

ARMOUR'S IDEA OF CANADA

The idea of Canada -- the title of Leslie Armour's¹ study -- is imprinted by its beginning. Armour regards his book to be "hopeful," even inclined toward celebration more than lament, a swipe, I suspect, at George Grant's *Lament for a Nation*.² Celebration, Armour explains, is a state-of-mind made possible due to the "strength of our inherited cultures" as well as the "fund of ideas which we have, sometimes painfully, retained," adding that he considers Canada "probably much better placed" than most," meaning that we're obligated to Canadians, to humanity, to "build on rather than destroy" what has been inherited.³ Given ongoing "crises" of Canadian community -- now very much "out in the open" for the Indigenous⁴ - it's not obvious to me how Canada is "better placed," especially with "technologies of a certain sort *combined with* forms of public organization which are increasingly impersonal,"⁵ threats that were also much in the mind of George Grant.⁶ What is missing, Armour feels sure, is a "closer kind of association."⁷ What makes this a "crisis" is that he fears that social distancing⁸ is jeopardizing Canadians' capacity for "tolerance."⁹ Reactivation of the past -- of Canada's origins -- is one remedy, namely (as Armour puts it) the "idea of an organic society, in which the individual and his society have been seen as a continuity, in which the individual has not traditionally been pitted against his society but in which the individual and his society have been seen as a continuing, in which neither is intelligible without the other, was deeply embedded in our beginnings, and has never been eradicated."¹⁰ Those profoundly pluralistic beginnings remain, he adds, as "common principles" that "embody a single nation."¹¹

Before identifying these "common principles," Armour acknowledges the two most evident strands of political philosophy in play at the time of his writing, one a version of "individualist 'contractarianism'" he associates with the work of John Rawls, the other a collectivism he associates with the writings of Karl Marx.¹² Armour then summarizes Rawls's theory that "human beings are rational agents," and as such, "choose always ... to further their own interests."¹³ Rawls had then reasoned "each would choose that society in which the least advantaged would have most advantage, because each of us might turn out to be the least advantaged," resulting in "fairness."¹⁴ Armour associates this scheme with the "American dream," one that "permits very great inequalities" while accommodating the "desire for freedom."¹⁵ The latter is "paramount" for Rawls; Armour notes: "one should choose that system which maximizes the freedom of the participants for, after all, the system is designed to optimize one's chances of acting so as to further one's own interests."¹⁶ What is not obvious, Armour concludes, is the "the value of being or not being in a society in which everyone pursues his own interests rather than the common good," including the "environmental."¹⁷ The choice between Rawls and Marx Armour reduces to the difference between a Holiday Inn and the Gulag, a choice (he thinks) not so obvious

‘for a poor man in New York,’ for whom “a state-subsidized apartment in Omsk with good free medical care may seem better than poverty in the Bronx.”¹⁸ Really?

Armour positions Canada in-between these two extremes, characterizing that in-between space as a “society at once organic and pluralistic,” an idea that has “very old roots in Canada.”¹⁹ He defines “organic” not biologically but as “pertaining to or characterized by systematic connection or co-ordination of parts in one whole,”²⁰ an idea circulating in curriculum theory, most recently reiterated in America.²¹ In between capitalism and communism, Armour’s idea includes elements of both,²² as the concept of an “organic society is the idea of a society in which mutual interest, mutual dependence and a common good which surpasses all individuals have a place.”²³ What he wants is a political philosophy that “accounts for the importance of history and tradition and yet which tells us how to organize a society in which the future is open, and in which there is no need to impose a single ideology.”²⁴ Isn’t that itself a “single ideology”?

There is a downside to such openness, Armour admits, namely “fragmentation,” which in Canada “mainly takes the form of regionalism, but that, though the regionalist thrust is a response to deep, old, and real injustices, the forms which it takes seem likely to make the problem worse and, indeed, to be self-defeating.”²⁵ Despite regionalism, Armour insists that “there is an identifiable and historical culture, and even some sociological data to show that there is much more to it than the confrontation of ancient pecksniffing Tories with modern, upstart, Americanised Liberals.”²⁶ Prominent in this complexity are “native peoples,” for whom “the crisis of community is out in the open.”²⁷ Also prominent is Québec; Armour thinks the future of Québec culture in North America is “almost certainly tied to the future of Canadian federalism.”²⁸ He then points to Alberta, about which he writes: “Albertans might get rich momentarily from control of their own oil. But oil is a declining resource and, even if it were not, the world must soon convert from it.”²⁹ Again, Armour asks: “Beneath the surface conflicts, is anything there? What links us in a way which makes one think that the appropriate responses are even possible, let alone likely?”³⁰

Next Armour returns to the past, and its imprinting on the present. “In the earliest phases,” Armour reminds, “the most influential groups of immigrants were French, Scots, and United Empire Loyalists. Their influence has remained critical.”³¹ That influence he associates with an “organic view of society,” a conception of shared life he suggests the “French, the Scots, and the United Empire Loyalists all tended” toward, noting that:

The French were here before the Revolution, resisted it ... and continued their traditional social order. The Scots were often clannish, resistant to the new orders which had displaced them at home, and fiercely loyal to their own traditions. The United Empire Loyalists included a good many men and women who specifically rejected the new individualism even if, as it is always the case with those who feel some new regime, they also included a good many men and

women who wanted to defend entrenched privilege or take advantage of the reward which the “other side” offered.³²

What these “three groups had in common” was, Armour reiterates, their “belief in an organic society.”³³

“Canadians’ commitment to democracy,” Armour admits, was “not as strong as that of either the English or the Americans,” adding (with another nod to origins) that Canadians are “a relatively clannish people, sceptical of their political institutions.”³⁴ Perhaps community in Canada was in “crisis” from the outset then, as Armour suggests that a “community shows itself in the institutions it legitimizes – or tries to legitimize. The structure of a community is the shape of public authority and the pattern of men’s interactions with each other.”³⁵ To illustrate the point he adds: “The law works because, by and large, people accept it.”³⁶ Given the amalgamation Canada is, community, to “remain alive and coherent, [must] generally must recognize and give effective shape to a range of institutions – legal, political, economic, educational, religious.”³⁷ If, however, “institutions fail to work together,” then “communities may also become ineffective.”³⁸

“Communities show themselves in their institutions, but they have their bases in culture,” Armour continues, acknowledging that culture is a “slippery word,” but he associates culture with “meanings,” this last term “as parts of human intentions and thus, ultimately, as associated with the ways in which people orient their lives.”³⁹ Such “orientations are expressed through – and become intelligible through - literature and art,” suggesting that “it is through a common sentiment articulated through painting, poetry, literature, and music that it becomes possible to have a culture despite all the complexities of a modern society.⁴⁰ Canada’s “crisis,” then, “has to do with the way in which the community is associated with a central culture and a variety of sub-cultures.”⁴¹ The challenge is to make an “understanding of meanings that can move men in spite of their differences,”⁴² referencing “Matthew Arnold [who] understood the link clearly and maintained that it was through culture, conceived as the arts, that we might hope to demolish class distinctions.”⁴³

Especially interesting to read in our present era of political polarization and cultural particularism is Armour’s assertion that: “If culture is associated with the assignments of meanings, it is always at once universal and singular,” adding that “meaning can be shared by all,” if “always anchored in particulars,” an instance of which are the “arts [which are] are invariably concrete.”⁴⁴ Then he references the First Peoples of British Columbia and the “potlatch” which, he reminds, functioned to “validate transactions central to the functioning of the most basic institutions,” adding:

Crucial changes in rank and power and the settlement of important disputes were related to a validation process in which the ceremonial giving of gifts – and at times the destruction of symbolically important property – played an indispensable part. When this ceremonial giving, potlatching, was outlawed, life still had to go on. But without the marks of validity, actions lost their crucial

dimension of meaning. The fragility of the culture became apparent in a situation in which the participants had already begun to recognize, even if reluctantly, the validity of competing institutions.⁴⁵

Armour considers the potlatch example as “typical of the whole crisis of community in Canada.”⁴⁶ So multiculturalism represents an effort to patch together “competing institutions” and cultures, that “crisis of community” with which he is preoccupied.

