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[Dear Readers: This paper is part of a book I'm writing on Hegel's social theory. The talk I'll give will be based on this paper, but I also plan to supplement these ideas with further remarks that both situate the topic and contrast Hegel's view with Rousseau's.]

Hegel's Critique of Social Contract Theory

The previous three chapters have been concerned with filling in many of the details of the two basic parts–the subjective and objective components–of Hegel's conception of social freedom. Now that we have seen how these elements work together to form the groundwork of the theory of Sittlichkeit, we are in a position to think more productively about one of the fundamental philosophical issues that has surfaced here from time to time but still remains unresolved, namely: the relation between individual and collective goods that underlies Hegel's account of the rational social order. More precisely, it is time now to determine the extent to which we can agree with Allen Wood's assertion, already noted in Chapter 1, that in Hegel's social theory "collective goods have value because they have value for individuals"?[1] In the present chapter I intend to examine this issue by focusing on the very complicated question concerning the extent to which Hegel's social theory is consistent with some version of methodological individualism. In the realm of normative social theory methodological individualism is the doctrine that the principles that define the ends of the rational social order can be exhaustively constructed from a starting point that takes into account only the rational ends of social members considered as individuals. This approach,

[1] Allen W. Wood, Hegel's Ethical Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 259.

I take it, is an essential feature not just of social contract theory in all of its forms (including those of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and even Rawls) but of liberalism more generally, including, for example, utilitarian liberal theories. Defined in this way, methodological individualism is not a content-neutral procedure, adaptable to any social theory whatsoever; rather, it rests upon a substantive claim about the possible content of any admissible conception of the collective good of social groups, namely, that the good of the social whole includes no ends of its own that cannot be derived from, or constructed out of, the good of the individuals (considered as such) who make up that whole. The same idea is sometimes expressed as the claim that the collective good is reducible (without remainder) to the good of individuals.[2] It is one plausible and historically influential way of giving content to the claim under investigation here: that collective goods have value because they have value for individuals.

It will no doubt seem immediately obvious to many readers that Hegel, the most insistent of modern critics of the social contract tradition, deserves, if anyone does, to be counted among the opponents of methodological individualism.[3] Although ultimately I shall not deny that this judgment is in some sense correct, I want to proceed here by calling into question this received assumption about Hegel's position in order to get clear on both precisely where it diverges from liberalism with respect to methodological individualism and what the significance of that divergence amounts to. This means that I shall not simply take at face value Hegel's apparent rejection of social contract theory but instead attempt to determine, with more clarity than Hegel himself achieves, the extent to which his basic

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[2] The phrases 'derived from,' 'constructed out of,' and 'reducible to' are far from unambiguous, and the sense in which collective ends are constructed out of individuals' ends varies widely among the liberal theories mentioned here. Still, each of these theories begins by ascribing a set of rational ends to hypothetical individuals prior to (political) association and derives collective ends out of some type of inquiry into how those ends are best coordinated. Later I examine in detail the specific version of this procedure used by Rousseau, the social contract theorist I am most interested in here.

[3] At PhR §156Z Hegel appears to reject explicitly the position I am calling methodological individualism. His term for the position is 'atomism.'

philosophical strategy for justifying rational social institutions differs in kind from that employed by Rousseau, the social contract theorist nearest to him in spirit.[4]

I suggest that we approach these issues by first addressing the closely related, though distinct, question posed by the issue of methodological individualism: Can we arrive at a complete account of the basic ends of the rational social order by starting from an account of the rational ends social members can be said to have as individuals, apart from the interests they acquire through their social membership itself? In other words, does the rational social order as Hegel depicts it pursue any ends (or achieve any good) beyond either the ends individuals have independently of social membership or ends that are defined solely in terms of the rational coordination of those individual ends? If so, what kinds of ends are they?

There are many reasons it is initially difficult to take seriously the suggestion that Hegel's social theory might be (or come close to being) reconstructible in accord with the strictures of methodological individualism. Let us note here two of those reasons. First, Hegel's texts abound with passages that characterize the rational social order as realizing an unconditioned or divine good that appears to belong to an order of goods entirely distinct from (and higher than) those ascribable to finite human individuals. To cite several well-known examples, Hegel describes the state (best understood here as the entire ensemble of rational social institutions) as "that which is rational in and for itself" (das an und für sich Vernünftige) and, further, as an "absolute, unmoved end in itself . . . that has the highest right in relation to individuals, whose highest duty is to be a member of the state" (PhR §258; emphases omitted). And, more notoriously: "The existence of the state is God's march in the world" (PhR §258Z).

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[4] One reason it is important to question the received view is that it is extremely difficult to weave Hegel's remarks on social contract theory into a coherent critique of some plausible interpretation of that approach to political theory. The most important textual sources for reconstructing Hegel's critique are PhR §§29A, 75A+Z, 258A+Z; NL, (440-53, 470-80, 518-9); LHP, vol. III, 401-2; XX, 307.

