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Arguing from Identity: Ontology to Advocacy in Charles Taylor's Political Thought

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By

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Abstract

In this thesis I discuss three normative claims that I take to be central elements of Charles Taylor's political thought. The first of these is Taylor's contention that, in contemporary pluralistic societies, justifying socially prevailing norms by appealing to universally binding moral values is unlikely to promote social solidarity. Because this approach tends to downplay the goods that people realise through membership in particular associations, Taylor believes we must adopt a model of justification that does not prioritise universal over particular goods if we are to further social co-operation. A second claim Taylor defends is that commitment to the liberal value of collective self-rule implies treating patriotically motivated public service as a non-instrumental good. We should not, Taylor argues, regard collective association as nothing more than a means to satisfying private goals. Taylor advances a third claim, that is, he maintains that liberal toleration for diverse ways of life may require a perfectionist state that supports particularistic ways of life when they are threatened by decline.

I offer a qualified defence of the first two claims, but suggest that the third is less compelling. I attempt to do this by evaluating Taylor's claims against the standards of lucid argumentation that he himself lays down. In discussing social and political norms, which he describes as "advocacy" issues, Taylor argues that our normative commitments necessarily rely on an underlying social ontology. More specifically, Taylor argues that the political values we defend are those that enable us to secure the interests we have as the bearers of an identity possessing both individual and collective dimensions. In setting out the conditions that favour integrated and free identity formation we may thereby reach a clearer understanding of the political norms that we wish to endorse. I argue that, while Taylor's ontological reflections might well incline us to accept his model of justification and his account of patriotic social commitment, they do not of themselves dispose us to accept state perfectionism.

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List of abbreviations

The titles of the books and essays most frequently referred to have been abbreviated as follows:

HAL	*Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1*
PHS	*Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2*
SS	*Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*
EA	*The Ethics of Authenticity*
MPR	*Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"*
PA	*Philosophical Arguments*

Introduction

The political uses of ontological reflection

Stephen K. White, in the essay "Weak Ontology and Liberal Political Reflection", discusses what he calls the recent "ontological drift" in political theory (White, 1997: 503). White argues that political theory, and the social sciences more generally, have in recent years demonstrated a renewed interest in ontological issues. Accompanying this development has been a shift away from ontological problems configured as the logical commitments attendant upon theorising activity to more practical critical reflections upon the make-up of the human subject that social science theory presupposes and the manner in which this subject negotiates concrete practices. This renewed interest in the human subject White traces to a waning of the self-assuredness of theory in Western modernity, which is accompanied by a sense of the contingency and uncertainty of modern life and a corresponding desire to return to questions of a broadly "metaphysical" nature. I believe that this search for metaphysical guidance in a complex and indeterminate present inspires Charles Taylor's inquiries in moral and political philosophy; his work cannot, at any rate, be fully appreciated without also considering his attempt to underscore the historically specific framework of reference within which the ontological questions that concern him arise. This ontological project is given its fullest working-out in *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (SS), where Taylor attempts to work toward an understanding of "what it is to be a human agent, a person, or a self" by exploring "the background picture of our spiritual nature and predicament which lies behind some of the moral and spiritual intuitions of our contemporaries" (1989: 3-4).

White distinguishes between "strong" and "weak" ontological reflection in political theory. Both approaches draw attention to basic existential realities, but differ about the conclusions that can be drawn from acknowledging them. Strong ontologists attempt to establish a framework for moral and political principles rooted in apodictic truth-claims. Weak ontologists, by contrast, believe that deriving practical principles from ontological reflection is a contestable and historically dynamic interpretive process (White, 1997: 506-07). Although White suspects that Taylor's political work slides between strong and weak ontology, he takes as a paradigm of weak ontological reflection Taylor's discussion in *SS* of the interplay of discovery and creation entailed in articulating the shared "frameworks" of meaning that, for Taylor, we all require not only as social science theorists but in order to lead our everyday lives.

Throughout the discussion that follows I aim to embellish White's argument[1] by illustrating how it is precisely as such an attempt to bring important ontological considerations to bear on political debates that Taylor's political writing must be understood. I do this by showing how the challenges to mainstream understandings of liberalism that Taylor offers – and particularly the formalistic normative accounts of liberal politics that he refers to as "procedural liberalism" – invariably proceed through a consideration of the manner in which a philosophically articulate and historically sensitive conceptualisation of the ontological background of liberal political theorising as well as the practice of liberal politics provides a framework for criticising the normative positions and political choices of the actors involved.

It is above all this attempt to reframe important political questions in a rich philosophical idiom that registers a range of moral issues not commonly encountered in mainstream liberal debate that constitutes the critical enterprise of Taylor's political thought. Accordingly, in the two chapters that make up Section One I discuss Taylor's ontological reflections on human identity and social science methodology, while in the three chapters constituting Section Two I then consider the political theses that he draws from these reflections. I focus throughout on the works that have helped establish his reputation as a political philosopher. These include the essays appearing in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (1985b; PHS), the influential long essay "Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition'" (1992; MPR) and *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1991a; EA). Because of my interest in tracing the connections between Taylor's ontological and advocacy views, I endeavour to situate the political arguments found in these works alongside those found in the works that have built Taylor's reputation as an important *moral* thinker, namely the essays comprising *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (1985a; HAL) and SS (1989). I also draw extensively on the mix of moral and political essays collected in *Philosophical Arguments* (1995a; PA),[2] as well as a number of occasional essays not found in these works, where this has been helpful in clarifying Taylor's views.

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[1] White only considers Taylor's philosophy parenthetically in this essay, and is himself more concerned with sketching what he believes is a general trend in contemporary social science theory while demonstrating how the work of George Kateb exemplifies this ontological drift in liberal theory (White, 1997).

[2] Taylor has been and still is an exceptionally prolific writer. His earliest publications appear in 1957 and he continues to publish into the present, the most significant recent work being *A Secular Age* (2007). For my selective choice of works I therefore hope to plead necessity, and the list I present here is nothing other than a body of writing that approximates what I consider a sort of canon of essays and books published in the decade between 1985 and 1995 (although the essays selected for these works date as far back as 1971) and most commonly taken up in the expansive secondary literature on Taylor. While I offer the briefest of side-glances at *Hegel and Modern Society* (1979, rev. 1988a) and at the essays on Canadian politics collected in *Reconciling the Solitudes* (1993, rev. 2005a), my relative neglect of the interesting political ideas contained in these works and my total neglect of Taylor's recent *Modern Social Imaginaries* (2004) is undeniably a shortcoming of the present study.

While I believe White is correct to portray Taylor as "a border runner between strong and weak ontology", moving from ontological to advocacy positions in a manner that is at times question-begging, I attempt to provide a detailed discussion of where these transitions occur and offer, where necessary, a defence of Taylor's views against criticisms that misconstrue or inadvertently misrepresent his views (1997: 506). I present, in other words, an immanent critique of Taylor's political philosophy, where the burden of argumentation falls on situating Taylor's political thought within the broader context of his moral philosophy – and, more particularly, aligning it with the anthropological reflections on human identity that I consider to be the focal point of this latter body of work – while attempting to assess the internal coherence of this project. This does not mean that I will not consider important external criticisms of Taylor's work, but that I will only do so peripherally or where this helps to clarify, through contrast with alternative outlooks, Taylor's moral and political arguments. For all the unresolved difficulties that his work throws up, I believe Taylor succeeds in presenting a range of compelling arguments that show how deciding important philosophical questions concerning the nature of human identity and communal belonging might be of relevance to coming to a better understanding of the political conflicts and social malaises that haunt our Western modernity, while also offering valuable insights concerning how best we might forge ahead.

Beyond advocacy issues

In Taylor's important essay "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate" he draws a distinction between what he calls "advocacy" and "ontological" issues (1995a: 181, 182). Advocacy issues are raised when attempting to resolve moral questions that inform normative discussions of social practices. One's stand on specific advocacy issues will determine where one lies on a continuum stretching from individualism to collectivism, in accordance with whether one assigns greater priority to individual rights and freedoms or to the demands of communal solidarity and collective goals in matters pertaining to public policy (Taylor, 1995a: 182). Taylor's political thought typically proceeds by assessing the viability of advocacy positions in accordance with whether they are sufficiently heedful of essential ontological features of all human life or of the historically-constituted form of life definitive of a particular cultural or national group. Where a political orientation runs up against the norms endorsed by a particular community, political debate has to weigh the competing goods of each in reasoned discussion and there will be no simple or uncontroversial solutions. Where, however, an advocacy position defines a mode of practice that fails to accommodate some fundamental condition of human existence, it cannot but be rejected. There will, of course, always be

controversy about how we arrive at an understanding of the ontological constants of human life but, *granted* such an understanding, we will be provided a set of criteria for ruling out certain advocacy positions in principle.

Taylor believes that it is essential for political theory to define its ontological commitments because it is these that determine the fundamental units of analysis employed in conceptualising the essential principles of social life. Any discussion of social practices, as well as the nature of social goods, presupposes some sort of social ontology, and places one on one side or another of the longstanding dispute between atomists and holists. Atomists hope to explain social action and social structures in relation to the properties of the individuals participating in these collective endeavours, and hope to understand public or common goods by decomposing them into individual goods (Taylor, 1995a). Taylor usually also associates atomism with the view that all goods, private and public, are those of an evaluating subject who is radically free, and that the inter-personal relationships, roles and commitments that such a view of goods allows for possess whatever value they do for us solely in accordance with their ability to facilitate the pursuit of our individual goods (1985a, 1985b, 1989, 1995a). Holists, by contrast, perceive a certain reductionism in this atomistic outlook and are committed to the notion that society cannot be exhaustively understood by describing the properties of individuals and outlining the causal principles governing social intercourse between these conceptually isolated subjects (Taylor, 1995a). In contradistinction to atomists, holists hold that many of our shared goods are, in Taylor's idiom, "irreducibly social" (1995a). These goods would not be what they are if they were not shared, and so they necessarily belong to a group. Holists usually, though not invariably, also differ from atomists in holding to some version of value realism which sets limits on our freedom of choice and conceive of social participation as an essential condition of the full realisation of our human potentialities, however unique these potentialities may be (1985a, 1985b, 1989, 1995a).

While one's ontological commitments do not tie one to the advocacy of any specific practice, Taylor contends that they help to generate normative content by defining a broadly congruent range of meaningful moral choices that lie open when selecting from among divergent practical political possibilities. Likewise, the reverse relation is true, insofar as endorsing certain practices commits one to accepting an underlying ontology that makes sense of these normative recommendations. That is, the formation of an advocacy position will invariably invoke what, employing Taylor's lexicon, we can call a background of intelligibility. Such an ontological framework can be more or less articulate but it cannot possibly be absent (Taylor, 1995a: 68).

The correct relation between these two levels of argument is, Taylor believes, either ignored or confused in much contemporary political debate. The fundamental problem here lies in the tendency of liberal thought to ignore ontological questions altogether, dismissing them as empty metaphysical speculations of little relevance to pragmatic political debates. This virtual "eclipse of ontological thinking in social theory" is behind the almost exclusive preoccupation of mainstream liberal thought in the Anglophone world with the attempt to derive generally acceptable and uncontroversial norms of acceptable political practice (Taylor, 1995a: 185). It is chiefly Taylor's concern to broaden the parameters of the discussion concerning justice and the ends of the liberal democratic state that surfaces in these debates by drawing attention to the ontological questions they too easily elide.

Where there is an appreciation that such ontological issues are germane to debates at the advocacy level, there is nonetheless plenty of room for confusion. This confusion comes from the belief that there is a straightforward relationship between these two sets of issues, with critics almost invariably lumping atomists with individualists and holists with collectivists, whereas either commitment on the ontological level is combinable with either advocacy position (Taylor, 1995: 185). For this reason, the belief that a solid ontological argument can put issues arising at the advocacy level beyond dispute is mistaken (Taylor, 1995: 183). It is the mark of a good ontological thesis that it purports

> to structure the field of possibilities in a more perspicuous way. But this does leave us with choices, which we need some normative, deliberative arguments to resolve….Taking an ontological position doesn't amount to advocating something; but at the same time, the ontological does help to define the options it is meaningful to support by advocacy (1995a: 183).

As we shall see, for Taylor it is precisely the disjunction between these two levels of enquiry that leaves room for reasoned debate, and it is here that philosophical investigation and argumentation has the most to offer political theory. Taylor places great value on such debate, hoping that through practical reason we can move toward a resolution of some of the more intractable dilemmas internal to Western modernity. What follows is essentially an attempt to assess, in terms of the standards of lucid argumentation he himself lays down, Taylor's contribution to such debates.

Three failures of democracy in the procedural republic

While in Section Two I try to reproduce in broad outline the contours of Taylor's engagement with specific liberal theorists, my discussion of his political thought in Chapters Four and Five takes as its point of departure the diffuse empirical concerns informing his political theory. This I do only obliquely, and I make little attempt to challenge the sweeping historical generalisations that necessarily inhere in this ambitious project. The relative neglect of empirical concerns owes to the fact that this aspect of Taylor's thought is pitched at a high level of abstraction and is often avowedly speculative. Nonetheless, it will be helpful to outline here three recurring observations that form the explicit or implied backdrop of Taylor's theoretical engagement with procedural liberalism. Taylor fears that procedural liberalism serves, even if unwittingly, to normatively endorse a model of political life that leads to the centralisation of political power, the exclusion of certain cultural groups from democratic debate, and the splintering or dissolution of politically effective and socially responsible coalitions within a political society.

In EA Taylor, developing a theme from Tocqueville, raises the concern that a form of uniquely modern despotism is now being realised in many modern Western societies. This "soft despotism" is not overtly oppressive; protest and criticism are tolerated, periodic elections and other basic procedures commonly associated with democracy are encouraged, and state intervention in the workings of society is relatively selective and restrained (Taylor, 1991a: 9, 112). The despotic character of these societies resides rather in the fact that most important political procedures are guided by an impersonal and inflexible system of legal procedures, and all major decisions are made by the officials and specialists of a state bureaucracy which is largely impervious to the needs and aspirations of the citizenry (Taylor, 1991a: 10, 113-15). Taylor believes that this mode of despotism creeps into a society as the foundations for collective self-rule are undermined and the society moves away from functioning as what Taylor calls a "civic republic" to what he, following Michael Sandel, refers to as a "procedural republic" (Taylor, 1992: 58; 1995a: 201, n.21; 1998b: 146; Sandel, 1984: 91).

The discussion in EA connects with Taylor's isolation of three major threats to modern democracies in the essay "Liberal Politics and the Public Sphere" (1995a). The first of these, discussed in Chapter Four, is widespread citizen alienation from the mechanisms of self-rule in the climate of centralisation and bureaucratisation typical of societies where participation at many decentralised levels of government and in free civil society initiatives is not vigorously encouraged. Where most import political decisions lie exclusively in the hands of a central government responsive, at best, to influential elitist lobbies and media interests, the average

citizen rightly considers him/herself to be incapable of exerting any leverage over broader social processes. The members of such a society, left with a negligibly small sphere of influence over their own affairs, become demotivated by a sense of impotence that inclines them to retreat into private life (Taylor, 1991a: 9-10; 1995a: 278-80).

A second failure of modern democracies – one that becomes increasingly threatening in contemporary conditions of pluralism – arises when the members of a minority or excluded cultural group within a political society believe that their shared interests have not been granted a fair hearing in the deliberative processes of the broader society. As we shall see in Chapter Five, this sense of exclusion is often tied up with the ignored group failing to be considered an integral part of such a society. When denied recognition in this manner, such groups tend to grow disaffected and may, in extreme cases, attempt to secede from the national community. At the very least, this decline in social solidarity is likely to promote a thoroughly conflictual mode of politics where all outcomes are understood in a zero-sum fashion (Taylor, 1995a: 281; 1998b: 144). In such conditions any productive form of conflict resolution is stymied because excluded or ignored groups are only likely to resign themselves to unfavourable political outcomes if they feel that they have been accommodated by, or at least respectfully incorporated in, democratic decision-making procedures (Taylor, 1998b).

These two failures of democracy frequently spill over into a third when they impact on a society's political life profoundly enough to generate what Taylor refers to as "political fragmentation" (1995a: 281). A political society becomes fragmented when groups begin to practise a form of politics that mobilises support around narrow agendas that do not conform with a vision of the shared good of all in society. In such conditions it is extremely difficult to build majorities that can shape public policy on important issues (1991a: 112-13, 115-17).

What Taylor refers to as soft despotism is the outcome of political fragmentation and the dissolution of ties between individuals and groups that feed it. In a fragmented society there exists a vicious cycle where the mechanisms of citizen control over governmental decisions, as well as those promoting participation in free civil society initiatives, atrophy to the point of near total ineffectuality and, along with them, the confidence in success and unity of purpose that these initiatives require (Taylor, 1991: 112-13). With the dissolution of participatory democratic will-formation and the vehicles of association that facilitate it, what little collective political organisation survives the alienation and depoliticisation of the individual fractures into mutually estranged associative groups organised around local community, ethnic, religious, ideological or special interest identifications, with no underlying, society-wide identifications or allegiances that can transcend these group divisions (Taylor, 1991a: 112-13). As Taylor explains,

> fragmentation comes about partly through a weakening of the bonds of sympathy, partly in a self-feeding way, through the failure of democratic initiative itself. Because the more fragmented an electorate is in this sense, the more they transfer their political energies to promoting their partial groupings…and the less possible it is to mobilize democratic majorities around commonly understood programs and policies. A sense grows that the electorate as a whole is defenceless against the leviathan state (1991a: 113).

It is fair to say that a concern with the danger of fragmentation for the moral life of the individuals and groups composing modern societies is a problem with regard to which all of Taylor's political writing can be read as offering an interpretation and, albeit tersely and suggestively, recommending partial solutions.

Taylor's ontological critique of procedural liberalism

The central concern of this thesis is to consider Taylor's belief that the empirical failures he identifies in the political life of contemporary procedural republics must be interpreted as, in large measure, caused or perpetuated by an inability to correctly conceptualise the moral foundations of modern political association. This is not an exclusively theoretical issue, but Taylor believes it can be most lucidly debated by engaging with the theoretical positions that may offer the most articulate formulations of the various advocacy positions in contestation. Accordingly, in his attempt to expose the failures of democratic practice that give rise to bureaucratic centralisation, misrecognition of disadvantaged cultural groups and political fragmentation, Taylor repeatedly leads us back to the theoretical shortcomings attending some of the most influential articulations of contemporary liberal democratic practice.[3] But these

[3] Contrary to his own wishes, Taylor is almost invariably labelled a "communitarian" critic of liberalism in the literature (Taylor in Tully ed., 1995b: 250; Taylor in Laitinen & Smith eds., 2002b: 169-70; Paul, E., Miller & Paul, J. eds., 1996; Buchanan, 1989; Kymlicka, 1989a; Carse, 1994; Mulhall & Swift, 2003; Mulhall in Abbey ed., 2004: 113). This appellation is probably more misleading than it is helpful, and below I make no detailed attempt to situate Taylor within the so-called "liberal-communitarian debate" except where this is necessary to highlight the background of his arguments. While intervening very influentially in a number of issues that have arisen in this debate over the years, Taylor submits that "the portmanteau terms 'liberal' and 'communitarian' will probably have to be scrapped" because of the tendency that has arisen with this crude schema to classify thinkers according to their advocacy positions alone (1995a: 185). The true differences between "liberals" and "communitarians", Taylor believes, often pertain to the ontological positions that they endorse (or are committed to endorsing), and failure to attend to these has resulted in a great deal of "cross-purposes" (1995a).

Nonetheless, within this more ontologically sensitive frame of reference, Taylor does offer many explicit interventions supporting the political theories advocated by thinkers like Michael Sandel and Alasdair MacIntyre that are generally viewed in the literature as communitarian stalwarts and criticising thinkers (frequently expressly referred to by Taylor as liberals or procedural liberals) like John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin and Robert Nozick, and there is some sense in situating him on what is conventionally considered the communitarian side of this divide (Taylor, 1985b: 1989: 1993: 345; 1995a; 1998b; 1998c; Paul, E. et al., 1996; Buchanan, 1989; Kymlicka, 1989a; Carse, 1994; Mulhall & Swift, 2003). This is especially true when discussing liberal theories of justice, and I draw out some of these important connections in Chapter Three.

individual thinkers he takes to be implicated – part articulators and part innovators – in a far broader understanding of the ends of human life and of political association that are so much a part of the self-understanding of modern Westerns that they frequently pass for common sense. It is this more general, frequently inarticulate or pre-theoretical, grasp of social reality that these and other theorists reproduce, obfuscate or illuminate (Taylor, 1985b; 1989; 1991c: 308).[4] It is also, importantly, this understanding of social reality that concrete political actors draw on in their quotidian engagement in political practices as a necessary condition of successfully negotiating the roles, relationships and evaluative languages through which these practices co-ordinate collective action. It is to this far larger and frequently inarticulate background set of beliefs and assumptions that Taylor's criticisms of liberalism are frequently directed.

If this approach seems misguided, it helps to appreciate that social and political theory is, for Taylor, seldom "innocent" (1985b). While natural science purports to offer a neutral description of the objects it studies by formulating hypotheses and testing how they measure up to the facts, social science cannot hope to successfully imitate this procedure. This is because the common-sense understanding that social theory extends does not relate to objects that exist in complete independence of our theorising activity concerning them (Taylor, 1985b: 91-96). Instead, social theory usually extends, through articulation, our pre-theoretical grasp of the constitutive understandings and norms that inhere in the practices and institutions of society. In the process, social theory usually normatively reinforces or weakens these bodies and procedures by fortifying or undermining the credibility of the understandings that they ride on (Taylor, 1985b: 91-98). For this reason there can be a more or less good fit between a practice and the theory informing it, with potentially detrimental consequences to the practice if the fit is poor and beneficial outcomes if it is good. In this sense social theories, as opposed to natural science theories, may contribute to a transformation of their objects by revealing the coherence or the contradictions between the avowed purposes of a practice and the outcomes that eventuate from it, and it is precisely such connections that Taylor, as a political theorist, hopes to expose (Taylor, 1985b: 98, 101, 248).

As we shall see in Chapter One, Taylor believes that any cogent account of human behaviour must acknowledge that individual persons act in a purposive fashion that accords with how we interpret ourselves and our surroundings. It is a feature of all persons, that is, that we act out of a certain self-understanding or identity. Moreover, because the terms in which

[4] Taylor takes this pre-theoretical mode of understanding to be more fundamental to that which we have through explicit representations in that it is always present, whereas we only intermittently form representations of our experience, and because it functions as a background in relation to which our explicit formulations make sense (Taylor, 1991c: 308).

we form our identities are inescapably given to us from the cultural systems in which we have been reared, we will share to some extent a common cultural stratum of identity. Taylor also holds that political institutions and practices are developed and sustained through co-ordinated action that is dependent on shared understandings forged in a dynamic interchange between persons. Because these understandings help to further define our identities, woven into our self-understandings will be a minimally shared set of political commitments – a claim which I discuss further in Chapter Two. Accepting this timeless truth, for Taylor, entails accepting holism and abandoning atomism.

While some of these claims may be difficult to accept, the question I raise throughout Section Two concerns whether, *granted* these ontological views about human identity and communal belonging, we will also wish to credit Taylor's constructive political project. This project is worked out in large part through a sustained polemic against procedural liberalism; a creed which, Taylor believes, has at least three distinct elements. In Chapter Three I assess Taylor's claim that procedural liberalism aspires to a universalistic impartiality in the justification of the political principles it deems permissible that is either conceptually misguided or else too remote from the concerns of most persons to motivate their allegiance. I argue that the former claim is not a real problem for procedural liberals but that the latter does raise some concerns for our understanding of how social solidarity is to be promoted in pluralistic societies, to which procedural liberals may be insensitive. I then consider Taylor's recommendation for overcoming this difficulty through a model of open-ended deliberative exchange between members of distinct cultures.

In Chapter Four I discuss another of Taylor's dissatisfactions with procedural liberalism, which is that it tends to regard political participation as a human good that is largely up for grabs. This, for Taylor, is because procedural liberals understand the value of public service in instrumental terms, as a means to protecting our individual freedoms, whereas Taylor believes that it has an inherent value that can only be overlooked at the cost of disregarding the indispensability of collective self-rule as a guarantor of human freedom and dignity. I outline three distinct arguments that Taylor offers for this position, only one of which points to a strong disagreement between him and procedural liberals. Taylor argues, however, that procedural liberals can get round this problem by endorsing a holistic ontology that is better able to account for the essentially participatory requirements of freedom and which will, at an advocacy level, incline them to accept the inherent value of patriotic commitment. Taylor's real argument, then, is not with procedural liberalism but rather with an atomistic understanding of society that procedural liberals may or may not endorse.

Taylor believes, however, that placing procedural liberalism on a holistic ontological footing is not without some further difficulties. While it may point the way toward overcoming bureaucratic centralisation, this solution also suggests that the systematic marginalisation of disadvantaged cultural groups and the attendant political fragmentation may be difficult to escape. This is because Taylor believes that patriotism, holistically understood, requires that we affirm a common good that encompasses the entire political community. But, as we shall see in Chapter Five, it is for this reason likely to push toward political exclusion of members of disadvantaged communities that are unable to democratically secure their group interests. For Taylor this is not an insurmountable difficulty, but it does mean that we must do away with the procedural ideal of a neutral state that refrains from publicly endorsing the inherent value of particular ways of life and which is blind to cultural differences when interpreting the law. In order to make this move, however, Taylor argues that we will first have to understand the intimate connection between freedom and cultural belonging – a move which again requires that we step outside of atomism at the ontological level. I argue that, whatever its appeal, Taylor's solution nonetheless doesn't follow on unproblematically from his ontological commitments; here, far more than elsewhere, Taylor slides between strong and weak ontology a little too unhesitatingly.

Chapter One

1. Taylor as a theorist of identity

Alessandro Ferrara has written that

> The only imperatives which in our times are acknowledged as unconditional, and thus as a possible basis for universally valid claims, are the requirements of the well-being of a concrete identity, individual or collective….This is the basis on which to build an universalistic position that does not sacrifice individuality to universality, and retains the possibility of criticizing the existent in the name of its own unfulfilled potentials (Ferrara in Rasmussen ed., 1990: 12).

Whether or not we agree with Ferrara, the question of what constitutes human identity, and what moral commitments attach to this understanding, is undoubtedly a central preoccupation in Charles Taylor's moral and political writing. Indeed, it is probably not an exaggeration to say that identity is the central descriptive category to be found in this body of work. At any rate, I hope to argue that coming to a clear understanding of Taylor's views on identity is indispensable to appreciating his normative political philosophy and the critique of procedural liberalism that is central to it.

Taylor approaches the theme of identity from two complementary perspectives. The first of these frames the problem in absolute, trans-historical terms as a question about the transcendental conditions of personhood. This, for Taylor, is an issue that philosophical anthropology – which he (citing Axel Honneth and Hans Joas) understands as the study of "the unchanging preconditions of human changeableness" – most directly addresses (Taylor in Honneth & Joas, 1988b: vii). Philosophical anthropology probes the timeless question of "human nature", hoping to place the social sciences on a secure theoretical footing by examining the continuities and differences obtaining *between* the human and non-human worlds. As such it is "the study of the basic categories in which man and his behaviour is to be described and explained" (Taylor, 1965: 4).

In SS, as well as in the essays collected in HAL, PHS and PA, Taylor works out a philosophical anthropology by seeking to establish constants of human existence, but he brings to the task an erudite historical sensitivity in order to avoid the pitfalls of anachronism and cultural parochialism that universalistic claims about human nature are prone to. A fundamental problem addressed by Taylor's philosophy, beyond exploring the boundaries between the human and non-human worlds, is therefore the historical question of how changes

arise *within* the human world. This requires dissociating the historically contingent and culturally variable elements of human behaviour from those that appear to be rooted in immutable features of human nature. Taylor's concern with sifting the mutable from the constant arises as part of the more ambitious task, carried to completion most fully in SS, of providing a genealogy of the modern Western identity in order to throw into historical relief the major moral conflicts that afflict contemporary Western modernity.

1.1 Compound identities

Any discussion of identity is at the very least an examination of perceived relationships of similarity or difference between objects or beings. In Taylor's discussions of human identity, as we shall see in more detail below, people develop a sense of self by identifying both with certain admirable aspects of themselves – those achievements and aspirations that they invest with greatest moral significance and which define their central existential purposes – and with certain of the values and purposes that they share with others through their participation in joint enterprises. This is not just a cognitive issue but also a question of motivation, in that Taylor thinks our identities are most fundamentally constituted by our concerns and commitments. I believe that Taylor consistently considers two basic identity-constituting relationships – an introspective self-interpretation and an outward-looking sense of cultural belonging – to be essential components of any fully-developed, coherent or healthy identity, and he takes the development of these to be inseparable from the exercise of "full, normal human agency" and the attribution of "integral…undamaged human personhood" (1985a: 3; 1989: 27). This account of identity, which is at the heart of Taylor's moral philosophy, is supplemented in his political writing with a consideration of a third identity-constituting relationship obtaining between the individual and the members of the political community in which she[5] is embedded.

The first of these relationships concerns how individuals relate to themselves. The monomania that Taylor attributes to his own projects in HAL and PHS, and which continues to inform his contributions to philosophical anthropology up to the present, arises out of his desire to highlight the importance of self-understanding in human life (1985a/b: 1). Taylor believes that we are not self-transparent, and that to understand ourselves we have to *interpret* ourselves.[6]

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[5] Throughout this chapter I employ the female personal pronoun, and thereafter I alternate between the female and the male usages across successive chapters.

[6] It is above all the capacity for interpreting ourselves and our worlds that, for Taylor, sets humans apart from the natural world, and the oversight or misunderstanding of this capacity in the "naturalist" accounts of human life that have come to dominate the mainstream of natural science and social science explanation since the early

Discussing self-understanding in terms of self-interpretation makes sense, for Taylor, only because our self-understanding is mediated by an understanding of the objects and people we are brought into contact with in the course of our socialisation. Personhood is not given us by nature but is rather an accomplishment, the result of immersion in an extensive nexus of human relationships as well as the modes of thought and feeling of a given culture.[7] Taylor believes that our self-understanding necessarily appeals to a shared cultural background of thought and experience, and this constitutes the second relationship that he argues is an inescapable feature of peculiarly human life. Very little human experience is immediate; upon examination, even the responses and intuitions that constitute our emotional lives appear to be inescapably structured by the way that we represent events to ourselves and others. While this representation is also an act of interpretation that can, and frequently does, assume a form unique to an individual, it does not exist even as a possibility without mastery of certain culturally inculcated competencies and participation in a minimally rule-governed network of personal and impersonal exchanges (Taylor, 1985a; 1989; 1991c). This is one sense in which

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Seventeenth Century provides a constant temptation to error and confusion in the social sciences. An essential part of escaping the "great epistemological cloud" thrown up by naturalist-inspired theories is therefore to emphasise that, simply as humans, we necessarily act in a purposive fashion that accords with our self-understanding, and that where this understanding is absent or undeveloped our capacity for exercising our agency in ways that appear non-pathological or recognisably human is jeopardised (Taylor, 1985a; 1989: 5).

[7] The use of these terms clearly is not without some associated difficulties. The first, and possibly most devastating, of these concerns the argument that the use of "culture" as a descriptive concept is more epistemologically unstable and/or politically determined than is commonly acknowledged by both liberals and liberal critics like Taylor (Rorty, A., 1994; Benhabib, 2002; Kukathas in Paul, E., Miller & Paul, J. eds., 1996). I will overlook this "external" criticism, which leads far beyond the scope of the present study, almost entirely, touching on it only briefly in Chapter Five. For a response to this type of accusation see Taylor 1994a.

There remains, however, a purely "internal" difficulty with Taylor's choice of terminology: Taylor frequently uses the terms "form of life", "way of life" and "society" interchangeably with the term "culture", and moreover often refers to rather different objects when doing so. In "Irreducibly Social Goods", for example, Taylor defines culture as a common "background of practices, institutions and understandings" through individual action becomes intelligible and is co-ordinated (Taylor, 1995a: 136). Here Taylor appeals to the idea that social and political practices are culturally and linguistically coded, with each serving to sustain the other (Taylor, 1995a: 138). This stronger definition of culture, which includes both a common moral outlook and social and political practices, is useful in highlighting the fact that social institutions and practices may be the bearers of a certain culturally partial value orientation (a theme I take further in Chapter Five). It is, however, important to note that Taylor's work on multiculturalism employs only a weaker sense of the term, where it refers more narrowly to a community of some description united by shared moral frameworks and expressive languages. In this weaker sense, as Amélie O. Rorty points out, "culture" refers to the intellectual and spiritual achievements of a community as these are reflected in its language, literature and art (1994: 156).

Even in this limited usage, however, the term seems uncommonly inflated. In MPR, for example, Taylor discusses the condition of contemporary ethnic or linguistic groups alongside that of feminist, religious, civil rights, and gay rights groups, employing the same analytic lexicon of cultural identity and struggle throughout (1992: 25-26). To head off confusion here, I believe that it is worth noting that in every case what Taylor means is a group that shares a common identity, where this identity is shared in virtue of, at the very least, commonly held values expressed in an evaluative language or languages that are subject to common or commensurable laws of intelligibility. The common social and political practices of a given community frequently also enter into the meaning of these terms as Taylor uses them, but I attempt to give some indication of this important distinction throughout by referring to the former unit of association as a "culture" and the latter as a "society" or a "political society", while taking all of these to be forms of "community".

Taylor believes that identities are, by their very nature, partially formed through what he calls "dialogical" exchange and can never be constituted purely "monologically" (1991c; 1992).

This second aspect of identity, binding the individual to a larger cultural life, is analytically distinct from a third set of relationships linking the individual with a political society of some description. Through common participation in a polity people are brought into association for the pursuit of goods that are secured by the normatively defined forms of collective action that this political community sustains. This is another sense in which Taylor believes that people reside throughout their lives within a dialogical setting, and his account of the dialogical dimension of human life can therefore be said to possess both a cultural and a political dimension. By considering the nature of the goods pursued through political action Taylor hopes to come to a better normative understanding of the value of political association.

In this chapter I discuss Taylor's treatment of the first two identity-constituting relationships mentioned above in detail, in order to explicate the trans-historical aspect of Taylor's account of human identity formation. I then go on to consider, in Chapter Two, Taylor's discussion of the third, political dimension of identity formation. There we shall see that the indispensability of participation in the political contexts of identity formation to the full realisation of the individual informs Taylor's attempt to demonstrate the methodological necessity of framing social science inquiry within the philosophical limits of a holistic social ontology. This will enable us, in the chapters that comprise Section Two, to demonstrate how Taylor attempts to intervene in advocacy debates concerning the desired form of liberal political society by considering the normative political possibilities admitted by accepting holism.

