2nd Edition. Scarborough: Nelson Canada.

Stone, Deborah A. 1988. *Policy Paradox and Political Reason.* New York: Harper Collins.

Weaver, Sally. 1993. "First Nations Women and Government Policy, 1970-1990: Discrimination and Conflict." *Changing Patterns; Women in Canada, 2nd Edition.* Eds. Sandra Burt, L. Code and L. Dorney. Toronto: McLelland and Stewart Inc.: 92-150.

---. 1983."The Status of Indian Women." *Two Nations, Many Cultures, 2nd Edition* Ed. Jean L. Elliott. Scarborough; Prentice-Hall, 1983: 56-79.

RATIONALITY AND FREEDOM (UN)FULFILLED: RESEMBLANCE AND DISSONANCE IN ROUSSEAU AND HEGEL

By Nadine Changfoot

J-J Rousseau and G. W. F. Hegel offer insight into problems associated with the concept of the individual. Each thinker's respective understanding of the individual reveals a paradox of simultaneous human desire for freedom and rationality, on the one hand, and creation of 'unfreedom' and irrationality, on the other. An examination of Rousseau and Hegel reveals that the rational subject gives rise to irrationality. Rousseau is highly critical of the general Enlightenment assumption that reason is historically self-improving and expanding in knowledge for the betterment of society.[1] It is the historical transformation of human reason, for Rousseau, that confounds the actualization of freedom. Through his concept of the general will, Rousseau attempts a corrective to the problem of rationality but inadvertently reveals the impossibility of the goal of realizing freedom given the very 'perfectibilite'-- subjective rationality -- of humans themselves. Political society, for Rousseau, remains a lie of its own promise of freedom.

The ugliness of political society that discomfits Rousseau permeates even Hegel's putative progressive and developmental view of human rationality. The Hegelian Idea effects the same symptom of irrationality as identified by Rousseau. It appears in Hegel's thought within the system of need in civil society. Need is manifest as poverty for some. While Hegel does not condone the condition of deprivation, he does not consider it irrational either. This does not represent a problem, for Hegel, since rationality requires acceptance of imperfections in society ironically as aspects of its own rational self-development. The Hegelian conception of rationality is more forgiving of injustices since it renders these as necessarily symptomatic, not threatening, of its own formation.

Hegel criticizes Rousseau's understanding of ratio-

nality. For Hegel, Rousseau's idea of reason falls short of what Hegel sees to be reason's own historical development and as a result, Rousseau limits the understanding of freedom humans can achieve. But Rousseau's pessimistic view of rationality's development provides the insight that rationality gives rise to irrationality and unfreedom. For Rousseau, rationality is unable to live up to its own promise of freedom because there is an internal contradiction at work in reason itself that prevents such fulfilment. The contradiction is a source of distress for Rousseau as he is unforgiving of what he sees as an overwhelming expansion of self-interest. Rousseau cannot reconcile his observations of society with his concept of the general will because the two are in opposition to one another. This contradiction can only be resolved in Hegel's thought through an acceptance of the contradiction itself as rational.

The implications of their respective views of rationality and freedom for individuals diverge significantly. Because Rousseau sees reason as inherently flawed in its historical development, there is no possibility of a genuine freedom or equality for citizens beyond formal political statement of such in the state. Contrary to Rousseau's notion of the general will, the state is incapable of sustaining freedom and equality. A state founded upon reason inevitably has to temper self-interest, which implies that reason works against itself, i.e., that reason is self-destructive. The individual who would come into conflict with the state out of his own self-interest must be punished. Rousseau, however, doubts the moral claim of the state over the individual because the state too is not exempt from reason's fallibility. Rousseau's thought suggests that subjective reason becomes pervasive to the extent that it gives rise to an irrational human condition that is mistakenly understood as rational. In contrast, Hegel sees the culmination of reason's self-development in the state where freedom is realized. Freedom in the state, for Hegel, means that individuals must accept judgement as their own from an authority which they themselves have created.

While Hegel criticizes Rousseau for relying on self-interest as the basis of individual freedom in the state, Hegel in fact underestimates the powerful indictment of rationality expressed in Rousseau's thought. As such Hegel's interpretation of Rousseau's state as an aggregation of individual desire among citizens sells Rousseau short of his own insight into the problem of the historical development of reason. Because Rousseau sees the state as subject to the contradictions of reason, the resulting freedom cannot help but be contradictory given the individual's self-destructive impulses and self-preserving desires.