A second reason for believing that Hegel rejects methodological individualism is that a large portion of his critique of the social contract tradition appears to be directed explicitly at the primacy it gives to the good of individuals. In a passage that belongs to his fullest (mature) elaboration of that critique Hegel decries those political theories that make "the interest of individuals as such" into "the final end for which they are united" (PhR §258A).[5] Immediately thereafter Hegel gives a characterization of his own view that he takes to stand in direct conflict with the position just described:

> [The state], however, has a completely different relationship to the individual. Because the state is objective spirit, it is only as a member of the state that the individual itself achieves objectivity, truth, and ethical life. Association (Vereinigung) as such is itself the true content and end, and the vocation of individuals is to lead a universal life (PhR §258A).

If individuals achieve "objectivity" and "truth" only by leading a "universal life" within a rational social order, if association itself is the final end of social life, then–so it would seem–the interests individuals have as individuals (in abstraction from the attachments they acquire through the forms of social membership under investigation) will not be an appropriate starting point for social theory. As the passage cited above makes clear, Hegel's reasons for rejecting theories that derive the rational ends of social institutions solely from the interests of individuals as such are bound up with his assumption that doing so commits one to understanding the value social membership has for individuals as purely instrumental in nature (as opposed to "association as such" being "the true content and end" of social membership). This assumption appears plausible if we restrict ourselves to the kinds of individual interests mentioned here, namely, "security and the protection of property and personal freedom." Hegel's thought is that, for a theory that begins with only interests such as these, social membership (here, political membership more narrowly construed) can only have significance as a means for individuals to achieve their common but separate ends rather than being the source of the substantive social bonds and shared

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[5] In the same place he describes the position he is arguing against as one that takes "the principle of the individual will" as its "fundamental concept" (PhR §258A) and therefore "starts out from

final ends that have such a prominent place in Hegel's theory of Sittlichkeit. If the only ends admitted into the construction of rational social institutions are those individuals have prior to (in abstraction from) their familial, corporative, and political attachments, what grounds can there be for claiming that individuals' engaging in social activity for its own sake–their taking "the universal interest" of their institutions as "their final end" (PhR §260)–is an essential feature of the rational social order?

I shall argue below that the first of these points–Hegel's description of the state as an unconditioned, divine good–does indeed pose genuine problems for any attempt to reconstruct his theory as a version of methodological individualism. (I shall postpone discussion of this issue until the end of this chapter.) It is important to see now, however, that the second set of considerations represents considerably less of an obstacle to such a reconstruction. Hegel's rejection of social contract theory as it is depicted in the paragraph immediately above rests on an overestimation of the extent to which the methodological individualism inherent in social contract theory in general necessarily translates into a theory that is also individualistic in substance (as, for example, the view that social membership is nothing more than a means for achieving the ends of individuals as such and that individuals need not incorporate the good of others into their own final ends). This is a misunderstanding that is easily acquired but difficult to be rid of, and for this reason it is necessary to explain here in some detail why Hegel's implicit assumption concerning the substantive implications of methodological individualism is false.

The first step toward this end is to clear up a crucial ambiguity inherent in formulating the issue at hand as a question about the way in which membership in the rational social order is good for the individuals that compose it. This ambiguity is best brought out by focusing on two different meanings that can be ascribed to the word 'for' in that formulation. Construed in one way–as "for" in the subjective sense–it refers only to an individual's conscious attitude to what is said to be a good for him. On this interpretation,

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individuality, from the individual self-consciousness" (PhR §258Z).

something is a good for me if, and only if, I in fact attach a value to it, or take it to be part of my good. Thus, the fact that a father values his participation in family life is sufficient to make it a good for him in this sense. If 'for' is understood in the second, objective sense, the assertion that social membership is good for individuals refers not to their own assessment of the value of that membership but to the objective value it has for them. Taken in this way, it is a statement made from a philosophical perspective that may be external to the actual consciousness–or, in Hegel's terminology, the subjective dispositions–of social members. To say that the rational social order is good for individuals in this sense is to make the claim that social membership satisfies interests that can be attributed to all individuals as such, independently of their consciously held values.

Hegel's doctrine of the subjective disposition of social members holds that in a rational social order social participation will be a more than merely instrumental good for individuals in the first of these senses: they will take their activity on behalf of collective ends to be valuable for its own sake. The claim that follows from the methodological individualism inherent in social contract theory, however, is that the rational social order is good for individuals in the second of these senses: it is well-suited to satisfy the fundamental interests of individuals as such. It is, of course, far from obvious that these two different assertions could be coherently unified within a single social theory, for it still seems that a position grounded solely in an account of the good (fundamental interests) of individuals considered apart from their social attachments will be unable to arrive at the view that individuals must be able to embrace the collective ends of their families, corporations, and the state as their own final ends if the social world is to be fully rational. The part of Hegel's critique of social contract theory referred to above is implicitly based on precisely this claim as to the incompatibility of the two assertions just delineated.

