>76</sup> Moreover, “an intellectual dapperling of these times boasts chiefly of his irresistible perspicacity, his ‘dwelling in the daylight of truth,’ and so forth; which, on examination, turns out to be a dwelling in the *rush*-light of ‘closet-logic,’ and a deep unconsciousness that there is any other light to dwell in or any other objects to survey with it.”<sup>77</sup>

David Alec Wilson, a Carlyle biographer, asserted as to how “Carlyle was too great a man to be a system-manufacturer or creed-cobbler”:

The necessary imperfections of knowledge render a complete scientific account of human life for ever impossible. We never can know men as well as a botanist, *e.g.*, can know flowers. Our manufacturers of philosophical systems—to say nothing of theologians—and our omniscient pseudo-scientific historians are about as wise as those old sages who devoted their lives to the search for the “philosopher’s stone,” or cracked their heads against the hard problem of perpetual motion.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Carlyle, “Chartism,” 366.

<sup>75</sup> Rawls’s *Political Liberalism* embodies the transition from comprehensive liberalism in *A Theory of Justice*.

<sup>76</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 333.

<sup>77</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 334.

<sup>78</sup> Wilson, *Mr. Froude and Carlyle*, 58, 84.



In their conceptualization of post-liberalism, Milbank and Pabst pose a question that Carlyle's philosophy can be applied to answer. Such a question underscores the difficulty of moving from a critique of liberalism to the attainment of a post-liberal society. Milbank and Pabst ask:

But how can people be educated into virtue? We have already seen that modern liberal assumptions render this impossible. On the one hand, enlightened utilitarianism reduces everything to egotistic pleasure, machinic or informational efficiency and the strength of the market-state. On the other hand, individualist romanticism reduces all to willful self-seeking and, again, the strength of the state and market combined.<sup>79</sup>

They acknowledge the limitations of utilitarianism and individualist romanticism, and by so doing come to entertain the possibility that education into virtue requires assent to something like belief in the Platonic forms.<sup>80</sup> They remark, "one can therefore conclude that our natural desire to know the transcendent Good ensures that we can in some degree realise it, while guarding against any totalitarian notion that we have the precise formula for its implementation."<sup>81</sup> This sentiment can be applied to Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, as Carlyle seeks to construct a means to attain the transcendent Good in the context of its plot, but concedes explicitly that there is no *precise* formula for its implementation. The conclusion can be drawn that the good life is in being a transcendentalist, which is largely synonymous with being a Platonist. In this context, being a transcendentalist is not instrumental towards achieving a higher utilitarian or material substantive end, but can be conceived of as an end in and of itself and as being intrinsically good.

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<sup>79</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 289

<sup>80</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 292

<sup>81</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 293

Alex Bavister-Gould points out the contradiction in MacIntyre's philosophy by juxtaposing MacIntyre's commitments in *After Virtue* with those he proposes subsequently in his support of Thomism as a viable political tradition to support as a means of curing the ills of modernity:

From the standpoint of the author of *After Virtue*, the adoption of Thomism is as much an absurd impossibility as a return to Barthist Protestant faith or communist party membership. This, I think, makes the argument of *After Virtue* of continuing and independent interest. It is more and other than a 'dry-run' for *Whose Justice?* and its sequels, and it opens possibilities that others, if not MacIntyre himself, might yet and fruitfully explore.<sup>82</sup>

In adopting Thomism as a viable philosophical tradition to respond to the crisis of liberalism (and the concurrent state of modernity as an era no longer guided by virtue), MacIntyre contradicts a core thesis offered in *After Virtue*: namely, that there is no means to reconcile the inherent incommensurability that exists among the universe of disparate ideologies and theologies that compete against one another, each of which has some adherents in the pluralist condition of liberalism.

Carlylean transcendentalism contains a means to solve the problem of incommensurability that MacIntyre has pointed out as unresolved and largely unresolvable. Carlyle's theory of transcendentalism thus compromises MacIntyre's central and sweeping thesis in *After Virtue*: "the joint effect of the secular rejection of both Protestant and Catholic theology and the scientific and philosophical rejection of Aristotelianism was to eliminate any notion of man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realised-his-*telos*."<sup>83</sup> The inference, applying Carlylean transcendentalism, is that one could reject Christianity and Aristotelianism and yet still realize

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<sup>82</sup> Alex Bavister-Gould, "The Uniqueness of *After Virtue* (or 'Against Hindsight')," in *Revolutionary Aristotelianism: Ethics, Resistance and Utopia*, eds. Kelvin Knight and Paul Blackledge (Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius, 2008), 73.

<sup>83</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 52.

his telos through being a transcendentalist, and thus seek to account for the true nature of reality and the universe. Carlyle's inherent yet implicit pronouncement of the failure of the Enlightenment project in *Sartor Resartus* prefigured MacIntyre's proclamation of the same in *After Virtue*.<sup>84</sup> I argue that Carlyle sought to resolve the failures of the Enlightenment by proposing a philosophical account in *Sartor Resartus* whose conclusions provided a telos and, if universally adopted, would connote entering a new stage in political development toward the "end of history." It can be inferred that it is the case that the Enlightenment has failed *and* Carlyle's transcendentalism has not been adopted that incommensurable and interminable debates persist in the contexts of moral and political philosophy.

Carlyle's philosophy has much in common with the subsequent philosophy MacIntyre offers, as both were harsh critics of the modern sociopolitical order while being unable to offer alternatives popularly adopted. Each theorized an alternative but provided no practical step-by-step guidebook as how to take a metaphorical exit ramp off the highway of modern liberal democratic capitalism and drive in an entirely different direction. This is a fundamental way in which Carlyle and MacIntyre, as a post-Marxist, departed from Marx's own criticism of liberalism, in that Marx offers a detailed account of the things that must be done in order to achieve communism as a new political order.<sup>85</sup>

Carlyle must be further contrasted with Nietzsche, Aristotle, Christianity, and the Enlightenment so as to elaborate on how transcendentalism can be constructed as a unique and independent ideology. Carlyle's transcendentalism is elaborate and provides a resolution in

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<sup>84</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 147.

<sup>85</sup> I am referring to Marx's list in *The Communist Manifesto*.

the adoption of the philosophy of clothes *and* the adoption of the Everlasting Yea. In contrast, Aristotle's conception of eudemonia and Nietzsche's conception of the *Übermensch* are nebulous and indefinable. Carlyle's transcendentalism leads to the conclusion that Aristotelian happiness and the Nietzschean *Übermensch* are essentially equal because they are equally nebulous. Teufelsdröckh provides a blueprint in the sense that readers of *Sartor Resartus* can adopt his philosophy and adopt his vantage point after being persuaded of its merits through the duration of the book. Aristotle maintains that happiness can be defined with more clarity "if we could first ascertain the function of man."<sup>86</sup> Aristotle remarks that the flute-player, sculptor, and any artist has a function, and Carlyle seeks to make known that Teufelsdröckh, as "Professor of Things in General," has a unique function in accounting for the entirety of the universe as being clothing that symbolizes a divine, transcendent, and immaterial order.

Ostensibly, if the flute-player, sculptor, and any artist or member of any occupation were to adopt Teufelsdröckh's philosophy, the "philosophy of clothes," they would promote themselves onto a higher plane in the sense that they would evolve from carrying out a function by nature specialized and limited in scope to carrying out a function universal in scope—accounting for the transcendental nature of the entirety of the universe. Specialized laborers who had gone about their functions unacquainted with and unfamiliar with Carlyle's philosophy of clothes could then share in a solidarity by universally becoming Teufelsdröckhs, or transcendentalists. The "function of man," it can be concluded from inference from *Sartor Resartus*, is to gain consciousness of the transcendentalist philosophy. Such a function has not been taken up since collective humanity heretofore has not recognized Carlylean

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<sup>86</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 11.

transcendentalism as the basis for pursuing that function. In other words, specialized occupations can be taken up while being united in pursuing transcendentalism as the universal function of humanity.

In comparison to Carlyle's account of transcendentalism, I argue that all other ideologies and theologies are incommensurable and arbitrary. Carlylean transcendentalism supersedes them. This is the logic behind how transcendentalism provides humanity a unique account of what the human function is. Aristotle asks, "Have the carpenter, then, and the tanner certain functions or activities, and has man none? Is he born without a function?"<sup>87</sup> In seeking to discover humanity's unique function, Aristotle considers how "life seems to belong even to plants, but we are seeking what is peculiar to man."<sup>88</sup> Aristotle concludes that humanity's function is "a certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle."<sup>89</sup> Humanity's peculiarity rests in its peculiar capacity to gain consciousness of Carlyle's conception of transcendentalism and consciously (and universally) recognize it as the apex of philosophy. The synthesis of Aristotle and Carlyle becomes that the "function of a good man [is] to be the good and noble performance of"<sup>90</sup> being a transcendentalist.

Throughout *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle provides commentary with respect to describing virtuous human life that is readily applicable to Carlyle's account of Teufelsdröckh's biography in *Sartor Resartus*. When it comes to the human experience of bad fortune through experiencing a multitude of bad events, Aristotle maintains that "even in these [bad events]

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<sup>87</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 11.

<sup>88</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 11.

<sup>89</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 12.

<sup>90</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 12.

nobility shines through, when a man bears with resignation many great misfortunes, not through insensibility to pain but through nobility and greatness of soul.”<sup>91</sup> Such an account provides a synopsis of Teufelsdröckh’s personal philosophical journey from Everlasting No to the Centre of Indifference to the Everlasting Yea. Teufelsdröckh’s alienation and rejection led him initially to adopt nihilism in the Everlasting No, and then he transitioned to the Everlasting Yea through his adoption of transcendentalism, made possible by his “greatness of soul.”<sup>92</sup>

Carlyle’s transcendentalism has been overlooked as a viable goal for humanity, but Nietzsche, and particularly Aristotle, have been examined in the literature and have provided solutions that have not been popularly adopted.<sup>93</sup> For example, no one is living in “Aristotelian” or “Nietzschean” political societies but, I argue, it is possible to construct a Carlylean transcendentalist society by applying *Sartor Resartus* to politics. Teufelsdröckh is an elaborate literary construction with which it is possible for readers to identify if they choose to read *Sartor Resartus* and then themselves embody Teufelsdröckh’s vantage point not only in their political lives but in the full scope of their lives. Teufelsdröckh is thus a blueprint that readers can replicate for themselves. Teufelsdröckh also serves as a type of dialectical synthesis of Aristotelian eudemonia and the Nietzschean übermensch in that Teufelsdröckh achieves fulfillment by living by a radical philosophy that he sets for himself but yet seeks to impart to others to resolve society’s problems. It can be inferred from Carlyle’s construction of *Sartor*

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<sup>91</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 17.

<sup>92</sup> For Teufelsdröckh’s biography and its relation to the construction of transcendentalism, see Book II of *Sartor Resartus*.

<sup>93</sup> MacIntyre discusses Aristotle and Nietzsche extensively in *After Virtue* and I have engaged his discussion. In particular, see Chapter 18 of *After Virtue*.

*Resartus* that Teufelsdröckh achieves fulfillment as a resolution to a narrative plot from which, and *only* from which, his self-realization is enabled.

Aristotle frames the final end for humanity in the following terms:

Since there are evidently more than one end, and we choose some of these (e.g. wealth, flutes, and in general instruments) for the sake of something else, clearly not all ends are final ends; but the chief good is evidently something final. Therefore, if there is only one final end, this will be what we are seeking, and if there are more than one, the most final of these will be what we are seeking. Now we call that which is in itself worthy of pursuit more final than that which is worthy of pursuit for the sake of something else, and that which is never desirable for the sake of something else more final than the things that are desirable both in themselves and for the sake of that other thing, and therefore we call final without qualification that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else.<sup>94</sup>

While Aristotle determines that happiness is the “final end,” the Everlasting Yea and the philosophy of clothes become the “final ends” realized by Teufelsdröckh’s unique biography, which enabled their discernment. I will argue that the Everlasting Yea and transcendentalism are conceptions of the good for humanity. The Aristotelian virtues, though conceptions of the good in themselves, can be informed by the addition of the Everlasting Yea and transcendentalism. Virtues practiced for the sake of happiness underscore the vagueness of happiness, particularly when considering the Everlasting Yea and transcendentalism as offering specific destinations for humanity to arrive at.

Teufelsdröckh compels us to think that one cannot be truly happy until one has discerned the highest philosophical truths (the Everlasting Yea and the philosophy of clothes) and that happiness as Aristotle frames it will be as empty as that of being a satisfied pig, as Mill characterizes the adherence to Bentham’s philosophy of utilitarianism. Aristotle defines happiness as the final end because it is what “we choose always for itself and never for the sake

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<sup>94</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 10.

of something else.”<sup>95</sup> The synthesis of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* with Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* leads to the inference that not only is Aristotelian happiness compatible with Carlyle’s concept of the Everlasting Yea, but happiness is most attainable if one’s philosophy is the Everlasting Yea and the philosophy of clothes.

Carlylean philosophy can be applied to ask of MacIntyre, with a non-Nietzschean and non-liberal lens, why should we assume Aristotle reached the apex of moral, ethical, and political philosophy and that moral philosophy has subsequently declined in the period subsequent to Aristotle? MacIntyre contends that it is a fact that “Aristotelianism is *philosophically* the most powerful of pre-modern modes of moral thought.”<sup>96</sup> This dissertation seeks to advance the normative argument that Carlylean philosophy, specifically his theory of transcendentalism and its political implications as presented in *Sartor Resartus*, is *philosophically* a compelling *modern* political and moral philosophy. Carlyle thus demotes both Aristotle and Nietzsche through his promotion of transcendentalism, as transcendentalism *transcends* not only every –ism but Aristotelian teleology and Nietzschean nihilism.

MacIntyre does not justify why he thinks Aristotle provides the *grandest* formulation of moral and political philosophy, other than that he was among the first philosophers of such, and theorized the concept of “teleology,” and that subsequently there has been a departure from Aristotelian teleology in favor of emotivism and pluralism. If moral and political philosophy had inaugurated themselves in the context of a state of pluralism and emotivism, and yielded a world in which Aristotle formulated his virtue ethics as a monolithic philosophy to

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<sup>95</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 10.

<sup>96</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 111



sew the world together, it is possible MacIntyre would similarly object to such a state of philosophy as rejecting the validity of ancient pluralism and liberalism the way liberals critique his own fidelity to Aristotle.

MacIntyre asserts in *After Virtue* that moral philosophy has suffered the effects of a catastrophe comparable to an imaginable world in which the natural sciences suffer the effects of a catastrophe.<sup>97</sup> Such a world would be one in which, were analytical philosophy to flourish, such philosophy would never reveal the fact of the disordered state of the world.<sup>98</sup> MacIntyre writes, “what we possess, if this view is true, are the fragments of a conceptual scheme, parts which now lack those contexts from which their significance derived.”<sup>99</sup> MacIntyre states his hypothesis by asserting “that we are in a condition which almost nobody recognises and which perhaps nobody at all can recognise fully.”<sup>100</sup> Carlyle’s transcendentalism, theorized in *Sartor Resartus*, is compatible with and informs MacIntyre’s account of the state of philosophical discourse with respect to not only moral philosophy but political philosophy as well. As MacIntyre writes:

And at least if even to entertain this hypothesis puts me into an antagonistic stance, it is a very different antagonistic stance from that of, for example, modern radicalism. For the modern radical is as confident in the moral expression of his stances and consequently in the assertive uses of the rhetoric of morality as any conservative has ever been. Whatever else he denounces in our culture he is certain that it still possesses the moral resources which he requires in order to denounce it. Everything else may be, in his eyes, in disorder; but the language of morality is in order, just as it is. That he too may be being betrayed by the very language he uses is not a thought available to him. It is the aim of this book to make that thought available to radicals, liberals and conservatives alike. I cannot however expect to make it palatable; for if it is true, we are all already in a state so disastrous that there are no large remedies for it.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 1-5.

<sup>98</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2.

<sup>99</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2.

<sup>100</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 4.

<sup>101</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 4.

I contend that both Carlyle and MacIntyre seek to transcend, and thus resolve, the crisis of hyperpluralism. For MacIntyre, it can be inferred from *After Virtue* that hyperpluralism can be defined as the interminable nature of the competition among moral and political philosophies. Drawing an inference from Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, hyperpluralism can be characterized as the notion that all competing ideologies are not only merely "clothing" worn by humanity prior to its consciousness of transcendentalism but also, as such, historical *constructs* that are necessary in order to eventually derive the realization of transcendentalism. In this way, Carlyle's account of transcendentalism informs MacIntyre's account that there is a singular conceptual scheme that has been shattered, resulting in interminable debates with respect to competing emotivist moral and political philosophies.

MacIntyre recounts the "catastrophe" that befell philosophy as a historical construct:

Suppose it were the case that the catastrophe of which my hypothesis speaks had occurred before, or largely before, the founding of academic history, so that the moral and other evaluative presuppositions of academic history derived from the forms of the disorder which it brought about. [...] For the forms of the academic curriculum would turn out to be among the symptoms of the disaster whose occurrence the curriculum does not acknowledge.<sup>102</sup>

As Christopher Stephen Lutz synthesizes from such a thought experiment, "in other words, modern history does not record the catastrophe because the catastrophe is invisible to it, because modern history is itself one of the fruits of the catastrophe."<sup>103</sup>

The rationale for transcendentalism's conversion to a practical movement is that it provides a means of resolving otherwise interminable moral, political, and social conflicts that not only persist but are exacerbated in the context of modern liberal democratic capitalism.

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<sup>102</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3-4.

<sup>103</sup> Christopher Stephen Lutz, "From Voluntarist Nominalism to Rationalism to Chaos: Alasdair MacIntyre's Critique of Modern Ethics," in *Revolutionary Aristotelianism*, 93.

Transcendentalism provides a philosophical narrative whereby liberalism can transition to post-liberalism in a manner that preserves the gains made possible by the liberal capitalist social order. In this way, Carlylean transcendentalism should be considered as an alternative resolution to the “riddle of history” in contradistinction to Marx’s presentation of communism as the solution to what Marx calls the “riddle of history”:

*Communism as the positive transcendence of private property, as human self-estrangement, and therefore as the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man; communism therefore as the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e., human) being—a return become conscious, and accomplished within the entire wealth of previous development. This communism, as fully-developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully-developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man—the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution.*<sup>104</sup>

Carlylean transcendentalism resolves, or at least ameliorates, economic conflict by providing a philosophical account of how exploitation and thus the mutual hostility within humanity can be terminated. Transcendentalism naturally can be cast into the role of post-capitalism, since it preserves the gains made by capitalism that date from the inauguration of the industrial age. Transcendentalism does this by recognizing the need for renunciation of the pursuit of insatiable consumption as a means of conserving scarce resources and preserving the free marketplace in the context of the long-term. In the absence of renunciation, capitalism would only continue to embody the pursuit of insatiable consumption as a means for the continuous generation of profits, which would lead to unending expansions in consumer and national debt (as in the case of the US in particular) in addition to unsustainable consumption of

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<sup>104</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 72

finite resources. In the long term, capitalism leads to environmental degradation and consumer dissatisfaction and disillusionment, and thus a taste for the spiritual, rather than satisfaction with merely being a consumer in the economic sphere.

Transcendentalism promises humanism and social solidarity to replace burgeoning competition, division, polarization, hyperpluralism, economic inequality, and identity politics. *Renunciation*, much as it resolves the problem of exploitation, resolves the problems of inequality, identity politics, ethnocentrism, and racism. Communism and Islamism have both promised an end to identity politics by universalizing their respective “creeds,” so that members of all nations, races, and ethnicities can join in solidarity in their affirmation of communism or Islam.<sup>105</sup> Communism and Islamism were unsuccessful in this regard because they each were particularistic ideologies incommensurable with not only one another but with all other ideologies.

Transcendentalism’s supersession of communism and Islamism, by resolving their incommensurability as a function of casting them and all other non-transcendentalism ideologies as “clothing,” is the means by which transcendentalism itself can be universalized across all nations, races, and ethnicities. Racism, ethnocentrism, and identity politics can be ameliorated and extinguished when all see themselves in universal accord, affirming transcendentalism. Transcendentalism yields racial solidarity as a means of replacing racism. Communism and Islamism each sought to proselytize converts and realize their aims explicitly calling for revolution in which violence would be a significant if not primary component. The notion that communism or Islamism can attain universal affirmation has proven specious and

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<sup>105</sup> See Qutb, *Milestones*, 116; Hansen and Kainz, “Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology.”

shows how transcendentalism's commitment to renunciation rather than revolution offers a plausible means of attaining universal solidarity. I argue that it is through Carlyle's transcendentalism, rather than Marx's communism, that exploitation is put an end to in the manner Marx said it would: "In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end."<sup>106</sup>

Transcendentalism curtails exploitation, inequality, and racism, among other social problems, only to the extent of the proportion of a populace affirming and adhering to transcendentalism and its call for renunciation. Until transcendentalism is affirmed universally and globally, it will compete against antagonistic ideologies that would be universally hostile towards it, much as Islamism has experienced. In effect, Carlylean transcendentalism would be just one more ideology among others such as liberal democratic capitalism, communism, fascism, and Islamism competing for adherents until it is recognized as superseding its competitors. Not only would this be the case, but transcendentalism would be seen as just one more ideology allowed *within* the context of pluralistic liberalism. The extent to which transcendentalism embodies merely one more ideology subsumed within the context of liberalism, or rather embodies an overlapping consensus in the context of liberalism, or serves as post-liberalism (a successor to liberalism) is difficult to forecast. This is because ascertaining transcendentalism's practical application is to a large extent a next stage *after* constructing transcendentalism as a coherent political doctrine. Transcendentalism's practical adoption and

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<sup>106</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 165

application would be dependent on political and economic climates, and transcendentalism can be applied to local, national, and international political contexts.