Apparently political leaders haven’t been much help, as Armour writes: “We have always found it hard to take our politicians seriously.”⁴⁷ I wonder who the “we” might be given the splintering of “community.” Certainly Indigenous peoples might not have found - might find - non-Indigenous “leaders” to be helpful, although colonialism seems the culprit. “A very likely reason for this circumstance,” Armour specialties, “is that our political institutions were borrowed from British and American societies which had undergone quite different transformations,”⁴⁸ with “borrowed” a bit of a cover-up, as – considering Canada as a colony of Great Britain - “imposed” might be more accurate. The point is well-taken, however, as leaders and structures of government might reflect the society which they represent, even bear an organic relation to that society’s history, present circumstances, and future prospects, but the problem here, Armour seems to be suggesting, is that Canadian society “remained committed to tightly knit communities of the kind which I have called organic, but these groups had been dispersed.”⁴⁹ Aren’t “tight-knit communities” by definition “dispersed,” and not necessarily organically associated, committed to cultural particularism not cosmopolitanism? That would seem so with North American French culture that had, by 1867, spread west, and in “parts of Ontario, Protestant and Catholic villages alternated along the roads through the newly opened bush.”⁵⁰ Armour implies if representation by community might have enabled a more organic relationship between the represented and their representatives when he writes: “Yet we adopted the Anglo-American plan of representation by place – a notion which supposed that men and women in the same geographical region formed a representable unity,” an organization of government that meant that Francophones in the west were outnumbered, out-pressured, and eventually simply outvoted.”⁵¹ Yes, colonialism is the culprit in Armour’s mind, as he concludes: “The readiness to regard British and American institutions as having a natural validity has therefore tended to prevent us from creating our own.” That, you recall, is Cynthia Chambers’ concern for curriculum studies in Canada.⁵²

The title of Hugh McLennan’s *Two Solitudes* has become a “standard expression for our predicament,” Armour reminds, although if he were writing today no doubt McLennan would have added another digit: Three Solitudes.⁵³ Apparently Armour wants to pushback, as then references Robin Mathews⁵⁴ who critiqued Margaret Atwood, in *Survival*, for encouraging “unwarranted despair” while ignoring “important Canadian literature.”⁵⁵ The critique is that the “background ideas in *Survival* are tied to that of the ‘garrison’ mentality which stems from the thought of Northrop Frye,” a

“notion that Canada got started at the peak of the influence of a certain reading of René Descartes.”⁵⁶ “On this reading,” Armour explains, “all experience seemed to be essentially private. I have my experience and you have yours.... We do not, on that view, live *at all* in a world of shared experience but in a world in which each of us must infer the existence of others. Added to this essential loneliness (the root of much subjectivism in art, poetry, and prose) was the literal isolation of man in a hostile environment.”⁵⁷

While the very concept of experience implies some degree of interiority, privacy depends on one’s willingness to express what one is experiencing, so privacy does not necessarily follow from the fact “isolation,” certainly not in our era of social media and widespread exhibitionism. That experience is in part inward does not deny its social dimension: our experience is often shared, although obviously culture, history, and politics encourage it as they inhibit any sense of what can be “shared.” And just as obviously, the “environment” – nature – can be “hostile” while also being “fragile” and worthy of our “respect,” those last two terms from Armour himself when he notes that: “There was therefore always an effort to combat this ‘Cartesianism’ and nowhere was this effort more consistent than in Canada,” as “Canadian philosophers perceived nature not as hostile but as fragile and to be treated with respect.”⁵⁸ “Nature,” he continues, “was neither that plastic creature of the American sunshine to be done with as one pleases nor the virginal beauty of the European Romantics. It was there. It responded. It demanded respect. It could never be conquered, but neither could it conquer.”⁵⁹

Besides being sunk into ourselves – what Armour is calling “Cartesianism” – Canadians are apparently pulled in four directions, to Great Britain and France most prominently (the two solitudes), but also to America and by Canada’s own internal complexity. Armour puts it this way: “The reasons why our own background has not emerged fully into the Canadian consciousness include the sheer magnitude of the country, our internal cultural plurality and the pull of external cultures.”⁶⁰ As does the contemporary YouTuber J.J. McCullough,⁶¹ Armour appreciates that Canadians are not, finally, all that different from Americans; he suspects that “our taste for American television is surely predicated on the fact that we already accept American culture.”⁶² About the influence of France, he writes:

French-Canadians do not automatically accept French institutions as valid though, as the power of the church has waned. French institutions have probably become more attractive to some. Québécois have not modelled their universities on those of France (but are they not also becoming rather American?) and their church has been their own. Their economic institutions are often identical with those of English Canada, and when they are not, they are more American than French.⁶³

Recall that Armour is writing before the close call of 1995, when Québec came close to leaving Canada.⁶⁴

Armour then turns to Jean Charbonneau - a philosopher, poet, playwright and “sophisticated man of letters” – who suggested (as apparently had François-Xavier Garneau) that “French Canada is really the natural continuation of the civilization that had its beginnings in the Roman Empire,” an Empire that had “transformed by Christianity” and over time had evolved into a “community of mutual responsibility,” a community that “elsewhere sundered by the individualism of the Enlightenment and by what he saw as decadence in French thought in the later part of the nineteenth century.”⁶⁵ In Québec, Charbonneau concluded that a “sounder society [had] endured.”⁶⁶

Armour tells us that Charbonneau leaned toward Stoicism and pantheism, regarding the “dominance” of the Catholic Church in Québec as “only a phase,” a conclusion the Church had “attacked.”⁶⁷ As for Marx, for Charbonneau, too, a “theory of history” was “essential,” something that in Québec the “swirl” of contemporary cultures and the “divorce” of curriculum from the “classics,” had undermined.⁶⁸ What proves true for Québec proves true for Canada, Armour implies, as Canadians are a “people with an outlook of its own, significantly alienated from the institutions validated by other cultures.”⁶⁹ Canada’s “regionalism” – here Armour recalls Northrop Frye’s wry remark – “may even be a sign of maturity.” Frye suggested, Armour recalls, “that cultural fragmentation may be a response – even an intelligent one – to the unification imposed by technology,”⁷⁰ that “unification” I have recently characterized as software’s subtle even inadvertent installation of a “supra-national state.”⁷¹

Unification occurs as well due to capitalism, as “to have mass production one must have mass consumption; to have mass consumption one must create a common pattern of demand.”⁷² Somehow such standardization – common patterns of demand and consumption – separates us from each other, so that “ego-centrism is on the march, and that the social bonds are creaking,”⁷³ what Christopher Lasch termed a culture of narcissism.⁷⁴ Armour notes that while “modern technology perforce unites behaviour in the literal sense that it compels hundreds of millions of men in many different parts of the world to go through the same motions, it also tends to deprive these same actions of many dimensions of meaning,” prompting a “search for meaning which is very likely in capitalist society to be turned inward.”⁷⁵ But, he continues, such inwardness is “notoriously subjective and this is surely, itself, one of the causes of the fragmentation of culture and thus of the crisis of community.”⁷⁶ He is skeptical such an inward turn constitutes, “maturity,”⁷⁷ while for me it is one prerequisite to such maturity.

Next Armour attempts to trace these issues – and specifically the question for meaning – through the centuries, for me a high-risk if not questionable enterprise, but no others have attempted when mapping human history into three periods: pre-modernity, modernity, and post-modernity. In what some might term pre-modern, for Armour a period characterized by an otherworldly or religious *Zeitgeist*, human beings “could, for the most part, find meaning in his daily task and a significance for his life

in a scheme of cosmic proportions.”⁷⁸ His sweeping summary proceeds as he invokes an eighteenth-century concept⁷⁹ – ideology – to depict medieval life, writing: “By and large the ideology was powerful enough to keep the difficulties within bounds, and the thirteenth century saw one of the great burgeoning of human civilization. Its breakdown was healed by a more individualistic ideology accompanied by the plague, famine, rapid technological change, and the creation of circumstances which were increasingly depersonalized.”⁸⁰ About this “medieval ideology,” Armour tells us that it “depended upon a world in which nearly every event and object in life could be seen to have a religious as well as secular significance. But one cannot have toasters in the form of a crucifix; no art can transform a vacuum cleaner into an object which points to a transcendent world.”⁸¹ Ideology decidedly comes into play in modernity, and specifically due to the advent of industrialization and its critics, especially Karl Marx, although in the sentences that follow Marx’s name does not appear. “The creation of the modern world,” Armour tells us, “had to bring with it the creation of at least a large number of modern men – men who could, like nuts and bolts, be interchanged with each other and who had been trained to precise and high standards, much as good tools are machined.”⁸² “Indeed,” he continues, “it was the creation of standard men – men trained for specific pre-determined tasks and trained in adequate numbers to provide at least some slight surplus – that led to the situation which now confronts us most brutally: men in competition.”⁸³

Armour would appear to affirm what is seen as an Indigenous view of time – as seasonal and cyclical⁸⁴ – when he suggests that the manufacture of “standard men for standard tasks and the resultant competition did more than anything else to orient time from a dominantly (but not wholly) cyclical notion to a linear notion which has plagued us ever since.”⁸⁵ Such a sense of linearity supported what became what Armour terms the doctrine of Progress⁸⁶ which at first “seemed natural enough,” but over time “it has gradually emerged that we are not necessarily going anywhere.”⁸⁷ That History has lost its narrative – not necessarily what Jean-François Lyotard termed master narrative or metanarrative⁸⁸ but any narrative at all (so that the “long-range future [is] seen as an endless set of meaningless events”) – combines with a fast-passed present experienced as “endless stimulation” to make “too many ... numbed” and without “interest.”⁸⁹ Again echoing Christopher Lasch,⁹⁰ Armour adds that “as the outside world becomes increasingly empty and meaningless, meanings tend to become internalized,” and “culture, as the pattern of meanings, becomes increasingly unstructured.”⁹¹ Still echoing Lasch, Armour worries that “art, literature, and music are apt to become amusements which do little more than distract because they are not closely tied to any external reality,” and so they “become progressively empty.”⁹² He suggests an “internalized culture also fragments very easily – there is nothing to hold it.... We shall have to look not internally but ‘out there’ for a theory to understand, and a method to resolve, our crises of community.”⁹³ Lasch provides both.

