![UiT The Arctic University of Norway]

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

Freedom of the dialogical self

A critical examination of Charles Taylor's Political Philosophy

Emil Asbøll

Master's thesis in Philosophy…FIL-3900…June 2020

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to provide a critical investigation of Charles Taylor's political philosophy in light of his views on the social dynamics of individual identity. Taylors political contributions are motivated by the recognition that any political ideology that misrepresent human nature is determined to fail in realizing and sustaining its own practical recommendations. His philosophy is formed by the attempt to clarify the distinct nature of human existence and spell out terms that describes the way people act and understand themselves. Without the right ontology of what human beings as persons are, what a society is, or how the relationship between the two must be understood, the politics we advocate for, be it the institutions we think are necessary, valuable or just, will have little practical application or could end up distorting self-understandings.

The distinction between ontological and advocatory levels of political thinking forms the background for his own preferred forms of politics as a criticism of 'procedural' models of liberalism that argue that the fundamental task of government is distribution of rights and resources based on the moral commitment of fair and equal treatment of all citizens regardless of their differences. Proceduralist take this commitment to involve a neutral and indifferent disposition towards the cultural life of citizens and insists on uniform imposition of rights that precludes collective goals or justifications of policy founded on cultural ideas about what constitutes a good life. According to Taylor, these models fail to recognize the political significance that follow from the fact that humans are motivated by a search for meaning and that as individual persons, our identity is continuously formed and shaped by social interactions. What this means is that it is not possible to draw clear-cut distinctions between the cultural life of citizens and the political procedures meant to treat all citizens fair and equally.

Taylor thinks that a liberal-democratic model that excludes considerations of the good life as moral sources for political institutions, a neutral state uninformed by particular values, is not in accordance with how western citizens understand and experience their liberal-democratic arrangements, nor are such models normatively desirable. With the right ontological foundation, Taylor instead promotes a liberal-democratic model meant to enable citizens to understand and appreciate institutions as the product of their culture, history, and aspirations. In this way, legitimacy of the liberal state is not one that solely depends on its instrumental

promises, which stands or falls with its level of legal efficiency, but instead rests on shared understandings amongst citizens that expresses social ideals they in part recognize as extended aspects of their own identity.

Taylors relationship to liberalism is not one that abandons fundamental commitment to universal human rights and civil liberties. The 'communitarian' label attributed to him, as someone who locates moral-political prescripts within communal domains rather than universal norms, overlooks the fact that his criticism of liberal theory is motivated by the aim of providing sustainable conditions for the proliferation of liberal-democracy. These conditions have to include conceptions of personal identity and social forms of self-understanding that are consistent with the idea of a universal core morality we can reason about. His 'communitarian inspired' politics also aims to reinvigorate what he thinks are neglected aspects of the liberal tradition itself. These concern conditions of social cohesion, the value of political participation and the social conditions of freedom. Taylor thinks that terms like freedom, as well as equality and justice, have been distorted by an overtly individualistic understanding of citizens as pure right-bearing atoms detached from one another with their own interests. In consequence, this view reduces the value and understanding of political arrangements as instrumental means towards the realization of individual interests in aggregation but overlooks the fact that some social goods are given meaning because they are irreducibly social.

The classical liberal idea that common goods emerge via the invisible hand of self-centered individual choices neglects common goods that are only valuable because they are mutually pursued and appreciated in common. In this vein, Taylor challenges the notion that individual rights can be reduced to individuals given that upholding liberal values like freedom of speech and association, depend on a culture's self-understanding that affirms the value of liberal rights and democracy as vital aspects of what it means to live a good, purposeful human life. This ought to tell us that often it is unwise to insist on imposing what we think is right into communities that do not have the same moral background that makes ethics intelligible. Liberal democracy is thus not the result of some rational procedure that we as moderns can never loose hold of but is closely aligned with citizens' search for meaning and self-understanding.

As I will show, there is an inherent logic within Taylor's thought about the individuals sense of self, the community of which it belongs to, and how we are able to think about the state, civilian

society, and public domains of deliberation. The aim of this paper is to analyze Taylor's politics in relation to his own views of personal identity and his conception of the dialogical self. While I share Taylor's skepticism of neutral liberalism and agree there's good reason to take account of people's self-understanding when imposing moral decrees, there exists an inconsistent relationship between his political philosophy and his conception of the self. Despite Taylors emphasis on the dialogical nature of individual identity, he goes to great lengths to emphasize how diverse the sources of the self of modern citizens is, which in turn gives great moral authority behind the modern ideal of authenticity, which Taylor understands as the entitlement individuals are owed in order to live an original way of living that is true to their own identity. Taylor's commitment to foster conditions that proliferate this ideal could be undermined if the political institutions he advocates for will stifle the plural sources of the self by imposing fixed views on individual identity, or creating social sentiments that exert conformist pressures that make it difficult for individuals to explore one's inner depth and original sense of being. Just because individuals need public domains to find themselves, it is unclear to what extent the state should play a part in this constitution.

Since no one but the individual can know what represents his identity in its full breath, it follows that the sources of what we consider valuable and good cannot be united by a singular symbol drawn by others. Given Taylor's claim that a liberal-democracy depends on a democratic culture where people share the same understandings of democracy and political identity as a genuinely shared good, and the fact that democracy tends towards implicit shaping of their own citizens to fit the need of social cohesion through common identity, politics might end up forming civil society into modes of living that is untrue to the individual identities within it. That being said, this does not mean that Taylor's understanding of the role identity plays in politics is misguided. As I will show, there is plenty nuance in Taylor's philosophy which shows that many of his critics exaggerate the supposed consequences that follow from his normative recommendations of what citizenship in a pluralistic society can mean.

In order to make this argument I will first lay out the philosophical background that informs Taylor's views on human agency and identity. I will then precede to place Taylor's views in relation to both classical and contemporary liberalism in chapter three and go through central corrections to his thesis on individual identity and social belonging, as well as his depiction of liberal theory in chapter four. In chapter five I will explain how his criticism of contemporary

political theory is an extended aspect of his views on modern morality and the close connection Taylor draws between action-guiding moral theory and an agents identity. From this I will contrast Taylor's views on the role of culture in a liberal democracy with the views of J*ü*rgen Habermas which serves as the final theme in order to discuss the extent to which Taylor's views on culture and identity are inconsistent with his own moral commitments to the ideal of authenticity. In the final section I will introduce a brief discussion of the applicability of Taylors work on how to understand identity questions in political life before I present my concluding remarks.

2. Taylor's philosophical agenda: Invoking culture

Taylor's political philosophy is part of his larger self-described 'philosophical agenda' to counter the influence of 'naturalistic' tendencies in social science and the humanities, by which he means any model inspired by the language and operatives of natural science to understand human beings. Validation of social theory differs from natural science, for the same reason why social science cannot without controversy perform prediction, given that the objects referred to are not constants but variables that change in accordance with human self-understanding. Humanity cannot be understood in objective terms that are independent of the subject's own beliefs and experience since human behavior is only intelligible because humans are creatures that search and attribute meanings to things. In this way, actions are events that express a certain meaning and dissecting social life requires investigation into the significance humans attach to their environment, and how it is established (Taylor 1985, 2-3)

The question of what human nature is, what makes them distinct from other creatures, and how humans should live, finds in Taylor an answer that emphasize human dependence on language, and the crucial role language plays in our ability to define our identity. It is through language that humans think, express itself and interact with others in ways that form their social reality and individual identity. Taylor argues that human beings ought therefore to be viewed as 'self-interpreting' animals. This means that humans have ideas about who they are in ways that constitute what they are. This is because human beings have, and attribute, anthropocentric qualities to the material world, themselves, and others. These are the kind of qualities that the language of objective natural science cannot accommodate since they are subjectively dependent, such as a 'beautiful mountain' or a 'honest person', yet indispensable in an account of human nature and personhood (ibid, 46-50, 234).

Taylor's thesis on human agency and individual identity are closely related. The fact that human beings are agents, beings that can articulate goals and act towards their realization, means not only that we have the capacity to engage in quantitative calculations or means/end reasoning, but also that we have the capacity to engage in 'strong evaluations'. What this means is that, as self-interpreters we see

> "*ourselves against a background of […] distinctions between things which are recognized as of categorical or unconditioned or higher importance of worth*" (ibid, 3).

This aspect of agency is our ability to critically reflect on our own desires in qualitative terms between the higher or lower forms of worth. The qualitative terms we employ to evaluate our own desires as being noble, base, worthy or cowardly and so on, is not something we have de novo, but is given to us through the understandings that tradition and culture have brought forward. Contrary to what 'naturalistic' models are inclined to do, these evaluations cannot be reduced to natural instincts or needs. They are instead expressions of our ability as agents to seek and attribute meaning. Strong evaluations can prompt us to make choices based on what we consider good, admirable, and purposeful, which intimately connects to what kind of person we want to be and identify as.

The process of personal development is situated within cultures that provides concepts for self-understanding and social interactions, whose meaning have been partially articulated by previous generations in ways that reflect both the universal human condition as well as a particular way of life by giving individuals ideas about what distinguishes the honest person from the deceiver, or the brave man from the coward, and a higher form of life from a lower form. The values we express through qualitative distinctions are articulations we use to orient ourselves as persons. The fact that our experience of the world as moral subjects is intersubjectively formed means that our capacity for agency depends on a social background that enable us to articulate what we consider meaningful and valuable. To be a person is to exist in this linguistically constituted space, where questions of what is valuable arise, and where we try to provide answers on what these qualitative distinctions entails, in dialogue with others and in our own meditations. Hence, the distinctions do not denote content but is given to us as frames that we can articulate and reflect upon. The moral progress that has brought forward modern senses of human dignity or respect, has happened through rearticulating of these qualitative terms through different cultural time periods. Thus, an important part of our ability to reflect as strong evaluators will consist of critically examining these articulations and refine them in concert with the goods we think they ought to refer to on the basis of our own experience (ibid, 16-30, 45-55).

2.1 Strong Evaluation and Individual Identity

Taylor's concept of strong evaluation is an extension of Harry Frankfurt's distinction between first- and second order desires. For Frankfurt, the crux of human agency lies in its ability to

relate desires themselves as the objects of a higher desire. Human agents can critically evaluate their actual or lack of motivation by evaluating what they are drawn to. For example, we can have a second-order desire to quit being drawn to vices, or a second-order desire to be in want of goods we currently are not drawn to. From this Taylor posits that there are two forms of second-order desire. Whereas first-order desires are good in themselves, second-order desires are evaluated based on their strategic or moral purpose. Weak evaluations are strategic judgments that concern the relations between our interests without any normative scrutiny of their worth. When we choose a glass of wine over whiskey, the choice reflects a matter of taste without any significant meaning. We might enjoy whiskey as well; we just do not feel like it at that particular time when faced with the choice between the two. As weak-evaluators, we are only concerned with quantitative consistency, but as strong evaluators we are informed that having desires are insufficient for establishing that its normative value, which lead us to reconcile our choices with the values we hold (ibid, 16-20).

Individual identity is intimately connected to strong evaluations. By refraining from acting on motives we consider unworthy and below our character, like revenge or spite, we see that the purpose of our actions is incompatible with who we are as a person. In this instance, the conception we have of ourselves, as a brave, just, or honest person, stems from how we define ourselves. Who we are, and who we want to be, attach to the values that are rendered intelligible through the qualitative contrast between higher and lower forms of being. Taylor claims that when we articulate who we are, we engage in implicit articulation of our life plans. By investigating our own preferences on the basis of higher ideals of what kind of life we consider worthy to live, and what kind of person we want to strive towards becoming, we go beyond merely weighing value-neutral alternatives in the weak sense of evaluation. Therefore, as I will soon explain in detail, morality cannot be narrowed into questions of what is right to do, for then we fail to elevate the strong evaluative aspect of agency which connects to a vision of the good life, and admirable virtues (ibid, 23-25.)

We depend on other's recognition, both intimately, publicly, and legally to define ourselves, and discover who we are by sharing our ideas about the world in mutual receptive relationships. The fact that human life is dialogical tell us that to become an agent in the full sense of understanding and forming one's own identity takes place by listening, speaking, having relationships of friendship and love, and consuming a wide repertoire of art available within

our civilization. These things are the modes of expressions that language in the broad sense refer to. Though we often reflect and refine our opinions in isolation, our reflection stems from social interactions and cultural references. To define your identity always involves some other as an addressed reference, be it friends, family, an author we have never met, or God. Some of these conversations, like with our parents, continue in our own mind even after they have passed away. As singular participants within a web of interlocutress that provide us with a public framework of reference we make use of to articulate our judgments of worth, our moral development picks up on a continuous process of articulations of qualitative distinctions of the good life, where we interpret these ideals through our own understandings (Taylor 1991, 32-34).

The strong evaluations that shape our behavior is intelligible through the cultural background that grounds our judgments. The properties we have in terms of our capacities or social background are only part of our identity in that they represent

> "*membership in a certain class of people whom I see marked off by certain qualities which I value in myself as an agent and which come to me from this background*" (Taylor 1985, 34).

To be a person defined by various characteristics, such as a nationality, profession, or a religion, are aspects of identity in that refer to his or hers background of meaning. These integral qualities cannot be distinguished from strong evaluations. To question their claim to truth is no simple process. When people have an identity crisis, they are forced to question the fundamental convictions that define life, and more seriously, when people suffer forms of oppression that denies them the expression of their convictions they can be psychologically damaged and rendered unable to perform authentic judgments of worth. Our standing in a social group of various sorts can also constitute, depending on the meaning we ascribe to our membership, a significant aspect of how we understand ourselves. The meaning of our social belonging can be articulated how we see ourselves against others in both good and bad terms. The background basis of what we think is worthy of respect will vary across different cultures, which puts restraints on our ability of moral imagination given our dependency of a certain range of dialogical partners to draw on as sources for moral development (ibid, 34-36).

Strong evaluations of what we consider valuable and significant is therefore not some existentialist choice in vacuum from our culture since there's only so much room for how we can describe the motives that guide us given that the descriptions we make use of in part determine our judgments. Even though the self is partially determined, Taylor does think that we can be held responsible for our strong evaluations, and he does not want his thesis to be interpreted as some form of cultural value relativism, which is often taken to mean that the value of a certain culture depends on contextual surroundings and that we therefore cannot criticize cultural-meanings from an impartial perspective. Taylor has however, been accused of promoting meta-ethical claims about morality, the idea that moral claims cannot enjoy universal status, and also for being too apologetic of cultural practices that we recognize as wrong. As I will discuss in more detail later, while the first accusation is false, I do think that the second accusation rests on partial misunderstandings of Taylor's position. Taylor does believe in a core human morality that enjoys universal status, and as such humans can hold inadequate strong evaluation that are open to change, and which historically always have changed in ways he describes as 'error-reducing' moves, whereby continuous interpretations of the qualitative distinctions that give meanings to an ideal, for example 'honor' or 'dignity', leads people to see the ways in which their judgments of value are mistaken. Though how this change comes about might be difficult, since practical reasoning must proceed via common points of reference that both parties accept, which means that we always need to agree on some strong evaluations (Taylor 1995, 36).

Therefore, the fact that we are responsible for our strong evaluation is necessary to establish since being hold responsible for our actions is a crucial aspect of agency. This responsibility depends on our possibility to re-evaluate our judgements given that we can make mistakes in our articulation of values, and reasonably be expected to be corrected when presented with a challenge on the basis of other evaluations we hold. The fact that our self-interpretations gives meaning to what we experience does not mean that experiences cannot change our self-interpretation. The conceptions of the good that people hold is what makes our identity connects to a life story of the past, and aspirations for the future. Values that we no longer affirm are therefore also a part of identity to the extent that our moral development moved away from them and connects us to our past. The evaluations we no longer hold have influenced and help us better understand the moral beings we might be today with regards to what we think is good to be, and right to do (Taylor 1985, 35-40, 263-265).

Taylor argues that large parts of the history of philosophy has overlooked the fact that human personhood, as a distinct form of agency, involves strong evaluations, which in turn has had moral-political consequences. The drive to quantify the mechanistic universe has excluded picture of human's anthropocentric qualities and their self-evaluation, which undermines how the world is understood in human forms of meaning. Beyond our capacity of rational objectification of the world, we are also emotional beings with values that stem from the anthropocentric qualities of things. Our feelings rest on our experience of situations, whose interpretation depends on culture. What is shameful in one culture might be honorable in another. These feelings depend on judgments that relate to cultural meanings we have been given through socialization and conscience self-reflection that has conditioned us in certain ways due to our cultural surroundings (ibid, 48-50, 62-63).

The alternative accounts that posits human agency as marked by the capability of quantifiable and value-neutral reasoning promote essentialist fixation of human ends that are detached from its continuous cultural interpretation. By viewing humans as rational calculators, these conceptions of personhood can only distinguish humans from other intelligible animals through differences in the degree of strategic planning. The moral-political forms of reasoning that implicitly rely on this view, as we will see, have as a consequence promoted instrumental views on social life that undermine individual's dependency on a cultural self-understanding in order to orient themselves. The temptation to adopt this view lies in the fact that it makes freedom easier to conceptualize, since the strategic person does not have to interpret the world in reflective terms to find out what he seeks and who he is, but understands his purpose as given. Despite this temptation, references to cultural meaning are needed to account for the fact that motivations are formed by self-interpretations in a dialogical interplay between individual and society, which poses a challenge for political philosophy on how to reconcile freedom and social belonging (ibid, 95-112).

2.2 The Best Available Account

Taylor's view of personhood connects to his 'principle of the best available account' which is meant to tell us that the explanation of any social phenomenon must make use of the same terms that agents themselves can understand based on their own experience. This is necessary to capture how different ways of living are judged intelligible by those who live it. To explain

what it means to be an agent cannot go via abstraction of her values into mere interests but must make use of the same term she refers to in explaining what is meaningful and valuable. To understand her personal identity, and the social community she might be part of, we need to accommodate the strong evaluations that shape people, to describe and devise normative recommendations for what they should do. Since persons are embedded in different cultures with their own ways of living, the various modes of self-understanding that takes place is something any descriptive theory should illuminate considering cultural differences. By abstraction and reduction, we fail to grasp these cultural differences, and what they could tell us about the human condition. Since the terms agents use to describe themselves and the world, through feeling such as fear, shame, pride and so on, are indispensable for how they understand themselves and the world, they ought to figure into a social theory to preserve the fact that humans are self-interpreting animals. We need subject dependent terms such as 'justice', 'dignity', or 'revenge' to understand the motivations people act on, since these are qualitative distinctions that capture the attribution of meaning humans employ. These terms belong to a certain form of life and a social world that reflects meaning. This does not mean however, that the explanations we provide coincide with the agents own experience given that they may hold inadequate judgments in relation to a situation that stems from false beliefs, or unarticulated evaluations that can be challenged (ibid, 55-60).

2.3 The Dialogical Self

The modern idea that a good life is lived in accordance with what we conclude from inward inspection of our true self is the moral ideal that Taylor calls the 'ethics of authenticity', the idea that identity has to accord with one's inner depth that cannot purely be externally ordered by social conventions. This ideal tells us that there is a way to be human that is uniquely right and original for each of us, and thus only the individual can discover what it consists of. In ancient times, this freedom to investigate 'the self' was untenable given the widespread belief that differences between individuals were of little significance and that there was a correct way each man ought to conduct himself in accordance with either his place in society, the dictates of the divine or objective accounts of human nature. This ethic informs us that all institutions, the established norms, values, and practices, in our social order are subject to scrutiny, and have to be affirmed by the people who live by them. However, the fact that we establish who we are via inward inspection is still dependent on our dialogical relations, and our need to be

recognized by others for who we are in order to construct our identity. We can only discover who we are and how we want to live through inward inspection by our attachment to social domains and cultural references. Through the medium of language, we are given qualitative distinctions that we interpret into our own ideals and moral frameworks and it is only through culturally conditioned linguistic practices, whereby we go through processes of socialization into norms and practices, that we access the horizons of meaning that enable individual self-realization to take place. We need culture to affirm for ourselves what we think is significant, we cannot invent it. We cannot express what we consider valuable in a vacuum but have to build on common goods and common meanings (Taylor 1994, 27-34).