Marx's description of sociological trends that would facilitate communism in the nineteenth century are potentially applicable to the facilitation of the adoption of Carlylean transcendentalism in the twenty-first century. According to Marx, "national differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world-market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto."<sup>107</sup> The hypothetical rejection of Carlylean transcendentalism portends the acceptance of the perpetuation of incommensurable ideologies and the accompanying interminable economic and political conflict that results from such rejection. Intractable and burgeoning economic and political conflict promises eventually to lead to the disintegration and dissolution of liberal democratic capitalism as the hegemonic social order, or at a minimum to a dramatic degeneration of the liberal social order. This context leads to one of the biggest questions facing liberalism: to what extent can liberal political institutions contain increasing levels of contentious politics?

Scholarship in the 2010s has rearticulated MacIntyre's claims in works such as Brad S. Gregory's *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* and Patrick Deneen's *Why Liberalism Failed*. These books document the hazardous trajectory of liberalism as a function of growing social disintegration and open the possibility for discourse on post-liberalism. In *The Unintended Reformation*, Gregory documents the continuous fracturing and proliferation of ideologies over the past five hundred years that precipitated with

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<sup>107</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 165

medieval Christianity's incapacity of remaining the hegemonic and singular sociopolitical ideology. As the hegemonic philosophical and political philosophical tradition during the medieval era, Christianity proved unsuccessful as a sustainable universal ideology when Christianity fractured during the Reformation into Catholicism and Protestantism. The Reformation was unsuccessful in that Protestantism fractured into a plurality of various sects, which then gave rise to the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment, much like Protestantism, has been unable to provide a universally consensual ideology and too has yielded a hyperpluralism of divergent and competing ideologies. From the medieval era, there has only been one consistent trendline: the systematic and exponential growth in the pluralism of both religious and secular ideologies with the corresponding less and less agreement on shared values that should be lived by. As Gregory puts it, "modern philosophers replicated in a rationalist key the unintended, open-ended, apparently irresolvable pluralism of Protestantism."<sup>108</sup> Gregory continues:

There is nothing remotely resembling agreement or convergence among contemporary philosophers about what is true, what reason prescribes, what their discipline's starting point or assumptions ought to be, what philosophy's most important problems are and priorities should be, or by what methods philosophers should or could try to resolve their disagreements...[Modern philosophy] sought universal, rationally demonstrable truth, but has produced instead an open-ended welter of preferential, ultimately arbitrary truth claims.<sup>109</sup>

After reading and appreciating Carlyle, John Stuart Mill published a review urging a competent author to undertake writing a *Treatise on the Ambiguities of the Moral Sciences* which "would enable all kinds of thinkers, who now are daggers drawn, because they are speaking different dialects and know it not, to understand one another, and to perceive that,

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<sup>108</sup> Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 379.

<sup>109</sup> Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 379.

with the proper explanations, their doctrines are reconcilable.”<sup>110</sup> Such a treatise, according to Mill, would “contribute a large part to what is probably destined to be the great philosophical achievement of the era, of which many signs already announce the commencement, viz., to unite all half truths, which have been fighting against one another since the creation, and blend them in one harmonious whole.”<sup>111</sup> I argue that Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* has the capacity to do this if not only the intellectual community but also the public at-large gains consciousness of the principles and conclusions that it espouses.

The trajectory of MacIntyre’s philosophical quest, particularly in *After Virtue*, casts doubt on the potential of there being any revival of the Aristotelianism and teleology that MacIntyre advocates.<sup>112</sup> Horton and Mendus characterize MacIntyre’s references to “the construction of local forms of community” and the need “for another—doubtless very different—St Benedict” as seeming to be “little more than whistling in the dark to keep the spirits up when set against his coruscating critique of modernity.”<sup>113</sup>

MacIntyre’s expressed purpose of *Against the Self-Images of the Age* could be applied to Carlyle as the definitive account of Carlyle’s philosophical career: “the aspiration to link philosophical criticism and ideological commitment.”<sup>114</sup> MacIntyre introduces *Against the Self-Images of the Age* with a passage that may be applied to consideration of Carlyle’s career and

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<sup>110</sup> Quoted from Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 14-15.

<sup>111</sup> Quoted from Neff, *Carlyle and Mill*, 15.

<sup>112</sup> John Horton and Susan Mendus, “Alasdair MacIntyre: *After Virtue* and After,” in *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*, eds. John Horton and Susan Mendus (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 3.

<sup>113</sup> Horton and Mendus, “Alasdair MacIntyre: *After Virtue* and After,” 3.

<sup>114</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *Against the Self-Images of the Age* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), viii.



his inability to articulate artfully an ideology (that would gain widespread popular support) to invalidate the numerous ideologies and doctrines in his own era. MacIntyre theorizes:

Against those who believe that some particular ideology is still able to provide the light that our individual and social lives need, I shall assert that—in the case of psychoanalysis, of Christianity, and above all of Marxism—either intellectual failure, or failure to express the forms of thought and action which constitute our contemporary social life, or both, have led to their necessary and in the long run not to be regretted decay. Against those who believe that in our type of society ideology as such can no longer find living roots or expression, I shall assert that it is the specific traits of these particular ideologies that we have inherited which make them no longer viable, and not any characteristics of ideology as such; and moreover that the belief in the end of ideology itself masks an ideology which is no less an ideology for being so often unacknowledged and which is perhaps less reputable than it might be insofar as it goes unrecognized.<sup>115</sup>

Such a passage provides a valuable backdrop to acknowledge the unending possibility of the emergence of a new ideology, or ideologies, to resolve the failings of ideologies attempted in the past. I have sought to illustrate how Carlyle’s transcendentalism might be acknowledged and cast as a viable ideology to displace competitor ideologies and constructs in the context of political philosophy.

In the next chapter, I compare Carlyle’s critique of modernity in the context of the nineteenth century with Jacques Ellul’s critique in the context of the twentieth century. Just as there are parallels between Carlyle and Qutb with respect to developing a “transcendental” philosophy, parallels exist between Carlyle and Ellul with respect to their bleak attitude toward what they take to be the hegemonic role technology plays in defining modernity. I unpack Carlyle’s cryptic theory of the “phoenix” of modernity, in which he contends infinite mechanization and construction of the materialist economy alongside the not-mutually-

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<sup>115</sup> MacIntyre, *Against the Self-Images of the Age*, viii.

exclusive decay of the role of spirituality in human affairs portends the unsustainability of both trends to the point of cataclysm.

## Chapter 6

### Carlyle, Ellul, and Their Critiques of Modernity

Thomas Carlyle and Jacques Ellul levelled large-scale critiques of modernity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, respectively. While others criticized specific forms of government, specific political economies (such as capitalism or communism), or political developments within specific countries, Carlyle and Ellul stand out for the all-encompassing nature of their critiques of the hegemony of the industrial technological materialism that has defined modernity writ large. According to them, this hegemony has spilled across countries and political economies such that every country, whether capitalist or communist, has had its politics defined by the dominant and unquestioned pursuit of infinite industrial and technological development so as to promote materialist consumption while demoting immaterialist spirituality. Carlyle and Ellul run parallel to one another in that each sought to argue that humanity does not guide modern industrial/technological development but, rather, humanity is dominated by the autonomous and infinite nature of industrial/technological development. It is not that they are against modern technological improvement as a means to an end, but they are against technology/industry as ends in and of themselves that block out the possibility of individuals attaining any other status than that of a producer and consumer in subservient service to the autonomous evolution of the economy at large.

Carlyle theorized about the critically important ramifications of the mechanization of society and humanity:

Thus does the Genius of Mechanism stand by to help us in all difficulties and emergencies, and with his iron back bears all our burdens.

These things, which we state lightly enough here, are yet of deep import, and indicate a mighty change in our whole manner of existence. For the same habit regulates not our modes of action alone, but our modes of thought and feeling. Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand. They have lost faith in individual endeavor, and in natural force, of any kind. Not for internal perfection, but for external combinations and arrangements, for institutions, constitutions,--for Mechanism of one sort or other, do they hope and struggle. Their whole efforts, attachments, opinions, turn on mechanism, and are of a mechanical character.

We may trace this tendency in all the great manifestations of our time; in its intellectual aspect, the studies it most favours and its manner of conducting them; in its practical aspects, its politics, arts, religion, morals; in the whole sources, and throughout the whole currents of its spiritual, no less than its material activity.<sup>1</sup>

This embodies Carlyle's romanticist critique of modern liberal democratic capitalism stimulated by the advent of industrialism. Carlyle sought to defend his thesis that, in modernity, means have replaced ends and means are now the ends in every respect ranging from the arts and religion to politics. Metaphysics, the Philosophy of the Mind, and Moral Sciences have been superseded and replaced by the science of the age, which is "physical, chemical, physiological; in all shapes mechanical."<sup>2</sup>

Carlyle singles out politics in particular when he says that nowhere is the "deep, almost exclusive faith we have in Mechanism more visible than in the Politics of this time."<sup>3</sup> It is in this context that Carlyle presents an iron cage thesis whose language sounds similar to that used by Weber years later.<sup>4</sup> Carlyle maintains:

Civil government does by its nature include much that is mechanical, and must be treated accordingly. We term it indeed, in ordinary language, the Machine of Society, and talk of it as the grand working wheel from which all private machines must derive, or to which they must adapt, their movements. Considered solely as a metaphor, all this is well enough; but here, as in so many other cases, the foam hardens itself into a shell,' and the shadow we have wantonly evoked stands terrible before us and will not depart at our bidding. Government includes much

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<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 320-321.

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 321.

<sup>3</sup> Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 324.

<sup>4</sup> See Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*, 121.

also that is not mechanical, and cannot be treated mechanically; of which latter truth, as appears to us, the political speculations and exertions of our time are taking less and less cognisance.

Nay, in the very outset, we might note the mighty interest taken in *mere political arrangements*, as itself the sign of a mechanical age.<sup>5</sup>

In forming his critique of the mechanism of the age, Carlyle neither ignores nor dismisses the positive results of industrialism. With respect to industrialism's devotion to "honest triumphs in engineering and machinery" and the making of "honest contrivance, and accumulation of capital by it," Carlyle does not remain unconvinced but authoritatively acknowledges that "truly, good consequences follow out of it: who can be blind to them?"<sup>6</sup> His next assertion, adding qualification to his endorsement of industrialism, is that industrialism yields at most "half of a most excellent and opulent result" and is "baleful only when it sets-up (as too often now) for being the whole result. A half-result which will be blessed and heavenly so soon as the other half is had,--namely wisdom to guide the first half."<sup>7</sup>

Carlyle's "Signs of the Times" is an important text that inaugurates modern social criticism in many ways, and its themes and theses are re-articulated by prominent social scientists and philosophers such as Max Weber and Jacques Ellul. As Ellul will do in the twentieth century, Carlyle warns that industrialism has the potential to be all-consuming, whereby humans increasingly become beholden to serving technology and not the other way around. He emphasizes how wisdom needs to guide the development of industrialism, and interchanges the word "beaverism" with "industrialism" as a way to suggest that human wisdom is not always the basis of human industrial output:

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<sup>5</sup> Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 324-325.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Carlyle, "Stump-Orator," in *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1850), 225.

<sup>7</sup> Carlyle, "Stump-Orator," 225.

If a man *can* keep his intellect silent, and make it even into honest beaverism, several very manful moralities, in danger of wreck on other courses, may comport well with that, and give it a genuine and partly human character; and I will tell him, in these days he may do far worse with himself and his intellect than change it into beaverism, and make honest money with it. If indeed he could become a *heroic* industrial, and have a life 'eminently human'! But that is not easy at present. Probably some ninety-nine out of every hundred of our gifted souls, who have to seek a career for themselves, go this beaver road. Whereby the first half-result, national wealth namely, is plentifully realised; and only the second half, or wisdom to guide it, is dreadfully behindhand.<sup>8</sup>

Carlyle's criticism of technology in many ways represents the advent of the critique of technology because it coincided with the start of the industrial age. The critique Carlyle offered in 1829 in "Signs of the Times" is echoed and amplified, though without credit to him, by Jacques Ellul in his landmark twentieth-century text, *The Technological Society*. Carlyle challenges his readers to "observe how the mechanical genius of our time has diffused itself into quite other provinces. Not the external and physical alone is now managed by machinery, but the internal and spiritual also."<sup>9</sup> Moreover, he offers a statement that essentially defines Ellul's thesis in *The Technological Society*:

To us who live in the midst of all this, and see continually the faith, hope and practice of every one founded on Mechanism of one kind or other, it is apt to seem quite natural, and as if it could never have been otherwise. Nevertheless, if we recollect or reflect a little, we shall find both that it has been, and might again be otherwise. The domain of Mechanism,--meaning thereby political, ecclesiastical or other outward establishments,--was once considered as embracing, and we are persuaded can at any time embrace, but a limited portion of man's interests, and by no means the highest portion.<sup>10</sup>

Carlyle introduces the dichotomy between "Dynamics" and "Mechanics," in that the science of Dynamics "treats of, and practically addresses, the primary, unmodified forces and energies of man, the mysterious springs of Love, and Fear, and Wonder, of Enthusiasm, Poetry,

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<sup>8</sup> Carlyle, "Stump-Orator," 226.

<sup>9</sup> Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 318.

<sup>10</sup> Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 326-327.

Religion, all which have a truly vital and *infinite* character.”<sup>11</sup> The science of Mechanics, on the other hand, addresses the finite, practical and external world.<sup>12</sup> He provides a critique of what he takes to be the direction political philosophy is taking by drawing on the contrast between Dynamics and Mechanics:

Now it is certain, that in former times the wise men, the enlightened lovers of their kind, who appeared generally as Moralists, Poets, or Priests, did, without neglecting the Mechanical province, deal chiefly with the Dynamical; applying themselves chiefly to regulate, increase and purify the inward primary powers of man; and fancying that herein lay the main difficulty, and the best service they could undertake. But a wide difference is manifest in our age. For the wise men, who now appear as Political Philosophers, deal exclusively with the Mechanical province; and occupying themselves in counting-up and estimating men’s motives, strive by curious checking and balancing, and other adjustments of Profit and Loss, to guide them to their true advantage: while, unfortunately, those same ‘motives’ are so innumerable, and so variable in every individual, that no really useful conclusion can ever be drawn from their enumeration. But though Mechanism, wisely contrived, has done much for man in a social and moral point of view, we cannot be persuaded that it has ever been the chief source of his worth or happiness.<sup>13</sup>

To substantiate his view that Mechanism has become dominant over Dynamism, Carlyle cites as evidence that there are machines for education in the form of a “secure, universal, straightforward business, to be conducted in the gross, by proper mechanism” and machines for religion in that the Bible-Society professes itself to be a high and heavenly institution but is found on reflection to be nothing more than an “earthly contrivance [that is] supported by collection of moneys, by fomenting of vanities, by puffing, intrigue and chicane” and is a “machine for converting the Heathen.”<sup>14</sup> G.B. Tennyson summarizes Carlyle’s position toward

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<sup>11</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 327.

<sup>12</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 327.

<sup>13</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 327-328.

<sup>14</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 318.

technology: “the machine becomes to him the great enemy, because it dehumanizes; it severs the organic relation of man to nature and God.”<sup>15</sup>

Carlyle was not opposed to technology itself but rather to its role in “mechanizing” humanity and the concurrent ill effects that came along with doing so. For example, he acknowledged how technology made it possible for humanity to be “much better fed, clothed, lodged and, in all outward respects, accommodated.”<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, Carlyle also recognized “how wealth has more and more increased, and at the same time gathered itself more and more into masses, strangely altering the old relations, and increasing the distance between the rich and the poor.”<sup>17</sup>

Leo Marx frames a question for Carlyle about his animus toward technology: “If he accepts the value of machine technology, if he believes that there is no turning back, why does he have this animus?”<sup>18</sup> Carlyle’s antagonism toward industrial society must be distinguished from the romantic’s nostalgic and reactionary rejection of industrialism in calling for a return to an earlier, simpler society.<sup>19</sup> Carlyle’s philosophy is a basis upon which Henry David Thoreau theorizes the “quiet desperation” of his native Concord’s local economy—a system in which his fellow villagers work endlessly, not to reach a goal of their choice but to serve the demands of the market mechanism.<sup>20</sup> Like Carlyle, Thoreau uses technological imagery to represent how industrialization is not only an economic phenomenon but has engulfed the human psyche and

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<sup>15</sup> Tennyson, *Sartor Called Resartus*, 307.

<sup>16</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 317-318.

<sup>17</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 318.

<sup>18</sup> Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 175.

<sup>19</sup> Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 174.

<sup>20</sup> Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 247



all of society.<sup>21</sup> Thoreau's indictment of Concord's economy might have been written to confirm Carlyle's dark view of industrialism and Thoreau puts himself in Carlyle's company by attacking the popular illusion that improving the means of production is enough, that if the machinery of society is in good order all would be well and the rest would care for itself.<sup>22</sup>

In the midst of World War II, Erich Kahler boldly proclaimed that "the rule over men by things and machines, man's adaptation to the machine, has come to its climax."<sup>23</sup> Though he was shortsighted in this analysis, in that technology's scope has only expanded since World War II, his view is nonetheless in accord with Carlyle's initial diagnosis of industrialism. Kahler presents a profound perspective in 1943 that must be reckoned with in the twenty-first century:

As the beginning of the great industrial development, there was still talk of human welfare. The rationalistic optimists expected that the new inventions, and those still to come, would enrich and develop man's nature. Machines would relieve him of toil for the bare necessities of existence, they would make human labor more and more superfluous and thus leave him time and strength to live his own life, to live for higher knowledge and happiness. But just the opposite of these fair dreams came true. The aids to existence became ends in themselves, and man lives almost exclusively for the increase and the cult of these aids. He is working himself to death to produce the appurtenances of life.

The optimists of today still endow all-powerful production with the mission of blessing an increasing number of people with a higher standard of living. But what does a higher standard of living mean today? Does it still mean a higher standard of life, more leisure for pleasure through deeper understanding? No, it means more air-conditioning, more washing machines, refrigerators and safety razors, automobiles and airplanes. Of course, modern living conditions mean more and more widespread cleanliness, hygiene, security of daily life. But the comforts of cleanliness of the body are outweighed by the growing barbarism of inner life, and the comforts of hygiene and security in the details of life are largely upset by the terrible insecurity of life as a whole.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 247.

<sup>22</sup> Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 247-248.

<sup>23</sup> Erich Kahler, *Man the Measure* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1943), 601.

<sup>24</sup> Kahler, *Man the Measure*, 617.

Kahler's juxtaposition of the costs and benefits of industrialism acts to underscore the argument that there are not *only* benefits of industrialism, which he sees as the hegemonic viewpoint. He emphasizes that the external and material benefits of industrialism are neutralized or even "outweighed by the growing barbarism of inner life," whereby "inner life" would entail what is mental, spiritual, and emotional.

Lewis Mumford, a twentieth-century critic of technology, painted a dramatic picture of what is at stake with the prospect of continuous automation of society by means of technology: "As for the eventual assemblage of a completely automated world society, only innocents could contemplate such a goal as the highest possible culmination of human evolution. It would be a final solution to the problems of mankind, only in the sense that Hitler's extermination program was a final solution for the 'Jewish problem.'"<sup>25</sup> Mumford concludes that "the exponents of progress were too committed to their doctrine to anticipate that the authoritarian institutions they sought to destroy forever might come back more oppressively than ever, fortified through the very science and technics that they valued as a means of emancipation from the past."<sup>26</sup> Consequently, "though even now few people seem to suspect the ideal form and the ultimate destination of the industrial organization that has been taking shape in our own time, it is in fact heading toward a static finality, in which change of the system itself will be so impermissible that it will take place only through total disintegration and destruction."<sup>27</sup>

Mumford's emphases on the path-dependent trajectory of technical civilization and the

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<sup>25</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine: The Pentagon of Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc, 1964), 180.

<sup>26</sup> Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine*, 200.

<sup>27</sup> Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine*, 211.

problem of its sustainability when it is fully assembled underscore how he was a prominent critic of technology and an antagonist to the hegemonic support of technology's advance.

Jacques Ellul defined rationalism as a phenomenon whose "aim was to construct a perfectly coordinated machine, single, hierarchized, and cohesive, in which the human element would be reduced to a minimum; to establish a mechanical administration that was anonymous and would eliminate every element of chance afforded by ideas, passions, sentiments, or personal interests."<sup>28</sup> Ellul seeks to illustrate how politics has been engulfed by and, as a consequence, superseded by technology. He wants to show that there is no longer room for genuine political and ideological debate because modern technological society naturally yields an "adherence to the ongoing socio-economic development generated by technological motives enforced by technological means, moving in the direction of a technological continuity."<sup>29</sup> This is a profound critique of both technology and politics, and seeks to show that humanity is not awake to the dominance of technology, which Ellul views as an autonomous driver of politics.