Here it is necessary to recall that Hegel's espousal of this claim depends on a crucial assumption he makes about the kind of interests that qualify as the interests of individuals as such ("security and the protection of property and personal freedom"). What is

significant about the kinds of individual interests Hegel has in mind when criticizing social contract theory is that they can be pursued and satisfied by agents who maintain radically individualistic self-conceptions–that is, conceptions of themselves as sovereign, self-standing beings for whom the good of others does not enter positively into their own final ends. While it is likely that achieving the end of personal security will require such individuals to join forces with other self-standing beings in a common project of mutual defense, there is no reason for individuals who are united solely for this purpose either to incorporate the ends of their fellow associates into their own final ends or to think of their social cooperation as anything more than an efficient means for achieving an end they have independently of their association with others. The same point can be made with the help of a term introduced in Chapter 3 when defining the voluntative identity supposed to hold between members of Sittlichkeit and their institutions: The individual interests Hegel has in mind when criticizing social contract theory are interests that agents can pursue and satisfy without surrendering their purely individual wills; (that is, each can continue to have a will directed exclusively at his own well-being as a separate, particular individual).

The discovery that Hegel's rejection of methodological individualism relies (at least in part) on this assumption about the nature of the interests individuals have as individuals should lead us to ask the following question: What if, contrary to Hegel's apparent assumption, there existed a good of which it were true both (i) that its achievement represented a fundamental interest of individuals (as such); and (ii) that it could not be universally achieved by individuals unless they were the sort of subjects who regularly incorporated (some part of) the good of their fellow associates into their own final ends? In other words, what if among those interests ascribable to individuals as such there were an interest whose satisfaction (as revealed by philosophical reflection on the conditions of satisfaction for all) required that individuals conceive of themselves not as radically self-standing units but as beings for whom their relations to others within certain social groups constitute an intrinsic part of who they are, with the consequence that they acquire the

ability to embrace collective ends as their own, even at the expense of (some of) their purely individual ends? The answer, of course, is that if there were such an interest, it would be far less obvious than Hegel takes it to be that his own social theory is incompatible with all versions of methodological individualism. But does such an interest exist? I shall argue here that both Hegel and Rousseau are implicitly committed at the deepest levels of their social theories to maintaining that there is indeed such an interest and that, moreover, both of them conceive of that interest as an interest in freedom. In order to get a clearer idea of how methodological individualism is compatible with the view, espoused by both Hegel and Rousseau, that it is an essential feature of the rational social order that its members regard their social participation–their activity in the service of universal ends–as having more than merely instrumental value, it is necessary to spell out in more detail how these two positions are united within Rousseau's account of the social contract and, more specifically, how his understanding of freedom as a fundamental interest of individuals enables him to bring the two together.

Rousseau

That Rousseau does in fact intend to unite these two positions is clearly evidenced by a prominent feature of his account of the social contract that has been a constant source of puzzlement for interpreters.[6] The feature I am referring to is Rousseau's insistence that the solution to the central problem faced by political theory requires that citizens of the rational state have a radically different subjective make-up from that of the (hypothetical) inhabitants of the state of nature with which his theory begins. The individual of the state of nature is said to be "by himself . . . a perfect and solitary whole" (SC, II.7.iii), a being who considers only himself (SC, I.8.i) and is motivated solely by his "private" (purely individual)

[6] See, for example, Patrick Riley's Will and Political Legitimacy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 110, which asserts (mistakenly, in my view) that this feature constitutes the central, irresolvable paradox of Rousseau's political theory.

interest (SC, II.7.ix). A citizen, in contrast, is supposed to regard himself as "a part of a larger whole from which [he] receives, in a sense, his life and being" (SC, II.7.iii) and is able, by virtue of this self-conception, to "want constantly the happiness of each" (SC, II.4.v). According to other passages, citizens do not "perceive their own existence . . . except as part of the state's;" they "identify themselves in some way with this larger whole" and "feel themselves to be members of the homeland" (PE, 222). The puzzle raised by these claims is based on the very same thought that underlies Hegel's rejection of social contract theory in the passage cited above: If it is true, as Rousseau states, that "among the motives causing men to unite . . . nothing relates to the union for its own sake" (GM, 158), how can he possibly arrive at a view that requires individuals to be subjectively constituted such that they regard the good of the whole as a constitutive part of their own good? Answering this question requires that we first make clear to ourselves the basic argumentational structure of Rousseau's political theory and the sense in which it qualifies as a version of methodological individualism.