There are several ways people can enjoy shared good, some of which are reducible to individual experience and some which are irreducible in that they depend on being shared. People might share the same beliefs or experience without depending on others to do so. The fact that a park is a social good that people enjoy spending time in is a function of individual sentiments, and hence the value of the park is an instrumental function for individual enjoyment. However, if the common points of reference between participants are enjoyed because there exists mutual recognition of each other's participation, the function of the good cannot be reduced to the individual level. Friendship and nationality, for example, are only meaningful because the individual members recognize each other's bond. Nationality is only meaningful because members share a history, language and distinct experience, the same way friendship is meaningful because friends know that the other appreciates his company, where the value of the association not an instrumental function of the individual enjoyment, but rather an intrinsic value conditioned on its shared nature. Both reducible and irreducible goods often depend on intersubjective reference points so that individuals can partake in a shared reality based on mutual understandings. Though people have few reference points that bind them together, there is always a need for common terms that allow us to communicate. The qualitative contrasts in language, such as justice or freedom, are intersubjective in this way because they are commonly known, but interpret differently (Taylor 1995, 130-145).

The fact that we have to look within our own depths to affirm that our identity is in alignment with what feels right for us as individuals, have to be reconciled with the fact that we are social animals that discover who we are through relationships and cultural resources within human civilization. As we will soon see, the tensions that exists within Taylor's politics and his theory

about the self, follows the considerations he makes in the attempt to reconcile individual freedom with social dependency, our sense of individuality alongside our sense of common civic unity. When Taylor asks whether we have any moral obligations towards the communities we have had no choice but to exists within, he invites us to think about ways that social obligations could be grounded on conceptions of freedom itself. In this way, there should be aspects of our social order we ought both to reform, re-invent and preserve. This is why he thinks that radical individualist philosophies are often self-defeating because they ignore the social conditions that uphold freedom. Though he recognizes that all traditions, norms, and practices are objects of normative scrutiny he does think that traditions, by their very existence, reflect aspects of the human condition. What this means is that traditions can tell us something about how different cultures have interpreted what it means to be human evident in the various forms of life that this universal has been given particular shape. As traditions have sustained themselves over time, they are entitled to the presumption that there could be something of value to be found within them, and we ought not to dismiss them before investigation the possible insights about humans and society that they contain (Taylor 1994, 66-67).

However, Taylor's assertion that there is such a thing as irreducible social goods is contested, as well as what he thinks ought to follow from their existence. For example, the fact that society is valued instrumentally is for Kukathas (1996) plausible in all the respects Taylor thinks it is not, because the very attachment people have to their relationships or frames of public reference is in the end something that is *"valuable to **someone** for the value it gives **someone"*** and just because goods depend on collective structures does not make it irreducible (ibid, 72). When pressed on this, Taylor would not dispute that a social good must matter for someone to be worthy of protection, and he does not denies the separateness of persons, the normative claim that each of us have our own life to life. However, he attaches significance to the fact that it is a life lived with others in a shared space. He thinks that goods are irreducible because the possibilities that are open to us as purposeful beings are only intelligible against our cultural background, however the significance of these social forces does not entail deterministic view that we can be reduced to these dynamics..

2.4 Is Identity and Ideal?

The emphasis on strong evaluation as an intrinsic part of the phenomenology of agency is at times framed in ways that present agency as an ideal rather than a sociological observation. It invites a reading that there are certain conditions needed to foster the exercise of strong evaluation as a potential we all have, rather than our actual nature. When Taylor writes that a person without this ability, the simple weigher of alternatives, lacks "*the depth we consider essential to humanity"* (Taylor 1985, 26), Daniel Weinstock (1994) asks whether this is supposed to be an objective condition that all human, at a minimum, must align with in order to pass as a person, which would suggest that very few people are actually persons in the full sense given the reasonable claim that few "*people generally engage in the fairly sophisticated exercise in reflexive self-understanding and self-constitution which strong evaluation involves"* (ibid, 172,174). This leaves the reader asking whether the basis of human rights lie in our actual practice of strong evaluation or because we have the potential to exercise it. If so it would seem that to be a strong evaluator in the full sense amounts instead to a normative claim that part of the good life consists of self-reflection, which ought to be fostered and pursued on the basis of favorable conditions that help us exercise our potential as humans. This follows from Taylors claim that when the basis of the respect we think humans are owed lies in a certain capacity, to recognize human rights involves an obligation to foster this capacity since "*to make someone less capable of understanding himself, evaluating and choosing, is to deny the injunction that we should respect him as a person"* (Taylor 1985, 100). In response to Weinstock, Taylor clarifies that his early writings were meant to define strong evaluation as a universal human potential, however to act on it does not require that we have critically reflected on the background of meaning that informs us, only that we can sense that some aspirations and desires stand in qualitative relationships to others (Taylor 1994, 249).

Beyond this confusion within Taylor's work, it seems problematic to link morality in the broad sense of what it is good to be so closely with self-identity. It seems that we lose hold of the claim that some things we should do are independent of whether we recognize the dictate as a conception of our own values. Taylor's account makes it hard to spell out the questions of morality that are distinct from defining one's identity, instead merging them together. Even if moral reasoning reveal aspects of our identity, does it follow that all identity questions involve morality and that the same reasons are employed in both domains? Intuitively, it seems that some questions of identity seem to be at a large distance from what I think I should do in a certain question. Since he thinks that seemingly trivial character traits are only aspects of

identity because there is some underlying notion of deeper meaning, the implications of this would blur the line between things that are important to people which we sometimes intuitively associate with identity. For example, it seems to suggest that one's taste in music or literature only distinguishes people on the basis of identity if we can show that there are different ideals behind the character traits.

This distance between intuitive understandings of identity and a person's values, also connects to the strong connection Taylor draws between identity and our ability to tell a life-story, where we could ask the same question of whether all aspects of identity are intimate directions of where we are going in life. The dialogical process by which identity is constituted in relations to others in life are united by our ability to set out a plan and act in accordance with what we take to be a purposeful pursuit on the basis of our horizon of meanings. This aspect is why Taylor sometimes refers to identity as something that we continuously are *becoming* given that continuity is marked by choices and re-articulation of our values, which reaffirms my impressions that there's an overt significance of action-guiding values that Taylor embeds in the concept of identity (Taylor 1989, 30-47).

Is this need for unity via the continuous streams of meanings across the life story that is our identity really necessary? Lyshaug (2004) argues this is too demanding and that it instead should be sufficient for the self's unity to understands its development via "*minimal narratives*" rather than an all-encompassing endeavor. In addition, she claims that there are ethical consequences for holding on to this life-story that leads to stifling conception of identity if people do not dare to challenge the narrative they have lived by and are unwilling to challenge the attributions of meaning they have held on to given the need to tell their story. We ought to recognize that people can fail in living up to their own ideals or the expectations of others, and that sometimes a radical distancing from the cultural frameworks that have supported the articulation of identity cannot be made into a story the way Taylor presents it as. Lyshaug argues that without this recognition, an individual that lives via the demand to tell a life-narrative might stifle and hinder the full expression of the dynamic self that Taylor models, and should be corrected via the fact that the complexity of the self might not be as significant as Taylor makes it out to be. There has to be ways in which one's identity is open to accommodating features of its experience that do not fit the larger story since these fragments will affect our identity by offering complementary understandings. (ibid, 305-306).

3. Sources of liberalism

Liberalism is a tradition of thought that seeks to spell out what follows from valuing freedom. As we will see, this alone is complicated by the fact that freedom is an essentially contested concept that is difficult to account for in neutral term given its normative implications. There are different ways to articulate the moral core of liberalism that grounds various understandings and justifications for political institutions such as individual rights, the rule of law or property rights. Given the fundamental equality of all human beings and the fact that individuals are the sole owner of their own body, there are certain things no one else are entitled to do to them, as the free individual is one who lives by his own dictates. Much of liberal philosophy seek to investigate the nature of political associations and the subsequent normative relations between individuals and the state. With some reservation, we could say that liberals at large share the belief that a just society is not one constituted by a state imposed understanding of how man should live, but instead one governed by a framework of law and equal citizenship amongst all members of society which enable individuals to pursue their own interests in accordance with their own beliefs and differences. The principles of justice that guide the institutions of law are independently valid from particular goods individuals affirm as these views are for the most part not necessary precursors for the establishment of the legal framework. As a political force, liberalism came into prominence in the 19th century alongside the rise of democratic institutions and new forms of commercial activity and was defended as the fitting ideology to accommodate the rising pluralistic mass society and the product of enlightenment ideals that promised individual prosperity for all amidst its diversity, so long as the state let individuals go on unrestricted in the self-interested pursuits where reason and instinct lead them (Pettit 1993, 163).

As a political philosophy, classical liberals understand the purpose of law as a baseline for impartial regulations and the only necessary framework needed to the coexisting pursuit of individual interests on the basis of their own conception of what a good and worthy life is. Beyond this, its purpose is usually taken to be nonexistent, and has no agenda in the shaping of citizens own conduct. Both Hobbes and Locke, two classical sources in the tradition, offered such a view. The regulation and enforcement of law is only one part, however. In Locke's model, it is emphasized that the power of the state is directed in appropriate manner and never threading on an individuals defined liberties, and have its justification, for example in the form

of a social contract, in impartial reasons that are in theory acceptable to be shared by everyone. The purpose of constitutionally embedded law is to demarcate the legitimate areas of interference within citizens scope of conduct and constrain the use of power, accordingly, thus constituting order and guaranteeing equal freedom amongst citizens. Both writers were motivated by the concern of moral pluralism which lead them to explore the possibility of constructing universal criteria that could accommodate the dynamics of a diverse society, both domestically and internationally, to establish common ground amidst different views on man, God, and society[1]. This search for a foundational principle in social-contract theory was meant to capture the human necessities that all had an interest in securing for themselves that could serve as the axiomatic starting point of which other facts about political life could be deducted from. For Hobbes, this condition was articulated in the fundamental law of nature to seek peace and keep it, which he took to be universal human interest that serves as the precondition for legitimate political authority (Tuck 1994, 167-168).

From these sources, writers in the liberal tradition has inherited the normative claim that the state is a distinct value-neutral sphere of influence, needed to uphold civil interests such as the rule of law, peaceful coexistence, and protection of property. The idea of state neutrality is often treated as an integral necessity of liberal government committed to justice and equal dignity of citizens. The fact that the genesis of the principle goes back to the distinction between church and state, as a way of dealing with religious pluralism, has over time been interpreted to entail that other cultural questions as well is something state policy and constitutional codes should not make reference to. The competing views on whether government ought to be neutral is difficult to dissect and compare because theorists have different understandings of what neutrality means. Thus, while Taylor is skeptical of the principle in itself because it has incoherent implications, he at the same time finds it uncontroversial to defend the idea of a non-neutral government is consistent with many of the commitments that defenders of the neutrality principle refer to, such as the distinction between church and state, moral autonomy and cultural diversity (Taylor 1994, 250).

---

[1] (Macedo 1998, 58)

Defenders of the neutrality principle take it as a crucial moral argument for limited government that does not aim to institute a virtuous picture of the good society into government, which is why the principle is often contrasted to perfectionist government, the idea that the state should shape its citizens in accordance with ethical ideals of how humans should live. In this thesis however, most arguments surrounding neutrality concerns whether the liberal state can justify policy or its constitution in reference to the cultural understandings of a polity, or pursue collective goals, not necessarily aiming to create virtuous, better persons in accordance with cultural or philosophical ideas about objective human goods, even though the same arguments against neutrality might be plausible in both these respects and sometime connect to one another since different cultures have widely shared understandings on what humans should strive for in life There are roughly three versions of the neutrality principle in liberal theory. The first concern neutrality of aim, which informs us that governmental policy ought not deliberatively aim to promote one way of life or conception of value, above another. The second, neutrality of justification, demands that policies are independently justifiable from any conception of the good viewed comparatively better than another. While the third, neutrality of effect, means that policies should not result in advantaging or disadvantaging one way of life above others, which very few defend given that people make different choices in life they themselves are responsible for (Arneson 2003, 191-192).

Contemporary theorist shares with their classical sources the idea that liberalism, as a political morality, can informs us why political institutions can be just through assumptions about individual interests. Kymlicka (1988) for example, argues that this endeavour could go via a commitment to autonomy, which first posits the universal interest everyone has in living a good life, and subsequently the conditions needed to determine, discover, and re-articulate what we want. It follows that all have an interest in exercising the capacity for rational reflection in order to make use of possible opportunities, in order to counteract fixed expectations of how we should live given that our ends could be different under circumstances where we are able to exercise rational agency. Though we might be wrong about which ends are correct for us, the objective human good is conditioned on our own realization. That is, the nature of good is such that its value depends on our autonomous choice. The good life is led in accordance with our original way of being. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that we require different resources and liberties, such as education, free speech, and a cultural framework that provides us with conceivable options of what to do in life. From these fundamental interests, it follows that all

individuals are entitled to equal consideration of their interests. According to Kymlicka, the reason why liberals oppose paternalistic government is not because they are moral relativists who think that all ways of living are equally valuable or good, nor is it right to posit that liberals think individual interests are intelligible outside society. The motivation for justifying rights and liberties on an individualistic basis is precisely because human beings often are wrong about what a valuable life consists of, and the value of liberty as a device is to shield us from conformist dynamics that hinder us to find out what is valuable (ibid, 182-183).

Here we see that the neutrality principle of justification is defended in relation to the value people place in developing human capacities and our ability to devise a life plan. The principle also captures the fact that we must respect the distinct nature of state, culture, and society. The political concerns of the state must not make evaluative judgments on the life of its citizens and to value a cultural marketplace entails that politics must be justified without reference to particular ways of living under the assumption that cultural life sustains itself. The interest of the communities that individuals are part of will be protected via individual entitlements to material resources and civil liberties, so that individuals can reaffirm their own attachments. The fact that we can act as autonomous beings, exercising critical choices of our ends is something that requires respect through institutions that provide us with the ability to do so, where neutrality affirms the moral entitlement to be able to critically examine autonomous choices and responsibility, where social attachments is the context that provides us with choices and values to guide us (Kymlicka 1989, 904,)

As we will explore later, Habermas (1993), unlike Kymlicka, thinks that conceptions of the good that a community abides by ought to evaluated in some liberal political arenas, but this is partially because he thinks it is necessary to avoid the entrenchment of fixed positions it could create without this discourse. His reasoning here is that without taking account of questions of identity and culture, individuals are less likely to be autonomous because cultural practices are sustained in the civic sphere without having been properly deliberated about in open forums based on equal participation. Without this domain, we are more vulnerable to having our social positions perpetuated without our own reflection. For Kymlicka however, the state is distinctly an apparatus founded on the distribution of primary goods, it is no forum. As we shall see, while Habermas is suspicious of Taylor's claim that the social practices we already have are the moral background of our deliberation of what is valuable, he does agree with him that without political

forums of deliberations, individuals are left critically unexamined in their social integration (ibid, 8).

However, many of the considerations above leave out the fact that liberals also have various understandings of democracy given that conceptions of, and demands that follow from, freedom and autonomy alone does not necessarily impose a necessary connection to a distinct form of government. Since classical liberalism posits that individual interests are secured by rights, where the confounds of limited government leave individuals free to pursue goods and compete with others, this extends into a view of democracy as another avenue of interest pursuit. In its ideal form, classical liberalisms therefore understand democracy and the administrative state on par with market-dynamics, where collective goals are the aggregation and weighing of individual interests constrained by constitutional codes of checks and balances and individual rights in the state apparatus. This characterization is, however, an ideal form that overlooks the nuances in the liberal tradition. As liberalism emphasize the necessity of toleration amongst different people to preserve the peace and govern our interactions in accordance with justice based on individual rights, as an aspect of democracy, liberal constitutionalism also aims to embody forms of self-government which includes the possibility to continuously interpret, contest and justify our principles (Pettit 1993, 170-175).

Macedo (1988) for example, argues that this type of constitutionalism includes the expectation that we can object to the exercise of power and be met with justified reasons, which is something we are owed under the banner of reasonable treatment. The norm that reasons for the use of power belongs in public supports judicial review and the rule of law, which gives citizens the ability to challenge others, including public officials, on their own interpretations of rights and laws in light of the coercive use of power. The exercise of judicial review together with continuous interpretation of the constitution ensures that the use of power resembles forms of self-government in light of public reasons that citizens are owed and can make use of. Liberal constitutionalism can be understood as something that is constituted by the ideal of public moral justification. On Macedo's understanding, liberalism is not merely some empty framework, but constitutes a virtuous political community, which go against the shared belief by many liberals that the state is merely a on overarching framework of the associations in civil society yet has no common end for itself. As we will soon explore in detail, much of modern liberal theory

evolve around competing understandings of what this substantive commitment consists of, the moral reasons to support the rule of law and neutrality (ibid, 215).

3.1 The atomic conception of the self?

Taylor's political philosophy is shaped by his criticism of 'atomic' conceptions of the self that underestimate man's dialogical nature and misunderstand social structures. He claims that salient concepts in political theory, such as freedom and rights, have atomist pretenses embedded within them, which means that they are reasoned about as if they only were self-evident properties of individuals, without recognizing that they have cultural conditions that sustain and proliferate them. If we value of freedom, individual rights or virtuous ideals and artistic artifacts, we ought to affirm the traditions and cultural forms of life that have articulated what they mean, why they are important and enable us to make use of them, rather than positing that society is by itself always a hindrance against liberty. As I will discuss in more detail later, this is why Taylor is inspired by the republican tradition of thought, which unlike liberals, are skeptical of the claim that individuals have natural rights, but rather conceives democratic society as the domain that constitutes rights and freedom (Taylor 1995, 218).

This is why the methodology we use to infer political rights, liberties, and obligations should not be based through the imagery of persons standing outside their social environment. An atomic conception of the self is the idea that persons can be self-sufficient, which means that it can be treated as something that enjoy the full range of human capabilities that enable meaningful choices in accordance with their goals and aspirations, without making reference to its dependency on social life, community, and a larger civilization. Taylor traces the idea of the atomic self-back to enlightenment epistemology and political philosophy, an era where philosophers exaggerated the human capacity for reason by neglecting the social dependency of rational agency. The Cartesian idea of a rational self, capable of discerning the world and the foundations of firm knowledge in isolation from others, made it intellectually defensible to conceptually isolate individuals from surrounding attachments, through a conception of persons as pre-social, rational selves, to justify principles of social organization and legitimate political authority as the result of a social contract founded on individual interests. From this, we have inherited a "*vision of society as in some sense constituted by individuals for the fulfilment of ends which were primarily individual*" (Taylor 1985b, 187).