For Carlyle, modernity will reach a climax as a "phoenix," in that the sociopolitical and economic world order inaugurated by the industrial revolution will come to fruition and then decay and evolve to a new world order as a function of being unsustainable. Carlyle conceives of modernity in this fashion through the voice of Teufelsdröckh:

Thus, if Professor Teufelsdröckh can be relied on, we are at this hour in a most critical condition; beleaguered by that boundless "Armament of Mechanisers" and Unbelievers, threatening to strip us bare! "The World," says he, "as it needs must, is under a process of devastation and waste, which, whether by silent assiduous corrosion, or open quicker combustion, as the case chances, will effectually enough annihilate the past Forms of Society;

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<sup>28</sup> Jacques Ellul, *The Political Illusion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), xvi-xvii.

<sup>29</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 46.

replace them with what it may. For the present, it is contemplated that when man's whole Spiritual Interests are once *divested*, these innumerable stript-off Garments shall mostly be burnt; but the sounder Rags among them be quilted together into one huge Irish watch-coat for the defence of the Body only!"<sup>30</sup>

Such a passage, though cryptic, offers a theory as to how Carlylean transcendentalism might assume a hegemonic standing not only in politics and society, but in the human consciousness and psyche. In his account of modernization, Carlyle presages what would become Weber's future account in theorizing that modernization is defined by mechanized rationalization and refinement alongside disenchantment. The "Armament of Mechanisers" is "boundless" in that the pursuit of greater mechanization takes place infinitely and unyieldingly as a function of the inauguration of the industrial age. The "Armament of Mechanisers" works alongside the "Unbelievers" in divesting the world of its spirit, whereby modern humanity loses consciousness that there is any such thing as transcendent "spirit" within the material world. As a result, the world and its material resources are being consumed until such a process burns itself out as a function of no longer being materially sustainable.

The "phoenix" takes place, according to Carlyle's theory, when "man's whole Spiritual Interests are once *divested*," or when, again presaging Weber, humanity's iron cage of modernity (marked by disenchantment) comes to its fullest fruition. Weber famously theorized the iron cage of modernity in the conclusion to *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*:

In Baxter's view, concern for outward possessions should sit lightly on the shoulders of his saints "like a thin cloak which can be thrown off at any time." But fate decreed that the cloak should become a shell as hard as steel [*stahlhartes Gehäuse*]. As ascetism began to change the world and endeavored to exercise its influence over it, the outward goods of this world gained increasing and finally inescapable power over men, as never before in history. Today its spirit

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<sup>30</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 178.

has fled from this shell—whether for all time, who knows?...No one yet knows who will live in that shell in the future. Perhaps new prophets will emerge, or powerful old ideas and ideals will be reborn at the end of this monstrous development. *Or* perhaps—if neither of these occurs—“Chinese” ossification, dressed up with a kind of desperate self-importance, will set in. Then, however, it might truly be said of the “last men” in this cultural development: “specialists without spirit, hedonists without a heart, these nonentities imagine they have attained a stage of humankind [*Menschentum*] never before reached.”<sup>31</sup>

According to Carlyle, when the world is rationalized and disenchanted at its climactic point, “innumerable stript-off Garments shall mostly be burnt.” Such burning of “garments,” it can be inferred, connotes that all previous ideologies and theologies will be burnt, since it is when humanity is divested entirely of its spiritual interests and engulfed entirely in mechanism and unbelief. Such a world is all-consuming and burns itself out as a “phoenix” because mechanization and unbelief each come into their full being, like the mythical bird, before returning to ash. It will be at this point that Carlylean transcendentalism, hypothetically, could emerge as a potential hegemonic ideology that supersedes all previous ideologies and theologies while also displacing liberal democratic capitalism’s hegemony. Such an occurrence would connote the “phoenix” being reborn.

Transcendentalism emerges when “the sounder Rags,” in other words, those not burnt, will be “quilted together into one huge Irish watch-coat for the defence of the Body only!” This is potentially when humanity will regain consciousness of the world as clothing, as symbolic of a transcendent order. The leftovers, products of the previous age of ignorance, will be retailed to fit the needs of a new transcendentalist world. Everyone will be conscious of the philosophy of clothes and recognize that the previous era was an era wholly unconscious of that philosophy. With all ideologies and theologies burnt out, and seeing through the illusion of how

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<sup>31</sup> Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism*, 121.

clothing defined society in the previous era, clothing will be used “for the defence of the Body only” in the newly emergent transcendentalist era. In summary, by inference from Carlyle’s theory, everyone would be a transcendentalist and have consciousness of the philosophy of clothes to the same extent Teufelsdröckh has consciousness of the philosophy of clothes.

Carlyle suggests that there is no means available of determining *precisely* when the “phoenix” will be triggered, as he theorizes that “what time the Phoenix Death-Birth itself will require depends on unseen contingencies.”<sup>32</sup> Carlyle writes on the nature of the “phoenix”:

For us, who happen to live while the World-Phoenix is burning herself, and burning so slowly that, as Teufelsdröckh calculates, it were a handsome bargain would she engage to have done ‘within two centuries,’ there seems to lie but an ashy prospect. Not altogether so, however, does the Professor figure it. “In the living subject,” says he, “change is wont to be gradual: thus, while the serpent sheds its old skin, the new is already formed beneath. Little knowest thou of the burning of a World-Phoenix, who fanciest that she must first burn out, and lie as a dead cinereous heap; and therefrom the young one start up by miracle, and fly heavenward. Far otherwise! In that Fire-whirlwind, Creation and Destruction proceed together; ever as the ashes of the Old are blown about, do organic filaments of the New mysteriously spin themselves; and amid the rushing and the waving of the Whirlwind-Element, come tones of a melodious Deathsong, which end not but in tones of a more melodious Birthsong.”<sup>33</sup>

Carlyle underscores the magnitude of politics and the political realm through his portrayal of how Teufelsdröckh conceives of it: “among all the wondrous provinces of Teufelsdröckh’s spiritual world, there is none he walks in with such astonishment, hesitation, and even pain, as in the Political.”<sup>34</sup> Carlyle acknowledges, through the voice of Teufelsdröckh’s English editor, the tension that lies in the dual realization that a) political conflict is a necessary prerequisite to the maintenance of the English political order and is the means by which “our invaluable Constitution kept warm and alive” and b) politics is always conducted in the space of

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<sup>32</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 180.

<sup>33</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 185.

<sup>34</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 188.

the present, “where the Present seems little other than an inconsiderable Film dividing the Past and the Future.”<sup>35</sup> The conclusion that can be drawn from these two characteristics that define politics is that politics is based on political conflict continuously taking place in the “perpetual” present with no resolution being attainable, and no attention paid to the immensity that defines the future in contrast to the “inconsiderable Film” of the present.

Moreover, it can be inferred that Carlyle believes the political influence of any one individual, given the weight of these two characteristics that define politics, is bound to be inconsequential. The individual who has consciousness of politics as defined by these two characteristics will, furthermore, view it differently than those who are unconscious of such characteristics. Consciousness of such characteristics might ostensibly lead to the resolution of political conflict via an acknowledgement of the pettiness and artificiality of political conflict and how the future is a much more pertinent subject for politics than the ephemeral present.

Nonetheless, those who participate in politics as political actors go about behaving politically in ways unconscious of the two characteristics Carlyle theorizes as defining politics. Such political actors elevate the present to the point of putting it on a pedestal, whereas the past and future and the exponentially greater magnitude they have weighed against “the film” of the ephemeral present goes largely unrecognized. Politics revolves around the pettiness and infinitesimal scope of the present and not around the vastness of the past and future.

For the individual political actor conscious and accepting of Carlyle’s characterization of politics, the question then becomes: “how shall we domesticate ourselves in this spectral

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<sup>35</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 188.

Necropolis, or rather City both of the Dead and of the Unborn?"<sup>36</sup> Presumably, political actors and political action would be altered if everyone internalized such a question in coming to terms with Carlyle's definition of politics. Political actors would be able to conceive of politics from the radical perspective that it is conceived of in *Sartor Resartus*. If perpetual political conflict is in fact a necessary prerequisite to the maintenance of the political order, political conflict that is perpetually without resolution is irrational to engage in, since it is merely political participation that antagonizes and neutralizes the opposition.

According to Carlyle, the weight of the future is so immense and heavy in comparison to the film of the ephemeral present, and is defined by the inevitability of history's trajectory (i.e. the phoenix), that "in those dim longdrawn expanses [of the future], all is so immeasurable; much so disastrous, ghastly...."<sup>37</sup> It is on this basis of Carlyle's elemental construction of a definition of politics that he divulges the extent and scope of the radical position Teuelsdröckh occupies in regard to politics, a radicalism arguably far grander than what is commonly defined as "radical" within mainstream political discourse:

And then with such an Indifference, such a prophetic peacefulness (accounting the inevitably-coming as already here, to him all one whether it be distant by centuries or only by days), does he sit;--and live, you would say, rather in any other age than in his own! It is our painful duty to announce, or repeat, that, looking into this man, we discern a deep, silent, slow-burning, inextinguishable Radicalism, such as fills us with shuddering admiration.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, Carlyle offers an implicit normative theory of political non-participation. In such a context, Carlyle provides a critique of voting and elections in which he conceives of them as inadequate to attain an ideal political existence:

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<sup>36</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 188.

<sup>37</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 188.

<sup>38</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 189



[Teufelsdröckh] appears to make little even of the Elective Franchise; at least so we interpret the following: "Satisfy yourselves," he says, "by universal, indubitable experiment, even as ye are now doing or will do, whether FREEDOM heavenborn and leading heavenward, and so vitally essential for us all, cannot peradventure be mechanically hatched and brought to light in that same Ballot-Box of yours; or at worst, in some other discoverable or devisable Box, Edifice, or Steam-mechanism. It were a mighty convenience; and beyond all feats of manufacture witnessed hitherto."<sup>39</sup>

Thus, humanity's ideal political existence cannot be attained merely by putting it up to a vote but must be acquired through the discernment and intuition that are necessary for the unequivocal determination and realization of the ideal. Teufelsdröckh asks a question fundamental to the history of political thought: " 'But after all, were the problem, as indeed it now everywhere is, To rebuild your old House from the top downwards (since you must live in it the while), what better, what other, than the Representative Machine will serve your turn?' "<sup>40</sup>

Zygmunt Bauman theorizes on the failure of the Enlightenment to have had an influence to lead history to move in a rational direction:

One can only say that for the past two or three centuries since that great leap to human autonomy and self-management variously called "Enlightenment" or "the advent of the modern era," history has run in a direction no one planned, no one anticipated, and no one wished it to take. What makes this course so astonishing and such a challenge to our understanding is that these two to three centuries started with the human resolve to take history under human administration and control—deploying for that purpose reason, believed to be the most powerful among human weapons (indeed, a flawless human facility to know, to predict, to calculate, and so to raise the "is" to the level of the "ought")—and were filled throughout with zealous and ingenious human effort to act on that resolve.<sup>41</sup>

Bauman's all-encompassing critique of the Enlightenment is intended to illustrate that the Enlightenment has not facilitated unidirectional progress to a destination that embodies

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<sup>39</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 189.

<sup>40</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 189.

<sup>41</sup> Bauman, *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?*, 110-111.

rationality. Such a retrospective indictment of the Enlightenment provides a basis to contend with Carlyle's transcendentalism and the prospects of its practical application.

In *The Technological Society*, Ellul echoes what Carlyle wrote in the nineteenth century in the context of the twentieth century:

*Technical civilization* means that our civilization is constructed *by* technique (makes a part of civilization only what belongs to technique), *for* technique (in that everything in this civilization must serve a technical end), and *is* exclusively technique (in that it excludes whatever is not technique or reduces it to technical form).<sup>42</sup>

As a corollary, Ellul also concludes that "the enormous effort required to put this technical civilization into motion supposes that all individual effort is directed toward this goal alone and that all social forces are mobilized to attain the mathematically perfect structure of the edifice."<sup>43</sup> Put another way, "technique encompasses the totality of present-day society. Man is caught like a fly in a bottle. His attempts at culture, freedom, and creative endeavor have become mere entries in technique's filing cabinet."<sup>44</sup> Carlyle wrote the equivalent of Ellul's theory when he commented on the human experience in the modern age through the voice of Teufelsdröckh:

And now the Genius of Mechanism smothers him worse than any Nightmare did; till the Soul is nigh choked out of him, and only a kind of Digestive, Mechanic life remains. In Earth and in Heaven he can see nothing but Mechanism; has fear for nothing else, hope in nothing else: the world would indeed grind him to pieces; but cannot he fathom the Doctrine of Motives, and cunningly compute them to grind the other way?<sup>45</sup>

Carlyle theorizes how humanity is thus governed by, consumed by, and beholden to mechanism to the extent that humanity would unconsciously let mechanism "grind itself to

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<sup>42</sup> I make this claim not in that Ellul explicitly cites Carlyle as a source or source of inspiration, but in the undeniable sameness of their arguments. See Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), 128.

<sup>43</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 139.

<sup>44</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 417-418.

<sup>45</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 167.

pieces.” Technology grinds humanity to pieces because humanity lacks the spiritual fortitude to choose what is spiritual over mechanism, a choice that would grind mechanism to pieces. Humanity is so enchanted by mechanism that it cannot recognize mechanism as grinding humanity to pieces, leaving humanity without soul or spirit. Carlyle laments, “‘Were he not, as has been said, purblinded by enchantment, you had but to bid him open his eyes and look’ to discover the state of actual disenchantment that a world governed by mechanism and calculation manifests.”<sup>46</sup> Christopher Lasch provides a synthesis of Carlyle’s romantic critique of technology when he says Carlyle believed that “technology sheltered mankind from the forces of nature, as clothes protected the body against the cold, but interposed a barrier behind which the inner meaning of the natural world was lost to sight.”<sup>47</sup>

Ellul proposes an allegory about the resistance a revolutionary book faces in being published, which in many ways is applicable to Thomas Carlyle’s own experience finding a publisher for *Sartor Resartus*:

Suppose one were to write a revolutionary book. If it is to be published, it must enter into the framework of the technical organization of book publishing. In a predominantly capitalistic technical culture, the book can be published only if it can return a profit. Thus, it must appeal to some public and hence must refrain from attacking the real taboos of the public for which it is destined. The bourgeois publishing house will not publish Lenin; the “revolutionary” publishing house will not publish Paul Bourget; and no one will publish a book attacking the real religion of our times, by which I mean the dominant social forces of the technological society. Any author who seeks to have his manuscript published must make it conform to certain lines laid down by the potential publishers. A manuscript which in subject matter and format does not conform has no chance....All this amounts to saying that technical forces, which were put into operation ostensibly for the diffusion of thought, lead in practice to its emasculation.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 167.

<sup>47</sup> Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 229.

<sup>48</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 418.

From this, Ellul concludes that inflammatory revolutionary manifestos and new economic and political doctrines can be written, “but as soon as any of these appear to have any real effect in subverting the universal social order, they are forthwith excluded from the technical channels of communication.”<sup>49</sup>

Ellul theorizes that technical civilization sprang forth from the favorable climate it had under liberalism, but that the domination of technical civilization ultimately spells the negation of liberalism. He thus refutes critics who maintain that technical civilization is compatible with liberalism:

It will doubtless be pointed out, by way of refutation, that production techniques were developed during the ascendancy of liberalism, which furnished a favorable climate for their development and understood perfectly how to use them. But this is no counterargument. The simple fact is that liberalism permitted the development of its executioner, exactly as in a healthy tissue a constituent cell may proliferate and give rise to a fatal cancer. The healthy body represented the necessary condition for the cancer. But there was no contradiction between the two. The same relation holds between technique and economic liberalism.<sup>50</sup>

Ellul illustrates how new technical developments are never “demanded” by an individual (or even the collective population) in liberal society but, rather, are “imposed” on the individual as a result of the autonomous historical development of technical civilization. According to Ellul, “technical development follows its own proper laws, not the tastes of the public. It was not the public which demanded air travel and television. Technical progress created these things, and they were technically diffused and imposed on the public.”<sup>51</sup> Ellul juxtaposes capitalism and communism as both being political economies in which the individual is enslaved to mass society: “for the proletariat, as for the *bourgeoisie*, man is only a machine for production and

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<sup>49</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 419.

<sup>50</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 200-201.

<sup>51</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 212-213.

consumption. He is under obligation to produce. He is under the same obligation to consume.

He must absorb what the economy offers him.”<sup>52</sup> In so doing, Ellul nullifies and invalidates the notion that politics plays a primary role in guiding human societies in the modern technological era with a synthesis of the many dimensions of his social theory:

The counterpart of the necessary reduction of human life to working is its reduction to gorging. If man does not already have certain needs, they must be created. The important concern is not the psychic and mental structure of the human being but the uninterrupted flow of any and all goods which invention allows the economy to produce. Whence the measureless trituration of the human soul, the true issue of which is propaganda. And propaganda, reduced to advertising, relates happiness and a meaningful life to consumption. He who has money is the slave of the money he has. He who has it not is the slave of a mad desire to get it. The first and great law is consumption. Nothing but this imperative has any value in such a life.

This summary description enables us to grasp quickly the subjective and incoherent way in which the human being tends to permit himself to be reduced to the two closely related variables of the economic man. All other dimensions are excluded in this idealized concept. Money is the principal thing; culture, art, spirit, morality are jokes and are not to be taken seriously. On this point, there is once again full agreement between the *bourgeoisie* and the Communists.<sup>53</sup>

Here, Ellul can be applied to consider MacIntyre’s concern with the necessity of pursuing a conception of the good. Ellul notes that it is commonly *supposed* “that technique evolves with some end in view, and that this end is human good”:

Technique, as I believe I have shown, is totally irrelevant to this notion and pursues no end, professed or unprofessed. It evolves in a purely causal way: the combination of preceding elements furnishes the new technical elements. There is no purpose or plan that is being progressively realized. There is not even a tendency toward human ends. We are dealing with a phenomenon blind to the future, in a domain of integral causality. Hence, to pose arbitrarily some goal or other, to propose a direction for technique, is to deny technique and divest it of its character and its strength.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 221.

<sup>53</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 221.

<sup>54</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 97.

MacIntyre similarly seeks to portray the illusion of liberalism's perfectionist aspirations, an illusion that professedly offers a social order in which individuals exercise their autonomy in choosing between alternative conceptions of a good life. According to MacIntyre, present-day market economies only offer such choice to a minority who hold a privileged position, whereas the majority are locked out from such possibilities.<sup>55</sup>

Ellul's views in *The Technological Society* are espoused in similar ways by other twentieth-century academics who take up the study of what is termed "technics." A selection from Oswald Spengler reads as if it is lifted directly from Ellul:

It is not true that human technics saves labour. For it is an essential characteristic of the personal and modifiable technics of man, in contrast to genus-technics, that every discovery contains the possibility and *necessity* of new discoveries, every fulfilled wish awakens a thousand more, every triumph over Nature incites to yet others. The soul of this beast of prey is ever hungry, his will never satisfied—that is the curse that lies upon this kind of life, but also the grandeur inherent in its destiny. It is precisely its best specimens that know least of quiet, happiness, or enjoyment. And no discoverer has ever accurately foreseen the *practical* effect of his act.<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, Bauman provides a conclusion in 2008 that is compatible with the conclusions Ellul draws in *The Technological Society*:

Just as the easily satisfied "traditional worker" (a worker who wished to work no more than absolutely necessary to allow his habitual way of life to continue) was the nightmare of the budding society of producers, so the traditional consumer, guided by yesterday's familiar needs and immune to seduction, would (were she or he allowed to survive) sound the death knell of a mature society of consumers, consumer industry, and consumer markets.<sup>57</sup>

Such conclusions by Spengler and Bauman corroborate Ellul's thesis, namely that the technological/economic system is autonomous and dominant, rather than the *individuals* who

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<sup>55</sup> MacIntyre, "What More Needs to Be Said? A Beginning, Although Only a Beginning, at Saying It," in *Revolutionary Aristotelianism*, 269.

<sup>56</sup> Oswald Spengler, *Man and Technics: A Contribution to a Philosophy of Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932), 70.

<sup>57</sup> Bauman, *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?*, 169.

facilitate the system. Individuals, and their insatiable appetites for innovation and consumption, are merely cogs that provide the fuel for the system's incessant expansion toward a destination that is unplanned for and unknown.

In *The Political Illusion*, Ellul seeks to show how "faith in attainable ends, in the improvement of the social order, in the establishment of a just and peaceful system—by political means—is a most profound, and undoubtedly new, characteristic in our society."<sup>58</sup> He also expounds on how he thinks political affairs are constrained and nearly artificial since they are subject to what is A) necessary and to what is B) ephemeral.<sup>59</sup> Ellul goes so far as to say that "*homo politicus*" is by his nature "*homo religious*" to show the level of faith contemporary humanity has in politics being the cure-all for all problems.<sup>60</sup> He presents the common two-dimensional definition of "politization" that he takes to be partially true but yet still lacking: "the importance and growing frequency of ideological debates; and [politization] is manifested by the tendency to treat all social problems in the world according to patterns and procedures found in the political world."<sup>61</sup> In this way, Ellul consolidates his own definition of politization to be the phenomenon whereby "*all problems have, in our time, become political*":

To think of everything as political, to conceal everything by using this word (with intellectuals taking the cue from Plato and several others), to place everything in the hands of the state, to appeal to the state in all circumstances, to subordinate the problems of the individual to those of the group, to believe that political affairs are on everybody's level and that everybody is qualified to deal with them—these factors characterize the politization of modern man and, as such, comprise a myth. The myth then reveals itself in beliefs and, as a result, easily elicits almost religious fervor.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 21.