The methodological individualism of Rousseau's theory can be seen in the fact that its logical starting point is an account of the fundamental interests of individuals as such. In the context of that theory the category "interests of individuals as such" is given content by thinking of the interests individuals would have if they existed in a world (the state of nature) that lacked those social relations specific to the particular form of association whose justification is the subject of inquiry (here, the state). Isolating these fundamental interests is essential to Rousseau's theory because the principles that govern legitimate political association will be (exhaustively) constructed by determining the principles of social interaction that best coordinate those interests. The legitimate, or rational, state will be defined as one that allows for the fundamental interests of all citizens to be satisfied. The specific interests Rousseau ascribes to individuals as such are set out in his formulation of the central problem political philosophy is to solve: "Find a form of association that defends and protects the person and goods of each associate with all the common force,

and by means of which each one, uniting with all, nevertheless obeys only himself and remains as free as before" (SC, I.6.iv). Two distinct kinds of interests are attributed to individuals here: first, those that could be described as interests in one's own well-being (including the preservation of life, personal security, and the basic material goods necessary for well-being) and, second, an interest in maintaining one's freedom, which is defined as "obeying only oneself."[7]

The existence of these two kinds of fundamental interests seems to present an irresolvable dilemma for the designer of rational political institutions, for while the interests associated with individual well-being can be satisfied only through extensive social cooperation, the natural consequences of that cooperation appear to be directly incompatible with the conditions required for the maintenance of freedom. In fact, the necessity of social cooperation poses two distinct obstacles to the maintenance of freedom, each of which must be grasped if the complexity of the problem addressed by Rousseau's political thought is to be fully appreciated. The first of these obstacles is articulated in the point, already familiar to us from Chapter 2, that the dependence engendered by social cooperation, when left in its natural, unreconstructed state, makes it virtually impossible for individuals to continue to obey only their own wills (and thus makes freedom a virtual impossibility). The second obstacle to the maintenance of freedom has its source in a different feature of social cooperation: Since effective cooperation must be regulated by a collective will directed at the common good (including the well-being of all), the need to cooperate with others will require individuals to adjust or curtail their actions in accord with interests beyond their own purely individual good. This seems to imply, however, that individuals will have no option but to let their actions be determined by a will other than their own and thus to surrender their freedom; for as long as individuals consider only themselves and are motivated solely by their own purely individual good, laws aimed at

[7] As noted in Chapter 2, 'obeying only oneself' should be understood as equivalent to the definition of freedom as "not being subjected to the will of others" (OC III, 841; RSW, 83).

realizing the common good cannot but appear to them as external constraints on the pursuit of their own good. Although the threat of punitive sanctions might in fact induce such individuals to comply with laws directed at the common good, their compliance would involve submitting to a foreign will rather than obeying themselves.

The possibility of resolving the dilemma posed by the existence of the two fundamental interests–and hence the central insight of Rousseau's political theory–ultimately rests on the fact that it is possible to conceive of a variety of forms of practical subjectivity (what Hegel will call configurations of the free will), each of which satisfies the essential requirement of freedom, namely, that one obey only oneself. This is precisely the point underlying Rousseau's crucial distinction between natural and moral freedom. As Rousseau understands it, natural freedom consists simply in the absence of all constraint by the wills of other individuals. The unassociated beings of the original state of nature (as depicted at the beginning of the Second Discourse) enjoy this freedom in that they pursue the satisfaction of their needs and desires more or less unhindered by others. In the absence of enduring contact with their fellow beings they escape determination by a foreign will and therefore obey only themselves, which in this case means nothing more than that they are free to follow, unimpeded by others, the impulses of their own particular (purely individual) wills.[8] It is important to note here that it is this conception of freedom that is invoked (implicitly) in formulating the dilemma posed by the competing interests of well-being and freedom.[9] Fortunately, though, this is not the only possible way of envisioning how individuals can remain obedient only to their own wills. Another possibility is offered by what Rousseau calls _la liberté morale_, defined as "obedience to the law one has

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[8] In the _Social Contract_ 'natural freedom' refers to a slightly different conception of freedom from the one attributed to the beings of the original state of nature in the Second Discourse. According to the former, natural freedom consists in the fact that individuals outside of political society have no _obligations_ to submit to the will of others. Thus, they are naturally free _de jure_, whereas the unassociated beings depicted in the Second Discourse are naturally free _de facto_ (their ability to satisfy their own needs enables them in fact to avoid submission to foreign wills).

prescribed for oneself" (SC, I.8.iii). Underlying this conception of freedom is the thought that if the laws governing the rational state can be understood as having their source in the wills of the individuals who are subject to them, then compliance with those laws can be regarded as a form of obedience to oneself and therefore as a kind of freedom. Thus, individuals' need for social cooperation (in order to promote their interests in their own well-being) can be rendered compatible with their interest in freedom only if the principles governing that cooperation, including those directed at the well-being of all, can be regarded as coming from their own wills in some meaningful way.