1.2 Personhood and moral subjectivity

An important point of entry into Taylor's many complex contributions to philosophical anthropology can be found in the essay "The Concept of a Person", where he discusses the concept of personhood as it is commonly employed in moral and legal discourse that attempts to establish philosophically the grounds upon which we owe respect to others through the attribution of moral status or rights (1985a). In its more common usage, Taylor argues, it is taken as relatively uncontroversial that a "person", where the term indicates something more than the biological category of human being, must possess certain faculties that enable her to formulate an original outlook on the world and behave as an agent possessing freedom.[8]

[8] Despite the distinction between humans and persons that Taylor acknowledges, he usually follows the common habit of using these terms interchangeably. This is presumably because he believes that we tend to treat those who have lost, or not yet acquired, the capacities associated with personhood as persons in most important moral

Entailed in this is the idea that "a person is a being who has a sense of self, has a notion of the future and the past, can hold values, make choices; in short, can adopt life-plans" (Taylor, 1985a: 97). Taylor speculates that, where these faculties have not developed or have been rendered inoperative, the person in question will experience something resembling the crippling disorientation that recent psychoanalytic literature describes in terms of crises of identity, ego loss, and other pathologies forming around the inability to register meaning or a lack of self-esteem (Taylor, 1985a: 34-35; 1989: 18-19, 27-28, 31).

Taylor doesn't call this basic set of presuppositions into question, but he does believe that within this broad understanding of the person there is plenty of room for meaningful debate about the specific human capacities required for exercising our agency in this minimal sense. In developing his position on this issue, Taylor takes it as ontologically basic that people exercise their agency by answering questions that, simply as people, we all have to resolve in order to live humanly fulfilling and healthy lives (1989: 29). For this reason humans are of necessity committed to the perennially engaging task of self-interpretation. In HAL and SS Taylor develops this self-interpretation thesis by arguing that the minimally coherent sense of self that we attribute to persons is a unity that is, and can only be, established through moral reasoning that serves to establish an individuated identity in the course of engagement with other people in the dialogical contexts of life. Taylor's basic thesis, with which SS opens, is that "[s]elfhood and the good, or in another way selfhood and morality, turn out to be inextricably intertwined themes" (1989: 3). To see why this is so, it is necessary to bring to light the "inescapable structural requirements" or transcendental conditions of human identity formation and the exercise of human agency (Taylor, 1989: 38, 52). Taylor does this by arguing that "strong evaluation" and narrative reasoning, which in SS he takes to be two basic faculties through which identity is formed and sustained, are criterial for personhood. In the interests of brevity, however, I will focus only on the first of these below.

1.2.1 *Taylor's strongly evaluating moral subject*

Taylor's account of strong evaluation must be understood in the context of his perennial effort to undermine the reductionism that derives from naturalist explanation in the social sciences. People, in exercising their agency, are not the "simple weighers of alternatives" that naturalist-inspired understandings of human nature, which attempt to explain all human motivations as qualitatively of a piece with animal drives, depict us to be (Taylor, 1985a: 23). On these naturalist accounts, which Taylor believes dominate the mainstream of social science

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respects, investing the potential possession more than the actualisation of these capacities with moral significance (1985a; 1992). Unless otherwise indicated, I will follow Taylor's usages.

explanation, human behaviour is explained in terms of the desires (as well as the inclinations or needs) that motivate it, with moral reflection and deliberation functioning only instrumentally, as an aid in furthering goals, ambitions and aspirations that aim at some greater desire-consummation or avoiding pain or harm (1985a; 1989).

In articulating his dissatisfaction with this understanding of practical reason[9] Taylor makes the ontological claim that "it belongs to human agency to exist in a space of questions about strongly valued goods, prior to all choice or adventitious cultural change" (1989: 31). By this he means that, in exercising our agency, we find ourselves engaged with the world in such a way that only by exercising the capacity for strong evaluation, which is a form of practical reasoning, can we find our bearings within it (1989: 30-31). It is not possible here to offer an account of strong evaluation that does justice to the complexity and originality of Taylor's treatment of this concept.[10] Basically, Taylor believes that strong evaluation is a mode of "second-order" desire formation, through which agents form relatively enduring preferences that determine which of their most immediate, or "first-order", desires they seek to fulfil. But unlike Harry Frankfurt, from whom he borrows these terms, Taylor does not believe that we form second-order desires with a view to attaining some long-term maximisation of first-order desire satisfaction (Taylor, 1985a: 16). In strong evaluation we judge our first-order desires in accordance with standards of value that register a range of peculiarly human concerns that are irreducible to desire, in the sense that they are employed to accept or reject desires (Taylor, 1989: 20).[11]

Strong evaluation is a form of moral reasoning that we employ when considering how to accommodate the well-being of other persons, determining how to live a fulfilled and meaningful life, and when regarding the attainments that make us fit objects of respect for other persons (Taylor, 1989: 4). By referring to morality in this sense Taylor stretches the concept beyond its received usage in mainstream moral philosophy and political theory, which typically deals with only the first of these three concerns, to include the broader gamut of what might be called "ethical", "aesthetic" or "spiritual" issues which touch on the latter two axes of moral reasoning and which also influence our understanding of the first axis (Taylor, 1985b; 1989: 4; Laitinen, 2003: 36-37). These moral issues, Taylor believes, are perennial human concerns through which all persons distinguish between what Aristotle called mere life and the

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[9] I discuss Taylor's understanding of practical reason in greater detail in Chapter Three. Here I simply mean by "practical reason" that form of deliberation we use when reaching decisions that, whatever their complexity, answer the basic existential question: "What should I do?" or "What is right for me?" (Habermas, 1993: 2, 116).

[10] Taylor's most extended discussions of strong evaluation are to be found in "What Is Human Agency?" and "Self-interpreting Animals" (both collected in HAL) and throughout Part I of SS.

[11] A more sophisticated discussion of the relationship between Taylor's and Frankfurt's accounts of personhood than I offer here can be found in Laitinen, 2003: 20-24.

good life (1989: 211-12). When strongly evaluating, our deliberation proceeds by assessing possible actions, not only in light of their immediate or delayed outcomes, but also by regarding our motivations for engaging in them; we choose between competing desires and purposes in accordance with our perception of their relative worth and our understanding of their appropriateness as a response to the situation that has occasioned them. These judgements may differ from group to group and, within these groups, individual to individual, as they are always the product of contestable interpretation, but in every case what makes them the sort of judgements they are is that they enable us to distinguish a class of ends or goods that matter deeply to us, in that we take them to be categorically, unconditionally valuable. A corollary of this is that, in deeming certain weakly valued ends undesirable, these are rejected on principle and not on contingent grounds like expediency. Strong evaluation entails making judgements[12] about how to live in accordance with, or in pursuit of, an esteemed or virtuous mode of being which will often rule out certain behaviours altogether (Taylor, 1985a: 23-26).

Because strong evaluation involves selection and principled discrimination between desires, feelings or motivations, it is also that by which we give shape to our selves and construct our identities. This is not just a case of choosing from among a given set of desires, but also characterising and interpreting these desires in the light of our understanding of ourselves and our relationships with others. This Taylor takes to be a uniquely human faculty, which entails situating our motivations within an inherently contrastive linguistic framework (1985a: 19, 24, 48; 1989: 35-39). In so doing we effect a differentiation between otherwise indistinct experiences. Both humans and animals experience anger, for instance, but it would be wildly anthropocentric to attribute indignation to an animal. While both are responses to aversive situations, experiencing indignation requires that we possess a sense of justice, which allows us to distinguish between right and wrong, as opposed to advantageous/disadvantageous or helpful/hurtful, when evaluating the situation in question (Taylor, 1985a: 261). To take another of Taylor's examples, the distinctions that we draw between various forms of attraction, by dissociating love from admiration or fascination, are the sorts of thing that only linguistic animals could make, and in drawing the distinction we

[12] The correct term here may not be "judgement", as Taylor is in fact concerned with what he refers to as our uniquely human moral responses, which are given to us not just through cerebration but also in a broad range of feeling and emotion that together Taylor calls our "moral and spiritual intuitions" (1989: 4). The term nonetheless seems a useful makeshift, both as a shorthand for this broader range of responses and because Taylor believes that where all but a very narrow, visceral range of reactions are concerned our responses are inextricably connected to some understanding of human nature or "ontology of the human", however implicit or inarticulate this understanding may be (1989: 5).

alter our emotional experience (1985a: 70).[13] This is the sense of Taylor's claim that "the whole notion of our identity, whereby we recognize that some goals, desires, allegiances are central to what we are, while others are not or are less so, can make sense only against a background of desires and feelings which are not brute" (1985b: 224). Taylor is not making a normative claim about what people should do in order to live a fulfilled life, but rather what all competent persons in fact do in all but the most prosaic of lived situations.[14] If we lacked the sense of self that we derive from strong evaluation we would, Taylor argues, suffer a paralysis of the will when engaging in practical reason with our environments. It is in this sense that Taylor believes strong evaluation to be a transcendental condition of personhood (1985a; 1989).[15]

1.2.2 *Strong evaluation and hermeneutic universalism*

One useful way of conceptually situating Taylor's discussion of strong evaluation is to view it as an account of human agency and language use that argues both for what might be called "hermeneutic universalism" for a "hermeneutic contextualism" (Hiley, Bohman & Shusterman eds., 1991: 7).[16] The former is based upon the claim that self-interpretation is a universal, perennial feature of human agency, while the latter emphasises that interpretation necessarily presupposes a context or background such as a system of belief, a nexus of social relationships, or a given tradition (Bohman *et al*., 1991: 7). These are, however, enormously controversial claims. Considering the first of these (I consider the second in the following section and in the discussion of value realism in Chapter Three), Taylor maintains that self-interpretation is a universal feature of all non-pathological human agency in order to describe what he believes is peculiar about humans or persons as objects of study that require conceptual categories not found in naturalistic thought. This might, however, be considered a too narrowly

[13] I discuss this claim further below, but here it might be noted that Taylor uses such examples to demonstrate that our motivations are only fully intelligible as reasoned responses to certain situations, and where we arrive at a different construal of our situation our desires will alter accordingly. The desire may still retain some of its original flavour and vigour but, if judged to be inappropriate to the situation that occasioned it, it will appear misplaced, inconsistent, mistaken, irrational, or something of the sort, and in virtue of this assume a different place in our affective experience (Taylor, 1985a).

[14] There are passages where Taylor suggests that strong evaluation is a capacity that can be more or less developed, and that the mere potential for strong evaluation is a sufficient criterion of personhood (Taylor, 1985a: 103; 1985b: 196). I do not defend this weaker claim, which is inconsistent with much of what Taylor writes on the topic and which, in those of his works that have appeared subsequent to HAL and PHS, Taylor drops.

[15] For a consideration of narrative reasoning, which Taylor believes is another transcendental condition of personhood, see my Appendix 1.

[16] Nicholas H. Smith, in his "Taylor and the Hermeneutic Tradition", discusses the use of the hermeneutic tradition in Taylor's work, which has relatively few points of contact with hermeneutic philosophy associated with biblical or legal textual exegesis, poetics, literary hermeneutics or questions of interpretative methodology (Smith in Abbey ed., 2004: 29-32, 37-38). Taylor's distinctive contribution to this hermeneutic tradition, argues Smith, comes from his concern to demonstrate how reflection on language and ethics can be incorporated into a project of philosophical anthropology.

"intellectualist" account of moral agency (Flanagan in Rorty, A. & Flanagan eds., 1990: 47; Smith, 2002). Because people may, and for the most part do, hold moral standards without reflecting upon them, we might find it difficult to credit the idea that the ability to strongly evaluate is implicit in the attribution of personhood (Flanagan in Rorty, A. & Flanagan eds., 1990; Weinstock in Tully ed., 1995b).[17] But this criticism loses its bite when we observe that, for Taylor, we needn't strongly evaluate in explicit formulations to be related to the good and possess an identity. Responding to such criticisms, Taylor has explained that, while his use of the term "evaluation" may mislead by implying an act of reflection and deliberate choice, we can strongly evaluate implicitly or passively (Tully ed., 1995b: 249; Smith, 2002).

Because strong values can influence us even pre-theoretically and inarticulately, prior to the moral deliberation that usually brings them into play, Nicholas H. Smith emphasises that, properly speaking, Taylor must be understood to be more concerned with the place of strong value in human life than with strong evaluation (Smith, 2002: 91, 94-95). It is more important, for Taylor, that we have the ability to recognise strong value than that we actively do so in explicit formulations (Smith, 2002; Laitinen, 2003: 29-30). Taylor has readily conceded that for this reason strong evaluation, which may suggest active, theoretical judgement, may be a misleading term (Tully ed., 1995b: 249). He is primarily concerned with the ineradicable "'sense' of qualitative distinction" that is the foundation of fully human identity and agency (1989: 21).

Taylor has also been accused of offering an excessively "moralist" account of moral deliberation (Flanagan in Rorty, A. & Flanagan eds., 1990: 42). Owen Flanagan argues that any plausible philosophical psychology or philosophical anthropology must acknowledge at a descriptive level that selves are formed inter-subjectively[18] and that we are "self-comprehending creatures"[19] (Rorty, A. & Flanagan eds., 1990: 44). Flanagan maintains that, while Taylor rightly defends these theses, neither entails that all persons consistently function as strong evaluators. Rather, it would appear to suffice for persons that they identify powerfully with their desires, whatever these may be or, at a second-order level, with even a superficial or non-ethical scheme of evaluation, for them to possess a stable sense of self

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[17] In this connection Owen Flanagan claims that Taylor "overstates the degree to which rich and effective identity, as well as moral decency, are tied to articulate self-comprehension and evaluation" (1990: 37). Similarly, Daniel M. Weinstock maintains that Taylor's account of strong evaluation "[raises] the entry conditions for personhood to an impossibly high level, since it is not at all clear that people generally engage in the fairly sophisticated exercise in reflexive self-understanding and self-constitution which strong evaluation involves" (Weinstock in Tully ed., 1995: 174).

[18] This is to claim that "identity is invariably created in the context of some social relations or other and is formed or constituted from the cloth of prior social forms and the possibilities available therein" (Flanagan in Rorty, A. & Flanagan eds., 1990: 43-44). We may modify these forms but we are not in the first instance their creators.

[19] On this view, "[s]ome minimal form of self-awareness is criterial for being a person" (Flanagan in Rorty, A. & Flanagan eds., 1990: 44).

(Rorty, A. & Flanagan eds., 1990: 49). Whether or not we agree with Flanagan, however, it is important to note that he appears to construe Taylor's account of moral judgement too narrowly (Smith, 2002; Laitinen, 2003: 36, n.29). Taylor, as we saw above, applies this term in an exceedingly expansive fashion, so that moral concerns come to include not only our obligations to respect the welfare of others but also conceptions about the nature of a fulfilled life and about the respect that others owe us (1989: 4). It is our inability to evaluate on any of these scales – and not just the first, as Flanagan appears to assume – that threatens to undermine our sense of identity because it renders us incapable of drawing the distinction between mere life and the good life that we require to function in the world as competent agents (Smith, 2002; Laitinen, 2003: 36, n.29).

A more challenging criticism of Taylor's account of strong evaluation comes from Amélie O. Rorty and David Wong, who argue that our identities are not *exhausted* by our ideals (in Rorty, A. & Flanagan eds., 1990). Taylor believes that Herbert Dreyfus is correct to maintain that humans are "interpretation all the way down" (Dreyfus, cited in Taylor, 1985a: 191). Taylor does allow that certain visceral responses, such as experiences of bodily pain, affect us prior to any interpretive figuration on our part (1989: 6), but this approach fails to consider the extent to which temperamental traits like aggression or friendliness, shyness or gregariousness, trust or distrust and the like shape our deliberation in ways that may frustrate or constrain our ideals of character (Rorty, A. & Wong in Rorty, A. & Flanagan eds., 1990).[20] Our practical deliberations may go better to the extent that we factor these temperamental traits into our sense of self, but Taylor's "ideal" or "top-down" model of deliberation leaves little room for this (Rorty, A. & Wong in Rorty, A. & Flanagan eds., 2002: 31; Smith, 2002). While Taylor's top-down conception of practical reasoning may hold up as a normative model, it seems descriptively misleading to the extent that persons do not in fact demonstrate any overwhelming need to prioritise their ideal over their temperamental identifications in order to possess a stable sense of identity (Rorty, A. & Wong in Rorty, A. & Flanagan eds., 2002).

[20] Rorty and Wong also criticize Taylor for failing to consider the influence of somatic dispositions on identity. Despite recent attempts to conceptualise the influence of physical embodiment on identity, this aspect of Taylor's thought has yet to be rigorously formulated by him (Taylor, 1995a). Where Taylor does discuss embodiment in detail (in "Overcoming Epistemology" and "To Follow a Rule", both collected in PA), he does relatively little to connect it with the questions of identity that are so central to his earlier work. As Jussi Kotkavirta observes, the importance of embodiment in constituting identity may be strongly implied in the importance that Taylor places on the emotional life in constituting the experience of persons, but Taylor does not draw out these connections and doing so would lead beyond the scope of this assignment (Kotkavirta in Laitinen & Smith eds., 2002: 69).

1.3 Personhood and language

We should now be in a better position to see how Taylor can claim that strong evaluation is an essential feature of persons. If our deliberations were not informed by strong evaluations we would, Taylor claims, be unable to exercise our agency in a recognisably non-pathological form; in determining how to act we would appeal to an array of desires that could only be distinguished by contingent criteria like degrees of expediency, which Taylor believes would not suffice to create a stable sense of self by *consistently* ruling some choices in and others out. This may well, as Rorty and Wong contend, be more compelling as a normative rather than a descriptive claim. But even if we are willing to grant Taylor's hermeneutic claim that all people are constitutively self-interpreting animals, Taylor also owes it to us to establish *how* this is possible. This can best be explained, I believe, by considering some important features of Taylor's philosophy of language. Taylor points out that in articulating our self-understandings we speak in "languages of qualitative contrast" that register, even if only implicitly, the qualitative distinctions expressed in strong values (1985a: 24). He believes that this is not just a matter of inclination or cultural habituation but of universal human necessity.

Attending to this point draws our attention to another important feature of Taylor's account of strong evaluation which informs his hermeneutic contextualism. Taylor argues that our individual self-understandings are necessarily related to a subject-transcending background of moral self-interpretation that is, in a meaningful sense, the possession of cultural communities. Understanding the contextual dimension of Taylor's hermeneutics helps to clarify the interplay between the first two identity-defining relationships that we isolated at the outset of this chapter, where we considered how, for Taylor, human identity formation is constitutively reliant upon both monological self-interpretation and culturally mediated exchange between persons.

I believe that we can best understand Taylor's position by discussing in broad outline his account of what he calls the "Herder-Humboldt" tradition of linguistic thought (1985a: 10). These are the "Romantic", "expressive" or "expressive-constitutive" theories of language first propounded by Herder, Humboldt and Hamann, which are extended in important ways more recently by Heidegger and in Wittgenstein's later writings (1985a; 1995a). Taylor believes that these thinkers draw attention to aspects of language use that are misunderstood or overlooked in "empiricist" or "designative" theories of meaning originating in the work of

Hobbes, Locke and Condillac and extending to the recent philosophy of language of W. V. Quine, Donald Davidson, John McDowell, Mark Platts and their followers.[21]

1.3.1 *Language as an expressive medium*

For Taylor, human language use is "expressive" in three senses. Firstly, language is not only a medium for communicating states of affairs in the world taken to exist independently of us but that through which we experience our selves and our environments in a recognisably human form at all (1985a: 227-29). Taylor wishes to argue that language is not, as it were, a screen between the individual and her environment, or a tool used by individuals for planning ends that could be pre-linguistically conceived, but a constitutive feature of our most basic mode of engagement with the world.

Secondly, while this means that language is expressive of a peculiar quality of subjectivity or consciousness, it does not follow that we should espouse a "subjectivistic" theory of knowledge and meaning, where this is taken as the thesis that what language expresses is exclusively the self of the individual articulator (Taylor, 1985a; 1995a). Given that it is only through speech acts that the capacity for reflective awareness latent in the possession of language is actualised, thought and speech are internally related. Moreover, if the better part of speech acts are conducted in dialogue with others, then it is possible to see the subject of language as, in a certain sense, the speech community (1985a: 234). "Language is shaped by speech", writes Taylor, "and so can only grow up in a speech community. The language I speak, the web which I can never fully dominate and oversee, can never be just *my* language, it is always largely *our* language" (1985a: 234; emphasis in original). Taylor's point here does not only apply to our induction into language but also to our continued reliance upon it throughout our lives; through shared languages "we are aware of a world through a 'we'

[21] Taylor's criteria for isolating these two traditions concern their respective accounts of the functions of language and the significance that they assign to language in the constitution of personhood. It is worth noting, however, that his treatment of these themes is entirely schematic. He doesn't claim that all of the views he outlines are found in any single thinker in each tradition, but that, read together, these writers provide insights that converge on two quite different construals of human agency and lend force to similarly divergent social ontologies. Endorsing the Herder-Humboldt tradition is, for Taylor, to portray language as fundamentally an expressive medium that is also constitutive of our personhood and our human associations in many important regards. Taylor views language holistically, as an interconnected lexical web with the individual parts conveying meaning in virtue of their connection to the whole and the whole registering the modifications to its parts as innovation becomes standardised (1985a: 230-31). In its uniquely human uses, language functions as a medium of consciousness, thought or reflection of a sort that is unavailable to animals. In this it is not merely an instrument for formulating and communicating thoughts or planning strategically; language is above all a vehicle of meaning, through which we receive, express and create a world of thought, feeling and emotion structured by uniquely human significances. Taylor discusses his understanding of language at greatest length in "Language and Human Nature" and "Theories of Meaning", both appearing in HAL, but the distinction he draws between the expressive and designative traditions and his endorsement of the former is something of a constant in his moral philosophy and is encountered throughout PHS, SS and PA.

before we are through an ‘I’”, and we can never wholly abscond from this ontologically basic or “primitive” orientation to the world (Taylor, 1985b: 40; 1989: 38). This reliance needn’t express itself in conversations with concretely present others, but in the continuing imagined dialogues that we maintain with the opinions of others in thought throughout our lives, through which we construct and modify our own value orientations (Taylor, 1989: 38).[22] This is the sense of Taylor’s oft-quoted claim that “[a] self exists only within what I call ‘webs of interlocution’” (1989: 36).[23]

Taken together, these two claims are meant to establish that, underlying the uniqueness of our individual speech acts there is necessarily a more basic commonality, where this is discernible both between people taken as individuals and between people insofar as they are members of particular cultures. In addition, Taylor effects a third departure from the designative tradition by widening the range of media that we understand to constitute language. Because language expresses not only thought but feeling and emotion too, limiting our understanding of language to prose proves too constraining and Taylor believes that we do well to conceptualise prose speech, in its expressive aspect, as functioning on a continuum with poetry, music, dance, art and other symbolic media (1985a: 216, 232-33).[24]

1.3.2 *Language as a constitutive medium*

In discussing the expressive functions of language Taylor is concerned with what (properly speaking) language is and who its subject is. But Taylor is also, and more fundamentally, interested in establishing the role language plays in the constitution of personhood and in

[22] “[T]hrough language”, writes Taylor, “we remain related to partners of discourse, either in real, live exchanges, or in indirect confrontations. The nature of language and the fundamental dependence of our thought on language makes interlocution in one or other of these forms inescapable for us” (1989: 38).

[23] Taylor’s intention is to emphasise the co-dependence of individual language use and the linguistic resources of communities. He does not want to advocate the (broadly speaking) structuralist position that the agent of language is the linguistic structure itself: “To give an absolute priority to the structure [of collective action and language practices] makes *exactly as little sense* as the equal and opposite error of subjectivism” (Taylor, 1985b: 173-74; emphasis in original). While this second claim might been seen as narrowing the scope of individual freedom of belief and choice, Taylor only intends to argue that there is a dynamic push-and-pull between individual linguistic innovation and a limiting set of conditions of linguistic intelligibility. These conditions are normative for individual expressive activity insofar as localised speech acts, however novel, must draw on the whole pre-existing structure of language if they are to be at all meaningful. Thus Taylor describes language as a “pattern of activity, by which we express/realize a certain way of being in the world…but a pattern which can only be employed against a background which we can never fully dominate; and yet a background that we are never fully dominated by, because we are constantly reshaping it” (1985a: 232). Nonetheless, it is possible that Taylor does in practice over-emphasise the extent to which individual subjectivity is constrained by the structure of language and that this leads him to stress our need to belong to particular cultural communities. I address these criticisms in Chapters Three and Five.

[24] Taylor sometimes also holds that this analysis can be extended further, into gesture and bodily comportment, which express the embodied understanding of a pre-theoretical awareness analogous to what Pierre Bourdieu has referred to as the “habitus” (1991c: 308-09; 1995a: 110, 178). But because this is a relatively recent and under-theorised contribution to Taylor’s philosophical anthropology, and because it has few points of connection with his political thought, I have chosen to omit it.

maintaining inter-personal relationships. Taylor employs the term “constitutive” in contradistinction to “causal”, “instrumental” or “contingent”, to refer to relationships obtaining between things that are internally, indissociably related to one another, not only in practice but due to conceptual necessity. The Herder-Humboldt tradition explicates three basic ways in which the capacities we associate most closely with persons necessarily draw on a background of linguistic competency, and discussions of human agency that omit or occlude this background lack an essential condition of their own intelligibility. I discuss the first two of these below and the third in the following chapter.

The first sense in which, for Taylor, language is constitutive of personhood is that language is that which enables us to effect a differentiation between both our internal states and the people and objects in our environments (1985a: 256-58, 269-70). Language is therefore what allows persons to assume a reflective and discriminatory attitude toward the world about them and towards their own motivations for action, which we have said is integral to strong evaluation. The relationship between language and thought that Taylor envisages is the dynamic relationship underscored by the expressivist view of language as speech activity, in that formulation in language is partially responsible for what is revealed or experienced through thought. This helps to explain why, for Taylor, self-awareness is also self-interpretation. Through articulation in speech we come to some understanding of ourselves and our worlds, but in so doing we also alter the way that these things appear related to one another or to us. This alteration in turn calls for another articulation, and so on, in a hermeneutic circle of interpretation that Taylor believes has no conceivable point of termination in an absolute account of things (1985a: 45; 1985b: 15).

Language, then, enables (indeed compels) us to make crucial distinctions between otherwise indistinct facets of experience, reconstituting the experience in the process. But Taylor also wishes to emphasise that the change here is not purely analytical; language also shapes our affective experience and thereby alters the feelings, desires and emotions that together constitute our motivations, opening us to concerns of a sort that could not arise for animals (1985a: 47). This we touched on above; humans are not alone in experiencing anger but we cannot intelligibly say that animals experience indignation, or that one animal is affectively tied to another out of fascination or admiration as opposed to love. To do so would be to slide into anthropocentrism by attributing a motivational state to an animal that only a human could, as a language-using animal, possess.[25] These linguistic distinctions and others

[25] I do not wish, and am unable, to defend Taylor’s position here. These are clearly complex, and possibly controversial, claims, a consideration of which would lead far beyond the confines of the present study. We might, however, note that it would be no less anthropocentric of Taylor to presume that animals do not experience a rich

like them, which inform our strong evaluations, provide reasons for action by shaping our motivations. For this reason Taylor believes that our human behaviour is only intelligible if it is assumed to be that of strong evaluators. This transformative power of language is a second constitutive function of language that Taylor considers, and it is this that he is pointing to when he writes that "self-understanding is constitutive of feeling" (1985a: 270).[26]

1.3.3 *Strong evaluation, language use and cultural belonging*

We must now return to the question, posed above, of how people strongly evaluate. In the discussion of human language use above, we saw that strong evaluation typically comes to expression in "languages of qualitative contrast". Taylor also refers to this as a "language of evaluative distinctions" or a "language of contrastive characterisation", which reflects his interest in providing a phenomenological account of how moral evaluation enters into our commonplace thinking and quotidian speech acts (1985a: 19, 24, 48). Taylor employs these terms of art to underscore the manner in which strong evaluations draw on a range of other terms in language to give them their meaning, and arise out of the attempt to establish commensurability of value between experiences that are differentiated and drawn into

emotional world of their own, but he does not mean to imply this; nor does Taylor make the obvious error of claiming that all non-human animals do not possess language. Rather, he simply wishes to argue that the ends humans seek are, for the most part, of a sort that animals lacking our human languages couldn't intentionally pursue. As Nicholas H. Smith explains, Taylor believes we can account for animal behaviour as purposive action directed toward physical survival, reproduction, primitive socialisation or some other ultimately biologically defined goal in terms that need make no appeal to their languages because these are ends that can be achieved without language. A description of their language use might enrich our explanation of their behaviour where in practice it is used to achieve these goals, but such an account would be quite intelligible without this description as for the purposes of explanation there is no conceptually necessary or constitutive relationship between their behaviour and their language (Smith, 2002: 76-77).

[26] In discussing this second constitutive function of language, Taylor wishes to establish that most of our motivational states (our feelings, desires, emotions etc.) are "import-attributing" and "subject-referring" (1985a: 48, 54). To assign an import to something is to make a judgement that confers meaning on it by bringing it into a linguistically defined relationship with our motivational states. "By 'import'", explains Taylor, "I mean a way in which something can be relevant or of importance to the desires or purposes or aspirations or feelings of a subject; or otherwise put, a property of something whereby it is a matter of non-indifference to a subject" (1985a: 48). Taylor's discussion of the human emotions and feelings has in mind a broad and loosely defined set of characteristically human affects: shame, humiliation, outrage, dismay, exhilaration, wonderment, dignity, pride, admiration, contempt, moral obligation, remorse, unworthiness, self-hatred, self-acceptance, etc. (1985a: 48, 58). He distinguishes these from purely physiological sensations like pain, heat or nausea, as well as apparently instinctual feelings like the fear of physical harm (Taylor, 1985a: 50-52, 260; 1989: 5). While the latter range of experiences affects us quite immediately and pre-linguistically – as brute realities that play the role they do in our experience prior to our assigning any meaning to them – the former presupposes some construal of the relationship between self and world. Shame, for instance, would have no meaning if there weren't a subject that aspired to dignity, honour, or some such value (however she might understand the practical demands required for realising these values) placed in a situation that thwarted these aspirations (Taylor, 1985a: 52-56). The point of drawing these distinctions is to demonstrate that there are conditions of intelligibility that govern not only claims about the world but also motivational states and to establish that these conditions are partly constituted both by the structure of what can be coherently figured in language and by certain properties of the situation in which the motivations are experienced. We will not experience indignation unless our sense of justice is outraged, nor will we feel shamed unless our dignity is compromised. In these and other situations our motivational states reflect a certain *interpretation* of events and would alter were that interpretation to change.

comparison in language. This differentiating function of language creates a need for us to order and discriminate; Taylor implies that linguistic activity that aims at ever-more authentic modes of expression is in a sense the solution to a dilemma that our induction into language has itself already posed.

At its most rudimentary level, the sense of strong value is just that our experience, no matter how inchoate or confusing, and precisely because it is experienced as *confusing* at all, is amenable to ordering in language; that in articulating our experience we will be in a better position to fix upon those features of our engaged situation in the world that are in some sense more important or valuable than others and respond accordingly. Taylor explains:

> as language animals…we have already incorporated into our language an interpretation of what is really important. And it is this articulation…which makes our inarticulate feelings into questions. Without language we could not have a sense of [the] distinction between what is really important and what we just from time to time desire (1985a: 74).

Taylor believes that the apparent presence of virtue terms in all human languages is not fortuitous but rather evidence of an inescapably moral mode of engagement with the world. Whatever their cultural affiliations, people invariably apply "desirability characterizations" (in the coinage that Taylor borrows from Elizabeth Anscombe) to their behaviour and that of others (1985a: 119). When employing this register

> our desires are classified in such categories as higher and lower, virtuous and vicious, more and less fulfilling, more and less refined, profound and superficial, noble and base. They are judged as belonging to qualitatively different modes of life: fragmented or integrated, alienated or free, saintly, or merely human, courageous or pusillanimous and so on (Taylor, 1985a: 16).

The upshot of the above-mentioned arguments, which is given its fullest explication in SS, is that our necessary reliance upon strongly valued goods for the formation of identity means that we are, simply as persons, reliant upon inherited "frameworks" of qualitative contrast that register the strong values informing our moral judgement. It is on this basis that Taylor's contextualist claims are built. Frameworks, as Taylor conceives them, are more or less abiding and internally coherent (though also ever-evolving and plastic) constellations of moral judgement common to cultural communities.[27] As Taylor explains,

[27] In SS Taylor discusses in detail a number of frameworks that have been especially influential in the West. Influential pre-modern frameworks include the Homeric honour ethic, Platonic or Stoic rational self-mastery and the Christian transformation of the will through grace, while underlying the plethora of ethical outlooks that

> a framework incorporates a crucial set of qualitative distinctions. To think, feel, judge within such a framework is to function with the sense that some action, or mode of life, or mode of feeling is incomparably higher than the others which are more readily available to us….One form of life may be seen as fuller, another way of feeling and acting as purer, a mode of feeling or living as deeper, a style of life as more admirable, a given demand as making an absolute claim as against other merely relative ones, and so on (1989: 19-20).

The judgements that make up our individual moral responses, however singular they may be, draw on such frameworks as a precondition of their being intelligible at all. This is not contingently true but rather conceptually necessary; because humans cannot but be concerned with strong value, these frameworks offer "contestable answers to inescapable questions" (Taylor, 1989: 41). An agent lacking any orientation toward the strong values that these frameworks of meaning make accessible

> wouldn't know where he stood on issues of fundamental importance, would have no orientation in these issues whatever, wouldn't be able to answer for himself on them....In practice we should see such a person as deeply disturbed....[A] person without a framework altogether would be outside our space of interlocution; he wouldn't have a stand in the space where the rest of us are. We would see this as pathological (Taylor, 1989: 31).

For this reason Taylor holds that our identities are always dependent on complex repositories of historically accumulated meaning existing in the language and thought of a cultural community (1989: 26).

1.4 Conclusion

In the discussion of moral discrimination and language use above I have tried to outline Taylor's understanding of the necessarily dialogical context of individual identity formation, which he commonly refers to as the "background" of human behaviour. This background consists of those features of human life that we must appeal to, either explicitly or implicitly, as conceptually necessary postulates when attempting to account for other components of human experience that presuppose such a set of background conditions. For this reason Taylor refers to the background as a "context conferring intelligibility" (1995a: 68).