Not to Lasch but to Hegel Armour turns next, specifically Hegel's "concern about politics and the human condition," a concern that "arose directly out of the aftermath of the French Revolution," a revolution Hegel had at first "supported," as it was a "widespread popular uprising directed against arbitrary authority and devoted to individual integrity, the brotherhood of man, and the hope of equality."⁹⁴ In contrast, the "American Revolution had drawn its support largely from merchants, manufacturers and landowners who wanted the rights and privileges already accorded to their counterparts in England."⁹⁵ But the French Revolution "aimed to go further and to establish a society based on reason and dedicated to justice," a utopianism that became a Reign of Terror⁹⁶ followed by Napoleon who declared himself Emperor of France,⁹⁷ surely a worse result than the American devotion to commerce and property - at least for those who were not Indigenous. And over the long-term the French version of revolution had also resulted in an "unquestioned acceptance of the power of a bourgeois devoted to trade and manufacture," acknowledging the "principle that wealth should be distributed to the winners of certain competitions - some in the business world, others ... state-controlled public education."⁹⁸ "In one way or another," Armour also admits, "the greater part of the population was still denied the conditions for success in those competitions."⁹⁹

Armour again returns to Hegel, who had also wondered "why" the French Revolution had turned into the Terror, then to autocracy, capitalism and colonialism; why had "sustained cooperative activity [proved] apparently impossible?"¹⁰⁰ To answer his question, Hegel returned to the "roots" of "Western civilization," arguing that (in Armour's words) "we carry the history of our civilization with us - each of us has a structure to his consciousness which reflects the experience through which men have painfully reached their present state of awareness," a structure that is "largely unconscious."¹⁰¹ For Hegel, Armour continues, this "structure of consciousness" is "reflected in all forms of social organization," what Hegel termed "objective spirit" reflected in the "social order," including in "the order one finds in the army, in the bureaucracy, in the church."¹⁰² More "recent philosophers" - Armour makes no reference here but perhaps he has poststructuralists in mind - have theorized that these structures of thought are built into language,¹⁰³ but - Armour reports - "Hegel realized that if language were *all* that were at issue we could surely overcome the problems quite easily."¹⁰⁴

Despite this "structure of consciousness" being "largely unconscious," Hegel is emphasizing far (in Armour's account at least) only the "social order," not the human subject who has consciousness. Armour makes it seem - I do not know otherwise - that Hegel conceded that "there *is* an 'inward' or 'mental' side to these structures of thought, but it too is, in Hegel's view, substantially influenced by the institutions of the public world."¹⁰⁵ Despite the reversal - earlier in his account structures of consciousness were reflected by the social order, but now the social order is structuring consciousness (surely there is reciprocity) - Armour returns to the human subject as

the source, suggesting that “language does reflect something of the underlying ways of thought,” although these “organizing ideas,” while “expressed through language” are never exhausted by it,” adding that “the poet can always wrench something new from it – and in so doing reveals a little more of its structure.”¹⁰⁶ Armour is a philosopher not a poet so he proceeds to “wrench something new” from “underlying ways of thought” by a (maybe an excessively) sweeping summary of the history of the West.

You will recall his earlier patronizing - or was it meant to be amusing? - invocation of Rawls. Now Armour conducts a Rawlsian¹⁰⁷ thought experiment – “let us imagine a society” – that I will only reference, recommending that you return to Armour’s original text.¹⁰⁸ From that he moves to Plato, the “ancient Greeks” and “their Oriental neighbours,”¹⁰⁹ focusing on the idea of “freedom,”¹¹⁰ all in the interest of “trying to find out where the sickness of the civilization of the West set in,” suggesting that “our great achievements have been loosely related to our great weaknesses.”¹¹¹ From Athens Armour moves – you guessed correctly! – to Rome, which represented the “first step toward a notion of freedom under which one man’s freedom is not attained at the expense of another’s.”¹¹² Moving at warp speed, we’re back to Hegel and his “contention – often thought paradoxical – that law so conceived is not the restriction of real freedom but, ultimately, its source,”¹¹³ adding that: “Such a system would work if it were really true that what reasonable men feely want would create cooperation and not conflict.”¹¹⁴ The genesis of “this larger notion of reason” he associates with “Roman law,” importantly dependent “on *rules* and not merely the edicts of *rulers*.”¹¹⁵

Armour also attributes to Rome’s “notions of tolerance,” suggesting that “one could do whatever was not prohibited by the rules (as opposed to whatever was not opposed by the ruling faction), and this led to the toleration of a variety of cultures, itself a major factor in the success of the Roman system of government.”¹¹⁶ (There was less tolerance, however, for those without tolerance, as in the case of “conflict first with the Jews and then with the Christians,” as “Jews and Christian alike refused the normal conditions of tolerance in the Roman world, which began with a recognition (if only symbolically) of one another’s gods.”¹¹⁷) This regime of tolerance was less a matter of ideals and more one of exigency, or so Armour implies when he explains that the “Romans were building an empire within which diverse peoples had somehow to be accommodated,” and so not only tolerance but a conception of “citizenship” had to be devised “which would hold within the empire but which could be obtained according to rules rather than according to birth.”¹¹⁸ While such a “system can provide an organization capable of uniting large bodies of men of different persuasions and cultures, particularly when there is some crisis to be faced,”¹¹⁹ “in trying to be universal, the empire necessarily lost its close associations with the ideals of its original culture and ultimately provided no content, no concrete goals, no common ends.”¹²⁰ Armour is talking about Rome here – and earlier about ancient Athens – but the association let’s say (as analogy seems too strong) with Canada seems clear: tolerance (except of

intolerance), multiculturalism, rule of law, no “empire” perhaps but a microcosm of one within its borders, occupied by First Nations, the Québec nation, strong regionalism, and – recall how Armour started his short book – a crisis of community, one without “content” or “common ends.”

Next Armour returns to his “go-to-guy” – yes, Hegel – reporting that Hegel’s view was that the “Roman empire gave way to the Christian world of the Middle Ages because Christianity provided content to what had been a rather empty and abstract system,” quoting Hegel’s characterization of Rome as showing a “sterile spirit of Rome,” and that due to its spiritual sterility – rather than political polarization,¹²¹ corruption,¹²² and invasion¹²³ - he suggests that the “Roman system defeated itself.”¹²⁴ Staying with sterility of spirit idea, Armour tells us that the “Church took the Roman idea of law and established its canon law – a law which embodied a concrete and unified set of goals,” thereby giving “shape, meaning and content to the abstract law.”¹²⁵ Having slowed down slightly, now Armour returns to warp speed, at first noting Hegel’s characterization of the Christian appropriation of Roman law as “externalizing of the Christian ideal,” a “process” to which Hegel attributes the “corruption of the Church before the Reformation,” as “once the system is formalized, one is bound by rules, not conscience.”¹²⁶ “If one can foster one’s self-advantage within the rules,” Armour continues, “one may feel no compunction against doing so,” and so over centuries the “unity of Christendom finally broke down,” and Europe, “politically and religiously fragmented,” incrementally, often violently, “emerged as the modern states we still have with us.”¹²⁷

Armour allows that “Hegel’s explanation has power, but it is interesting for us to notice that some of his analysis is invalidated by our own experience in Canada,” and, I would add, not only by Canada.¹²⁸ In Canada, he suggests, “there are still societies which seek to guard their tribal unity,”¹²⁹ a reference apparently not to the First Peoples but to “immigrants from Eastern Europe,” whom he distinguishes from the “industrialized individualism of many American immigrants to Alberta in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century,” but “their nature is not readily explicable by Hegel’s analysis.”¹³⁰ Armour considers the Canadian “position” as “special just because, in addition to the indigenous peoples, we began with groups which to some degree evaded the transformations of mind that paved the way in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe for the final triumph of capitalism in the nineteenth century,”¹³¹ colonialism apparently not one of those.