It is Rousseau's doctrine of the general will that is supposed to provide a solution to the complex problem said to lie at the heart of political philosophy. It does so by imposing two different kinds of conditions on the laws that regulate citizens' interactions within the rational state (conditions that correspond, respectively, to Hegel's doctrines of objective and subjective freedom). First, those laws must have a certain content in order to qualify as a true expression of the general will: they must in fact further the well-being of all (the fundamental interest that originally motivates their association (SC, I.6.i; GM, 157-8)); and, as we saw in Chapter 2, they must effectively mitigate the freedom-endangering consequences of social cooperation by restructuring natural dependence so as to make it realistically possible to avoid subjection to the particular wills of other individuals. (In accomplishing this the general will secures the necessary conditions of a negatively-defined conception of freedom, civil freedom (SC, I.8.ii), conceived of as the ability to act unconstrained by the particular wills of others within a sphere of activity external to the vital interests of the community as a whole.)[10] Second, in order to satisfy the requirement that individuals obey only themselves, the laws that in fact advance their fundamental interests as individuals must also be recognized by the citizens who are subject to them as

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[9] More precisely, this conception of freedom is presupposed by my account of the second obstacle to the maintenance of freedom, since the problem at issue there arises only on the assumption that individuals are motivated only by their own purely individual good.

[10] Thus, civil freedom is roughly equivalent to Hegel's conception of personal freedom.

products of their own wills. In many places Rousseau clearly regards citizens as the actual fashioners of their laws; (la liberté morale, remember, is said to consist in prescribing laws to oneself). In other passages (SC, II.1.iv), however, he seems to impose only a weaker condition–closer to the one subsequently adopted by Hegel, who believed that the size of modern states made radically participatory forms of democracy impracticable–namely, that citizens merely affirm the laws that govern them as good. In either case, if individuals are to recognize rational laws as products of their own wills–if they are to be free in their subjection to those laws–they must be able to be moved by their assessment of the common good and to assent to laws that (sometimes) subordinate their purely individual good to that of the whole.

This summary account of the basic structure of Rousseau's political theory provides us with the resources necessary to begin to articulate how his methodological individualism–his beginning only with the interests of individuals as such–can result in a view that makes social membership into more than a purely instrumental good for individuals and requires that they be subjectively constituted so as to regularly take (some part of) the good of their fellow associates as a part of their own good. The most important part of the argument that underlies Rousseau's view can be summarized in terms of the following steps:

> (i) Individuals considered as such have two kinds of fundamental interests: their own well-being and their freedom.
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> (ii) In order to further their interests in their well-being individuals must engage in social cooperation.
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> (iii) But social cooperation poses a threat to the freedom of individuals because: (a) the relations of dependence it involves make it difficult to escape subjection to the wills of others; and (b) the principles of the common good that govern cooperation will at least sometimes be at odds with their purely individual good and therefore appear as external to their own wills.
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> (iv) Hence if the requirements of well-being are to be reconciled with those of freedom, one condition that must be met is that the interactions of individuals be regulated by laws (implicit in the concept of the general will) that both advance the common good and restructure their interdependence so as to be less detrimental to freedom.

(v) But if this condition is fully to satisfy freedom's requirement that individuals obey only themselves, it must also be the case that individuals can consciously embrace the laws dictated by the general will as their own.

(vi) Since these laws have the common good as their content–they aim to advance the good of all citizens–individuals can be free in their subjection to those laws (recognize the laws that govern them as their own) only if they can view the good of others as a part of their own good. Their freedom, therefore, requires that they have more than purely individual wills.

Membership in the rational state, then, serves to realize the freedom of citizens in two respects: The laws dictated by the general will mitigate the freedom-endangering consequences of dependence (thereby securing the necessary conditions of a negatively-defined civil freedom), and citizens who embrace the general will as their own enjoy a kind of self-determination (la liberté morale) that consists in obeying self-prescribed laws. The latter point is crucial to understanding how a political theory can start only from the interests of individuals as such (including their interest in freedom) and yet view political association as having a value that goes beyond the purely instrumental role it plays in securing the fundamental interests of individuals as such. This is because political participation itself–both the framing of laws, jointly undertaken in accord with a shared conception of the common good, and the actual compliance with laws recognized as one's own–is more than simply a means to being free; it is also, and more importantly, constitutive of a kind of freedom, for in acting in accord with laws they give to themselves citizens do nothing other than obey their own wills.[11] Because this form of freedom presupposes that citizens have a standing commitment to the common good, one of the conditions necessary for its realization is that individuals be able to incorporate the good of their political community as a whole (including the good of their fellow citizens) into their own ends. Thus, given the need for social cooperation that sets up the central problem of political theory, the aspiration of human individuals to be free can be fully realized only on

[11] I take Joshua Cohen to be making roughly the same point when he says that "having a general will is not . . . a means to autonomy" but rather "what autonomy consists in." See his "Reflections on Rousseau: Autonomy and Democracy," Philosophy and Public Affairs 15 (Summer 1986), 287.

the condition that they acquire general wills. The same point is sometimes formulated by Rousseau as the claim that the subsistence of the rational state as such depends upon the virtue of its members (SC, III.4.vi; PE, 222), where virtue is defined simply as the "conformity of the particular will to the general will" (PE, 217). Since discerning the common good is by its nature a joint enterprise, carried on in a public arena and requiring the input of other citizens, the realization of freedom is possible for individuals only by becoming members of a collective subject–a body, composed of all citizens, that strives to know, will, and determine its activity in accord with its general will. Put in terms reminiscent of those Hegel uses to characterize spirit: "the I" achieves its freedom only as part of a "we."[12]