Classical liberalism usage of social-contract theory, the idea that we can reason about political principles for the organization of society by imaging society as a contract established by rational participants who agree to give up some liberty in exchange for the common protection of the state, is the originator of the atomic outlook in political theory. The participants in this contract are assumed to be self-sufficient in the sense that they have full human capabilities, an identity, and life prospects and interests, all of which are only constituted within society. The interest that society guarantees are only an elevation and protection of individual interests, which is why the covenant is presumed to be rational. To the extent that these individuals have identity, its constitution is understood as a convergence in the pre-political state of nature, rather than a meaningful commonality. The conception that persons are pre-socially constituted, rights-bearing subjects, whose accomplishments in life are solely their own achievement without regard for the larger infrastructure that make us succeed and do great things in life, is an image that have and will continue to erode the significance we ought to attach to social life (ibid, 207)

When the atomic conception of the self is implicitly utilized as a way of understanding collective actions, social structures and goods, as well as human capabilities and conditions for living a good life, the flawed image of the self-sufficient person capable of establishing and pursuing his end on his own entrenches itself. For example, methodological individualism is one attempt to explain the properties of a collective phenomenon by reducing the aggregated contributions down to its individual level. This method is effective in understanding convergent goods, but not irreducible shared goods whose meanings depend on a shared nature, where the good in question is transformed by concerted enjoyment. The effects of a dam for example, is a social good capable of being reduced to the benefits of different individuals, but a concert, or a fishing trip with friends, has a common value that is more than its individual parts, and not properly individual goods. They are rather common goods enjoyed by individuals together. While individuals could in theory shield themselves from a flood on their own, the value of decomposable common goods follows from the references our moral nature makes to intersubjective and common meanings in a common world. An atomic conception of the self fails to account for how self-expression as individuals a dialogical process within intersubjective frameworks is founded on language and traditions, which make meaningful choices possible. The health and vibrancy of social goods have consequences for individuals self-determination and autonomy as culture proliferates intersubjective values

Culture itself contains certain understandings and institutions that make us able to appreciate things that are not in themselves individual goods. It is only because of our cultural background that make us able to appreciate certain forms of arts, because we have access to a rich language that would be unintelligible to a person belonging to an ancient culture. The same goes for the value of equality amongst citizens, in that individuals together share the common meaning that their equal status as rights bearing citizens, and that there is something valuable about living in a society where citizens can have their say, where everyone is accountable to the law, and that there's certain ways a political decision that effects society should be made. This good belongs to everyone, yet it depends on everyone understanding its meaning, the fact that we all share the same dignity as citizens and that this society is a higher and worthier form of life than living under a benevolent dictator (Taylor 1995, 135-140).

3.2 Ontology and Advocacy

The methodological individualism that classical liberalism builds on is a flawed, atomic, ontology that cannot explain how societies sustain themselves, how individual identity is constituted in relation to social dynamics, and the social conditions needed to uphold liberal commitments to individual rights, democracy and political legitimacy, all of which depend on a common meaning. Taylor argues that there is a mismatch between the political theory's level of advocacy and its ontological foundation. While ontologies aim to describe the social reality, issues of advocacy concern the stand we take on policies, constitutional structures, obligations, and how individual and collective concerns must be weighed. Though these levels of socio-political thinking are distinct, ontology serves as the background that renders advocacy issues intelligible as it forms the questions we ask in relation to our understanding of human nature, agency, and society, and make us more aware of certain factors we think matters to explain social life. Thus, ontology does set the parameters of our normative understandings of how society should be structured and organized, to the extent that it possible, desirable, or just (Taylor 1995, 181-183, 200-203).

Taylor's claim that the correct ontology of social life his holistic rather than atomic informs us that the self's determination and fundamental interests is conditioned on the totality of common processes that language, as a mode of human expressions, bring forth; and the recognition that some goods are irreducibly social, where the totality of the whole is greater than its parts and

depends on being enjoyed in common. The question of what follows from this tenet is contested. By its own it does not legitimize any particular form of politics as there are no criteria to judge the soundness of the many candidates that make the move from this ontology. For Taylor, the connection between the two levels of argument is complicated by his own view that social theory is seldom purely descriptive, but rather validated on the basis of how it affects people's self-understanding.[2] The fact that Taylor thinks that a good social theory provides tools to interpret social dynamics in ways that can change or affirm our understanding of social life, is part of his criticism of methodological individualism, in that it distorts rather than illuminate our pre-theoretical understandings of social goods, such as democracy. This is why a flawed ontology can bring about undesirable forms of life if people internalize the view that culture or social relationships are only instruments for individual ends. Beyond the fact that such a distortion is unfortunate in itself for the individuals appreciation for the meaning of attachments, he also thinks it can undermine vital conditions that political units depend on to sustain themselves (Taylor 1985b, 91-95).

While many theorists in the liberal tradition has recognized man's social nature and cultural dependence, they have premised political theory on models that assume an isolated person whose preferences as a pre-social being, can be established via abstraction, in order to derive political principles on the relationship between state and citizens. By constructing society as some sort of contract that individuals can enter into, we neglect the fact that individuals are constituted as persons within society, which our political methodology should reflect The atomic ontology that social-contract theory builds on must therefore be replaced by a holistic ontology which gives better attention to what sustains individual rights, and how individual interests and conception of what is valuable and good in life are formed in dialogical relations. He writes that the social conditions of liberty ought to tell us that that it:

> "*requires a certain understanding of self, one in which the aspirations to autonomy and self-direction become conceivable; and second, that this self-understanding is not*

---

[2] He writes that the purpose of social theory is to offer an "*account of underlying processes and mechanisms of society, and as providing the basis of a more effective planning of social life*" (ibid, 92). He mentions as an example how a workers interpretation of his relationship to the labour market can be completely changed if he accepts a Marxist explanation of the economy, a description which in turn affects the readers self-understanding.

something we can achieve on our own, but that our identity is always partly defined in conversation with others or through the common understanding which underlies the practices of our society" (Taylor 1985b, 209).

Since we cannot step outside social life to find out who we are, what values we hold, learn about our own possibilities and gather knowledge about the world, all of which are the full range of human capabilities that society enables, it follows that society cannot be constructed as some instrument where all obligations towards each other follow from a singular foundation established via contract. This is because such a view would undermine all the conditions that make autonomy possible given that by valuing autonomy we ought to value societies that sustain its possibility. The atomic ontology overlooks that liberal values need a social foundation to be respected and are upheld by a political culture where people share common meanings. In addition, the many linguistic concepts we organize liberal politics around, such as justice, freedom, and equality, are only meaningful as evaluative terms because they have been fostered and given meaningful interpretations within different cultures. It is only because we have access to language, as a mode of cultural expression, that we understand the meaning of freedom or individual rights as something we can reason and discuss, since traditions have brought them forward to us. For Taylor, the move from ontology to advocacy involves the claim that individual rights cannot serve as the singular principle of how we think about political relationships, as there are other goods individuals seek and establish through communal living, where we need some form of common bond amidst our differences in order to preserve the legitimacy of democracy amidst the various social tensions that can arise, which is why liberal society needs a conception of a valuable good life that our institutions proliferate, and stand for. Since culture is reproduced in common, Taylor thinks that there are some things that individuals value that cannot be secured through free market mechanisms. He argues that some social goods or institutions that help uphold cultural structures can be justified in virtue of this social thesis, that relate to culture, political societies, and civil associations (Taylor 1995, 183-186)

3.3 Liberal foundationalism

Taylor argues that modern moral-political approaches to moral pluralism, in the search for universal interests that grounds political organization, has abstracted away from individual

differences in ways that oversimplifies the meaning diverse ways of life have to people, and thus operate with a flawed view of person which in turn undermines our social attachments. Since humans have a diversity of goods that cannot be reduced to a singular quantifiable notion of preferences or interests, but instead value things in qualitative terms that cannot be ranked against each other, he rejects the idea that individual rights, or any other good for that matter, can serve as the foundational principle for political life, rather than standing on par with a variety of considerations.

The crux of Taylor's arguments concerns the self-understanding liberal theory profess against liberal values like autonomy, freedom and equality, as foundational products of reason which are in fact only morally intelligible given their critical function in fulfilling a prior affirmation of human capacities the social life needs to sustain itself. It is only by assuming that aspects of human life ought to be fostered that we can make sense of our evaluation of why individuals are entitled to rights. In the same way that a just distribution of resources is only intelligible through our understanding of a good life and the nature of social affairs, liberty is only valuable because it lets us pursue our what we take to be our higher purposes. Individual rights or liberty cannot be the foundational principles for political theory in ways that disguise that they derive from our conception of the good. We cannot escape the qualitative contrasts we make use of in orienting ourselves in the moral space of different goods, and by abstracting away from moral diversity ideas about universal interests, rights-oriented liberalism marginalizes questions of the good life. Taylor thinks that the same drive in modern ethics to 'narrow morality' is evident in modern political theory because it is much easier to establish that it is "*better that men's desires be fulfilled than they be frustrated, that they be happy rather than miserable"*. Rights-oriented liberalism is attractive because they present themselves to be founded on self-evident or neutral premises that better resist the charge of relativism than those founded on qualitative contrasts. However, the claim that this foundation is distinct in this way is an illusion since "*some forms of ethical reasoning are being privileged over others, because in our civilization they come less into dispute or look easier to defend"* (1985b, 241).[3]

---

[3] A 'narrow morality' is used by Taylor to refer to ethical and political theories that prioritize the right above and the good, and defends the idea that we can construct theories on what to do in abstraction from questions of what

In order to asses Taylor's critique it is uncontroversial to first reply that few liberals, if any, think of individuals and society in the atomic terms Taylor at times implies and that Taylor does not give proper credit to the motivation and purposes behind social-contract methodology as a way of testing our intuitions about legitimate political authority through properties that individuals share in common. It was never meant to involve a serious claim that individual identity is a self-sufficient endeavor, nor that individuals are not socio-political animals that develop and exist within societies many social relations, nor that all human goods can be deduced from a singular principle. The central motivation for the classical social-contract theorists was the question of how to accommodate moral pluralism with the aim of devising principles of mutual toleration and peace amidst religious conflicts, exactly because they recognized how important cultural attachments and social forms of living is to people. The prominence of rights was merely the necessary instrument to bring different people together in order for their respective values to resist the claim of entitled dominance over society by coercing others into their mode of being (Tuck 1994, 164).

Many liberals argue that Taylor's social thesis is at best a correction of unarticulated premises that liberal rights-oriented paradigms can accommodate. While some theorists are sympathetic to aspects of the social thesis, many reject the idea that there can be irreducible social goods. Though the difference between ontological and advocacy levels of political thinking are distinct, in order to be consistent, the connection between the two are closer than Taylor admits. This is because in a holistic ontology, in the order of explanation of a social phenomenon we go via properties that belong the whole, rather than its parts, and simultaneously hold that social goods cannot be reduced. Taylor's politics, on an ideal construction, seems to fall in line with a holistic ontology as the foundation for the liberal order. In contrast to the claim that atomism cannot without incoherency inform us of the meaning of social entities and the essential dynamics of culture and society, we would have to prove that communities uphold themselves because they are dynamic entities whose shape and form change in accordance with their

---

it is good to be, and what the nature of the good life consists of. The relevancy this has to Taylor's political philosophy will be explained and discussed in chapter five.

memberships evolving modifications in ways that Taylor overlooks. Is not consent and interest sufficient to sustain communal forms of living?

Many critics of Taylor argue that the conditions that sustain culture could be threatened by some forms of political entities since relationships are grown and discovered rather than something that could be institutionalized via predetermined expectation of what a community is, and how it should continue to be. From this follows the argument that we ought to stick by liberal institutions that treat relationships and communities as evolving entities that can sustain themselves. Den Uyl (2006) argues that Taylor's holistic ontology combined with individualist politics is unstable and threatening to civil society because, given the fact that individuals are rejected as the primary unit for explanation, if a conflict between whole and part emerge, individual wishes, wants and projects could be subordinated to defined social understandings as representative of the social (ibid, 849).

Taylor's worry is the instrumental evaluation of political norms, where individualism erodes the very foundation of liberal culture given that it cannot value its structure beyond themselves as it lacks an ethical basis. Even if some sort of social dynamic is needed to sustain liberal political culture, does this common meaning resemble a common end? Can it not legitimize its form through 'metanorms' that protect a structure surrounding the socio-political domain where individuals live their lives according to their own substantial ends? In order to explore these themes more systematically it is necessary to place Taylor's claims about ontology and advocacy within the larger debate between liberals and communitarians, which in turn better positions us to explore contemporary liberal theory (ibid, 854).

3.4 Procedural liberalism and the communitarian critique

The liberal tradition thinks of individual liberty, and the conditions of autonomy, as standing beyond and above the individuals communal place, in order to counter hierarchy, communal conformity and fixed social positions. In order to achieve this, the only common good is a system that guarantees liberty, dignity, and welfare, namely the neutral constitution that upholds rule of law and individual rights without being justified on substantial conceptions of the good life. In order to spell out the relationship between Taylor's political philosophy and his conception of individual identity, we need to understand his criticism of modern 'procedural' models of liberalism and his distinct contribution among theorists who think

procedural liberalism undermines social life. These models often argue that a plural society necessitates that fair political institutions are justified when they are not based on particular moral outlooks that citizens hold, in order to secure everyone's fundamental interest in living a good life, and thereby respecting the moral autonomy of citizens on an equal basis. There are different ways to ground these commitments where the term 'procedural' is meant to bring out that the just organization of society can be demonstrated and discerned via methods that are rational and neutral towards all, rather than coupling the concept of social justice with particular social conventions. This is why the traditional liberal understanding of politics is commonly referred to as models that 'prioritize the right above the good', which is meant to bring out that the purpose and role of a liberal system of law is working as a framework for accommodating individuals self-chosen interest on the basis of individual rights, and not be engaged in the protection or promotion of collective goals or values affirmed within the cultural life of citizens, which at times might be overridden by the dictates of law in order to protect minorities (Kymlicka 1988, 182-183).

Communitarian political theory is in large part a reaction to the methodology and normative recommendation of John Rawls 'A theory of justice' where he proposes general principles of political justice assigned to the economic and political institutions of society. While most liberals that follow Rawls way of thinking about political justice seek to institutionalize the conditions that guarantee individual autonomy, many communitarians claim that liberal theory in effect undermines individual autonomy by paying too little attention to individual's attachments to their communities. Communitarianism object to liberal understandings of law, society, democracy, and identity. They complain that liberalism either fails to appreciate the value of community, or advocate policies that undermine its foundation. Even though liberals acknowledge individual dependence and embeddedness in various relationships, they differ with communitarians about normative consequences this has for the state's responsibilities, for example questions regarding redistribution, the use of judicial review, the extent of individual rights, or normative ideas about the size and scope of a federal, or unitary state. Within the literature of communitarian thought we can identity four themes of criticism (Caney 1992, 273).

The first claim resembles Taylor's criticism of social-contract theory, namely that political theory must operate with a methodology that recognize mans situated nature and his culturally embedded life-plans, rather than operating with an unencumbered model of the self whose

interests can be established pre-socially. Many communitarians argue that individual identity is identical to its established ends, and thus we cannot assume to know what his fundamental interest is prior to social life. A crucial aspect of human nature is the identity constituting feature of social forms of living that a liberal conception of the self, as a methodological step in making the argument of what autonomy requires, fails to accommodate. We cannot imagine a neutral position where rational actors are able to discern cross-cultural moral-political claims for the organization of society. Instead political reasoning must be contextualized. Though Taylor recognizes that contemporary liberals are not blind to the fact that identity is constituted within society, his main criticism is that the methodology employed simplifies socio-political life in ways that are unfit to accommodate the relationship between individuals and society given that socio-political life is too complex to be approached via principles that pre-determine the form of social organization. This simplification touch on the second claim that communitarians raise, namely the issue of state neutrality in the face of modern societies diverse nature of diverging values (Taylor 1995, 182-193).

Here, communitarians deny that neutrality is *the* marker of a just state, and question the claim that neutrality is necessary to recognize the equal dignity of all citizens by refraining from justifying policies or constitutional codes in reference to cultural ideas about the good life. Liberals argue that without neutrality, the state will favor some views of others, and that questions of culture are something only individuals have to affirm amongst themselves within a system of law. As we will explore in detail, Taylor thinks neutrality in all its forms are incoherent, unnecessary, and undesirable. It is incoherent because all politics imply conceptions of the good. It is unnecessary because non-neutral politics do not necessarily erode individual autonomy. And it is undesirable because a liberal polity depends on a culturally conditioned affirmation of the many goods that matter to people, and the stability and legitimacy of a liberal regime must have an expressive aspect within its political society that relate to the historically situated ideals and experience of a people. Taylor wants to defend a broad model of citizenship that is not an impediment to pluralism, but instead recognizes difference as the basis of society as a common end. The necessity of non-neutrality concerns to the third communitarian theme, which concern their criticism of civic integration between individuals and society. Taylor argues that liberal principles are not enough to sustain a polity without some shared overarching understanding of who they are as a civic polity, which includes affirming collective goals and cultural goods. A free society requires a people that values liberty and is willing to fight for it

because they identify with their social institutions and the form of life it proliferates (Taylor 1998, 153-154).

The last theme concerns whether norms can enjoy universal status. Taylor does not join company with those who defend meta-ethical claims which tell us that political principles like justice and freedom are relative to the shared understandings of a particular community, and that communal values have an authority in themselves. For example, the claim that a caste system, the idea that different people by birth have certain rights relative to their hierarchical position, can be just because it accords with people's beliefs. Taylor does not reject the ideal that moral reasoning aims to articulate universal principles that have cross-cultural validity; however, he has been criticized for promoting moral relativism. As I will show, Taylor is no relativist but only invites this reading through his claim that we should not insist on always imposing what is right when people hold radical different conceptions of the good life. His criticism of liberal universal pretension is motivated by political prudence, given that particular self-understandings are necessary aspects for moral-political principles to be respected. Though morality involves cross-cultural claims, sometimes we ought to resist the temptation to impose them. Related to this we find reason to argue that many political issues cannot be understood as competing interests around fairness, but rather competing conceptions the good when people's moral views collide with each other (Bell 2005, 225)

4. The bounds of liberalism

If liberal theory cannot account for the value of community, or foster ways of living that undermine communal vitality, how should we correct its atomic ontology? Though liberalism claims to be neutral about the nature of the good life, they in effect affirm that it consists of exercising critical self-reflection and autonomous choice while at the same time neglecting the extent to which our social attachments constrain how extensive these practices can be. The ideal typology of communitarianism is a political theory that rather preserves individual autonomy via taking community and communal attachment as the centerpiece of normative consideration and imagines that the cultural life in itself can be turned into a political community[4]. However,

---

[4] This view is associated with Daniel Bell, one of the few theorists that aim to offer a systematic alternative to liberal theory, rather than a simple critique (Bell, 2005). Taylor on the other hand maintains that the liberal

Taylor rejects any communitarianism that is defined in contrast to liberalism in this way. Just as liberalism is too concerned with the priority of neutrality or individual rights as the singular principles of political theory, he also finds it flawed to flip the script and instead take understandings of community, and communal protection, as appropriate normative modes. Neither of these approaches give credence to the fact that moral political thinking involves prudence among various important goods where neither one can serve as an overarching principle to think about political and ethical life (Taylor 1994, 250-251).

There are various ways that liberals have responded to communitarian critiques. Some argue it can never provide a desirable alternative to the main frames of liberal theory as an overarching union of civil life, given that the conditions of modern society is to diverse for us to blur the line between state and society, and therefore we must maintain that the domains that the liberal state enables for political contestation are not communities. Stephen Macedo (1988), however, does think liberal democratic states, to the extent that they depend on fostering civil virtues, do constitute a political community founded on the principle of impartiality and public justification, which requires liberal virtues on part of the polity in order to sustain itself. As we will later see, his conception of liberalisms substantive commitments resembles, although only partially, some of Taylor's understanding of liberalism as substantive doctrine. However, Macedo maintains that communitarianism is flawed in that they undermine the necessity of the moral perspective of public reasoning, where they too often falsely assume or reason as if boundaries between political communities are drawn on the basis of common meanings within each unit. He further argues that liberals are not committed to a conception of the self completely unencumbered from its own aims and attachments, but only the moral necessity of the self to have the resources needed to critically evaluate its own attachments and ends, without which, we fail to respect the equal dignity of members of a community that might differ in their evaluation of their communal given ends. Whatever commitments we have, there is a demand that our identities must retain a distance large enough from them that enable us to engage in critical evaluation. It is true that we depend on community to develop our moral vocabulary

tradition is rich enough to accommodate a simple critique and does not challenge its tenants as extensively as Bell.

and capacities, however the political community of the state is made up of various sorts of civic communities (ibid, 221-224).