It is Rousseau's unsettling appreciation of the deficiency of the individual's capacity to control complex, evolving subjective desires that resonates with feelings of awe he held of political society. Rousseau states at the end of *The Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* that "it is only the spirit of society together with the inequality that society engenders which changes and corrupts in this way all our natural inclination" (p. 271).[2] Even though we may desire freedom and equality, Rousseau discovers that we are our own worst enemy, so to speak, in that the opposite is brought about. Yet, Hegel's claim that the individual is rational and free leaves one asking the same questions or making the same observations as Rousseau: there is something rotten in the state in which we find ourselves amidst poverty and deprivation despite pronouncements of the progress of western civilization. To expect improvement through further progress and development because rationality and freedom are our desired end evades the fundamental paradox of the rationality and irrationality of the will, from Rousseau's perspective.

For Rousseau, alienation from genuine equality and freedom is at the heart of being an individual. There can only be significant disenchantment with what exists in political society knowing that it is fundamentally deficient in comparison to what could possibly be achieved according to the idea of the general will. Political action, in Rousseau's view, is one that is both flawed at the outset but also necessary if one takes the general will seriously

as a normative idea. Moreover, we learn from Rousseau that we can and should condemn our situation and ourselves for bringing it about. The solutions for change are uncertain, will always be inadequate, but can nevertheless be guided by the idea of the general will.

For Hegel, Rousseau's anguished doubt of attaining a genuine freedom and equality is misplaced since Hegel argues that Rousseau relies on a destructive self-interested understanding of rationality at the outset. Reason's self-development, so Hegel claims, actually reconciles both subjective and universal interest. Individuals are free but their freedom is constituted in their own self-development from which the family, civil society, and the state emerge. Accordingly, the individual accepts state authority as one's own. We learn from Hegel that circumstances of poverty, disability, unequal distribution of wealth emerge from rationality's own self-development and what we can do is affirm ourselves while recognizing and alleviating the variety and degree of need observed in civil society of one's own time. While Hegel is critical of Rousseau's notion of rationality, Hegel does not address Rousseau's discomfiture over society's tendency toward inequality and unfreedom -- rational outcomes of rational objectives--and cannot enact Rousseau's idea of the general will in which Rousseau envisaged equality and freedom. We are not led to question fundamentally either our notion of rationality, ourselves, or the state in Hegel's thought. The problems we observe within civil society are worth addressing but as problems to be solved within the system itself. We cannot provide a radical critique of society drawing upon Hegel in the same way as Rousseau because rationality's purported outcome of freedom, for Hegel, is taken to be sufficiently normative.

i

The foundation of freedom, for Rousseau, is the individual. The individual forms himself through the ability to *think*.[3] The capacity for reason, or the 'faculty of self-improvement,' is put to use for the purpose of enabling the individual to decide what is best for himself. It

is this faculty which makes man rational and sets man apart from the animal. In the *Discourse*, Rousseau states, "the one [animal] chooses and refuses by instinct, the other [man] from an act of free will" (p. 207).

The individual is simultaneously influenced by what is external to him/her, i.e., other similar individuals in society.[4] Rousseau's understanding of the individual reveals the following paradox: in order to understand himself as being free, an individual must be able to act on his needs and desires without obstruction or interference from other individuals, on the one hand, yet he must also recognize his freedom, his capacity to think of, and act on his desires, as situated in relation to other similar individuals, on the other. An individual's ability to fulfil his needs and desires is dependent upon other individuals, and vice versa. The individual, however, puts himself first to secure his own existence or self-preservation, even though he is also cognizant of his dependence on others.[5] Rousseau states:

> his first law is to provide for his own preservation; his first cares are those which he owes himself; and as soon as he reaches years of discretion, he is the sole judge of the proper means of preserving himself, and consequently becomes his own master (SC I,II).

Self-preservation, according to Rousseau, historically evolves to be inextricably linked with *amour propre*.[6] Rousseau suggests that self-interest risks the destruction of both oneself and the other. *Amour-propre*, or self-love, becomes so all-consuming that it precipitates the demise of the self and that of society altogether. Self-love, in effect, becomes the obstacle to human existence that is rational and truly free. Individual freedom is threatened by the following internal opposition at work in reason. While it is rational thought that is the life-affirming aspect of the individual, it is amour propre that is life-threatening. In that the interdependence between individuals has come to be dictated by self-love, society risks falling into the Hobbesian war of all against all. The fact

that reason can act on amour propre and follow a self-destructive course is irrational, for Rousseau, and therefore must be changed. He states:

> I suppose men to have reached the point at which the obstacles in the way of their preservation in the state of nature show their power of resistance to be greater than the resources at the disposal of each individual for his maintenance in that state. That primitive condition can then subsist no longer; and the human race would perish unless it changed its manner of existence (SC I,VI).

The paradoxical aspects of the individual -- self-preserving thought and self-destructive impulses -- need to be reconciled for Rousseau in order to assure freedom and life itself. The 'manner of existence' in society is transformed from one where individuals pursue their self-interest to destructive ends into one where individuals are peaceably at one with themselves and with others. How each person can attain a social existence so that each can act freely on their own desires is a tricky problem under such an association. Such a community would seem to impose limits on self-interest. Rousseau states:

> The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before (SC I,VI).