Next up is Marx who, Armour reminds, “followed Hegel in distinguishing two sorts of ‘alienation,’ one natural and one not at all natural,” the first following the “fact that one must act in order to find oneself – a departure from oneself,” although upon “reflection,” of course “one can fit the new to the old and retain one’s view of oneself as a coherent, ongoing person.”¹³² The second form of “alienation occurs ... when what one does seem to have no connection with oneself,” when “most of one’s working life is spent producing articles with which one cannot identify oneself and if

much of the rest of one's life is passive, one may become an empty cipher."¹³³ This alienation was not specific to the nineteenth-century Europe about which Marx was writing; Armour quips: "There really is a large population which goes home at night and fills its emptiness with American television and Canadian beer."¹³⁴ Almost anticipating the "new place of subjectivity"¹³⁵ in the humanities, Armour concludes that the "possibility of effective [I'd say civic and not necessarily "effective"] cooperative action is frustrated by the fact that capitalism tends to deprive people of effective identities and the simple will power to undertake action."¹³⁶ And then there's Québec where, Armour suggests, "never having been effectively transformed by the industrial revolution," there is held "older and more profound notions of community," reflected, he seems to imply, in the Parti Québécois, which "has provided more humane and effective government than has been in Canada for some time."¹³⁷ Thus the "conflicts in Canada are not *just* those of the class war."¹³⁸

Returning to the "new place of subjectivity" – which may not be so new¹³⁹ – Armour links Hegel and Marx again, concluding that the two "struck deeply at the Enlightenment notion that we can reform the world by reason alone, and opened up the idea of the unconscious – a notion which derives largely from the German philosopher Leibniz in the seventeenth century, and from Immanuel Kant's successor Johann Fredrich Herbart, who was born at the end of the eighteenth century," adding: "Sigmund Freud, however, gave the unconscious even harder work to do."¹⁴⁰ Summarizing, Armour writes that: "Freud, like Spinoza, thought that one had more or less to come to terms with one's inner life and that the turmoil of the world could not really be brought to an end except, perhaps, in so far as individuals could be helped to understand their own unconscious minds,"¹⁴¹ registering an urgency Freud must have found horrifyingly affirmed in the *Anschluss*.¹⁴² The violence of the Nazis Freud discerned as embedded in the nature of humanity: "Freud thought that the passage from tribalism to individuality was a violent one, probably a good deal more dramatic than anything Hegel or Marx thought of," as the "emergence of the individual and the breakdown of the paternal authority is a kind of murder, symbolic or real," defining the "demand to be free in that sense is a demand to dominate."¹⁴³ "If Freud is right," Armour cautions, "we must expect that a technological society like ours with the power to destroy everyone will, in due course, succeed in doing so."¹⁴⁴ He concludes: "If reason cannot encompass the experiences which sustain it, the transcendent may be more dangerous than the atomic bomb."¹⁴⁵

"Canada," Armour continues, constitutes a "curious kind of time machine: we can travel across our country and find societies belonging to various phases of Western civilization together with indigenous societies which belong to wholly different time frames," meaning (among other things) that "we have in Canada preserved certain features of human history which were largely obliterated in European."¹⁴⁶ "If history is carried around in the structures of our experience," he notes, "we may have more of it than our European ancestors."¹⁴⁷ Such pre- or early-modern structures may remain as

a Canadian “commitment to an organic society,” but such “commitment” would seem to have been corroded by the present “individualistic age,” conscious that a “specifically Canadian pluralism exists,” but pluralism that “has led to weak and divided commitments to our institutions.”¹⁴⁸

Armour then focuses on “individualism,” noting that the concept can ignore that even “personality is itself a relational notion.”¹⁴⁹ The very concept – of individualism that is – “would not be intelligible, except in a world where people felt themselves very distinct and very different from everyone else,”¹⁵⁰ for “individuality comes about through social differentiation,” the latter concept/phenomenon dependent upon some sense of continuing social cohesion because “societies are networks within which individuality can appear.”¹⁵¹ Armour slides from concept to concept – society, individualism, then community – “for it is here [community] that one meets the situation within which one can express oneself.”¹⁵² But on the idea – and the fact – of Canada, Armour draws a line: “In Canada, although the capitalist economic system came to us, the individualist ideology did not – at least not wholly,” meaning that “what we continued to generate, at least in part, was the ideology of the organic society,” doing so, he adds, “in the context of two languages, two sets of institutions, two of almost everything,”¹⁵³ a number today he would, no doubt, increase to three.¹⁵⁴

“In the beginning,” Armour imagines, “there was the kind of hope which accompanied the development of the New World – the hope that man would discover his true relation to nature,”¹⁵⁵ as if the Americas were “new,” even to the Europeans, considering that Vikings may have visited centuries before – and the Polynesians centuries even earlier.¹⁵⁶ Among the first professional philosophers in Canada – Thomas McCulloch – imagined a “rural idyll in which sensible men would devote themselves to a suitable mixture of hard work, Bible reading, and tough philosophical thinking,” registering this fantasy in a “series of imaginary reports on rural Nova Scotia which he called the *Stepsure Letters* – a chronicle of the folly of those who seek to avoid hard work and get rich by trade, or to replace the sound and reasoned religion with the latest revelations from New York or Glasgow.”¹⁵⁷ McCulloch’s idea, Armour summarizes, is that “there is a proper relation between man and of the land,” one that could be cultivated in “a small community, as close to self-sufficient as possible in everything but ideas.”¹⁵⁸ Armour suggests that McCulloch’s fantasy of a “rural idyll exactly parallels a concern which one finds very frequently amongst Francophone philosophers in Québec,” reiterated in 1917 by Louis-Adolphe Paquet in an essay written for the three hundredth anniversary of the arrival in Québec of Louis Hébert, the first settler, entitled “La Terre Canadienne.”¹⁵⁹ In the writings of Paquet and others, Armour continues, there is a characterization of the human being as “situated between the angels and the animals,” thereby incurring a “duty to stay close to nature.”¹⁶⁰ William Lyall¹⁶¹ though “that our strongest clue to the nature of reality is in the emotion

of love,” an emotion that “transcends personal interest” and thereby “leads us to the idea of God” and “community.”¹⁶² For Lyall, the state is a “necessary evil.”¹⁶³

Armour then turns to Jacob Gould Schurman, the “first major figure in Canadian philosophy to be born in Canada,” born before the union of Lower and Upper Canada, living until the middle of the Second World War, a time during which the “idea of nationality had become both difficult and important.”¹⁶⁴ For Schurman, Armour reports, “social theory is a matter of understanding the combination of a social process which is essentially evolutionary, and of moral insights which transcend the immediacies of history,” and the “failure to grasp either is ultimately fatal,” as “every social problem has a moral element as well.”¹⁶⁵ (In addition to misrepresenting Darwin, the Social Darwinists also misrepresented time, conflating it with “progress.”¹⁶⁶) In 1889, Schurman published an article in *The Forum* an article entitled “The Manifest Destiny of Canada” in which he postulated the capacity of Canada to “unify disparate populations with a constitution which he saw as significantly more flexible than its American counterpart.”¹⁶⁷ He wrote “feelingly of the continuity of Canadian history with that of Western civilization and (oddly) of our stimulating climate” while countering “American proposals for the incorporation of Canada into the United States.”¹⁶⁸ No “necessary evil” (as for Lyall), the state could, Schurman hypothesized, function as a “conciliator,” but “less convinced, in general, that it *itself* could embody moral principles.”¹⁶⁹ That idea – that the state might not “embody moral principles” but could nonetheless mediate between conflicting parties – derives (in Armour’s analysis) from “Schurman’s background as a man of Dutch descent in PEI, as a Baptist who studied and taught at Acadia University in a time when higher education itself was thought to be considered mainly with the inculcation of right principles of action.”¹⁷⁰ Conciliation, with its implication of not only mediation but healing, implies a moral grounding, also implicit in the concept of reconciliation, so prominent in curriculum studies in Canada today.¹⁷¹

Armour finds parallels between Schurman’s “wrestling with nationalism” and the work of Louis Lachance, one of which is the same “tension” between ideas of a universal “moral order” and the particularities of the “social order,” a tension that animates Lachance’s *Nationalisme et religion*.¹⁷² Lachance concludes (in Armour’s words) that only the “nation state” can “bind” people “together,” if in “constant adjustment” between civic “virtues” and universal “moral demands,”¹⁷³ reconciliation of another kind. While their lives overlapped by forty years or so, Armour considers it “unlikely” that Lachance and Schurman ever met, but – we read a rare moment of Armour’s sense of humor – “the events of the time rendered the closed compartments of their two solitudes a little leaky.”¹⁷⁴ So the state is (again) no necessary evil (as Lyall had suggested), but it does do the heavy lifting: mediating between conflicts for Schurman, uniting the country for Lachance, reconciling moral universality with social particularity. The state is a set of laws, precedents and procedures which, like the curriculum conceived as content (even as objectives and outcomes) becomes enacted

through the persons authorized to do so, so it is odd to read that Armour thinks it “interesting” that in Canada the “political surface has rarely been decisive,” that, as quoted earlier, he considers “our politicians” have rarely been taken “seriously.” Is that because they inevitably disappoint? How can the state even function if those elected and appointed to reconcile differences and unite the people are not taken seriously by those they are reconciling and/or uniting?