We have seen that this background includes a set of moral frameworks that all persons possessed of a minimally coherent identity will grasp, as well as a language of strongly

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modernity has produced, we find *inter alia* the familiar ideals of artistic expressivism, individual freedom, and the valorisation of work and family life (1989).

evaluative terms that carries these concepts. These claims are best understood, we have also said, in the context of Taylor's dissatisfaction with naturalism. In the following chapter we will further see that Taylor's attempt to outline a philosophical alternative to the naturalistic "simple weigher" view of the agent is tied up with his criticism of "atomism", which is the methodological approach to social science inquiry that Taylor believes has grown out of naturalism. More importantly, strong evaluation finds its way into our common social and political action, imbuing shared practices with an "expressive" dimension in virtue of which they function as carriers of a certain shared identity. By getting clearer about this third constitutive function of language we will be better placed to appreciate the force of Taylor's critique of atomism in the social sciences and his endorsement of a holistic method of inquiry into human behaviour.

Chapter Two

2. The dialogical in human life: Taylor's holism

I have attempted above to portray Taylor's discussions of identity or personhood as contributions to an argument for the necessarily dialogical nature of all human life and that, in substantiating this claim, Taylor underscores the necessity of accessing the moral frameworks and languages of a shared culture for sustaining a minimally ordered, non-pathological sense of self. But, in addition to this cultural aspect of the shared "background" of human life, there is also a social and political dimension of commonality between persons. Taylor argues that, while participation in a common culture is a necessary condition of personhood, we can only aspire to the full realisation of our human potential insofar as we also participate in common social and political practices that allow us to attain vital human goods that couldn't be otherwise secured. Failure to participate in these institutions does not eventuate in an identity-crisis, but it does stifle our self-development. I argue, in Section Two, that Taylor understands social and political participation to be an essential condition of human freedom; here I discuss Taylor's belief that if we adopt a naturalistic understanding of human agency then we will misrepresent, and fail to appreciate, the value of participation in collective initiatives.

Granted the indispensability of strong evaluation to healthy personhood that we considered in Chapter One, and given also the importance of expressive languages for our self-understanding as discussed there, Taylor believes we must appreciate that an individual's self-understanding or identity, however original it may be, draws heavily on the resources provided by some or other community, and is consequently likely to overlap quite strongly with the self-understandings of others embedded within the same "webs of interlocution", which Taylor also calls "webs of birth and history" (Taylor, 1989: 36). Taylor's paradigm of such communities would appear to be cultural communities associated through shared linguistic practices, where these practices are understood as the speech activities of a pre-politically defined nation, but, as we shall see below and in Section Two, he often extends this analysis to other forms of community that cohere around common social and political institutions and a history of common association. While Taylor often refers to "cultural" communities in both these narrower and broader senses, I will, unless otherwise indicated, refer to cultures only in the narrower sense and distinguish these from "social" or "political"

associations.[28] Nonetheless, it is important to emphasise that both of these are forms of dialogical association aiming at the definition and realisation of common goods, with political participation constituting the third element of individual identity formation that we discussed in Chapter One.

One of the central issues in dispute in recent debates in political theory is the nature of communal belonging. As Chandran Kukathas explains, all agree that a community is an association of individuals, but

> the centrally important point of contention is the relationship between the individual and the community and, more specifically, the question of whether the individual is shaped or constituted by the community, or whether the community is something to which individuals merely belong or are attached. The issue here is one of identity (in Paul, E. et al., 1996: 82).

Taylor argues that, because of the dialogical dimension of identity formation, individual persons are embedded in communities prior to choice, from which they cannot too easily detach. This is the sense in which we must understand Taylor's assertion that

> [t]he community is not simply an aggregation of individuals; nor is there simply a causal interaction between the two. The community is also constitutive of the individual, in the sense that the self-interpretations which define him are drawn from the interchange which the community carries on (1985a: 8).

This is an ontological thesis about personhood, and it provides the essential support for what Taylor calls elsewhere the "social perspective" (1995a: 135). The social perspective raises an important challenge to understandings of human subjectivity that remain within the limits of individual psychology, which is committed to describing the manner in which people interpret their environments and form moral judgements as the actions of isolated agents that may share values and co-ordinate activities with others but can never in any meaningful sense *also* function together as a collective agent (Taylor, 1985b: 40, 51).

In Section Two I consider the manner in which, according to Taylor, liberal political theorists and political actors in contemporary society more generally tend to disregard the

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[28] Will Kymlicka's reproach against communitarians for too easily eliding social and political modes of association seems fair as a criticism of Taylor's work in general (1989a). In "Atomism" (1985b) Taylor speculates that social structures must be more or less politically regulated to survive over time, but it is only in later essays like "Invoking Civil Society" and "Liberal Politics and the Public Sphere" (1995a) that he does much to discuss the conceptual relationship between political and extra-political forms of association. In order to avoid confusion I will nonetheless follow Taylor and use the terms "social" and "political" in a broadly similar sense, though I will generally opt for the latter, where this is understood to be a sub-category of the social. I deviate from Taylor's use of these terms by strictly separating these off from discussions of "culture".

social perspective. My aim below is somewhat different, and I focus in what follows on explicating Taylor's belief that the social perspective offers a methodological approach to social inquiry that is a necessary extension of the dialogical account of identity formation considered in Chapter One. There we said that Taylor's dissatisfaction with naturalist thought centres on its failure to differentiate between human and animal subjectivity and agency. Here I argue that Taylor is also dissatisfied with naturalist thought because of a methodological "ideal of disengagement" that has evolved in tandem with this tradition (Taylor, 1985a: 5). Taylor argues that as a normative standard for scientific enquiry into the inanimate natural world this ideal has plenty to recommend it, but it holds up poorly under philosophical scrutiny when taken as a thesis describing the way in which people exist in the world and applied to the social sciences. "Atomism" is the catch-all term Taylor employs to describe the worldview that emerges from reifying the normative ideal of disengagement into an ontological thesis about human subjectivity and personhood. Taylor argues that atomist explanation prioritises individual choice and action while bypassing an account of how common understandings are formed when explaining political action, and that in doing so it forsakes methodological coherence. For this reason, Taylor believes, we have to opt for holism over atomism at the ontological level of explanation.

2.1 The social perspective

Taylor understands atomism to be definitive of a diffuse range of elements within the self-understanding of modern Westerns. Perhaps for this reason, his use of the term tends to be inconsistent. Below I isolate three conceptually distinct, if in practice usually overlapping, components of atomistic thought as Taylor understands it. Atomism, I argue, entails a commitment to methodological individualism, moral subjectivism and an instrumental account of common goods. At the same time, I set out Taylor's attempt to provide a non-atomistic or holistic account of political association that avoids the theoretical pitfalls of atomism. Throughout I hope to demonstrate that an appreciation of the (as yet undiscussed) third constitutive function of human language – its ability to co-ordinate collective action by forming common understandings – helps to explicate Taylor's endorsement of a holistic social ontology.

2.1.1 *Public space and language: against methodological individualism*

The common ground of atomistic beliefs, as Taylor variously portrays them, is the notion that the individual can, in principle, be described independently of her communal embedding (Taylor, 1985a: 8). For those who adopt this ontological outlook there is nothing in the very

idea of what it means to be human that necessitates reference to any sort of encompassing social environment. People may, of course, be influenced by their social environments in any number of important ways, and may themselves effect changes upon this environment, but conceptualising their actions is always a matter of describing interchanges between practically and conceptually distinct entities (Taylor, 1985a: 8; 1995a). Otherwise put, people exist in dynamic interchange with their social environments, but this relationship is causal; it has a bearing purely on the choices that lie open to the individuals concerned. Thus whatever the manner in which people are embedded in community, this will always be a matter of contingent concern for understanding their personhood, and a certain form of communal exchange can never be understood as establishing a limiting set of preconditions for healthy identity. For atomists, understanding the individual is a question for individual psychology, while understanding society is in the last analysis just a matter of understanding the aggregated preferences and co-ordinated actions of its composite individuals. This is precisely the premise of social science explanation that has come to be known as "methodological individualism", which Taylor also calls "philosophical atomism" in order to highlight the debt that it owes to atomistic modes of thought (Taylor, 1995a: 129-30).

Taylor believes that philosophical atomism or methodological individualism runs against the social perspective and in doing so misconstrues the nature of collective action. From the atomistic perspective all knowledge states and actions are those of a single agent, or groups of agents co-ordinating their activities but understanding themselves as "I"s from the first-person singular perspective (1995a: 171-73). Taylor believes this is excessively reductive; atomism has no place for a common agent who *also* necessarily understands and acts from a "we" perspective, and whose very sense of self would disintegrate if completely dislodged from this communal background.

One way of escaping the analytical reductionism that inheres in the atomistic outlook is by considering what Taylor calls the semantic dimension or the "dimension of meaning" that all action presumes (Taylor, 1995a: 135). When considering collective action, attention to the semantic dimension allows us to appreciate that the network of institutions and practices – common "roles, offices, statuses, rules, laws, customs" – within which collective social and political action is exercised is necessarily sustained by certain shared meanings or self-descriptions, without which the practices and institutions in question could not function (Taylor, 1985b: 93; 1995a: 130). As Taylor explains:

> There is always a pre-theoretical understanding of what is going on among the members of a society, which is formulated in the descriptions of self and other which are involved in the institutions and

> practices of that society. A society is among other things a set of institutions and practices, and these cannot exist and be carried on without certain self-understandings (1985b: 93).

These understandings needn't be expressly formulated, but are no less essential to the sustenance of the practice for this reason:

> [T]he practices which make up a society require certain self-descriptions on the part of the participants. These self-descriptions can be called constitutive. And the understanding formulated in these can be called pre-theoretical, not in the sense that it is necessarily uninfluenced by theory, but in that it does not rely on theory. There may be no systematic formulation of the norms, and the conception of man and society which underlies them. The understanding is implicit in our ability to apply the appropriate descriptions to particular situations and actions (1985b: 93).

Voting practices, for instance, rely on a norm of individual independence that stipulates that votes must be cast in uncoerced conditions if they are to be legitimate (Taylor, 1985b: 93). Voters must be able to comprehend this norm and apply it to their own behaviour:

> As they vote, they will generally be capable of describing what is going on in terms like these: 'this is a valid vote', or 'there is something dubious about that', or 'that's foul play'….If no one involved had any sense of how their behaviour checked out in this dimension, they would not be engaged in *voting* (Taylor, 1985b: 93; emphasis in original).

Taylor's objection to methodological individualism proceeds on the assumption that collective action requires not just that we do something together but also that we are theoretically or pre-theoretically aware of our doing it in this fashion, where this awareness needn't go beyond knowing which self-descriptions are appropriate to the actions we perform (and, conversely, which actions take us beyond the range of the self-descriptions we adhere to) (Taylor, 1985b; 1995a). Society therefore cannot subsist without some degree of common understandings, and any account of collective action that considers common understanding to be dispensable to such action lacks an essential condition of its own intelligibility (Taylor, 1985b; 1995a). To establish this point, Taylor argues that collective political action is analogous to, or a species of, linguistic action insofar as both individual speech acts and other social and political actions performed in accordance with, or defiance of, a society's inherited institutions and practices are governed by interpretive norms in virtue of which they are intelligible (Taylor, 1995a: 132, 135). Individual particiption in political life requires a mastery of these meanings, which are sustained within a speech community and are embodied in its language (Taylor, 1995a: 134).

To better understand these claims, which are not a little contentious, we can reconsider what was said above about the constitutive functions of language. We discussed, in Chapter One, two senses in which Taylor understands language to be constitutive of human life: language use defines a peculiarly human mode of engagement with the world and enables us to experience the differentiated conceptual and emotional life that we associate with personhood, while also altering our experience of self and world in both thought and emotion through articulation and expression. But Taylor also discusses a third constitutive function of language which we have not yet encountered: the ability to establish common spaces of awareness and dialogue or "public space" (1985a: 259). "That something emerges into...public space", writes Taylor, "means that it is no longer just a matter for me, or for you, or for both us of severally, but is now something for us, that is for us together" (1985a: 259).

Taylor's conception of public space, which he refers to interchangeably as "common space",[29] differs from what is often referred to as the "public domain" in sociology and political science in two ways (1985a: 260; 1995a: 262). Firstly, Taylor conceptualises the institutional space created through association and debate in social and political life as continuous with the more intimate spaces of dialogical interaction that are established between smaller groups or individuals in intimate relationships of love and friendship, as in every case we co-ordinate our action through invoking and creating shared meanings in a shared language. "We can speak of 'common space'", writes Taylor, "when people come together in one act of focus for whatever purpose, be it ritual, the enjoyment of a play, conversation, the celebration of a major event" (1995a: 262).

Secondly, Taylor wants to stress the importance of what he refers to as "common", as opposed to "convergent", understandings in normatively regulating action in social institutions and practices (Taylor, 1995a: 139). Most discussions of collective action understand the shared or inter-subjective meaning required to co-ordinate it as a form of convergent understanding, where something is understood in a similar way by many isolated parties but where there is no *necessary* common acknowledgement of this. Taylor believes that this portrayal of collective action overlooks another qualitatively different mode of common association, and that this oversight derives from adherence to the disengaged epistemology, which holds all knowledge states to be, in the last analysis, those of individuals (1985b; 1995a). He therefore prefers to speak of "common understanding" to conceptually differentiate from this scenario the state of affairs that arises when people act collectively on

[29] In what follows I stick to the second usage. Not only is this in keeping with Taylor's more general reliance on the term, but I believe it also helps highlight the continuities in his arguments for the inter-dependence of common space and common understandings.

the basis of shared understandings that not only overlap in content but are the result of a common outlook dynamically developed in common space through the acknowledgement of all parties. “We can speak of ‘common space’”, writes Taylor,

> when people come together in one act of focus for whatever purpose….Their focus is common, as against merely convergent, because it is part of what is commonly understood that they are attending to the common object, or purpose, together, as against each person just happening, on his or her own, to be concerned with the same thing (1995a: 262).

Taylor’s point is that establishing public or common space needn’t necessarily be premised on transmitting new information. One of the essential insights of the Herder-Humboldt tradition is that “the content of my assertion may be secondary to the enterprise” (Taylor, 1985a: 264). We establish common space in speech and dialogue in interpersonal settings of friendship and love, public gatherings and in the printed and electronic communicative media of society at large, where this may simply entail collectively acknowledging something that all people concerned already know, thereby making it an object of common awareness (Taylor, 1995a: 190).[30]

While convergent understanding builds on contingently shared knowledge, and may therefore quite correctly be attributed to isolated individuals, common understanding is irreducibly the possession of groups:

> Common understandings are undecomposable. This is because…it is essential to their being what they are that they be not just for me and for you, but for us. That we have a common understanding presupposes that we have formed a unit, a “we” who understand together, which is by definition analytically undecomposable (Taylor, 1995a: 139).

Taylor believes that it is meaningful to speak of common understanding, which is also that by which we come to a “common mind”, without postulating the existence of any metaphysically dubious entities like a “mysterious collective consciousness” or some “strange, mystical entity, a ghostly spirit of the collectivity” encountered in the “Hegelian mists” (Taylor, 1995a: 130, 135, 263). To speak of a supra-individual subject as, for instance, Hegel does in his portrayal

[30] Taylor stresses that the shift from private or individual space to common space is not to be understood as effecting the concatenation of monological knowledge states, where by acknowledging some matter partner A knows that B knows, and (possibly) B that A knows that he now knows, etc. This view of collective action unjustifiably collapses what is really a dialogical situation into what comes to be viewed, despite its complexity, as at bottom a monological one (Taylor, 1985b; 1995a). Rather, a qualitatively different mode of awareness and understanding is opened up in dialogue, which is of great significance in any account of human association: “[t]he move from the for-me-and-you to the for-us, the move into public space, is one of the most important things we can bring about in language, and any theory of language has to take account of it” (Taylor, 1995a: 190).

of the human community as the vehicle for the realisation of divine spirit, is to invoke a metaphysics that, to contemporary, disenchanted Westerns cannot really be taken seriously (Taylor, 1988a; 1995b; Descombes in Tully ed., 1995). If forced to choose between methodological individualism and the view that social action is best explained as the activity of a collective super-subject Taylor would doubtless opt for the former, which he believes is, up to a point, perfectly coherent. But Taylor believes there is a third option – a sort of sociological[31] reconstruction of Hegel's account of objective spirit in terms made available by an expressive-constitutive account of language (Taylor, 1988a; 1995b: 237; Descombes in Tully ed., 1995).

Drawing out the conceptual limitations of methodological individualism, for Taylor, involves showing how collective action is rule-governed to the extent that it is reliant upon common understandings forged through the shared practices of a community. Inter-subjective relationships of love and friendship, and exchanges within the institutions and practices of social and political life, are regulated by shared meanings. These meanings, formulated in a common language, give expression to norms governing the actions of individuals living and operating within these dialogical spaces. To grasp these meanings is to master a common mode of evaluation, which the competent individual choices and actions of the individual agents involved in any collective act must appeal to. Thus it is not only true, as we have seen above, that common understandings are indispensable to the functioning of social practices and institutions; Taylor argues that the constitutive bond obtaining between social structures and common understandings means that the reverse relationship also obtains, and these structures serve, in a sense, to inculcate a certain identity within their participants.

This point is implicit in the discussion of the second expressive function of language discussed in Chapter One, where we said that, in a certain sense, the subject of language is the speech community. But it is also significant for our concerns here because by means of it Taylor hopes to show how linguistic action facilitates the development not only of a cultural but also a social or political dimension of individual identity, through which we come to understand ourselves in relation to others with whom we participate in common practices. In this vein, he writes that

> language itself serves to set up spaces of common action, on a number of levels, intimate and public. This means that our identity is never simply defined in terms of our individual properties. It also places

[31] Taylor uses the term "sociological" here very loosely to cover "the generic sense of any study of society" (1995b: 237).

> us in some social space. We define ourselves partly in terms of what we come to accept as our appropriate place within dialogical actions (1995a: 173).

The theorist attempting to explain collective action cannot therefore reduce his explanatory terms to a causal account of how individual choices are formed and concatenate. Taylor's point is not that the consideration of individual choice is ever irrelevant to social science explanation, but rather that in doing so one is forced to also acknowledge the constitutive role that an ideal entity – a culture or society, as well as the languages it employs – plays in making such choice what it is: an intelligible response to a situation that is mediated by some dialogically formed self-understanding. The locus of this ideal entity in virtue of which these choices are meaningful is not in individual minds, as the dovetailing understandings of a contingently associated collection of individuals, but rather in the ongoing symbolic exchanges of a speech community (Taylor, 1995a; 1995b).

Taylor develops the thesis that social and political action participates in the semantic dimension by drawing an analogy between speech acts and other forms of action within public space. For Taylor, reducing communal accretions of symbolic meaning within a language to individual speech acts overlooks the complex, inextricably interconnected nature of linguistic terms which compels each speech act to be in some measure compatible with pre-established meanings. Taylor believes that this is an important theme found in expressive accounts of language and takes it to be axiomatic to linguistic thought in the wake of Ferdinand de Saussure (Taylor, 1995a: 134). The distinction that Taylor draws between individual speech acts and the broader linguistic framework that these acts draw on and modify appeals to the sort of distinction made famous in Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale*, which distinguishes between language as a code or pre-established structure (langue) and language as speech activity (parole) (1985a: 240; 1995a: 134). Acts of parole necessarily appeal to langue, and whatever innovations they contain, by mistake or by design, are constrained at the outer limits by what langue renders intelligible.

Collective action within the institutions and practices of a society is similarly bounded by "constitutive norms" that govern their functioning and make possible co-ordinated action of a particular sort (Taylor, 1985b: 98). This whole approach is perhaps easier to grasp when we consider that Taylor defines a practice in the most general terms, as

> more or less any stable configuration of shared activity, whose shape is defined by a certain pattern of dos and don'ts….The way we discipline our children, greet each other in the street, determine group decisions through voting in elections, and exchange things through markets are all practices. And there

> are practices at all levels of human social life: family, village, national politics, rituals of religious communities and so on (Taylor, 1989: 204).

In this sense social structures and the practices they sustain function as carriers of certain value orientations, demanding of their participants a grasp of the vision of the good that animates them, which, for Taylor, is the same as saying that they help to inculcate a certain identity.[32] Just as langue establishes validity conditions for acts of speech, so too shared meanings and predefined roles proscribe and regulate the choices and actions that agents make in public space. Thus Taylor says that "[e]ach individual filling of a role is an act of parole which presupposes a background langue; and this in turn is sustained through constantly renewed acts" (1995a: 135). This is not to deny that social action, like speech activity, may deviate from accepted practice and in so doing help to reconstitute the background conditions of its intelligibility if these deviations become standardised over time: "Structures of action or languages are only maintained by being renewed constantly in action/speech. And it is in action/speech that they also fail to be maintained, that they are altered" (Taylor, 1985b: 173). What is important in both cases, however, is just that individual actions in common space participate in the semantic dimension and as such are not wholly explicable on their own terms. While methodological individualism allows that this background of practices and understandings influences individual choice, it cannot allow that this background is indispensable to choice as a condition of its very intelligibility.

2.1.2 Shared meanings: against moral subjectivism

Granting common or public space premised on common understandings validity as a descriptive category distinct from convergent space helps to undermine atomistic beliefs as these find expression in methodological individualism and promises to open up what Taylor believes to be a very important normative range of issues pertinent to debates concerning the nature of human interests or the good, as well as the meta-ethical debates about how we decide upon these goods in practical reason. At an elementary level, these debates question what the

[32] Taylor believes that modern social science owes a debt to Hegel, not as a metaphysician but for first articulating this important insight in his historical and political writing. It is Hegel who first gives a meaningful sense to the idea that "we can think of the institutions and practices of a society as a kind of language in which its fundamental ideas are expressed. But what is 'said' in this language is not ideas which could be in the minds of certain individuals only; they are rather common to a society, because embedded in its collective life, in practices and institutions which are of the society indivisibly….Certain norms are implicit in [these practices and institutions], which they demand to be maintained and properly lived out" (Taylor, 1988a: 89). More recently, Taylor credits Wittgenstein, in his celebrated arguments against the possibility of a private language, with providing an understanding of language that lends force to this thesis: "[w]here for the classical theories public language was only a convergence of private lexica, Wittgenstein shows the status of privately invented meanings as parasitic on public language" (1995a: 135, n.7).

good is and to whom it belongs. But Taylor believes that atomistic beliefs have drawn strength from another quarter in the form of philosophical theories that endorse some version of moral subjectivism, and this functions as another obstacle to non-reductive social science explanation.

Taylor has argued that moral subjectivism – the notion that moral values are in some sense illusory, or irreducibly historically or culturally contingent, or possess whatever value they do exclusively in virtue of individual desire or choice – struggles to accommodate a conception of morality that appeals to a minimally fixed conception of human nature or the good life; nor is it willing to allow for extensive, reasoned debate on moral questions, as all moral argumentation appears on its terms to be either objectless cant or ultimately a contestation of individual and group preference that can only be resolved by fiat (Taylor, 1991a: 18). Whether arising from moral scepticism, cultural relativism or theories of self-determining freedom and radical choice, subjectivism is a cause of inarticulacy about the good (Taylor, 1989; 1995a).[33]

With regard to the first moral question mentioned above, concerning what the good is, Taylor believes atomist premises conspire to nullify moral debate or divert it from following a constructive course. Taylor has argued that, historically, the political thought of Hobbes and the Eighteenth Century utilitarian tradition marks the original point of convergence between naturalism and atomism in the human sciences (1988a: 69-75; 1985b: 319). In these doctrines, humans are seen as essentially desiring subjects, and practical reason is properly concerned only with calculating the most expedient mode of fulfilling these desires; people are, in the terms introduced in Chapter One, "simple weighers" of desire. Whatever the degree to which such desires may differ between individuals or members of distinct groups, people are universally motivated by a form of self-love into the pursuit of "happiness", understood simply as the fulfilment of desire (Taylor, 1985b: 319; 1988a: 74-75). As Taylor explains: "Reason now comes to mean 'reckoning' and practical reason is the intelligent calculation of how to encompass ends which are beyond the arbitration of reason" (1988a: 74). The yardstick of value for such theories is happiness, and goods are defined and ranked in relation to whether, or to what degree, they grant satisfaction (Taylor, 1995a: 128). What all such theories share is a commitment to "subjectivism" and, more generally, to atomism (in the narrow sense of methodological individualism):

[33] It is not possible here to do justice to the complexity of Taylor's ongoing engagement with these issues. He has criticised the moral scepticism that comes of subscribing to an is/ought or fact/value cleavage for failing to appreciate the ineradicable value-saturation of all human languages (1985a; 1989: 68). Taylor also takes issue with theories of freedom which see value as purely a function of individual choice (1985a; 1989: 68; 1991a). A potted version of Taylor's views on moral subjectivism and practical reason can be found in the essay "Explanation and Practical Reason", which is included in PA (1995a). A lengthier account appears in SS, ch.3.

> [Subjectivism] is implicit in the utilitarian conception of happiness, which…is deliberately non-critical. Happiness, and thus the good, is measured in terms of what makes people feel happy. We are ultimately referred to subjective feelings, or satisfactions; in terms of a more up-to-date version of utilitarianism, to preferences. The good, or the objects of value, is ultimately determined by what goes on in people's minds or feelings. But then the atomist understanding seems all the more appropriate, since no one supposes that there is a locus of thought or feeling other than the minds of individuals. Unless one takes refuge in a group mind of some strange sort, it simply appears evident that the good so understood must be ultimately decomposable into states of individuals. Subjectivism adds force to atomism in contributing to the unshakeable force of this thesis (Taylor, 1995a: 130).

All this does not mean that, for utilitarian subjectivists, individuals cannot be mistaken about the good. What it does mean though, is that the only acknowledged criteria for determining the good are individual feelings, and in this way answering the first moral question above, concerning what the good is, also forces a position on the second, which concerns whose good it is (Taylor, 1985b). Taylor believes that this whole approach to morality is appealing because, by taking all human motivation to be of a piece, it comports comfortably with a desire to avoid complex "metaphysical" issues that raise much vexed questions concerning the *quality* of desire or motivation, or the nature of the human good, while it can also fit with a desire to discredit certain forms of political paternalism that presume to prescribe to individuals what the good is for them (Taylor, 1985b: 319; 1995a: 128). In mistaking the good, utilitarians will claim, people may fail to perceive correctly what will best satisfy their desires but they cannot be said to misperceive which desires they should have, as determined by some independent moral order. This subjectivist position, however, runs counter to the logic of strong evaluation. As we said in Chapter One, the hermeneutic contextualism that Taylor endorses holds that we necessarily engage with our worlds by forming identities that incorporate strongly valued goods expressed in the moral frameworks of certain cultural communities and carried in some expressive language (Taylor, 1995a: 36-38). If we accept Taylor's arguments for the identity-defining function of strong evaluation and human language use, then utilitarian subjectivism is not an option for persons and the truncated view of practical reason that it sanctions is a formula for pathological disorientation.

2.1.3 *Shared goods: against instrumentalism*

Taylor's concern with factoring common space into the descriptive terms of social science explanation and his dissatisfaction with reductive, subjectivist accounts of the human good feeds directly into his dissatisfaction with instrumental reason and the "eclipse of ends" that

typifies modern moral debate in the social sciences (Taylor, 1991a: 10). Taylor believes that the differentiated, non-reductive articulation of the goods people collectively pursue that comes of rejecting methodological individualism and moral subjectivism also allows us to assign different qualitative values to these goods. This is a necessary point to make because Taylor believes that atomism also gains in plausibility from adopting a reductive view of shared or public goods which portrays them to be only contingently valuable, while Taylor believes that certain public goods – or at least a certain mode of deliberating over and pursuing public goods – are constitutive of healthy identity and therefore indispensable to persons.

Taylor questions the instrumentalist view of goods by inquiring whether it is the case, as atomists (methodological individualists and subjectivists) believe, that the pursuit of the good is in every case ultimately a pursuit of some individual good, regardless of whether people are best able to encompass their ends in isolation or through co-operative social action. If this is so, then, while the empirical conditions governing the collaborative provision of the good may differ, the good will be in every case conceptually identical insofar as the locus of the good will be the individual that benefits from the fruits of this collaboration (Taylor, 1995a). But, given Taylor's arguments for rejecting any atomistic social ontology based upon methodological individualism and subjectivism, we already have reason to discern a class of goods that are by their very definition only realisable through collective action. Moreover, Taylor believes that atomists do and must always adopt an instrumental account of the value of shared goods, which leads them to misrepresent and undervalue the moral worth of certain forms of social co-operation and common political action.

To better appreciate Taylor's position, it is important to note that he believes something analogous to the monological/dialogical or convergent/common distinction between modes of understanding and action also holds true of goods (1995a: 190). By this he means that there are some goods that by definition can only be appreciated and practically realised by a collective agent of some sort. His philosophical defence of this position proceeds, I believe, by arguing two basic positions: firstly, that shared goods are not always merely compound individual goods. In examining collectively pursued goods we can distinguish between at least two distinct categories: on the one hand, there are "decomposable" or "convergent" goods, which are analytically reducible to the several individual goods that make them up, but, on the other hand, we can identify a category of goods that are undecomposable and "irreducibly social" (Taylor, 1995a: 127, 129, 191). These latter can only be properly understood as the shared goods of a community, because part of what constitutes their value is the fact of their being shared. Secondly, beyond claiming that irreducibly social goods are the possession of communities, Taylor also argues that they are of inherent value to the

individuals within these communities in the sense that they are not valued as the means to some other good end, but are valuable as ends in themselves. In both these regards they differ from decomposable goods.

In defending the first of these claims, Taylor argues that those goods commonly referred to by utilitarian-inspired disciplines such as welfare economics as "public" or "common" goods are frequently of a purely functional or instrumental value; a dam built to prevent flooding, an army trained for national defence, or local police and fire services, are of this sort (Taylor, 1995a: 190-91). These things are not, strictly speaking, goods in themselves, but make possible a range of individual goods by proffering similar benefits upon all those affected by them; in these examples, the physical security of all the individuals in the group whose interests these objects and services satisfy. As a matter of empirical likelihood these objects and services could not be funded and maintained by individuals, and so their provision to one requires their provision to all (Taylor, 1995a: 129, 138). But here their "public" or "common" nature refers only to the circumstances of their provision and says nothing about what, in strictly moral terms, makes them the goods they are, which is why Taylor prefers to refer to them as "convergent" goods (1995a: 191).[34]

In positively valuing security as a good we may, and usually do, also value as goods the commonly possessed instruments like a dam or defence force that make it possible, but there is nothing in the nature of security as a good that requires any *necessary* appeal to common enterprises like these. However difficult it may be in practice, it is quite conceivable that individuals could find ways of independently ensuring their security, without the security for that reason being practically undermined or diminished in value (Taylor, 1995a: 137). Our interest in security bears no essential, conceptually necessary connection to our holding common understandings and engaging in collaborative efforts in common space. The dam or defence force, then, are only causally, externally related to the good that they make available – physical security, in these examples – and this security is indeed best described in atomistic terms as the composite good of each member of the group benefiting severally from these public enterprises (Taylor, 1995a: 137). In this sense, the dam, the defence force and the

[34] For a similar distinction between "public" and "common" goods see John Haldane's "The Individual, the Sate, and the Common Good" (in Paul, E. et al., 1996: 72-73). Haldane argues that the former can be thought of as "distributive" goods while the latter are "communicable". Distributive goods such as laws promoting civil order and public health are "social means to individual ends" because they are conditions for the benefit of individuals taken in isolation, and the public nature of these goods resides simply in their being the objects of convergent interests (Haldane in Paul, E. et al., 1996: 72). Endeavours to comprehend and communicate political, moral and spiritual ideas and virtues can be viewed, by contrast, as common or communicable goods because they contribute to the advancement and enrichment of the shared self-understanding or sensibility of an entire society. Taylor articulates a similar distinction between goods while, as we shall see below, valuing not only certain forms of common understanding as common goods but also forms of action that necessarily rely upon common understandings.

municipal services are only of instrumental value, as means to the end of security, and this end itself can only lucidly be described as a good insofar as it fulfils the interests of individuals.

Taylor does not dispute the instrumental view of many public goods that surfaces in atomistic social theories, provided such accounts describe what he prefers to call convergent goods. He does, however, insist that there is a class of public goods that are irreducibly social in the sense that they cannot be conceptually assimilated to convergent goods. These irreducibly social goods, for which he reserves the title of "common" goods, are not decomposable into the several goods of individuals because part of what makes them good is that they are appreciated and pursued in common. Their being shared is not a matter of contingency, pertaining only to their provision, but is an essential feature of what it is that we value about them (or, properly speaking, what we *should* value about them). "Some things have value to me and to you", explains Taylor, "and some things essentially have value to us. That is, their being for us enters into and constitutes their value for us" (1995a: 190).

Taylor identifies two, usually overlapping, sub-categories of common goods: "mediately" common or "culturally conditioned" goods, and "immediately" common goods (1995a: 138, 190). The former are "the goods of a culture that makes conceivable actions, feelings, valued ways of life" (1995: 140). If, for example, we value authentic self-expression, the experiences that come of appreciating certain works of art or selfless acts of heroism, we must, in the name of self-awareness and self-consistency, acknowledge a debt to the culture that makes these appear as valuable objects at all (Taylor, 1995a: 136-37). To value these goods is to value the culture – or certain aspects of the culture, as we may consistently object to some aspects of the culture in question while esteeming others – which is constitutive of the goods in the sense that we could not appreciate their moral worth were it not for the common understandings that the culture provides us (Taylor, 1995a: 136-37).

Where direct relationships between people are concerned (as opposed to experiences that involve indirect, unacknowledged interactions between people mediated through appeal to common cultural artefacts), Taylor believes that we are justified in speaking of another, compatible sort of irreducibly social good. He calls these "immediately common" goods when distinguishing them from the mediately common, culturally conditioned goods mentioned above (Taylor, 1995a: 190). Immediately common goods rely by definition on common understandings and actions and exist in common space through acts of collective focus, as in the case of open and equal public relations between people, or, at the intimate level, in relations of friendship and love (Taylor, 1995a: 138-39). Where these relationships are concerned, "what matters to us is just that there are common actions and meanings" (1995a: 190). In practice, however, the common understanding involved here is usually not just that

the relationship is of a certain sort, but also entails the further mutual acknowledgement of the relationship's goodness, because where this is lacking the relationship is unlikely to prove durable (Taylor, 1995a: 138-39, 190).