This association is achieved through the social compact which requires the complete alienation on the part of each individual of himself, and all his claims made against the whole community. Alienation, for Rousseau, means "to give or to sell" (SC I,IV). What is given up is that irrational part of the individual will that is manifest through *amour propre* and which is the obstacle to self-preservation and freedom. Since there is total alienation

of this aspect of the self across the board, according to Rousseau, the conditions of society are equal for all individuals. Formal equality is realized as a result of this covenant or social compact. Rousseau claims that, because there is formal equality for all members of society, no one benefits by trying to take advantage of another person. Complete and unconditional alienation sets the ground rule or understanding that no individual member has to claim additional or disproportionate rights against one another; formal equality precludes inequality. He states that the covenant represents

> the total alienation of each associate, together with all his rights, to the whole community; for, in the first place, as each gives himself absolutely, the conditions are the same for all; and, this being so, no one has any interest in making them burdensome to others (SC I,VI).

The most important aspect of this abstract association of individuals is that each person retains his own freedom. Because the unity of individuals is based on the unconditional alienation by all, there is unconditional equality in the sense that rights gained and lost in the association are not advantageous to any single individual. In fact, there is only a gain for all of society's members given that all individuals augment their freedom by being able to preserve what each already possesses or owns. As Rousseau states:

> each man, in giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody: and as there is no associate over which he does not acquire the same right as he yields others over himself, he gains an equivalent for everything he loses, and an increase of force for the preservation of what he has (SC I,VI).

The general will, according to Rousseau, "creates a moral and collective body" (SC I,VI). It is moral since it embodies the individual as the negation of the self-destructive aspect of *amour propre*, and gives rise to com-

plete rationality, formal equality, and freedom, as a result. Individuals maintain their autonomy since they can pursue their self-interest without worry of fulfilling an unclaimed right against another, and conversely, they can be obligated to others without feeling that each is being disadvantaged.

The general will, for Rousseau, is a theoretical device which enables the individual to act on self-interest in a community, where one can realize freedom, one's very existence, without self-destructive tendencies. The individual is transformed into a unity of two dimensions which neutralizes, in thought only, the self-destructiveness of subjective rationality. In this sense, the general will embodies the individual in an abstract and ideal existence that transcends the individual.

Rousseau, however, cannot maintain the reconciliation of the paradoxical aspects of the individual according to his concept of the general will. Although the individual can claim to mould oneself according to the abstract concept of a general will that negates the self-destructive interest, the claim will not be realized. The individual that is the principle of the state, for Rousseau, is partial as Hegel alleges, but not for the reason Hegel gives. Rousseau attempts to consider the individual as completely free and rational, as opposed to "only in its determinate form" (§258), but discovers that rationality itself is its own greatest obstacle to rationality and freedom.

According to Hegel, Rousseau's state arises out of a contract through the union of arbitrary self-interest. Hegel's interpretation ignores Rousseau's consideration of the individual with rational potential. While Rousseau's general will may finally succumb to arbitrary self-interest, it is not until the general will is considered in light of its dyadic elements that subjective reason is seen to persist as an obstacle to freedom, according to Rousseau. Rousseau's deliberations about the general will reveals that its failure may be better exhibited in Rousseau's thought than Hegel concedes.

The general will consists of two meanings. First, there is the general will in which reconciliation is complete in thought. In this case there is perfect reconciliation between the individual's simultaneous self-destructive and self-preserving tendencies, which, in turn, enables the individual to coexist harmoniously without destructive self-interest. The general will in its second meaning represents incomplete reconciliation, but nevertheless takes the name of the 'general will.' In this case the reconciliation is flawed given the persistence of irrational destructive self-interest. The state, for Rousseau, is abstractly founded upon the first meaning of the general will, but it operates according to the second meaning and is left to contend with the individual's self-destructive tendency of subjective reason.

Governing in Rousseau's state, according to Hegel, consists of expressing individual consent "given at its own discretion" (PR§258). Arbitrary will is invested with power, but the will acted upon is assumed to be rational, when in fact, it is not, and consequently freedom is not realized. Hegel states that "when these abstractions were invested with power the intention behind this was to give it what was supposed to be a purely rational basis" (PR§258). When the two meanings of the general will posed above are taken into consideration, Hegel is ignoring the possibility that Rousseau is aware of the problem of abstraction, and in fact is cognizant that it is not the first meaning of the general will that is empowered, but rather the second. In contrast to Hegel's interpretation of Rousseau, Rousseau understands that there is no rational basis for the second meaning of the general will that is empowered. The individual can live only through self-interest that has self-destructive tendencies. Freedom and equality as defined through the first meaning of the general will remains elusive. What persists are irrational impulses and desires: *amour propre*. For Rousseau, the actual is not rational. The general will remains unactualized and exists only as a concept.