If it’s not politicians or even (by implication) the government that unites, what does? Not shared culture – think of my comment about the three (not two) solitudes; add new immigrants and refugees and that’s five – as Armour admits: “Despite our pious pretensions, we did not establish a society which could accommodate Louis Riel, many of the indigenous societies, or the special communalism of the Doukhobors.”¹⁷⁵ Still, Armour still seems to think something is shared, even if “what we have in common cannot be expressed through a single community.”¹⁷⁶ Is that the crisis of community Armour names at the outset? History not pluralism seems to be at issue, as Armour reminds that “our existing political institutions are borrowed,” in 1867 mixing “our essentially British political forms with a compromise between them and American federalism,”¹⁷⁷ a “process” that “provided fairly well for individual rights” but not so well “for group rights.”¹⁷⁸ Because Canada is “composed of real communities within which the important life goes on,” those “vestigial group rights” (concerning language in the federal Québec legislatures and denominational schools) that were named in the British North America Act have “proved too feeble even to guarantee that one of the local school systems in Ottawa should remain Francophone as well as Catholic.”¹⁷⁹

“With communitarianism and pluralism,” Armour suggests, “goes a third set of fundamental ideas which cluster around our sense of history,” a sense he associates with conceiving of “communities as natural phenomena within which individuals develop, rather than as simple creations of ready-made individuals,” a contrast from which he concludes that “one must be interested in history.”¹⁸⁰ “Less obviously but equally importantly,” he continues, “pluralism and an interest in history go together,” as a “simple slice of the present will not distinguish between momentary groupings and those which are deeply woven into our national life.”¹⁸¹ Contradicting that contrast are the examples he provides: “West of Thunder Bay and north of the Lakes, Canada is the creation of technology,”¹⁸² namely the “railway,” technology that determined the direction of prairie settlement, the industrialization of central Canada, “even the form of religion,”¹⁸³ a rather sweeping attribution of demographics, economics and religion to one mode of transportation. Pausing over the first, the cause of conflict that reverberates still: “Our know-how created a technology which forced settlement patterns certain to bring about a final clash with the followers of Louis Riel, but offered nothing by which to settle such a dispute,” and the “resultant tragedy” lingers on in French Canada, specifically over what is regarded as the “runaway technological civilization of English Canada.”¹⁸⁴

Still traveling a warp speed, Armour tells us World War II “turned Europeans inward in search of new understandings,”¹⁸⁵ although my own reflection on inwardness is focused on an Austrian writer – Robert Musil – who died in 1942.¹⁸⁶ Then he turns to “American thought” which “ran to behaviourism” as well as “logical analysis,” in contrast to “European thought” – a phrase reminiscent of Battiste’s reductionism (EK)¹⁸⁷ – went “increasingly to phenomenology, existential, and to programs which emphasize the inner life and the increase of understanding.”¹⁸⁸ Not sure why Armour would say “Canadians had been more directly exposed to the impact of technology on history,”¹⁸⁹ as all industrialized countries have for two centuries been so “exposed,” and surely Germany and Japan during World War II were “directly exposed to the impact of technology on history.”¹⁹⁰ His more important point, at least the one tied to his earlier over-generalizations, is: “We tended not to feel the immediate postwar euphoria or the subsequent paranoia which gripped Americans when they found that they had not really chosen their part and could not write the next act. Equally, however, we lacked the tradition which allowed Europeans to turn inward.”¹⁹¹ The “result,” he continues, “seems to have been a kind of passivity,” as English and French Canada drifted into new forms of an old collision,¹⁹² the collision with the Indigenous evidently not yet preoccupying in English or French Canada at the time of Armour’s writing.

Collision, or at least conflict, is on Armour’s mind, however, and he tells us that “philosophy has flourished in Canada because we have constantly had to reconcile conflicting institutions – partly in our own affairs and partly between them and those of the cultures which have surrounded us.”¹⁹³ Certainly the Indigenous came to feel “surrounded” - by settlers. Both settlers and the Indigenous peoples felt the power and enormity of the natural world, as did the Toronto-based philosopher George Blewett - to Armour’s mind “perhaps our most distinguished native-born philosopher” – who was focused on the “Canadian relation to nature, emphasizing the fragility of the natural environment and its essential independence of us.”¹⁹⁴ What evolved – not just from Blewett but from struggling to survive – Margaret Atwood’s (in)famous one-word depiction of what animates Canadian literature – was a “Canadian worldview that emphasizes community, reason, and our collective relation to nature,” that in contrast to an “alternative view” – surely he means “the” American one – “which sees men as individual, experience and immediate and independent of reason, and nature as something mainly to be used requires a different view of knowledge.”¹⁹⁵ Both Canadian Hegelians – dominant in English Canada - and Thomists – dominant in French Canada – conceived of knowledge as a belonging to “community, transmitted by tradition and institutions and shreds through the community.”¹⁹⁶

But “history”, Armour acknowledges, “put pressure on Hegelians and Thomists alike,” here referencing those who survived the First World War, a “disillusioned generation” who concluded “community has failed,” setting off, then, on a “march toward unreason,” one that “cut more quickly into the Hegelian tradition than into the

Thomist tradition in French Canada.”¹⁹⁷ The Hegelians seemed stymied, producing “no new all-embracing systems and became guardians of a doctrine which seemed harder and harder to express clearly as time went on.”¹⁹⁸ But what Armour terms as the “Canadian crisis of knowledge”¹⁹⁹ evidently had less to do with “unreason” than with the acceleration of science which “both needs history and renders it dubious as a discipline.”²⁰⁰ In science’s practical applications, specifically “technology” which, “in our lack of understanding²⁰¹ we are apt to become the victims and not the masters,”²⁰² a prescient prediction given the rise of Artificial Intelligence and warnings by even those whose research made its present prominence possible, among them the Canadian Gregory Hinton.²⁰³ From prescience to predicament, Armour the philosopher seems to lament his profession’s positioning, as “I do not know what we should now call theoreticians of the human condition but since then many of our most distinguished ones – George Grant, Northrop Frye, Donald Creighton, Marshall McLuhan and recently Dennis Lee – have been found outside philosophy departments, most of them for the whole of their academic careers.”²⁰⁴

Armour returns to the task at hand – the idea of Canada and the country’s crisis of community – by reminding us that there are “three well-known theories about the state.”²⁰⁵ The one which “we inherit from the Greeks from whom we get the word politics, the state is a mystical union of man and place.”²⁰⁶ A second “comes from Hegel and the modern effort to rebuild the social bonds,” a conception of the state as the “source of the ultimate solution to our identity crisis: it is the unity of subject and object and of man and man.”²⁰⁷ In the third (from “Aristotle by way of the medieval philosophers”), the state is an institution, an institution which coordinates the others.”²⁰⁸ Not thinking of Indigenous conceptions Armour asserts that “in Canada, that the mystical union of man and place is not to be had,” mistakenly concluding: “If any place stands irrevocably tied to a given culture, it lies outside the bounds of multicultural Canada.”²⁰⁹ Then he almost contradicts that assertion: “We know that the human possibilities cannot all be expressed through a single culture,” and so “we have always opted ... to preserve several cultures,”²¹⁰ again evidently aware that preservations of Indigenous cultures is something historically “we” – those Europeans who moved to what are now the Americas – did not do. “Pluralism we have and shall have – or we shall have nothing,” he concludes.²¹¹