For Macedo, liberal constitutionalism comes with the ideal that policies ought to be justified in public. This ideal is the morality behind judicial review, the practice of courts testing cases against established conventions and laws, which makes *"constitutional government a publicly principled enterprise".* This tells us that this continuous interpretation, the practice of public morality, not only belongs to courts, but governments and citizens as well. This is why, in both practice and theory, liberal constitutionalism comes with substantive ideals connected to both citizenship and community, and thus the communitarian critique is flawed to the extent that they recommend something that is already there (ibid, 215).

Macedo (1998) is also willing to bite the bullet in the face of Taylor's criticism that liberalism cannot be culturally neutral[5], in that he admits that liberalism is a fighting creed that is bounded by citizens self-understanding. This is because valuing the *"political authority of public reasons"* involves recognition of the fact that liberal constitutionalism has transformative and educational dimensions embedded within itself. Without appreciating this dimension, we end up with a model that takes the liberal personality for granted as a natural parameter. One example that illustrates the transformative function of the system are the mechanisms of civic or humanistic education. The citizens that a liberal constitutional regimes requires for its sustainability cannot be taken for granted, but has to, and have historically been shaped and formed. Macedo mentions as an example the American historical relationships to Catholics on the questions of the education systems curriculums, as well as the school systems function not only as a service given to those who could not afford private schooling, but a civic project of bringing together and integrating children from various backgrounds into a common institution funded on values meant to promote a sense of common citizenship and attachment. On a transformative understanding of liberalisms citizens, Macedo argues that there is a need for the

---

[5] Taylor argues, as an example, that the liberal insistence to separate certain private beliefs from public contestation depends on a cultural self-understanding and cannot without controversy be insisted to be a neutral demand via reference to people's universal interest (Taylor 1994, 62).

government to secure that "*future citizens acquire the character traits, habits and virtues they must have if the liberal political project is to survive and thrive*" (ibid, 59)

As an end, the liberal political morality requires a view of diversity where we are not blind to the fact that a liberal order depends on the virtues and character of the civilian sphere, and given the support they constitute, their shape and form is of public concern. Macedo understands liberalism as more than the valuating individual freedom as the end of our story, for to put liberty at the center of one's values obligates one to secure the conditions for its sustainability, and therefore the liberal cannot be blind to the necessity of a shared civic culture where individuals need moral education in the virtues of liberal constitutional citizenship (ibid, 58-69).

4.1 What is a community?

When Taylor says that our identity is 'partly' defined through others, how far does this partially extend, and in what way does it connects to various forms of social life? Kukathas (1996 b) argues that both sides of the liberal communitarian debate are mistaken in their understanding and evaluation of community. He argues that whereas Taylor criticism of liberalism embodies a recipe for fostering political communities that are not consistent with his own valuation of civil communities and cultural life, Macedo in his response undermine the liberal commitment to pluralism; in his all too willing eagerness to impose the dictates of the state into civilian life (ibid, 82). Kukathas (1996) argue an ontology that views society as a collection of individuals are largely correct and gives greater reference to what Taylor undermines, namely competition and conflict between individuals. People associate with each other to find mechanisms that can mediate conflicts in peaceful proceedings, yet the purpose is only to transform this conflictual aspect. This is consistent with the fact that there are common interests such as the sustainability of an established order or associative bonds based on solidarity. The fact that people cooperate and have common ends does not change the fact that society is a collection of different persons. This alone does not propose a connection to rights-based liberalism, nor a distinct view about human nature, but does inform us to not overlook the fact that society has value because it promotes individual welfare. Kukathas argues that just because men can only exist in society is consistent with the fact that individual interests are the hearth of social living, since society's purpose is dependent on individual goods. He argues that even if some of these are irreducible,

they still matter because they are valued by an individual. What more purpose could society have? To correct the extent of which social goods partially embed our own identity we need to investigate closer the different forms of community that exists and how they relate to our identity (Kukathas 1996, 70-72).

Community denotes a kind of association between people, whose meaning is defined via contested characterizations of whether we are embedded by them or belong to them. Though communitarians concede that we are only partially constituted by community, they maintain that liberals do not grasp the significance that our identification with community matters for our own. That fact that communities matter tells us nothing about what communities are. Some might be geographically situated, such as a neighborhood, a club, a city, or a village, while others are not demarcated by space such as business, science, or fitness communities. We can progress in this regard by distinguishing between three models of community, and the various political significance attributed to them by different political traditions. The first model distinguishes communities from associations by the fact that members share not only geographic proximity but most crucially by the fact that they share a common origin of experience (Kukathas 1996 b, 83)

Whereas associations are something people form, community is something one is born into. Given that identity in this regard is taken to be a natural relationship, the value of these types of communities have often had their significance articulated and defended by conservatives. The second type of community denotes those formed on the basis of common interests between members with a close proximity to one another. Here having a shared origin is not necessary so long as the individual members are united by the wellbeing of their group. This model aligns with socialists critique of conservative thought given that the real interests people have is establishing identities on the basis of intentional relationships that express their actual, rather than artificial, concerns. The last type identifies communities with a shared interest. This interest differs from the second type in that it is not necessarily a commitment to a common good but instead a community formed through the recognition of mutual advantages. Communities of this sort can span across regions and borders and given that the bonds that unite them are weak they are more like partial associations. It is this model of community, Kukathas argues, that is most in line with the liberal traditions understanding of pluralism and toleration. A good society is not some overarching domain that imposes common forms of living on

different people, but instead a framework of law that allows different partial communities to develop (ibid, 83-84).

When political society governed by liberal framework is reduced to a partial associations it is clear that it is not really a community at all. He writes that:

> "*A community is essentially an association of individuals who share an understanding of what is public and what is private within that association*" (ibid, 85).

Social groupings are distinct from associations that constitute communities because only the latter have particular shared understanding of what is of public concern. Communities share mutual expectancies of what is a proper way to behave, and the merits of interfering with someone's behavior. Though members of a community might disagree on what should be done in response to a public concern, they are able to identify when something is of public concern to the community and simultaneously, there is a shared understanding of what is properly private. Though shared interests are a necessary aspect of community, there also has be shared understandings of mutual obligations that stem from this membership. This is significant because it signals a mutual understanding by all that individual identity is not determined in full by communal belonging. The extent to which this membership influences individual identity depends on the quantity of other communities individuals are part of, the individuals own judgment for how significant a particular membership is for him as a person, and his dependency on the community. This is why

> "*few, if any, communities can constitute an individual's identity, because few, if any, individuals are locked in a single community which leaves no room for other attachments to which the group is indifferent. In this sense, all communities are partial communities*" (ibid, 86).

Communities are also unstable depending on their own divisions. A diverse community with different traditions might challenge the common recognition of obligations that the community depends on, which could change or break them up. However, this is still consistent with the recognition that some social attachments are more important for individual identity than others. Part of the reason why is either because of personal commitment, or because of surrounding pressure that make communal identity more salient and reminds individuals of their attachment.

Yet they will still be partial associations so long as the individual has an interest in his own private affairs and multitude of attachments. It follows that a political community is "*an association of individuals who share an understanding of what is public and what is private within their polity*" (ibid, 87).

Here, members will share mutual understanding of what its political institutions ought to concern itself with, and what it has no legitimate business in interfering with, which will vary across different societies. Even though members will contest the recognition of what lies within the domains of public or private, this does not alter their political community which exists so long as the conventions by which it is defined as are recognized. The relationship between political community and political institutions give rise to the question of how we understand the state itself. Political communities, unlike religious or academic communities, are concentrated geographically and have governments that administrates the polity. Thus, within one state there might be many different political communities, such as federal states, communes, or indigenous councils. Though people need to share some beliefs, these do not amount to comprehensive doctrines about the good. The fact that we are different people with different belief does not take away our understanding of belonging to a community with people different from us that we nonetheless share something in common with.

Political community is only a 'partial community', which cannot constitute our identity given that it is only one out of many communities we recognize as belonging to. National identity might take on expressive force, but for the most part it would a false imposition to claim that it could ever be the only identity individuals have. It also is clear that the existence of political communities does not mean in itself that it is a good thing, on the contrary the correct understanding of what it is should "*make us wary of assuming that political community is in some way the most important or the fundamental form of community which somehow subsumes or subordinates all others*" (ibid, 89).

The power of the modern state ought not to mislead us into thinking that individual identity is constrained by his belonging to its political community. While Taylor does not think that shared understandings of individuals ought to serve as the structural center for organization, he does think that these understandings are not something that can be ignored and separated completely from the constitution of the right framework of law, in addition to the fact that political

communities, both national and local, are important domains of belonging. He also thinks that social attachments are partially intrinsic aspects of our identity and given the interdependent nature of the constitution of identity, recognizing these common goods ought to matter. For example, it merits the plausibility of supporting distinct forms of politics that supports reinforces the mutual nature, such as the promotion of cultural institutions that bind people together and provides an anchor in people's lives. Since individual depend on community to live an autonomous life, the vibrancy of communities matters, we should not overlook that human goods cannot be attained in isolation from others (Taylor 1998, 153)

For Kukathas, this position is only tenable if we ignore the extent to which social attachments' partial nature. Even though some forms of community are especially important for identity, it can never be the only one that gives shape to our lives and will vary in its interpretation and meaning. Individual rights are important because, not because we can step outside all the attachments we are born and raised into, but because we exist in partial associations, which is why communitarians often undermine various partial commitments in favor of a supposed political community by exaggerating the meaning of nationality or citizenship as the markers of identity. The danger by doing so is that the politics recommended can weaken other forms of community that matters for individuals in the attempt to strengthen national communities (Kukathas 1996, 91)

The danger with nationalism, according to Kukathas, is that it fails to demarcate in what way patriotism can be fostered in ways that preserve the liberal concern for pluralism which is marked by our diverse set of partial communities. Fostering nationalist sentiments has historically been a top to the bottom process, rather than the other way around which is why liberal commitments speak against the validity of fostering national identity on the presumption that it will suppress diversity. These attempts increase the likelihood of conflicts between the political community and other communities we belong to. Respecting this fluid character speaks against state-sanctioned recognition of cultural practices, collective goals or even subsidization of various civic associations. However, through Kukathas commitment to toleration he shares with Taylor the reluctancy to impose principles of the right, settled within political society, into various communities, although for different reasons. He thinks that if liberals want to protect pluralism, they should see that elevation of the political community as the sole domain of state-sanctioned decision making, undermines various communities form of

life. Political society ought not have a massive integrative function which conditions pluralism in relation to the principles that the state decides through an obsession of instituting unity across the polity. In the end, too many liberals as well as communitarians undermine that the political community is just another partial association, although a significant one (ibid, 92- 96).

4.2 The dangers of the centralized state

Though Kukathas understanding of political society is significantly different from Taylor, within the nuances of Taylor's positions on identity, there is a great more agreement between the too than Kukathas presents it as. However, I do not think it is correct to assess that Taylor is blind to the conflictual element of social life given that his motivation for a differentiated understanding of citizenship within multinational societies is precisely motivated by the concern of diverse sets of cultural identities within a polity.[6] In addition, while Taylor does defend the necessity of some form of national unity, he argues that this should never be imposed but rather fostered via toleration of different ways to be united within a polity, precisely because democracies have historically tended to exclude various local identities in favor of a national sense of sense of self. The temptation to exclude subsets of the population follows from the fact that a well-working democracy is founded on mutual trust and commitment. In its radical form, authoritarian forms of coercion can take place when political leadership demands that other succumb to their understanding of citizenship, for example in post-revolutionary Russia or France. Here exclusion goes via the imposed expectation of what patriotism within the political culture demands, and a demand that one's civic identity has primary status above other forms of allegiance that matters for identity, such as religion, culture, or class. Though France and Russia are extreme historical examples, the dynamic they illustrate is still with us to the extent that citizens refuse to acknowledge that various forms of identity might be more fundamental to the individual than one's status as a citizen. The cultural shift towards the ethics of authenticity, whereby the individual can live as she pleases without shame for not suppressing one's way of being to fit with the molds of larger society provides merit to the claim that individuals are entitled to recognition of their way of being (Taylor 1998, 149).

---

[6] Taylor's view's on collective goods and differentiated forms of citizenship will be discussed later.

Given these dynamics, there has to be a way to protect individual identity and its partial communities against the exclusionary dynamics of the state. This is why democratic cultures need continuous reinvention of how they understand their collective identity alongside the inclusion of different people that alters the traditional culture via the inclusion of new identities. Given the fact of pluralism and the need to accommodate a diverse set of identities, it is common to understand the collective understanding of democracy via right-based liberalism rather than through civic virtue of a self-determined polity. This tendency is exemplified by the attempt to elevate elements of political culture as pillars of the states' national identity in the face of increased diversity, by insisting on uniform treatment across different regions to guarantee equality. The solution is taken to be an identical set of rights and liberties that all individuals can make use of and partake in and share as citizens, which express our equal dignity. This is tempting because if society is already fragmented what sense does it make it the quest for unity to insist on something the social conditions do not allow for? (ibid, 150-151).

Instead of waiting in vain for agreement about the good life, and the extent to which this informs collective identity, it's better to agree on the notion that people have interests and that the best way to secure equal interests is freedom of choice on the basis of preference. The liberal neutral model is attractive because people will never agree on the ends of life, and its best to live and let live under a system of equal rights that guarantees democratic conceptualization of equality, freedom and fairness. However, there are politically relevant ways that citizens can be connected beyond abstraction from difference. Rather than stating that commonality has to be constructed in spite of difference, bindings can be built because of them. Differences are complementarity contribution we can appreciate in common as a shared good that enriches their association. Here, we go beyond the standard liberal argument that we have an interest in choosing for ourselves how to live, but also note our moral interest in other's authentic way of being as a unique contribution in the common enterprise of human achievement as a common good (ibid, 153-154).

From this we see that, if anything, Kukathas criticism applies to the possibility that Taylor is overtly naïve in his belief that common identity can be built on differences beyond the liberalism Kukathas recommends, but not that Taylor is blind to the coercive effects of nationalism or the value of different communities. A significant disagreement however concerns the state's obligation to intervene within the civil sphere, perhaps through

subsidization, when doing so is thought to be necessary to uphold communities and associations as a counterweight to the integrative functions of the state, precisely because state-sanctioned authority homogenizes difference. It is not enough to defend communities via the liberal assumption that individuals have enough of an interest in catering for their own communities. Here, it is assumed that all it takes to defend local communities is the guarantee of individual resources, such as civil rights and material benefits, that enable cultures, communities and associations to evolve naturally in concert with individuals own choices as the aggregation of society's preferences. This point has been articulated by Michael Walzer (1990), who argues that such an approach would undermine liberal society itself, given that the integrity of civil society depends on certain associations that cannot survive on their own.

 Walzer is motivated by the same concern as Kukathas, to keep the coercive, and potentially dangerous, powers of the state away from civilian life. In order to uphold neutrality with regards to the individuals fundamental question of what is valuable and worthy of pursuit in life there are ways in which the government cannot be neutral. Walzer argues that the standard liberal argument in favor of neutrality, does not take into consideration that a fragmented society without integrative functions of community and associations will lead to the increased imposition of the centralized state since this is the only union left to hold people together. Walzer's argues that absent of this non-neutrality, local associations would be unable to serve their historical integrative function, that binds people together into trade-unions, guilds and other cultural avenues, that serve a critical function in the democratic process, as well as partial sources for individual identity. It is these communities that partly give meaning to individuals, and the liberal government committed to its own sustainability must subsidize associations that "*seem most likely to provide shapes and purposes congenial to the shared values of a liberal society*" (ibid, 17).

Though it is true that liberal citizens are more alien toward one another than used to be the case, it is also true that communities and cultures are resilient entities, and given the social nature of individuals, so long as the human race survives there will always be new communities established in the place of old ones lost. Given this, communitarianism cannot be more than modified liberalism, given that individual rights, pluralism, free speech and association and political participation, are the vocabulary framework we understand ourselves in and is what we ought to preserve. If liberal theory hinder ourselves from appreciating our own order, and

the continuously developed communities within it then it follows that the communitarian correction cannot go beyond the fact there "*is no one out there but separated, rights-bearing, voluntarily associating, freely speaking, liberal selves*" where we could hope to educate people "*to know themselves as social beings, the historical products of, and in part the embodiments of liberal values*" (ibid, 15).

Taylor too argues that various association in the civil sphere serve an integrative function and counterweight to the administrative state. Civil society are in some sense autonomous from the wider state, even though the state shapes the conditions of associations via rules of coexistence, the activities that goes on within this framework is not directed by it. Whereas the market economy is largely autonomous within civil society, the larger public sphere where public opinion is formed, is brought out through the common concerns of the polity via common points of reference. The workings and influences of associations matters not only to ground people with an anchor of belonging in the face of the transformative effects of free market liberalism, but also to work as an opposition to the dictates of the state, which Kukathas champions (Taylor 1995, 215, 287).

It is here we find various points of convergence between Kukathas and Taylor. My reading of Taylor does not lead me to think he would disagree with the notion that various forms of community are at best partial associations that have a limited claim on our allegiance and can never constitute our identity in its entirety. As mentioned, he also shares the unwillingness to insist that a concentrated state should have the power to override the understandings of local communities when doing so undermines significant goods we ought to consider. This is why he seeks to build a model of citizenship that does not insist that national identity has to be the most important identity that people understand themselves via (Taylor 1998, 154).

4.3 The value of freedom

Taylor's understanding of liberty is part of his wider attempt to reconcile our dependency on wider society with our ability to be autonomous agents, and part of his criticism of liberals that he thinks are oblique to the social conditions of freedom. Whereas negative conception of freedom is rather straightforwardly understood as the absence of external interference in one's affairs which guarantees our ability to do whatever we want, positive conceptions are more controversial in that they make references to an agents state of mind as a potential hindrance

against freedom. Though many acknowledge that positive liberty, the state of being self-directed and determined to act in accordance with one's ideals, is a meaningful concept, few agree on its political relevance since within the liberal tradition, negative liberty has been an important tool in articulating how individual rights can set the legitimate frames of government-interference by establishing the area of non-interference citizens are entitled to live their lives within. Beyond the minimal need of government to protect the liberty of citizens from theft and violence from others, the negative conception maintains that the wider the legally sanctioned area of non-interference, the greater our liberty (Taylor 1985b, 214-215).

Some have attempted to resolve the distinction between the two conceptions through the idea that both interpret the same set of liberty-reducing parameters as a triadic relationship between an agent, preventive conditions, and his desired actions. In this way, negative conceptions locate impediments of liberty in the acts of others while positive conceptions locate them within an agent's state of mind. Taylor's account however affirms the distinct nature between the two by positing that freedom can be understood both as an opportunity concept, and as an exercise concept which capture the fact that liberty denotes the quality of agency in ways that cannot be reduced into interpretations of what constraints refers to. As an exercise concept, positive liberty informs us that freedom involves being self-determined in relation to the significant and valuable and our ability to discriminate between our desires according to what we recognize as worthy of pursuit. Removing barriers that hinder this development is a necessary but not sufficient condition to be free. The opportunities this opens for us are worthless unless we have the necessary capacities to act in accordance with what we recognize as higher or lower forms of being which means that when freedom is invoked as an exercise concept, doing whatever you want is not sufficient for being free unless we are engaged in the critical evaluation of our desires. This is evident when we are acting out of ignorance, fear, or hatred. In the same way that being brought up in poverty with few material resources hinder our pursuits in life regardless of which opportunities are open to us, liberty is impeded if we live in an abusive society that deny us the personal resources to reach moral maturity to make autonomous choices about what is valuable in life. These reflections suggest that negative liberty alone is perhaps not the only guide to normative evaluations of the institutions of a free society. As dialogical selves, there is an extent to which community and cultural frames constitute freedom, by helping us come to see what our purpose in life consist of. Therefore, the capacity of a person's ability to choose cannot be treated as a constant factor, since our authenticity is conditioned on

our environments expressions of the human possibility, which affect our capacity to critically engage with the objective world and attribute meaning to it (ibid, 218-221).