<sup>59</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 65.

<sup>60</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 21.

<sup>61</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 8.

<sup>62</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 9, 12.

Ellul's thesis and language in many ways mirrors that of Carlyle's original critique of modernity in "Signs of the Times." For example, Ellul reflects as to how "we consider it obvious that everything must be unreservedly subjected to the power of the state; it would seem extraordinary to us if any activity should escape it."<sup>63</sup> In "Signs of the Times," Carlyle notes that "no individual now hopes to accomplish the poorest enterprise single-handed and without mechanical aids; he must make interest with some existing corporation, and till his field with their oxen."<sup>64</sup> Carlyle applies this to the mechanism of politics:

Nowhere, for example, is the deep, almost exclusive faith we have in Mechanism more visible than in the Politics of this time. Civil government does by its nature include much that is mechanical, and must be treated accordingly. We term it indeed, in ordinary language, the Machine of Society, and talk of it as the grand working wheel from which all private machines must derive, or to which they must adapt, their movements. Considered merely as a metaphor, all this is well enough; but here, as in so many other cases, the foam hardens itself into a shell, and the shadow we have wantonly evoked stands terrible before us and will not depart at our bidding.<sup>65</sup>

Ellul thus echoes Carlyle when he says that "any attempt on the part of any enterprise, university, or charitable enterprise to remain independent of the state seems anachronistic to us."<sup>66</sup>

Carlyle's description of the politization he sees going on in the 1820s is similar to Ellul's description in the 1960s. Sarcastically, Carlyle mocks the predominant view:

Were the laws, the government, in good order, all were well with us; the rest would care for itself! Dissentients from this opinion, expressed or implied, are now rarely to be met with; widely and angrily as men differ in its application, the principle is admitted by all.<sup>67</sup>

Ellul characterizes politization in a similar manner:

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<sup>63</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 13.

<sup>64</sup> Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 319.

<sup>65</sup> Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 324.

<sup>66</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 13.

<sup>67</sup> Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 325.



it is not just the fact of the state being at the center of our lives that is crucial, but our spontaneous and personal acceptance of it as such. We believe that for the world to be in good order, the state must have all the powers.<sup>68</sup>

Ellul maintains that the causes or catalysts of politization are the expanding scope of the state and the growth of the individual's participation in political life.<sup>69</sup> According to Ellul, the individual's participation in political life is growing as a result of speedier communications, population growth, greater access to education, the trend whereby the state's actions increasingly concern everybody, and that the state needs assurance of its legitimacy by the expressed support of the people.<sup>70</sup>

An inference can be made from Ellul, namely that politization proves what may seem counterintuitive: politics and political theory are ineffectual if politization increases and are effectual if politization decreases. The ever-growing trend to politicize social problems demonstrates both the limits of politics in being able to solve social problems and the limits of political theory to devise political or institutional cures for them. It is only the trend of a decreasing rate of politization that would show politics and/or political theory to be effective. This is because when less is politicized, it corresponds as a function to there being less need for politicization, because a political program has resolved the need for every problem to be addressed by political means. Such a program might simply result in recognizing and exposing the fallacy of thinking every problem has a political solution, rather than a solution that must take place at the individual level so that it can be resolved from the bottom up at the collective level. Rather than seeking a political solution as a default means to solve problems, Carlyle's

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<sup>68</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 13.

<sup>69</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 9-11.

<sup>70</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 11.

alternative prescription may be heeded by all individuals at the level of the individual: "To reform a world, to reform a nation, no wise man will undertake; and all but foolish men know, that the only solid, though a far slower reformation, is what each begins and perfects on *himself*."<sup>71</sup> Ostensibly, the reformation of individuals via the individual perfecting reform on himself or herself can yield genuine reform at the collective level in a manner that a political solution cannot.

Ellul conceives of the ballot box with a fierce Carlylean skepticism. He mocks the predominant view of the political world: "To progress is to receive this power [to place a paper ballot in a box], this mythical share in a theoretical sovereignty that consists in surrendering one's decisions for the benefit of someone else who will make them in one's place."<sup>72</sup> Ellul is adamant in his view that the modern state grants powers to the individual that are never anything but "innocuous concessions," powers to endorse what is good for the state.<sup>73</sup> He synthesizes these ideas to conclude that "the masses actually do not participate in political affairs, but yet firmly believe that they do; and, in addition, make their illusory participation their principal criterion of dignity, personality, liberty."<sup>74</sup>

Moreover, Ellul claims that modern society condemns "apolitical people," which is the label applied by society to persons who behave in a manner that suggests they do not think politics comprises the panacea of any or all social problems:

In our society anyone who keeps himself in reserve, fails to participate in elections, regards political debates and constitutional changes as superficial and without real impact on the true problems of man...will be judged very severely by everybody. He is a true heretic of our day.

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<sup>71</sup> Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," 342.

<sup>72</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 17.

<sup>73</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 18.

<sup>74</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 18.

And society excommunicates him as the medieval church excommunicated the sorcerer. He is regarded as a pessimist, a stupid fellow (for he fails to see the very deep and secret more in the political game), a defeatist who bows his head to fate, a bad citizen: surely, if things go badly, it is his fault, for if he were more civic minded, the vote would turn out differently (it is not enough to have 80 per cent of the voters cast their vote; no, we need 100 per cent!), and democracy would be more effective. Negative judgments rain down on him; his effectiveness and his morality are judged; even his psychic health is questioned (the unpolitical man is obviously a little paranoid or schizophrenic!). Finally the ultimate condemnation of our day and age is hurled at him: he must be a reactionary.<sup>75</sup>

Such a characterization applies to Carlyle's political profile and sheds light on how Carlyle's lack of faith in political solutions to every problem might have contributed to his being discredited or disregarded as a political philosopher.

Ellul maintains that there is a stark difference between real and illusory political action. According to Ellul, true political decisions must never obey necessity, which means political action cannot be limited to that of a machine simply supporting inexorable events.<sup>76</sup> Ellul specifies that real political decisions can be made only by those who are not compelled by an uncompromising cause to behave reflexively in only one possible way. As such, "real political decisions can be made only by men who are not too much tied down by their constituents, or by legal texts, or too conditioned by a monolithic civilization, or ruled by circumstances."<sup>77</sup>

Ellul emphasizes how mechanism and the technical development of society have largely curtailed true political decision making. Ellul insists that "the true choice today with regard to political problems depends on the technicians who have prepared a solution and technicians charged with implementing the decisions."<sup>78</sup> Thus, political decisions are no longer taken on the

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<sup>75</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 18-19.

<sup>76</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 26.

<sup>77</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 26.

<sup>78</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 36-37.

basis of a philosophic principle, a doctrine, or an ideology, but on the basis of reports handed down by technicians and experts outlining what is useful, possible, and efficient.<sup>79</sup>

What is more, Ellul describes politics as “ephemeral” and taking place in the transitory realm that is modernity at-large.<sup>80</sup> Ellul informs us that politics is as unlasting as a television news broadcast or a newspaper and that current events themselves are the most important elements that make contemporary politics ephemeral.<sup>81</sup> Just as how “we bring all our care, all our intelligence to bear on the production of a TV broadcast that will last only twenty minutes and survive only in the spectator’s fleeting memory,” so the innumerable decisions, votes, decrees, elections, plans, and fruits of all the political activities are just as ephemeral.<sup>82</sup> From this analysis, Ellul concludes that “this is one of the most distressing aspects of contemporary man.”<sup>83</sup>

Ellul theorizes that a synergistic relationship between technology and mass media cripples politics and keeps politics from achieving anything beyond a mere response to current events. According to Ellul, the citizen “only knows what happened yesterday, excites himself only over the latest events, and demands that the politician should take a position on it [while] all the rest matters little to him.”<sup>84</sup> Thus, the politician is in a place to have to respond and thus be beholden to the incessant, albeit ephemeral, current events.<sup>85</sup> The development of the technological infrastructure of the mass media precipitates an environment in which incessant

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<sup>79</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 37.

<sup>80</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 50.

<sup>81</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 50, 53.

<sup>82</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 49-50.

<sup>83</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 50.

<sup>84</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 54.

<sup>85</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 54.

and ephemeral news becomes irresistible. In a statement that may be more an apt characterization of the media climate in the 2010s than it was in 1967 when it was published, Ellul maintains that from the moment mass media machinery was created, the need for information “spread like lightning, like an avalanche, and not only ever more information but also ever more recent information was needed.”<sup>86</sup> This yields an environment in which people will be more interested the more the information is superficial, unimportant, and befitting that of a spectacle:

If everybody is in agreement that nowadays the exercise of authority is solely based on public opinion; if the ruling powers draw their splendid existence from public opinion; if, on the other hand, it is true that opinion must come from the outside, never being self-generated; if, finally, this opinion never exists except in connection with a news event—then we will understand both the influence of the news phenomenon and the ephemeral character that it necessarily imposes on political affairs.

I will posit it as a sort of principle that the predominance of news produces a fundamental political incapacity in the individual, be he a leader or just a citizen.<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, Ellul provides a corollary conclusion that is particularly apt for a discussion of Carlyle in the context of contemporary politics and political philosophy:

If a man speaks at such a moment of a deeper level, he appears out of tune with his time, uncommitted; although only by digging more deeply can political thought be formed and the present be eventually explained. But who is looking for an explanation? Because he is riveted to the news, the citizens rejects the truly fundamental problems, remaining attached exclusively to perfectly outmoded and useless terms and images such as “Right and Left,” “capitalism and communism,” and really believes that the fundamental political problems are located.<sup>88</sup>

He maintains that the nineteenth-century brand of political theory that advocated the realization of a particular ideology, whether it be socialism, liberal humanism, etc., has devolved so that “for our time (and for the foreseeable future) we have developed a

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<sup>86</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 54.

<sup>87</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 55-56.

<sup>88</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 60.

mechanism whereby politics operates independently of any such values.”<sup>89</sup> Carlyle’s social criticism and conception of transcendentalism illustrate that he sought to go beyond superficial politics to reach a deeper level of inquiry and analysis.

Ellul seeks to show how the modern state has become a vast body that possesses a multitude of centers, bureaus, services, and establishments, and wants to expose the concept of the state primarily consisting of the presidential regime, parliament, and elections as simply antiquated.<sup>90</sup> He does not hold back and communicates his dismay by acknowledging how political scientists know about the complexity and depth of the modern state yet “surprisingly, we then find them once again discussing the presidential regime or electoral procedures as though the political future were dependent on these illusory forms.”<sup>91</sup> Essentially, a contradiction is manifest between knowledge of what the modern state is and the constant affirmation that the citizen can control the state.<sup>92</sup> Ellul concludes that efficiency is the primary and hegemonic political value in a manner deeply reminiscent of Carlyle’s own conclusion in “Signs of the Times”:

Efficiency is, after all, the [bureaucratic] machine’s fundamental law. This imperative really aligns the machine with the technological world and ideology. The bureaucracy has nothing whatever to do with values. It does not know social justice or political liberty. It is there to function, to make a political-economic-social body function, to make it advance as a whole. It does not seek to promote verities. It cannot consider individuals. It obeys the sole rule of efficiency. Yes, it will be said, this machinery operates in order to attain an aim set by politics, and that aim incorporates value! Not at all. If a political aim is set, it becomes diluted in the machine and soon has no more content. The administration no more obeys central leadership than it knows values. Everybody is merely concerned that his political-economic-social sector should function well, without crisis or stoppage; everyone has his sector and fails to know the whole.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 70-71.

<sup>90</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 139-140.

<sup>91</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 139-140.

<sup>92</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 140.

<sup>93</sup> Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, 146.

In this chapter, I have sought to present the compatibility between Carlyle's nineteenth-century criticism toward modernity and Ellul's twentieth-century criticism. Such critiques are sociological and seek to demonstrate that the hegemonic spirit of mechanization is supra-political and dominates politics. In many ways, the dialogue of Carlyle with Ellul allows for the conclusion that politics is a mirage, or an "illusion," as Ellul characterized it. The hegemonic values of materialism, growth, and technological expansion are dominant and taken for granted to such an extent that political actions that seek to depart from them would be received as heretical and sacrilegious. What is more, Carlyle and Ellul illuminate a reality in which modern development is autonomous and incapable of significant reform. They seek to show how there is a lack of resources to be able to appreciably reign in and alter the destiny of modern development. As such, modernity is largely on auto-pilot due to the ossified hegemony of the continuous pursuit of greater consumption coupled with the continuous expansion of technology. In the next chapter, I will discuss Carlyle's theory of the "phoenix" in the context of Ellul to ascertain the prospects of Carlyle's application to philosophical deliberations on post-liberalism, which have only emerged to any significant extent in the 2010s.

## Chapter 7

### Carlyle's Theory of the Phoenix and the Dissolution of Liberalism?

Carlyle's ideas can be applied to the work of twenty-first-century political philosophers who grapple with the weaknesses inherent to liberalism that could potentially lead to its collapse as the hegemonic political and economic ideology on the global stage. Literature that theorizes about the prospects of the advent of "post-liberalism" does so on the basis, either implicitly or explicitly, that a return to the "transcendental" in some form will be necessary to cure liberalism's malignancies. Carlyle's theories of transcendentalism and the dissolution of liberalism can be applied to post-liberal literature such as Patrick Deneen's *Why Liberalism Failed* and John Milbank and Adrian Pabst's *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future* because such post-liberal philosophers demonstrate compatibility with Carlyle's political thought and lay a foundation for a re-assessment of Carlyle's ideas.

Carlyle cryptically presents a theory of the "phoenix" in *Sartor Resartus* in a chapter of that name. I contend that such a theory is valuable to engage because it embodies an "end of history" narrative that is a departure from the more dominant narratives offered by Karl Marx and Francis Fukuyama. Marx concluded that there is a scientific basis for the manifestation of communism as the successor to what he took to be capitalism's eventual and inherent unsustainability.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Fukuyama, as an eyewitness to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the conclusion of the Cold War, declared that liberal democratic capitalism

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<sup>1</sup> See Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Manifesto of the Communist Party*.



constituted the last stage of human political development.<sup>2</sup> Carlyle's theory of the "phoenix" is a "third way" to these two accounts that inherently glorify communism or capitalism. Carlyle's thesis is that liberal democratic capitalism will come into its full form (i. e. reach the highest level of economic development) before becoming unsustainable, causing it to naturally decay, and then evolve, to a new state that cannot be forecasted with any kind of precision.

There is certainly room for debate as to whether and to what extent Carlyle's theory of the "phoenix," espoused only explicitly and cryptically in a brief chapter in a work of fiction, should be taken seriously as offering what may be called an "end of history" narrative.<sup>3</sup> Carlyle's theory is not offered in as serious and detailed a fashion as Marx's and Fukuyama's. Nonetheless, I hold that Carlyle's theory should be considered, particularly in light of the emergence of philosophical deliberations on ascertaining the prospects of "post-liberalism" to resolve the irregularities liberalism is theorized to be itself incapable of resolving.

Carlyle begins his theory of the "phoenix" with Teufelsdröckh's conclusion that "Society, properly so called, [is] as good as extinct; and that only the Gregarious feelings, and old inherited habitudes, at this juncture, hold us from Dispersion, and universal national, civil, domestic and personal war!"<sup>4</sup> The basis for this conclusion parallels the assessment that MacIntyre famously articulated in *After Virtue*: namely, that there is no longer a doctrine that is universally shared and accepted, one that allows for humanity to be bound together in a state

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<sup>2</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, xi.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 5 of Book III in *Sartor Resartus*: "The Phoenix," 176-180.

<sup>4</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 176.

of social solidarity in pursuit of a *telos*.<sup>5</sup> Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh prefigures what would later become MacIntyre's core thesis in *After Virtue*:

"For the last three centuries, above all, for the last three quarters of a century, that same Pericardial Nervous Tissue (as we named it) of Religion, where lies the Life-essence of Society, has been smote at and perforated, needfully and needlessly; till now it is quite rent into shreds; and Society, long pining, diabetic, consumptive, can be regarded as defunct; for those spasmodic, galvanic sprawlings are not life, neither indeed will they endure, galvanise as you may, beyond two days."

"Call ye that a Society," cries [Teufelsdröckh] again, "where there is no longer any Social Idea extant; not so much as the Idea of a common Home, but only of a common, over-crowded Lodging-house? Where each, isolated, regardless of his neighbor, turned against his neighbor, clutches what he can get, and cries 'Mine!' and calls it Peace, because, in the cut-purse and cut-throat Scramble, no steel knives, but only a far cunninger sort, can be employed? Where Friendship, Communion, has become an incredible tradition; and your holiest Sacramental Supper is a smoking Tavern Dinner, with Cook for Evangelist? Where your Priest has no tongue but for plate-licking: and your high Guides and Governors cannot guide; but on all hands hear it passionately proclaimed: *Laissez faire*: Leave us alone of your guidance, such light is darker than darkness; eat your wages, and sleep!...a World becoming dismantled...."

We might ask, are there many "observant eyes," belonging to Practical men, in England or elsewhere, which have descried these phenomena; or is it only from the mystic elevation of a German *Wahngasse* that such wonders are visible? Teufelsdröckh contends that the aspect of a "deceased or expiring Society" fronts us everywhere... "What, for example," says he, "is the universally-arrogated Virtue, almost the sole remaining Catholic Virtue, of these days? For some half-century, it has been the thing you name 'Independence.'"<sup>6</sup>

On this basis Carlyle entertains and theorizes, albeit cryptically, what will emerge

*literally* as post-liberalism:

Are we returning, as Rousseau prayed, to the state of Nature? "The Soul Politic having departed," says Teufelsdröckh, "what can follow but that the Body Politic be decently interred, to avoid putrescence? Liberals, Economists, Utilitarians enough I see marching with its bier, and chaunting loud paeans, towards the funeral-pile, where, amid wailings from some, and saturnalian revelries from the most, the venerable Corpse is to be burnt. Or, in plain words, that these men, Liberals, Utilitarians, or whatsoever they are called, will ultimately carry their point, and dissever and destroy most existing Institutions of Society, seems a thing which has some time ago ceased to be doubtful."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 2 in *After Virtue*: "The Nature of Moral Disagreement Today and the Claims of Emotivism," 6-21.

<sup>6</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 176-177.

<sup>7</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 177.

In this context, Carlyle suggests that liberalism will be all-consuming and give way to another ideology to take its place as the hegemonic ideology. The newly emerging ideology cannot be forecasted with precision, as it is not possible to foresee exactly how liberalism will evolve and decay. Nonetheless, the crux of Carlyle's theory of liberalism is that it will be *unsustainable*.

Another passage from Carlyle reads as if it were a synopsis of Ellul's *The Technological Society*, given the level of criticism Carlyle hurls at the budding industrial and technical civilization, which he forecasts will come into full being before returning to ash:

"Our European Mechanisers are a Sect of boundless diffusions, activity, and co-operative spirit: has not Utilitarianism flourished in high places of Thought, here among ourselves, and in every European country, at some time or other, within the last fifty years? If now in all countries, except perhaps England, it has ceased to flourish, or indeed to exist, among Thinkers, and sunk to Journalists and the popular mass,--who sees not that, as hereby it no longer preaches, so the reason is, it now needs no Preaching, but is in full universal Action, the doctrine every where known and enthusiastically laid to heart? The fit pabulum, in these times, for a certain rugged workshop-intellect and heart, nowise without their corresponding workshop-strength and ferocity, it requires but to be stated in such scenes to make proselytes enough. —Admirably calculated for destroying, only not for rebuilding! It spreads like a sort of Dog-madness; till the whole World-kennel will be rabid: then woe to the Huntsmen, with or without their whips! They should have given the quadrupeds water," adds [Teufelsdröckh], "the water, namely, of Knowledge and of Life, while it was yet time."<sup>8</sup>

Teufelsdröckh concludes in a fashion similar to Ellul more than a century later: "with a tragic solemnity, that the monster UTILITARIA, held back, indeed, and moderated by nose-rings, halters, foot-shackles, and every conceivable modification of rope, should go forth to do her work;--to tread down old ruinous Palaces and Temples, with her broad hoof, till the whole were trodden down, that new and better might be built!"<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 178.

<sup>9</sup> See Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 179 and Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 97.