Returning to the nature of the nation state, and in particular the Canadian state, Armour concludes that pluralism “leaves us with the older idea that the state is what coordinates the other institutions.”²¹² Almost anticipating Canada as a multinational state,²¹³ Armour acknowledges that “one nation does not entail a monolithic state,”²¹⁴ a fact that becomes clear when one distinguishes “between the state as coordinator and the state as controller.”²¹⁵ With the former, the “common good, the ideal of justice is not to be found in the political life but in the law,”²¹⁶ an assertion that assumes the law is always just. What if the law is unjust, say when Canada’s Indigenous children were forced to attend residential schools?²¹⁷ So how can moral action always and everywhere

mean to “transcend one’s own interests and act in the interests of all?”²¹⁸ Those questions unconsidered, Armour returns to the “state,” which, he concludes, is “then left to coordinate, to negotiate, to seek agreement,”²¹⁹ with the caveat: “To the extent that institutions are imperfect and that there is an outside world, the state must be structured so as to limit its danger and encourage the community to develop from the bottom up and not from the top down.”²²⁰ From the “bottom up” requires respect for the “right to be heard and the right to know,” what Armour regards as “perhaps the two most fundamental rights in the traditional sense.”²²¹ It’s not immediately obvious to me as these “two most fundamental rights” co-exist with “our duties, our *obligations*, which come *first*,”²²² unless, of course, our duties include speaking (no promise of being heard of course) and being informed, the latter what I conceive as the obligation of study.²²³

“If we are to have communities,” Armour continues, “we must have group rights,”²²⁴ the concept of “group” not designation, say, the First Nations where blood lines, not civic inclusion, rule.²²⁵ Armour makes that clear when he suggests that “anyone is free to change from one group to another.”²²⁶ Moreover, Armour asserts that: “Any community must ultimately insist that such resources be used for the public good,”²²⁷ an unlikely impulse in our era of apparently intensifying political polarization. He proposes that “groups share the resources in proportion to the population of their members,”²²⁸ a proposal Indigenous peoples on occasion ignore by disenrolling members to increase revenue for those allowed to remain (as we saw in endnote #225). Armour reminds that “our philosophers have all warned against cutting loose from history and tradition,” advice Armour himself ignores when he speculates that “somewhere in Canada we shall have to have another major population centre in which people speak French,”²²⁹ and that that “somewhere” might on the Pacific coast.²³⁰ While it remains unlikely that British Columbia will host a French-speaking city, Armour did get right the “need” for a “new constitution,” one that “needs to be rather unlike the one we have now,” but nonetheless “need not represent a break with the past,” leaving Canada “time to evolve.”²³¹

Regarding how much time Canada has, Armour seems not entirely sure, as he thinks that these common principles and shared historical experience are “not enough to make a nation.”²³² “To have a nation,” he thinks, “there must be a tendency toward a common strategy,” and, after a momentary pause, he is persuaded that “there is enough of that,” maybe just enough, as he also concludes that “our economic strategies have been too superficial, [but] our communitarian tendencies are apparent enough.”²³³ “If I am right,” he continues, “the concept of nation is the concept of common outlook and strategy which is reflected in the way in which institutions display themselves.”²³⁴ What apparently imperils Canada is the “tendency to a unified faceless culture based on some form of possessive individualism,” and it is that “which makes our future one which requires a good deal of protecting,”²³⁵ again almost echoing George Grant.²³⁶ The crisis of community with which Armour starts his study is also a crisis of culture,

as “what the community feeds on is the culture,” culture defined as “everything which gives meaning to human actions.”²³⁷ The “part of the culture of which we can *work*,” he adds, “is the part which has to do with the creation of the objects in which we find our own reflections and the part which has to do with the passing on of tradition,” anticipating a preoccupation with the past as materialized in objects that Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht references.²³⁸

Armour doesn’t reference objects in service to reactivating a past interred in an ever-accelerating present. He thinks the “development of a culture depends on the constant iteration of the original process and on the development of the special abilities of some of those within that original structure,” a conviction he illustrates by referencing “our efforts to revive native arts,” adding (ruefully?) “but we have not been so interested in the drawings of Cape Breton coal miners or the verses of British Columbia fishermen.”²³⁹ Canadians, he continues, have had a “long history of ‘people’s art’ – of an art which bears a real relation to the social situation of those whose lives modern technology has transformed.”²⁴⁰

Armour considers philosophy – I’d add curriculum – to be “largely the business of replacing and reconciling conflicting intuitions by appeal to reason, then we need to know a good deal more about those original intuitions than we in fact do if we are going to generate a philosophy [and a curriculum] which is responsible to our needs.”²⁴¹ It follows that it is “not narrow minded to insist that all those who teach in universities, work in our cultural institutions, and take part in our public services, have a thorough knowledge of the Canadian tradition in their own fields,”²⁴² an apparent reference to the Canadianization movement of the previous decade.²⁴³ Somehow this iteration – what I’d term reactivation – of the past can create a “sense of a national culture,” one “capable, I think, both of binding us together and of recognizing the discreteness of our various communities.”²⁴⁴ Apparently not through politics but “through literature and art we can build a world which we can share,” adding that the very “point of the arts, in a sense, is that they enable men to live more than one life – to live some lies directly and some vicariously – and to share one another’s visions.”²⁴⁵ But, Armour adds, “in sharing lives and visions, we do not *become* each other. On the contrary, as I have suggested, we create a context in which we can become distinct, in which genuine individuality is possible.”²⁴⁶ Working alone, together.

Armour’s analysis is an impressive if overly ambitious – at least in the space he allowed himself - effort to articulate the very idea of Canada, an effort with implications for curriculum studies in Canada. One implication concerns the distinction between Canada and the United States. Fundamental to that distinction is Canada’s disinclination, indeed refusal, to join the thirteen colonies to the south in warfare against the mother country, choosing instead to remain a colony, a choice and a status imprinting almost all aspects of Canadian life, although these influences are fading due to the scale of immigration to the country. Newcomers may study but cannot carry psychically the past that Armour, referencing Hegel, considers “largely unconscious.”

English Canada's anti-revolutionary conservatism and Québec's pre-revolutionary settlement - itself obscured by the Quiet Revolution and recent immigration - lay an anti-democratic, at times authoritarian, foundation upon which subsequent generations of Canadians have built a democratic multinational state, one that, Armour argues, is less about control and more about coordination even conciliation, evident in the country's commitment to pluralism and multiculturalism. Both control and coordination seem embedded in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as efforts to redress the injustice, the genocide, of the past is, to no insignificant extent, downloaded onto educational institutions. Those Calls to Action were – are being - heard, including in scholarship, evidenced in, among other fields, curriculum studies in Canada.

So Canada's anti-revolutionary and pre-revolutionary imprinting remain, accented by recent efforts to acknowledge and honour the country's Indigenous pre-history as well as redress the nation's historical – ongoing – erase that pre-history. That is evident in the field's ongoing commitment to pluralism and multiculturalism as well as in effort to conciliate – even reconcile – historical injuries, group identities, regional differences, even the conundrum of cultural incommensurability. Also a dynamic in Canada's distinctiveness is a lingering (and regionally variable) anti-Americanism, historically sedimented but also a contemporary defensiveness even denial of the two country's similarities, a fact evident in the Curriculum Studies in Canada project website - curriculumstudiesincanada.com - where both the field's distinctiveness and its engagements (even intersections) with the U.S. field are featured. I am an American living in the United States, with a life-long history of engagement with both Canada and its curriculum field, including almost two decades of full-time employment by the University of British Columbia. My own ongoing interests in the internalization of history and culture within subjectivity, with that fact's implications for decolonization, subjective and social reconstruction, and for the architecture of gender and race (themselves intertwined) all come into play into this project to chronicle and critique the field I study now. It is a field whose intellectual history and present formation become more intelligible by studying the very idea of the country in which it is grounded.

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ENDNOTES

¹ <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/leslie-armour>

² Pinar 2019b, 46.

³ Armour 1981, ix.

⁴ As Armour acknowledges: 1981, 6.

⁵ 1981, ix.

⁶ Pinar, 2019b, 6.

⁷ 1981, ix.

⁸ I read Armour’s book during the COVID-19 crisis when social distancing was not only consequence of the technologization of social relations but also a mandating strategy for ending the pandemic.

⁹ 1981, ix.

¹⁰ 1981, x.

¹¹ Ibid. Armour is writing before Canada becomes a multinational state: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3232879>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Armour 1981, x-xi.