Just how deeply, though, must "the I" be constituted as a "we" in order to be free? At precisely what level of the will must a commitment to the common good be incorporated into the subjective disposition of free citizens? Or, equivalently, how radical a transformation in self-conception would the inhabitants of the state of nature have to undergo in order to take their place as free members of the rational state? Strictly speaking, Rousseau's argument as articulated thus far establishes only that in order for individuals to remain subject only to their own wills as members of the state, they must be able to will the common good as (a part of) their own. It does not by itself show, however, that citizens must possess a self-conception that differs as radically as Rousseau claims it must from the self-conception characteristic of the hypothetical individuals with which his account of the social contract begins. More precisely, the argument summarized above does not yet demonstrate that the realization of their freedom within the rational state requires that individuals conceive of their political membership as intrinsic to who they are and therefore aim to achieve the good of the whole for its own sake, because the flourishing of their

[12] In showing how "the I"'s being constituted as "a we" follows from Rousseau's brand of methodological individualism, I take myself to be filling in some of the details of the view implicit in Cohen's suggestion that Rousseau's emphasis on freedom as a fundamental interest of individuals means that "there is . . . an anticipation of the general will–something universal–present within the contractual situation itself, and therefore a basis for that will in the nature of human beings" (284).

community (and of their fellow citizens) is regarded by them as good independently of its relation to their own good as separate individuals. In other words, this argument shows that citizens must be able to take the common good as their own end but not that they must will it as a final end.[13]

In fact, the argument summarized above enables us to see more clearly how it is possible for an individual to possess a general will to the extent required in order to be free (being able to will the common good even at the expense of (some) purely individual ends) while remaining, ultimately, a wholly self-interested being. For what that argument shows is that the satisfaction of one's fundamental interests as an individual is inextricably bound up with the existence of a political community in which the same interests are satisfied for all. Presumably, then, a recognition of this fact would make it possible for citizens to endorse legislation directed at the common good while regarding the achievement of that good as valuable only instrumentally, as simply a means to the satisfaction of their own fundamental interests as individuals. In such a case the ability to will the common good when it conflicts with one's purely individual ends would require nothing more than the ability to distinguish one's fundamental interests as an individual from other, less fundamental ends one has and consistently to give priority to the former over the latter; in other words, it would require only that an individual have learned, as Rousseau himself expresses it, "to prefer his properly understood interest to his apparent interest" (GM, 163).

It is important not to overlook the fact that even this vision of the subjective disposition appropriate to citizenship would require a substantial reconfiguration of the subjective make-up of individuals who were not yet constituted as citizens, a reconfiguration that could quite legitimately be called a radical transformation in self-conception. It is no minor distance that separates the inhabitants of the state of nature,

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[13] To make this distinction more concrete by means of a contemporary example: Do I support a universal health care plan only because I am far-sighted enough to see that ultimately my own freedom and well-being will be threatened in a community plagued by radical inequalities in basic

who aim only at their own particular good, from beings who consistently will the common good because they recognize that their own fundamental interests are best served by doing so. The self-conception at work in the latter scenario consists in identifying most deeply, not with one's own particular good, but with interests one shares with all other individuals (one's fundamental interests as an individual) and in recognizing that the fundamental interests of each can be satisfied only by promoting the fundamental interests of all. Yet this subjective change, however substantial, falls short of the radical transformation Rousseau thinks is generally required if natural individuals are to become citizens. For the latter, as Rousseau says again and again, regard the good of the political community as logically prior to their own, willing it for its own sake and not merely as a means to satisfying their own interests as individuals.[14] What grounds does Rousseau have, though, for requiring this more socially spirited disposition of free citizens?

The key to understanding at least one of the motivations behind this part of Rousseau's view lies in appreciating the importance of a theme that runs throughout all of his major works, namely, the difficulty human beings naturally have, due to passions that distort their vision and pull them in the wrong direction, in keeping sight of and acting in accord with their own best interest.[15] It is this feature of human beings that makes it necessary for political philosophy to concern itself with the formation (SC, II.7.x), or education–or, as Hegel calls it, the Bildung–of citizens. In order to be reliable willers of the common good, individuals who attributed no intrinsic value to the good of the whole would have to possess what Rousseau regards as nearly superhuman qualities: the ability always

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goods such as health care, or do I attach some intrinsic value to my fellow citizens' basic needs being satisfied?

[14] This, I take it, is implied by Rousseau's talk of a "shared felicity from which each individual would derive his own" (GM, 158) and his claim that in the rational state "public felicity, far from being based on the happiness of private individuals, would itself be the source of this happiness" (GM, 160).