Thus far, we have seen how Taylor substantiates the first of the two claims that we identified above, to the effect that we can analytically isolate two distinct categories of goods by distinguishing between common and convergent goods. The second claim, concerning the inherent value of these goods, will be explored throughout Section Two. This is because Taylor's arguments for the intrinsic value of these goods are arguments about practical reason and human freedom, and these take us far into a consideration of his social and political philosophy and the critique of procedural liberalism that runs through it. But already, I hope, the substance of the second claim should be apparent. In terms of the discussion of layered identities above, we can see that the mediately common goods of which Taylor speaks are what we have referred to as the cultural elements of the background of human agency, which function as a precondition of us esteeming certain achievements, lifestyles, legal relationships and the like. Taylor's contention appears to be that were it not for the existence of cultural frameworks of meaning these goods could not move us; they are the sort of goods that could not make motivational claims upon us if we lacked the ability to frame the value distinctions by which they are identified and articulated, and as such we could not be driven to pursue them without first having familiarised ourselves with the languages and values of some culture. Assuming that we accept Taylor's thesis about the moral constitution of personhood or healthy identity, then in identifying these cultural common goods as good we are also committed to seeing the culture in question as intrinsically, non-contingently valuable to us; by providing a common background of meaning, the culture is as much a part of the experiences it makes possible as langue is a condition of acts of parole conveying meaning. In Taylor's terminology, we could say that the culture is constitutive of these moral experiences, which are essential to us insofar as they help to form our identities.

Similarly, the second sub-class of common goods – the immediately common goods – are constitutive of the political dimension of identity that we discussed in Chapter One. An important question that recurs throughout the chapters that make up Section Two is whether, even accepting Taylor's claims about human identity formation, these immediately common goods are also necessary to the maintenance of a healthy identity, as Taylor claims they are. If Taylor's claims are to be reckoned convincing, judged by the standards internal to his own thought, they must gain credibility from the contributions to philosophical anthropology that we have discussed thus far. Then, as will be discussed further, he might also be seen to credibly establish a second contention, central to his political philosophy, which is that

versions of liberal thought that are demonstrably committed to endorsing the atomistic misperceptions that we identify here, and which consider either or both of these background elements (i.e. cultural and political identity-defining goods) dispensable to the goods affirmed by the theory, are theoretically incoherent and, in all likelihood, also promote models of society that are inimical to freedom and human flourishing.

2.2 Conclusion

Whatever we think of Taylor's account of personhood and identity it should, in light of the above, now be clear how Taylor attempts to redeem the claim that human identity is necessarily formed within both monological and dialogical contexts of thought and action. For Taylor, we all possess a self-understanding which is at the same time a self-interpretation in the light of dialogically formed values and exchanges within the cultural and political settings in which we live. This means that humans are not contingently but essentially sociable creatures that can only hope to realise their potentials within a community of some sort that makes certain cultural and political goods available to us that would not otherwise be. Accepting this, for Taylor, means accepting that human behaviour needs to be explained in conceptual categories that include but exceed those found in atomistic theories. As social scientists we opt for atomism over holism at the cost of reductionism.

The co-dependence of these monological and dialogical dimensions of identity formation does not, however, necessitate that they exist harmoniously. Taylor believes that, within the necessary interdependence of individual and communal identifications, serious tensions can exist. Indeed, Taylor believes that philosophically explicating these tensions and their political ramifications is an indispensable key to understanding the historical meaning of Western modernity. Post-Romantic Western moderns possess a "complex and many-tiered" sense of self constituted by both particular and universal identifications or commitments (Taylor, 1989: 29). Moreover, the plurality of substantive cultural and political sources of value we acknowledge have come to rely on understandings of the good that exist in often unacknowledged tension and provide an endless source of confusion and conflict. For both these reasons we are drawn toward a range of goods which are at times terribly difficult to practically reconcile (1989: 29). Taylor agrees with his former teacher Isaiah Berlin that

> human beings are always in a situation of conflict between moral demands, which seem to them to be irrecusable, but at the same time uncombinable. If this conflict is not felt, it is because our sympathies or horizons are too narrow, or we have been too easily satisfied with pseudo-solutions (Taylor in Tully ed., 1995b: 213).

It is to this most elementary problem, which is of particular concern for our understanding of social solidarity in the pluralistic political societies of the contemporary West, that we must now turn.

Section Two

From ontological to advocacy issues

In Section One we considered a number of interconnected themes pertaining to Taylor's understanding of human identity. A healthy or non-pathological identity, we said in Chapter One, coheres through a sense of strong value and is ordered in language. Taylor argues from this ontological grounding that identity, in all human cultures, is constructed not only monologically but also dialogically, through immersion in a cultural structure that offers us the expressive languages in which we frame our self-understandings. In Chapter Two we saw that Taylor extends his understanding of the dialogical conditions of identity formation to include common political practices. Participation in these practices is not a transcendental condition of personhood but it is a prerequisite of full self-development insofar as it allows us to realise the immediately common goods that we cannot realise in isolation. For this reason the social sciences must steer clear of atomistic reductionism and instead appeal to a philosophical anthropology that acknowledges the essentially social constitution of all individual identity. Social science theories that draw on atomistic premises are at best one-sided and reductive and will therefore fail to account for the value of political participation. A more rewarding approach to explaining human behaviour is to adopt a holistic methodology which possesses the differentiated conceptual resources required to factor common understandings and common space, as well as common or irreducibly social goods and a realist account of value, into its explanatory lexicon.

In the chapters appearing in this section I explore Taylor's contention, discussed in the Introduction, that ontological reflection upon the shared background of human life has something important to contribute to political thought insofar as it helps delimit the range of defensible alternatives when debating "advocacy issues". These, we said, are moral-political principles concerning the manner in which individuals are integrated into a social collective. Taylor believes that normative debates concerning the proper relationship between individual freedoms and obligations toward community, which are central to much social and political thought, and especially to recent debates concerning social justice, must steer free of confusion and error by avoiding the atomistic reductions underscored by his philosophical anthropology.

Taylor's arguments have a strongly polemical thrust. One recurring target of Taylor's perennial dissatisfaction with atomistic social theories is the family of political thought that he

calls "procedural liberalism", which he believes does, though needn't, rely on atomistic premises. Throughout this section I attempt to delineate some of the most important features of Taylor's political theory by explicating how it is formulated, in large part, as an ontologically informed critique of procedural liberalism. In so doing we will see how Taylor bears out his contention that debates over advocacy issues can be reframed and refined by appeal to ontological reflection. Where an advocacy position held by procedural liberals can be demonstrated to rely on the atomistic reductions that Taylor associates with atomism, he believes it is open to the charge of overlooking or misconceiving fundamental features of human existence. Conceptual confusion of this sort does not of necessity undermine the political practices informed by procedural liberal theories, but it may go a long way toward explaining the empirically identifiable failings of these practices within procedural republics. The task Taylor sets himself is to identify the self-understandings upon which such practices proceed, while suggesting how they could fare better when informed by a holistically grounded self-understanding.

Freedom as a normative category

Beyond the polemical, there is also a constructive element of Taylor's political thought and this can best be understood as an attempt to define the fullest freedom available to contemporary Westerns and to suggest how best our political practices can allow us to realise such freedom. Recall that in Chapter One we said that, within the transcendental conditions of identity formation that Taylor sets out, which posit a necessary individual reliance on communal frameworks of meaning, Taylor contends that identity is also shaped by historical developments within particular communities. This is, I believe, already implicit in Taylor's understanding of the dialogically constituted framework of human life, but it requires further discussion. If people necessarily co-exist in common spaces structured by ever-evolving common understandings and common practices and institutions, and if doing so is integral to their identities because it is a condition of realising the goods through which they define and actively realise their most basic purposes, then changes in collective understandings will be significant for the identities of the individuals thus associated. Taylor's various contributions to political thought attempt to take cognisance of such shifts and are best understood as part of a broader normative critique of Western modernity. Taylor attempts to isolate architectonic shifts in the collective self-understanding of modern Westerns in order to perceive how these changes intrude upon our political thought and practice, giving rise to a set of dilemmas and conflicts that go a long way toward explaining the historical trajectory of our societies.

Central to Taylor's discussions of Western modernity is a portrait of the West as a civilisation that aspires above all to release individuals from their communal embedding to as great an extent as is consistent with the maintenance of a just and equal society, where this exertion is best conceptualised as at bottom a demand for individual freedom (1985b). To understand the motivational appeal of this demand for freedom Taylor believes we have to view it as, in part, an expression of the increasingly individuated nature of our identities, where universal commitments hang in a precarious balance with both particularistic group identifications and with the peculiarly modern striving for individual self-reliance and authentic self-contact and expression.

I argue in this section that Taylor's diverse contributions to this immense theme, insofar as they are relevant to his political philosophy, can be read together as an attempt to work out the moral foundations of social solidarity in liberal conditions of freedom. For the complexity of Taylor's political thought to be fully appreciated it is, firstly, necessary to understand how he believes democratic agreement can best be reached, and conflict resolved, in modern, liberal democratic societies that strive toward maximal political inclusion and toleration of cultural difference. It is also necessary to, secondly, conceptualise what Taylor believes human freedom and dignity to consist in, and which practical social and political measures he considers indispensable to its exercise in contemporary Western societies where individual freedoms are taken to be inviolable. These turn out to be different aspects of the same problematic, however, as Taylor understands the pursuit of individual freedom and social solidarity to be mutually reinforcing ends that are promoted or retarded by the political norms prevailing within a given society. The first issue, which concerns the justification of political principles in liberal theory, is the focus of Chapter Three, while the second theme, dealing with the interplay of justification and the practical application of liberal norms within procedural republics, will be explored in Chapters Four and Five.

Chapter Three

3. Justification

One of the most widely debated issues in the social, political and legal theory of recent years concerns the nature of social solidarity (Rehg, 1994: 1-3). While there is nothing new about this concern as such, many contemporary scholars have come to believe that this question best admits of a *moral* answer. Where this is accepted, a theory of practical reason will offer important insights into how and why people co-operate socially, as well as how breakdowns in such co-operation can be overcome or avoided (Rehg, 1994: 1-3). One pivotal reference point for these discussions is John Rawls's enormously influential *A Theory of Justice* (1971, rev. 1991), which sought to derive a decision-making procedure for reaching consensus about principles of social organisation able to command the assent of all rational persons regardless of their religious, cultural, lifestyle and other commitments through a remodelling of Kant's categorical imperative (Rawls, 1991: 256-57; Rehg, 1994: 4; Sandel, 1984: 85-86). This mode of decision appeals to a conception of morality in which the demands of justice trump all others. Rawls's conception of justice, as formulated in *Theory*, aims to be universal and impartial, affirming the necessary worth of individual moral autonomy – understood as the ability to rationally frame, revise and pursue our understanding of the good life – as well as of political relationships regulated by individual rights and duties for all persons (Rehg, 1994: 4; Mulhall & Swift, 2003: 476).

In the vigorous and ongoing debate ignited by Rawls's book, many commentators have traced a divide between those following Rawls in affirming a universal conception of justice as the fundamental normative principle governing social consensus and those contending that modern democracies cannot entirely do away with the more traditional mode of social cohesion which draws its allegiance from a substantive conception of the common good or human telos (Kymlicka, 1989a; Rehg, 1994; Mulhall & Swift, 2003). Though it lends itself to an analytically reductive schematism, a common trend in the literature is to refer to the former camp as "liberals" while their critics, generally of a neo-Aristotelian or neo-Hegelian leaning, have come to be known as "communitarians" (Habermas, 1993: vii; Rehg, 1994: 3-4; Carse, 1994: 188; Honneth, 1995). While the so-called "liberal-communitarian debate" encompasses an exceedingly diverse range of issues, and while Rawls and others have reformulated their positions in the course of this debate, these discussions all presuppose in varying degrees an understanding of practical reason (Rehg, 1994: 4). This is because critics of liberalism have all

attacked in some form the liberal "scheme of justification", that is, the standards in virtue of which a given substantive moral or political demand, or set of demands, is justified and therefore has generally binding authority, as opposed to the moral or political commitments (the specification of rights, the function of the state as the safeguard of civil and political liberty, etc.) themselves that flow from these demands (Carse, 1994: 185).

In this chapter I attempt to distil what I believe to be Taylor's most important contributions to this debate over justification. In "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate" Taylor argues that in the discussions of social justice that have been central to this debate "liberals" have frequently failed to demonstrate a receptivity to "communitarian" attempts to reveal how ontological reflection may inform these advocacy debates and steer them clear of certain fundamental errors (1995a). While I make little attempt to get into the details of Taylor's engagement with specific thinkers, except where this enables us to better understand Taylor's arguments, this chapter explores Taylor's contribution to the deeply contested issue of whether moral deliberation for the purposes of conflict avoidance or resolution and the construction of democratic consensus should avoid appealing to a substantive account of the human good when justifying public policies.

Taylor, whose thought is strongly marked by Aristotelian and Hegelian sympathies, answers in the negative, contending that procedural liberalism appeals to a conception of the good that will frequently be too weak to command consensus in practical political life, and that this weakness owes something to the theoretical attempt to define the common good in universal terms through a formal testing procedure. While there may be cogent reasons for endorsing a procedural model of practical reasoning, such a procedure cannot yield the result that Taylor believes procedural liberals wish it to – it cannot be employed to define a universal understanding of the good that both floats free of particularistic values and commitments *and* that categorically surpasses those in normative priority. This is because the meta-theory explicitly or implicitly justifying the proceduralist test will itself necessarily be informed by a substantive conception of the good indexed to some communal framework of meaning. Below I suggest that Taylor doesn't do enough to redeem this claim, at least where this is read as an attempt to charge defenders of procedural forms of practical reason with theoretical incoherence. I contend, however, that his argument works better as a claim about the negative political consequences of normatively prioritising universally shared human interests over more partial interests within culturally plural political societies. But in order to better understand Taylor's polemical claims and the problems that they present it is necessary, firstly, to say something about his understanding of practical reason and the difficulties associated with reaching public agreement in conditions of pluralism. I argue that, while accepting

Taylor's ontological views about human identity and language use make the difficulties more apparent, these are not insurmountable in principle. Lastly, I consider Taylor's constructive contributions to an understanding of what reaching agreement in public deliberations might entail in practice.

3.1 Dialogue, practical reason and social solidarity

Practical reason is the form of deliberation that we employ when responding as agents to the exigencies of our engaged situations by answering the question "What should I do?" or "What is right for me?" (Habermas, 1993: 2, 116). In Chapter One we discussed how, when selecting between possible courses of action, people sometimes operate as simple weighers of desire, choosing whatever offers the most prudent or most urgently desired route to a desired outcome. Typically, when we assign little significance to the range of possible outcomes in question – when the goods that we identify are only weakly valued and, as such, their realisation is not integral to our sense of self – we deliberate in this instrumental fashion. But Taylor contends that all people exist in the world in such a way that, throughout our lives, situations arise that inescapably require of us some sense that certain things are of incomparably greater value than others and deserve to be treated as such. Such situations, encountered on a quotidian basis, confront us with moral questions and can only be answered by appeal to our grasp of strongly valued good and so a "true 'simple weigher' in all contexts in life would be a severely pathological case, incapable even of what we would call an identity" (in Tully ed., 1995b: 249). Our sense of strong value provides us with standards that guide moral deliberation by delimiting a class of ends or goods that categorically trump other, weakly valued goods, and we construct our identities in conformity to these standards.

But what happens when we are forced to choose *between* strongly valued goods? As we said at the end of the previous chapter, moral values are forever coming into collision by prioritising ends that cannot all be practically reconciled and, unless this dilemma can be resolved, those who have built their identities around these values will be internally or inter-personally divided (Taylor, 1985a; 1989). The question of inter-personal division is of particular concern for the political theorist concerned with working out the principles of social co-operation. Moreover, to the extent that this theorising is concerned with finding liberal solutions to political problems within contemporary liberal democracies, it will also attempt to be sensitive to the conditions of pluralism in which collective goods are worked out. Because the languages in which people articulate and debate their understandings of the good life may not simply diverge but may rather appear to entirely lack a common foundation of value commensurability, those who define their identities through divergent cultural and social

affiliations may not only be divided in their allegiances but may also feel themselves to be speaking across an unbridgeable gulf when trying to overcome these divisions.

3.1.1 *Hermeneutic contextualism, holism and value realism*

If it is impossible to attain all our strongly valued ends in practice, Taylor believes we nonetheless cannot be indifferent to them. Moral dilemmas, Taylor argues, can only be responsibly resolved by acknowledging or establishing a foundation of commensurability obtaining between strongly valued goods and, on this basis, effecting a rank-ordering of these goods (1985b; 1989). While utilitarian accounts of the good dress themselves up in the language of subjectivism, arguing that morality should only properly be concerned with weighing satisfactions or preferences, we have seen that, for Taylor, the rejection of subject-transcending standards of value runs counter to the logic of strong evaluation and supports an atomistic account of goods. But Taylor has also argued that, where our social ontology allows for subject-transcending standards of value but considers these inescapably culture-bound, a similar problem arises for moral debate, and in both cases the result is to radically undermine the possibility of consensus or compromise through practical reason in political contexts where members of distinct cultures or societies attempt to reach deliberative agreement. These holistically grounded arguments, presented by, among others, "neo-Nietzscheans" like Foucault, hold that there exist no shared standards of value for such deliberators to appeal to. Taylor believes that such arguments are harder to dismiss than their atomistic counterparts, but he holds that there are no convincing arguments for this position *a priori* (1985b, 1989).

I don't hope to do justice to the complexity of these neo-Nietzschean positions here. Taylor's argument, in short, is that while thinkers like Foucault, who also endorse what we have been calling a hermeneutic contextualism, correctly point out that the goods we pursue are unintelligible without reference to the languages and social interchanges of a given society, they mislead by inferring from this that these goods cannot in many cases also exercise a human appeal that extends beyond the society in question (1989: 60-71; 1993: 355-56; 1996a: 38-39).[35] Conversely, it is not wrong *in principle* for a person to criticise or repudiate another culture's vision of the good. Indeed, given the indispensability of strong evaluation in the life of persons, affirming the possibility of avoiding either of these stances seems to verge on confusion (Taylor, 1989: 99). Whether affirming or criticising, what is required is a receptive,

[35] Taylor's dissatisfaction with neo-Nietzschean thought, which boils down to the claim that it dismisses strong evaluation and provides a reductive account of moral reasoning, is most clearly formulated in his discussion of Foucault's thought in "Foucault on Freedom and Truth" (1985b) and "Living With Difference" (1998c). For a detailed discussion of Taylor's reading of Foucault, which identifies points of similarity between Taylor's and Foucault's thought, and which offers a qualified defence of Foucault against Taylor's criticisms, see Connolly 1985. For Taylor's response, see Taylor 1985c.

well-informed and morally tractable engagement with the other, which provides the mutual understanding required for reasoned deliberation and constructive debate (Taylor, 1992; 2002a). While we may ultimately fail to establish commensurability between the languages in which we express our self-understandings, there are no grounds for ruling this out a priori (Taylor, 1989: 60-62).

Taylor is aware that Neo-Nietzscheans raise a serious philosophical issue by arguing that if we accept hermeneutic contextualism and an associated social holism it may be impossible to also avoid non-realism about value, including moral values (Taylor, 1990). Given a holistic methodology, and the contextualist thesis that underpins it, it might seem plausible that there can be no "true" or transparent understanding of our selves any more than there can be rational agreement between people from distinct cultural backgrounds. We would then have to accept that in understanding ourselves we have no access to any truth of the matter and that in encountering people from other cultures a certain measure of ethnocentrism is simply unavoidable.

Richard Rorty has argued the neo-Nietzschean case against Taylor,[36] contending that Taylor cannot avoid these conclusions (Rorty, R., 1991; 1994a; 1994b; Guignon in Hiley, Bohman & Shusterman eds., 1990). Taylor, for his part, believes that Rorty's position fails to consider the real philosophical alternatives available to us from within a philosophical position that accepts hermeneutic contextualism (Taylor, 1990; in Tully ed., 1995b). Taylor argues that, while rightly rejecting a "representationalist" model of language use and value construction which understands knowledge to be an accurate inner representation of a wholly external reality, Rorty is nonetheless committed to a fundamental error inhering in the representationalist outlook by viewing language use and reason as mere tools, as opposed to enabling conditions, for the exercise of our human agency (Taylor, 1990: 271; 1995a: 2-3). Rorty fails, in Taylor's opinion, to appreciate that the inability of language to frame meanings that are true to a subject-independent world viewed in isolation from the perspective of an engaged agent does not mean that language cannot make true statements about the world (Taylor, 1990). Our human languages have evaluative claims built into them which reflect the shared understandings of a cultural community, and this means that truth claims will always

[36] We should note that Rorty does not self-identify as a "neo-Nietzschean", and it is not clear whether Taylor would choose to lump him into this category. Here I am only suggesting that Rorty defends the non-realist thesis that value is indexed to a given set of social practices in such a fashion that people from distinct societies cannot hope to reach meaningful agreement about values. This claim, along with an aesthetic account of freedom as individual self-making, I take to be central to Taylor's identification of the neo-Nietzschean outlook. Taylor appears to believe that these theories, despite their clear differences, owe a debt to Nietzsche in viewing truth claims, or at least claims for *moral* truth, as exclusively an expression of social dispositions of power and in understanding freedom to consist in subverting these power relations through individual acts of willed creation (Taylor, 1985b; 1989; 1998c).

be those of situated agents with predefined purposes and taken-for-granted beliefs that are, at least in part, those of a larger group, but this does not in itself mean that our claims are arbitrarily related to reality and can be justified only by establishing correspondences between these claims and our other beliefs (Taylor, 1990; 1995b; Dreyfus in Abbey ed.: 56-58). Rather, we check our claims according to their ability to orient us in a reality that is neither wholly graspable outside of our representations of it nor assimalable to these representations. It is just this need to negotiate a reality that is not reducible to our chosen pictures of it that both explains why we need to formulate articulated beliefs and how we judge some better than others; and if our understanding does connect up to a reality that is shared, against which we test our judgments and alter them if necessary, then, at least in principle, we will have common points of reference with which to establish commensurability of value (Taylor, 1990; 1995b; Dreyfus in Abbey ed.: 56-58, 69-70).[37]

3.1.2 *Moral pluralism, moral dilemmas and the diversity of goods*

Ganted, then, that we do not start out from the "preshrunk moral universe" of subjectivism, while also avoiding the cultural relativism that attaches to the non-realist holism defended by thinkers like Rorty, how does this contrast and prioritisation of goods proceed (Taylor, 1989: 62)? How do we justify one strongly valued end over another in a deliberative procedure, and of what practical value is such justification when applied in the contexts that usually bring it into play? In the dialogical encounters that are of concern to liberal political theory, this is typically some ideal situation in which people or groups possessing divergent understandings of the good are attempting to reach consensus over the provision of public or common goods through non-coercive means (Larmore, 1992: 53-54; Williams, 1987: 99).

For an influential strand of modern liberalism, the question of moral justification turns on the rationality of the deliberative procedure (Larmore, 1992: 53-55; 124-25; Williams, 1987: 54, 100). Taylor argues that utilitarian and Kantian moral theories locate the rationality of a choice in its conformity to a procedurally defined deliberative criterion, the former enjoining people to privilege those actions that conduce toward the greatest aggregated happiness of a given society and the latter endorsing actions that pass a test of universalisation (1989; 1993). Despite their disagreements, both theoretical outlooks hold that it is just adhesion to a generalisable, procedural norm that determines whether a choice is rational or morally justified; the situated context to which the action is a response cannot call for some

[37] I discuss the issue between Taylor and Rorty further in Appendix 2. A thoroughly informative overview of Taylor's disagreement with Rorty and of Taylor's views on epistemology more generally can be found in Herbert L. Dreyfus's essay "Taylor's (Anti-) Epistemology" in Abbey ed., 2004.

other deliberative norm to override these more basic criteria (Taylor, 1989: 82-89). Taylor contrasts this procedural model of practical reason with an alternative substantive model endorsed by thinkers of a broadly Aristotelian allegiance, who accept as provisionally valid a wide range of the actual goods pursued by particular agents and define practical rationality along the lines of what Aristotle referred to as *phronēsis* or practical wisdom, that is, as the capacity for moral discernment between rival goods based on an insightful reading of the situation that calls moral deliberation into play (Taylor, 1989: 85-86, 125; 1991b: 29-30; 1993: 346, 350). On the former model we get things right – we choose rationally – if we have followed a certain style of reasoning and regardless of the content of our choice, while on the latter account our conception of the good is judged according to its substantive worth.

The procedural model of justification has been very attractive to contemporary neo-Kantian thinkers like John Rawls, who wish to isolate a narrow category of human concerns that are of greater normative value than others, touching on the very nature of autonomous agency and thereby commanding universal assent. Taylor most often engages with these neo-Kantian theorists when discussing what he believes to be the shortcomings of purely procedural models of practical reason. This, I believe, is not only due to the immensely influential effect that these thinkers have had on contemporary moral and political philosophy but, more importantly, because Taylor considers utilitarian and neo-Nietzschean moral and political theories to be committed in their essence to subjectivism or a non-realist account of value, whereas non-subjectivistic, value realist versions of neo-Kantian thought are both conceivable and, potentially, able to avoid the errors attending both the atomism of utilitarianism and the holistic parochialism of thinkers like Rorty.

Neo-Kantian thinkers generally endorse some version of the distinction between moral and ethical values. Moral concerns matter to us simply in virtue of the absolute commitment to pursue autonomously chosen ends and uphold justice binding on all rational beings, while we possess ethical values by participating in communities that cohere around the common pursuit of a particularistic vision of the good life (Taylor, 1989: 63-64; 1991b; Rasmussen ed., 1990; Rawls, 1991: 12, 19; Williams, 1987: 6, 93-112, 174-96).[38] In this schema, practical reason must privilege moral over ethical concerns when these are in conflict due to the universal consent that moral values command. While we must appeal to ethical values when filling out the contours of what we personally take to be a good life, only moral values can guide us in public debates concerning the conditions of inter-personal or inter-group justice designed to

[38] Ronald Dworkin offers the following shorthand definition: "ethics includes convictions about which kinds of lives are good or bad for a person to lead, and morality includes principles about how a person should treat other people" (Avineri & de-Shalit (eds.), 1992: 205, n.1).

allow all members of a society to determine and pursue the good in the first place. This is because the universality of the moral point of view provides an impartial standpoint from which to arbitrate rival claims for all-purpose means for securing a dignified life (Rawls, 1991: 12, 19). Rawls calls these means "primary goods", which include, on the barest reckoning, some basic set of rights and liberties and a fair portion of social and economic goods (1991: 92-93).

One of the driving motivations behind these neo-Kantian theories is to articulate a vision of the good that can command widespread political agreement, especially in the contemporary atmosphere of moral pluralism that characterises the culturally diverse societies of today (Taylor, 1993: 347; 1998c). The hope is that a sufficiently formal criterion of justification can isolate and prioritise what Rawls has called a "thin theory of the good", promoting a conception of human freedom that fits with widely held intuitions about the dignity of human life while avoiding controversial issues about the good life (Rawls, 1991: 395-99). Taylor, like Bernard Williams, believes that common to such thin accounts of the good is a concern with what we ought to do, with theory typically limiting itself to describing a range of obligatory actions binding on all rational agents and offering a purely procedural criterion for selecting from among these in practical deliberation (1989: 84-89; 1993: 348; Williams, 1987: 174-96). Here our actions are described as good or rational without appeal to the objects or ends we seek to secure; the rationality of an action, in other words, is not contingent upon its realising a substantively defined human good. What is important is rather that our choices issue from a process of practical reasoning that adheres to specified formal laws of rationality (Taylor, 1989: 84-89; 1991b: 30; 1993: 347; Larmore, 1992: 9-10).

"Thick" accounts of the good, as Taylor chooses to characterise them, go beyond this and concern themselves with what it is good to do even in the absence of obligation, and/or with what is good to be or to admire, focusing not only on action but on motivations and desired modes of life (Taylor, 1989: 79-90). From this perspective, our choices are good or rational if they press toward the realisation of some strongly valued human capacity. Such eudaimonic discussions of the good typically find expression in languages of qualitative contrast, with their culturally-bound evaluative terms and corresponding inclination to endorse a substantive ethics pegged to some particularistic understanding of human nature and the good life (Taylor, 1989: 80, 85).

Taylor believes that the seduction exercised by proceduralist ethical models, especially in contemporary liberal political circles, resides in their seeming promise to dispel unnecessary conflict from the public domain and thereby to promote political solidarity and stability (1993; 1998c). At the same time, these liberal thinkers believe that procedural models

of practical reason geared at determining universally valid norms of social justice or fairness offer critical social thought an important platform from which to rationally criticise existing social practices and the actions of political authorities. By cutting through the existing thicket of parochial and exclusionary conceptions of the human good, moral theory may arrive at a conception of just political accommodation that stands to benefit all the members of a particular society (Taylor, 1985b; 1989: 87, n.60). Rawls, for instance, argues in *A Theory of Justice* that people can reach consensus in public by abstracting from their particularistic conceptions of the good life and debating matters of public policy by appeal to non-controversial and culturally neutral principles of right or justice, thereby setting up an "Archimedean point for assessing the social system without invoking a priori considerations" (Rawls, 1991: 261). For Rawls, as for Kant, this entails taking the "right" to be morally prior to the "good" (Rawls, 1991: 30-32, 446-51; Sandel, 1994: 1766). One meaning of this dictum, as Rawls defends it, is that the principles of justice that specify our rights do not themselves require a moral justification that appeals to a particular conception of the good life but rather to the good of all rational persons whatever their life plans (Sandel, 1994: 1766).[39]

3.2 Justification in proceduralist ethics

A central support of Rawls's normative prioritisation of the right over the good is an epistemological claim about moral knowledge which argues that the particularity and diversity of individual conceptions of the good disqualifies them from providing suitable grounds for the justification of principles of social co-operation (Baynes in Rasmussen ed., 1990: 63). Taylor contends, however, that the dislocation of a narrow range of moral demands from the identity-defining commitments of the ethical realm carries with it some important theoretical shortcomings. By questioning both the possibility of conceptually separating the right from the good and the notion that the right must trump the good whenever these principles conflict Taylor calls into question liberal attempts at justifying their political formulae on purely procedural grounds. He hopes to show that the normative claim he disputes, which is integral to the liberal scheme of justification, cannot be presumed a priori, and that the prioritisation of the right over the good can only proceed from dubious ontological premises about human agency (Taylor, 1985b; 1991b; Baynes in Rasmussen ed., 1990). Taylor argues that procedural liberals, in seeking a universalistic foundation for their scheme of justification, put forward models of practical reasoning that lack an awareness of their own ethical situatedness. But

[39] The other sense in which the right is prior to the good, common to what Taylor refers to as "primacy of rights" theories, is that individual rights morally outweigh the common good of a political society (Taylor, 1985b: 188; Sandel, 1994: 1766). This second issue I consider in the following chapter.

while Taylor appears to believe that this untenability resides both in an inability to provide ontological grounds for distinguishing the right from the good and for normatively prioritising the right over the good without violating the justificatory neutrality that procedural theories seek to uphold, the first of these criticisms is difficult to sustain and appears inconsistent with other of Taylor's claims about moral reasoning. Taylor's second criticism may still hold but, depending on how we formulate it, it either fails to draw on Taylor's ontological reflections concerning human identity for its credibility or else it does so but at the cost of shooting somewhat wide of its procedural liberal targets.

3.2.1 *Contesting the theoretical priority of the right*

Taylor believes that adopting a proceduralist ethic in order to neutrally arbitrate between competing conceptions of the good by delimiting a select category of higher-order goods deemed to command universal assent might plausibly offer a method for resolving disputes over the definition of common goods and ensuring social co-operation in pursuit of these goods, but only if those endorsing this procedural test are able to provide a compelling account of what makes this form of arbitration between goods desirable or just (1985b, 1991b, 1989). The answer to this cannot simply be that the procedural formula allows us to adopt the moral perspective; we must also have some account of why the moral perspective is superior to others. Taylor illustrates his argument with reference to the influential spectrum of neo-Kantian political thought, of which Rawls stands out as an influential contemporary exponent, that typically argues that my respect for the moral autonomy of all persons, as expressed in a willingness to deliberate about the common good from the impartial standpoint of justice, is a precondition of securing my own freedom and dignity in the long term (Taylor, 1985b; 1989: 86-89; 1995a: 199; Williams, 1987: 58-64). If this is so, then (so runs the argument) principles of law, norms concerning the just distribution of social goods, and whatever else is demonstrably consonant with an affirmation of my freedom and dignity, must be formulated through a decision-making procedure that ensures that all persons regard the autonomy of others and evaluate their choices from an impartial perspective. This perspective is that of justice or the right because by appealing to a set of moral obligations binding on all rational persons we can best avoid selfish, ethnocentric or otherwise partial judgements and secure a fair settlement for all (Taylor, 1985b, 1989; Habermas, 1993: 42; Carse, 1994).

This is the reasoning behind Rawls's much-discussed conception of the original position, a hypothetical situation employed to demonstrate how subjects with a purposive rational orientation and subject to an imagined veil of ignorance concerning their natural endowments and social position deliberate about the most desirable form of social

organisation (Rawls, 1991: 12; Honneth, 1995: 233-34; Sandel, 1984: 86). Under such conditions Rawls believes that people would be likely to settle upon two principles of justice – the principle of the greatest possible freedoms in the assignment of basic rights and duties compatible with a similar degree of freedom for all and the principle of difference, holding that social and economic inequalities are only justified when they benefit all members of society, and especially the least advantaged – because these principles ensure a maximal level of primary goods for all, which the imagined deliberators require for freely formulating and pursuing their conception of the good (Rawls, 1991: 14-15, 60-65; Honneth, 1995: 234). "Rational individuals," explains Rawls in a pithy formulation,

> whatever else they want, desire certain things as prerequisites for carrying out their plans of life. Other things equal, they prefer a wider to a narrower liberty and opportunity, and a greater rather than a smaller share of wealth and income. That these things are good seems clear enough (1991: 396).

Taylor does not wish to reject these liberal egalitarian principles, but he believes that Rawls needs to do more than he does here in order to argue for them. Although Taylor's criticisms are rendered impressionistically, I believe he wants to argue that even if we do grant that the ethically neutral persons Rawls imagines really would arrive at these principles of justice, we, as ethically situated deliberators, still have to question whether the conclusions so reached fit with our original motivations for procedurally pre-determining the limits of acceptable moral deliberation in conformity with the mode of practical reasoning that Rawls's original position is intended to model. This balancing of basic regulative principles that have their foundations in moral intuitions with the considered judgements that are the outcomes of our reasoning procedure is central to Rawls's understanding of the process through which we seek certainty in moral matters, which he has called "reflective equilibrium" (Taylor, 1985b: 290; Rawls 1991: 20-21, 48-52, 577-80; Mulhall & Swift, 1992: 119). Taylor, I believe, means to claim that these intuitions cannot be downplayed because they are an ineliminable part of what makes Rawls's principles of justice appear desirable options at all.