Isaiah Berlin suggested that positive conceptions of liberty are dangerous because they have at times invoked ideas about a divided self that longs to be liberated through the authentic, and rational part of the will, which in turn has been distorted by oppressive forms of government under the guise of 'forcing the weak to be free'. This historical fact is however no argument that positive liberty is meaningless, nor does it infer a necessary connection to particular forms of government. Though the absence of interferences in the form of individual rights is a necessary aspect of what it means to be free, Taylor argues that the concept on its own has absurd consequences that connects to its inability to tell us why freedom is valuable, which is found within the modern ideal of authenticity I mentioned earlier. Since the modern individuals seek to realize itself and find fulfilment, an absence of interferences is not in itself valuable unless he is able to act in purposeful ways, which requires a moral background that guides his investigation. To the extent that positive liberty connects with our state of mind as self-directed and self-determined individuals, it does not rely on divisions between a higher or lower self, but rather between the qualitative contrasts we invoke when judging our own motivations as strong evaluators (ibid, 222-224)

This is why freedom is not something that can be quantified on the basis of how many hindrances we face, but rather whether these impediments encroach on the significant about being human. If freedom were only the absence of interferences, it would follow that a society can be more or less free than another on the basis of trivial hindrances such as traffic regulations, and to insist on this would deprive its meaning. To live in a free society, I need certain guarantees that allow me to express my personhood and this is why the pursuit of the purposeful is not impeded by traffic regulations, but rather by authoritarian modes that hinder my ability to participate in social and cultural activities or the liberty to express myself and travel freely without risking arbitrary arrest. These are the serious limitations of freedom which express acts of great injustice, because they impede on the things we need to live a good life. There are no straight answers on what the meaning of positive freedom should have on our political arrangements, the same way there is no necessary connection between the advocacy level of political theory with Taylor's holistic ontology. To claim that a free society is one where individuals can realize themselves, and that this is something we ought to bring about, is distinct

from the question of what is just, and what the state should do, which place the question of liberty against other considerations (ibid, 225).

While these considerations clarify many of Taylor's approaches into political theory in general, it specifically has relevancy into his understanding of republicanism.[7] This is because there is a historical connection between positive liberty and republican conception of democracy as self-rule. Though these conceptions are distinct from one other, they do relate partially. The genesis of this connection lies in combing the insights of Kant's conception of individual freedom, and Rousseau's account of political freedom, both of which operate with a notion of freedom as self-government. For Kant, the free individual is one who is self-determined by living according to his self-imposed moral law against his natural inclinations. For Rousseau, the free citizen is one who can be the author of his own laws, and thus lives according to his own will rather than the will of others in the state of nature, or the will of the unconstrained monarch. In both cases, freedom is linked to the effective determination of the direction of how one aspires to live. However, Taylor does think that freedom as self-direction and self-control can sometimes depend on others acting in concert as there is a sense in which self-rule, or self-government, connects with freedom as the ability to give shape to one's own community, and as something that express common meaning of a higher form of life (Taylor 1985b, 212, 318-320).

4.4 Is liberalism ahistorical?

The force of the liberal argument against communitarian depiction of liberal theory, Caney (1992) thinks, is that liberalism more than any other ideology has fostered various communities through individual rights that guarantee free expression and free associations, which has proliferated various forms of community, in line with the recognition that culture is fluid and dynamic. A civil society wherein various communities are allowed to flourish depend on the very rights liberals defend in order to preserve its integrity (ibid, 285).

Have liberals ever explicitly denied the social thesis Taylor's contrasts their view with? The fact that the autonomous individual will always be situated within culture is not incompatible

---

[7] Republicanism will be discussed in section six.

observations from a normative point of view, since the former depend on ideas to live by through critical examination of things that matter to them, and which things that merits revaluation. Liberal theory has always been motivated by the attempt to shield individuals from conformist, intolerant and homogenic forms of living, which is why the social-contract methodology assumes a pre-social person in order to evaluate social norms and propose ideas about legitimate authority. Caney argues that we can distinguish between individual's personal identity, and their moral personality, and claim that universal claims and impartiality concerns our moral nature, without inferring that the self as a person is not attached to his values and relationships. The motivation here, as within classical contract theory, is precisely because social attachments and moral views are so important to individuals that they should not affect their entitlements within a political sphere they share with others who hold different views. The methodological inference from cultural ignorance, in order to dissect political principles, is needed to protect everybody's interests in their own personal autonomy. This does not involve the view that individuals can articulate their fundamental pursuits in life independent from their social situation, on the contrary, a well-ordered society is founded and justified through the very fact that individual interests rely on various forms of institutions (ibid, 278-279).

Part of Taylor's criticism of liberal understanding of individual rights is that they are defended in distance from the social domain of the self which implies that individual identity is something we can approach in existentialist terms where culture and personality are things we can pick out of our own choosing, which undermines the historical sources behind our own identity. However, the problem with Taylor's social thesis of individual embeddedness is his interchangeable reference to identity in both the metaphysical meaning, the conditions of an objects identical existence over time, and in the psychological meaning of self-understanding. This is problematic because we are only embedded persons in the psychological notion of identity. The social thesis cannot be a claim about what a person is, but what shapes it, given that changing beliefs and commitments are not at odds with personal identity in the metaphysical sense Though it matters that we are partially embedded in social domains, Taylor does not deny that we are able to distance ourselves from practices we disvalue. Yet, often it can be hard to read what distinguishes partial from complete embeddedness if there's aspects of identity beyond revaluation. There are always ideals in a culture whose interpretation can be changed, without people distancing themselves from it. Though we can never change where we come from, we can change our understanding of that experience (ibid, 275).

Another ambiguity in Taylor's theory of the self lies between whether it is a sociological observation, or a teleological aspect of human development and human history. Though Taylor rejects that obligations and norms can be upheld through the notion that they are part of a rationalizing developing order, he does maintain that traditions and norms have a certain authority over us in that they are the domains we must look to find meaning, and that significance is something we discover within the horizon of meaning, yet never invent on our own as if something had value simply because it was chosen. There is something self-defeating in the idea that we can question every aspect of our social situation, since this would eliminate all background understandings of value that motivate us to live in accordance with our character and purposes. The radically free self is one that exercises his capacity of reason to do away with strong evaluations, yet this is impossible. We are only free as a situated self and this cannot involve questioning all self-understandings and presupposition under the guise of rational self-determination. If this were possible, we would have no content to direct our way in the myriad of opportunities. Some aspects of what is given to us are constitutive aspects of our identity, and the exercise of liberty is conditioned on our horizon of meanings, that make choices intelligible and purposeful (Taylor 1992, 30-40).

Caney (1992) argues that liberal theory is neither ignorant nor unable to recognize our partial embedded situation, without admitting that this ought to change our understanding of autonomy. To the extent that traditions or cultures are meaningful, then we can assume people will choose to live by them. In this way, commitments to individual autonomy is not coupled with ahistorical and distanced conception from people's situations, nor does it involve the existentialist claim that we can step outside our own experience and construct our ties from a baseline position (ibid, 277). For Kymlicka (1988), the error in Taylor's argument is that it builds on the assumption that liberals must value freedom intrinsically, as alluded to above. Instead we value freedom exactly because, as Taylor says, we can form relationships and commitments that matter to us, and this meaning depends on a continuity of how we have decided to live in accordance with who we are (ibid, 187-188).

The real question instead concerns the extent to which society serves the function of setting guidelines or ends of things we come to value. If we think that some ends are given, we must inquire where they come from and ask whether their source lies in embedded values or activities. If our freedom is situated in this way, does it mean that individuals are fixed against

roles in a community? According to Kymlicka, communitarians to often conflate situated freedom with the situated individual. For him, the value of liberty stems from the purposes we can pursue where we choose our ends on accord of our own individual judgments and understanding of the various alternatives. Therefore, no ends are authoritative on their own without individual affirmation of its value. The only aspects of ourselves that are 'given' is what gives us the reason to choose, since it will be different for different people and vary as we get older. Though it is externally influenced, it is internally 'set'. Taylor's argument against radical freedom is flawed because he does not show that the 'given' are horizons of the community. The fact that communal values are objects of an individual's critical reflection does not amount to an empty view of the self (ibid, 188-190).

By affirming that the social is concern for the political we must take account of the dangerous coercive potential that follows from such authority. In the same way, Kymlicka (1989) recognizes that liberals have neglected the fact that pluralism cannot be taken for granted. A free society is the product of history, giving rise to a culture that values freedom, and as a historical achievement it can be threatened either because of the lack of critical reflection from our practices, or because people are to attach to their cultural practices. A culture of freedom needs both attachment and critical distance in mixture (ibid, 899).

For Taylor, the content of a society's conception of the good is based on civic deliberations, they themselves have to decide what is valuable, and it is a mistake to construe the state as neutral with regards to their social practices. While he is aware of the danger of oppression in cultural reinforcement, the tensions in Taylor's answers on these questions follows from his wider attempt to reconcile freedom with belonging, and how cultural norms and practices express something meaningful about humans, even though they might be problematic. Part of Kymlicka's criticism against Taylor's train of thought concerns the danger of rewarding those that are articulate, at the expense of those who are not gifted in the pursuit of collective deliberations of what values they hold onto. Many values or practices are not properly understood by others, and many have been deliberatively excluded. It is unfair to demand that people ought to participate in this endeavor, it is best to leave them free to articulate who they are in relation to family and friends in ways they can be understood rather than being succumbed to the demands of wider society. The majority is always able to impose and entrench its values

in ways that hinder natural social change, that might be called for by a sizable minority (ibid, 901).

There is value to the communitarian idea that a culture's history and structure matters for evaluation of what is a common good, but these ideas are the partial products of elitist definitions and majoritarian stories that influence how debate about what is valuable proceeds. In contrast, liberal neutrality is worthwhile because its inclusive and allows minorities to associate on their own terms against majority practices and definitions. If we instead demand that minorities, through public domains of deliberations, ought to defend their ideals of the good life, given the linger threat of state coercion, such a practice would be exclusive. This danger cannot be avoided, especially given the oppressive history that exists in different societies across the world. It is this relationship between state and society which necessitates neutrality. The liberal social thesis is very much aware that relationships and domains of interactions are formed by individuals in order for them to articulate what they consider valuable, they simply argue that the state is not needed to provide this domain, but rather will distort the natural social process. It is rather communitarians who implicitly think atomism and singular individualism is what will happen if social deliberation is not put into a context of politics (ibid, 904).

5. The moral field

Taylor's claims that procedural models of liberalism and democracy build on a 'narrow' understanding of morality, evident through the supposed fact that they shy away from questions of the good in favour of neutral decision procedures that claim to offer reasonable guides on how to organize political life. For Taylor, morality is a broad term that refers to more than just what is right to do, but what kind of person it is good to be. The moral refers to the background meanings that inform the judgments individuals have when making a choice. If all our deliberations as agents consisted of means/end reasoning on the basis of value-neutral preferences, which he thinks classical liberalism implies, we would be simple weigher of alternatives. In reality, the questions we ask about individual rights or the nature of the good life are shaped by how our strong evaluations are connected to different moral questions that depend on each other. The reason why people deserve equal rights, and why people deserve respect, are couched in a wide moral ontology of what we consider good. When we articulate what we build on when we judge something as valuable, or why something is entitled to respect,

or define rights, liberties, or obligations, we are engaged in articulation of the framework of goods that make these judgments intelligible. To know yourself is to know your relationship to questions of value and the moral compass that guides your judgments when making a choice. This moral horizon is part of our agency as individuals, and part of our background as political theorists when we propose principles for social organization that reflect what we consider valuable (Taylor 1989, 20-27, 65-69).

Instead, the attempt to be neutral via disguising strong evaluations and the plurality of goods, the moral field is undermined. As Taylor sees it, all ethics of what it is right to do will implicitly rely on unarticulated conceptions of what is good, which is why giving absolute priority to the former whenever a conflict emerges, will undermine the plurality of goods that matter in an individual's life. Moral goods like personal integrity, rational capabilities, or autonomy are all expressions of what many understand as integral aspects of living a good life and how we define ourselves. The diverse set of goods that matter for people cannot be reduced to singular, quantifiable notions of preferences as this would undermine the qualitative nature that informs us of ethically relevant considerations that should matter in political theory. For example, within an individual life, a person might be committed to both family life, and aspirations of a career, both of which pull against each other without rendering the other invalid by making a choice (Taylor 1985b, 235-245).

Taylor thinks that neutral decision procedures that make no reference to the good will narrow morality by privileging some goods we value, that they implicitly build on, such as utility or equal respect for human capacities, at the expense of questions of what it is good to be; as these questions are more vulnerable to the charge of relativism, when in fact both routes invoke qualitative views. As such, many goods that matter are subordinated to the supposedly rational and impartial demands that claim absolute priority whenever a conflict between the good and the right emerges. When important questions are only asked within the framework of what is right to do, we neglect how answers rely on the wider field of morality that inform us why human beings are worthy of respect and dignity, why this imposes obligations on us, and how we find meaning in life. To understand why someone is motivated to act in a certain way, or why a society upholds individual rights, we must investigate the background of meanings embedded within their cultural ideas about what it is good to be. Whereas ancient forms of morality were 'substantively oriented' by identifying the marker of rationality as the

establishment of correct judgments of the good, modern notions of reasons are instead judged by how we think, regardless of whether the outcome is correct. In addition, modern ethics rejects qualitative distinctions as the basis for moral judgments by reducing their importance down to 'basic reasons'. Instead of viewing good behavior in line with our aspiration to be a honest or brave people, modern ethics instead tell us to act in accordance with moral principle like the categorical imperative, the Kantian idea that we should act in accordance with universalizable rules that treat humans as ends in themselves, or some utilitarian calculus that informs us to act in ways that produce the most pleasure for the greatest number (Taylor 1989, 85-86).

These basic reasons, Taylor thinks, disguise rather than illuminate their own strong evaluations that makes their ethic meaningful, for example that a good life is lived autonomously or maximizing utility, and therefore they cannot explain in which way these things are goods that define a way of living in qualitative higher contrasts to other forms of life. The reason why we can respect basic reasons that tell us why we should not hurt or steal from others is because we have a conception of why human life is valuable. Without invoking these judgments, we cannot explain why people are owed impartial concern, and following in this train of thought eventually leads to moral reasoning that do not have grounding in people's actual motivation and our commitment to impartiality falls short. When we articulate what lies behind our intuitions or our choices, we make use of these distinctions to spell out what we consider valuable, and why we act as we do. Modern ethics is attractive to people because they express implicit ideas about the good life that inform our strong evaluations, either because we find it worthy to reduce suffering and satisfy as many preferences as possible, or live an autonomous life of freedom and self-control, but neither can affirm these substantive conceptions without undermining the primacy of the right above the good. Neither approach can reach full agency since this would involve critical examination of one's framework that render ethical judgment meaningful. If we only focus on the mutual obligations ethics imposes on us amidst our own judgments, we fail to consider that the imposition of ethical demands presupposes that we are motivated via our conception of the good to abide by its demands. When we criticize established institutions, practices, and way of life, this goes via our strong evaluative framework in some way (ibid, 76-85).

This is the background that informs Taylor's criticism of 'procedural' theories of liberalism. First because we cannot really distinguish between the right and the good, and second, in the attempt to do so, we give precedence to a singular principle that reflect one commitment, at the expense of the diversity of goods that matter for us. Their way of reasoning undermines these goods by subordinating them to universal demands that tell us that whenever they conflict, the right overrides all other considerations. In this way, the qualitative distinction is reduced into action-guiding principles that disguise their own substantive commitments. The priority of the right above the good, cannot without error articulate their own foundation. If political principles have lexical priority over other considerations that matter in human live, and are justified as instrumentally valued goods rather than intrinsic goods, we lose hold of the fact that liberal principles are worthy of respect, such as freedom of speech and association, because they are essential parts of what we consider a qualitatively better way of living than others, in the same way that we value democracy not only because we want to accommodate our private interests in a fair manner, but also because we consider a life where men rule themselves qualitatively better than one lived under an enlightened despot (ibid, 76-80, 155-160).

5.1 Individual rights and strong evaluations

A liberal society has different goals, such as the rule of right, an open public sphere, without one or the other being the exclusive feature worthy of extensive interpretation in isolation from the others. We should recognize that liberal societies take care of these aims in various ways, without letting go of the fact that some fundamental rights will always trump the concerns of community given that they express a moral core of humanity whose claim to validity stretches across different cultures. Beyond this, we should let go of the pretension that some societies are not liberal just because they might not have the same wide understanding of how rights weigh against other concerns, for example cultural or welfare goods (Taylor 1995, 247, 287).

Both with regards to civil liberties, as well as redistributive material arrangements that instruct the political economy under notions of equality and fairness, a certain political culture express its own strong evaluations and the qualitative discriminations between a higher or lower form of society, that is the common expression of how a society thinks it is good to be, and how the respect we accord other people place us under mutual obligations. When we say that someone

has a right to something, our statement is only intelligible within a culture that understands the value of that thing. He writes that

> "*our notion of human dignity is in turn bound up with a conceptions of the human good, that is, our answer to the question, what is the good for man? This too is part of the background of a conception of distributive justice. [...] related to conceptions of the human good and to different notions of men's dependence on society to realize the good. Thus deep disagreements about justice can only be clarified if we formulate and confront the underlying notions of man and society."* (Taylor 1985b, 291).

This help us to understand the differences of interpretation within principles of justice and tell us that normative political principles cannot be distinguished from investigations of the human subject. Within political theory we find ideas about human agency in the full sense, and the dignity we accord to people to have their human capacities respected and sustained. When we assert the right to free speech, we say that there's something deeply important for humans given their capacities as rational beings to say and do what they want on the basis of their own articulation of what is valuable. This also places us in a political dilemma in relation to those whose cultural self-understanding are not as willing to accept the universal validity of this right if their moral horizon is radically different from our own. If we understand rights in this way, we go beyond the mere consequentialist justification for certain goods in relation to the good life. Instead, rights are much more substantial given that they are intelligible within a cultural background of what it means to be a person, which capacities we associate with selfhood, and how they are indispensable in living a good life. This poses a challenge for us to balance different interests and capacities that we associate with human dignity. Just by asserting that some rights are inalienable does not put an end to the many public contestation we have in society given the competing nature of different goods based on our self-understanding. There is no formula that can put an end to these disputes simply by weighing different individual rights against each other. Rights are necessary in that they protect important things about humans, but appealing to rights will neither answer nor account for the nature involved in various socio-political disputes (Taylor 1985b, 302)

5.2 Does Taylor misunderstand modern moral-political theory?

According to Kymlicka (1991), Taylor misunderstands the structure of modern moral-political theory, in so far as moral questions in the broad sense has been replaced rather than suppressed. While questions of the good do serve the motivational function Taylor attributes to them, they belong in the private sphere. Taylor's account on moral agency does not imply that we can reject the priority of the right above the good, because the principle is not conditioned on a denial of the qualitative difference between forms of life, but instead the commitment to impartiality. Given modern diversity, a commitment to impartiality is a moral point of view that gives all persons due recognition of ends in themselves with the entitlement to equal consideration of their interests. This is why moral acts are those that are impartially justifiable in ways that embody equal concern This concern go back to the ancient idea that we are all children of God, but as moderns we give different answers on what people's interests are, and what it means to offer equal consideration to them. Modern morality is united via the claim that morality involves impartial treatment of interests, however we define it, which does not marginalize qualitative goods but on the contrary welcomes a discussion about what they are (ibid, 159-161).