[15] This conflict is not natural in the sense that it belongs even to the animal-like beings of the original state of nature but in the sense that it is a basic feature of the human condition. That is, it is a natural concomitant of the social dependence and the divergence among particular interests that come about once individuals acquire more than the very simplest of needs.

to bear in mind the essential link between the common good and one's own fundamental interests as an individual, and a constant disposition to give precedence to those (long-term, sometimes barely palpable) interests while resisting the pull exerted by one's (more immediately perceptible) purely particular good.[16] For Rousseau, a political theory that required these qualities to be widely distributed among citizens in order for the state to succeed in securing the fundamental interests of all would violate the very first principle to which such a theory must conform: in attempting to devise "laws as they can be" it would take insufficient account of "human beings as they are" (SC, I.1.i.). The general unreliability of human beings' ability to discern and will their fundamental interests means that if citizens are consistently to relate to the general will as their freedom requires–if they are to be "safeguarded against the seduction of particular wills" (SC, II.6.x)–their subjective disposition ought to include an attachment to the common good that is less dependent on the effectivity of their reason.

This is surely one reason for Rousseau's view that citizens must have a deeper attachment to the common good–and therefore be more thoroughly constituted as "a we"–than his argument seems at first to warrant. Although it is not always completely clear in his texts, Rousseau responds to the problem raised here by locating the primary ground of citizens' commitment to the common good, not in an understanding of the unseverable connection between that good and their fundamental interests as individuals, but in an affective bond they have to their political community and, by extension, to their fellow citizens. Thus, the freedom of citizens turns out to depend, for the vast majority of individuals, not so much on rational (or philosophical) insight into the identity of individual and collective interests as on "love of country" (l'amour de la patrie), an earnest concern for "the fate of the republic" (PE, 224), that is reinforced, if not instilled, by a consciously

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[16] Rousseau formulates the problem at issue here in the following terms: "Each individual, appreciating no other aspect of government than the one that relates to his particular interest, has difficulty perceiving the advantages he should obtain from the continual deprivations imposed by good laws" (SC, II.7.ix).

undertaken program of political education. This affective attachment to their political community provides citizens' wills with a force that, because itself a passion, is better suited to counteracting the promptings of their particular wills than a force more purely rational in nature. It is love of country, then, that above all else enables citizens to have the effective concern for the good of their fellow members–gives them the capacity to "constantly want the happiness of each" (SC, II.4.v)–that is essential to having a general will.[17]

Although Rousseau himself does not explicitly mention it, there is perhaps a second consideration motivating his view that citizens must will the common good for its own sake. This consideration, however, is not connected to the realization of freedom in a precisely Rousseauean sense of that term (which is to say that, strictly speaking, it is not based on the mere requirement that citizens end up obeying only their own wills). Rather, this consideration is grounded in the somewhat different concern that one's political membership and participation be more directly expressive of one's self-conception, and more immediately related to the final ends implicit in that self-conception, than is possible for citizens who accord no value of its own to achieving the good of the whole. Let us consider again the subjective disposition of individuals who regularly will the common good but do so only because they know that it is the sole guarantor of their fundamental interests as individuals. It follows from Rousseau's definition of freedom that such individuals are free in complying with the general will, because in acting in accord with the common good they do only what their own wills prescribe. It is even true that for such individuals political participation–determining with others what the common good requires and playing one's part in bringing it about–could be experienced as having a certain value in and of itself, since that participation is not merely a means to securing their fundamental interests but also

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[17] This connection between love of country, political education, and the general will is nicely summarized in the following statement: "Love of country (l'amour de la patrie) is the most effective [means of teaching citizens to be good], for . . . every man is virtuous when his particular will

constitutive of a certain kind of self-determination (prescribing laws to oneself) that they enjoy in the rational state.[18] Yet there is one respect in which the political participation of such individuals could be said to fall short of being fully "their own," a deficiency that is located in the very fact that the immediate object of their deliberation and activity as citizens (the common good) possesses no intrinsic value for them. Although their participation in the state meets the formal requirements of freedom (they avoid subjection to a foreign will), there is an important sense in which its content–the end to which it is immediately directed–is, though not antithetical to their wills, nevertheless external to what they ultimately care about. The thought here is that if the attachment individuals have to the common good is rooted solely in self-interest, there remains too great a distance between the immediate object of their will and activity as citizens (the common good) and the final ends (the satisfaction of their fundamental interests) that account for their ability to will it. This distance, when characteristic of a significant portion of one's practical involvement in the world, can plausibly be regarded as a kind of alienation from oneself and one's activity. Although this thought belongs more obviously to Hegel's understanding of the subject's aspirations than to Rousseau's–it is, for example, an explicit and essential part of Hegel's claim that socially free individuals are "with themselves" (bei sich) in their social institutions–it is at least hinted at as well in Rousseau's general concern that individuals achieve not only free wills but also a wholeness or integrity of will that involves, among other things, a subjective disposition in which feeling is at one with reason.