Rawls doesn't hold that we can steer completely free of moral intuitions, but Taylor accuses him of overlooking the connection between out most basic moral intuitions and the background frameworks that make these intelligible. In this connection we have seen in Chapter One that, in choosing which principles are to guide our conduct, we do not, and cannot, appeal exclusively to weakly valued preferences concerning contingently desirable courses of action; rather, we always proceed with strongly valued principles about higher and lower modes of living in relation to which we rule certain forms of action out altogether or

deem them more preferable to others. As Taylor, in a polemically charged passage in SS, explains:

> Rawls…seems to be proposing in *A Theory of Justice* that we develop a notion of justice starting only with a "thin theory of the good", by which he means what I am calling weakly valued goods. But this suggestion is on the deepest level incoherent. Rawls does, of course, manage to derive (if his arguments in rational choice theory hold up) his two principles of justice. But as he himself agrees, we recognise that these are indeed acceptable principles of justice because they fit with our intuitions. If we were to articulate what underlies these intuitions we would start spelling out a very "thick" theory of the good. To say that we don't "need" this to develop our theory of justice turns out to be highly misleading. We don't actually spell it out, but we have to draw on the sense of the good that we have here in order to decide what are adequate principles of justice (Taylor, 1989: 88-89).

Rawls's original position is designed to ensure impartiality in collective decisions by deriving principles of justice that don't rely on any particular conception of the good. Rawls's two principles are rather claimed to be prerequisites for pursuing whatever (justice-respecting) goods we do seek. Only by adhering to such impartial principles can the political practices and institutions that are regulated by these norms steer clear of constraining people from forming and pursuing their own life plans in an autonomous fashion. Taylor argues, however, that if we are to agree to view these principles as just and worthy of pursuit it will only be because we share a more fundamental ethical agreement in value. Rawls's two principles are not rational per se; they command rational assent only because they are a working out of a more fundamental commitment to what Taylor calls "the universal attribution of moral personality", i.e. the ideal of human dignity unique to the modern West that, "in fundamental ethical matters, everyone ought to count, and all ought to count in the same way. Within this outlook, one absolute requirement of ethical thinking is that we respect other human agents as subjects of practical reasoning on the same footing as ourselves" (1985b: 231-32).

Rawls defines moral personality in a broadly Kantian sense, as the capacity for autonomously choosing a conception of the good and formulating a life plan, as well as for possessing a sense of justice (1991: 335, 505). Taylor accepts the universal attribution of Rawls's ideal, as well as his attempt to derive a commitment to some basic set of rights, liberties and socio-economic goods – Rawls's "primary goods" – that enable the exercise of this capacity. What Taylor questions is the attempt to argue for some distributive schedule of primary goods without articulating the grounds of the universalistic commitment to moral personality that makes these demands intelligible (1985b). A defence of primary goods that are valued in accordance with a commitment to a universally shared capacity for moral

personality, where the super-ordinate value of this capacity is itself taken as a given, will not only lack self-awareness or theoretical depth but will also be insensitive to claims for complementary or competing goods that are justified on other grounds.

This prior ethical commitment to a universally-shared capacity for human dignity does not, of course, invalidate Rawls's project, but rather requires that Rawls and those who endorse his account of justice alter their theoretical self-understanding by acknowledging that, despite Rawls's contentions to the contrary, the good precedes the right in his proposed scheme of justification.[40] From this ethical grounding in a principle of equal respect for all persons, Taylor believes that neo-Kantians can establish a meta-theoretical platform upon which to intelligibly argue for the singular importance of autonomy-promoting values in their scheme of justification (1985b; 1993).

Taylor thus wishes that Rawls be more explicit about the conception of the person that he endorses, and that he realise that this conception is more contestable, because more culturally contingent, than it may appear. Rawls's neo-Kantian meta-ethical justification for his principles of justice builds on a basic philosophical anthropology that privileges the potential for exercising moral self-determination as a uniquely significant source of human dignity and posits that this capacity is universally shared. Where this view commands general assent, it can function as a non-controversial shared value that may serve as the ground for adopting a formal procedure binding on the scheme of justification through which we deliberate over proposed principles of redistribution, rights ascription and the like. But, importantly, the political principles that we agree on in this deliberation must be considered rational insofar as they are a working out of our shared substantive commitment to respect the moral autonomy of all persons equally and not for the purely derivative reason that we adhere to a particular procedure in reaching them.

3.2.2 *Taylor on the priority of the good*

To better appreciate Taylor's criticism of Rawls, which I believe is not altogether convincing as it stands, we must further attend to certain features of Taylor's understanding of practical reasoning. Taylor believes that arguments of practical reason should not seek justification in what he calls "basic" or "external" reasons, i.e. supposedly rationally unrepudiable moral

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[40] Will Kymlicka accords with Taylor on this point: "Rawls doesn't favour the distribution of primary goods out of a concern for the right rather than the good. He just has a different account of what our good is, of what promotes our essential interests, and hence of what it means to give equal weight to each person's interests" (1989a: 35). Kymlicka, following Ronald Dworkin, argues that both liberals and their "communitarian" critics believe justice requires that we give equal consideration to each person's good. Both sides start from what Dworkin calls the same ethical "egalitarian plateau", and principles of right are just a working out of how best to do define this good and promote it in practice (Kymlicka, 1989a: 21).

principles like utilitarian doctrines of happiness and Kantian principles of universalisation (1989: 76, 77; 1995a). These moral principles, like all others, can only claim our moral allegiance if, in the first place, they are set in a broader moral framework that makes intelligible the grounds upon which pursuing them would be rational. Thus instead of seeking moral certainty by appeal to apodictic moral principles that are said to categorically command the allegiance of rational agents, Taylor believes that arguments in practical reason must begin by demonstrating that a certain mode of reasoning and conflict resolution is in fact best suited to accommodate the most basic value intuitions – the strong values – that all deliberators share. Working from such a shared set of common understandings, partner X can then proceed to convince partner Y that X's position best accommodates the insights that they both accept while eliminating contradictions, confusions or omissions in Y's understanding (Taylor, 1989: 72; 1995a).[41] Instead of retreating to a standpoint of moral impartiality external to the moral positions of the deliberators in question, the existence of which Taylor (like Rorty and other thinkers opposed to epistemological foundationalism) disputes, Taylor believes that we can prioritise goods and reach rational agreement in moral matters without bracketing strong goods out of our deliberative procedures (Taylor, 1995a). Taylor's point is, however, not only the weak claim that we can do so, but rather also the stronger claim that we always in fact do so, whether or not we wish to. As Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift explain, Taylor's claim that practical reason proceeds through transitions

> amounts to the claim that any evaluations of practical reasoning will necessarily involve the invocation of conceptions of the good. Specific moral decisions and positions can be assessed as rational or irrational only by reference to one's own concrete moral experience and intuitions, and the conceptions of the good that they presuppose; and it will also entail the higher-order ranking of competing goods (1992: 116).

This reliance of our practical reasoning upon ideas of the good is, for Taylor, an in-principle limitation on moral deliberation. But, assuming we grant Taylor this point, it is an open question whether it really shows up any flaws in procedural liberalism. The sort of Archimedean point envisaged by Rawls in *Theory*, for instance, needn't be, and in fact isn't, a

[41] The contradictions Taylor has in mind are not necessarily logical contradictions, but also conflicting substantive value commitments. Thus we may criticise another's position for the logical contradictions it contains but, where such contradictions are absent, we may still find it *irrational*, and it is this latter form of moral disagreement that Taylor is most concerned with. Here the rationality of another's position turns not on the a priori validity of her beliefs, but on their ability to make the best sense of her engaged situation in the world, that is, with the "effective practices of knowing and being in a world" that are available to her (Taylor, 1990: 267). Taylor discusses these issues in great detail in "Rationality" (1985a), "Rorty in the Epistemological Tradition" (1990) and "Overcoming Epistemology" (1995a).

value-neutral position but rather a common foundation of human value that Rawls believes all persons who value their freedom and dignity cannot repudiate in reason (Rawls, 1991: 587; Mulhall & Swift, 2003: 470).[42] I take Rawls to be arguing that we can have a *universal* good or goods as the support of our justificatory theory but not any *particular* good, and in this sense hold that the right remains prior to the good without forsaking the claim to ethical neutrality of our justificatory scheme. Thus Rawls, clarifying and reformulating his views in *Political Liberalism*, can hold firmly to his claim that the two goods that constitute his "thin" theory of the good in *A Theory of Justice* (the presentation of goodness as rationality and the intrinsic worth of primary goods), are in an important sense impartial between rival particular conceptions of the good, and in explicating the grounds for accepting his theory he needn't have recourse to a "thick" theory of the good as Taylor claims he inevitably must (Rawls, 1993: 173-206; Mulhall & Swift, 2003: 472).[43]

We have said above that Taylor accepts that goods are, at least in principle, valid across cultures, so it is possible that Taylor would find the clarification of Rawls's meta-ethical commitments in *Political Liberalism* an acceptable defence of his theory. We might, however, be given pause at this point as there are places where Taylor draws on his expressive account of language to argue that, because the language of descriptive theory is shot through with strongly evaluative terms, describing the moral point of view in culturally-neutral terms is a non-starter (1991b: 34). Taylor argues that, when challenged to defend a given account of moral or just action, the defender of the theory in question must have recourse to a value-laden background of linguistic intelligibility that provides strongly valued reasons for her delimitation of a single province of human concerns as universally binding on all rational agents (1991b: 34).[44] That the theorist may be unaware of this reliance or disavow it is, for

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[42] Thus Rawls observes that "to see our place in society from the perspective of [the original] position is to see it *sub specie aeternitatis*: it is to regard the human situation not only from all social but also from all temporal points of view" (1991: 587). While this sort of statement might make us think that Rawls hopes to seek agreement on abstract universalistic grounds, Rawls clarifies that "[t]he perspective of eternity is not a perspective from a certain place beyond the world, nor the point of view of a transcendent being; rather it is a certain form of thought and feeling that rational persons can adopt within the world. And having done so, they can, whatever their generation, bring together into one scheme all individual perspectives and arrive together at regulative principles that can be affirmed by everyone as he lives by them, each from his own standpoint" (1991: 587). Rawls believes that we seek to adopt this position when justifying our moral beliefs, both as individuals and in moral discussion with others. Justification, Rawls explains, "presumes a clash of views between persons or within one person, and seeks to convince others, or ourselves, of the reasonableness of the principles upon which our claims and judgements are founded. Being designed to reconcile by reason, justification proceeds from what all parties to the conversation hold in common" (1991: 580-81).

[43] Rawls also claims that this is true of his position in *Political Liberalism*, although he now explicitly defends five basic goods, which include those of *Theory* as well as the distinction between reasonable and unreasonable conceptions of the good, the conception of the political virtues and the account of the intrinsic good of a well-ordered society (Rawls, 1993: 173-206; Mulhall & Swift, 2003: 472).

[44] In this connection Taylor writes: "Language plays an indispensable role as an expressive medium in the overall domain of practical reason. We express our moral ends and our understanding of ourselves as humans by at the

Taylor, neither here nor there; the social theorist no more than any other person can escape the orientation to strong values that is built into our human languages. Taylor might therefore be understood to hold that any claim to the ethical neutrality of the right will be indefensible as the very idea that people can forge agreement by appeal to a "thin" theory of the good relies upon a philosophically naïve conception of human agency (1989, 1991b, 1993).

This would, however, be an uncharitable reading of Taylor. For Taylor, as we have seen in Chapter Two, identity-formation through language draws on both langue and parole, where the latter designates the active, creative use of language that has a certain independence from the pre-existing linguistic system as a whole. Taylor's point about the substantive claims built into language can therefore establish at most that practical deliberation *starts out* from a thick account of goods. There seems no reason why, accepting Taylor's views on human agency and language use, we cannot move from a thick to a thin account of the good in practical reason, provided only that we mean by a thin account of the good not a moral position external to the value orientations of all deliberators but one common to all. If Taylor were to seriously suggest that justificatory discourses cannot float free of thick accounts of the good at all, this would have to be read as an inconsistency in his philosophy. We would then have to agree with Habermas that Taylor's understanding of language use, while purporting to give equal weight to both the structure of language and the isolated acts that renew it in the generation of inter-subjectively acceptable values, tends illegitimately to privilege the former (Habermas, 1991: 215; 219). But Taylor, as we shall see below, has argued that while we may come to our practical deliberations as bearers of a linguistic orientation that is deeply imprinted with the strong values of our culture, we are always capable of leaving with a grasp of the good that has moved some distance from this original parochialism (1992; 2002a). If this move toward a commonly acceptable moral orientation situated *within* our ethical commitments, as opposed to a value-neutral position external to these, is all that is meant by adopting a thin theory of the good, then Taylor cannot disagree with it, or can only do so at the cost of the sort of inconsistency that Habermas has argued he is guilty of.

Even granted that we can intelligibly articulate a thin theory of the good, however, Taylor's objection to the priority of the right might still hold insofar as he believes that procedural liberals have to articulate why the universal goods that we endorse from the moral point of view are not just another category of good but are of superior value to competing particularistic goods. This they have to do while also upholding their commitment to ethical

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same time understanding and justifying our ends: we articulate the implicit understanding which comprises the background of our social norms, customs and institutions, and which is closely bound up with our understanding of moral ends" (1991b: 34).

neutrality. Rawls's answer to this, we have seen, is that endorsing universally valid moral principles of justice furthers social co-operation by securing rational agreement on moral grounds that will not prove politically divisive. This will allow all persons to pursue their individual or group goods without unjust obstruction. This is certainly a coherent argument, and the real issue between Taylor and Rawls concerns whether Taylor is right to affirm that, as we said above, the universal attribution of moral personality is a value that reasonable persons seeking political accommodation cannot deny once they have understood the grounds for this belief or whether endorsing this ideal will strongly depend on a pre-established embededness within some *particular* cultural structure. Whatever our position on this issue, however, it seems fair to note that if we take the burden of proof to be on Taylor rather than Rawls then we will be unlikely to side with Taylor, who offers very little in the way of argumentation to establish his claim.[45] Nonetheless, there is a way of formulating Taylor's objection to Rawls that might make it seem more plausible, and it is to this that we must now turn.

3.2.3 *Taylor on the motivational appeal of the good*

From the discussion above it should be clear that agreeing with Taylor's objection to procedural attempts to prioritise the right doesn't require that we find their ontological premises wanting. In this sense, Taylor's advocacy position doesn't appear to follow on from his ontological understanding of human identity. But here I want to argue that, presuming we

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[45] What Taylor *does* argue for, and quite compellingly I believe, is the sheer impracticality of a universalistic ethics. Both Taylor and Rawls consider uncoerced public agreement crucial to the maintenance of a liberal society that upholds the moral worth of individual choice, but Taylor suggests in places that if co-operation were secured on universal grounds it would lack normative content when applied to concrete political issues. Thus, for instance, Taylor holds that a Rawlsian consensus on principles of justice would have no difficulty ruling public incitements to murder like the fatwa issued on Salman Rushdie to be unreasonable, but we are unlikely to have any clear guidance about more troublesome issues like the legality of school prayer (1998c: 219). Habermas, in "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State" (1999), has taken issue with Taylor on this score, arguing that this is not a concern for justificatory theory because discourses of justification are inevitably given substantive content by political actors when they are interpreted and applied in concrete political settings. I consider this disagreement between Habermas and Taylor in Appendix 3.

Taylor's position here might profitably be viewed to issue from his dissatisfaction with the neo-Kantian belief that a purely universal conception of the good could generate the sort of principles required to distinguish between the substantive doctrines we take to be morally acceptable and those we don't. Taylor has argued that Kant's own moral theory, which provides the paradigm for many contemporary proceduralist models of practical reasoning, succeeds where its successors fail insofar as it is informed by a thick account of human nature and the human good (1985b: 322-25; 1989: 83-84; 1993: 349). Kant privileges the formal criterion of universalisability (as well as self-consistency) by appeal to substantive claims about the centrality of the rational faculty to who we are as human beings. This basic anthropological claim allowed him to maintain that a substantive understanding of the good emerged from the universalisation test that the categorical imperative defines (Taylor, 1991b: 30; Williams, 1987: 64). While Taylor doubts that Kant succeeded in this, he believes that, in principle, procedural models of practical reasoning grounded in a substantive account of the human good can generate such normative claims. Analogously, he suggests that disowning these substantive ontological underpinnings cripples the theory at a normative level by rendering its advocacy positions irrelevant to the concrete circumstances that call practical reason into play (1988a; 1991b: 31-32; 1993: 359; 1995a). But, again, if we do follow Taylor here all he seems to establish is that universal principles of social co-operation are impractical, not that they are illegitimately partial.

don't take Taylor to be objecting to the *intelligibility* of proceduralist theories, or presuming that this argument is not terribly effective when directed against procedural liberals like Rawls, there is another objection that he directs at procedural liberalism which might raise a more serious challenge to any normative prioritisation of the good. This argument concerns our motivations as concrete moral agents for pursuing social co-operation and it does derive some credibility from Taylor's ontological reflections. Unfortunately, this link-up between Taylor's ontological arguments and his advocacy position appears to undermine his polemical attempt to show up some basic flaws in procedural liberals like Rawls.

To appreciate Taylor's criticism we must consider that Rawls's conception of justice in *Theory* requires that, in assuming the moral point of view, we deliberate about the ends that we seek as free and equal persons and not as particular individuals with a substantive set of personal and communal identity-defining commitments (Carse, 1994; Nussbaum in Mulhall & Swift eds., 2003). A similar identity split is implicit in the model of moral deliberation defended by Rawls in *Political Liberalism*, where, however encumbered I am by the commitments attendant upon the substantive views (Rawls calls them "comprehensive religious, philosophical and moral doctrines") I endorse in my private life, I am capable of also holding a "public" or "institutional" identity as a citizen of a democratic, constitutional state (1993: xvi, 30). By appealing to the values central to my public identity I may reach an "overlapping consensus" with others about basic political issues in conformity with a self-understanding that abstracts from my privately held, "nonpolitical" or "noninstutional" identity (Rawls, 1993: 10, 30, 31). Regardless of whether we conceive of the deliberator in question as a citizen of a constitutional democracy or as a moral deliberator more abstractly defined, it is precisely this real deliberative situation, which Rawls claims any person or group of persons can enter (when not subject to aversive conditions) at any time, that the hypothetical conception of the original position is meant to model (1991: 138; 1993: 24-28).

Taylor, unlike Michael Sandel (with whom he is frequently associated in the literature), doesn't generally dispute our ability to stand apart from our most basic identity commitments in practical deliberation, and so there seems no reason why he should find this ideal of public reason *conceptually* unsound (Kymlicka, 1989a; Sandel, 1982: 150-65, 175, 179-83; 1984: 85-87).[46] What Taylor does dispute, however, is the normative notion that the conclusions we

[46] Taylor does not claim, with Sandel, that liberals presume a metaphysically implausible transcendental subject that can be known and experienced in isolation from its most basic motivations, or a self that is unconstrained by socially-defined roles and commitments, but he does, analogously, suggest that they conceive of individual autonomy as a matter of radical choice, that is, of abstracting from all pre-given ends in practical deliberation (Taylor, 1988a: 157; Kymlicka, 1989a; Sandel, 1982: 150-65, 175, 179-83; 1984: 85-87). Taylor finds this unsatisfactory because, by considering both individually held and communally shared standards of evaluation dispensable to meaningful choice we are left with a vision of freedom which "would be a void in which nothing

reach and the commitments we undertake by reasoning morally, in the restricted sense of this term that he attributes to liberal moral and political theory, *should* trump our more general ethical commitments. Taylor appears to believe that the only manner in which a person could be persuaded to accept the superiority of universal moral norms would be through accepting some more basic substantive claims about the good. Viewed in this light, Taylor's challenge to Rawls would be that Rawls fails to provide any theoretically interesting reasons for why concrete persons, as opposed to hypothetical deliberators in the original position, would rationally opt for a conflict-resolution procedure of the sort Rawls outlines, regardless of the particular goods that the conflict situation they are engaged in requires them to weigh.

Taylor, in a critical response to Habermas's[47] *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), has similarly argued that Habermas cannot answer radical challenges to the normative priority of the right while also maintaining justificatory neutrality because, in maintaining that we should adopt a universalistic value perspective for the purpose of forging political consensus, Habermas deprives himself of any satisfactory way of answering the question of why we should choose to behave morally. Taylor appears to believe that Rawls cannot provide for why a person would want to enter the original position in the first place; similarly, he suggests that Habermas cannot offer any reason that is both compelling and impartial for why people should seek through uncoerced discourse generally acceptable norms to regulate their interaction (Taylor, 1989, 1991b; 1993; Rehg, 1994: 132-36). As William Rehg argues, both Rawls and Habermas appear to offer models of public practical reasoning that rely, for their acceptance, on a more basic moral commitment to a good of rational co-operation among autonomous individuals, and these thinkers don't offer us a great deal in the way of explanation of how this is arrived at (Rehg, 1994: 132, 138-39).

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would be worth doing, nothing would count for anything. The self which has arrived at freedom by setting aside all external obstacles and impingements is characterless, and hence without defined purpose, however much this is hidden by such seemingly positive terms as 'rationality' or 'creativity'. These are ultimately quite indeterminate as criteria for human action or mode of life. They cannot specify any content to our action outside of a situation which sets goals for us, which thus imparts a shape to rationality and provides an inspiration for creativity" (1988a: 157).

But I do not consider passages such as this, taken from his *Hegel and Modern Society*, as generally representative of Taylor's views on practical reason. This is felicitous because if Taylor were to consistently defend this account of practical reason then it would seem both profoundly counter-intuitive and politically unappealing in that it might slide into a justification of just the sort of parochialism to which thinkers like Rorty are resigned (Kymlicka, 1989a: 47-53; Carse, 1994: 191; Mulhall & Swift: 1992: 177; 2003: 465; Buchanan, 1989: 871, 872). It would also seem an uncharitable representation of the understanding of freedom held by most important liberal thinkers (Buchanan, 1989; Kymlicka, 1989a; Digeser, 1995; Mulhall & Swift, 2003). For a more detailed discussion of this issue see Appendix 4.

[47] Although Habermas may not be a liberal in any conventional sense, he is certainly a formalist who favours a procedural model of practical reasoning in the formation of public agreement. Taylor believes that for this reason his discourse ethics lends itself to the same theoretical reductionism that one finds in Rawls and his followers even while going one up on them by better providing for the dialogical nature of collective will-formation (Taylor, 1989; 1991b; Habermas, 1993: 42-43, 64).

It should be noted in their defence, however, that Taylor's criticisms look very *external* to the projects that Rawls and Habermas put forward. Rawls explicitly presumes that people enter the original position because they have an antecedently formed sense of justice, and Habermas believes that the task of philosophical argumentation is to reconstruct the moral intuitions that socialised persons already posses (Rehg, 1994: 132, 138-39). This means that while these thinkers can hold, with Taylor, that concrete actors are oriented to the good before they are to the right, there is no obvious need to posit a priority of the good at a *theoretical* level (Rehg, 1994: 138). Habermas argues in this connection that Taylor believes

> philosophy should protect us from becoming blind or cynical toward moral phenomena. It should…persuade us of the pre-eminent importance of the orientation to the good; it should *sensitize* us to the hidden dimension of the good and infuse us with the strength for passionate engagement in the cause of the good….But the ethical-individual process of reaching an individual self-understanding and the ethical-political clarification of a collective self-understanding are the concern of those involved, not of philosophy. In view of the morally justified pluralism of life projects and life-forms, philosophers can no longer provide on their own account *generally binding* directives concerning the meaning of life….We learn what moral, and in particular immoral, action involves *prior* to all philosophizing; it impresses itself upon us no less insistently in feelings of sympathy with the violated integrity of others than in the experience of violation or fear of violation of our own integrity (Habermas, 1993: 75-76; emphases in original).

As it stands, Habermas's criticism may be somewhat misplaced because Taylor does not think that it is up to philosophers to prescribe solutions to moral and political problems. Rather, his concern is that we are able to offer a philosophical account of why persons would choose to resolve their disagreements in what is considered by neo-Kantian liberals to be a moral fashion, privileging ideals founded on universality and equality like fair treatment and benevolence, as opposed to pursuing goals like self-fulfilment and expressive integrity that they possess through inclusion in less than universal communities, where both courses stand open to them and are mutually incompatible (1989: 89, n.66; 101). But we can better appreciate Habermas's position if we see that he is objecting not to the details of Taylor's theory so much as to what this means for Taylor's normative approach to securing reasoned social co-operation *within contemporary pluralistic societies*.

3.3 Cultural pluralism: problems and solutions

If we are willing to go this far with Taylor's understanding of practical reason, we will agree that it points to an important gap in procedural liberal theories without in any way

undermining them. Taylor's real theoretical challenge, then, is to complacent views about the appeal of conflict resolution founded upon universal goods, but we must still consider what the upshot of his ontological reflections is at the advocacy level. In this regard Taylor argues that, for political consensus to emerge less fortuitously and disagreement to prove less stubborn, we need to acknowledge the inescapable place of strong value in the constitution of personhood. From this assumption it can be derived that bracketing important identity-shaping values and the associated shared particularistic conceptions of the good life out of our deliberative procedures will not always be desirable, and public debate needs to engage this broader spectrum of human concerns.

Habermas's criticism of Taylor starts to look more pertinent when we consider that Taylor does believe that, where people lack a common sense of strongly valued goods, or where co-operation breaks down over the nature of these goods, we may have to fall back on philosophical argumentation that makes explicit our inarticulate moral orientations so that the motivational force of these can be better felt and communicated (1989: 103). But if this is the case then clearly Taylor's account of practical deliberation sets a very demanding standard for mutual accommodation through public debate because it stipulates that reaching agreement over policies designed to secure public goods will always require a more basic ethical agreement that grants, at the outset, equal weight to the strong values of all deliberators. As Rehg explains,

> [r]ather than enjoining on the participants in a conflict resolution a perspective taking aimed at locating those thin values and points of mutual understanding that would allow for further cooperation, Taylor's model would apparently require participants to work out a shared *substantive* identity or framework within which conflicting goods are rightly ordered (1994: 120; emphasis in original).

Habermas has noted that the attempt to present a specific form of life as generally fulfilling in contemporary conditions of pluralism, which Taylor's model of practical reasoning would appear to require of political actors, would be a monumental philosophical undertaking and one unlikely to ever succeed in practice (Rehg, 1994: 123). This is undoubtedly a real problem for Taylor's theory, but he would no doubt argue that it simply cannot be sidestepped. If we invariably do start out from a substantive value orientation when entering into practical deliberation with others then, where our values diverge, we must seek to articulate our most fundamental beliefs if we hope to move toward mutual reconciliation. Moreover, as we shall see below and in Chapter Five, Taylor argues that in such cases the willingness to take the substantive values of all parties into account in order to get

conversation going, which neo-Aristotelian models of practical reason are willing to do, is likely to promote a spirit of solidarity between deliberators who might otherwise feel dismissed out of hand (1998c).

3.3.1 *Moral realism in a pluralistic society*

Taylor certainly does present a model of mutual understanding that places very high demands upon agents seeking a foundation for mutual understanding and co-operation in practical acts of public deliberation where sources of mutual agreement are not easily located. This is presumably why he concedes that, in practice if not in principle, neo-Nietzscheans may be right to emphasise the futility of seeking reasonable political co-operation across cultural divides. But if Taylor is right to say that Rorty and Foucault are too ready to accept that judgements about the good are *solely* justified from a certain social or cultural perspective, without there ever being something in the nature of the case to arbitrate between competing perspectives, then he owes us an account of how we do determine the good in such cases. It cannot be enough to argue that we must reach inter-subjective agreement about goods by simply endorsing one existing point of view over another or by locating values that we both share because this agreement might be reached on morally arbitrary grounds. This is a possibility that Rorty, for instance, acknowledges; indeed, as I understand him, Rorty believes that truth claims are *only* ever justified by reference to the linguistic norms and beliefs internal to the practices of a certain community, which are inescapably arbitrary in the sense that these don't and couldn't have any purchase on some extra-cultural reality.

Taylor, as we have said above, can avoid non-realism by demonstrating that truth claims needn't refer to a wholly independent reality and are rather true insofar as they enable us to realise our concrete purposes best, where our environments place some boundary conditions on what choices are available to us without this eradicating the need for us to engage with our surroundings interpretively. But Taylor still has to say something more about what it is that makes adopting from within a range of meaningful possibilities whatever interpretations we do to be *worthwhile*, and what makes some more so than others, in a way that refers to something other than the set of preferences we happen to hold at a given time from personal inclination or cultural conformity (Anderson, 1996: 24). Failing this, it is difficult to understand why it is rational to privilege one set of beliefs over another and what generally binding normative weight could attach to collective agreements forged around such beliefs. Taylor is quite aware of this problem but is nonetheless upbeat about the prospects of overcoming incommensurability in practical deliberation on non-arbitrary grounds. It is an open question, however, whether the solution he proposes – an aesthetic receptivity to sources

of meaning or inspiration credited with a subject-transcending ontological status – relieves or compounds the problem he identifies. Joel Anderson has argued that, granted Taylor's claim that people must always reach rational consensus through the contrasting of inter-subjectively formed values, his belief that we must provide an *ontological* justification for elevating some values over others may sit awkwardly with the commitment that he shares with liberals to sustaining and promoting value pluralism (Anderson, 1996).

This problematic is given its most extensive treatment in SS, where Taylor argues that articulating our interpretations of the good in ever-more perceptive or perspicuous terms enables us to derive a sense of the good and define of our identities in a manner that, metaphorically speaking, places us "closer" to subject-transcending "sources" of value[48] that we must credit with some form of ontological independence from ourselves (Taylor, 1989: 91-97; Anderson, 1996). Taylor does not name these sources, but seems confident that there exist a plurality of environmental, political, theistic, etc., frameworks of value with regard to which no person could prove wholly indifferent (1989: 102). The problem that Anderson flags, however, is that to the extent that we seek to publicly *justify* our choices in relation to purported ontological sources of value we will be less inclined to accept a similar approach by other individuals or groups (1996).

This is undoubtedly an unresolved difficulty in Taylor's moral philosophy and, as I argue in Chapter Five, it creates a number of problems in Taylor's work on multiculturalism. There exists a tension between what Anderson calls Taylor's account of the "individuating role of personal commitments" – that is, Taylor's belief that our individual identities are partly what they are in virtue of us personally finding certain projects, relationships and ideals to be of unconditional value in a way that they may not be for others – and Taylor's ontological account of the good as a source of value with (potentially) universally binding motivational force which is never satisfactorily worked out in Taylor's writing (1996: 18).

While pursuing this issue leads beyond the scope of the present argument, it might simply be noted that this is hardly an insurmountable difficulty for Taylor. As Arto Laitinen suggests, Taylor would only need to draw a distinction similar to that which Joseph Raz makes between respecting values and engaging with values to get around the problem (Laitinen, 2003: 42-48). Strong evaluation alerts us to a plurality of goods that are conceivably worth pursuing, which our grasp of evaluative languages makes available to us but which we credit with a partially independent ontological standing. At the same time, strong evaluation also concerns our motivations for engaging with certain values in our own lives. Within the wide range of

[48] In SS Taylor refers to these as "constitutive goods" (1989: 92).

goods that we acknowledge (and which, Taylor believes, we can't help acknowledging simply in virtue of our need to practically engage with our surroundings in thought and activity at all times), we can, however, hope to realise only a select few in our personal and collective activity (Taylor, 1985b; 1989). It is therefore consonant with respect for others' choices that they pursue different goods than we in fact do, so long as these goods can appear to us as meaningful choices at all. Arguably, this respect would be seriously undermined if we held to non-realism about value; we might still respect others' choices, but our grounds for doing so would be morally arbitrary – a deeply patronising matter of whim or culturally-induced conformity – in the absence of some belief in their ontological validity. In this regard Taylor argues that we will seek to realise a given set of values because of the inherent worth we attribute to them. Choosing to pursue a good doesn't in itself make that good valuable; rather, its independent value makes it a potentially worthwhile choice (Taylor, 1991a, 1992; Laitinen, 2003). Presuming, then, that realism about values is required for respecting choices that appeal to such values, it seems plausible to hold that, far from negating pluralism, moral realism would encourage it by providing the necessary grounds for respecting the identities of others.

3.3.2 *Fusion of horizons as a deliberative norm*

What, then, does Taylor have to say about how, in practice, public agreement is to be reached? Taylor describes what is required here by sketching an ideal of practical reason that builds on the social and political consequences of Hans-Georg Gadamer's ideal of a "fusion of horizons", where interlocutors articulate their most basic ethical frameworks and scrutinise their culturally inculcated values in the light of the alternatives that confront them (Taylor, 1992). For Taylor, the difficulty with reaching this sort of understanding resides not so much in obtaining correct information about the other as in possessing the willingness to open oneself to the alien and possibly disturbing human potentialities that they have realised (2002a). Within this conversational paradigm, "in coming to see the other correctly, we inescapably alter our understanding of ourselves. Taking in the other will involve an identity shift in us. That is why it is so often resisted and rejected. We have a deep identity investment in the distorted images we cherish of others" (Taylor, 2002a: 295). Without such mutual openness, however, uncoerced understanding and accommodation can only ever be reached by interlocutors who already share a broad range of underlying values, and will always be vulnerable to dissent that calls these values into question.

This does not in itself tell us much; nor does it seem that Taylor's claims about identity will incline us toward accepting this norm. In order to appreciate the value of this ideal as a political creed I believe we do well to read it against the backdrop of Taylor's understanding

of the basic political problematic of justice. If societies, whatever else they are, are essentially "associations for the achievement of common goods", then

> what goods are to be distributed, and to whom, will depend on what the ends of the association are, and how they are achieved. The basic intuition underlying justice is this: in any common attempt to achieve the good, all genuine collaborators benefit from the contribution of the others. They are all in a sense in each other's debt (Taylor, 1996a: 37).