It is on the basis of these several passages from *Sartor Resartus* that Carlyle forecasts how “the phoenix” will ultimately take shape and precipitate a new era, analogous in many ways to how a product is yielded from adding elements together in a chemical formula:

Thus, if Professor Teufelsdröckh can be relied on, we are at this hour in a most critical condition; beleaguered by that boundless “Armament of Mechanisers” and Unbelievers, threatening to strip us bare! “The World,” says he, “as it needs must, is under a process of devastation and waste, which, whether by silent assiduous corrosion, or open quicker combustion, as the case chances, will effectually enough annihilate the past Forms of Society; replace them with what it may.”<sup>10</sup>

Carlyle then writes an extraordinarily cryptic sentence, through the voice of Teufelsdröckh, that could arguably be his core thesis, while simultaneously being the climactic legacy of *Sartor Resartus*: ““For the present, it is contemplated that when man’s whole Spiritual Interests are once *divested*, these innumerable stript-off Garments shall mostly be burnt; but the sounder Rags among them be quilted together into one huge Irish watch-coat for the defence of the Body only!””<sup>11</sup> Here, Carlyle suggests that when the world becomes disenchanted and de-spiritualized, and humanity becomes essentially nothing more than automated producers and consumers serving the needs of the industrial civilization, the multiplicity of theologies and ideologies that have “clothed” humanity until then will be garments that will be stripped off and extinguished. Ideologies and theologies will be eliminated naturally, since they were merely what humanity wore until the point of disenchantment was reached, as a function of reaching the apex of an industrial economy.

Moreover, in such a context, the theologies and ideologies humanity swore by for centuries will be stripped off naturally as a function of their carrying no weight and serving no

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<sup>10</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 178.

<sup>11</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 178.

purpose in a disenchanted world in which “man’s whole Spiritual Interests are once *divested*.”

The conclusion that “the sounder Rags among them [will] be quilted together into one huge Irish watch-coat for the defence of the Body only!” reads almost as a pure enigma. It suggests that at the time of “the phoenix,” when all previous theologies and ideologies are found out and recognized as clothing merely worn by humanity along its extended journey from the “cradle of civilization” to an industrial civilization that has reached its highest capacity, only certain elements from them will be “retailored” into transcendentalism as the final ideology. In this regard, Teufelsdröckh speaks of “Religion, in unnoticed nooks, weaving for herself new Vestures” and it is on this basis that the narrator in *Sartor Resartus* asks: “Teufelsdröckh himself being one of the loom-treaddles?”<sup>12</sup> Carlyle follows this up immediately: “Elsewhere [Teufelsdröckh] quotes without censure that strange aphorism of Saint-Simon’s, concerning which and whom so much were to be said: *L’age d’or qu’une aveugle tradition a placé jusqu’ici dans le passé est devant nous*; The golden age which a blind tradition has hitherto placed in the Past is Before us.”<sup>13</sup> It is at this particular place in *Sartor Resartus* where the inference can be made that Carlyle prophesies that transcendentalism will become a viable ideology in the future because transcendentalism is precisely the “new Vesture” that Teufelsdröckh “loom-treaddles” and such a vesture would inaugurate the new “golden age.”

At this juncture, the “philosophy of clothes,” or transcendentalism, will be widely known and perceived in a universal fashion through which humanity will universally recognize all theologies and ideologies as merely “clothing” that have been worn on its long historical path

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<sup>12</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 179.

<sup>13</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 179-180.

to a fully disenchanted and fully-developed industrial economy. Humanity will have consciousness of the “philosophy of clothes” so as to distinguish between theologies and ideologies as one type of “clothing” and clothing (to be physically worn by humanity) as another and exclusive type of “clothing.” Henceforth, humanity will adopt clothing that will be “for the defence of the Body only” and will never again wear the theologies and ideologies on its persons from which it has divested itself.

Carlyle takes the position that the adoption of transcendentalism is the ultimate destination for human history and humanity has path dependency to eventually reach this destiny, such that it cannot be altered:

“Nevertheless,” cries Teufelsdröckh, “who can hinder [the phoenix]; who is there that can clutch into the wheel-spokes of Destiny, and say to the Spirit of the Time: Turn back, I command thee?—Wiser were it that we yielded to the Inevitable and Inexorable, and accounted even this the best.”<sup>14</sup>

Thus, Carlyle offers a philosophy that maintains that history is purely evolutionary and path dependent.<sup>15</sup> He asserts, through the voice of Teufelsdröckh:

“Society,” says [Teufelsdröckh], “is not dead: that Carcass, which you call dead Society, is but her mortal coil which she has shuffled off, to assume a nobler; she herself, through perpetual metamorphoses, in fairer and fairer development, has to live till Time also merge in Eternity. Wheresoever two or three Living Men are gathered together, there is Society; or there it will be, with its cunning mechanisms and stupendous structures, overspreading this little Globe....”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 178.

<sup>15</sup> This philosophy of history stands in contrast to the Hegelian and Marxist philosophy of history that maintains a dialectical account of history. It also stands in contrast to nihilist accounts that claim history has no direction and no purpose and is completely random and without meaning. As such, Carlyle’s philosophy of history is a type of synthesis between dialectical and nihilist accounts of history.

<sup>16</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 179.

So, when will “the Phoenix” take place and produce transcendentalism as the basis for a future “golden age?” Carlyle seeks to answer this specific question through Teufelsdröckh’s commentary:

“in what year of grace such Phoenix-cremation will be completed, you need not ask. The law of Perseverance is among the deepest in man: by nature he hates change; seldom will he quit his old house till it has actually fallen about his ears. Thus have I seen Solemnities linger as Ceremonies, sacred Symbols as idle Pageants, to the extent of three hundred years and more after all life and sacredness had evaporated out of them. And then, finally, what time the Phoenix Death-Birth itself will require depends on unseen contingencies.—Meanwhile, would Destiny offer Mankind that after, say two centuries of convulsion and conflagration, more or less vivid, the fire-creation should be accomplished, and we find ourselves again in a Living Society, and no longer fighting but working,—were it not perhaps prudent in Mankind to strike the bargain?”

Thus is Teufelsdröckh content that old sick Society should be deliberately burnt (alas! with quite other fuel than spicewood); in the faith that she is a Phoenix; and that a new heavenborn young one will rise out of her ashes!...will not the judicious reader shake his head, and reproachfully, yet more in sorrow than in anger, say or think: From a *Doctor Utriusque Juris*, titular Professor in a University, and man to whom hitherto, for his services, Society, bad as she is, has given not only food and raiment (of a kind), but books, tobacco and gukguk, we expected more gratitude to his benefactress; and less of a blind Trust in the future, which resembles that rather of a philosophical Fatalist and Enthusiast, than of a solid householder paying scot and lot in a Christian country.<sup>17</sup>

A literal reading of this passage would mean that “the Phoenix” would be due to usher in a new age by 2033, if *Sartor Resartus*’s 1833 publication date is the date from which two centuries should be calculated. In considering transcendentalism as a prospective post-liberal political ideology, this dissertation seeks to theorize as to how liberalism *could more efficiently and effectively* transition to transcendentalism without paying the potential costs of a “phoenix.” A recognition of Carlylean transcendentalism as a potential post-liberalism means that transcendentalism can be planned and promoted rather than understood as merely an unforeseen natural evolution from liberalism. As such, this dissertation seeks to begin to refine

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<sup>17</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 180.

Carlylean transcendentalism from its crude state and provide a normative argument for its adoption as a means of *intentionally* transitioning from liberalism to transcendentalism.

Such normative promotion of transcendentalism conjures a discussion of transcendentalism's potential parallels to communism as a post-liberal ideology in its own right. Just as Marx offered communism scientifically with confidence that it is inevitable and will be the next ideology to follow the hegemony of liberal democratic capitalism, Carlyle, through Teufelsdröckh's voice, concludes that transcendentalism will follow liberal democratic capitalism.<sup>18</sup> Unlike Carlylean transcendentalism, Marx's communism, beyond being merely a scientific theory, was studied, theorized, and promoted by communists in the political spheres of nation-states and at the global level. This dissertation in many ways marks the first attempt to provide a normative *promotion* of transcendentalism as a political ideology, because Carlyle, Emerson and Thoreau, as the most iconic transcendentalists, never promoted it as a practical political ideology to be *adopted* in the same fashion communists promoted communism's universal adoption.

Carlyle theorizes that industrial society will come to fruition in the context of political and economic liberalism but that it will be impossible to sustain indefinitely. Carlyle also maintains that it is illusory to think that political action can redirect or alter the path that history will ultimately take. As an inaugural social criticism of the modern industrial era, *Sartor Resartus* provides a cryptic prophecy that all attempts at radical alterations of the hegemonic liberal world order will be thwarted and are destined to fail.<sup>19</sup> Essentially, the hegemonic liberal

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<sup>18</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 168.

<sup>19</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 178.



world order is destined to come into full being before it naturally and organically dissolves, giving way to a new social order. Carlyle's meta-narrative of modern political history stands in contrast to Fukuyama's narrative of the progression of history in addition to the Hegelian/Marxist narrative, whereby Fukuyama argued that liberalism itself connotes the last stage of human political development.<sup>20</sup> Through *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle rejects both the narration of unending progress and the dialectical pattern of history and poses the phoenix narrative as an alternative account.

Ellul and MacIntyre each present a meta-narrative of the "phoenix" without explicitly naming it as such, as Carlyle does. The narratives of Carlyle, Ellul, and MacIntyre are largely compatible with one another in that each concludes that decline will be an inevitable product of modernization and the economic expansion that takes place in the context of liberal democratic capitalism's hegemony. According to Ellul, a "monolithic technical world" is taking shape and coming into full form, and it is "vanity to pretend it can be checked or guided."<sup>21</sup> Ellul, sounding much like MacIntyre, prioritizes the need to discover a new end, or *telos*, for human society in the midst of the technical age to replace the society that unconsciously pursues a monolithic technical construction as its only *telos*.<sup>22</sup> Ellul comments on technology's all-encompassing, yet hidden and deceitful, grasp on humanity:

The aims of technology, which were clear enough a century and a half ago, have gradually disappeared from view. Humanity seems to have forgotten the wherefore of all its travail, as though its goals had been translated into an abstraction or had become implicit; or as though its ends rested in an unforeseeable future of undetermined date, as in the case of Communist

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<sup>20</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, xi.

<sup>21</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 428.

<sup>22</sup> For MacIntyre's account of the need to discover and pursue a new direction for humanity, as a function of liberalism's decline, see MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 238-245.

society. Everything today seems to happen as though ends disappear, as a result of the magnitude of the very means at our disposal.<sup>23</sup>

MacIntyre reflects in a similar fashion: “what matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us.”<sup>24</sup>

Ellul concludes *The Technological Society* with reflections reminiscent of those made by Carlyle through Teufelsdröckh in *Sartor Resartus*. Ellul reflects on the trend of ever-increasing specialization in specialized academic disciplines in the context of higher education, remarking that “it seems as though the specialized application of all one’s faculties in a particular area inhibits the consideration of things in general.”<sup>25</sup> What is more, “none of our wise men ever pose the question of the end of all their marvels [and] the ‘wherefore’ is resolutely passed by.”<sup>26</sup> While Carlyle attempts to illustrate philosophically how the entire universe is monolithic in that all that makes up the universe (including time and space themselves) are mere clothing symbolizing and embodying the divine idea of the world, Ellul seeks to show how technical civilization is monolithic and how every human activity (economic, political, social, cultural, etc.) is monolithic in that it is required to conform to the autonomous nature of technical civilization.<sup>27</sup>

In a profound statement that can be applied to synthesize his work with the work of Carlyle, MacIntyre, and even Marx, Ellul reflects that it is “apparently our fate to be facing a ‘golden age’ in the power of sorcerers who are totally blind to the meaning of the human

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<sup>23</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 430.

<sup>24</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 245.

<sup>25</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 435.

<sup>26</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 436.

<sup>27</sup> See Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 57-58 and Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 417-418.

adventure.”<sup>28</sup> This statement is nearly a perfect repetition of Carlyle’s own in *Sartor Resartus* in which he remarks that the phoenix will come about by those who are completely unconscious that they have conjured a phoenix rather than a golden age of liberalism/utilitarianism. It is valuable to return to Carlyle’s conception of the phoenix in the context of Ellul’s own conception:

Are we returning, as Rousseau prayed, to the state of Nature? “The Soul Politic having departed,” says Teufelsdröckh, “what can follow but that the Body Politic be decently interred, to avoid putrescence? Liberals, Economists, Utilitarians enough I see marching with its bier, and chaunting loud paeans, towards the funeral-pile, where, amid wailings from some, and saturnalian revelries from the most, the venerable Corpse is to be burnt. Or, in plain words, that these men, Liberals, Utilitarians, or whatsoever they are called, will ultimately carry their point, and dis sever and destroy most existing Institutions of Society, seems a thing which has some time ago ceased to be doubtful.”<sup>29</sup>

Carlyle, MacIntyre, and Ellul each distinctly illuminate the meaning of the “human adventure” and do so while sharing Karl Marx as their point of nexus. Carlyle, as one of Marx’s philosophical influences, narrates the “human adventure” through *Sartor Resartus*, and MacIntyre and Ellul, as post-Marxists, inform as to how Marx erred in his theory of the “human adventure.” The sorcerers of whom Ellul speaks, who he claims are totally blind to the meaning of the human adventure, are those who have ostensibly either no familiarity with the types of criticism of modernity levelled by critics (for example, Carlyle, Marx, MacIntyre, and Ellul himself) or have dismissed their criticisms outright. Such sorcerers have no consciousness that they are conjuring a “phoenix” that will turn to ash, or at a minimum devolve, rather than persist as a golden age of infinite economic growth as a function of infinite consumerism.

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<sup>28</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 435.

<sup>29</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 177.

The “sorcerers” of whom Ellul speaks are largely synonymous with the “Liberals, Economists, Utilitarians” Carlyle speaks of, namely those who mistakenly see the incarnation of liberal political economy in its full fruition as a “golden age.”<sup>30</sup> For Ellul, such a *technological* society coming into its full being is no golden age. For Carlyle, the “Liberals, Economists, Utilitarians” are blind to the notion that liberal political economy reaching its apex yields not a golden age but rather the disintegration of society because when the atomization of utility-maximizing individuals reaches its full form the other institutions and previous nexuses (other than cash-payment) that bonded members of society together will be destroyed. Such talk of “sorcerers” is also reminiscent of Marx’s passage on “sorcerers” in the “Communist Manifesto”: “Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells.”<sup>31</sup>

The history of political thought offers many instances of philosophers attempting to foresee the dissolution of types of political regimes. Such thought is evident spanning from ancient political philosophy through to the twenty-first century. Plato and Aristotle theorized of the devolution of regime types in *The Republic* and *Politics*, respectively. The early twenty-first century has witnessed discussion of what post-liberalism might entail with such controversial

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<sup>30</sup> See Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 435 and Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 177.

<sup>31</sup> Marx and Engels, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 153. It is important to note here that Marx’s philosophy is a point of nexus for Carlyle, Ellul, and MacIntyre, though they each depart dramatically from Marx’s theory of communism. Marx appropriates Carlyle’s criticism of society being governed solely by “cash payment” in “The Communist Manifesto” and Ellul and MacIntyre are post-Marxist critics (in the sense of previously having been Marxists) of liberalism and modernity. See Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 54 and MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 244.

texts as *Why Liberalism Failed* by Patrick Deneen and *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future* by John Milbank and Adrian Pabst. These two texts represent merely the genesis of deliberations in political theory as to what might be the next stage of human political development that follows liberalism. Deneen and Milbank and Pabst point out the achievements of liberalism, all the while making known that liberalism is not without pitfalls that would be hazardous to either ignore or overlook.

Deneen goes so far as to say that liberalism has failed because it succeeded.<sup>32</sup> Such an argument correlates with Carlyle's theory of a phoenix, since it embodies the view that liberalism has reached its full fruition and as a function of doing so has sprung internal tensions that will preclude the sustainability of liberal democratic capitalism as a social order. As Milbank and Pabst theorize, with respect to liberalism:

its self-swallowing is no partial crisis, susceptible to a new adjustment, but is rather a metacrisis, which cannot be transcended, whether for good or ill, in a purely liberal way.

This holds true despite the many historical wars over truth as to claims to territory or creed: for were they not more noble than liberal wars over money, and less terrible than the wars that have been instigated by nihilists who have taken the liberal logic to its limits? At least, the past wars over jurisdiction and belief assumed a reachable horizon of consensus in eternally guaranteed moral reality: the *pax romana* or the *pax christiana*. But it is this horizon that liberalism no longer envisages. Initially it wagers that a more modest, horizon-less cynicism will produce a more stable *political* pacification. But in the long run, this very cynicism has proved to be naïve delusion: a horizon, after all, of assumed ontological violence that eventually proves a terrible prophecy of the nihilist consequences of such an assumption, without by one jot confirming it.<sup>33</sup>

Almost two centuries after Carlyle first identified it, Milbank and Pabst echo Carlyle's concern that "cash payment" is the sole nexus that binds humanity, both economically and

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<sup>32</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 58.

politically.<sup>34</sup> Their conclusion is nearly a complete reincarnation of the core of Carlyle's philosophy: "at the heart of liberal self-undoing lies the primacy of the economic and the political over the social and thus the subordination of both social bonds and civic ties to the abstract standards of law and contract."<sup>35</sup>

The fusion and synthesis of the critiques of modern liberal democratic capitalism provided by Carlyle (as a pre-Marxist), Ellul (as a post-Marxist), and MacIntyre (as a post-Marxist) shows that growth in alienation, inequality, exploitation, hyperpluralism, polarization, hyperconsumerism, atomization, automatization, and Weberian rationalization are taking place. What is more, such a synthesis demonstrates that modern liberal democratic capitalism shows no signs of being able at any point to facilitate what is needed—the arrest and reversal of all such growth—to ensure its own stability, legitimacy, and even survival. As such, post-liberalism, in some form, is upon us. Milbank and Pabst conceive of post-liberalism as the "primacy of common good."<sup>36</sup>

Brad S. Gregory describes the modern sociopolitical environment in a manner that can be appropriated to synthesize the philosophies of Carlyle, Ellul, and MacIntyre, since they each identified the limitations and vulnerabilities of Enlightenment rationalism:

Modern reason in its two most influential expressions is therefore a schizophrenically mixed bag: philosophy has dramatically failed, but science has spectacularly succeeded. One consequence is that the ever-expanding technological capacities afforded by scientific advances are set within an increasingly rancorous culture of moral disagreement and political contestation. If not necessarily a failure of modernity per se, this fact certainly contributes to its volatility and potential for man-made catastrophes on scales inconceivable in the preindustrial world.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 183.

<sup>35</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 58.

<sup>36</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 72.

<sup>37</sup> Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 380.

Gregory's nuanced assessment of the Enlightenment's results serves as a dual critique of the Enlightenment's philosophical failings and its technological advances. In the absence of any philosophical consensus generated by the Enlightenment, technology exacerbates political and philosophical conflicts and has the potential to yield unprecedented catastrophes. Such an assertion parallels and synthesizes the arguments of Carlyle, Ellul, and MacIntyre.

In *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future*, Milbank and Pabst themselves *explicitly* appropriate Carlyle as a foundation for their argument that "the notion of a collective neutrality as to some sort of fundamental existential choice is as much a myth as it would be in the case of an individual [such that] for in either case, not to choose is, after all, to choose only arbitrary choosing, supplemented by a qualifying, yet confirming, utilitarian notion of the objective and effective as the only thing that can ever be chosen in all its modes."<sup>38</sup> They make this claim by arguing that Locke's advocacy of toleration "was in reality an advocacy of civic indifference," because Locke was hostile to the notion of Christianity supplying a viable comprehensive doctrine for political society.<sup>39</sup>

Milbank and Pabst conceive of post-liberalism not as anti-liberalism, in the sense that they acknowledge that liberalism has precipitated valuable effects in the form of individual freedom, respect for the individual, and diversity of preferences *up to a point*.<sup>40</sup> As Milbank and Pabst define post-liberalism, they assert it "implies not that liberalism is all bad, but that it has inherent problems and deficiencies."<sup>41</sup> Milbank and Pabst recognize liberalism's value and its

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<sup>38</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 46.

<sup>39</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 46.

<sup>40</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 55.

<sup>41</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 2.

contributions, but also argue that “evermore individual rights and untrammelled economic contract alone cannot provide security, prosperity and human flourishing for the many.”<sup>42</sup>

Milbank and Pabst second Carlyle’s critique that eventually the hegemonic social order defined as liberal democracy will erode to a “sum of zero”:

At first, as we have already noted, the exultation of negative freedom of choice swept away many rigid restrictions and autocracies that have eventually seemed without justification even for their (often religious) instigators. However, *in the long run*, liberalism seems to undo itself and to reveal that, as a mode of sophistry, it erodes the very political field that it claims to save. This self-undoing turns out to mean that eventually liberalism is exposed as a tautology and as only applying to abstract individuals and the monolithic collectivity, thereby revealing nothing of the deeper truths about human association.<sup>43</sup>

A synthesis of the philosophies of Carlyle, Ellul, and MacIntyre provides a context for coming to terms with both the contributions and limitations of liberalism. Such a synthesis also leads one to conclude that post-liberalism (or, at minimum, a stark evolution of liberalism) is inevitable and that conclusion can be reached by bringing Carlyle, Ellul, and MacIntyre in dialogue with one another. Carlyle, Ellul, and MacIntyre are philosophically compatible and complementary toward one another to such an extent that the deficiencies of liberalism become readily apparent. It could be said that Carlyle, Ellul, and MacIntyre collectively reach a “limit of political theory” in that they identify the deficiencies and contradictions of liberal democratic capitalism, but each fails to offer a viable doctrine to cure the ills. This dissertation has sought to refute that claim with respect to Carlyle by arguing that he has offered a prospective, albeit cryptic, solution in the form of transcendentalism in *Sartor Resartus*.