In Rousseau's idea of the general will the contradiction contained in reason itself can be observed. The individual comprises an internal opposition that pits evolving amour propre that is subjective particularity in

Hegel's terms with what Rousseau viewed to be man's object of freedom whereby all obey all and also themselves individually. This internal opposition is simultaneously reconciled, cancelled, and maintained in the concept of the general will. Reconciliation, however, falls apart outside the idea of the general will because of the predominance of destructive self-interest and what remains is the war of all against all that is civil society.

Hegel would purport to overcome the internal opposition observed in Rousseau's notion of reason through his dialectic. The Rousseauian irreconcilability between the preserving and destructive tendencies of rationality is putatively resolved by Hegel through reason's process of self-identity. Rationality understands its own determinations, i.e., feelings, needs, desires, objects, as integrally part of the universal brought down into its own particularity. This is achieved through the *Aufhebung*; the individual overcomes the other through struggle, and via transcendence, is able to preserve the other in oneself. In this sense, the individual is being with oneself in an other. What the individual might confront in another is, according to Hegel, one's own self that can be overcome in a higher level of self-understanding.

Rousseau's general will exhibits a similarity to Hegel's transcendent moment of rationality. For Rousseau, individuals would interpenetrate unproblematically in their abstract identity according to the concept of the general will. Unlike Hegel, however, Rousseau is unable to translate the individual's existence conceived in the idea of the general will to actual society. The internal opposition of rationality cannot be contained by the general will; rationality regresses toward *amour propre* that is linked to the primacy of self-interest versus preservation, reconciliation of *amour propre*, and desire for freedom. Given this antagonism, the individual of the general will remains transcendent, separate from the individual in society.

I turn next to a discussion of the state as key to understanding how Rousseau's notion of reason condemns us to live in a political community without freedom and how Hegel's understanding of reason claims to

permit us to live in a state of freedom. For Rousseau, the state is important in that it is the object of the idea of the general will which is ultimately found untenable. Yet, it is within political community that the individual should attain freedom. Similar to Rousseau, the state is where freedom should be realized, but unlike Rousseau, is thought to be realized, according to Hegel. Whereas rationality and freedom in the state is impossible for Rousseau, they are possible for Hegel.

II

The form of association borne by the general will is not exempt from the contradictions of rationality that are identified by Rousseau in the Discourse. The opposing tendencies of rationality are observed in Rousseau's state to the extent that the state cannot ensure freedom through control of destructive self-interest according to the idea of the general will. In contrast, Hegel's notion of reason is maintained in his understanding of the state. For Hegel, the state embodies rationality in its contradictory and reconciled moments at a higher level of self-development.

The general will that gives the "body politic life and existence" (SC II,VI) is undone by the primacy of destructive self-interest, according to Rousseau. He states that "the body politic, as well as the human body, begins to die as soon as it is born, and carries in itself the causes of its destruction" (SC III,XI). We cannot live the ideal human existence through the general will in its first meaning, and consequently, the existence we do lead is at best an incomplete and dubious one in terms of the second meaning of the general will. Rousseau's metaphor of the body is devastating in that it implies that our human existence and freedom cannot be realized as long as the paradox of reason remains. Rousseau, however, also states that "the best-constituted State will have an end; but it will end later than any other" (SC III,XI). Our existence is partial in so far as the rationality, freedom and formal equality of the abstract general will are not fully realized aspects of our lived life in a society that takes

destructive self-interest as a moral imperative. Tragically, it is the partial individual of this moral imperative that is the source of our less than rational and free existence.

The two meanings of the general will can be seen in Rousseau's understanding of the state, particularly in his discussion of the criminal. He states that "in a well governed State, there are few punishments, not because there are many pardons but because criminals are rare" (SC II,V). This is the state founded on the first meaning of the general will, where rationality is harmoniously reconciled in a community of others, and the destructive aspects of *amour propre* are snuffed out. The general will corrects the individual who comes into conflict with the community by force, when necessary. Government acts to restrain and respond to the potential self-destruction of our existence.

According to Rousseau, the criminal is one who violates the laws of the state. In so doing, the criminal ceases to be a member of the state and "in such a case the preservation of the State is inconsistent with his own, and one or the other must perish; in putting the guilty to death, we slay not so much the citizen as an enemy" (SC II,V). The criminal has committed an act that runs counter to the preservation of the state, and also himself as citizen. By putting the state and himself in jeopardy, the individual has acted irrationally, "as merely a man" (SC II,V), and must be punished possibly extricated from the community through execution.