What Rousseau offers us, then, is an account of the legitimate state that is constructed in accord with the strictures of methodological individualism and yet prescribes as rational a subjective disposition in which citizens regard their political membership as an end in itself and take the good of the entire political community as a final end of their own.

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conforms on all matters with the general will, and we willingly want what is wanted by the people we love" (PE, 218).

A feat that might initially appear to require an act of philosophical legerdemain shows itself to be accomplishable instead by means of an argument whose success depends, first and foremost, on effecting a transformation in the way we conceive of political freedom. This transformation is brought about by showing, first, that under the conditions of human dependence a social world based on natural freedom alone would in fact be a world of universal subjection to the wills of others and, second, that if individuals are to submit themselves to a collective will for the sake of advancing their fundamental interests as individuals and at the same time be free, the freedom they enjoy as citizens must be a more complex form of obeying only oneself (embracing the general will as one's own) than is contained in the conception of natural freedom. It is important to note that Rousseau's argument does not simply replace its initial conception of freedom with a second, wholly unrelated one. On the contrary, his argument depends on there being an essential commensurability between the two conceptions such that from the perspective of the first the second can also be recognized as a conception of freedom. Moreover, this commensurability consists in the fact that each conception represents a different way of giving content to freedom's defining quality, obedience only to oneself. Thus, although Rousseau's argument involves no change in its definition of the abstract essence of freedom (freedom always consists in obeying only oneself), it does require a change in the way that abstract essence is specified or made determinate. Or, using the terminology introduced by Rawls, we could say that the move from natural to moral freedom represents a transformation in the conception, but not in the concept, of freedom.[19]

Thus, one of the distinctive features of Rousseau's political theory is that while it starts by considering only the fundamental interests individuals have as such, it ends up with an account of the rational state that requires citizens, in effect, to surrender (some of)

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[18] One could say, more perspicuously perhaps, that their political participation satisfies or gives expression to a certain conception of themselves as self-determining beings and that the terms under which it occurs accord them a dignity appropriate to that self-conception.

their original individuality (to cease to think of themselves only as separate individuals) in order that those interests be universally satisfied. This basic feature of Rousseau's theory can be translated into the general claim that although it is possible to identify or define the fundamental good of individuals independently of their social relations, it is not possible fully to specify the content of that good (to determine concretely what that good will consist in when realized in the world) without envisioning the individual as integrated into a political community such that he no longer conceives of his own good as essentially separable from the good of the whole. Rousseau's claim is not simply that the individual's fundamental interest in freedom can only be satisfied within the framework of a certain political order but, more radically, that the freedom realized by individuals in the rational state must be social in its very content, a freedom that consists in citizens discerning and endorsing the collective will of their political community and doing so not as independent individuals with separable interests but as substantially integrated members of a single, indivisible body.

This reconstruction of Rousseau's position shows, then, that, contrary to Hegel's assumption, methodological individualism in political theory–making "the interests of individuals as such" into "the final end for which they are unified"–is not necessarily incompatible with the claims Hegel himself wants to advance concerning the relation between individuals and the rational social order, namely (PhR §258A): that "it is only as a member of the state that the individual itself has objectivity, [or] truth;" that "association as such is itself the true content and end" of social membership; and that "the vocation of individuals is to lead a universal life" (to have a general will). In other words, Rousseau would agree with Hegel's conclusion that it is only as members of the state that individuals attain objectivity (become the kind of beings they by nature ought to be) but deny that doing so consists in anything more than satisfying a fundamental interest they have as individuals,

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[19] The distinction between a concept and a conception (of justice) is made by John Rawls in A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), 5-6.

since, as citizens, they succeed in realizing their freedom, the quality that defines their essential nature as human beings.

Let us conclude our discussion of Rousseau's political theory by noting that, contrary to appearances, his methodological individualism does not commit him to the view that the only goods that make citizenship in the rational state valuable for those who enjoy it are goods that could also be appreciated as such from the perspective of the unassociated, purely self-interested individuals of the state of nature. Rousseau's argumentational strategy as I have reconstructed it here leaves room for the view–one explicitly embraced by Rousseau himself (SC, I.8.i)–that citizenship brings with it certain goods (for example, the good intrinsic to having enduring, noninstrumental attachments to others and in pursuing with them common projects informed by shared final ends) the value of which can be recognized only by individuals who already have the subjective dispositions appropriate to citizens.[20] This implies, then, that what makes the rational state good for its members need not be reducible to its ability to satisfy their fundamental interests as individuals. In fact, Rousseau's argumentational strategy commits him only to the claims that a concern for the fundamental interests of individuals as such is itself sufficient to generate the construction of a complete account of the basic features of the rational state and, further, that the satisfaction of those interests (especially the realization of freedom) represents the most fundamental good individuals achieve through membership in the state.

[20] Rousseau appears to take the same view of membership in the family (DI, 146-7). Presumably the good intrinsic to conjugal and paternal love, described here as "the sweetest sentiments known to men," could not be recognized by the unassociated beings who precede the development of families.