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<sup>42</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 2.

<sup>43</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 55-56.



In a robust thesis that implicitly synthesizes Carlyle, Ellul, and MacIntyre, Milbank and Pabst conclude succinctly that “the triumph of liberalism today more and more brings about the ‘war of all against all’ (Hobbes) and the idea of man as self-owning animal (Locke) that were its presuppositions.”<sup>44</sup> They resolve that liberalism’s facilitation of the war of all against all “developed illusory proof in the shape of practical violence of its negative assumptions [and this] also undermines its claims to offer the salve to this reality.”<sup>45</sup> Liberalism, having assumed in theory the “war of all against all” and “man” as a self-owning animal, has yielded in practice such theoretical assumptions.<sup>46</sup> Milbank and Pabst succinctly articulate their critique of liberalism:

In this manner, liberalism marks the unnecessary victory of vice over virtue—of selfishness, greed, suspicion and coercion over common benefit, generosity, a measure of trust and persuasive power. Just as liberal thought has redefined human nature as fundamentally individual existence abstracted from social embeddedness, so too liberal practice has replaced the quest for reciprocal recognition and mutual flourishing with the pursuit of wealth, power and pleasure—leading to economic instability, social disorder and ecological devastation.<sup>47</sup>

As an alternative to liberalism, Milbank and Pabst offer what is purely a Carlylean solution in that it echoes in 2016 what Carlyle first articulated in the nineteenth century. Milbank and Pabst maintain that “the only genuine alternative is a post-liberal politics of virtue that seeks to fuse greater economic justice with social reciprocity.”<sup>48</sup> The phrase “greater economic justice with social reciprocity” alone could be used to define a theme that Carlyle pursued in his prolific writing. Such a phrase is also indicative of what transcendentalism might potentially yield if it is recognized, refined, and embraced as a political ideology to adopt as a

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<sup>44</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 2.

<sup>45</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 58.

<sup>46</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 2.

<sup>47</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 2.

<sup>48</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 3.

means of resolving the limitations found in liberalism. Transcendentalism represents a prospective resolution to the consideration that “callous cash-payment” is the sole nexus that binds humanity together.

As Gregory concludes in *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society*, “judged on their own terms and with respect to the objectives of their own leading protagonists, medieval Christendom failed, the Reformation failed, confessionalized Europe failed, and Western modernity is failing, but each in different ways and with different consequences, and each in ways that continue to remain important in the present.”<sup>49</sup> Gregory defines modernity:

What remains in the absence of shared answers to the Life Questions is a hyperpluralism of divergent secular and religious truth claims in contemporary Western states, and of individuals pursuing their desires whatever they happen to be. The world in which all Europeans and North Americans are living today is a combination of hegemonic and hyperpluralistic realities, the former safeguarding and permitting the latter. Highly bureaucratized sovereign states wield a monopoly of public power in enforcing laws. The hegemonic cultural glue comes especially from all-pervasive capitalism and consumerism: scientific findings are applied in manufacturing

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<sup>49</sup> Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 365-377. Gregory argues that as modernity has become ever more rationalized, it has done so simultaneously via a dissolution of both moral and political philosophy into relativism and emotivism. His central thesis is that “the Reformation is the most important distant historical source for contemporary Western hyperpluralism with respect to truth claims about meaning, morality, values, priorities, and purpose.” On pages 365-377, Gregory unpacks the ways each of these failed in ways that I conclude are compatible with Carlyle’s political philosophy. Here are some passages from Gregory that are compatible with Carlyle’s philosophy: “The failure of medieval Christendom derived rather from the pervasive, long-standing, and undeniable failure of so many Christians, including members of the clergy both high and low, to live by the church’s own prescriptions and exhortations based on its truth claims about the Life Questions.” “...the Reformation’s failure derived directly from the patent infeasibility of successfully applying the reformers’ own foundational principle. For even when highly educated, well-intentioned Christians interpreted the Bible, beginning in the early 1520s they did not and manifestly could not agree about its meaning or implications.” “Modernity is failing partly because reason alone in modern philosophy has proven no more capable than scripture alone of discerning or devising consensually persuasive answers to the Life Questions.” Gregory thinks modernity’s failure is underway as a result of the erosion of beliefs, values, and priorities necessary to maintain modern liberalism: self-discipline, self-denial, self-sacrifice, ethical responsibility for others, duty to one’s community, commitment to one’s spouse and children. Such erosion, he asserts, has occurred via secularization, which was precipitated by capitalism and consumerism (which themselves are derivative from liberalism). I contend that the compatibility of Gregory’s views with Carlyle’s philosophy provides a foundation upon which Carlyle’s transcendentalism can be constructed as an alternative to secularism and orthodox theology. For Carlyle’s discussion of the decline of the hegemony of Christianity, see Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 147.

technologies to make the stuff consumers want, whatever they want, heirs to the early modern Christians who made the industrious revolution that preceded and prepared the way for the Industrial Revolution. There is no shared, substantive common good, nor are there any realistic prospects for devising one (at least in the immediately foreseeable future). Nor does secular discourse offer any realistic prospects for rationally resolving any of the many contested moral or political issues that emerge from the increasingly wide range of ways in which individuals self-determine the good for themselves within liberalism's politically protected formal ethics of rights. Appeals to a Rawlsian "overlapping consensus" are akin to reminders of the fact that antagonistic Christians nevertheless continued to share many beliefs in common in the sixteenth century. Indeed they did. But it hardly conduced to their moral agreement or political cooperation.

As a result, public life today, perhaps especially in the United States, is increasingly riven by angry, uncivil rivals with incompatible views about what is good, true, and right...Nevertheless, these same liberal states continue to *depend* on the widely embraced pursuit of consumerist acquisitiveness to hold together the ideological hyperpluralism within their polities.<sup>50</sup>

Gregory's portrayal of the interminable political conflicts that define liberalism illustrates that liberalism itself may not be sustainable indefinitely. Liberalism's vulnerability could manifest in its incapacity of generating a shared consensus, namely the kind of consensus Rawls sought to theorize in order to sustain liberalism.

Deneen's 2018 book *Why Liberalism Failed* reads in large measure as a re-articulation of Thomas Carlyle's political philosophy, retrospectively looking back on the past two centuries while Carlyle forecasted two centuries forward from the middle of the nineteenth century. Though Deneen does not explicitly reference Carlyle, multiple passages in Deneen's text mirror closely Carlyle's sentiments. While Deneen's lack of credit given to Carlyle suggests he derived his conclusions independently of him, an engagement with Deneen's *Why Liberalism Failed* provides a valuable means to legitimize Carlyle's philosophy from the perspective of hindsight.

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<sup>50</sup> Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 377-378.

For example, Deneen's discussion of the ideology of progress is nearly synonymous with

Carlyle's composed in 1840. According to Deneen:

The development of progressivism within liberalism is only a further iteration of this pervasive presentism, a kind of weaponized timelessness. Like classical liberalism, progressivism is grounded in a deep hostility toward the past, particularly tradition and custom. While widely understood to be future-oriented, it in fact rests on simultaneous assumptions that contemporary solutions must be liberated from past answers but that the future will have as much regard for our present as we have for the past. The future is an unknown country, and those who live in a present arrayed in hostility to the past must acquire indifference toward, and a simple faith in, a better if unknowable future. Those whose view of time is guided by such belief implicitly understand that their "achievements" are destined for the dustbin of history, given that the future will regard us as backward and necessarily superseded. Every generation must live for itself. Liberalism makes humanity into mayflies, and unsurprisingly, its culmination has led each generation to accumulate scandalous levels of debt to be left for its children, while rapacious exploitation of resources continues in the progressive belief that future generations will devise a way to deal with the depletions.<sup>51</sup>

Such a view is nearly synonymous with Carlyle's viewpoint:

...what a melancholy notion is that, which has to represent all men, in all countries and times except our own, as having spent their life in blind condemnable error, mere lost Pagans, Scandinavians, Mahometans, only that we might have the true ultimate knowledge! All generations of men were lost and wrong, only that this present little section of a generations might be saved and right. They all marched forward there, all generations since the beginning of the world, like the Russian soldiers into the ditch of Schweidnitz Fort, only to fill-up the ditch with their dead bodies, that we might march-over and take the place! It is an incredible hypothesis.

Such incredible hypothesis we have seen maintained with fierce emphasis; and this or the other poor individual man, with his sect of individual men, marching as over the dead bodies of all men, towards sure victory: but when he too, with his hypothesis and ultimate infallible credo, sank into the ditch, and became a dead body, what was to be said?—Withal, it is an important fact in the nature of man, that he tends to reckon his own insight as final, and goes upon it as such.<sup>52</sup>

As Deneen argues, "by now we should entertain the possibility that liberalism continues to expand its global dominion by deepening inequality and constraining liberty in the name of

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<sup>51</sup> Patrick J. Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 73-74.

<sup>52</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 142.

securing their opposite.”<sup>53</sup> Derivative from such a view is his assertion that “we effectively possess little self-government, either as citizens over our leaders or as individuals over our appetites.”<sup>54</sup> Deneen further reflects on liberal democratic capitalism in a manner deeply reminiscent of Carlyle’s forecast for liberal democratic capitalism in the nineteenth century as eyewitness to the advent of the modern industrial age:

Liberalism has failed—not because it fell short, but because it was true to itself. It has failed because it has succeeded. As liberalism has “become more fully itself,” as its inner logic has become more evident and its self-contradictions manifest, it has generated pathologies that are at once deformations of its claims yet realizations of liberal ideology. A political philosophy that was launched to foster greater equity, defend a pluralist tapestry of different cultures and beliefs, protect human dignity, and, of course, expand liberty, in practice generates titanic inequality, enforces uniformity and homogeneity, fosters material and spiritual degradation, and undermines freedom. Its success can be measured by its achievement of the opposite of what we have believed it would achieve. Rather than seeing the accumulating catastrophe as evidence of our failure to live up to liberalism’s ideals, we need rather to see clearly that the ruins it has produced are the signs of its very success. To call for the cures of liberalism’s ills by applying more liberal measures is tantamount to throwing gas on a raging fire. It will only deepen our political, social, economic, and moral crisis.<sup>55</sup>

Carlyle’s views in 1840 demonstrate almost a perfect compatibility and parallel to those of Deneen:

All this of Liberty and Equality, Electoral suffrages, Independence and so forth, we will take, therefore, to be a temporary phenomenon, by no means a final one. Though likely to last a long time, with sad enough embroilments for us all, we must welcome it, as the penalty of sins that are past, the pledge of inestimable benefits that are coming. In all ways, it behoved men to quit simulacra and return to fact; cost what it might, that did behove to be done. With spurious Popes, and Believers having no private judgment,—quacks pretending to command over dupes,—what can you do? Misery and mischief only. You cannot make an association out of insincere men; you cannot build an edifice except by plummet and level,—at *right*-angles to one another! In all this wild revolutionary work, from Protestantism downwards, I see the blesseddest result preparing itself: not abolition of Hero-worship, but rather what I would call a whole World of Heroes. If Hero mean *sincere man*, why may not every one of us be a Hero? A world all sincere, a believing world: the like has been; the like will again be,—cannot help being. That were the

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<sup>53</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 197.

<sup>54</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 186.

<sup>55</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 3-4.

right sort of Worshippers for Heroes: never could the truly Better be so revered as where all were True and Good!<sup>56</sup>

Carlyle and Deneen share the view that liberalism is a *stage* in sociopolitical evolution that cannot be sustained as the final stage of such evolution. Deneen articulates what Carlyle forecasted to be the “sad enough embroilments for us all” stemming from liberalism, such as inequality and material and spiritual degradation.

Deneen discusses at length the decline of the humanities in universities as a result of them being deemed not useful or irrelevant to the modern economy. According to Deneen, the humanities will persist in some form as a “‘boutique’ showcase,” but the humanities are nonetheless on a downward trajectory, having an ever smaller role in the modern university.<sup>57</sup> The decline of Carlyle scholarship exemplifies this decline of the humanities. *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle’s magnum opus, once resonated both in university and public intellectual circles as a foundational text in the humanities, but has become largely forgotten and unheard of in the twenty-first century.<sup>58</sup> The notion that politics, political science, and political theory could be guided by principles derived from *Sartor Resartus* as a nineteenth-century work of fiction is difficult to imagine in the early twenty-first century. Yet, with refinement and application, the precepts Carlyle espouses in *Sartor Resartus* can prove valuable as a foundation to inaugurate Carlylean transcendentalism as post-liberalism.

Deneen defends the humanities by arguing that they provide a valuable lesson that is going unlearned in the climate of the early twenty-first century:

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<sup>56</sup> Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 150-151.

<sup>57</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 125.

<sup>58</sup> For a discussion of the American reception of *Sartor Resartus*, see Hook, “United States of America,” 474.

Its warning would be simple, recalling its oldest lessons: at the end of the path of liberation lies enslavement. Such liberation from all obstacles is finally illusory, for two simple reasons: human appetite is insatiable and the world is limited. For both of these reasons, we cannot be truly free in the modern sense. We can never attain satiation, and will be eternally driven by our desires rather than satisfied by their attainment. And in our pursuit of the satisfaction of our limitless desires, we will very quickly exhaust the planet. Our destiny, should we enter fully down this path toward our complete liberation, is one in which we will be more governed by necessity than ever before. We will be governed not by our own capacity for self-rule but rather by circumstance, particularly the circumstances resulting from scarcity, devastation, and chaos.<sup>59</sup>

Compatible with the philosophical thesis of *Sartor Resartus*, this passage implores readers to entertain *renunciation* as the means (and only means) to attain the highest form of genuine liberty, self-governance, and self-command for individuals. *Renunciation* is perhaps the chief lesson Carlyle sought to impart in *Sartor Resartus* and it can be applied in contexts beyond consumerism such as ethnocentrism.

The concept that liberalism has failed because it has succeeded correlates to Carlyle's theory of the phoenix, whereby the modern world order would come to its fullest incarnation before being unable to sustain itself. Deneen sounds like Carlyle theorizing about the phoenix in

*Sartor Resartus*:

The "Noble Lie" of liberalism is shattering because it continues to be believed and defended by those who benefit from it, while it is increasingly seen as a lie, and not an especially noble one, by the new servant class that liberalism has produced. Discontent is growing among those who are told by their leaders that their policies will benefit them, even as liberalism remains an article of ardent faith among those who ought to be best positioned to comprehend its true nature. But liberalism's apologists regard pervasive discontent, political dysfunction, economic inequality, civic disconnection, and populist rejection as accidental problems disconnected from systemic causes, because their self-deception is generated by enormous reservoirs of self-interest in the maintenance of the present system. This divide will only widen, the crises will become more pronounced, the political duct tape and economic spray will increasingly fail to keep the house standing. The end of liberalism is in sight.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 125-126.

<sup>60</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 180.

Deneen suggests that political development is likely to follow one of two paths. He theorizes that “liberalism” as a political system might persist but only operate in forms contrary to its purported claims about liberty, equality, justice, and opportunity. According to Deneen, this will entail the continual growth of the administrative state and the imposition of liberalism through surveillance, legal mandate, police power, and administrative control by administrative bureaucrats who disdain the populist course democracy has taken. Such a conclusion is comparable to Tocqueville’s in *Democracy in America*, where Tocqueville prophesies democracy culminating in despotism.<sup>61</sup> The alternative Deneen offers is liberalism giving way to a new regime type altogether, much like what happened in the twentieth century when Germany evolved politically from liberalism to fascism and Russia flirted with liberalism before imposing communism: “while these brutal and failed examples suggest that such possibilities are unlikely to generate widespread enthusiasm even in a postliberal age, some form of populist nationalist authoritarianism or military autocracy seems altogether plausible as an answer to the anger and fear of a postliberal citizenry.”<sup>62</sup> Deneen concludes:

While growing discontent in Western liberal democracies suggests that either outcome is a realistic possibility, neither is to be wished for in the form it is likely to take. Yet the failure of liberalism itself invites this outcome, even as the unwillingness of liberalism’s defenders to perceive their own complicity in fostering widespread discontent among their fellow citizens only makes such a lamentable outcome more likely. Liberalism’s defenders today regard their discontented countrymen as backward and recidivist, often attributing to them the most vicious motivations: racism, narrow sectarianism, or bigotry, depending upon the issue at hand. To the extent that liberalism regards itself as a self-healing, perpetual political machine, it remains almost unthinkable for its apologists to grasp that its failure may lead to its replacement by a cruel and vicious successor. No serious effort to conceive a humane postliberal alternative is likely to emerge from the rear-guard defenders of a declining regime.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 180-181; Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: The Library of America, 2004), 816-821.

<sup>62</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 181.

<sup>63</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 181-182.



Invoking Plato, he maintains that political evolution from the status quo to a new political order is the only thing that is guaranteed:

Imagining a humane alternative to either liberalocratic despotism or the rigid and potentially cruel authoritarian regime that may replace it seems at best a parlor game, at worst a fool's errand. Yet engaging in the activity once central to political philosophy—the negotiation between the utopian and realistic, begun by Plato in the *Republic*—remains essential if the grimmer scenarios of a life after liberalism are to be avoided, and something potentially better brought into being. If today only the barest outlines may be discerned amid a landscape so completely shaped by our liberal age, tentative first steps are required. The destination is unknown and unforeseeable, and the journey will probably require generations to complete.<sup>64</sup>

Deneen suggests that, in conceiving of what a post-liberal political order may look like, we must outgrow the age of ideology: “Of the three great modern ideologies [liberalism, communism, and fascism], only the oldest and most resilient remains, but liberals mistook the fall of its competitors for the end of history rather than the pyrrhic victory it really was.”<sup>65</sup> Additionally, he asserts that “there is evidence of growing hunger for an organic alternative to the cold, bureaucratic, and mechanized world liberalism offers.”<sup>66</sup> Yet this alternative would in no way take the form of an ideology to replace liberalism, as “the impulse to devise a new and better political theory in the wake of liberalism’s simultaneous triumph and demise is a temptation that must be resisted. The search for a comprehensive theory is what gave rise to liberalism and successor ideologies in the first place.”<sup>67</sup> The recognition of Carlylean transcendentalism, as theorized in *Sartor Resartus*, as a legitimate prospective political theory

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<sup>64</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 182.

<sup>65</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 183.

<sup>66</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 191.

<sup>67</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 196.

to succeed liberalism stands as a counterargument to Deneen's claim that a comprehensive theory should not be searched for.

Milbank and Pabst explicitly leverage Carlyle's philosophy in their argument that market equilibrium is the primary, if not only, conception of the good that is strived for in the context of modern liberal democratic capitalism.<sup>68</sup> In this way, they capture Carlyle's desire to see humanity transcend servitude to the market as subservient, individualistic, and atomized producers and consumers and create a communitarian society based on mutual economic and social solidarity.<sup>69</sup> Milbank and Pabst appropriate Carlyle explicitly:

Thus both the invisible hand of "providence" and the visible hand of the state are deemed to be seeking the same goal of perfect rational equilibrium that coordinates egoistic wishes, without any mutual agreement as to the common good. In the case of both left and right, the reality of the aspiring and discerning soul has been tacitly abandoned in favour of the willful and power-seeking manipulation of animal appetites—as Thomas Carlyle argued in his presentation in *Past and Present* of the first effectively "post-secular" analysis of modernity.<sup>70</sup>

Milbank and Pabst ask: "Can a new emphasis on the common good and the promotion of human flourishing be truly relevant to hard economic questions?"<sup>71</sup> They answer in the affirmative, maintaining their view on the basis that liberalism takes the form of a phoenix, just as Carlyle did previously in *Sartor Resartus* and Patrick Deneen does later in *Why Liberalism Failed*. Milbank and Pabst conclude much as did Deneen that liberalism is destined to fail because of its success, particularly in the realm of liberal market capitalism. They argue that a new emphasis on the shared conception of the common good will take form from the ashes of liberal market capitalism "because liberalism also, as an indication of its fatal theoretical

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<sup>68</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 132.

<sup>69</sup> This is my synthesis of Carlylean philosophy applied to how Milbank and Pabst appropriate Carlyle for their purposes.

<sup>70</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 132-133.

<sup>71</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 133.

tautology, is subject to that very law of diminishing returns which it has itself articulated.”<sup>72</sup>

Milbank and Pabst defend this by claiming that *at first* liberalization of financial markets leads to growth but in the long run *too much* financial liberty leads to market anarchy and state coercion.<sup>73</sup> They cite “over-abstraction from the real economy; the creation of credit and debt that dissolves property and other assets into purely nominal value; self-interest that can be aligned to market failure rather than market success; the non-constraint of capital by labour; and a multitude of transactions that are only about shifting around the existing monetary symbols of wealth, not about creating new wealth, even in abstract terms.”<sup>74</sup>

Milbank and Pabst restate in 2016 what Carlyle originally said in his inaugural criticism of liberal modernity in *Sartor Resartus*: “the quest for maximal utility is subject to the law of diminishing returns.”<sup>75</sup> Essentially, market forces are the only means to adjudicate and derive to some extent a mutual agreement as to the common good. Liberal economics fails to acknowledge qualitatively beyond the scope of supply and demand “a range of goods that vary in qualitative intensity and satisfy our souls just because they fulfil our creative talents and natural desire for beauty.”<sup>76</sup> Milbank and Pabst draw on Carlyle to elaborate on such a viewpoint in a manner that underscores his significance as not only a social theorist applicable to his own contemporary world of Victorian England but also his perhaps greater application to comprehending the globalized world of the early twenty-first century:

Liberalism, by contrast [to a qualitative and aesthetic distinction among goods], treats all goods as if they could really be subject to a flattening quantitative calculus, because they are seen as mere measurable stimuli for a soulless organism. Far from such an outlook representing the

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<sup>72</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 133.