Though we might be mistaken about our own ends, the answer lies within each persons, which is why the condition that enable us to reevaluate our commitments are so important. These 'discovery procedures', seek to establish conditions that allow continuous re-evaluation of our judgments. To make this realistic, one has to abstract away from particular ends to find what the pursuit of the good requires. This could be done via 'thin theories of the good', where neutral resources are justified by guaranteeing individuals to make use of, in the same manner that Taylor describes, the qualitative distinctions to conceive moral judgments in the broad sense. The commitments to instrumental, procedural, reason, does not mean that this is how we live a good life. Further, there will always be qualitative distinctions that underlie basic reasons. People are worthy of the impartial concern they recommend because we all have the same capacity for reason, or the ability to experience pain and pleasure (ibid).

Taylor complains that procedurally produced obligations will undermine or override conceptions of the good, which is most problematic when, for example, individual rights are defined in extensive terms and treated as an 'all or nothing matter', without room for prudence in the face of collective goals or particular forms of life, connected to a community's substantive views. This view, according to Taylor, undermines liberalism itself because it fails

to acknowledge that some rights are more important than others and that we ought not always to insist on their imposition when they threaten significant goods. Here, procedural morality imposes itself in unrealistic ways without recognition of commitments to friends and family for example, which is at odds with the insistence on neutral impartiality (Taylor 1989).

Kymlicka points out that just because the normative judgments that modern moral-political thinking builds on are not explicitly illuminated, there is no hindrance against articulating them. To suggest that they cannot do this is misleading, since there is a difference between general and particular conceptions of the good. In liberal theory, the background judgments that give credence to the lexical priority of the right is general in that it guides our thinking about which conditions best enables individuals to determine and pursue particular conceptions. The motivation to articulate rights and obligations in impartial terms is not because they want to marginalize questions of the good, but rather because the very purpose of "*sustaining ways of life that citizens can affirm as worthy"* where "*justice draws the limit, the good shows the point"* (Kymlicka 1991, 168).

This is why Taylor's emphasis that institutions must be intelligible for humans in their search for meaning seems to talk past the implicit meaning liberals think a priority of the right expresses. Since we can assume that individuals are naturally interested in the conception of the good life, the purpose of moral-reasoning ought to concern itself with providing reasons why others are entitled to respect for their views. Thus, Taylor misunderstands the 'division of labour' that modern moral-political theory operates with. Crucially, Taylor's conception of morality breaks with our modern vocabulary. We intuitively think of immoral persons or societies as those who infringe on the rights of others, not those who live poor or unimaginative lives. This is where Taylor argues that without illuminating substantive commitments we have for others; morality cannot offer reasons for why people must abide by obligations. If people are not are not able to act on the basis of moral prescripts, what value do they have? The illustration of required actions that follow from basic reasons are insufficient if agents are unable to recognize the obligation as an aspect of the moral field. If we are living beyond the moral means of which our identity encapsulate, morality must moderate its claims (ibid, 168-170).

Even if we agree with Taylor that morality cannot take place in complete abstraction from the actual lives that people live, is there not sometimes reason to insist that this is irrelevant for the validity of moral prescripts? Kymlicka mentions as an example the uncontested claim that non-whites in apartheid South-Africa had moral entitlements of equal citizenship, a claim independently legitimate from considerations of whether the white population would be "*willing to accept and empowered upon"* to act in accordance with the obligation. Another example could be the entitlements to redistribution people in the global south are owed. If this claim has impartial validity it does not depend on whether those who are obliged to fulfill the obligation are willing to comply with the command. There are many examples in history where turning to violence was necessary to institute what is right given the lack of others recognition of their claim. Failure to see this point on Taylor's account of morality in effect is limiting "*the scope of human rights to what privileged people can be motivated to be or do is to offer a cramped, conservative, view of morality"* (ibid, 174).

Contrary to Taylor's claim that impartial reasoning sacrifice goods that matter for our identity, such as family or traditional ways of living, Kymlicka argues that their value is independent from the dictates of moral prescripts. Since modernity is diverse and people hold different goods, impartiality matters in order to adjudicate when conflict arises. In turn, impartiality is justified in reference to our substantive commitments to human dignity due to our sentient nature as being beings with the capacity of reason and moral conscience. If modern morality is narrowed because it cannot empower people to comply, why should this change anything? The aim of morality is to provide reasons for how to act on the assumption that we all have an interest in living a good life, that impartiality matters, and that morality is demanding in ways that transcends consent. This is why procedural models do not need reference to the good, but rather catering to common interests, which implicitly builds on qualitative distinctions of the higher and admirable things in life (ibid, 179).

Is this really the implications of Taylor's position? It seems that we could interpret what it means to be morally empowered to do, differently than what Kymlicka here does, by invoking a difference between what a person, as a human being, is capable of recognizing on the basis of his self-understanding, and how he currently understands himself. The fact that legal equality amongst all South Africans today exists shows that people were unable at a certain time, given beliefs that needed to be, and proved to be able to change. There are many contemporary human

rights violations around the world where it is uncontroversial to claim that people's self-understanding have to be changed in order to institute what is right, it is another thing to say state-sanctioned imposition, or violence, is something we ought to do. Taylor' thinks that Kymlicka, by recognizing that conceptions of the good have their significance independent of subjective affirmation, make little use of it. He distinguishes between 'life goods' and 'constitutive goods'. While ordinary life goods include ideas about the good life, constitutive goods are the overarching inspirations that lowers all other goods, which can have religious or secular foundation. He claims that moral theorists ought consider the significance of these goods as the foundation for human motivation since they cannot be as easily separated as Kymlicka claims, since they are

> "*features of the universe, or God, or human beings, (i) on which the life goods depend, (ii) which command our moral awe or allegiance, and (iii) the contemplation of or contact with which empowers us to be good. In virtue of (iii) such constitutive goods function as what I call 'moral sources'. Examples of candidates for constitutive goods available in the tradition are: God, Plato's Idea of the Good, Kant's power of rational agency, which commands the awe of the agent him/herself*". (Taylor 1991, 243)

The fact that moral prescripts and goods conflict as much as they do makes it irrational to give unconditional precedence to one over the other. The temptation to do so follows from the flawed view that "*all issues of fairness were equally vital and grave, and issues of the good life equally secondary. But that is not the way it is in life […] this search for across-the-board principles seems to me to fly in the face of elementary facts of human life*" (ibid, 244). Sometimes the questions between these two sphere vary in significance and must be treated accordingly when weighed against each other. When we realize that someone lives beyond their moral means, should not a priori rule out considerations whether moderation is appropriate.

To suggest instead that morality demands coercion is to hint that this is always *the* answer when people are unable to consent with supposed obligations, rather than looking for solutions that take people's self-understandings seriously. Given that some injustices are more serious than others, it is unwise to insist on universal principles that equalized their significance when insisting on coercion can break up "*community spirit, friendship, or traditional identity*" (ibid, 244). This is why we ought to interpret the validity of principles in relation to the domains they

are meant to be applied in. Suggesting otherwise overlooks the destructive consequences foreign imposition and coercion in the name of justice can and have had on communities. The contours of ethical life ought to advise us to weigh prudently between the good, the right and people's interests, which speaks against Kymlicka's division of labour. Without knowing a priori when something trumps the other, Kymlickas proceduralism does not pay "*enough attention to the good to determine whether and when the moral principles they offer ought to be modified to accommodate its demands.*" (Ibid, 245).

Beyond the claim that liberalism ought to moderate its universalist claims when political prudence speaks in favor of investigating people's self-understanding, we also see why Taylor does not believe that neutrality, when taken to its logical conclusion, is coherent. The level of political advocacy will always be informed by the moral field, even though it is justified in impartial terms. Different forms of family policy are one example. The argument that different taxation schemes and welfare arrangements can be neutral because they are justified as a mere distribution of resources based on choices of individuals, disguises the fact that the state has an agenda evident in its own incentives to foster some forms of living it thinks is valuable, and which reflects citizens different conception of the diversity of goods. The reason why right- and left-wing governments argue for different forms of family policies is not merely because they have different understandings of what is fair, but because their judgments about fairness is informed by their values and their ideas about what a family is, and should be. The very definition of family is also political and can always have its legal recognition challenged for being non-neutral. There is no way that the state takes a neutral position on what it is and deserves to have which is why, according to Taylor "*neutral liberalism is an angelic view, unconnected to the real world in which democracies function*" (Abbey 1996, 5).

6. The free republic

How can government be neutral with regards to the distinct culture that different communities adhere to, under the banner of protecting them, without affirming their worth? If the liberal democratic aspiration of popular sovereignty is rule by the people for the people, in what way does it make sense to issue no judgments of their own culture's conception of the good life? From Taylor's idea that there can be irreducible common goods we get the idea that a liberal constitution that affirms its own value needs to foster these collective goods connected to

culture and language. In order to sustain a liberal polity, there is a need for some social cohesion founded on loyalty and patriotism toward its own dictates.

It is in this context that Taylor argues that a political unit needs some sort of collective identity founded on its historical experience, in order to enjoy legitimacy, which is the precondition of social cohesion and stability in the face of social turmoil. Belonging to a political society can only be reconciled with freedom if it manifests a common purpose or common identity as a democratic, historically situated unit. For him, this cannot be a convergent good, but an expressive aspect of common appreciation of the fact that citizens share a polity with others because they recognize democracy as a higher form of life that express our mutual dignity as a self-ruling people. The countries we recognize as liberal are not properly neutral in the strict sense that liberal theory describes since many of them do take an active part in the civil sphere, and uphold cultural practices as a common goal against market dynamics that threaten to erode things people value but cannot acquire on their own, or depend on others to appreciate. The historical unit is a source of identity and its patriotic dynamic cannot be accounted for without recognizing irreducible social goods. As Taylor sees it, the classical 'atomic' liberal conception of democracy fails to accommodate that citizens are not calculating rational actors who think of politics as an instrument towards their own material needs, but instead cast their vote in alignment of their visions of what kind of society they think is meaningful to aspire to (Taylor 1995, 260-270).

Habermas (1994), however, argues that this depiction is a strawman of liberal theory. It is not the case that rights do not express the common history of the polity it emerges from and applies to, nor is it the case that laws will not express a distinct form of life that citizens can recognize as their own, and as such, as an extended aspect of their own identity. While Habermas defends the liberal tenet that a concern with diversity forbids us from instituting substantial values that serve as an overarching consensus of popular contestation, the laws of the polity are still legitimate in the eyes of citizens because they have been subjected to legislative procedures that invariantly will connect to their public conceptions of how they understand themselves as citizens and a people. Habermas agrees with Taylor that civic integration of individuals, in order to secure social cohesion, cannot be secured via the mechanisms of the market economy or the rule of law that the administrative state upholds, unless we make sure that the different questions that concern people are subjected to various forms of discourses, in both the civil

sphere and the legislature, that can serve as a source for patriotism as a distinct understanding of who they are as a people. By investigating aspects of Habermas deliberative theory of democracy we can see how some procedural theories of democracy aims to reconcile conceptions of the good with principles of the right.. Since Habermas defines his model as a third alternative to both liberal and republican conception of democracy, we can also shed light on ideal aspects of republicanism that inspires Taylor (ibid, 112).

6.1 Three models of democracy

In an ideal typology, the difference between liberalism and republicanism can be drawn between their understanding of law and freedom, and their understanding of civic virtues. Whereas republicans traditionally understand freedom as a social status citizens enjoy in democratic settings marked by equal relations, liberals locate freedom in individuals natural rights, where law is a necessary impetus rather than a condition. Classical liberals have often viewed democracy through the lens of market dynamics, which is why they have been less concerned about the need for public virtues given that the aggregation of individual preferences in both politics and market will produce the common good (Pettit 1993, 162).

While negative conceptions have mostly been associated with the liberal traditions, the positive conception has been associated with republicanism. On Pettit's understanding, the republican conception of freedom is actually a clarification of what negative liberty consists in, which he labels freedom as non-domination. Here, the absence of interferences is a guarantee that requires more than the actual lack of invasion in one's life. To be free from domination is the status the free citizen of the republic enjoys given that he lives in a democratic regime founded on the rule of law, which closely aligns to the formulation I attributed to Rousseau above. It tells us that we are only negatively free to the extent that we are protected from possible interferences, given that a benevolent dictator might dictate interventions in the life of citizens without due cause, putting us at constant risk. To uphold the republic, it is important that citizens are committed to the democratic values of the state in order to defend them in times of turmoil. Liberals have traditionally been inclined to view law as a necessary constraint on liberty justified by the overall freedom it guarantees, while republicans think law is the constitution of liberty, where law can only erode on liberty if they erode significant aspects of human life such as free expression, culture, and individual possibility. Without the rule of law,

there can be no freedom since this is the domain where equality between different people is established via the citizenship that protects us from the dominance of others (ibid, 166-175).

Habermas model of the deliberative democracy is defended as a third alternative motivated by valuable insights within each model in order to meet the critique that neutral liberalism is culturally empty. On a correct understanding liberal democracy, Taylor's communitarian inspired critique is not only misleading, but fails to recognize how some questions must be kept at a distance from each other within the democratic system. Whereas liberals have traditionally viewed the political domain as foundation of collective goals via aggregation of interests in accordance with constitutional constraints of legislative procedures, republicans have elevated this domain as a third source for civic integration, beyond law and markets, by fostering a sense of social unity and self-determination of what kind of society they want to live in (Habermas 1994, 5).

The fact that citizens are able to stand outside the prerogatives of law and markets, means that their relationships cannot be reduced to mere conflict and competition, but also one of meaning. This is why republicans take issue with the classical liberal claim that political rights and political participation is just another avenue for the pursuit of private interests via the channels of democracy, and also why they are less inclined to elevate negative liberty as a foundational axiom given that all law must emerge from the public's concerns and their self-determination, where freedom is equated with the ability to live under the laws one has drafted for oneself. Here, social autonomy does not precede politics via metaphysical notions of natural rights but emerges out of the democratic process as a legitimizing force of the state apparatus via the recognition that rights depends on a public that values democracy. Republicanism thus seeks to institutionalize positive freedom in the collective sense of what it means to be self-determined, which merits that the state must sustain inclusive domains of deliberations that can give shape and direction to the common goals of the polity. Habermas agrees with Taylor that the political process, cannot be reduced to the traditional liberal reduction of citizens as rational actors engaged in strategic pursuit of power, since political legitimacy is more than a quantification of aggregated preferences. Republicans better capture the ancient meaning that democracy tries to institutionalize our capacity of reason as a common exercise, which is why a legitimate legislature must aim to transform interests and opinions via domains of deliberation with the ideal of reaching an agreement. This is important since individuals political ideas are not

articulated in complete isolation, but through dialogue with others, and this process ought to continue within the channels engaged in instituting the political direction of the polity. The classical liberal model falsely assumes that interests, meaning, and values are already articulated (ibid, 6-7).

However, Habermas takes issue with the communitarian reading of republican insights, which he sees as the supplementary claim that self-determination of democratic discourse consists of constructing a common identity through a homogenic view of the civil sphere. The purpose of political participation is not articulation of a community's collective identity, as this overlooks the liberal insight that we are strategic, competitors as well. There are limits of which expectations we can attribute to citizens ethical commitments to the common good compared to his private interests. It is too naïve to insist that legitimacy of political power must depend on some common ethos of the polity that rational discourse and processes of bargaining follows from, as there is no necessary binding between the dialogical functions of democracy and a community bound together by a common substantive ethic (ibid)

It is this connection that Taylor promotes, as a binding between democratic self-determination as a worthy form of life and a community's history, which creates the conception of the good that renders law intelligible and in line with one's own aspiration as a citizen. The common exercise that is politics can enable the individual to understand his own embeddedness with others in a historically situated unit, and further enables him to better articulate his own identity in virtue of his community's self-understanding given that identity is in part the product of the traditions in which it emerges. For Habermas, this undermines that the legislature is more than a domain to explore shared values, it is also an institute to guarantee peace and equal autonomy for all individuals. This is why, even though questions of the good take place within liberal democracy, they will always be constrained by dictates of the right, or in Habermas vocabulary, moral questions have priority over ethical questions since they regulate the democratic structure. Though Habermas agrees with Taylor that ethical questions are important because they spell out common understanding of various communities, the traditions they want to hold on, and which norms they think are worthy for who they are as a people, they are not the centerpiece of democracy, but only one discourse which stands on par with technical discourses that concern mean/end reasoning, and the overarching questions of justice that transcends particular conceptions of the good and claims absolute universality. This is because a

commitment to freedom and equality for all requires some metric that protects minorities, without which democracy can undermine the autonomy of individuals who feel estranged by the collective self-understanding that the process produces. Moral questions are independent of the community's understanding, yet at the same time they enable the reciprocal relationship between public and private autonomy. What this means is that without sufficient protection for the individual, there cannot be any overarching ethical understandings that bind people together since this presupposes that the discourses where these questions are deliberated are made of by the different understandings of identity that exists within the civil sphere. This is why communitarians overlook the dynamics of modern pluralism, where the state-sanctioned goals of the state always risk favoring some values or interests that do not align with the actual intersubjective understanding of the polity in its entirety (ibid, 8-9)

Taylor's claim that rights-oriented liberalism cannot accommodate the cultural significance of societies is a misunderstanding since liberalism recognizes that law must be constructed by the citizens themselves, not imposed on them without inputs and such the laws that pass through our legislative bodies will embody our public autonomy as authors of our own laws. Here, the connection between constitutional codes and democratic participation is not a 'difference-blind' liberalism given that citizens deliberate into "*what respects equal things will be treated equally and unequal things unequally in any particular case*" (Habermas 1994b, 113).

There is no reason to retract from this framework in order to provide a common sense of unity, or to accommodate differentiated claims with regards to distinct communities. A legal order founded on modern law recognizes that law is formal, its existence lies within codified scripts, it recognizes individuals as the subjects of rights, and it is founded on the decisions of a representative legislature that is constrained by procedural formulas of how to implement new law in accordance with their popular mandate. Habermas is well aware that loyalty towards the system requires integration into the political culture. This would be futile if constitutional principles were abstract and distanced from the lived experience of citizens, but in fact political culture is formed by their own interpretation of their constitution on the basis of their own history, which is not neutral in the strict sense. A polity's self-understanding will be formed by this "*common horizon of interpretation*" which is based on a distinction between two forms of integration, constitutional and sub-political communities with their own conceptions of the good. If this distinction is not respected, the majority will integrate its own cultural

understandings into the state prerogative. The only common bonds beyond diverse communities is a consensus on legitimate law and power. Its universality is based on the ideal that it approaches consensus, against a political culture that is loyal to its constitution (ibid, 134-135).

This is why rights-based liberalism is not an abstract universal that creates laws at a distance from the actual experience of citizens. He writes that "*the more concrete the matter at hand, the more the self-understanding of a collectivity and its form of life […] are expressed in the acceptability of the way the matter is legally regulated*" (ibid, 125). Since there are different ways we reason depending on the topic at hand, laws will be affected by various discourses, one of which concerns questions of the good life, culture, and identity. If the democratic process shapes individual rights in accordance with overarching conceptions of the good life, our private autonomy is threatened because it ends up fixating cultural understandings. Instead, conceptions of the good is only on aspect of the democratic process where citizens do in fact reflect on their form of life, what identity means for them, and most crucially, can reflect on which traditions they wish to reaffirm.