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- ¹⁵ 1981, xi.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ 1981, xiii.
- ¹⁹ 1981, xiii.
- ²⁰ 1981, xiii. No need to discard the biological metaphor, it seems to me, as it breathes life into the mechanistic metaphor his definition risks.
- ²¹ Wang 2021.
- ²² Armour (1981, xiv) would seem to disagree: “But, it is as well to remember that, if one seeks the space between Rawls and Marx, the space between the liberal individualist and the systematic collectivist, the received categories will not make much sense.”
- ²³ 1981, xiii-xiv.
- ²⁴ 1981, xiv. Is that not a “single ideology,” albeit an expansive one?
- ²⁵ 1981, 5.
- ²⁶ 1981, 5. Obviously today’s Liberal, New Democratic, and Conservative parties represent more complex coalitions than these phrases suggest.
- ²⁷ 1981, 6. Especially after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission - <https://rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525> - that “crisis” has been “out in the open.” Armour is writing at a much earlier moment, one before the scandal of residential schools was widely acknowledged.
- ²⁸ 1981, 9.
- ²⁹ Ibid. Not yet, and maybe not in time to avert climate catastrophe.
- ³⁰ 1981, 12.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Ibid. “Alberta attracted large numbers of Americans from the Dakotas,” Armour adds, “but they were balanced by migrations from eastern Europe of peoples relatively little touched by the industrial revolution” (1981, 12). “British Columbia from the beginning was more strongly English in outlook,” he notes, “but the movement of Ontarians westward and later substantial movements from the prairies continued to give it some Canadian flavour” (1981, 12).
- ³⁴ 1981, 13.
- ³⁵ 1981, 15. There may be readers who might require reminding that when Armour wrote “men” was a gender-neutral term of inclusion.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ 1981, 16.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ 1981, 17.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² 1981, 17-18.

⁴³ 1981, 18.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ 1981, 20.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ 1981, 20-21.

⁵⁰ 1981, 21.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² See RB#34. See also Ng-A-Fook's concern: RB#35.

⁵³ 1981, 22. Even *The Canadian Encyclopedia* reports: that “*Two Solitudes* ... is a novel whose title has become emblematic of Canada's most troubling legacy: the relations between English and French Canadians” – <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/two-solitudes> – but today even the Québécois would probably not dispute that the “most troubling legacy” is that between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples

⁵⁴ <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/robin-mathews>

⁵⁵ 1981, 23.

⁵⁶ Ibid. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Cartesianism/Malebranche-and-occasionalism>

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Armour is right to put quotation marks around “Cartesianism” as the term is defined and decried variously. See, for Aoki 2005 (1993); Judovitz 1993. As for the alleged absence of the social in Cartesianism, Marshall (1997, 26) quotes Rosi Braidotti: “In the classical theory of subjectivity as illustrated by the Cartesian cogito, the production of meaning is regulated by the relation between those bodies that are defined as capable of action and those which are acted upon. The active-reactive distinction allows for the two ontological categories of Being and non-Being, that is, of the same-as and different-from, whose dialectical relationship upholds a single meaning and system of representation.”

For some, Sternhell (1994, 73) reports, “Cartesianism was also held to be the origin of the idea of ‘infinite progress’.” You see my point: the term is indeed defined variously. I recommend curriculum studies students avoid it – unless they are willing to undertake extensive study of Descartes and his philosophy, including the so-called secondary literature.

⁵⁹ Ibid. A “middle” perspective may have been shared by philosophers in Canada, but the country has hardly been free from exploiting its vast natural resources: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/resource-use>

⁶⁰ 1981, 23.

⁶¹ https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=j.j.+mccullough

⁶² 1981, 25.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/Québec-referendum-1995>

⁶⁵ 1981, 25. Transplanted to Puritanism in America (see McKnight 2003, for example), late-nineteenth-century decadentism – apparently not specific to nineteenth-century France: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/cambridge-history-of-french-literature/decadence/B58C66439950A4A24FEAC5DE230E690E> – seemed “progressive” to me. Much of my adult private life has been structured by that juxtaposition.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ 1981, 26.

⁷⁰ 1981, 29.

⁷¹ Pinar 2022.

⁷² 1981, 29.

⁷³ 1981, 31.

⁷⁴ Lasch 1978. Narcissism is one of the three intertwined cultural crises I identify as challenges to considering curriculum as *currere*: Pinar 2023.

⁷⁵ 1981, 31.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Lasch and Armour would have agreed on this point. Certainly, narcissism is child-like (and not in a welcome way); unless one achieves a certain self-understanding, I worry maturity can amount to conformity.

⁷⁸ 1981, 33.

⁷⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ideology-society>

⁸⁰ 1981, 33-34.

⁸¹ 1981, 34.

⁸² 1981, 34-35.

⁸³ 1981, 35. One recalls the now infamous conception of the curriculum as an assembly line, teachers as factory workers, children as raw material to be manufactured into marketable products: Pinar et al., 1995, 95.

⁸⁴ <https://ecologicalprocesses.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s13717-018-0136-6>

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ https://philosophynow.org/issues/141/Does_History_Progress_If_So_To_What

⁸⁷ 1981, 36.

⁸⁸ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781444337839.wbelctv2m003>

⁸⁹ 1981, 36.

⁹⁰ 1978. I rely on Lasch in my contextualization of curriculum theory: Pinar 2019a, 3-4.

⁹¹ 1981, 37.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ 1981, 42.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Reign-of-Terror>

⁹⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Napoleon-I>

⁹⁸ 1981, 42.

⁹⁹ 1981, 42-43.

¹⁰⁰ 1981, 43.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. I confess I had associated that term – the unconscious – with Freud, mistakenly assuming it was, then, a twentieth-century term, one that Armour had projected onto Hegel. Mistaken I was: <https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-philosophy/314/#:~:text=Hegel%20describes%20the%20development%20of%20discursively%20structured%20thought,from%20structured%20habituation%20in%20relation%20to%20other%20subjects>.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ 1981, 43-44. I call this effort to revise reality by characterizing it differently “discursive engineering” (Pinar 2023, 188).

¹⁰⁵ 1981, 44.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. “In Hegel’s view,” Armour adds, “the poet is thus the friend of knowledge and not, as Plato thought, its enemy” (Ibid.).

¹⁰⁷ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/original-position/>

¹⁰⁸ 1981, 44-45.

¹⁰⁹ 1981, 45-46. Apparently, Armour had not read or was unpersuaded by Said’s (1979) critique of the concept.

¹¹⁰ 1981, 46-47.

¹¹¹ 1981, 47.

¹¹² 1981, 49.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ 1981, 50.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. I’m writing this on August 2, 2023, the morning after Donald J. Trump was indicted, this time for his efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 U.S. Presidential election, an instance of the rule of law trumping (sorry) the preferences of rulers.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Armour adds that the “ideas behind the Roman system did not emerge suddenly and were never wholly victorious. They arose out of components of Greek culture and out of the breakdown of Greek civilization” (Ibid.)

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

120 1981, 51.

121 <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/lessons-decline-democracy-from-ruined-roman-republic-180970711/>

122 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1cc2m76>

123 https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/fallofrome_article_01.shtml

124 1981, 51.

125 1981, 52.

126 Ibid.

127 Ibid.

128 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/hegel-bulletin/article/abs/hegel-and-colonialism/61B53799DD191018664EE38446E0915D>

129 1981, 53.

130 Ibid.

131 Ibid.

132 1981, 57.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid.

135 Traverso 2023, 2. Traverso is focused on shifts in historiography, but the subjective turn has occurred in several fields, including education: Pinar 2023, 185-193.

136 1981, 57. Later, Armour (1981, 71) declares that “personal identity *is* problematic.”

137 1981, 59.

138 Ibid.

139 See Seidentop 2014.

140 1981, 61.

141 Ibid.

142 Recall that Freud was forced to flee Vienna after the Nazis took control of Austria: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Anschluss>

143 1981, 61.

144 1981, 62. Probably Armour is thinking of the threat of nuclear annihilation – still a possibility: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-62381425> – and could not have anticipated the threat Artificial Intelligence poses: <https://ideas.ted.com/how-the-gains-we-make-in-ai-could-ultimately-destroy-us/>

145 1981, 68. Is Armour associating here the power of technology with transcendence, the latter term more often reserved for matters spiritual not secular in nature: see Huebner 1999.

146 1981, 69.

147 Ibid. Concerning those “structures of experience,” Armour (1981, 73) “Buried in ideas like [John] Watson’s notion of accumulated human experience is the fundamental concept of culture.” I have always worried that “culture” is a homogenizing concept/phenomenon, but for Watson and perhaps Armour it may make the notion of an “organic society” intelligible.