<sup>73</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 133.

<sup>74</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 133.

<sup>75</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 133.

<sup>76</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 133.

most basic, governing realities, it rather substitutes what Carlyle called a “sucedaneum” for concrete and variegated interpersonal existence...As Carlyle declared, “It is your souls that lie dead [...] and are not souls at all, but mere sucedanea for *salt* to keep your bodies and their appetites from putrefying”. Instead of vivid reality, liberal economists posit a grey simulacrum. Yet, thanks to mass manipulation, it becomes increasingly the case that the colours of quality get washed out of the lives of all but a few, who can afford to paint their private lives in more interesting shades.<sup>77</sup>

Then, in an all-encompassing appropriation of Carlyle’s philosophy to define the zeitgeist of modern sociopolitical and economic society, they resolve that:

liberal capitalism tends to turn people into automatons devoid of character and creativity, ushering in first the Mechanical and now the Digital Age in which [according to Carlyle] “nothing is now done directly, or by hand; all is by rule and calculated contrivance”. In this manner, the oligarchy seduces the masses to consume more and more shoddy goods whose appeal will, indeed, soon pale – causing them to seek to earn more in order to be able to buy a new variant or new seductive novelty.<sup>78</sup>

Ellul had previously provided an analysis that is nearly synonymous with such sentiments:

The technical society must perfect the “man-machine” complex or risk total collapse. Is there any other way out? I am convinced that there is. Unfortunately, I am also compelled to note that neither the scientists nor the technicians want any part of any other solution. And since I work with realities and not abstractions, I recognize the inevitability of the fact that technical difficulties demand technical solutions. All the troubles provoked by the encounter between man and technique are of a technical order, and therefore no one dreams of applying nontechnical remedies. Men distrust them.<sup>79</sup>

He concludes, referring to technical civilization as “Behemoth,” a mono-civilization, that

“Behemoth can rest easy; neither Henry Miller’s eroticism nor Andre Breton’s surrealism will prevent him from consuming mankind.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 133-134.

<sup>78</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 134.

<sup>79</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 414.

<sup>80</sup> Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 416.

Milbank and Pabst characterize the state of the world in the early twenty-first century as “the ‘disenchanted immanence’ of an eventually secularised liberalism that has now captured our culture.”<sup>81</sup> They provide a succinct synopsis of the human political, social, and economic condition in 2016 that is comparable to Carlyle’s philosophy:

In consequence [of the “disenchanted immanence” of secularised liberalism], sheerly impersonal and devitalized social forces have started to undermine the interpersonal relationships and mutual flourishing on which vibrant cultures depend. Behind the functionalist formation that serves utilitarian purposes of utility maximisation lurks a nihilism that believes in nothing except the power of an impersonal natural flux that somehow (it is never really explained) combines randomness with efficient mechanism. We, accordingly, require a new and dynamic re-induction into virtue in order to save humanity from the post-humanist nightmare of bio-robotic rule and help to restore the cultural primacy of the living, yet always technically supplemented and, thereby, rational human person.<sup>82</sup>

Milbank and Pabst call for a revival of Platonism/Christianity in a new form to serve as a comprehensive doctrine for society to live by as a type of post-liberal ideology and this provides a compelling context to consider how a revival of Carlylean transcendentalism could serve as a prospective solution:

Today, what the West’s politics and education need in cultural terms is a revival of the archaically Western vision in a new form. As T.S. Eliot wrote in *Little Gidding* (1942), “It is not to ring the bell backward. Nor is it an incantation. To summon the spectre of a Rose. We cannot revive old policies. Or follow an antique drum”. So to call for a revival does not mean restoring unjustifiable hierarchies and inequalities that the Enlightenment and liberalism rightly swept away. After all, Christianity had already democratized Platonism with its God who reached down to be born in a manger and its more open yet more extreme, ever-to-be repeated mysteries of water, bread and wine as the now more accessible and yet more necessary modes of triggering recollection of the eternally good.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 308.

<sup>82</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 308.

<sup>83</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 306-307.

They theorize how a revival is “required to uphold the absolutely incomparable value of both the person and of relational reciprocity in free association.”<sup>84</sup> They do not define such a revival as explicitly Christian, but themselves articulate the necessity of a type of “transcendentalist” approach:

It is hard to see how we can sustain the genuine Western legacy unless we revive, more democratically, its archaic idiom. This is required to uphold the absolutely incomparable value of both the person and of relational reciprocity in free association. We need both the mysticism of the individual soul and the spiritual and liturgical community of souls, in whatever sense. For our true human equality resides in the upper register of the shared psychic and not in the lower register of matter, which is the realm only of the unconscious and occultly striving or desiring, and so not of the communal. Whenever equality has tried to speak in the name of our lowest shared attribute, a fantasised and grim purpose has been ideologically attributed to the innocent simplicity of matter—whether of racial preference, class preference or economic growth for the sake of it. The option of “disenchanted immanence” has failed us dismally.

Instead, a more democratized version of “enchanted transcendence” sees all worldly realities, including cultural ones, as symbolizing something higher and hidden.<sup>85</sup>

For Milbank and Pabst, “enchanted transcendence” is preferable to Enlightenment notions of “man as the measure of all things and of human beings encouraged (like their omnipotent maker) to dominate nature, even though they cannot be trusted to relate to each other but must, rather, submit to a mechanised version of divine providence (whose workings reflect Newtonian physics, like Adam Smith’s ‘hidden hand’).”<sup>86</sup> They conclude that “such ‘disenchanted transcendence’ is to be rejected.”<sup>87</sup> This conceptualization of “enchanted transcendence” shows parallels to Carlyle’s conceptualization of transcendentalism in *Sartor Resartus*. In the context of Milbank and Pabst’s construction, I contend that a revival of transcendentalism promises to be more effective in facilitating relational reciprocity in free

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<sup>84</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 307.

<sup>85</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 307.

<sup>86</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 307-308.

<sup>87</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 308.

association because it promises to resolve incommensurable, antagonistic, and seemingly irresolvable ideological and theological conflicts. I also contend that a revival of Christianity would not resolve the incommensurable “polychromatic” nature that is the multiplicity of theologies in the way a revival of transcendentalism promises to. Carlylean transcendentalism fashioned and promoted as a popular political ideology fulfills the definition of what Milbank and Pabst strive to achieve in that itself would embody a Platonic and democratized version of “enchanted transcendence” in which all worldly realities are seen as symbols of what is higher and hidden. Milbank and Pabst thus strive for what amounts to be the popular acceptance of Carlyle’s transcendentalism.

In this chapter, I have sought to apply Carlyle to emerging debates in political philosophy that concern the sustainability of liberalism and, concurrently, the prospects of post-liberalism. Such a deliberation will require much more refinement and attention beyond the scope of this dissertation so as to effectively describe and promote an evolution toward the “transcendental” in the context of popular politics. Beginning the conversation is a crucial step so as to apply Carlyle’s theory of transcendentalism in the context of the twenty-first century and beyond. In the next and final chapter, I will synthesize what I have presented heretofore so as to attain a coherent conclusion.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion: Carlyle's Transcendentalism and a New Stage of Political Development?

In a statement applicable to this dissertation, David Sorensen commented: "If Carlyle is to be redeemed for the twenty-first century, then his salvation lies not in his prophecies, but in his histories, in which he dramatized the vicious reality of political religions."<sup>1</sup> Such a comment underscores how Carlyle's conception of transcendentalism should not be applied as rigid dogma but rather should be synthesized with the present hegemony of liberalism so as to facilitate post-liberalism. I argue that liberalism itself can be cast as a political religion that has been sworn by largely because of the failures of communism and fascism as alternative political religions. But liberalism and all of the multiple ideologies subsumed within and allowed by it have yielded increasing polarization, inequality, and identity politics, particularly in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

I have sought to situate Thomas Carlyle's philosophy, in particular his theory of transcendentalism, in the larger context of the history of philosophy. By relating Carlylean transcendentalism to politics and to competing political and philosophical doctrines, transcendentalism's application to both the theoretical and the practical can be better understood. The intention was to expose transcendentalism as a political philosophy in disguise and, as such, something heretofore not applied as an ideology in the context of politics to

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<sup>1</sup> Sorensen, "'The Great Pioneer of National Socialist Philosophy'?", 45.

<sup>2</sup> This conclusion is based largely on my reading of criticism of liberalism and theories of post-liberalism. See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*; Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*; Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*; Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*.



resolve political problems. Carlyle's account of transcendentalism has relevance and application to the ancient philosophers Plato and Aristotle, to Carlyle's contemporary philosophers John Stuart Mill and Friedrich Nietzsche, and to twentieth-century philosophers such as Jacques Ellul, Sayyid Qutb, John Rawls, and Alasdair MacIntyre. On these bases, I also have sought to provide a normative argument as to why Carlylean transcendentalism should be considered as a prospective and valid post-liberal ideology in the context of post-liberal philosophers who have themselves drawn on Carlyle for inspiration in some instances in the twenty-first century.

Carlyle's theory of transcendentalism, as articulated in *Sartor Resartus*, offers a means by which political, economic, and religious conflict could be resolved (or at least heavily mitigated) through the adoption of the philosophy of clothes and the principle of renunciation derived from such a philosophy. Carlylean transcendentalism mitigates political conflict by conceiving of non-transcendentalist political ideologies as incommensurable and thus incapable of achieving consensus because they are inherently fodder for interminable conflict. Such ideologies are incapable of genuinely embodying comprehensive doctrines, in Rawls's conception of them, as a function of manifesting unconsciousness of the philosophy of clothes, which itself is an ideology that supersedes competitor ideologies because it is Platonic and views non-transcendentalist and incommensurable ideologies as essentially shadows on the wall of the Platonic cave.<sup>3</sup> Though Carlyle did not explicitly invoke and promote transcendentalism as an exceptional philosophy in comparison to the limitations inherent in

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<sup>3</sup> For Rawls's conception of comprehensive doctrines, see Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xviii. For Plato's allegory of the cave, see Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 234.

other political philosophical accounts, such a promotion of transcendentalism can be made in the context of Carlyle's conclusion:

The Dryasdust Philosophisms and enlightened Scepticism of the Eighteenth Century, historical and other, will have to survive for a while with the Physiologists, as a memorable *Nightmare-Dream*. All this haggard epoch, with its ghastly Doctrines, and death's-head Philosophies "teaching by example" or otherwise, will one day have become, what to our Moslem friends their godless ages are, "the Period of Ignorance."<sup>4</sup>

Carlyle is suggesting--especially in light of and applying his conception of transcendentalism--that the Enlightenment settled for ascertaining what is merely material and perceptible by the senses and through science, by resisting and being blind to all that is mystical, romantic, and transcendental. Carlyle is also suggesting that the Enlightenment is a passing phase. In such an evolution, the future elevation of enchantment to displace the disenchantment which the Enlightenment instigated will show the disenchanted age to be a period of ignorance. It was short-sighted and a period of ignorance because it had no intention of ascertaining a higher meaning through the symbolism of all that is material and perceptible. This is an exposition of the philosophical pathway and line of reasoning Carlyle takes to conclude that what is romantic, mystical, and transcendental automatically occupies a higher plane than what proverbially are the shadows on the Platonic cave (i.e., all that is merely material and perceptible).

An inference that may be drawn from Carlyle's conception of transcendentalism is that political questions that have been ripe for bitter debates between incommensurable sides can be resolved through ascertaining and adhering to the natural order (a.k.a. reading the "clothing" of the universe). By doing so, transcendentalism favors minimalism over

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<sup>4</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 299.

consumerism, nature over mechanism, and spirituality rather than disenchantment. As such, it should be recognized as a philosophy in opposition to that of Nietzsche's nihilism. An inference from this is that the political and ideological clash at the highest level could potentially be conceived as a choice between Carlyle and Nietzsche rather than, as MacIntyre theorized, between Aristotle and Nietzsche.<sup>5</sup>

Carlylean transcendentalism also offers the means by which religious conflict can be resolved, as incommensurable theologies can be superseded by Carlylean transcendentalism or provide a common consensus among theological accounts. Escaping the Platonic cave connotes the adoption of Carlyle's transcendentalism and becoming a transcendentalist in a manner compatible with Teufelsdröckh in *Sartor Resartus*. The adoption of transcendentalism portends the mitigation of economic conflict, as renunciation on the part of all (ie. both wealthy and poor) is a means to attain a more equitable distribution of resources at the point when capitalism has developed itself into full capacity (rather than by means of a proletarian revolution). This illustrates again how Carlylean transcendentalism fulfills a *post-liberal* solution the way Marx's communism promised to, yet failed. Carlylean transcendentalism is shown, therefore, to be most valuable when it is adopted precisely when liberal democracy and capitalism have each flourished to their fullest capacities and whose achievements need to be preserved and sustained by transitioning to post-liberalism. The time at which liberal democracy and capitalism should transition to post-liberalism is when diminishing returns are evident in the form of increasing economic inequality and increasing political contention on

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<sup>5</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 238-245.

economic, identity-based, and ideological grounds, attributes of the growing instability and unsustainability of liberalism.

Carlyle recognized that change can take place through people reforming themselves individually rather than through revolution, so as to yield reform at the collective level. His political philosophy can be boiled down to this: “To reform a world, to reform a nation, no wise man will undertake; and all but foolish men know, that the only solid, though a far slower reformation, is what each begins and perfects on *himself*.”<sup>6</sup> Such a claim can be synthesized with how Carlyle defines justice as “a thing ever struggling forward; irrepressible, advancing inevitable; perfecting itself, all days, more and more,--never to be *perfect* till that general Doomsday, the ultimate Consummation, and Last of earthly Days.”<sup>7</sup> Transcendentalism can serve as a prospective means by which individuals can reform their lives and strive toward justice with the knowledge that justice is something that can only be increasingly approximated but never *fully* attained.

The post-Cold War era has precipitated the revival of ideological forces of ethno-nationalism, far-right and far-left populism, and the resurgence of Islamist jihad, which could ultimately prove to be as threatening to liberal hegemony as fascism and communism once were.<sup>8</sup> On top of this, the West today looks bereft of ideas and deeply divided, particularly compared with previous eras such as the era since the discovery of the New World or the Cold War era.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, part of the appeal of liberalism was the promise of progress, but it can

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<sup>6</sup> Carlyle, “Signs of the Times,” 342.

<sup>7</sup> Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 25-26.

<sup>8</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 316.

<sup>9</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 319.

be asserted that liberalism unleashed the forces of science and technology while divorcing modernization from the pursuit of substantive shared ends.<sup>10</sup> It can be concluded that liberalism's weakness lies in its tendency to release human energy and foster individual freedoms while at the same time failing to guide the forces it unleashes on an international as well as national scale.<sup>11</sup>

In beginning the process of articulating the form and shape that post-liberalism would and should take, Milbank and Pabst are adamant that "above all, there remains a clear need for a broad popular movement in shaping a politics of the common good—a movement that can overcome the binaries that divide Western countries and, increasingly, the whole world: young *versus* old, owners *versus* workers, natives *versus* immigrants, city *versus* countryside, faithful *versus* secular."<sup>12</sup> In the concluding paragraph of *The Politics of Virtue*, they assert that the emergence of a religious and metaphysically inspired post-liberal movement may seem unlikely, but it nevertheless is far less unlikely than any other scenario of non-fascistic resistance to liberalism.<sup>13</sup> In their concluding sentence, Milbank and Pabst invoke Carlyle: "After all, 'man' is, as Thomas Carlyle put it, 'the missionary of Order.'"<sup>14</sup> Such conclusion to a political philosophy text that is representative of the genesis of a political theory of post-liberalism provides a launching point to examine Carlyle's transcendentalism as a candidate to be a religious and metaphysically inspired post-liberal movement. Carlylean transcendentalism, too, may be far less unlikely than any other scenario of non-fascistic resistance to liberalism.

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<sup>10</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 317.

<sup>11</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 318.

<sup>12</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 382.

<sup>13</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 384.

<sup>14</sup> Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*, 384.

Carlyle's theory of transcendentalism has the means to offer a revival of the Western heritage in a new form. Transcendentalism literally and intrinsically retailers incommensurable and antagonistic "polychromatic" ideologies into a new "monochromatic" and universal doctrine. Transcendentalism, as such, is post-ideological and embodies post-liberalism. Liberalism had been assumed to be non-ideological but has proven to be an ideology that has upheld neutrality as its ideological foundation. Liberalism's commitment to neutrality has fostered greater antagonism among conflicting ideologies and theologies with no means of resolution to the escalation of such conflicts. Moreover, liberalism has set the stage for the insatiability of consumption and identity politics to flourish in the economic and political spheres, respectively. I argue that such phenomena are not sustainable and provide further evidence that liberalism as the enabler is not sustainable. Transcendentalism offers a viable means of resolving the incommensurable and antagonistic ideologies present in liberal society while simultaneously preserving the gains that liberal democratic capitalism has precipitated since the advent of the industrial age. As such, transcendentalism is a prospective "exit ramp" from liberalism toward a new sociopolitical and economic future.

Michael Touloumtzis provides a compelling account of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* and Thoreau's *Walden* when he remarks that "both of these books are attacks on the status quo, and they are calls to action as well as calls to understanding."<sup>15</sup> Touloumtzis recognizes the inherent radicalism of the transcendentalism that Carlyle and Thoreau propose. He concludes that "both Thoreau and Carlyle face this difficulty in putting forth their arguments: that their

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<sup>15</sup> Michael E. Touloumtzis, "Thoroughly Saxon": The Influence of Thomas Carlyle on Henry D. Thoreau's Art and Thought" (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1981), 243, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

pronouncements are so far beyond the norms of common thought and expressions that they are very apt to be misunderstood.”<sup>16</sup> Such an insight might explain, at least partially, why transcendentalism has never penetrated the popular political imagination as a viable and practical political ideology.

Specifically, Carlyle’s exposition of transcendentalism in *Sartor Resartus* offers a means to conceive of it as a sociopolitical ideology that can be compared to the existent and competitor ideologies of liberalism, Islamism, fascism, and communism. While liberalism vanquished communism and fascism in the late twentieth century, Carlylean transcendentalism has attributes that suggest it is a plausible candidate to take up the mantle of hegemony as post-liberalism. Carlylean transcendentalism can be characterized as post-Islamism in addition to being post-liberal and can be characterized as a “fifth-way” in reference to liberalism, Islamism, fascism, and communism. Carlylean transcendentalism can be conceived as a prospective “end of history” ideology the way liberalism, Islamism, fascism, and communism have proven themselves incapable of embodying the last stage of political development. As such, I would argue that transcendentalism has the potential to recast domestic politics in nation-states globally, as well as the potential to recalibrate international relations.

Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* is political philosophy in disguise. Carlyle unveiled the cryptic and highly-romanticized claim that a golden age lies beyond the age of liberal democratic capitalism with the publication of *Sartor Resartus* in 1833, when modern democracy and capitalism were only nascent and emerging phenomena. There is evidence to suggest that Carlyle’s theory has been vindicated: that liberal democratic capitalism would evolve, phoenix-

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<sup>16</sup> Touloumtzis, “Thoroughly Saxon,” 245.

like, to give way to a new hegemonic social order over the span of two centuries. As a text that epitomizes romanticism, *Sartor Resartus* teaches us that a golden age needs to be conceived of, theorized, and articulated so that it may then gain popular support and be realized. The idea of a golden age can serve as a type of Aristotelian *telos* for a polity to strive to achieve. Such a golden age need not be rooted in uncompromising dogma but rather application of principles such as renunciation and mutual solidarity.

Carlyle theorizes that renunciation and mutual solidarity are foundational virtues that transcendentalism embodies inherently. *Mutual solidarity* crystallizes as a product of Carlyle's romanticist plot construction in *Sartor Resartus* through the mutually reinforcing premises of 1) renunciation in the form of annihilation of self and 2) recognition of the universe as clothing symbolic of a transcendent/divine order. In other words, in the context of Carlyle's romanticism, making the most minimal personal claims upon the world and viewing the universe as universally divine become the most rational positions to take. Renunciation is rational because the only alternative is to be a slave to one's otherwise insatiable desires. Transcendentalism is rational because the alternatives are: 1) to view the universe as disenchanted and be a nihilist rather than a transcendentalist; 2) to be neither a nihilist nor a transcendentalist and resort to being a utilitarian, which ostensibly leads one to seek to satisfy insatiable desires; or 3) to subscribe to an ideology that is not transcendentalism which is antagonistic and incommensurable to competing ideologies. Teufelsdröckh's views lead to a grand conclusion that embodies and supports mutual solidarity, a conclusion that theoretically can be adopted and applied at a personal level, universally, and in the context of politics as an ideological viewpoint:



With other eyes too could I now look upon my fellow man; with an infinite Love, an infinite Pity. Poor, wandering, wayward man! Art thou not tried, and beaten with stripes, even as I am? Ever, whether thou bear the Royal mantle or the Beggar's gabardine, art thou not so weary, so heavy-laden; and thy Bed of Rest is but a Grave. O my Brother, my Brother! why cannot I shelter thee in my bosom, and wipe away all tears from thy eyes.<sup>17</sup>

If everyone were to make the most minimal claims on the world and view the world as universally the embodiment of divinity, each would ostensibly conceive of this vantage point and adopt this position.