Taylor, developing Aristotelian themes he finds in Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1981, rev. 1982), argues that justice is not a unitary domain and distinguishes between "distributive" or "local" justice on the one hand and "absolute" justice on the other. The claims associated with the latter privilege the "transcendent" goods that make a claim on us simply as persons possessed of reason over the "internal" goods that are constitutive of the former, where issues of justice are considered in relation to the self-understandings and practices peculiar to a particular historical community that cannot be valued other than through study of or participation in the life of that community (Taylor, 1985b: 302, 1993: 355-56, 1996a: 38-40; MacIntyre, 1982: 175-78; 226-34). Procedural liberals, according to Taylor, hold that practical deliberation should privilege the pursuit of transcendent goods in all lived contexts if people are to agree on practical political policies while associating in conditions of fairness and equality. But Taylor argues that, while doing so may indeed bring us closer to absolute justice by furthering citizen equality in the most rigorous fashion, there are no persuasive conceptual reasons for categorically preferring the pursuit of transcendent goods that define absolute justice over the internal goods which ground claims for local justice: "we are faced with transcendent goods that demand our awed consent, with practices whose internal goals seem valuable, and with a distressing amount of prima facie conflict between the two. There is no a priori way to resolve this; we have to work it out case by case" (1993: 357).

If we wish to accommodate vital political goods like social solidarity and social stability and bridge cultural divisions, Taylor believes we may be forced to sacrifice transcendent goods for internal goods. A fundamental principle of many communal associations is that members who contribute disproportionately to the common good merit a greater share of the rewards of their common association. We might therefore do best to adopt an Aristotlean principle of "proportionate" equality and distribute social goods in a fashion that accords with our society's understanding of outstanding achievement and the benefits that

it merits (Taylor, 1985b: 290; 1996a: 37).[49] More importantly, as we shall see in the chapters that follow, Taylor believes that members of distinct cultural groups (as well as regional groupings within a larger political union) may deserve different treatment before the law. This will not be for outstanding conduct but rather as a means of redress for social disadvantages like negative stereotyping, disenfranchisement, unequal development, historical conquest and associated forms of discrimination that these people have to contend with as members of such groups (Taylor, 1985b: 312; 1992). In such cases, upholding universalistic principles of absolute justice will lead us to downplay claims for differential treatment insofar as we will be inclined to regard all persons in a difference-blind fashion. While doing so may be just in absolute terms, in local terms it may fail to offer the rewards or to right the wrongs that these unique cases require.

3.4 Conclusion

Taylor's endorsement of Gadamer's ideal might seem more of a compelling incantation than a workable formula for reconciliation in practical politics. In Taylor's defence, however, he insists that his political philosophy in general is not to be read as an attempt to define a worked-out policy orientation for the practical political issues it addresses (Taylor in Laitinen & Smith eds., 2002b). Here, as with all of Taylor's political philosophy, he is rather interested in demonstrating how reflection on ontological issues of identity circumscribes a range of suitable advocacy solutions to stubborn political problems while ruling others out, without conclusively deciding in favour of any particular policy solution. In this instance Taylor is best read as attempting to work out a difference-sensitive model of public deliberation that can function as an alternative to the universalistic mode of justification favoured by procedural liberals. By invariably privileging justice claims considered to be universally binding over others that call for asymmetrical distributions of goods Taylor believes that procedural liberals may ultimately undermine the social solidarity that they seek to promote.

The discussion above suggests, however, that there are some worrying flaws in Taylor's project. This is because, if we read Taylor as objecting to the intelligibility of separating morality from ethics, or the right from the good, it is not clear that his argument holds up as anything other than a claim about how we *begin* our public deliberations. If we

[49] Taylor is cautious to point out that liberals like Rawls do not deny this principle but only that they tend not to give it its full due. He argues that Rawls's difference principle, which Rawls uses to establish that "no-one deserves his greater natural capacity nor merits a more favourable starting place in society", appears to negate inequality in so thoroughgoing a fashion as to undermine any enduring proportionate equalities (Rawls, cited in Taylor: 1985b: 308). Taylor shares with Rawls the belief that inequalities must be tempered by egalitarian concerns, but he believes that the sort of difference-blindness that Rawls favours tends to overlook both morally arbitrary differences *and* morally relevant ones.

define the moral point of view as Rawls does, as a position that is universal, not by standing outside of the value commitments of all persons but as a common core of understanding shared by all, then this would appear to be a vantage point that all rational deliberators, including the strong evaluators envisaged by Taylor, can seek to occupy when resolving disputes. Moreover, assuming only that peaceful co-operation in pursuit of common goods like Rawlsian primary goods is a minimal requirement of the individual self-realisation of all members of society, then the notion that we must normatively privilege the moral point of view seems less contentious than Taylor, without much in the way of argumentation, suggests it is. Taylor can, of course, take another line and argue that procedural liberals offer us nothing in the way of explanations for why we would be motivated to be moral in the sense they envisage when our universally held ends clash with our particularistic or individual goals, but procedural liberals can respond that this is a concern that is external to their theories. What the discussion of absolute and local justice issues above underscores, however, is that, to the extent that procedural liberals are concerned with outlining in various ways a scheme of justification that promotes social solidarity within pluralistic societies, they may disregard the motivational appeal of non-universal goods at a great cost. In upholding universal principles of justice and favouring transcendent over internal goods they are not straightforwardly wrong; rather, in a formulation that Taylor approvingly borrows from Aristotle's *Politics*, they "speak a part of justice only" (Taylor, 1985b: 312).

Chapter Four

4. Freedom

Taylor believes that the shortcomings he attributes to procedural liberal attempts at securing justificatory neutrality are not exclusively a problem for political *theory*. Because political practices are partly constituted by theoretical or pre-theoretical understandings, they can go better or worse in accordance with whether these understandings further or frustrate our most basic purposes. Thus a developed moral psychology that considers the motivational foundation of collective action offers to inform theoretical political discussions while also offering guidance in our practical political life. Something of this connection between theoretical and practical issues has already been intimated in the previous chapter, where we saw that a categorical preference for public goods held to be universally valid may undermine social solidarity by predisposing public deliberators to pass up "internal" goods for "transcendent" goods. This, we said, might fit better with an absolute conception of justice while distancing us from a local conception, and while such a move may be desirable, it may also not be. Taylor's concern is that if we consistently prioritise universal criteria of justification alone the whole issue cannot arise at a practical level and certain claims made in the name of local conceptions of justice will be dismissed out of hand instead of being given a fair hearing.

In this chapter and the next I hope to go further into the practical political problems that are of concern to Taylor. Addressing this broader range of issues, he identifies a number of political shortcomings in the contemporary procedural republics of the North Atlantic world. One of these concerns the centralisation and insulation of decision-making agencies within these societies. Here

> The average citizen feels power to be at a great distance, and frequently unresponsive. There is a sense of powerlessness in face of a governing machine that continues on its way without regard for the ordinary people, who seem to have little recourse in making their needs felt. There seems no way that the ordinary citizen can have an impact on this process, either to determine its general direction or to fine-tune its application to the individual case (Taylor, 1995a: 278-79).

Bureaucratic centralisation is both cause and effect of citizen disempowerment, and it functions to entrench what Tocqueville referred to as "soft despotism" – the political condition of de jure entitlement co-existing with a de facto state of disenfranchisement. Taylor does very little to empirically establish the extent to which this condition prevails, and only offers the

vaguest of practical solutions for remedying it. What he does offer, however, is a challenging philosophical interpretation of the sources of the malaise, which he locates in a misunderstanding of the social prerequisites of human freedom and the manner in which the dignity and integrity of persons is to be politically protected.

Taylor believes that modern Western social theory is frequently guilty both of misconceiving what our capacity for freedom consists in and of being insufficiently aware of the necessary social preconditions of its exercise. Taylor doesn't always specify the objects of the "liberal" position against which he contrasts his own moral and political views; Locke and Hobbes are invariably invoked as paradigm models of political theorising in the Anglophone world, and the moral and political philosophies of John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin and Robert Nozick (among a host of others less frequently mentioned) are portrayed, in various places, as successor doctrines with regard to certain conceptual essentials. Some of the confusion this creates can be dispelled if we appreciate that Taylor understands these theories to be symptomatic of far broader trends in modern Western thought, and it is to this wider backdrop of thought – what he calls an "unreflecting common sense shot through with atomist prejudices" – that his criticisms are ultimately addressed (Taylor, 1995a: 188). Even where Taylor defines his philosophical position by contrast with another thinker, his intentions are always to illustrate, at a theoretical level, a more basic critique of certain civilisational trends in the modern West which he believes affect members of our culture at a pre-theoretical level and seldom pass the threshold of explicit theorisation.

To appreciate both where we have gone wrong and where we may seek moral solutions Taylor considers it vitally necessary to address the question of how people formulate and defend their identities in the social and political conditions of modernity where

> freedom has become the central value of our culture. All sorts of demands are made from all sorts of quarters in the name of liberty. People seek recognition, equality, justice, but all as corollaries of 'liberation'. This is something which has evolved in our civilization over the last three centuries. The process has been punctuated, and partly shaped, by paradigm statements by major thinkers, although it has amounted to much more than these: the movement of a whole culture (1985b: 318).

By foregrounding the issue of freedom in Taylor's philosophical work we are better placed to address what Taylor understands to be an insensitivity within liberal theory and contemporary Western societies more generally to the importance of public service motivated by a sense of patriotic allegiance in securing the defence and exercise of freedom. Below I explore Taylor's contention that procedural liberalism, building on a conception of "negative freedom", may unwittingly erode citizen liberty by undermining the political commitment that serves to

sustain it. In so doing I will contrast negative freedom with the vision of republican freedom that Taylor attributes to the tradition of civic humanist thought and draw out both the conflicts and the possible complements between them. I argue that Taylor believes clarity at the ontological level about the indispensability of collective self-rule to the maintenance of individual freedom recommends, at the advocacy level, a model of society bonded through an ethos of participatory patriotism that facilitates decentralised democratic debate and broad-based civic initiatives.

4.1 Supplementing negative freedom: freedom and collective self-rule

John Christman argues that a common feature of traditional liberal theory is a conception of human freedom in which

> the liberty of a person is strictly a function of the restraints that the agent faces in the carrying out of her decisions (however the concept of a restraint is construed). The person – the complex set of functioning capacities and the forces that condition them – is not to be counted in the freedom of the agent (1991: 343).

An influential articulation of this belief in recent political philosophy is Isaiah Berlin's essay "Two Concepts of Liberty", which contrasts "negative" and "positive" freedom or liberty (Berlin, 1969; Christman, 1991: 343). Negative freedom, for Berlin, is the political condition in which we are safeguarded by the state or other authorities from obstruction by others in doing what we would do unobstructed (Berlin, 1969: 122; Larmore, 1992: 46-47). This entails drawing a line between an area of private activity with which no other person or authority may legitimately interfere and a public realm of obligatory behaviour in which we may justifiably be coerced to the extent that our actions threaten to undermine the equal private freedom of others (Berlin, 1969: 124).

Liberals traditionally advance a conception of negative freedom which corresponds to the above, while distinguishing between this and positive freedom. Those adhering to a positive conception of freedom argue that, in addition to having our negative freedom secured, we are only free when possessing the capacity for self-mastery and self-government (Christman, 1991: 344). However this self-government is construed, it entails determining out of my own will my most basic purposes and in so doing escaping having these purposes imposed upon me by some force or authority with which I do not identify (Berlin, 1969: 131-34). Though it is uncommon to dissociate them, arguments for positive freedom usually make two conceptually distinct claims: that freedom requires self-direction in the formation of an

individual's desires and values, and that political participation or collective self-government is indispensable for a truly free life (Christman, 1991: 344).[50]

In "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty" (1985b), Taylor faults negative conceptions of freedom for failing to accommodate the first of these two theses, while elsewhere he argues, in addition to this, that negative accounts of freedom fail to place sufficient value on the participatory dimension of freedom (1985b, 1991a; 1995a). Below I consider Taylor's arguments for the necessity of participation and collective self-rule, which advance what I will refer to as a "republican" conception of freedom, while in Chapter Five I consider what might be called Taylor's "expressive" understanding of freedom, which is more concerned with the necessity of autonomous and authentic desire formation and belief in the life of a free agent. Taylor, clearly believing that any satisfactory account of freedom must contain negative, expressive and republican elements, seldom draws these distinctions, but in separating them out I hope to better clarify some notionally distinct elements in Taylor's political thought.

4.1.1 *The social thesis and the primacy of rights*

The question of whether, if at all, there are certain social preconditions of freedom – whether, that is, belonging to society, or society of a certain sort, is indispensable to the exercise of freedom – is, Taylor believes, an important locus of contention between liberals and their critics (Taylor, 1985b; 1995a; Mulhall in Abbey ed., 2004: 108-09). Taylor maintains that the exercise of meaningful freedom of any sort necessarily requires that certain social conditions be in place, and that these conditions aren't exhausted by the allocation of schedules of freedom-promoting individual rights. One important statement of this point is found in the influential essay "Atomism", where Taylor outlines what he calls "the social thesis" (1985b). Briefly stated, the social thesis holds that, if one accepts the ontological claim that the capacities central to the appreciation and exercise of freedom are socially derived, then in normatively affirming their worth one is, on pain of inconsistency, also committed to affirming the worth of the society (or relevant aspects of the society) that facilitates their development and continued exercise (Taylor, 1985b: 187-94).

While this may seem trite, Taylor's argument for the social thesis should be read in the context of the previous chapter's discussion of the liberal prioritisation of the right over the good. Liberals can hold that the right is prior to the good at what we have called the advocacy level of political deliberation, not because justice must take priority over the common good in

[50] Taylor's own understanding of positive liberty only endorses a version of the second of these two claims. As we shall see in Chapter Five, this is because it relies on what he calls an "exercise-concept", which is incompatible with Berlin's sense of negative freedom, while the first claim employs an "opportunity-concept" which can be assimilated with a negative conception of freedom (1985b: 213).

the formulation of an impartial scheme of justification but because, as persons whose freedom resides in part in formulating and pursuing our life plans without external coercion, we need to belong to a political society that secures the conditions under which we can deliberate about the good and pursue our plans without excessive obstruction (Honneth, 1995: 236-37). The manner in which this freedom is secured in modern Western societies, and which is defended by liberal theories across the board, is by allowing basic individual rights to "trump" the demands of the common good (Baynes in Rasmussen ed., 1990: 62; Sandel, 1984: 82; 1994: 1766). Taylor doesn't wish to take issue with this principle of right per se, but rather fears that it threatens to erode communal solidarity if pushed beyond certain limits and in so doing threatens to unravel the social arrangements that both make individual rights appear valuable and which allow for their meaningful exercise.

To establish his point, Taylor argues that the only defensible rationale informing the defence of rights is that they function to protect the strongly valued capacities in virtue of which people are considered free and dignified subjects (Taylor, 1985b: 190-91). In speaking of these capacities, Taylor has in mind those competencies commonly seen as inseparable from the human aspiration to freedom, regardless of whether we understand freedom to rely upon the capacity for moral autonomy, expressive self-realisation or collective self-determination (and Taylor, I will argue in this chapter and the next, believes that true freedom entails all of these) (Taylor, 1985b: 200-03). Typically, these capacities are ascribed to people in virtue of their potential for developing and exercising the qualities of rational thought or full moral agency and moral responsibility, through which we may be considered persons possessing dignity and worthy of respect (Taylor, 1985b: 191). Whether explicitly formulated or merely presumed, this is the background that makes intelligible the defence of schedules of rights in liberal societies. Rights of self-expression such as the unimpeded profession of conviction, the free exercise of moral or religious beliefs, the free choice of lifestyle and profession, as well as rights to the free disposition of property, to a living wage, and whatever else may stand as a guarantor of these expressive behaviours are defended by liberals in order to allow people to realise their purposes according to their own freely chosen life plans (Taylor, 1985b: 191, 193, 195).

Taylor further argues that, if the capacities that we take to be integral to free self-realisation are reckoned to be good, and if these can only develop in a society that protects them through awarding individual rights and the like, then – so the social thesis tells us – their value must at the very least be co-equivalent with the good of social belonging, by which Taylor means commitment to furthering the collective good of a particular society. Respecting one of the distinctly human capacities by the conferral of a right therefore draws with it the

necessity of accepting such a principle of belonging (Taylor, 1985b: 197-98). This affirmation of the collective good extends not only to the political institutions and practices of the society, but also to the cultural life of that society which makes the defence of these capacities and the ascription of rights appear a cogent and valuable pursuit by comparison with a range of alternative human possibilities (Taylor, 1985b: 204-08; 309-10).

At a conceptual level, any normative claim affirming the value of the socialised capacities that lacks this background understanding lacks also a condition of its own intelligibility (Taylor, 1985b; Smith, 2002: 146-47). At a practical level, this means that any policy aiming to promote individual freedom must at the same time sustain, or at least not undermine, the broader social conditions that make this freedom possible at all. For purely empirical reasons which Taylor nonetheless takes to be overwhelmingly plausible, these conditions would seem to include the functioning of a wide range of institutional supports, cultural endeavours and political fora for collective deliberation and decision-making (Taylor, 1985b: 205-07, 309). Without commitment to sustaining these aspects of society indefinitely, the conditions for the enjoyment of individual freedom – a social structure that makes available a broad range of meaningful life choices, that allows for these choices to be reached in collective deliberation, and that empowers its citizens with the political means for exercising their common will – may be jeopardised at any time by those whose visions of the good are inimical to diversity, innovation and originality (Taylor, 1985b: 207; 309-10).

Considering the above, the social thesis laid out in "Atomism" can be understood as a thesis concerning the social preconditions of freedom and dignity and can be used to derive a sub-thesis concerning the foundation of democratic legitimacy and rights ascription. In the former aspect it is intended to establish a conceptual foundation for the notion that freedom cannot be exhaustively conceived in negative terms; individual freedom, Taylor argues, cannot be guaranteed without supporting what, in the argot of contemporary political theory, has come to be called a "politics of the common good" (Sandel, 1984: 93; Kymlicka, 1989a). In the later aspect the social thesis argues that what Taylor elsewhere refers to as "active" respect – the legalistic protection of individual freedoms – cannot be guaranteed without also committing to the defence of a particular community's way of life that the extended, participatory account of freedom he outlines demands (1985b; 1989: 15).

In both these regards the social thesis is intended to undermine social theories built upon atomist premises. Taylor charges atomist theories with lacking an understanding of the social preconditions required for both the evaluative appreciation and the rights-based defence of the freedom-sustaining human capacities (1985b). Such theories, he maintains, provide arguments that seek to establish the legitimacy or otherwise of a political dispensation, or the

desirability of certain public policies, by appealing exclusively to their ability to further individual freedom with such measures as defending autonomy-promoting rights (Taylor, 1985b). Taylor shows that, without an equivalent commitment to maintaining a social structure that allows the capacities defended by such rights to appear valuable when set against a background of other possibilities and to develop to their fullness, the defence of the right can undermine the social conditions that make it meaningful and that allow for its practical exercise (1985b).

But however compelling, Taylor's arguments in "Atomism" are open to a number of criticisms. For one thing, it might be possible to contest the extent to which the capacities so highly prized by liberal theory are socialised but, *given* this claim, it seems to fall out as a simple truism that commitment to furthering these values must also extend to protecting a society that fosters them. Thus Will Kymlicka argues that, while the conceptual coherence of the social thesis is surely irrefutable, it is hard to credit the idea that any prominent liberal theorists would attempt to challenge it (1989a: 79-80, 95).[51] This softens the edge of Taylor's polemical thrust and means that at best Taylor might be credited with having identified a shortcoming in the common-sense of members of liberal societies. Secondly, while Taylor argues that traditional liberal theory lacks an adequate account of the need that all individuals possess to belong to a vibrant, freedom-promoting culture, his social thesis offers no indisputable conceptual grounds for arguing from this to promoting a *particular* conception of the common good attributable to any specific culture (Kymlicka, 1989a: 78-79). The first of these objections, which to be upheld would lead far beyond the scope of this work,[52] I leave hanging, while I address the second below. Before doing so, however, I consider a third, connected problem with Taylor's social thesis: as an attempt to establish a necessary connection between individual freedom and social commitment, it would appear that Taylor's

[51] While Taylor puts forward empirical concerns about the vulnerability of freedom-respecting and tolerant understandings and practices that may be well-founded, Kymlicka points out that this doesn't necessarily pose a problem for most liberal thinkers. Nozick's libertarianism, which is the immediate target of Taylor's criticism in "Atomism", may overlook the social supports of freedom in espousing a model of apolitical, spontaneous social co-operation, but this is certainly not true of the liberalism of Rawls, Dworkin and others, who acknowledge that freedom of any sort requires the active defence of the justice-promoting institutions of society (Kymlicka, 1989a: 84, n.6). Taylor does not criticise these latter thinkers in his discussion of the social thesis, nor any other of the heirs of Hobbes and Locke that he targets, but then it is not clear to what extent Taylor has successfully identified a general weakness in contemporary liberal thought. Thus Kymlicka goes on to point out that "Taylor is right to emphasize the importance of his social thesis, and hence the importance of a secure social context, of public principles of justice, and of civic participation. All these are of unquestionable importance. But that is just the problem. No one does question their importance. Liberal principles of justice may be misconceived, but not because they deny any of these obvious truths about our social situation" (1989a: 95).

[52] Taylor may fail to diagnose a general problem in procedural liberal theory, but this would not concern us directly as we are concerned with establishing the extent to which Taylor's moral and political work is internally coherent. Taylor can claim that procedural liberals fall foul of the social thesis without appealing to his ontological work at all, and so if this claim rings hollow, as I suggest it does, then this is at best an external objection to his argument.

argument can be accommodated by those wishing to hold to a purely instrumental account of the value of social solidarity and the nature of shared goods which views our associations with others to be valuable but only of purely contingent worth.

Atomists, as Taylor portrays them, hold an instrumental view of social relationships and view social co-operation as an aid to furthering our own individual goods but take this co-operation to be external to (or a causal condition of) our appreciation of these goods. I may be wholeheartedly committed to a social movement defending the civil liberties that both I and my fellow countrymen enjoy against political authorities that unjustly seek to curtail these freedoms, or I may be devoted to the cause of a labour union, or I may refrain from making unnecessary social welfare demands, or again I may scrupulously regard the laws forbidding me from cheating on tax payments, but the *reason* for me doing so may be simply that I cherish the personal fulfilments – the possibility of religious, ideological or sexual non-conformity, the financial independence I gain from holding down a well-paying job, the fulfilment I derive from contributing to the upliftment of members of society less fortunate than myself, or whatever the case may be – that belonging to this society offers me. When my personal fulfilments are not threatened or cease to be effectively advanced by these forms of co-operation, however, my commitment to these social causes loses the urgency that it would otherwise have and may well seem a distraction from the pursuits that I truly value.

Taylor is not unaware of the possibility of valuing community involvement for instrumental reasons alone and tries to head off this interpretation of the social thesis by arguing that freedom can only be valued in virtue of a culturally inculcated identity, and that this identity is nourished by a range of conceptual and material forces that could only evolve along with an entire culture or civilisation (1985b: 209, 309). For this reason, we must acknowledge an unconditional debt to the broader cultures in which we, as individuals, are embedded, and must see our own self-development as essentially reliant upon the flourishing of an entire cultural structure, not only in the present but across succeeding generations (1985b: 205-06, 209, 309-10). In "Atomism" however, he does little to defend this claim which, to be convincing, would require a more worked-out understanding of human identity that did something to explain the moral psychology of political commitment. Taylor would have to demonstrate that, for purposes of mobilisation in defence of freedom-promoting institutions as much as for the receptivity to non-coercive deliberation that we discussed in the previous chapter, a society united in its affirmation of a shared thin good such as a universal conception of the right or justice cannot secure a more tolerant and resilient foundation for co-operation in pursuit of shared goods than a society united in its pursuit of some substantively defined common good (Kymlicka, 1989a: 83-85).

4.1.2 *The republican thesis I: public service through patriotic virtue*

Taylor outlines in various places an extension of the social thesis which goes some way toward addressing these shortcomings by arguing that social commitment must have as its object a particular historical community and that, for such commitment to endure, it requires a non-instrumental appreciation of the common good of this community. In "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate" he refers to this as "the republican thesis" (1995a: 193). The republican thesis is presented as a schematic outline of the underlying logic informing the otherwise very different versions of civic humanist thought that Taylor identifies. Taylor consistently sets up civic humanism as a current within traditional liberal thought that can be used to frame a conception of liberal democratic politics that provides a supplementary ideal to the rights-based and procedural understandings of liberal politics dominant in the North Atlantic world. In Taylor's hands the republican thesis is meant to establish not so much that freedom requires commitment to an institutionalised culture of freedom as that this commitment must necessarily be understood to issue from the affirmation of a commonly held, thick conception of the good. Any free political society, for Taylor, is and must be sustained by the dedicated exertions of citizens whose individual conceptions of the good are in part formulated in conformity with the common good of their communities. While procedural liberals can accommodate this insight, they can only do so at the cost of abandoning any atomistic conceptions of the human subject that might undergird their theories because fidelity to the common good must at the very least include a lively sense of patriotism, where this patriotism is properly understood as a common, particularistic good of inherent value and not a contingently valued, convergent good.

Taylor defines republican freedom as non-despotism. This is the political condition where people are not subject to the authoritarian will of a single ruler or ruling elite but regard themselves as equal citizens whose dignity lies in collective self-rule; that is, in giving the law to themselves and, in Aristotle's formulation, ruling and being ruled in turn (1995a: 200). Republican freedom in this broad sense is the value that classical Aristotelian political thought sought to further and it remains a foundational value in the liberal democratic societies of the modern West (Taylor, 1985b; 1995a).

Central to the civic humanist accounts of freedom that Taylor considers is an affirmation of freedom through patriotic solidarity, where this patriotism can be understood in its original classical and early modern sense of fidelity to the interests of a wider historical community such as the city state or in its more contemporary usage as dedication to a national group (Taylor, 1995a; 2005a). Taylor loosely characterises patriotism as "common citizen

identification around a sense of common good" or "a common identification with a historical community founded on certain values" (1995a: 194, 199). Appreciating how republican freedom is promoted allows us to distinguish between sustainable and self-destructive political programmes in general by considering how these are able to defend our freedom (Taylor, 1995a; 2005: 42).

The republican thesis argues that freedom demands active citizen commitment to the laws and institutions of a political society, which can only be secured if citizens are bonded in a shared vision of the common good that at the very least includes an affirmation of patriotic solidarity as a fundamental citizen virtue. In its weaker formulation, the republican thesis argues for the necessity of committed public service for the maintenance of freedom by reasoning that, while despotic regimes are organised by elites and frequently demand low levels of citizen participation in the public life of a society, non-despotic societies, by contrast, require that the citizenry as a whole assume responsibility for functions that would otherwise fall to the lot of their rulers. The demands of citizenship in free societies are more onerous than in despotic societies because the gamut of duties is far broader, with citizens called on to replace hired mercenaries in the defence of their countries, or to participate actively in collective decision-making, or something of the sort (Taylor, 1995a: 193). For this reason, Taylor believes that commitment and vitality in the performance of public duty requires a strongly valued sense of the worth of patriotic allegiance if people are to be motivated, over time, to maintain the exertions that public service demands. Citizens of free republics must learn to consider collective participation in public life and the defence of free institutions to be an essential, non-contingent condition of maintaining the freedom and dignity of all in society, committing individual citizens to locating their own good in the maintenance and defence of their shared way of life (Taylor, 1995a).

Taylor believes that any political advocacy policy has to accommodate or further this common good of patriotic allegiance but, importantly, his reasons for maintaining this are not purely prescriptive. The logic of the republican thesis is also submitted as a descriptive claim, about what in fact sustains the free societies that do presently exist or have existed in the past (Taylor, 1995a). Taylor outlines the republican thesis as part of what, in "Cross-Purposes", he calls the "viability objection" to procedural liberalism, which holds that, where procedural liberalism builds on an atomist ontology, it describes a political society that couldn't even in principle sustain itself in freedom (Taylor, 1995a: 202).

4.1.3 *Questioning the republican thesis*

We might pause at this point to note that, thus stated, the republican thesis is still open to the criticisms levelled above at the social thesis: we can agree with Taylor's defence of the necessity of public service in a free society without having to follow him in describing this as a non-instrumental, particularistic good, thereby still remaining within the instrumental framework of allegiance that he attributes to atomistic theories. Taylor accepts that our modern notion of the good life and of equality means that we can no longer follow Aristotle in viewing a life of political commitment as inherently more elevated than a life given over to private pursuits (1995a: 144-45).[53] As Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman point out,

> most people in the modern world….find the greatest happiness in their family life, work, religion or leisure, not in politics. Political participation is seen as an occasional, and often burdensome, activity needed to ensure that government respects and supports their freedom to pursue these personal occupations and attachments. This assumption that politics is a means to private life is shared by most people on the left and right, as well as by liberals, civil society theorists, and feminists, and defines the modern view of citizenship (1994: 362).

But if this decoupling of active political life and the good life really is a defining feature of our modern western moral sensibility, then it is unclear why freedom and dignity require anything more than a defence of free institutions *when these are threatened*, and why a healthy regard by all citizens for their own negative freedoms would not spontaneously move people in such defence.

This is a possible objection that Taylor acknowledges: if, as atomists wish to maintain, the social good is in fact decomposable into the several goods of the individuals of which the society in question is formed, then there is nothing to prevent us from acknowledging the need to collectively support the free institutions of that society when these are under threat by viewing such action as a precondition of enjoying our own individual goods (Taylor, 1995a). In this case, there is still reason for defending a political society geared exclusively toward the defence of negative freedoms from illiberal or undemocratic threats, but the good that we appeal to is not the collective good of a particular society but rather the freedom of its members to privately define their own good, provided only that these individuals respect the similar freedom of others and acknowledge a debt to defending the freedom-promoting

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[53] This belief is one feature of what Taylor refers to as the modern "affirmation of ordinary life", by which he means a rejection of received elite or aristocratic frameworks that privilege supposedly higher activities like contemplation, religious asceticism and the public pursuit of honour over the activities associated with the "life of production and reproduction, of work and the family" (1995a: 144). The affirmation of ordinary life is an important theme for Taylor, and its historical genesis and basic presuppositions are discussed at greatest length in SS, Part III.

institutions of this society and observe the restraints that this demands. Neo-Kantians, for instance, will maintain that individuals appealing to universally acceptable moral values like an autonomy-promoting conception of justice will have ample reason to perform such actions, and that allegiance to the thinly-defined good that emerges from this will suffice to motivate people to act in defence of the societies in which they live when its freedom-promoting institutions are threatened (Taylor, 1995a). Alternatively, it could be argued that individuals acting out of pure self-regard will perceive that enjoying the affluence or security that they value requires them to defend their society when the freedoms it enshrines are under threat. In neither case does commitment to a thickly-defined common good appear to be an indispensable motivational source of political mobilisation or an absolute requirement of a free and dignified life (Taylor, 1995a).

Taylor finds both alternatives unsatisfactory. In the first case, rational commitment to a universal moral principle like a shared conception of justice alone is unlikely to motivate any but the most altruistic of people to maintain or defend free institutions; in the second case, self-concern will promote only sporadic and limited interventions in defence of these institutions which will be incapable of effectively rehabilitating them when they cease to channel self-interested behaviour into co-ordinated activity that defends rather than undermines liberty (Taylor, 1995a; Hill, 1993: 68). Hoping to outline a more plausible account of the motivational foundation of civic virtue, Taylor outlines a third possibility. He believes that the citizen virtue of patriotism found in civic humanist thought offers an account of the constitutive bond obtaining between freedom and social commitment that best describes the motivational foundation of political allegiance in both its pre-modern and early modern forms of attachment to a city-state and in modern, liberal versions of nationalism (Taylor, 1995a; 2005a). As Taylor explains:

> patriotism is based on an identification with others in a particular common enterprise. I'm not dedicated to defending the liberty of just anyone, but I feel the bond of solidarity with my compatriots in our common enterprise, the common expression of our respective dignity. Patriotism is somewhere between friendship and family feeling, on one side, and altruistic dedication on the other. The latter has no concern for the particular: I'm inclined to act for the good of anyone anywhere. The former attaches me to particular people. My patriotic allegiance doesn't bind me to people in this familial way….But particularity enters in because my bond to these people passes through our participation in a common political entity (1995a: 187-88).

This returns us to the motivational question raised in the previous chapter. There we said that if we are, in practice, to deliberate with one another in a rational manner and be

willing to take the views of others not sharing our personal vision of the good into consideration, we need some account of what it is that would motivate us to do so. We have seen that, for Rawls, this is the sense of justice that motivates people to enter the original position. Here Taylor is posing a similar question, only the issue is not about why we would assume the moral point of view and endorse a scheme of justification for our policies that will prove acceptable to all reasonable persons but rather concerns what moral virtues and aptitudes are required of citizens if they are to exert themselves in defence of the freedom-sustaining institutions of their societies. One way of assessing Taylor's criticism of the understanding of the republican conditions of freedom is therefore to ask whether Rawls's justice-respecting citizens really would behave in this civic-minded fashion.

This is the question that Allen Patten poses, and he argues the Rawlsian "sense of justice" would, despite Taylor's suggestions to the contrary, draw allegiance to the laws and institutions of a particular historical community (Patten, 1996: 39).[54] In *A Theory of Justice* Rawls argued that attachment to universal principles of justice can motivate attachment to an historical community in which these principles are realised (Rawls, 1991: 472-479; Patten, 1996: 39). Rawls contends that citizens will bond together when just institutions are threatened not simply from pure, principled altruism but because they can learn to view their society as "a cooperative venture for mutual advantage" where the pooling of individual talents works to the benefit of all (Rawls, 1991: 4, 520-30; Patten, 1996: 39). Rawls clarifies this position in *Political Liberalism*, arguing that political societies can unite around a principle of reciprocity that falls between a purely altruistic commitment to the general good and a purely self-interested regard for one's present or future individual advantage (1993: 15-16). Patten thus believes that Taylor misleads in his neat distinction between the other-regarding and self-interested motivational bases of public service available to procedural liberals and that this weakens Taylor's contention that a commitment to procedural justice could not inspire the prolonged defence of free social institutions (Patten, 1996).