But even the state works against the idea of the general will. Individuals pursue self-interest that runs counter to the idea of the general will and the state is put in a position of working against the very self-interest that gives rise to the general will at the outset. He states:

> as the particular will acts constantly in opposition to the general will, the government continually exerts itself against the Sovereignty. The greater this exertion becomes, the more the constitution changes; and, as there is in this case no other corporate will to create an equilibrium by resisting the will of the prince, sooner or later the prince must inevitably suppress the Sovereign and break the social treaty (SC III,X).

The individual remains alienated from the state, for Rousseau. Individual freedom cannot be guaranteed by the state since the state inevitably has to work forcibly against its own citizens' interests. Freedom becomes mitigated by state action upon the individual. In working against corrupt individuals of which it is composed, the state, according to Rousseau, also takes on its own self-interest which, in turn, takes state action further away from the idea of the general will.

Rousseau further says that "it is when a State is in decay that the multitude of crimes is a guarantee of impunity" (SC II,V). This suggests that crime becomes the behavioural norm and as such criminal acts go unjudged. They cannot be judged because the state that does not realize itself as the idea of the general will can no longer make moral judgements. The state comes to accept crime as acts of freedom and in so doing has shown itself to have succumbed to the irrationality of destructive self-interest. Irrationality becomes the norm and masks itself as rational. Self-doubt emerges as to what can be judged which implies that all individuals may take on aspects of the irrational criminal to be punished: Rousseau says "I feel my heart protesting and restraining my pen; let us leave these questions to the just man who has never offended, and would himself stand in no need of pardon" (SC II,V).

In contrast to Rousseau's state that becomes corrupt by destructive self-interest, the state, for Hegel, is "the actuality of concrete freedom" (PR§260)[7]. Concrete freedom, for Hegel, means the full realization of the self-determined rational individual as developed within the family and civil society,[8] as parts of the state. The individual recognizes oneself as the universal interest from which freedom and social institutions are manifest. It is the desire for freedom that creates social institutions, according to Hegel. One must "knowingly and willingly acknowledge this universal interest even as its own sub-

stantial spirit, and actively pursue it as its ultimate end" (PR§260). The individual is self-conscious of one's freedom given the dialectical constitution through the universal and particular whose end is the state.[9] For Hegel, the contradiction between the universal and particular is resolved when the self recognizes the state both as the universal and as its own rational end.

According to Hegel, the state is an organism that continually produces and preserves itself (PR§266) because of its rational basis. Unlike the state body of Rousseau, however, Hegel's is not a dying one, but an historically self-improving one. Similar to Rousseau, Hegel uses the metaphor of the body, specifically the nervous system as a metaphor for the state (PR§263). The nervous system is that part of the body which is not visible to the external world but has its own internal organization--without which the body itself would not exist--that provides perpetual unseen order to the body.

Hegel believes that the state has longevity because it allows individuals to fulfil their own arbitrary desires or self-interest even to an extreme, without the self-destructiveness that such pursuits imply. Destruction is preempted given that self-interest is pursued in relation to the universal which the individual recognizes to be his own. The unity between self-interest and the universal, which is divine and everlasting, is preserved in the particular itself. Hegel states that:

> the principle of modern states has enormous strength and depth because it allows the principle of subjectivity to attain fulfilment in the self-sufficient extreme of personal particularity while at the same time bringing it back to substantial unity and so preserving this unity in the principle of subjectivity itself (PR§260).

As a member of the state, the individual realizes his own freedom since the content of the state, i.e., laws, rights, and duties in civil society, is recognized to be a part of the individual himself, as of his own making. In obeying

laws, satisfying rights, and fulfilling duties, the individual is rational and also free in recognizing self-made constraints.

For Hegel, the criminal, as a member of the state, is a rational being and must be so "honoured" (PR§100). In recognizing the state as part of himself, the criminal must come to understand that, in committing a crime, he is simultaneously subjecting himself to a law that "he has recognized for himself in his action" (PR§100). The criminal understands that he will and must be punished since he is subject to the laws of the state that are his own. If punishment is denied, or if the criminal does not recognize the need for his own punishment, he is being denied his rationality and, consequently, is treated no differently from an animal.

Rousseau's anxiety over the individual's tendency toward self-destruction, acting on his desires irrationally, is never fully resolved in his political thought because he is not content to resolve this problem in thought only. This is not to say that he does not try. In order to ensure our partial existence and slow down the process of inherent degeneration of the individual and his community, according to Rousseau, the general will must be imposed via the state, which, however, is itself flawed in its inception. Given the decay of the state, forces both internal and external to the state are required to impinge on the individual so that he recognizes his own capacity for freedom, even if it is freedom ideally construed. The internal forces can be the state itself through law and punishment; the external forces can be what Rousseau refers to as the Legislator and Civil Religion. The paradox of the rationality, however, remains in these attempted solutions.[10] Each opposes destructive self-interest as an attempt to enact the general will yet each fails because in so doing individuals would have to be deprived of their own will. Try as Rousseau might, the irrational outcomes of rationality cannot be overcome.