The *conscious* recognition that Carlylean transcendentalism embodies the identity of being post-liberal offers a basis for the *conscious* evolution of liberalism to post-liberalism. Without such conscious recognition, liberalism would evolve without any formal guidance to a new and unknown state, likely one defined increasingly by authoritarianism and populism.<sup>18</sup> Transcendentalism offers the means to consciously and formally redirect and evolve liberalism to a new state so that the hard-fought gains of liberalism may be preserved from authoritarianism and populism. The rise of populism, authoritarianism, and nationalism globally should be taken as indicators that the nexus of cash payment is not enough to maintain and preserve the hegemony of globalized capitalism on either local, national, or global scales.

In the context of the United States, transcendentalism embodies a prospective “third-way” between increasingly divided and polarized ideologies and political parties and a political climate guided increasingly by identity politics, racial division, and the economic and urban-vs-rural divides. Liberal democratic capitalism has yielded increasing antagonism rather than its mitigation in the United States in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Since

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<sup>17</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 143-144.

<sup>18</sup> For a theory of liberalism's trajectory toward authoritarianism and populism, see Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*.

disparate and incommensurable ideologies have not been reconciled and there is no evidence to suggest they can be reconciled, in the absence of reconciliation the only alternative has shown itself to be a deepening polarization clash until such tension can no longer hold the political fabric together.

Transcendentalism calls on us to devise a new means to resolve the seemingly incommensurable and intractable divisions that grip American politics by seeking to reconceive American politics from its vantage point. For example, which demographic groups in the United States would be most open to adopting transcendentalism rather than the mutually-polarizing and antagonistic binary of liberalism and conservatism? Moderates and those not wedded to an ideology or a political party could potentially be open to the adoption of transcendentalism. Moreover, youth and “new minorities,” such as Hispanic-Americans, Asian-Americans, and multiracial Americans, could potentially find transcendentalism attractive so as to inaugurate it as a viable third-way in the context of American politics. This is because these demographic groups have been shown to demonstrate the least identification with the Democratic and Republican Parties.<sup>19</sup> Such a prospect would reconfigure the demographics of American politics. A youth movement could potentially support transcendentalism as a third-way to vanquish the ideological and partisan polarization that has increasingly gripped American politics since the 1960s, polarization that has only precipitated continuously escalating contention that will likely not be sustainable if civil unrest is viewed as something to be avoided.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lauren Young, “Gen Z is the Most Progressive—and Least Partisan—Generation,” *Teen Vogue*, accessed August 4, 2021, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/how-will-gen-z-vote>.

<sup>20</sup> Deepening contention is most especially evident in the context of the United States, which has witnessed a trend of ideological polarization between the left-wing and right-wing that has precipitated non-violent and violent mass protests such as the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, and the unprecedented raid on the U.S. Capitol in 2021.

By drawing on renunciation and mutual solidarity as foundational principles, transcendentalism's platform can be devised and proposed so as to inaugurate a new stage in political development. For example, transcendentalism views mutual solidarity as a necessity to be eventually adopted within the context of liberal democratic capitalism since the sole nexus of cash payment is not sustainable in preserving human society and community at either the local, national, or global levels. The nexus of cash payment as the primary (if not only) universal nexus of humanity from the advent of the industrial age in the nineteenth century to the twenty-first century has only grown more frayed as capitalism has increasingly evolved to a fuller incarnation in the contexts of increasing economic inequality both at national and global scales.

Liberal democratic capitalism's hegemony has precipitated consumerism and hyper-pluralism in the context of maintaining cash payment as the primary nexus that holds society together. The insatiability inherent in consumerism as the hegemonic ethos that pervades economic behavior in the free market illustrates that consumerism is not sustainable. The growth in the pluralism of incommensurable and irreconcilable ideologies inherently embodies social dis-integration and the economic nexus can only take the place of shared ideological solidarity to an extent and only for so long until the economic nexus based on continuously increasing inequality too disintegrates. The economic nexus cannot hold the social fabric together in the context of continuously increasing economic inequality and increasing

ideological pluralism with nothing on the horizon that suggests that such trends will be reversed.<sup>21</sup>

Socialism has not proven itself to offer viable solutions to the problems of humanity being predominantly organized by the nexus of cash payment in the free market and increasing inequality. This is because socialism fosters class warfare, resentment, and the pursuit of insatiable material consumption largely in the same fashion capitalism does. Neither capitalism nor socialism endorse *renunciation* as an economic virtue that needs to be incorporated at least to some extent in the context of economic production and consumption. Emerson's framing, albeit crude, of how socialists and capitalists are synonymous is applicable in this context.<sup>22</sup>

Emerson identifies the inherent tension, if not cognitive dissonance, that socialists embody by being purely non-transcendental materialists much like capitalists embody non-transcendental materialism: "they attack the great capitalist, but with the aim to make a capitalist of the poor man."<sup>23</sup> An inference from this is that the overcoming of exploitation with a spirit of renunciation is of an entirely different character from the overcoming of exploitation with a spirit of greed, which is synonymous to the spirit a capitalist would have. At the time when capitalism has developed to its fullest post-industrial form, renunciation of the pursuit of insatiable material consumption at the individual and collective levels and prioritizing the pursuit of equitable compensation for labor should be prized as valuable economic means of

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<sup>21</sup> These conclusions are based largely on my reading of criticism of liberalism and theories of post-liberalism. See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*; Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*; Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*; Milbank and Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue*.

<sup>22</sup> For a more contemporary discussion of the view that capitalists and socialists are synonymous with respect to their primary devotion to pecuniary interests, see Eugene McCarraher, *The Enchantments of Mammon: How Capitalism Became the Religion of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019).

<sup>23</sup> Emerson, "The Young American," 388.

preserving the gains made by capitalism since the nineteenth century. In the American example, the only alternatives to doing such would be continuations of the growth in consumer and national debts, growth in inequality, and the furtherance of environmental degradation. Such trends illustrate why renunciation and mutual solidarity could be such valuable and necessary concepts to apply to free market capitalism as their preservatives.

Renunciation embodies a duality: *moderation* of consumption and an *amelioration* of inequality. It recognizes that infinite economic growth, infinite profit generation, and the maintenance of exploitation in the context of the maintenance of capitalism as the economic status quo is not sustainable and ultimately will lead to diminishing returns, runaway inequality, and environmental degradation. An economy based on the infinite pursuit of economic growth and consumption is unsustainable. I argue that there needs to be a focus on renunciation, moderation, and preservation, but this stands wholly contra to capitalism, which only prizes the infinite advance of consumerism and profits. Renunciation acts as a preservative to sustain the gains capitalism has generated by “plateauing” the economy at an ideal level so that it does not eventually become all-consuming and burn itself out through the destructive tendency of promoting infinite consumption and continuous profit generation for a continuously growing global population.

Without the adoption of renunciation, mutual solidarity, and equitable compensation for labor, capitalism is liable to evolve only randomly and naturally in the context of there being no conscious alteration of values on the part of consumers and producers. Liberal democratic capitalism is bound to yield diminishing returns precisely because renunciation plays no *economic* role in the context of the pursuit of insatiable economic consumption and no *political*

role in the context of 1) increasing commitments to incommensurable ideologies on the part of devoted ideologues with the concomitant unwillingness to comprise, and 2) increasingly racialized factions premised on racial division and mutually antagonistic ethnocentrisms. These economic and political constructs, which increasingly form the bedrock of liberal democratic capitalism, indicate that liberal democratic capitalism has not mitigated but rather precipitated a “war of all against all.”

In the context of the United States, for example, I will assert that an increasing population coupled with increasing inequality, alongside the maintenance of cash payment as the primary nexus that holds the social fabric together, is not sustainable. Renunciation and mutual solidarity can be consciously adopted as a basis for a new nexus of social relations to preserve the free market economic system so that it does not eventually burn out and lead to negative outcomes and externalities such as increasing class warfare (by means of populism and potentially other means), increasing homelessness, environmental degradation, and resource depletion. The adoption of renunciation and mutual solidarity preserves the free market in a manner distinct from socialism, in that it does not support the government as a third-party engaging in formal wealth redistribution. The challenge lies in the necessity of maintaining and balancing free market competition while at the same time adding renunciation so as to attain and ossify an ideal economy. This requires economic actors to balance their need to be consumers and producers in pursuit of necessary profits with the recognition that renunciation is necessary to curb exploitation, runaway inequality, and a single-minded pursuit of consumption. Economic actors who juggle these contradictory demands effectively will

precipitate a collective economy that approximates one characterized by equity and economic and social justice.

Renunciation has not played a role in capitalism since it inherently embodies what is contrary to capitalism's heretofore blind devotion to continuous and infinite economic expansion and continuous and infinite profit-making. Neither continuous economic expansion nor continuous profit-making are sustainable in the context of finite resources and population growth. This shows how transcendentalism naturally fits as a post-liberal and post-capitalist ideology and how capitalism's status-quo is not sustainable. Capitalism was necessary to yield economic expansion and increase the quality of living on a global scale, but an exit ramp needs to be taken to maintain and preserve the economy that capitalism has generated since the nineteenth century. The mitigation of inequality, consumer and national debt, environmental degradation, and resource depletion inherently can be conceived of as attributes of a golden age that lies post-capitalism.

The difficulty in conceiving of and realizing post-liberalism is that those who personally profit the most from liberalism are unwilling to recognize its deficiencies. They are unwilling to recognize the diminishing returns of a liberal economy and a liberal political system because, in addition to their personal profits, liberalism is seen as the only alternative to previously failed illiberal regimes. As Deneen has articulated:

To the extent that liberalism regards itself as a self-healing, perpetual political machine, it remains almost unthinkable for its apologists to grasp that its failure may lead to its replacement by a cruel and vicious successor. No serious effort to conceive a humane postliberal alternative is likely to emerge from the rear-guard defenders of a declining regime.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 181-182.

A consensus with respect to the adoption of Carlyle's conception of transcendentalism can be valuable and might eventually be necessary so as to assert political will in opposition to such rear-guard defenders of a declining regime who are essentially analogous to Carlyle's conception of "Boa Constrictors." As Carlyle has said, "but what, except perhaps some such Universal Association, can protect us against whole meat-devouring and man-devouring hosts of Boa Constrictors?"<sup>25</sup> Carlyle's conception of transcendentalism provides a means by which such an association could prospectively form as an alternative to Marx's conception of a political revolution. The beginnings of such a "Universal Association" might possibly be ascertained in the growth of populism globally in the context of the 2010s and illustrate that transcendentalism has gone unheeded and unrecognized as an alternative approach to nationalist or Marxist revolutionary populism.

Yet, perhaps the largest question asked in the context of Carlyle's cryptic political philosophy in *Sartor Resartus* remains to be answered: is the "phoenix" real, or when liberal democratic capitalism has reached full capacity, can it somehow sustain itself and not naturally evolve to a new stage in human political development? While preparing a final draft of this thesis, the coronavirus pandemic engulfed the globe. The ramifications of the pandemic on the stability of the world order, which had increasingly been defined by globalization, free market capitalism, and technology, are yet undetermined. It cannot be disputed that globalization enabled and facilitated the coronavirus pandemic, as coronavirus was only able to spread as a function of the global transportation infrastructure and high level of global travel made possible by the modern capitalist economy only increasingly coming into its full form. The pandemic is

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<sup>25</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 152.



causing unprecedented economic decay on the global level and illustrates that the global economy is not invulnerable to irregularities whose negative impact may be exacerbated with the vast scope of the global economy. Such a catastrophe, the scale of which has not been witnessed since World War II, could potentially yield a transcendentalist awakening and a concomitant diminution of the hegemony of non-transcendentalist materialism. An elevation of nature, spirituality, and renunciation could potentially be within reach as a function of the pandemic instigating a phoenix of the global order. But that, of course, is yet to be determined. The coronavirus pandemic may signify only a minor tremor that allows for the maintenance of globalized capitalism for a longer period.

The natural evolution of political economy can perhaps be said to fit under the same purview as Carlyle's theory of justice:

An ideal of right does dwell in all men, in all arrangements, actions and procedures of men: it is to this ideal of right, more and more developing itself as it is more and more approximated to, that human Society forever tends and struggles. We say also that any given thing either *is* unjust or else just; however obscure the arguings and strugglings on it be, the thing in itself there as it lies, infallibly enough, *is* the one or the other. To which let us add only this, the first, last article of faith, the alpha and omega of all faith among men, That nothing which is unjust can hope to continue in this world.<sup>26</sup>

It has been my intention to consider and construct Carlyle's philosophy with a normative aim of realizing justice more fully. At a minimum, Carlyle's conception of social justice, as an evolutionary project continuously unfolding, may be the ideal reassurance.

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<sup>26</sup> Carlyle, "Chartism," 366.

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## Brian Wolfel

bwolfel@syr.edu / 520-419-0596

brianwolfel.com

### EDUCATION

**Syracuse University**, Maxwell School, Syracuse, NY  
 Doctor of Philosophy, Political Science, Expected October 2021  
 Master of Arts, Political Science, December 2017  
 Major Subfields: American Politics and Political Theory

**University of Arizona**, College of Public Health, Tucson, AZ  
 Master of Public Health, Health Behavior and Health Promotion, May 2012

**Cornell University**, College of Arts and Sciences, Ithaca, NY  
 Bachelor of Arts, Government, May 2009

### DISSERTATION

“American Transcendentalism Contra Contemporary Political Philosophy: Applications of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson to Liberal Democratic Capitalism, Platonism, Islamism, Technology, and the ‘End of History’”

Committee: Margaret Thompson (Chair), Glyn Morgan, Dennis Rasmussen, Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, Hossein Bashiriyeh

### RESEARCH INTERESTS

Contemporary Political Philosophy, Political Economy, Race and Ethnicity, COVID-19 Pandemic, Liberalism and its Critics, Post-Liberalism, American Transcendentalism, Technology and its Critics, Islamism, Thomas Carlyle, Alasdair MacIntyre, John Rawls

### PROSPECTIVE COURSES

American National Government and Politics, The American Presidency, US Congress, Race and American Politics, American Political Thought, US Foreign Policy, Democracy and its Critics, Contemporary Political Philosophy, Theories of Post-Liberalism, Classical Social Theory, Political Sociology, Radical Political Philosophy, Marx and Nietzsche, The

Aristotelian Political Tradition, Politics and Virtue, Introduction to Political Philosophy

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Book Proposal**

*Thomas Carlyle, American Transcendentalism, and an Elusive Post-Liberalism*  
(Under Review)

### **Academic Articles**

“The Antagonism of Thomas Carlyle’s Romanticism and John Rawls’s Rationalism on Social and Distributive Justice” in *Fictional Worlds and the Political Imagination*. Hagberg, G., (Ed.). 2022.  
(Forthcoming)

“Thomas Carlyle’s Conception of Transcendentalism in *Sartor Resartus* and its Application to Theorizing Post-Liberalism.” *Telos*.  
(Forthcoming)

“American Transcendentalism and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”  
(Under Review)

“Martin Luther King Jr.’s Nexus with Thomas Carlyle and Carlyle’s Cryptic Theory of Anti-racism”  
(Working Paper)

“Thomas Carlyle, Alasdair MacIntyre, and the Search for Virtue in Politics”  
(Working Paper)

“Thomas Carlyle’s American Reputation, Louis Hartz’s Liberalism Thesis, and the Limits of American Political Evolution”  
(Working Paper)

“Technological Advance, Demographic Change, and the End of the End of History?”  
(Working Paper)

“The Rationalization of Irrationalism: A Comparison of the Concepts of *Jahiliyya* and Revolution between the Islamism of Sayyid Qutb and the Technological Discontent of Jacques Ellul”  
(Working Paper)

**Popular Press**

"From Islamism to Transcendentalism," *Modern Diplomacy*, 8 Nov. 2020.

"The COVID-19 Pandemic and the 'Phoenix' of the Globalized Technological Capitalist System?,"  
*Modern Diplomacy*, 5 Jun. 2020.

"How Emerson and Thoreau's Transcendentalism Could Inspire a Re-Awakening (and Consensus?) After the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Resilience*, 1 Jun. 2020.

"Casino Gambling in Massachusetts: the Dice Heard 'Round the World,'" *The Christian Science Monitor*, 5 Aug. 2010.

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE****Instructor of Record****Syracuse University:**

PSC 300: Radicalism and Populism from Marx to Trump  
(Summer 2018)

**State University of New York at Oswego:**

POL 205: American Government and Politics  
(Fall 2017, Spring 2018, Fall 2018, Spring 2019, Fall 2019)

**Teaching Assistantships at Syracuse University**

PSC 121: American National Government and Politics  
-Led 2 discussion sections per semester (Fall 2014, Fall 2015, Fall 2016, Spring 2017)

PSC 329: The Modern American Presidency  
(Fall 2017, Fall 2018, Fall 2021)

PSC 125: Political Theory  
-Led 2 discussion sections per semester (Spring 2016, Spring 2018)

PSC 326: Foundations of American Political Thought  
(Spring 2020)

PSC 357: US Foreign Policy  
(Spring 2021)

SOC 335: Political Sociology  
(Fall 2020)

PSC 356: Political Conflict  
(Fall 2019)

HST 102: American History Since 1865  
-Led 3 discussion sections (Spring 2019)

PSC 321: Populism and Conspiracy Culture  
(Spring 2015)

PAF 421: Mediation: Theory and Practice  
(Summer 2017)

HST 303: The Age of the American Revolution  
-Grader (Fall 2017)

HST 302: Early American History  
-Grader (Spring 2017)

**Teaching Assistantships at University of Arizona**

College of Public Health 300: Community Health Sciences and Services  
(Fall 2011, Spring 2012)

**CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION**

Syracuse University Political Science Research Workshop (2019)  
Presentation of "The Antagonism of Thomas Carlyle's Transcendentalism  
and John Rawls's Rationalism"

New England Political Science Association 2019 (Portland, ME)  
Presentation of "Thomas Carlyle, Alasdair MacIntyre, and the Search for  
Virtue in Politics"

New England Political Science Association 2018 (Portsmouth, NH)  
Presentation of "John Stuart Mill and the Dissonance of Romanticism,  
Utilitarianism, and Liberalism"

Northeastern Political Science Association 2018 (Montreal, QC)  
Presentation of "The Antagonism of Thomas Carlyle's Romanticism and John Rawls's Rationalism"

New England Political Science Association 2017 (Providence, RI)  
Presentation of "Technological Advance, Demographic Change, and the End of the End of History?"

New England Political Science Association 2016 (Newport, RI)  
Presentation of "H.P. Lovecraft and the Clash (and Reconciliation) of Liberalism and Romanticism"

Northeastern Political Science Association 2016 (Boston, MA)  
Presentation of "Thomas Carlyle's American Reputation and Louis Hartz's Liberalism Thesis"

### **RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

Research Assistantship with Prof. Chris Faricy (February-July 2015)

Research Assistantship with Prof. Thomas Keck (June-August 2014)

### **OTHER EXPERIENCE**

**First Things First**, Tucson, AZ

May 2011-July 2011

*Paid Public Health Intern*

- Worked in and evaluated health outreach projects implemented in conjunction with grant-funded Pima County Health Department and Child-Parent Centers, Inc. (Southern Arizona Head Start) to enroll children aged 0-5 in public health insurance coverage

**Project Vote Smart**, Tucson, AZ

April 2010-July 2010

*Key Votes Department Staffer*

- Researched key votes in state legislatures and wrote vote summaries to be on website

**Center of Excellence in Women's Health, University of Arizona**

Jan. 2011-May 2011

- Conducted needs assessment and program planning for project within the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health Across the U.S. (REACH) program through MPH coursework

**Cornell Political Coalition**Aug. 2006-May 2008 *Co-President (2007-2008)*

- Planned political dialogue events on campus such as debates between political groups on healthcare and the War in Iraq

**PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AND DEVELOPMENT****At Syracuse University**

Future Professoriate Program Teaching Associate (2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years)

Senior Thesis reader for Alicia Drummond (Spring 2017)

**AWARDS**

American Political Science Association Travel Grant (2019)

Syracuse University Department of Political Science Summer Fellowship (Summer 2017, Summer 2019, Summer 2020)

Syracuse University Graduate Student Organization Travel Grant (Spring 2017, Fall 2018)

**PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

American Political Science Association

Northeastern Political Science Association

**REFERENCES**

Dr. Margaret Thompson (Syracuse University)  
msthomps@maxwell.syr.edu

Dr. Dennis Rasmussen (Syracuse University)  
dcrasmus@maxwell.syr.edu



Dr. Glyn Morgan (Syracuse University)  
dgmorgan@maxwell.syr.edu

Dr. Jeffrey Gonda (Syracuse University)  
jdgonda@maxwell.syr.edu