The deliberative model Habermas proposes is one in which the process of the legislature is conditioned in such a way that it can balance and compromise among diverging interests so that it's consistent with the collective good, while at the same time applying moral questions of universal justice onto the particular community with their own traditions and values. This model presupposes a certain view of society that merges the liberal market metaphor, and the republican reference to culture, without reducing itself to either one. Whereas republicans operate with a blurred distinction between state and society, liberals understand democracy as a bridge between the two; though constrained by individual rights and constitutional regulations that prohibits the concentration of power. In the deliberative model, we let go of the unrealistic notion that civic virtues are motivating enough to perform collective action, and concede that society is largely self-regulating outside the political domain without holding onto the idea that the common good will be produced via an invisible hand. Political participation is crucial aspect of self-determination, but we should not view the constitution of society as the legitimate product of deliberations, but rather the conditions that enable the process itself by institutionalizing deliberative domains that can institute state-sanctioned political will in connection to the political inputs from civil society and elections. Given that society is decentered, popular sovereignty has to be imagined as located in the processes that shape

political will by being connected to various spheres of public influence in which people can participate (ibid, 8-12)

The question of a sovereign self-determined citizenship cannot be understood through ideas about its intricateness with a social whole, nor on the basis of being atomic, isolated individuals. As an ideal, the democratic process produces decisions whose genesis lies within the public and its tested in legislative and judicial domains yet maintains that state and society are distinct domains. The legitimacy of the republic goes beyond the mere aggregation of votes and public justification where there needs to be broad procedures that can include various opinions and concerns that can be articulated and rationalized within the legislature. Habermas' assumption is that in this way the administration's ultimate mandate of implementation will be much better and rational than in their stead since decisions have been tested in line with the various discourses that steer the administration. The moral ideal of popular sovereignty must recognize the fact of pluralism which necessitates that it is only through legislative, executive, and juridical forms of power that the will and ideals of the competing, yet bounded people can manifest itself. Though there will be issues that affect everyone in society, society as such is not a 'self', as it cannot organize into a common will, which is why popular sovereignty must have an intersubjective interpretation (ibid, 12).

6.2 Whose values?

Is this a sufficient rebuttal of Taylor's claim that neutral liberal democracy cannot affirm the culture of its own citizens? The unity that Habermas professes as sufficient for civic integration is a kind of constitutional patriotism where a diverse public will recognize themselves as distinct community through their own laws. Though Taylor can be partly vague about the distinct boundaries of individual rights, he is well aware of the dangers of pluralism, and do recognize that there are some fundamental rights that a community's self-understanding never can thread upon. At the same time, he does not think that Habermas model is substantial enough to serve as a unifying source of patriotism given that its form insist that principles of the right must override particular conceptions of the good. Habermas' discourse principle is meant to tell us which rules are valid depending on the political question at hand, which places constraints on the identity questions Taylor thinks are unavoidable. For him, questions of a community's identity and historical self-understanding is not something that can be simply

placed within a discursive context and pretend that it can keep itself there respectfully abiding that it's permanently subordinated to the conditions of the universal principles and expected to step aside as soon as a conflict emerges. As we have seen, this is not how human beings as self-interpreters and strong evaluators work, as we operate with a moral field that is permanently there in all discourses in political life. To work as a foundation for strong evaluation it must touch on the basis of goods that are affirmed. If we were to ask why rational discussion is supposed to play its designated part, the answer reveals a strong evaluation, namely that those who are affected by law are entitled to have a say. The constitutive goods that lie behind the formula is what makes it an attractive idea for the contemporary liberal west, but would be unintelligible for a Platonic culture that subscribed to the idea that there's an objective good for man and society independent from whatever people consent to in a deliberative sphere. It is this hyper-good that underlies the procedure which distinguishes between different questions and ranks them, and thus the vision of the good plays a role that the theory denies. In order to justify what we take to be a core morality we cannot operate with epistemological distinctions where that which is more easily agreed upon serves as a foundational axiom rather than ideas about good because:

> *"this kind of distinction is made […] by certain modern Western theories, notably Kantian ones: the rule of right can be distinguished from people's conceptions […] of the good life (Habermas), and given a different more secure foundation (in reason itself, or the commitments involved in discourse, or whatever). But this distinction is internal to **one** historical view. One couldn't ask […] people from other cultures altogether, to buy this radical distinction between the right and the good, or between definitions of rights and those of human flourishing".* (Taylor 1994, 247).

This is the same train of thought that applies to Caney's argument mentioned above, the idea that the methodology of political theory can operate with a distinction between personal identity and moral personality as a way to deduct universal principles. Though liberals can criticize the meaning Taylor attaches to this point, and claim that neutrality was never meant to be posited as something that can accommodate every worldview, as this defines neutrality in ways that

no one can deny is impossible[8], the fact that our different self-understandings easily can lead to conflict is further argument for why imposition of the right must be cautioned against the actual lived lives of those it concerns. Habermas foundationalism of what the protection of private autonomy demands, such as free speech or free association, is premised on a thin understanding of a universal interest. It must therefore assume cultural convergence or work to establish it on the basis of cultural resources. When a core is given this special importance to always override other considerations then Habermas shares with the classical liberal theorists the idea that

> *"it is sufficient that one has grounded **all that matters** from a single source. This is after all, what Kant and foundationalist thinkers after him, e.g. Habermas, claim to do. There are other issues, [...] e.g. what I and my culture consider a fulfilling life. But the deliverances of a discourse ethic must take precedence over these. In other words, we don't ground everything, but we ground what trumps" (ibid, 248-249).*

6.3 Freedom and self-determination

Taylor does not deny that Habermas discourse model cannot accommodate the need for various societies, he only protest the claim that is it can serve as a universal recipe for all societies, and that it cannot accommodate various goods that distinct societies want to live by. There is a plurality of different goods we need to affirm to sustain a liberal polity that reflects its form of life. This means that he protests the form his model rather than the content and simultaneously urges us to accept that it is better to build a kind of patriotism that recognize democracy as self-government as a higher form of life. It expresses dignity we have as both rational and expressive beings, capable of discussing what kind of society we think it is valuable to live in. Abstract principles of the right, where a universalist demand of impartiality has absolute precedence is not something that can motivate people to fight for unless they see the freedom it stands for in connection to their way of life. By recognizing self-government as a good, there are consequences for our understanding of neutrality. He agrees that history should not be fixated on a singular interpretation that is imposed on peoples understanding, but he does claim that as a substantive value, self-government should be taught in schools as an ideal that a republic holds. This is a form on non-neutrality because many worldviews, including Christian sects in

---

[8] (Barry 2001, 25-27)

the West, hold political participation to be both irrelevant and unworthy pursuits. Here, unlike the moral discrimination of Macedo, Taylor is mentioning a "*non-neutrality motivated by not by the commitment to the principle of neutral liberalism, but by another good, that of participatory, citizen self-rule",* which merits abandoning the strict application of neutrality (Taylor 1994, 252).

Taylor defends a liberal model that can accommodate collective goods, and collective goals of a community, so long as these goods are not in violation with fundamental civil and political rights such as freedom of speech and the rule of law. The fact that some goods are irreducible, such as national identity, language, or self-government, since their value express a shared form of meaning, political life should not reduce these social attachments into instrumental arrangements. The liberal tendency to view all forms of patriotism as potentially dangerous is yet another reductive tendency to eradicate the different forms this kind of allegiance can take, where we ought to foster a civic patriotism that can ensure that citizens identity with their own political unit in order to preserve its fundamental commitment to human rights and the rule of law and democracy. We must recognize however, what true patriotism means, as it too often can be abused by those who rally around the flag to distract people from injustices. As Weinstock (1994) says, true patriotism must involve continuous challenge to that which is unjust or unfair, given that many movements that have been labelled 'unpatriotic' have been goods things insofar as the challenge the historical self-understanding of historical traditions and contribute to the continuous self-understanding of the polities claims and aspirations. A diverse community can only develop if the majority interpretations of its own history is challenged and not left alone to essentialize and freeze dominant understandings of its history. How a community imagines its own history is often contested and the various calls for civil rights by minority cultures or ethnicities have often been labelled as 'unpatriotic' when they in fact have been involved in exposing the hypocrisy that a political community's understanding expresses. Patriotism can be a good thing so long as it includes references to those who in the name of liberty and justice challenge the polity's dominant interpretation, since there are often political interests behind the perpetuation of a country's story. Conflicts emerge if government goes too far to institute understandings of history on the basis of majority sentiments which is why a healthy society that commits itself to upholding free speech and association can peacefully transform its own culture and self-understanding (Weinstock 1994, 183).

7. Is liberalism blind to differences?

The same motivation that lies behind Taylor's criticism of neutral liberalism with regards to a polity's self-understanding transfers into his views about multicultural politics, differentiated citizenship and the tenet that some cultural goods can be weighed against the insistence on a uniform imposition of rights without room for nuance. Taylor thinks that cultural survival is one of these goods, and its demand follow challenging the traditional understanding of what equal dignity in the context of a multinational society can mean, and what the ideal of authenticity, the ability to express what makes one distinct from everybody else, entails. There are many political demands behind this ideal, where the argument claims that indifference towards relevant differences constitutes an act of injustice that the traditional understanding of citizenship overlooks. In this liberal tradition, the recognition of our distinct identity is secured via abstraction to our legal status as citizens which reflects our equal dignity as compatriots. The recognition we need as distinct individuals to confirm our sense of self is something we achieve through our private relationships and partial communities. Since liberalism, in this way, is "*fundamentally a theory about multiculturalism*"[9] there is no further need for the liberal state to concern itself with the cultural life of citizens (Taylor 1994, 38-42).

Taylor's views on multicultural politics is largely influenced by his personal experience with the French speaking province Quebec in Canada, and its demand for differential treatment by the federal government. French Canadians argue it is unfair for them as a distinct society to be subjected to the identical law of Canada, as this would subjugate them to the cultural framework of larger society through the state apparatus in ways that do not protect their distinct culture and forbids them to implement policies that protect the usage of the French language. This is the rationale for why sometimes, by not paying attention to the distinct nature of different

---

[9] This quote belongs to Kukathas. His objection here mirrors the same objection leveled against Taylor's characterization of classical liberalism as being inhospitable to difference. He claims that the strict neutrality on matters of cultural or religious difference is not because liberals are inattentive to the importance culture, it is precisely because they recognize how important this is to people, which the history of religious and cultural conflicts bears witness to, that these matter belong in the private sphere (Kukathas 1998, 690)

groups, the interpretation that equality under the law is all there is to the demand of equal treatment, is in fact an injustice. For Taylor, French Canadian culture is taken to be a collective good since their way of life is not some resource they can choose to make use of, but an aspect of who they are and hence something they want to preserve forever. They want to be recognized for what is distinct about them as a group, which for Taylor is interpreted as a collective irreducible dimension, as their common meaning as a nationality is only intelligible together. To accommodate this differentiated basis, we have further reason for why a neutral liberalism committed to equality and self-rule of the people must be revised (Taylor 1994, 59-60).

For Habermas, Taylors argument is invalid since equal citizenship can in fact accommodate relevant differences, and hence it is wrong to characterize this model as difference-blind the way Taylor does. The fact that we are all equal under the law as citizens never meant that we treat everyone the same in the relevant respects. Many liberals argue in the same vein that cultural recognition is important for our identity, but that there's no need to retreat from the standard model of equal citizenship where a differentiated distribution of material resources can accommodate their demand to proliferate their own culture. This is preferable because it allows the public to decide for themselves whether it is worthy to preserve the French language in Quebec, as the majority should not be allowed to impose this on the rest of society. If we stray away from this, and recognize a right to cultural survival, then we start treating cultures as a kind of species we need to save from extinction, when in fact cultures have always changed and will continue to do so on the basis of citizens own understandings (Habermas 1994,107-115).

But if this was all there was to it, why do the people of Quebec and Scotland insist on having special rights that recognize their status as a distinct culture, and should we reject it? What the people of Quebec are demanding is a differentiated treatment which seems to break, or at least offer a new interpretation of what the politics of universal dignity entails, which cannot only be a universal set of rights that are accorded to all citizens. To ensure cultural survival, the state can protect practices that affirm cultural outlooks based on cultural groupings and differentiated form of citizenship that grants different groups political autonomy regarding local affairs. This form of liberalism would uphold fundamental rights but not stretch their extension into trivial domains that undermine the proliferation of cultural outlooks. In the absence of such conditions, procedural liberalism would make it harder for some to live an authentic life in accordance with

their distinct identity, given that the majority will always have the cultural framework needed to be authentic individuals. The rationale for multicultural policies is to ensure that the conditions of authenticity are equally distributed amongst all members of society (Taylor 1994, 57; 1998, 154).

However, while I think Taylor provides uncontroversial rationales for why distinct societies, be it Quebec, Scotland or indigenous societies, are entitled to some political autonomy from a larger state, especially if we couple his defense with the value of local government, decentralized structures of power and the caution to insist on principles of a state's rights in the face of a community's self-understanding, we should still reject the notion that there can be such a thing as a right to cultural survival. The nature of identity and culture is to dynamic to be made into some collective right. In the same way that the ideal of authenticity is not consistent with an overt patriotism, the concept of a collective's right to cultural survival should not serve as the basis for why we recognize a distinct society like Quebec or Scotland to have what I think are justified arrangements for political autonomy. There's still reason to caution against extending the argument into a general rule of how liberal societies ought to approach various forms of cultural identities.,

7.1 The danger of cultural scripts

Taylor recognizes that identity configures partly in relation to political societies while at the same time the self is too complex to be articulated into a singular symbol as there's a diversity of goods and allegiances that we care about in relation to who we are and what kind of society we want to live. In what way can identity, and the various sources that underlie it, be politicized rather than unfold itself within social relationships outside political institutions? Part of Taylor's motivation to reconcile social attachments and dependencies with our own unique identity is to grasp that our articulation is bounded by the conceptual resources in language which is an essentially common enterprise. This is turn depends on a community that renders identity intelligible. As an irreducible good, it cannot be understood via its designative features as it is a holistic phenomenon that over time has built interconnected meanings by which people understand themselves, their societies, and a form of life. To protect the identities that depend on a certain language, we ought to respect that language is a common good politics can be organized around (Taylor 1995, 93).

The struggle of self-identity depend on a framework of meaning which reflects social practices, while at the same time, institutions that aim to preserve the culture of which it figures might undermine its dynamic character when individuals come to interpret its ideals with new meaning. Though self-realization involves a certain understanding of one's cultural embeddedness, will individual authenticity be fostered by policies that aim to protect particular practices? The politics of recognition, which seeks to appreciate and foster differences rather than equalizing them, is not easily reconciled with the ideal of authenticity. Its goal is to affirm the individual's authentic way of being yet has to operate with collective categories as representative formulations of what the individual's concern consists of. Collective identity matter for individual members, but members will always have their own interpretation of what it means for them in ways that cannot be articulated by others. There is a danger of essentialism at play, the idea that we can pick out features of what individual identity consists of, which goes against the fact that cultural identity is evolving. Dissecting the relationship between the collective and individual is difficult, as individual identity it only partially constituted by membership in various communities and at the same time partially constituted via ideals of which have nothing to do with their collective membership. These properties matter for social life, yet it is only collectives that can be understood as a social category (Appiah 1994, 150-151).

The expression of authentic form of life is often formed in opposition to social conventions and traditions we are embedded in, which we seek to escape, and the recognition of who we are as persons will be formed by these experiences as well. The oppositional aspect of authenticity complicates things given that there's complex and various components to individual identity, sometimes so unique that there is no way to offer collective recognition of the social category in ways that will not go against individuals own interpretation. The ideal of authenticity after all urges us to reject conventionalism of larger society, so how can it be made into a foundation of recognition when it is developed against various social forces? Since identity is constructed through social relationships, and made intelligible via public points of reference in culture, particular identities have various sources that transcends particular communities as we are partially embedded in different cultural frameworks, and identity is constructed by various options that is determined for us (ibid, 152-153)

If we agree with Taylor's reasoning for why we should reject procedural liberalism defined as a uniform imposition of rights without regard for relevant differences and rejection of collective goals, is the reason because society has an interest in cultural survival from one generation to the next with particular institutions and practices? Here, this is taken not only to mean that culture has meaning for us today, and that distinct societies deserve differential treatment, he takes it to mean a continued intergenerational guarantee. Since culture is dynamic, the goal should rather be that individuals have the necessary resources to influence the pace of this change against external pressures, in order to avoid that people are coerced into practices they would otherwise reject. A commitment to equal dignity to all cannot allow that a particular conceptions of the good take precedence in all matters. In this connection, Appiah writes that cultural survival ought to be "*consistent with respect for autonomy in the sense that if we create a culture that our descendants want to hold onto, our culture will survive in them*" (ibid, 157-158).

The problem with insistence on cultural survival is when institutions create and reinforce cultural scripts of proper behavior, where dominant frames of reference impose themselves as the proper expectation of how a certain identity ought to look which might go against the individuals own understanding. This is the problem with minorities within a minority, the individuals whose identity cannot be represented by anyone else, and do not want anyone to tell them what it means to be a proper Catholic or a Jew. There is a danger, both with regards to recognition of minority cultures as well as overt forms of patriotism, where particular modes of behavior become connected with a certain identity, which imposes norms onto people on how they should live their life. Taylor's recognition that we construct our identity in virtue of a story ought to caution us against the possibility that we become to connected to a certain script that does the job for us, rather than liberate ourselves from its expectations (ibid, 160).

7.2 The conditions of moral reflexiveness

When we recall Taylor's argument that positive liberty, as an exercise concept, involves the quality of agency which tell us why liberal principles are valuable, we are reminded that negative conceptions cannot accommodate that the development of personhood has to be guided, interpreted and affirmed by the individuals own values. As purposeful beings, liberal institutions enable us to choose what is important for us to live autonomous lives. However, we

should then ask for clarifications of how the conditions of self-realization are consistent with the ideal of authenticity as there is always a risk that our capacity of strong evaluation and recognition of what is significant is made on the basis of social conditions that are not in accordance with autonomy. The importance of these conditions has been articulated by Christman (1991) who argues that the exercise of free will depends on how we have developed our values. If the conditions that give rise to our perception of what is purposeful in life are marked by our ability to critically reflect on the social forces that affect us, rather than being manipulated, then this is consistent with the condition of autonomy that the exercise of freedom involves (ibid, 345)

The relationship between the dialogical self and society is always strained by the demand that the values we affirm are genuinely our own. There is always a chance that we are not autonomous if the motivational sources we live by have been imposed via oppressive practices we might even be obliquus of. For Christman, self-government means that our attitudes are chosen for the right reasons where the level of autonomy is relative to how our values were formed. This tells us that at the time when our beliefs were formed, we were able to reflect on the processes that influence us and were in a position to affirm them via our own self-reflection. This is however a strict demand and somewhat controversial claim since some philosophers think it makes autonomy an impossible demand. Regardless, at its surface it does tell us that the relationship between the dialogical self and social life is always in tension with the demand that the values we affirm are genuinely our own, since there is always a chance that we are not autonomous if the motivational sources we live by have been imposed via oppressive practices unknown to ourselves. The tensions between freedom as an exercise of choosing in line with what is significant and the conditions of communal belonging which we depend on as strong evaluators is not easy to reconcile. Community both enables and constrains this possibility through its moral horizon and its conformist dynamics (ibid, 345-347).