As Horowitz and Horowitz[11] suggest, Hegel does not allow the contradictions that trouble Rousseau to get in the way of his systematic and totalizing thought. By

taking reason as self-developmental, for Hegel, the contradictory aspects of freedom cohere in his notion of reason. These contradictory aspects are manifest in the pursuit of subjective desire, on the one hand, versus meeting the exigencies of the will in an universal form, on the other. They are resolved, according to Hegel, in the individual's very formation of oneself and one's rational end, life within the state. In other words, freedom, for Hegel, is attained in the very development of rationality as it is embodied in institutions of the family, civil society, and the state. The individual accepts constraints to one's absolute freedom as themselves rational and as part of freedom itself.

iii

Hegel's criticism that Rousseau's notion of the individual is partial converges with Rousseau's insights into the individual. That is, Hegel's criticism of Rousseau turns out to be a point about which Rousseau may be all too aware. Rousseau does understand the individual as partial, but only after he discovers that human beings, "taken as they are," are, in fact, partial. For Rousseau, it is the very incompleteness of the individual that impedes his own freedom and rationality. In fact, it is our very humanness that makes us incomplete. Self-destructive impulses of desire and need are part of the individual, for Rousseau, and on the basis of this understanding he implies that there is an historical irrational part of the individual that cannot be overcome, except in an abstract existence that transcends the individual. While Rousseau is very much in search of a mediation between the life-affirming and life-denying aspects of the individual in the idea of the general will, he cannot master the inevitable self-destructiveness of *amour propre*. Perfect reconciliation in the ideal general will remains oblique to destructive self-interest in society. Failed reconciliation, in turn, unravels the abstract harmonious community of individuals, freedom, and equality.

Contrary to Hegel's interpretation, Rousseau did not 'destroy' the universal aspect of reason, but rather it

is reason itself that limits the actualization of the concept of the general will, i.e., its own universality. While Hegel's conception of the individual relies on an immanent self-development, Rousseau detects that the individual becomes subject to his own destructive self-interest in ways that are not clearly understood. This, for Rousseau, is an effect of the internal opposition he discovers. It is the subjective aspect of reason, for Rousseau, that is the obstacle to attaining freedom.

The individual remains separate from his ideal existence posited in the idea of the general will precisely because of the persistence of destructive self-interest. This separation, for Rousseau, indicates that neither the individual, nor humanity, realizes freedom. Rationality itself is incapable of guaranteeing freedom or equality for a political community, from Rousseau's perspective. In other words, arbitrary will can be eliminated in thought only. In spite of the abstract possibility of freedom in accordance with the idea of the general will, the individual is enslaved to irrational impulses of *amour propre*. The general will that is enacted thus takes on a different meaning than its intended one.

Hegel, unlike Rousseau, understands freedom as attainable. In that freedom is realized as an abstraction or idea, for Hegel, it remains in a process of self-actualization. Freedom, then, may fall short of its own concept, but this does not mean that the individual is not self-actualizing freedom. Nor does this mean that Hegel solves the problem of, what are for Rousseau, irrational manifestations in society to Rousseau's satisfaction. Hegel is only able to account for why they persist, not how they can be eliminated because he accepts them as rational. While Rousseau is able to account for the ugliness of irrationality in society, unlike Hegel, he wants very much to eliminate it. He cannot as his thought reveals failure already in his solution of the general will. Rousseau endeavours to put forward a vision of society that embodies a rational subject, but it is the very antagonistic rational and irrational elements of the individual that preempt the emergence of a rational state. Although Hegel's critique of

Rousseau is sustainable within his system of thought, Hegel is unable to respond adequately to Rousseau's despair and resignation over a persistent malaise of rationality that is manifest through contradictions in society.

Ironically, Hegel also understands that his state as the actualized Idea -- which is freedom, the individual, and the state in concrete form -- is itself not the guarantor of an ideal existence that Rousseau envisages as a possibility through the general will that transcends the individual. Human existence in civil society, for Hegel, is tainted with poverty, unequal distribution of wealth, the rabble, the criminal, aspects of society about which Rousseau felt embittered, and feared were manifestations of the historically irrational individual.[12] According to Hegel, however,

the state is not a work of art; it exists in the world, and hence in the sphere of arbitrariness, contingency, and error, and bad behaviour may disfigure it in many respects. But the ugliest man, the criminal, the invalid, or the cripple is still a living human being; the affirmative aspect -- life -- survives [*besteht*] in spite of such deficiencies, and it is with this affirmative aspect that we are here concerned (PR§258).

For Hegel, the state is the affirmative aspect of human life, in spite of the misery experienced, since it is through the state that the free and rational will develops historically. While our existence may not be perfect now, the individual putatively knows that there is the possibility for improvement since the state is capable of accommodating this possibility. The state remains the realm of freedom, for Hegel, because it is the end of rational thought.