Patten has, moreover, argued that Taylor, by distancing himself in "Cross-Purposes" from the claim that a life devoted to public service is inherently more dignified than a life

[54] Taylor does not directly name Rawls in "Cross-Purposes" but, as Patten points out, Rawls does implicitly appear to be the most direct target of Taylor's criticisms, which are directed at the "apolitical attachment to universal principle…that is central to modern ethics of rule by law" (Taylor, 1995a: 187; Patten, 1996: 39). For another defence of Rawls's understanding of citizen virtue against Taylor, see Greg Hill's interesting discussion in Hill 1993. Hill argues that a theory of citizenship can be distilled from *A Theory of Justice* that demonstrates how citizens bonded in a shared understanding of the right will be motivated to rise in defence of their free institutions when these are confronted with illiberal threats. This they will do not exclusively for the instrumental individual benefit that comes of such defence but because Rawlsian citizenship inclines citizens to understand the political institutions of their community as "the social arrangements through which they both cooperate for mutual advantage and express their nature as free and equal citizens" (Hill, 1993: 81).

wholly given over to private pursuits, in fact endorses a model of civic participation that is not unlike Rawls's account of the rational grounds for upholding freedom-promoting principles of justice and protecting just institutions (Patten, 1996). Patten argues that Taylor, despite his protestations to the contrary, is best understood as advancing an "instrumental republicanism", where the value of active citizenship and civic virtue can be defended either because of its inherent worth or because it stands as a causal requirement of maintaining a system of equal negative liberties that allows citizens to pursue their own individual or collective interests (Patten, 1996). As Patten explains,

> [i]t is important, for Taylor, that individuals regard citizenship as a (non-instrumental) good, not just because it *is* a good, but because it contributes to the preservation of a free society. The thesis about what Taylor calls the 'viability' of free institutions is an instrumental claim:…it is a defence of public service and civic virtue which is distinct from the more traditional Aristotelian view that citizenship is an essential component of the good life (1996: 37; emphasis in original).

As I understand him, Patten wishes to argue, along with Rawls, that rejecting the Aristotelian prioritisation of a life of public service as a privileged locus of the good life allows us to accept that political participation will be of purely instrumental value to the self-realisation of many (though not all) moderns, without this compromising their capacity for living a good life. This does not mean that political participation is not good, but just that it does not invariably feature in every good life plan (Patten, 1996: 37; Rawls, 1993: 205-06). On this instrumental view, civic virtue is up for grabs where our negative freedoms are not threatened, and we cannot categorically say that a life wholly given over to private pursuits has failed to live up to some generally binding standard of the human good.

4.1.4 *The republican thesis II: patriotism as a common good*

Patten may well be correct in maintaining that Taylor mischaracterises the motivational account of political participation that neo-Kantian procedural liberals like Rawls must appeal to as exclusively other-regarding. Just as, in Chapter Three, we said that the universalism of the moral point of view endorsed by Rawls is not some perspective-taking situated *outside* of our shared beliefs but within them, so too the universalistic fellow-feeling that comes of this is needn't be some abstracted, apolitical regard for others but rather occupies a middle position between pure altruism and pure self-regard of just the sort that Taylor hopes to outline. We could therefore agree with Taylor's premise that people will only be motivated to demonstrate

civic virtue when this is tied to the affirmation of some particularistic good without rejecting a neo-Kantian proceduralism like that defended by Rawls.

This aspect of Patten's argument is, I think, compelling. I believe he is nonetheless quite mistaken to claim that Taylor defends an "instrumental patriotism". This is because there is a more challenging argument about citizen freedom and dignity to be found in "Cross-purposes" and elsewhere that Patten fails to consider. Taylor, I believe, wants to challenge procedural liberal accounts of the social preconditions of freedom not by *presuming* a basic sense of justice[55] and deriving principles of civic virtue from this, but by questioning at a more fundamental level what gives rise to the sense of justice and how best we characterise it. Thus contrasting Taylor's account of civic virtue with Rawls's only takes us so far, and we need to consider Taylor's grounds for rejecting the notion that self-interest will secure social co-operation in pursuit of the good where a shared conception of justice is generally lacking. While Taylor does appear to believe that his non-instrumental account of republican freedom is not accommodated by thinkers like Rawls, this is best read as an external criticism that points out a gap in Rawls's theory without necessarily claiming that the theory lacks internal coherence. Moreover, the target of Taylor's polemic here is less the atomistic theories that he seldom names[56] than the more general atomistic mindset that he believes is characteristic of Western modernity.

Taylor's position here builds on the contention that patriotic commitment to civic virtue and active citizenship may be construed as a common good, in the sense of the undecomposable or "irreducibly social" goods discussed in Chapter Two. Because these goods are those upon which we build our identities, Patten's insistence that Taylor's republicanism is inescapably instrumental is misleading. Taylor believes that in explaining what gives rise to the sense of justice we must have recourse to affective ties with members of a community upon whom we are dependent for attaining the irreducibly social goods we seek and with whom we are therefore forced to reach agreement. If Taylor is right to claim that atomistic

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[55] I don't mean to imply here that Rawls lacks an account of how we derive a sense of justice, and Rawls's discussion of the development of the sense of justice and the principles of reciprocity in *Theory*, ch.8 clearly are intended to work this problem out (Rawls, 1991: 478-96; Hill, 1993: 76-81). My point here is only that this is not where Rawls believes the burden of his theory lies. Rawls's derivation of his principles of justice presumes an ideal situation of what he calls full compliance where, in working out the basic principles of justice in the original position, deliberators are presumed to be rational, sincere and without envy (Rawls, 1991: 142-47; 245-46; Patten, 1996: 43).

[56] Where he does list actual representatives of this atomistic view in passing, Taylor mentions the theories of interest group pluralism formulated by David B. Truman and David Easton and elite theories of democracy as these have been defended by Jospeh Schumpeter and Robert Dahl (1995a: 143, n.12; 195, n.16). More generally, Taylor appears to believe that this view is central to modern forms of utilitarianism such as welfare economics, whose intellectual ancestors he takes to be Hobbes, Locke and Bentham (1995a: 127-29, 137-38, 142-144). As Taylor feels no compulsion to discuss the details of these theories, I take it that he wishes to read them as, in large part, symptomatic of the atomistic common-sense that he considers a definitive feature of the modern Western identity (1995a: 188).

theories cannot account for irreducibly social goods, and if the account of patriotism that Taylor advances, while avoiding Aristotelian doctrines of the superior value of a life devoted to public service, describes one such good, then he really does provide an account of political commitment and freedom that procedural liberals cleaving to an atomist social ontology are incapable of defending.[57]

For Taylor, we saw, public goods are not an analytically homogenous category. Convergent goods are not goods in the strict sense at all, and are decomposable into the individual goods that they make available, while common or irreducibly social goods are formed through ever-evolving cultural developments or acts of common focus between people or groups and are always nothing less than the common property of all involved. Moreover, convergent goods are only instrumentally, contingently valuable, while irreducibly social goods are of intrinsic worth. As Taylor puts it in SS, "some of the most crucial human fulfilments…are not possible even in principle for a sole human being"; we are brought together in society not just for personal advantage but in pursuit of goods that are not realised within people so much as between them (1989: 40, n.20). This is a claim not about the *provision* of goods but about their *enjoyment*. Taylor believes that this is a thesis with important political consequences, and that civic humanist theories[58] draw this political significance out:

> The very definition of a republican regime as classically understood requires an ontology different from atomism, falling outside atomist-infected common sense. It requires that we probe relations of identity and community, and distinguish different possibilities, in particular the possible place of we-identities as

[57] Patten acknowledges that there may be a real disagreement between Taylor and procedural liberals, but not for this reason. Patten argues that, while we may insist that our brand of patriotism is fused to the particularistic good of some historical community in such a manner that it is irreconcilable with the Rawlsian conception of justice, this insistence takes us beyond the bounds of liberalism (Patten, 1996: 40). Not only does Patten believe this step is unnecessary, because it exaggerates the shortcomings of the procedural account, but he also argues that it is also possible to "question whether non-liberal patriotism is really likely to be instrumental to the preservation of a free society" (Patten, 1996: 41). However, even if Taylor ultimately advances a model of patriotism that is best characterised as "non-liberal" (Patten, 1996: 40), I suspect that this whole way of putting the issue inadvertently obscures Taylor's position. Taylor is less concerned with outlining any particular advocacy position than he is with establishing at an ontological level that there is a mode of patriotic allegiance that is not instrumentally motivated, and as such possesses a moral quality that atomistic variants of procedural liberalism necessarily misrepresent. In so doing Taylor wishes to extend our understanding of the intelligible range of advocacy positions that are available to us, without definitively ruling in favour of any one of them.

[58] Taylor also mentions "various socialist theories" and "theories of sex complementarity", but does very little to discuss either of these in the works we are considering here (1989: 40, n.20). While a consideration of these issues falls outside the province of this thesis, Ian Frasier discusses Taylor's relationship with Marxist thought in great detail in his informative book *Dialectics of the Self: Transcending Charles Taylor* (2007). For those interested in exploring Taylor's relationship to feminist thought (or, more accurately, his potential relationship, as Taylor in fact has very little to say about feminist theory in any of his works) see Susan Wolf's "Comment" in MPR (Wolf, 1992: 75-85). A lengthier discussion of this issue appears in Melissa A. Orlie's article "Taylor and Feminism: From Recognition of Identity to a Politics of the Good" (Orlie in Abbey ed., 2004: 140-65).

> against merely convergent I-identities, and the consequent role of common as against convergent goods (1995a: 192).

In "Cross-Purposes" Taylor identifies a stronger version of the republican thesis that levels a challenge at instrumental accounts of the social requirements of freedom that may be difficult for procedural liberals to dismiss, and I believe it is to this stronger version of the republican thesis that he generally appeals when criticising procedural liberalism. It is, for our purposes, also the more interesting line of argumentation insofar as it builds upon some of the central conceptual constructs informing Taylor's holistic social ontology and in so doing illustrates his concern to demonstrate the relevance of ontological reflection to normative political debates. The stronger republican thesis shares with the weaker thesis an emphasis upon the need for active, participatory citizenship in non-despotic societies but also differentiates between free and despotic regimes on what might be called purely moral or motivational grounds. "If we call [the] basic proposition connecting patriotism and freedom the 'republican thesis'", writes Taylor, "then we can speak of narrower and broader forms of this, with the former focused on purely participatory freedom and the latter taking in the broader gamut of liberties" (Taylor, 1995a: 193). The stronger version of the republican thesis defines non-despotism

> not just in terms of participation, but by a broader gamut of freedoms, including negative ones. It would…argue a link between the solidarity of patriotism and free institutions, on the ground that a free society needs this kind of motivation to provide what despotisms get through fear; to engender the disciplines, the sacrifices, the essential contributions it needs to keep going, as well as to mobilize support in its defense when threatened (Taylor, 1995a: 193).

Even where members of both free and despotic societies are called upon to observe similar restraints and sacrifices in the name of the collective good, their motivations for doing so will differ (Taylor, 1995a: 193). While conformity to the laws, the paying of taxes, and the like can be exacted coercively, civic humanists argue that an essential difference between free societies and despotisms is that members of the former have good reason to observe these restraints in a self-disciplining fashion out of a sense of dignity rooted in patriotic virtue, while in the latter dispensation subjects will only be motivated to act out of fear of punishment (Taylor, 1995a: 187, 192-93). Though both behaviours may be outwardly identical, the moral quality of the action differs profoundly, with the committed republican acting in an uncoerced manner – from an "inwardly generated sense of honour and obligation" – that expresses his

freedom, while his counterpart in the despotism will be acting out of submission to externally-imposed authority (Taylor, 1995a: 193).

In establishing a connection between patriotism and freedom the stronger republican thesis is not only an argument that outlines the extra, participatory dimension of freedom corresponding to the second aspect of positive freedom that we isolated above; it offers this, but in a manner that Taylor believes is uncommon among liberals. The stronger republican thesis argues that citizen participation and sacrifice are indispensable aspects of freedom, while *also* stressing that the motivational quality of such undertakings must be of a certain type for them to count as truly promoting freedom. A corollary of this is that even when it comes to defending negative freedom *alone*, the reasons in virtue of which we are motivated to do so will also play a part in determining whether or not our actions give expression to our freedom and dignity or undermine it. As I understand Taylor, he wishes to claim that even if it turned out that procedural liberals could provide a convincing account of how a healthy regard for their own negatively-defined individual freedoms could motivate people to engage in public service and shoulder the burdens of active citizenship, they would have to say something more about *why* these individuals choose to defend these freedoms if they are to meaningfully distinguish between free and unfree activity. Put in the terminology Taylor employs in SS, we might say that the defender of negative liberty envisaged here would have to move from a mode of argumentation based on action-descriptions alone to a more articulate moral psychology that considers also reasons for action (1989: 78-81).

Critics of Taylor's republicanism who fail to address the specifically motivational dimension of his critique of atomist accounts of freedom will, like Alan Patten, fail to see how Taylor's civic humanist arguments for the defence of freedom might really challenge liberal political theories or the common-sense opinions of those that do allow for the need to protect free institutions from illiberal challenges (Patten, 1996). Taylor's concern with distinguishing the motivational quality of free from unfree action must be emphasised. His argument is not that, in maintaining and protecting the institutions of a political society, the republican will be acting to protect the causal guarantors of his (negatively defined) freedom, as opposed to the oppressed subject who will be shoring up the power that oppresses him, though this may also be true. If this were the extent of Taylor's critique, then Patten might rightly insist on calling it a version of "instrumental republicanism".

In setting out the stronger republican thesis Taylor distinguishes between free and unfree collective action by appeal to a thesis about human identity that builds on a holistic social ontology:

> Every political society requires some sacrifices and demands some disciplines from its members….In a despotism, a regime where the mass of citizens are subject to the rule of a single master or a clique, the requisite disciplines are maintained by coercion. In order to have a free society, one has to replace this coercion with something else. This can only be a willing identification with the polis on the part of the citizens, a sense that the political institutions in which they live are an expression of themselves (Taylor, 1995a: 187).

Taylor's argument in favour of the stronger republican thesis develops the claim that, where an agent's self-understanding acknowledges no essential, constitutive bond of identity between himself and the broader political community, sacrifices for the good of this community must appear, at best, as necessary evils either endured out of a sense of altruistic self-sacrifice or undertaken out of enlightened self-interest, and this is the sense of his distinction between his own view of civic virtue and the egoistic and altruistic alternatives he outlines (Taylor, 1995a: 194-95). Taylor wants to argue that, conversely, where an agent views communal belonging as an essential feature of his identity, because belonging to that community is an indispensable condition of realising the goods the he acknowledges, and where the object of this communal sentiment is a political society constituted of freedom-promoting practices and institutions, common action that aims to benefit such a collective cannot but also benefit the individual agent (Taylor, 1995a).[59]

In order to adopt the second view, it is necessary to concede that, in addition to their own singular purposes, people also seek fulfilments that by definition could not be valued or realised other than through participating in a particular collective enterprise, where this participation is not a precondition of attaining such fulfilments but is itself partially constitutive of the fulfilment. This is as true of intimate relationships of friendship and love as it is of public relationships of respectful, open exchange between political equals pursuing common goals (Taylor, 1995a: 138-39; 190). Such claims are necessarily at odds with liberal theories that build on an atomistic social ontology because atomism cannot convincingly account for common space created through the collective action of agents sharing we-identities. For atomists, As Taylor pithily puts it, "the action is collective, but the point of it

[59] As I understand him, Taylor wishes to argue that in the latter case, commitment to the community is of non-contingent value and unrepudiable in reason. The agent in question will be willing to sacrifice the pursuit of his own individual goods where doing so is required to maintain the free institutions of his society without perceiving this as an external impediment to his will because the society will cohere in an understanding and pursuit of the good that he shares. What is different in these two cases is that in the former the agent acts in accordance with reasons that appeal to the goods constitutive of his I-identity, while in the latter scenario the agent possessing civic virtue also factors the goods constitutive of his we-identity into his deliberation. To the extent that the identity of the patriot is dialogically constituted, these goods will be harmonious and where they do conflict he is able to balance his own individual good against the collective good that he acknowledges and at times sacrifice the former for the latter without this necessarily constituting an absolute diminishment of his freedom.

remains individual….[and the] common good is constituted out if individual goods, without remainder" (Taylor, 1995a: 188). Atomistic versions of procedural liberalism will, accordingly, not wish to grant Taylor's conception of common goods validity as an ontological category (Taylor, 1995a).[60] While an atomistic theory might comfortably concede that the goods it affirms cannot, for practical reasons, be secured without an agent belonging to a society of some sort that makes provisions for their attainment, it could not concede that an essential condition of realising certain goods is co-operative action undertaken out of a shared identity. To do so would be a step out of atomism, because it would be to acknowledge that attributing freedom to an individual, even where this is negatively defined, requires that the agent in question affirms at the very least a patriotism that has as its object the substantive common good of a particular community (Taylor, 1995a).

Taylor's contention, then, is that collective social action in defence of free political institutions, where this is undertaken out of a sense of patriotism, is a good of precisely this latter variety. Assuming this patriotism is affirmed through a willing individual identification with a greater good, the commitments that come of it needn't be conceived as a limit upon the scope of individual freedom but as an essential component of its expression. In defending a society committed to upholding individual rights against internal or external threats to these rights, and whatever else might be demonstrated to conform to the demands of justice, we will be defending our freedom not simply because we act in accordance with the demands of justice that all rational persons are committed to affirming as a condition of realising their own life goals. Taylor, I believe, is arguing that we are free because we maintain that in virtue of which we will have a love of justice at all. And while liberals like Rawls may be right to say that regarding the universal demands of justice will lead us into affirming the value of some particular society that is geared toward the fair and co-operative realisation of shared goods, Taylor would point out that we have a regard for justice by first possessing a patriotic identification with the values of a justice-respecting society.

Relating the issue of civic virtue to that of moral motivation this way, I suspect, does something to clear up the issue between procedural liberals and Taylor concerning whether political commitment is necessarily directed toward a particular society. Taylor believes that civic virtue can issue from a collective affirmation of justice or the right, but only because the principles of right that we thereby affirm are those that are integral to our identities as

[60] Taylor's reasoning here, which has been outlined more extensively in Chapter Two, is that, for an atomist committed to methodological individualism, subjectivism and an instrumental understanding of the value of social relationships, talk of common goods in the sense of irreducibly social goods is inherently obfuscatory. Where all shared goods are understood as good only in virtue of the individual fulfilments that they facilitate, and only need to be shared in accordance with whether they satisfy desires and purposes that happen, de facto, to be best served by collective action, a picture of shared goods as convergent goods necessarily emerges.

members of justice-respecting communities, without which these principles would fail to make a strong motivational claim on us. Procedural liberals can accept this, but then they must also accept holism. Although Taylor does not explicitly describe it in these terms, he views patriotism as an immediately common good. Such goods, as we said in Chapter Two, are good in virtue of being constitutive of the political dimension of our identities. If these goods are integrally bound up with our identities, we can only value them instrumentally at the cost of taking certain features of our identities themselves to be up for grabs. Because patriotism, for Taylor, is an essential condition of freedom, in passing patriotic commitments up we could not be said to violate a transcendental condition of personhood but we would relinquish an essential condition of the unhindered exercise of free agency.

But if this is so, then Allen Patten's claim, which we considered above, that Taylor's republicanism is instrumentally valuable must surely be misleading. Still, Patten's challenge to Taylor remains in that Taylor has to give some constructive account of the non-instrumental value of patriotism while also steering clear of the Aristotelian claims that he repudiates, and it is to this problem that we must now turn. Exploring Taylor's position on this issue will also allow us to reconnect to the observation with which this chapter opened, where we discussed Taylor's fear of a creeping "soft despotism" within procedural republics.

4.2 Taylor's politics of the common good

From the ontological foundation set out in the republican theses, Taylor believes that we will be inclined to endorse two further advocacy orientations, one concerning the practical political culture most conducive to guaranteeing that the dignity we assign to free agents is respected and the other concerning the desirable limits of state neutrality in liberal societies. I discuss the first of these here, while in the following chapter I examine the issue of state neutrality.

4.2.1 *Instrumental patriotism*

We do well to recall here Taylor's empirical concern with the excessive bureaucratisation of modern Western states, which he believes encourages citizen alienation from the vehicles of collective mobilisation and in so doing diminishes the freedom and dignity of all citizens. This syndrome Taylor takes to be symptomatic of the practice of procedural politics. In the United States, which Taylor considers the paradigm of the procedural republic, we find an insular mode of politics where mutually unconcerned or estranged groups mobilise diminishing popular support in the defence of narrow agendas defined by single-issue campaigns, lobbies or petitions (Taylor, 1995a: 200; 1991a; 1992). Using either these institutions or the courts, individuals seek to secure their dignity through the retrieval of their individual rights and

through measures taken to ensure that the state shows an equal regard for the preferences of its citizens. No absolute value is placed on participation in these representative institutions on this model, and the co-operative action that they facilitate is only conceived as a good insofar as it is instrumental to furthering the individual goods of all participants. Where these goods are not threatened, participation is only valuable, at best, as one personal preference among other equally worthwhile life choices and, where they are, participation is likely to proceed in an adversarial spirit that is inimical to a sense of patriotic solidarity (Taylor, 1995a: 200). Taylor believes that, while it may act as a counter-balance to the disempowerment that comes of bureaucratic centralisation, this form of political mobilisation doesn't go far enough in providing persons with a sense that they are able to effectively realise their purposes in the world. Without this sense of "efficacy", which undermines our ability to attain the goods around which our political identities are built, our self-identification as free and dignified subjects is imperilled (1995a; 2005a: 73, 94).[61]

4.2.2 *Participatory patriotism and citizen dignity*

Taylor contrasts the model of association described above, which I will call an "instrumental patriotism", with an alternative model that, following Taylor, we can refer to as a "participatory patriotism".[62] On this alternative, citizen dignity cannot be secured unless individuals participate, at least part of the time, in co-operative activity, and unless they are joined in this activity through a shared sense of common purpose that takes their collective participation itself to be part of the good that they seek (Taylor, 1995a: 200). Rights reclamation and single-issue campaigning, on this model, are not enough to secure citizen dignity; in addition, citizens need to work together in a spirit of solidarity and tolerance within shared institutions and practices in order to forge consensus and build majorities when shaping the rules defining their common association (Taylor, 1995a; 2005a). This is a normative claim, but Taylor does not consider it exceedingly utopian. Within the Western countries outside of the United States – and Taylor is concerned chiefly, but not exclusively, with Canada – national unity frequently appears to be built around this participatory model of patriotism (Taylor, 1995a: 203).

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[61] In places, Taylor also identifies the sense of efficacy with our capacity as producers linked into a technological nexus of economic activity through which we are able to collectively transform nature and shape it to our ends (1985b; 2005a: 74). I do not discuss this below owing to my concern with the specifically political dimension of Taylor's work, and this is in keeping with Taylor's own overwhelming concern with the political determinants of efficacy alone. Taylor believes that, while threats to a society's economic capacity can undermine political stability, the real threats to stability come through an inability of the state to fulfil the political principles upon which it is founded (1985a: 248).

[62] In speaking of a participatory patriotism I am borrowing Taylor's term of art from *Reconciling the Solitudes* (2005a: 92). There he refers to what I am calling "instrumental patriotism" as a "patriotism of rights".

Taylor holds in "Cross-Purposes" that these two models of patriotism are incommensurable, although elsewhere he views them as ideal types which in practice are usually found in some admixture within all modern states.[63] He is admittedly better disposed to the participatory model, but allows that philosophical speculation alone may be insufficient to decide the issue. It may well be that the institutional life and shared historical experience of the United States makes the instrumental model more viable there while in other countries the participatory model will be better suited to securing the dignity of its citizens, but this would have to be decided by appeal to empirically-derived criteria (Taylor, 1995a: 200; 2005a: 99-100). What Taylor does hope to establish definitively, however, is that this advocacy choice only arises once we abandon atomism at the ontological level. From within the limits of atomism, even where we accept the importance of patriotic citizen commitment, the instrumental model of patriotism will seem the only lucid formulation of the grounds of citizen virtue, while endorsing a holistic ontology makes the participatory model an intelligible alternative.

4.2.3 *Deliberative democracy and decentralisation*

Endorsing a positive conception of freedom and a participatory model of patriotism also predisposes us, Taylor believes, to endorsing at the advocacy level a thoroughly inclusive form of political life within modern, liberal societies that can offset the tendency toward centralisation.[64] Taylor prefers to consider the ends of common association to be definitive of a society's liberal standing. In "Liberal Politics and the Public Sphere", Taylor defines liberal society as, at the very least, a society that endeavours "to realize in the highest possible degree

[63] For the latter view, see especially Taylor's discussion of the "participatory" and "rights" models of society in "Alternative Futures: Legitimacy, Identity and Alienation in Late-Twentieth-Century Canada" (2005a: 92) and the discussion of "institutions that serve" and "institutions that identify" in "Institutions in National Life" (2005a: 132), both of which appear in *Reconciling the Solitudes*.

[64] Taylor's preferred definition of liberal society makes no direct appeal to the institutional forms and procedures that are commonly associated with the liberal democratic state. Representative government, the rule of law, regimes of entrenched rights recoverable by judicial review, and mechanisms for the division and decentralisation of political power will, in all likelihood, appear in some form in all such societies. So too will the extra-political or "extra-parliamentary" bodies of free association that are commonly considered indispensable to developing an atmosphere of freedom within society, and which, in post-Hegelian terminology, are discussed under the head of "civil society" (1995a: 257-59; 286). These bodies include non-political associations like the market economy and the various fora for conducting public debate that constitute the public sphere, and indeed any system of organisation facilitating collective action across an entire society independently of the state system (Taylor, 1995a: 258-59).

While we would struggle to identify a society that entirely lacked these institutions and practices as liberal, Taylor believes that the multiplicity of forms that these take in the diverse liberal societies of today makes generalisation at this level insupportable (1995a: 257-59). This is particularly true if we consider the complex "alternative modernities" in which many contemporary nations are negotiating unique versions of liberal society that diverge in considerable ways from the original Western models (1995a: xi-xii).

certain goods or principles of right. We might think of it as trying to maximize the goods of freedom and collective self-rule, in conformity with rights founded on equality" (1995a: 258).

Whatever else it may be, "a free self-governing society…is…a society in which (a) people form their opinions freely, both as individuals and in coming to a common mind, and (b) these common opinions matter – they in some way take effect on or control government" (Taylor, 1995a: 260). Within the modern West representative democracy has become the accepted form through which opinions are channelled into a social choice function. Taylor considers it vitally necessary that such democratic decisions are uncoerced and well-informed, accurately reflecting the opinions and aspirations of the people and free of the distortions of misinformation, prejudice and irrational fear (Taylor, 1998b: 273). Modern liberal democracies also ideally attempt to realise the principle that political decisions be broadly representative, emphasising that such decisions, if they are to be counted as legitimate, must be reached through consensus or majority vote by equal and autonomous agents (Taylor, 1995a: 273; 1998b: 143-44). It is with the latter principle, which underscores the value of popular sovereignty and sees inclusivity as the fundamental source of democratic legitimacy, that Taylor's political philosophy is most directly concerned.

If democratic dialogue is to prove fruitful, all parties must be mutually acquainted, capable of understanding one another's positions and submitting arguments that inter-refer, and willing to freely adapt their own original views in accordance with these exchanges. This presumes that the members possess a basic set of shared meanings and understand themselves to be engaged in common deliberative activity, where this common understanding makes the decisions that they reach qualitatively different from those arising fortuitously in the from of convergent understandings (Taylor, 1995a: 260-62). Taylor explains:

> A democratic state is constantly facing new questions, and it aspires to form a consensus on these questions, not merely to reflect the balance of individual opinions. A joint decision emerging from joint deliberation requires that each person's opinion be able to take shape or be reformed in the light of discussion with others. This necessarily implies a degree of cohesion. To some extent, the members must know one another, listen to one another, and understand one another (1998b: 143).

Where such solidarity exists, discussion in common space is capable of yielding decisions that belong to a group that have forged what we called in Chapter Two a "we"-identity through active dialogue, which will be qualitatively distinct from the decisions emerging from a composite body of people possessing "I"-identities. Taylor wants to argue that agreement forged among groups of the latter variety can only ride on fortuitously convergent

understandings, while groups of the former sort are also capable of reaching decisions predicated on common understandings.

We can, following John Horton, refer to the former scenario as the "instrumental" view of democracy (1998: 163).[65] On this view, mutual estrangement between citizens is not seen as an inherently negative feature of the democratic decision-making process, provided that there is enough overlap of individual agreement for a workable majority consensus to form. Here the ideal of democratic rule has been met when there has been free political discussion in the media and when the casting of ballots has functioned to aggregate individual interests or preferences into a collective decision designed to elect representative assemblies and executive office-holders in accordance with satisfactory norms of non-manipulation (Taylor, 1995a: 274; Horton, 1998: 163).

Taylor does not reject the instrumental view wholesale but rather considers it unduly limited, arguing that it fails to adequately consider the manner in which open debate within a political community can actively forge alliances among previously unreconciled groups or retain civil relations capable of abiding enduring group disagreements (1995a). As Horton puts it, Taylor is dissatisfied with the instrumental view's inability to allow for "the transformative possibilities inherent in democratic decision-making" (1998: 163). When engaged in activities like voting people needn't simply act out of individual interest. We frequently understand ourselves to be part of a community, and are capable of entering into discussion with others and modifying our own conception of the good to accord with that of a community with which we identify and with other communities that share this common good (Taylor, 1995a: 277).

I have attempted to demonstrate above that Taylor's dissatisfaction with the tendency toward centralisation within procedural republics, which we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is best understood within the context of his polemical engagement with the instrumental view of democracy that he attributes to procedural liberalism. While he is extremely cautious about offering general institutional recommendations for how to remedy this situation, he does recurrently argue for the need for political decentralisation that can function to stimulate the civic participation that he believes procedural publics sorely lack. Taylor argues that collective self-rule in the mass societies of today, both within the

[65] In "Liberal Politics and the Public Sphere" Taylor calls this the "objective-interest view" of democratic decision-making, while in MPR and elsewhere he associates it with neo-Kantian versions of procedural liberalism (1995a: 275; 1992). The first appellation refers to the notion that the legitimacy of democratic decisions is simply a function of their proportionate fit with pre-determined individual interests. The second highlights the idea that an individual's primary interests are best determined through a monological mode of practical reasoning to which communal affiliation is ultimately of only instrumental value. In both cases communal belonging, however practically useful, is ultimately external to the determination of our most basic, identity-defining purposes.

contemporary West and beyond, requires a "double decentralization" that serves to empower regional societies and to create what he calls "nested public spheres", which function to channel the voices of multitudes of ordinary citizens into a coherent national debate capable of reaching conclusions that will be taken into account in the deliberations of major political actors (1995a: 280). The first aspect of decentralisation pictured here entails a devolution of key government functions from a geographical centre to more localised units. The second aspect entails the parallel development of a multiplicity of local public spheres[66] that discuss the political affairs of local government bodies, as well as political parties and social movements like feminist and ecological campaigns that maintain a lively internal debate that is maximally open to the public (Taylor, 1995a: 279-80). Through the formation of such bodies it is possible to channel the concerns of large numbers of people toward the political centre and in so doing break the hold of elitist lobbies on government decisions and large media interests on national debates (Taylor, 1995a: 279-80). Taylor's ideal is not only of a proliferation of participatory vehicles, but "a kind of symbiosis" between them (1995a: 286). The discussions carried on in smaller public spheres need to be routed into a larger national debate, and all these voices need to have an effect on government.

4.3 Conclusion

It is important to note that Taylor doesn't wish to impugn procedural liberalism wholesale. Just as, in Chapter Three, we saw that those advocating procedural theories of justification can render their ethical positions intelligible by spelling out the meta-theory in virtue of which their formal procedures should be accepted, so too we have seen here that Taylor believes procedural liberalism can answer the viability objection by forsaking its atomist commitments and redescribing itself in holistic ontological categories (1995a: 202). What the above discussion points to is that, while Patten is right to claim that Taylor does not directly disagree with procedural liberals about the *object* of our patriotic allegiance, Taylor does suggest that

[66] Taylor describes the public sphere as "a common space in which the members of a society meet, through a variety of media (print, electronic) and also in face-to-face encounters, to discuss matters of common interest; and thus to be able to form a common mind about those matters" (1995a: 259). Though composed of geographically and temporally diffused exchanges by multiple actors, these actors are, in principle, meant to be inter-communicating, and it is in virtue of this that the public sphere may be considered a unitary "common space" of the sort discussed in Chapter Two (Taylor, 1995a: 259). In addition to the need for constant inter-referral between the arguments of the various interlocutors brought into mutual exchange through the public sphere, and for these exchanges to function as critical arguments working toward a potentially singular conclusion, it is essential that all interlocutors understand themselves to be engaged in an act of common deliberation (Taylor, 1995a: 262). Without this element of common understanding, there would be no way of distinguishing between opinions that happen, contingently, to converge, and those that have been forged through a process of collective deliberation. In doing away with the distinction between common and convergent understandings we lose also the ability to morally distinguish the normative values of, say, an opinion poll from that of a lively debate conducted in the media or in face-to-face encounters (1995a: 263, n.5).

they fail to account for its *origins*. Moreover, and contrary to Allen Patten's contentions, Taylor does have a serious disagreement with procedural liberals about the *value* of patriotic allegiance, categorically considering it a non-instrumental good that is essential component of citizen dignity. We thus do well to foster a participatory patriotism and build decentralised democratic practices that empower citizens to shape the conditions under which they will live together.

Taylor admits, however, that arguing for the participatory, communally-oriented requirements of democratic decision-making raises problems of its own. A fundamental dilemma that all liberal democracies must resolve is that the need for democratic decisions to emerge from a body of deliberators that have forged a common identity through uncoerced dialogue threatens to undermine another fundamental liberal value: the toleration of difference that liberals take to be a fundamental feature of any equal and just society. Modern liberal democracy therefore carries within itself a constitutional tension: "democracy is inclusive because it is the government of all the people; but paradoxically, this is also the reason that democracy tends toward exclusion. The exclusion is a by-product of the need, in self-governing societies, of a high degree of cohesion" (Taylor, 1998b: 143). Where consensus on public policy cannot be secured in reasoned debate, there is a standing temptation to exclude dissenting parties from this debate altogether, thereby making a mockery of any democratic pretensions to inclusiveness. This problem is aggravated by the increasingly pluralistic nature of most modern states, where populations are fractured into groups possessing a multiplicity of distinct identities which are either new or which have existed in the past but have gone unrecognised. The felt need for democratic exclusion may result in attempts to block immigrants from obtaining citizenship, a much-discussed contemporary example of which is the treatment of "guest workers" in Germany (Taylor, 1998b: 145). But, aside from such legal measures, there may also develop a tendency to discuss public policy issues in sectarian terms and to regard newly enfranchised groups as outsiders (Taylor, 1998b: 146).