Weinstock (1994) argues that to settle this tension we should recognize that if the common values of a polity cannot be reduced to social goods that enable individual pursuits of the good, then the polity will undermine the very conditions Taylor affirms as necessary to foster our capacity as moral agents. He argues that a commitment to the betterment of societies moral reflexiveness is best aided via a value-neutral distribution of material resource and civil rights rather than the communitarian inspired elevation of collective goods as the source of social

organization. This is because we need to be aware of our own moral framework of evaluative distinctions that work as a background for the choices we make. In Taylor's theory, this is a richer form of the ideal of authenticity which goes beyond the simple view that freedom is merely the ability to act on desires, but rather express our ability to pursue things we judge purposeful and express the meaning of who we are. It is only as strong evaluators we can know that some forms of living are worthier than others, and the reflexive awareness of the language we orient ourselves through conditions personhood (ibid, 185).

Weinstock argues we are more likely to develop this reflexiveness when we interact with others whose judgments differ from our own. This, he thinks, speaks against policies that stifles social conditions where people are subjected to dominant understandings of identity that a community upholds. If people around us mostly share our convictions and affirmed practices, there is a greater chance that we will remain unaware of our own moral vocabulary. In a society without much diversity we are more likely to take our judgments for granted without reflecting on the moral field that guides us. It is only by living in witness to alternative form of living that we are able to reflect and evaluate our own beliefs and practices in the attempt to hold on, revise or abandon them on the basis of their worth. In a diverse society we can reflect on the background of which we make our judgments, not only because we require recognition from others, but also because it places us in a challenge with our own way of being as it reveals to us that our identity is contingent on a certain understanding that supports its worth (ibid, 186-187)

The process of self-conscious development requires mutual questioning that make us attune to reflect on the presuppositions of value that lie behind moral orientations, which moral and cultural diversity enables. Does recognizing this point infer Weinstocks argument that the conditions of mutual respect are best secured under neutral institutions? He thinks it does because recognition requires states of equality where all members see themselves as independent moral agents. To make ourselves better self-evaluators, there must be room for forms of life that are granted equal settings as any dominant culture. From this he argues that moral agency is best secured within a neutral state that in effect affirms the equal value of all conceptions of the good as this puts everyone in a state of self-reflection against one's own frameworks of value, compared to a community structured around a collective substantive good (ibid, 187).

The capacity to exercise moral agency also depends on our ability to reevaluate and refine our judgments as we gain new understandings from social interactions and our own experience. Taylor's views on practical reasoning claims that the process of continuous self-understanding is a process between different evaluations. If we accept some propositions, others can show us that we hold inconsistent views in relation to it, which prompts us in a process of altering beliefs. If there are some criteria both participants in a debate accepts, either side has to show the other the inconsistency in relation to this belief (Taylor 1989, 72).

Weinstock thinks that if social institutions are able to support our ability to partake in this deliberation, they will belong to a society that refrains from imposing costs onto citizens when they change their mode of life in concert with their changed beliefs. In such a society the best arguments, not the absence of costs, is what should motivate people to perform error-reducing moves. If a community is based on a collective substantive good, there will be social costs on part of the individuals whose self-understanding is altered in opposition to the dominant culture. From this we can reasonably assume that the society has instituted a significant disincentive that will prevent rather than foster conditions needed to for citizens to be strong evaluators. This is why a liberal state proves its affirmation of full agency by abiding itself only to the distribution of material and civic liberties. Since dialogical interaction is what makes us full agency, government ought not to privilege one form of living above others (Weinstock 1994, 189).

7.3 Moderating the critics

The prospect of securing domains that facilitate a fuller form of authenticity might be stifled through the imposition of cultural scripts and collective goods, but we must not exaggerate the consequences that follow from Taylor's intention to provide justifications for differentiated citizenship in multinational societies and a sense of unity amidst differences among people. When Lyshaug (2004) writes that politics of recognition "*encourages individuals to live as if by the permission of their ancestors, or leaders who claim to speak for their ancestors",* she does not give due acknowledgment of Taylor's reservation that ideally, the aim of the policies he affirms is to provide the rationale for why a certain group ought to have some autonomy in regards to the common good of language while still being committed to individual liberty. It seems too stark to conclude that collective enterprises founded around the idea that language

and culture is a good to be preserved in the face of globalization, migration and market-pressures, is not testament to illiberal forms of politics that end up handicapping the fundamental significant aspirations of individuals to find meaning in their lives (ibid, 313)

Given that culture is a dynamic phenomenon, the increased effects of globalization will give rise to continuous articulations of identity in line with a wide social context of various forms of communities that interact within and across state-borders. In order to combat the sense of loss that can amount from this, there will be necessary to foster a feeling of anchor amongst diverse selves, but this enterprise should not take on forms that are at odds with the liberty and self-understandings of the people it concerns. Given the fact of pluralism and the plural sources of the self, it is hard to say exactly how the judgements of meanings that figure into a person's identity can be facilitated in politics in way that fosters rather than undermines authentic forms of living.

Taylor also thinks identity is politically significant because it serves as individual contributions into a common good founded on collective, yet differentiated, forms of human experience. It is in this sense that we can gain better knowledge and understand ourselves as humans best, by fostering mutually interchangeable forms of life that can learn and provide contributions to each other. Humanity at large, is only something we can know by investigating the cultural forms it takes. Through culture, we get an insight into how humans make use of their capacities and create diverse forms of life and through a 'fusion of horizons' we can get closer to knowing what the universal core of humanity is (Taylor 1994, 66).

This is another reason why we ought to be open to forms of politics that can better help us understand, through various cultural interchanges, what is at the core of this condition. Though this would indeed be good, it is perhaps an overly optimistic view of cultural dynamics which go against the ugly history of human exchanges. It seems doubtful that one's commitment to a particular collective identity involves a generous outreach to others in the pursuit of understanding. Against this we do well to remind ourselves of the fundamental intolerant psychology of human beings that has manifested itself throughout history. Though he is right that we have reached better understandings of others and ourselves through cultural interchanges, this insight must not be elevated against its ugly backside. (Lyshaug 2004, 316)

8. Discussion: Is it time to water the liberal wine?

Culture and identity are dynamic phenomenon's that will always continue to change but recognizing this does not mean that we should dismiss the political significance they have towards different people. The increased effects of a globalized modernity, which on the one hand is a gives rise to various new communities and fluid identities across different cultures, we should not forget that for many people rapid changes are experienced as a sense of loss. Since the moral horizon of which our identity is built on provides us with a compass to orient ourselves in the world, there's something to the claim that fostering cultural practices provides a feeling of anchor amongst diverse selves, without this meaning that common enterprises are at odds with liberty or the self-understanding of the people it concerns. It is difficult to say exactly how the judgements of meanings that figure into a person's identity can be facilitated in politics in way that fosters rather than undermines authentic forms of living. We do well to remind ourselves that, contrary to what Taylor often implies, liberalism is not some *"magic bullet"* that provides all the answers on how to orient ourselves in political life, but only provides a recipe for coexistence so long as people are able to accept that some things are properly private while other things are of public concern (Barry 2001, 25).

Liberalism is however a fighting non-neutral creed because a commitment to autonomy will merit that certain education resources we think are valuable to teach our children in order to be authentic individuals. Children do not start with any values, they have to have taught them, and by valuing autonomy we will teach children that it is good to respect other people's beliefs. These values go beyond mere respect for liberal institutions since liberal constitutionalism cannot be indifferent towards all conception of the good. This is why children are taught that in a secular democracy, religion and faith are private matters that our society affirms are valuable ways to accommodate diversity. While the view is not imposed, it is presented in ways framed around the domain understandings for why the current generation values these commitments, where a good education will allow people to make up their own mind and come to determines why traditions like this ought to be maintained. The education system will always be political, and there is no way to design a neutral curriculum that in some way is not involved in social reproduction via the affirmation of society's collective goal of fostering liberal democracy. This is one way the republican ideal of common end can be understood (Appiah 1994, 158-159).

The legitimacy of the state depends on instrumental as well as expressive aspects, both of which reinforce each other. Democracy is supposed to be an inclusive doctrine premised on the promise that political sovereignty belongs to the people. Historically, democratic systems have expanded their own recognition of who counts as a citizen. At the same time, it has an exclusionary dynamic built into its own operatives that follows from its inclusive functionality. This paradox follows from the fact that democracy depends on social cohesion and common identity, which implicitly tends to exclude certain identities. Since democracy is understood as self-government, it needs a conception of a self, and since legitimacy is understood via the notion of popular sovereignty, some entity must be capable of being sovereign. There will however always be threshold of cohesion behind these norms. Participants must be able to understand and respect each other's concerns the source behind the systems of laws that is meant to embody popular sovereignty lie in an inclusive sphere of deliberation. This ideal can fractured if some subsection of the polity feel ignored, misunderstood, or disrespected, not because one does not get one's way, but because of a belief that one's concerns are not listened to or considered with the respect it deserves. Such laws have no legitimacy in the eyes of the excluded. (Taylor 1998, 143-144).

Dialogical openness to other's is an essential part of democratic legitimacy and social cohesion. This require reciprocal commitments among citizens, despite their differences, in virtue of a common bond of allegiance to the political entity. Without common consciousness there cannot be any confidence among minorities that their voice matters, and the troublesome task is to construct a common identity that supports popular sovereignty. This is why the age of empires gradually collapsed with the rise of democracy in Europe, and why nationalist sentiments within multi-national states can fragment the polity's unity, given its own promise of popular rule by the people. Unlike authoritarian states, modern democracies have to inspire citizens through common identity and patriotism in order to sustain the polity's need for collective commitments (ibid, 146-147).

Beyond the observation that subjugated peoples seek political independence from their imperial overlords, or that minorities within a multi-national demand some autonomy in order to rule themselves, established states often tend to create their own people through institutions that bind them together. As an example of what this means, we can observe that the United Kingdom, as a political union, has long struggled to define its common identity amidst the

nationalist sentiments of Scots, English, Welsh and Irish republicans, and the diverging interpretations of what it means to be British. This question was highlighted in the 2014 referendum where Scottish people voted to remain in the union after a long national debate on what it meant to be Scottish or British within their union. It is plausible to assume that the loyalists who decided the vote had diverging sets of reasons for why they opposed the idea of an independent Scotland. Perhaps many of them weighed the instrumental warnings of what would happen to the economy above supra-nationalist arguments that invoked the common history and identity with the United Kingdom. The salient question of what the union is supposed to represent has not gone away and illustrates Taylor's point that the project of a country and its people's identity is a continuous endeavor whose stability depends on some mutual understanding. The impact of human identity in social life and politics is highly relevant to understand not only contemporary political affairs, but events of the past, and those of the future. Political questions will in some way, or another reflect on individual conceptions of who they are, what they consider good, and what it is good to be, in ways that cannot be marginalized to the side-lines of considerations. The impact of nationalism and religion, two powerful sources for how humans find meaning in the world, will continue to create tensions in the face of liberal promises of social unity amidst our differences.

The various forms of right-wing populism that has made its impact and shocked the liberal establishment of western democracies in the last few years, as well as numerous reactionary regimes in the middle-east and Asia that have upped their ante to consolidate power in the face of democratic demands, are all symptoms of liberal naivety in the face of the cultural factors of identity, which tell us that liberal democracy cannot be imposed without taking into account the continuously evolving self-understandings of the citizens it concerns. The social grievances that explain various forms of political instability in the west are both economic and cultural. We cannot understand why people are drawn to radical forms of politics by only invoking economic factors, as this implicitly implies that we are rational, utility seeking actors. This does not encompass what motivates human beings, in our own personal and civic lives, as well as our participation in politics as meaning searching creatures. Populist insurgencies, despite their divisive and exclusionary forms, represent demands to be heard in the face of political alienation. The perception of those who feel radical forms of politics are viable options is that their perspective is not listened to, and that their form of life is unrecognized by common frames

of reference in public discourse. The attachment some place in radical leaders cannot be reduced to economic distress alone, but also touch on identity.

The same dynamics that explain the call for identity politics, the need for various forms of historically oppressed groups to be recognized as societies with distinct needs, are also at work behind the rise of right-wing populism. In part, their impact is a reaction to cosmopolitan liberalism, and its self-deceiving neutrality. When liberal politicians and philosopher claims to support no particular conceptions of the good, they are deceiving themselves in that their politics favor institutions that align with their urbanite, university-educated, forms of living, at the expense of lives that fall outsides their own characteristics. As Michael Sandel writes, the only way we can revitalize public discourse in the face of political turmoil is to let go of the strict demand of liberal neutrality. Though it is tempting because it seems to avoid the tyranny of the majority over the values of the minority, will guarantee religious tolerance and the firm basis for mutual respect it in fact is a mistake since it:

> "*ill-equips us to address the moral and cultural issues that animate the populist revolt. For how is it possible to discuss the meaning of work and its role in a good life without debating competing conceptions of the good life? How is it possible to think through the proper relation of national and global identities without asking about the virtues such identities express, and the claims they make upon us?"* (Sandel 2018, 358).

By holding onto neutrality, Sandel shares Taylor's own insistence that questions of "*meaning, identity and purpose*" are narrowed down to questions of fairness, which fail to capture why citizens are willing to gamble on radical politics in the face of a liberal elite they feel humiliated by and alienation from. To understand these populist insurgencies, Taylor's work on personhood and modern diversity is insightful.

9. Conclusion

In this thesis I have attempted to contextualize Taylors political philosophy within his wider understanding of what human nature is, and what it means to be a human agent. It is a valuable insight to not forget that we are motivated by the search for the significant and the purposeful, and that this is not something that stops being true within the field of the political world. As dialogical selves we depend on others to articulate who we are, and what kind of society we want to live in. The fact that this both conditions and constrains our liberty is a difficult topic to dissect, and Taylors contribution, despite its controversies, is a valuable contribution. The fact that citizens need some form of patriotism and cultural belonging to be anchored in the world, yet at the same time strives to be her own person illustrates this difficulty. Since our self-understanding is affected as much as it is by the wider moral field should tell us that we cannot without controversy operate with a dual identity in political theory in order to dissect how we approach the relationship between individuals, state and society. Aside from the fact that Taylor is rightly criticized for his understanding of the liberal tradition, it is clear that both sides of the communitarian liberal debate often talk past each other in ways that makes it difficult to dissect what their differences really consists of. In Taylor we see one attempt to combine the insights of the two within a framework that is open to be challenged and revised considering other perspectives. His greatest strength, I believe, is showing why self-understanding matters for us to pursue our political ideals and remind ourselves of the limitations of the human subject. Though Kymlicka is right that ethics should not depend on what people are willing to do, which is why impartiality matters for us to engage in cross cultural dialogue, it is still not the case that we should insist on imposing what is right in the face of traditional ways of being as this often has unintended hurtful consequences.

Literature

Appiah, K. Anthony (1994): "Identity, Authenticity and Survival". In *Multiculturalism* [ed. Amy Gutmann], Princeton University Press: Princeton.

Abbey, Ruth, and Charles Taylor (1996): "Communitarianism, Taylor-Made: An Interview with Charles Taylor". *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 68(1), pp. 1-10.

Abbey, Ruth (1997): "More Perspectives on Communitarianism: A Reply to Chandran Kukathas". *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 69(2), pp. 73-82.

Arneson, Richard. J. (2000): "Perfectionism and politics". *Ethics*, Vol. *111*(1), pp. 37-63.

Arneson, Richard J. (2003): "Liberal neutrality on the good: An autopsy". In *Perfectionism and neutrality: Essays in liberal theory* (ed. Bruce Ackerman). Rowman & Littlefield.

Barry, Brian (2002): "*Culture and equality: An egalitarian critique of multiculturalism*". Harvard University Press**.**

Bell, Daniel A. (2005): "*A communitarian critique of liberalism*". Analyse & Kritik, Vol. 27(2), pp. 215-238.

Caney, Simon (1992): "Liberalism and Communitarianism: A Misconceived Debate". *Political Studies,* Vol 40, pp. 273-289.

Christman, John (1991): "Liberalism and Individual Positive Freedom". *Ethics.* Vol. 101(2), pp. 343-359.

Christman, John (2005): "Saving Positive Freedom". *Political Theory.* Vol. 33(1), pp. 79-88.

Den Uyl, Douglas J. and Douglas B. Rasmussen. (2006): "The Myth of Atomism". *The Review of Metaphysics,* Vol. 59(4), pp. 841-868.

Fossland, Jørgen and Harald Grimen (2001): "Selvforståelse og frihet, Introduksjon til Charles Taylors Filosofi". Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Habermas, Jürgen (1994): "Three normative models of democracy." *Constellations,* Vol. 1(1), pp. 5-12.

Habermas, Jürgen (1994b): "Struggles for recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State". In *Multiculturalism* [ed. Amy Gutmann], Princeton University Press: Princeton.

Kukathas, Chandran (1996): "Against the Communitarian Republic". *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 68(1), pp. 67-76.

Kukathas, Chandran (1996b): "Liberalism, Communitarianism and Political Community". *Social Philosophy and Policy Foundation.* Vol. 13(1), pp. 80-104.

Kukathas, Chandran (1998): "Liberalism and multiculturalism: the politics of indifference". *Political Theory,* Vol. 26(5), pp. 686-699.

Kymlicka, Will. (1989): "Liberal individualism and liberal neutrality". *Ethics*, Vol. 99(4), pp. 883-905.

Kymlicka, Will (1988): "Liberalism and Communitarianism". Vol 18(2), pp. 181-203.

Kymlicka, Will (1991): "The Ethics of Inarticulacy". *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy,* Vol. 34(2), pp. 155-182.

Lyshaug, Brenda (2004). "Authenticity and the Politics of Identity: A critique of Charles Taylor's Politics of Recognition". *Contemporary Moral Theory.* Vol. 3, pp. 300-320.

Macedo, Stephen (1988): "Liberal virtues, constitutional community". *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 50(2), pp. 215-240.

Macedo, Stephen (1998): "Transformative Constitutionalism and the Case of Religion". *Political Theory,* Vol. 26(1), pp. 56-80.

Sandel, Michael J. (2018): "Populism, liberalism and democracy". *Philosophy and Social Criticism.* Vol 44(4), pp. 353-359.

Taylor, Charles (1985): "*Human agency and language – Philosophical Papers I*". Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, Charles (1985b): "*Philosophy and the human sciences – Philosophical Papers II*". Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, Charles (1989): "*Sources of the self: the making of modern identity*". Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Taylor, Charles (1991) "Comments and replies". *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 34(2), pp. 237-254.

Taylor, Charles (1992): "*The Ethics of Authenticity*". Harvard University Press.

Taylor, Charles [ed. Amy Gutmann] (1994): "*Multiculturalism*". Princeton University Press: Princeton.

Taylor, Charles (1994b): "Can Liberalism be Communitarian?". *Critical Review,* Vol. *8*(2), pp. 257-262.

Taylor, Charles (1994c) "Reply and re-articulation". In, James Tully and Daniel M. Weinstock, "*Philosophy in an age of pluralism, The philosophy of Charles Taylor in question*". Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, Charles (1995): "*Philosophical arguments*". Harvard University Press.

Taylor. Charles (1998): "The Dynamics of Democratic Exclusion". *Journal of Democracy,* Vol. 9(4), pp. 143-156.

Taylor, Charles (2007): "Cultures of Democracy and Citizen Efficacy". *Public Culture,* Vol. 19(1), pp. 117-150.

Tuck, Richard (1994) "Rights and pluralism". In, James Tully and Daniel M. Weinstock, "*Philosophy in an age of pluralism, The philosophy of Charles Taylor in question*". Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Walzer, Michael. (1990): The communitarian critique of liberalism. *Political theory*, Vol. *18*(1), 6-23.

Weinstock, Daniel M. (1994) "The political theory of strong evaluation". In, James Tully and Daniel M. Weinstock, "*Philosophy in an age of pluralism, The philosophy of Charles Taylor in question*". Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.