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- ¹⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁹ 1981, 70.
- ¹⁵⁰ 1981, 71.
- ¹⁵¹ 1981, 73.
- ¹⁵² 1981, 77.
- ¹⁵³ 1981, 79.
- ¹⁵⁴ The “third solitude” today is that of the First Peoples, a fundamental fact did not seem figure in non-Indigenous intellectuals’ analysis until the 1990s when “Aboriginal groups, too, became more politically active” (Fierlbeck 2006, 37).
- ¹⁵⁵ 1981, 93. Of course, North America was “new” to this generation of Europeans, including Samuel de Champlain, the founder of New France who, Fischer (2009, 143-144) tells us, regarded Indigenous Peoples as “fully equal to Europeans in intelligence and judgment, and he was much impressed by their qualities of mind.” But “even as Champlain wrote of the Indians with sympathy and respect, he thought that some of their customs were inferior to the practices of civilized nations,” including religion: while the Indigenous “worshiped one Great Spirit, believed in the immortality of the soul, and had an idea of the Devil,” there were a “people who had never been brought to the truth faith.... But in other ways he regarded them as equal in mind and spirit to Europeans.”
- ¹⁵⁶ <https://www.britannica.com/story/did-the-vikings-discover-america>
- ¹⁵⁷ 1981, 93.
- ¹⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁶⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁶¹ Another early philosopher in Canada: see Armour and Trott 1981, 61.
- ¹⁶² 1981, 94.
- ¹⁶³ 1981, 95.
- ¹⁶⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁶⁵ 1981, 97.
- ¹⁶⁶ Armour 1981, 100. See research brief #103.
- ¹⁶⁷ 1981, 101. “Simple cultural unity,” Schurman concluded, is “neither possible nor necessary” (Armour 1981, 103), anticipating the multiculturalism so prominent decades after his death.
- ¹⁶⁸ Ibid. Despite moving to the United States himself – first a professor of philosophy then President of Cornell University in upstate New York – Schurman perhaps remained “unincorporated” in his new place of residence.
- ¹⁶⁹ 1981, 102.
- ¹⁷⁰ 1981, 105.
- ¹⁷¹ For a review, see Hare 2020.
- ¹⁷² Ibid.
- ¹⁷³ Ibid.

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- 174 Ibid.
- 175 1981, 110. Doukhobors were a sect of Russian dissenters, many of whose descendants live in western Canada. They are known for their radical pacifism which brought them notoriety during the 20th century. Today, their descendants in Canada number approximately 20,000, with one third still active in their culture. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/doukhobors>
- 176 1981, 109/
- 177 1981, 110.
- 178 Ibid.
- 179 Ibid.
- 180 Ibid. Communities, I should think, are neither “natural phenomena” or “simple creations,” but complex combinations of each. And an “interest” in history is required for any serious student of humanity.
- 181 Ibid.
- 182 1981, 111.
- 183 1981, 112.
- 184 1981, 113. Among the Anglo-Canadian critics of “runaway technology” was the great George Grant: Pinar 2023, 123-137.
- 185 Ibid.
- 186 Pinar 2015, 201-213.
- 187 See research brief #6.
- 188 1981, 113.
- 189 Ibid.
- 190 Ibid.
- 191 1981, 113-114.
- 192 1981, 114.
- 193 1981, 117. For a superb review of philosophy in English Canada 1850-1950 see Armour and Trott 1981.
- 194 Ibid.
- 195 Ibid.
- 196 1981, 118.
- 197 Ibid.
- 198 Ibid.
- 199 Ibid.
- 200 1918, 119.
- 201 “The knower has disappeared from the world,” Armour (1981, 121) worries, something ChatGBT and other forms of “generative” Artificial Intelligence might indeed make happen.
- 202 1981, 119.
- 203 Roose (2023, May 31, A1) reported that a group of industry leaders warned on May 30, 2023, that the artificial intelligence technology they were building become

nothing less than an “existential threat to humanity and should be considered a societal risk on a par with pandemic and nuclear wars.” The statement said: “Mitigating the risk of extinction from A.I. should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks, such as pandemics and nuclear war” (quoted in Roose 2023, May 31, A1). The statement was signed by more than 350 executives, researchers, and engineers working in A.I, among them Geoffrey Hinton and Yoshua Bengio, “two of the three researchers who won a Turing Award for their pioneering work on neural networks and often considered ‘godfathers’ of the modern A.I. movement.”

²⁰⁴ 1981, 119.

²⁰⁵ 1981, 125.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. Recall that during the period Armour was writing, “man” was an ungendered generic term referring to humanity.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ 1981, 127.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² 1981, 127.

²¹³ <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/canadian-journal-of-political-science-revue-canadienne-de-science-politique/article/abs/canada-and-the-multinational-state/98A5E9BCF5157CF22003AB63668A4D2C>

²¹⁴ 1981, 128.

²¹⁵ 1981, 129.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ “By 1920 Duncan Campbell Scott, the Deputy Superintendent for the Department of Indian Affairs, amended the Indian Act and made it mandatory for all Indigenous children to attend residential schools. It was illegal for them to attend any other type of school.” <https://settlement.org/ontario/immigration-citizenship/citizenship/first-nations-inuit-and-metis-peoples/what-were-canada-s-residential-schools/#:~:text=By%201920%20Duncan%20Campbell%20Scott%2C%20the%20Deputy%20Superintendent,them%20to%20attend%20any%20other%20type%20of%20school.>

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ 1981, 130.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² 1981, 131.

²²³ Pinar 2023, 35-53.

²²⁴ 1981, 131.

²²⁵ Our home, the place from where I work, rests on the traditional land of the Nooksack People, an Indigenous tribe of about 2,000 people who, starting in the 1800s, fought for federal recognition and rights to the territory that they had long inhabited; today the tribe has trust land and a small reservation, from which it extracts revenue, including from a casino, a convenience store and a gas station, those along with treaty rights to fish salmon along the namesake river that flows out of the Cascade Mountains (Baker 2022, January 3, A12). Living on the ancestral land of the Nooksack, I was struck by the news that 300 members were being “disowned by the tribe, on the losing end of a bitter disenrollment battle that has torn apart families and left dozens of people facing eviction” (Baker 2022, January 3). The tribe even mobilized its own police to force those who had been disenrolled from their tribal homes; tribe leadership had already cut off educational aid, health services, financial stipends, in the process destroying a community where, tribe member Saturnino Javier noted, “the main thing is identity” (quoted in Baker 2022, January 3). Javier added: “Your whole life you think you are Nooksack, and then, bam, they are saying you are not Nooksack” (quoted in Baker 2022, January 3). Baker (2022, January 3, A12) reports that evicted Nooksack members have petitioned the U.S. federal government to intervene. “On the face of it, for sure we want sovereignty,” said Michelle Roberts, another expelled Nooksack member, adding: “But when that sovereignty is used as a tool to bully people and take advantage of the system, to kick them out of their tribe or to take any kind of services or anything away from them, then that’s when it needs to be controlled somehow” (2022, January 3, A12). The U.S. federal government, which funds tribal housing programs, asked the Nooksack leadership to halt the evictions for 30 days to allow the government time to review the situation. “There are extremely concerning allegations of potential Civil Rights Act and Indian Civil Rights Act violations regarding these evictions,” Darryl LaCounte, the director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, wrote in a letter to tribal chairman Ross Cline (quoted in 2022, January 3, A12), a letter Mr. Cline ignored. Baker (2022, January 3, A12) reports that First Nations across the United States have in recent years moved to reduce membership rolls by “scrutinizing family trees and cutting out those deemed to have tenuous or insufficient ties to tribal heritage in an effort to strengthen tribal identity.” Such disenrollment efforts that have only intensified as casinos and other businesses have brought in new revenue. Baker notes that in 2007, the Cherokee Nation stripped tribal citizenship from the descendants of Black people who had been enslaved by the Cherokee because the descendants did not meet “blood” requirements demanded by the tribe’s constitution. That action was then overturned by a U.S. court that ruled that the so-called Cherokee Freedmen must enjoy all the rights of tribal citizens according to an 1866 treaty that had granted citizenship to Cherokee slaves; in 2021 the Cherokee’s own Supreme Court last year rewrote the tribe’s constitution to confer membership rights to their slaves’ descendants (2022, January 3, A12).

²²⁶ 1981, 133.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ 1981, 135.

²³⁰ 1981, 135-136.

²³¹ 1981, 136.

²³² 1981, 137.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ 1981, 139.

²³⁵ Ibid. Notice the use of “possessive individualism,” denoting not individuality or individuation but an almost exclusively economic conception of the social agent: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100124539>

²³⁶ Pinar 2019b, 144ff.

²³⁷ 1981, 140.

²³⁸ Pinar 2023, 21.

²³⁹ 1981, 140.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ 1981, 141.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Cormier 2004.

²⁴⁴ 1981, 141.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ 1981, 142. “Matthew Arnold,” Armour (1981, 142) concludes, “rightly thought that the only thing which would break down the class structure in England was a shared culture.... But one must not imagine that such a shared culture needs to be homogenous.”