For Rousseau, however, 'bad behaviour,' 'ugliness,' 'deficiency,' and 'criminality' are the actual manifestations of the self-destructive self that for him reveal the paradox of the will and unrealization of freedom. For Rousseau, it is the individual itself that remains the greatest obstacle to attaining freedom, and overcoming this obstacle in thought only is insufficient for him to accept

the problems he observed in relations among individuals in society. At the conclusion of the *Discourse* Rousseau states:

> in the midst of so much philosophy, humanity, civilization, and of such sublime codes of morality, we have nothing to show for ourselves but a frivolous and deceitful appearance (271).

The realm of freedom, for Rousseau, is found neither in the state, nor civil society, but only in the concept of the general will that transcends and remains separate from the individual, and therefore, human existence. For Rousseau, this separation is the crux of his frustration and the contradictions that arise from this problem of rationality that necessarily persists no matter what improvement or progress occurs in society.

When we reflect upon our own historical context, we can continue to be guided by insights offered by both Rousseau and Hegel. Inspired by Rousseau, we can immediately condemn or at the very least suspect our situation as falling short of a normative idea such as the general will and ourselves for playing a role in our own imperfection even if we may be less clear on how we bring about our own situation. The possibility of an ideal should lead us to realize that political society requires significant transformation and yet the difficulty in achieving such wholesale change requires us to reflect upon our very selves that give rise to what we criticize. Hegel echoes Rousseau in that regardless of what political changes we may enact (irrational) side effects will emerge that themselves are the product of our own rational existence. We continue to live in political community even if it might be a community ridden with violence, poverty, and inequality. These are the byproducts of rationality. In contrast to Rousseau, rather than condemn our situation and ourselves as giving rise to our situation, Hegel seems to suggest that we should affirm rationality and exercise it with the understanding of its self-contradictory constitution to work in favour of what might and can be better.

We learn that political change can have contradictory effects. Although inexplicit, Rousseau's thought suggests that only radical political action can bring about transformation in society and yet it is always inadequate. Hegel's thought does not necessarily preclude radical political action because his understanding of the state would see such action as rationally embodied by the state. But regardless of the action, there would be contradictory side effects that would be a source of misery in society.

Iv

Rousseau and Hegel provide two opposing views of rationality and freedom. Rousseau sees reason as inherently contradictory and giving rise to irrational contradictions and unavoidable limitations on freedom in society. Hegel's notion of reason comprises contradictions that he claims are themselves rational and attain freedom as its own end. Rousseau attempts to develop a concept of the general will founded on subjective rationality that could achieve freedom and equality but the self-destructive impulses of subjective rationality preempt the enactment of Rousseau's idea of the general will. Hegel's system takes reason as constitutive of freedom that is self-developing and claims to overcome contradictions in successive moments of higher self-actualization. The general will cannot be enacted, for Rousseau, in the state because the state is founded on destructive self-interest. Freedom is enacted, for Hegel, because he is able to accept injustices as rational side effects of the development of rationality itself. With Rousseau's insight into the problem of subjective rationality, we understand that freedom is never attained, that individuals are not fully rational, nor equal as members in political society. Given that rationality is understood to unfold as freedom in Hegel's thought, his system does not lend itself to questioning the state as a whole.[13] The problems of the state are worth addressing, but as problems within the system. While such problems would have been considered injustices for both thinkers, Hegel does not lead to a profound questioning of the state

or the concept of rationaliy in themselves as in Rousseau's thought. As such, we can look to Rousseau more than Hegel to provide a more potent, thorough-going critique with the intent of radical transformation to be levelled at ourselves and society.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Martin Morris and the anonymous reviewers of *Problematique* for their very helpful comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this paper. Rousseau writes with irony that "it is a noble and beautiful spectacle to see man raising himself, so to speak, from nothing by his own exertions; dissipating, by the light of reason, all the thick clouds in which he was by nature enveloped; mounting above himself; soaring in thought even to the celestial regions; like the sun, encompassing with giant strides the vast extent of the universe; and what is still grander and more wonderful, going back to himself, there to study man and get to know his own nature, his own duties and own end" (*A Discourse on the Moral Effects of the Arts and Sciences*, translated by G. D. H. Cole (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1950), p. 146.

2. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, translated by G. D. H. Cole (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd, 1950). References to *The Social Contract* and *The Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* will be made as SC and Discourse respectively.

3. Rousseau, in the *Discourse*, traces the historical development of the human species. In this work, he emphasizes that individuals are not atomistic and self-sufficient as suggested by Hobbes and Locke. On the contrary, the development of the human species has been historical whereby our capacity for perfectibilite has been a primary factor in this evolution.

4. The "other" for Rousseau is also inextricably linked to property and labour. In the *Discourse*, Rousseau argues that man lost his independence as exchange developed in

order to ensure survival. He states that "but from the moment one man began to stand in need of the help of another; from the moment it appeared advantageous to any one man to have enough provisions for two, equality disappeared, property was introduced, work became indispensable" (p. 244).

5. Rousseau diverges from liberal thinkers such as Hobbes and Locke who posit the atomistic individual who is not dependent on any other individual for his own self-preservation, but whose security is threatened by other individuals.

6. Rousseau explains this evolution in Part Two of the *Discourse,* see especially p. 248.

7. Hegel's conception of the state is drawn from his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right,* ed. Allen W. Wood, translated by H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). This work is referred to as PR.

8. Given the scope of this paper, I will not be tracing the development of the concept of freedom through the family and civil society. What I will say is that, for Hegel, both the family and civil society are constitutive moments of the Idea of the state. Neither is independent of the state, nor of each other.

9. The end of the self-actualization of the will is also the end in history, according to Hegel. History, for Hegel, is tied to the development of spirit through four successive "world historical realms" (PR§352) which are as follows: the Oriental Realm; the Greek Realm, the Roman Realm, and finally the Germanic Realm in which spirit is actualized as being-in-and-for itself (PR§358). The end in history as the development of a process has been reached. This does not mean, for Hegel, that the self-development of the will as freedom emerges perfectly or as it ought to develop, or that there is no more history. The historical self as it appears in the family, civil society and the state,

and the social institutions in each of those facets of self-development are, for Hegel, "only the superficial exterior" (PR Preface, footnote 22) to a process that has been simultaneously completed, and from which history still unfolds.

10. Given that the scope of this paper is limited to a discussion of the individual, I have decided not to examine this aspect of the Legislator and Civil Religion in this paper. Briefly, the Legislator is proposed by Rousseau to enact proper laws in accordance with the concept of the general will. The Legislator fails, however, since individuals in society are incapable of understanding the universal laws of the Legislator as being in their own particular interest. The purpose of the Civil Religion, for Rousseau, is to foster a sense of love for duty toward others in society, thus strengthening the social bond. The Civil Religion, however, also fails since its "being founded on lies and error" (p.135) reveals the inherent contradiction of the individual himself. The contradiction being that the individual of self-interest requires a lie in the form of civil religion to regain a semblance of the rationality of the concept of the general will.

11. Asher Horowitz and Gad Horowitz, *"Everywhere They Are In Chains:" Political Theory from Rousseau to Marx,* (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1988), p. 59.

12. In the *Discourse,* Rousseau views the social contract as an egregious event. He states that "everything being reduced to appearances, there is but art and mummery in even honour, friendship, virtue, and often vice itself" (271). While in the Discourse, Rousseau is vitriolic about the social contract, he is more fearful of its failings in *The Social Contract.*

13. While Hegel does not advocate unconditional duty to the state, it is the subject of debate the degree to which an

individual can question the state according to his concept of the rational individual. See Z. A. Pelczynski, "The Hegelian Conception of the State," in *Hegel's Political Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

Works Cited

Althusser, Louis. 1972. *Politics and History: Montesque, Rouseau, Hegel and Marx.* Translated by Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books

Avineri, Shlomo. 1972. *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hegel, G.W.F. 1991. *Elements of the Philosphy of Right.* Edited by Allen W. Wood, Translated by H.D. Nisbet Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Horowitz, Asher. 1987. *Rouseau, Nature and History.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Horowitz, Asher, and Gad Horwitz. 1986. *"Everywhere they are in chains": Political Theory From Rouseau to Marx.* Scarborough: Nelson Canada.

Levine, Andrew. 1976. *The Politics of Autonomy: A Kantian Reading of Rouseau's Social Contract.* Amherst: University of Massachussets Press.

Pelczynski, Z.A. 1971. "The Hegelian Conceptions of the state." in *Hegel's Political Philosphy: Problems and Perspectives.* Edited by A.A Pelczynski. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 1-29.

Plamenatz, John. 1971. "History as the realization of Freedom." in *Hegel's Political Philosphy: Problems and Perspectives.* Edited by A.A Pelczynski. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 30-51.

Reidel, Manfred. 1971." Nature and Freedom in Hegel's Philosphy of Right." *Hegel's Political Philosphy: Problems and Perspectives.* Edited by A.A Pelczynski. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 136-158.

Rouseau, J.J. 1984. *A Discourse on Inequality.* Translated by Maurice Cranston. New York: Penguin Books.

Rouseau, J.J. 1950. *The Social Contract and Discourses.* Translated by GDH Cole. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd.

Taylor, Charles. 1975. *Hegel.* Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Wood, Allen W. 1990. *Hegel's Ethical Thought.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.