Taylor warns against resolving the problem of inclusiveness at the price of sacrificing toleration of diversity, which he believes we have seen in both the premodern democracies of classical antiquity and the "Jacobin", "Bolshevik" or "Marxist-Leninist" regimes of more recent times (1995a; 1998b). We might refer to Taylor's characterisation of democracy in these societies as instantiations of a "general will" model of democracy with its roots in Rousseau's thought (Taylor, 1995a: 221, 1998b; Horton, 1998). In these societies a rigid definition of politics and citizenship is laid down and vigorously defended against all challenges in the attempt to secure unanimity in democratic decisions. In such cases, we find another form of exclusion at work which "operates not primarily against certain people

already defined as outsiders, but against other ways of being. This formula forbids other modes of modern citizenship. It castigates as unpatriotic a way of living that does not subordinate other facets of identity to citizenship" (Taylor, 1998b: 147). It is to this problem – the pressing need to secure citizen participation in self-rule without requiring of citizens that they relinquish or downplay vital aspects of their extra-political identities in their public dealings – that we turn in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

5. Cultural recognition, group survival and political fragmentation

We saw, in the previous chapter, that one of the empirical failings of contemporary procedural republics that Taylor identifies is their tendency to undermine citizen participation in self-rule. This leads to a bureaucratisation of political life and a centralisation of power and, in the process, to a diminishment of the freedom of all citizens. This condition of citizen disempowerment is reinforced by an atomistic mindset that views civil participation as, at best, an instrumental good, while at the advocacy level it finds expression in a mode of practical politics that attempts to ensure respect for the dignity of all citizens by providing mechanisms of rights assertion and securing political representation through single-issue campaigns and lobbies. Conceptually, this view of social relations overlooks the manner in which active citizenship motivated by a patriotic identification with the common good is crucial to any fulfilled and dignified life, and practically it blinds people to the need for vigorous participatory initiatives to ensure citizen self-rule in a spirit of solidarity.

We might say that the problem Taylor identifies in this manner is one of an absolute disempowerment of all citizens within a given polity. But, most notably with the publication of MPR, another problem comes to the fore in Taylor's political thinking, which is concerned also with the differential effects of disempowerment within a political society. Taylor believes that procedural liberalism is frequently insensitive to people's particularity and, despite its attempts to be maximally tolerant, ultimately undermines toleration of group diversity. In this connection, Taylor argues that another empirical failing of procedural republics is their inability to adequately secure inter-group solidarity. The groups Taylor has in mind here are usually "cultures", although his use of the term is uncommonly slippery. Taylor sometimes means by this a group united around a common particularistic identity through reliance upon a common set of moral frameworks and evaluative languages as well as through participation in shared social and political practices. In MPR, however, cultures are implicitly considered in abstraction from these social and political structures, and what unites them is cleavage to a common intellectual or spiritual creed (Rorty, A., 1994: 156).

One of the dangers accompanying the breakdown of inter-cultural solidarity within a political society is that democratic legitimacy (and with it political stability) may be undermined. Any democratic community worth the name must be a deliberative community, and deliberative communities are bonded through a sense of shared identity that cuts across

group divisions. Where members of a group feel that they are not included in the democratic community's self-understanding, and are for this reason not adequately represented in collective decision-making bodies, productive debate and social co-operation will decline and in its place a conflictual mode of political practice is likely to emerge with a zero-sum system of benefits and only absolute winners and losers (Taylor, 1991a; 1995a). Another danger attendant upon such communal rifts is that members of minority cultures are subject to the harm of misrecognition of the cultural dimension of their identities (Taylor, 1991a; 1992; 1995a). Taylor argues that this misrecognition has damaging psychological consequences for these citizens and curtails their freedom. Given the moral harm of misrecognition, he then argues for state perfectionism in defence of disadvantaged cultural groups.

I touch on the problem of democratic legitimacy only in passing here and focus instead on Taylor's treatment of the latter, psychological or moral aspect of the problem, which he believes requires that we question the philosophical basis of liberal society. These are, however, not entirely distinct concerns for Taylor, who views them as complementary elements of a vicious circle. This, I believe, is why Taylor can claim that the psychological damage that he believes comes of cultural misrecognition constitutes a form of *political* oppression. The decline of communal solidarity leads to the disempowerment of all groups within society, but it is particularly damaging to minority and otherwise disadvantaged groups who, lacking numbers or political clout, can only reasonably hope to attain their shared cultural ends democratically through participation in a politics of mutual accommodation geared toward the pursuit of a good that the entire political community shares. The actual schedule of cultural goods sought will differ from one community to the next, but Taylor believes that they will be understood in every case by those who pursue them to be essential to the more encompassing good of cultural survival (1992; 2005a). Where the common good of a political society denigrates or ignores the demands that cultural groups consider essential to their survival, members of these groups are confronted with an untenable choice between affirming the value of their political attachments and accepting cultural decline or upholding their cultural ties at the cost of political alienation and effective disenfranchisement, where either choice results in a diminishment of their freedom.

Where public policies fail to accommodate the needs of disadvantaged cultural groups in this way, intra-mural divisions within the political society may be the cause of a third empirical problem which Taylor refers to as political fragmentation (1991a; 1995a; 2005a). The danger posed by fragmentation is that people lose the ability to build political and extra-political coalitions capable of influencing the political life of an entire society in accordance with a vision of the common good of the whole community. Fragmentation brings about

> the breaking up of potential constituencies for majority coalitions behind multifaceted programs, designed to address the major problems of the society as a whole, into a congeries of campaigns for narrow objectives, each mobilizing a consistency determined to defend its turf at all costs (Taylor, 1995a: 282).

This, at a collective level, returns us to the political problem we encountered in the previous chapter, where we discussed Taylor's fear that procedural liberalism undermines participatory patriotism and thereby also deprives people of the motivational foundation for securing their republican freedom and safeguarding their dignity through collective self-rule. But the problem that concerned us there was of a failure within procedural liberalism to place sufficient value on immediately common goods due to an inability to appreciate the non-instrumental, identity-defining value of patriotic virtue; here, I will argue, the problem concerns a similar misunderstanding and neglect, but of mediately common or culturally-conditioned goods, which are constitutive of what we called in Chapter One the cultural dimension of individual identity. Taylor's dissatisfaction with procedural liberalism concerns not only its inclination to undermine patriotic affiliations by accounting for all common action in instrumental terms, but also its tendency to subordinate the value of particularistic cultural commitments to the pursuit of individual fulfilment or to universally-binding affiliations that bypass particularity and lay a direct moral claim upon individuals. Taylor argues that this latter advocacy orientation is attributable to an ontologically misconceived ideal of equality, which serves as the moral foundation for policies that, despite their best intentions, curtail rather than promote human freedom.

5.1 Procedural liberalism, democratic exclusion and ethnocentrism

In the previous chapter we saw that, faced with the viability objection to the feasibility of the rule of right as the foundation of social solidarity in modern Western societies, (neo-Kantian) procedural liberals can concede that their affirmation of the good of freedom also commits them to affirming the good of patriotism, where this patriotism is a participatory patriotism affirming the common good of a particular community. This does not invalidate their commitment to the rule of right, but places it on a holistic foundation by portraying this commitment as an immediately common good of inherent value. In this chapter I discuss another contention made by Taylor, who believes that making such concessions exposes procedural liberalism to the charge of unwittingly endorsing an ethnocentric model of practical political accommodation. Following Taylor's usage in "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-

Communitarian Debate" (1995a) we can refer to this as the ethnocentricity objection to procedural liberalism. Here Taylor's accusation is that even if the cultural neutrality procedural liberalism aspires to is in principle realisable it may nonetheless turn out to be bogus in practice, and in furthering purportedly culturally neutral procedures designed to promote individual autonomy the state may in fact be furthering the substantive good of a culturally dominant community, albeit unintentionally.

Even if state neutrality between rival understandings of the good life turned out to be a real possibility in some societies, Taylor argues that it would not to be so in all societies (1995a). While the United States may offer a model of a political society bonded in its commitment to the defence of free institutions alone, most modern societies, in addition to the defence of free institutions, are committed to the defence of a national culture organised around a shared commitment to the pre-political substantive good of a majority group's language or historical traditions (Taylor, 1995a). Taylor invariably discusses issues of minority language rights in the Canadian province of Quebec in order to illustrate the difficulties that that face a country where members of a cultural sub-group within the political community generally believe that the grounds of their political allegiance cannot be formulated in abstraction from their shared commitment to a cultural good. The ongoing defence of French language rights, which many Quebeckers see as indispensable to the continued existence of their culture is, however, but one of many instances in which members of a disadvantaged or minority culture – in Quebec, the defenders of Quebec as a "distinct society" within the Canadian federation who claim to represent the interests of the Francophone majority in the province – feel that difference-blind public policies formulated in accordance with procedural norms are neglectful of their most basic identity needs (Taylor, 1992; 2005a). While wishing to remain within the federation, these Francophones aspire to benefit from legal protections designed to ensure that French culture within the province of Quebec resist assimilation into the Anglophone culture of the national majority, and are willing to go so far as advocating secession from Canada if these demands go unheeded (Taylor, 1992; 2005a). Because commitment to the flourishing of substantive cultural goods is integral to the self-definition of such groups, and thereby places a precondition on their affirmation of state legitimacy, public policies cannot be neutral toward the defence of these goods without also compromising the solidarity and stability that Taylor believes is indispensable to the continued existence of Canada as a democratic state.

The general problem which the Canadian case illustrates is that, as Greg Hill explains:

> The citizens of a modern nation-state may share a common fate, but they do not share an understanding of the ultimate ends of life. And while people may belong to lesser communities that are united in this way, it is oftentimes the conflicts between these communities that give rise to questions of justice (1993: 82).

Indeed the term "nation-state" is something of a misnomer as most contemporary states are inhabited by a multiplicity of cultural groups or nations[67] (Kymlicka, 1995: 10-19; 75-80). Recent global immigration patterns create conditions of "multiculturalism" by altering traditional ethnic alliances of language, ancestry, shared history and culture, calling long-established group identities into question. Increasingly strident political demands by feminists, homosexuals, religious and aboriginal groups and internal cultural minorities suing for respect and legal equality from within the traditional bounds of political communities have a similar effect, and the inclusiveness that the liberal democratic state seeks to accommodate is pressed to the limits by politicised groups contending that democratic debates are incapable of accommodating their difference (Taylor, 1996b: 408; 1998b: 149).

We saw in Chapter Three that it is this condition of pluralism that liberal attempts to prioritise the rule of right are intended to address by formulating democratic norms of public decision-making that accord with a strict liberal commitment to citizen equality. To meet this challenge, the host societies would have to adapt their common understandings to include the new arrivals and the newly enfranchised as part of the political community and refashion their political practices to be accommodating of the identity needs of the new members (1998b). This entails, in the first place, coming to some new understanding of what a viable foundation for political unity in contemporary conditions of pluralism could be. And if Taylor is correct in identifying cases where cultural impartiality is impossible, where state policies cannot retreat to some culturally neutral, difference-blind ground without foregoing their legitimacy, then the problem cannot admit of politically neutral solutions (Taylor, 1992).

Of course, this marginalisation is not in itself harmful, and any interesting objection to it has to demonstrate that it eventuates in *moral* harm of some sort. This is a central preoccupation of Taylor's MPR, where he argues that procedural liberalism curtails the freedom of members of disadvantaged groups by discrediting claims for the public protection of group difference. In order to make Taylor's claim more comprehensible I contextualise it within his critique of negative conceptions of freedom, and argue that Taylor's understanding

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[67] I mean to use these terms synonymously here. With all the reservations that I have already registered about Taylor's use of this term, I follow him in speaking generally only of cultures below. For a more fine-grained discussion of these terms see Miller, 1988: 654, Kymlicka in Paul E., et al., 1996: 107-14 and Haldane in Paul, E. et al., 1996: 76.

of the need for recognition draws on a conception of what I will call "expressive freedom". I also attempt to show how this is a moral concern with political significance insofar as Taylor believes that endorsing an expressive understanding of freedom will also incline us to appreciate the value of securing "attitudinal respect" through a "politics of difference" that deviates from strict state neutrality and endorses the ascription of group-specific rights (1989: 15; 1992: 38).

5.1.1 *Negative freedom and expressive freedom*

We said in Chapter Four that accounts of positive freedom insist that freedom cannot only be defined negatively, and that something other than the absence of external restraints has to enter into our definition of freedom. One common strategy is to stress the necessity of political participation in order to secure collective self-rule. This is the essence of Taylor's social and republican theses, which argue for the indispensability of what Isaiah Berlin, in his influential essay "Two Concepts of Liberty", refers to as positive freedom or liberty (Berlin, 1969). But we have seen too that advocates of positive freedom also stress the necessity of autonomous individual desire and value formation for the attribution of freedom (Christman, 1991: 344). Taylor also argues for this conception of freedom, although, unlike Berlin, he does not classify this as a positive conception. Taylor argues that distinguishing conceptions of freedom along the positive-negative axis in the manner that Berlin does obscures as much as it clarifies. A more useful schema is to distinguish between concepts of freedom that rely on an "opportunity-concept" and those informed by an "exercise-concept" (Taylor, 1985b: 213). Positive theories necessarily rely on an exercise concept because they wish to distinguish between the potential for freedom and its actualisation in concrete acts that are an expression of self-direction. In distinguishing between self-directed and other acts some substantive claims about the nature of freedom have to be made because freedom can only be realised in a community that shares an understanding of the common good (Taylor, 1985b: 215-16).

Thus far, Taylor's analysis corresponds with Berlin's, but Taylor takes issue with Berlin and his followers by arguing that, while positive freedom requires what Taylor calls an exercise-concept, the assumption that negative freedom must rely only upon an opportunity-concept that abstracts from all substantive claims about the content of the good life is misleading.[68] In advancing this claim Taylor attempts to reveal the purely conceptual

[68] Taylor also disagrees with Berlin that forsaking a pure opportunity-concept of freedom invites the non-liberal political consequences that Berlin and like-minded liberals have attributed to it. Advocates of positive freedom hold that our judgements of the good are not incorrigible; an agent lacking moral discrimination may unwittingly pursue a given end that fails to advance, or even reduces, her freedom, and Berlin has argued eloquently that this understanding of freedom opens the door to illiberal and even totalitarian forms of political coercion over the

limitations of Berlin's understanding of freedom by demonstrating both that negative freedom is compatible with an exercise-concept of freedom and that the political provisions for non-interference in the life of the individual recommended by Berlin and advocates of negative freedom in fact assume such a background.

One family of exercise views that is inadequately attended to by Berlin conceptualises freedom as a good that obtains not only in virtue of participation in collective decision-making but also in the individual attainment of self-fulfilment or self-realisation (Taylor, 1985b: 211). These self-realisation views draw on a background understanding of freedom that Berlin and liberals of his convictions, if pressed, would in all likelihood endorse, that is, "the post-Romantic idea that each person's form of self-realization is original to him/her, and can therefore only be worked out independently" (Taylor, 1985b: 212). That an individual lacks external physical or legal impediments on her will is no guarantee that she will put her potential freedom to use because internal restraints such as false consciousness, repression, a fear of breaking with authoritative standards of judgement, or a lack of self-awareness that blinds her to her own potentials may also hinder her from the effective pursuit of her purposes (Taylor, 1985b: 212-13; 215). An individual subject to these and similar internal restraints cannot meaningfully be considered free because "the capacities relevant to freedom must involve some self-awareness, self-understanding, moral discrimination and self-control, otherwise their exercise could not amount to freedom in the sense of self-direction" (Taylor, 1985b: 215).

In light of this one may still affirm the value of the opportunity-concept of freedom, but it would make little sense to do so without also placing similar value on the need to be internally or psychologically free, and this internal freedom is something that by definition is only realised in the exercise of certain capacities (Taylor, 1985b: 213-14). Thus Taylor believes that, given some fairly uncontroversial claims about fully-realised personhood, we may second-guess the freedom of other individuals in accordance with an assessment of what they have actually made of the human potentials that their negative freedom protects. Here we might note that Berlin never sought to deny that freedom may also be positively defined; rather, Berlin believed that positive conceptions of freedom were not to enter into our *political* definition of freedom (Larmore, 1992: 56-57, 57 n.7). Taylor further claims, however, that not only *can* we in principle legitimately judge the degree to which another is expressively free,

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individual (Taylor, 1985b: 215-16; Berlin, 1969). I do not explore this disagreement directly below, but the discussion of state neutrality that follows implicitly demonstrates that Taylor simply wishes to draw a different line around the acceptable forms of political coercion than Berlin does. For Taylor, the state must refrain from infringing on the basic liberties that are central to the liberal tradition in which he situates both himself and Berlin, but it may, given that a range of other empirical considerations concerning the inequalities within a political community obtain, infringe on less basic rights which fall outside of this basic liberal consensus.

but that liberal political thinkers typically do so in practice. When we look at the restrictions that liberals do in fact place on acceptable action, these appear to make a tacit appeal to the self-realisation concept of freedom (Taylor, 1985b: 218; Christman, 2005: 84). Even liberals who wish to cling to a pure opportunity-concept of freedom in order to avoid making judgements in the third person about which of an individual's purposes are authentic and promote freedom implicitly do so by considering some infringements on freedom more significant than others. No liberal would dispute that, for instance, the installation of a traffic light at a local intersection constitutes a comparatively minor obstacle to the freedom of those affected by it when placed alongside a law forbidding individuals to worship according to their desired form (Taylor, 1985b: 218).

In drawing this distinction the liberal in question would be appealing to "a background understanding, too obvious to spell out, of some activities and goals as highly significant to human beings and others as less so"; in the terms introduced in Chapter One, the liberal in question would find herself strongly evaluating (Taylor, 1985b: 218). For Taylor, the fact of strong evaluation has important repercussions for our understanding of freedom. In strong evaluation, as we have seen, we isolate some purposes (our second-order desires) as more significant than others (our first-order desires) and identify with them. The inhibition of these strongly valued purposes is experienced, not as a trivial infringement of our freedom (as in the case of being compelled to wait at a traffic light), but as a potentially harmful threat to our identity – as something that prevents us from pursuing those ends that further our individual flourishing (Taylor, 1985b: 221-22). As Iseult Honohan explains, Taylor's understanding of freedom develops the insight that "people distinguish more or less central purposes in pursuing self-development. Freedom is a matter of realising ourselves according to our most central purposes, not the absence of interference" (Honohan, 2002: 132).[69]

As we shall see in the discussion of authenticity below, Taylor contends that the modern understanding of freedom as self-realisation, which I refer to as "expressive freedom" in what follows, articulates an ideal of freedom that is so deeply tied up with the modern, post-Romantic sense of selfhood or identity that contemporary Westerns, for the most part, experience it to be unrepudiable. This basic sense of what freedom entails, in other words, is an architectonic feature of modern Western culture, part of the shared moral sensibility of our

[69] Liberals might agree that a cogent account of freedom requires some understanding of self-realisation but still refuse to endorse an exercise-concept of freedom by clinging to their reservations about second-guessing another's conception of the good. This sort of anti-paternalism, of which Bentham was an early influential exponent, remains deeply entrenched in contemporary liberal thought (Taylor, 1989). But then the defender of the pure opportunity-concept would have to establish that there may in principle be alternative forms of freedom that are not undermined by the presence of internal impediments of the sort mentioned above if they wish to cling to an unalloyed opportunity-concept of freedom, and Taylor argues that no such position would be coherent (1985b).

times. It finds its way, if only implicitly, into contemporary liberal positions on freedom, while practically it is embodied in the normative orientations of our social and political practices, though the specific advocacy commitments that come with it may be, and commonly are, interpreted and defended in divergent forms. Taylor believes that our modern commitment to expressive freedom gives rise to both politically constructive and destructive moral interpretations of individualism, where what distinguishes these individualisms is their ability to facilitate or obstruct the realisation of our strongly valued potentials.

5.1.2 *Individualism, expressivism and authenticity*

Taylor traces the historical emergence of two distinct forms that modern individualism[70] has assumed, which, following Vincent Descombes, we can refer to as the "individualism of equality" and the "individualism of difference" (Descombes, 1994; Taylor, 1991a: 58-59; 1998a: 109-10). It is "[t]he paradoxical encounter of these two individualisms" that, for Taylor, "constitutes modernity and its internal tensions" (1998a: 110). The individualism of equality, Taylor argues, originates with the collapse of the social hierarchies of the ancien régime and the corresponding move toward greater social egalitarianism in the form of democratic politics in the Seventeenth Century (1991a: 46-47, 58; 1998: 110). This demotic ideal provides a moral foundation for respecting all people equally through an acknowledgement of the equal value of certain shared human potentialities such as the potential for freely choosing a life plan, and typically finds political expression in the defence of equal rights and entitlements for all members of a political community (Taylor, 1991a: 46-47).[71] To this first individualism a second was added. Emerging in Europe toward the end of the Eighteenth Century, the individualism of difference presupposes in some measure the conditions necessary for the evolution of the individualism of equality, while building on it through the development of a moral ideal that Taylor associates with some of the more influential philosophers of the Romantic tradition in general, and most closely with Herder (Taylor, 1991a: 25-29; 1998a: 110). This "ideal of authenticity" gives expression to the belief that through intimate self-

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[70] Taylor (following Tocqueville) distinguishes between "individualism" and "egoism", where the latter designates a non-moral outlook and the former a moral ideal (1991a: 21, n.17). I adhere throughout to Taylor's usage, where individualism is understood as an ideal that makes claims about the relationship between the individual and those with whom she is dialogically engaged. For Taylor, "it is a feature of all forms of individualism that they don't just emphasise freedom of the individual but also propose models of society….[I]ndividualism as a moral principle or ideal must offer some view on how the individual should live with others" (1991a: 44-45).

[71] Taylor believes this institutional change comes along with new individualist ideals, such as the disengaged rationalism of Descartes and his followers and the political individualism of social contract theorists like Locke (Taylor, 1991a: 25). More importantly for our purposes, it is also bound up with a new ideal of equal citizen dignity that replaces the pre-modern, honour-based system of valuation in which people's identities were largely a function of their standing within social hierarchies (Taylor, 1991a: 46-47).

contact and self-awareness people may come to a fuller realisation of their human potentials, and presses upon us all the need to explore and express our individuality as an essential component of human self-fulfilment or self-realisation (Taylor, 1991a: 17, 28-29). Self-exploration comes to be seen not just instrumentally, as a means to acting morally, but as an end that possesses value in itself and which is indispensable to the good life (Taylor, 1991a: 26). In this the ideal of authenticity functions as a derivative ideal of a more basic ideal of expressive freedom. "Expressivism",[72] which is the term Taylor employs to refer to a constellation of views about the human person originating before the Romantic period but taken up by important romantic philosophers like Rousseau, Herder and Humboldt,[73] develops

> the idea that each man (and also nation) has a nature within him (it) that has to be explored and revealed. This only comes to light in its articulation, and it is entirely original and peculiar to the man (or nation) concerned….[N]ot only do we have to turn away from other dependence and false passion; but we have to be able to find ourselves, to articulate what we are. In a further development this turns into the notion that our fulfilment requires an inner exploration. From the second version emerge the ideas of self-exploration and fulfilment which play such an important part in our time; the need for self-expression which is also self-realization (Taylor, 1985b: 272).

The ideal of authenticity valorises self-fulfilment and self-discovery, but it needn't promote the egoism and self-indulgence that comes of atomistic subjectivism: "self-fulfilment, so far from excluding unconditional relationships and moral demands beyond the self, actually requires these in some form" (Taylor, 1991a: 72-73).[74] A commitment to authentic self-fulfilment can carry with it an ideal of social and political accommodation that underscores the benefit that harmonious dialogical associations confer upon individual life, which Taylor

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[72] This is an adaptation of Isaiah Berlin's use of the term "expressionism", which designates both the philosophical work that Taylor is interested in and its offshoots in the arts (Taylor, 1988a: 1).

[73] Taylor's reading of historical developments here and elsewhere is certainly open to challenge. Vincent Descombes contends that, while the individualism of equality may owe a great deal to developments within Europe in the Seventeenth Century that ultimately led, in the Eighteenth Century to the philosophy of Rousseau, the French Revolution and more generally the moral and political democratic levelling of which Taylor speaks, the individualism of difference (or which Rousseau is also an important articulator, and which Taylor believes develops out of the individualism of equality) had already been expressed in prior philosophical speculations among the scholastic philosophers and appears in Reform variants of Christian doctrine (1994). In Taylor's defence, however, he doesn't deny that some version of these developments in individuality might always have existed; his claim is that they were culturally peripheral in earlier times and his historical observations attempt only to isolate the points at which they were given influential philosophical or artistic articulations and taken up in the cultural mainstream of Western modernity.

[74] As Taylor explains, "authenticity (A) involves (i) creation and construction as well as discovery, (ii) originality, and frequently (iii) opposition to the rules of society and even potentially to what we recognize as morality. But it is also true…that it (B) requires (i) openness to horizons of significance (for otherwise creation loses the background that can save it from insignificance) and (ii) a self-definition in dialogue" (1991a: 66). The monological misreading common to atomistic expressionisms comes from privileging (A) over (B) or ignoring (B) altogether. It entails decoupling the aesthetic from the moral dimensions of self-making and prioritising the former in the mistaken belief that one can only be true to oneself to the extent that one strips away commonly held convictions and repudiates generally accepted moral obligations.

refers to in one place as "the Herder-Humboldt model of the associative bond" (1998c: 224).[75] This ideal holds that individual human life can be greatly enriched by the mutual interchange between diverse ways of being:

> Humboldt argues the crucial moral interest that each one of us has in the authentic development of the other. Since each life can only accomplish some small part of the human potential – Humboldt accepts Goethe's principle that we have to narrow ourselves to achieve anything – we can only benefit from the full range of human achievement and capacity if we live in close association with people who have taken different paths. To attempt to force conformity is to condemn ourselves to a narrower and poorer life (1998c: 214).

This moral outlook, which subsequent to Herder and Humboldt's early articulations of it has exerted an enormous influence on the self-understanding of Western moderns, makes intelligible those models of human association that seek to establish the political grounds upon which we can live together as equals in difference, where diversity is not an obstacle to overcome so much as a value to be positively affirmed (Taylor, 1998c).

5.1.3 *Inclusion and exclusion*

Taylor discusses the ideals of self-realisation and social belonging associated with the individualism of difference in order to better appreciate the motivational foundation of many political struggles in the present post-Romantic phase of Western modernity. He hopes to argue that the extended range of identity needs associated with the individualism of difference means that fidelity to a pre-politically defined culture has become a strongly valued dimension of individual identity within Western civilisation that cannot be deemed *in principle* less important than other dimensions of identity. Precisely because this mode of belonging has

[75] The connection between the two ideals is frequently strongly implied in Taylor's discussions of authenticity, and explicitly discussed in the essay "Living with Difference" (1998c: 214-15). This social and political extension of the ideal of authenticity, which Taylor also refers to as "the Herder-Humboldt complementarity view", is seen as synonymous with the "Herder-Humboldt tradition", inviting a more detailed comparison between Taylor's expressivist philosophy of language and the expressivist aspects of his moral and political thought than I offer here (1998c: 216, 218). For a fuller consideration of these connections, see Victoria Fareld's "Charles Taylor's Identity Holism: Romantic Expressivism as Epigenetic Self-Realization" (2007). Nicholas H. Smith also explores this topic in *Charles Taylor: Meaning, Morals and Modernity* (2002). Fareld demonstrates that in Taylor's writing of the 1990s, such as in EA and MPR, Taylor usually limits his discussion of expressivism to linguistic philosophy and discusses the moral ideals associated with expressivism under the head of authenticity. This usage departs from Taylor's previous and subsequent habit of discussing both moral and linguistic orientations in terms of expressivism. While I have separated out these analytically distinct elements of Taylor's thought, I draw them together here under the heading of expressive freedom so as to highlight the conceptual continuities between Taylor's moral and political thought (and, largely by implication, his philosophy of language). An alternative, favoured by Smith, would be to refer to these aspects of Taylor's account of self-realising freedom as elements of an account of "situated freedom", following Taylor's own use of this term in *Hegel and Modern Society*.

become an indispensable source of self-fulfilment or self-realisation, demanding that people abstract from these needs in their public dealings can be construed as limitation upon their expressive freedom. It is in the very nature of these appeals that they require not blindness to difference but sensitivity and respect for values and commitments that command less than universal allegiance (Taylor, 1992; 1998c).

But if the individualism of difference is as much a part of the Western self-understanding as Taylor portrays it to be, and so deeply entrenched in our institutions and practices, we may well ask why it is so poorly accommodated. Why do the demands arising from individuals and groups seeking to secure their particularistic attachments remain so controversial and persist as a bitter cause of political division in contemporary multicultural societies? Although he does not separate them out, Taylor offers two distinct explanations for this, one owing to a liberal commitment to universal human potentialities that fails to give due weight to the particularistic moral claims associated with the ideal of authenticity and another from an atomistic misreading of this ideal which locates all human value in the individual good alone. In both cases the value of dialogical association is bypassed.

Considering Taylor's discussion of expressive freedom, we are now better placed to understand his claim, anticipated in Chapter Three, that normatively downplaying the demands arising from our particular attachments in public debate will lead members of cultural groups that seek special treatment to feel excluded from the democratic interchange that free societies require. Disregarding the substantive goods cherished by members of such groups tends to undermine political solidarity because, even if there are compelling moral reasons for rejecting the demands that these cultural groups make, their grievances tend to be dismissed out of hand, without being given a fair hearing. This makes a mockery of the liberal commitment to toleration, as well as the democratic aspirations of our contemporary liberal societies to function as deliberative communities where common goods are worked out through maximally inclusive forums of collective debate (Taylor, 1998c: 220). Where we possess an ontological commitment to expressive freedom, holistically understood, and where we appreciate the human need for understanding and mutual association in difference in a manner similar to the ideal of complementarity defended by Herder, Humboldt and their followers, we will be better disposed to pursue a politics of compromise and mutual respect that allows members of groups whose demands go unmet to walk away from public debate with the knowledge that their claims have been given a fair hearing. Assuming such demands don't fall hopelessly foul of our most basic value commitments, as, for instance, hate speech or incitement to murder will do in contemporary liberal societies, they needn't be dismissed *in*

principle using "one big meat-cleaver principle" but rather can be turned down for reasons that all reasonable parties can be made to understand (1998c: 218).

5.2 Taylor on liberal political society

The move toward greater political inclusiveness is not just a question of changing attitudes and ideals; the real challenge of Taylor's political philosophy is to show how a change is our conceptual understanding of issues of identity can lead to a corresponding change in the normative political principles we endorse. To this end, a great deal of the argumentation in MPR is devoted to revealing political alternatives within the framework of liberal democratic values that are opened up by what Taylor distinguishes as "two kinds of politics in Western societies", both premised on an ideal of equal respect for others but interpreting the political demands consonant with this ideal in a manner that issues in "two incompatible views of liberal society" (1992: 44, 60). These two orientations, which correspond to the two types of modern individualism discussed above, he refers to as "the politics of equal dignity"[76] and "the politics of difference" (Taylor, 1992: 38). The former is the forerunner of what we are calling procedural liberalism, which it continues to inform, while the latter designates the various theoretical orientations and practical political movements that have in recent years emphasised the importance of cultural membership in the construction of identity (Horton, 1998: 166).

5.2.1 *Politics beyond proceduralism and individual rights*

Procedural liberalism, and the rights-based orientation of the politics of equal dignity that it builds upon,[77] endorses, for Taylor, a compelling but ultimately impoverished normative model of liberal democratic political practice. Compelling, because it advocates a mode of social co-operation that places great emphasis on the need for fair and equal treatment of all citizens and gives great weight to the deeply felt modern need to ground citizen dignity on a firm basis of inviolable individual rights and entitlements intended to secure freedom and respect for all. Speaking from his own experience as a Canadian with a deep personal involvement in the fate of both Quebec and Canada at large, Taylor writes:

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[76] In MPR Taylor also variously refers to this orientation and the procedural liberalism that develops out of it as a "politics of universalism", a "politics of universal dignity", a "liberalism of equal dignity" and a "liberalism of rights", for reasons that should become apparent in the course of this discussion (1992: 37, 39, 43, 60). I avoid these alternative usages below in the interests of clarity.

[77] Taylor consistently opposes the politics of equal dignity to the politics of difference in MPR. Unless specifically indicated, however, I refer in what follows to procedural liberalism instead of the politics of equal dignity. Despite the terminological discrepancy, I believe that this is fully in keeping with Taylor's own treatment of this theme, which views procedural liberalism as the dominant contemporary expression of the politics of equal dignity.

> As the country gets more diverse, we are more and more acutely aware of the divergences in our conceptions of the good life. It then appears that what can and ought to bind us together are precisely the procedural norms that govern our interaction. Procedural liberalism not only begins to look more plausible in itself, but it also seems to be the only unquestionable common ground (2005a: 178).

But while this commitment to the political values most prized by the liberal tradition is beyond reproach, the understanding of how these values are to be furthered that comes to the fore in the theoretical discussions of the exponents of procedural liberalism is entirely too narrow.

In situating Taylor's arguments, we might recall that the early political thought of Rawls and Dworkin has been subject to extensive criticism for, among other things, its failure to adequately address issues of cultural membership (Kymlicka, 1989a: 3-5, 137; 1995: 80-94, 101-06). Related to this is the important question of the status of minority group rights within a theory of justice, with the fundamental question being whether awarding group rights comports with a basic commitment to individual freedom and equality or necessarily undermines this commitment. Liberals tend to argue for or to assume the incompatibility of individual and group rights, or hold the latter to be a superfluous extension of the former, and to opt for individual rights in the name of a basic commitment to non-discrimination (Taylor, 1992: 56; Kymlicka, 1989a: 3-5, 140).[78]

Taylor has been one of the more influential critics of this liberal position, arguing that the central problem besetting procedural liberalism is its inability to accommodate collective goals through measures like allowing for group-specific rights (Taylor, 1992; 1995a; 2005a). Advocates of Francophone interests in the Canadian province of Quebec, for instance, have argued that the good of cultural survival through the preservation of the French language that the French-speaking majority within the province are committed to justifies the legal measures that were passed in the province compelling Francophone Quebeckers and immigrants to send their children to French-language schools, to force businesses with over 50 employees to conduct business in a French medium, and for all commercial signage in Quebec to be in French (Taylor, 1992: 52-53). These measures were seen by many to violate the spirit of the

[78] Will Kymlicka argues that the individualism and egalitarianism of Rawls and Dworkin, which views individuals as the ultimate objects of moral regard and which champions equal concern and respect for individuals, is frequently – if mistakenly, in Kymlicka's opinion – understood to be inimical to group rights (1989a: 140). As Kymlicka explains, "[t]here seems to be no room within the moral ontology of liberalism for collective rights….Once individuals have been treated as equals, with the respect and concern owed them as moral beings, there is no further obligation to treat the communities to which they belong as equals. The community has no moral existence or claims of its own. It is not that the community is unimportant to the liberal, but simply that it is important for what it contributes to the lives of individuals, and so cannot ultimately conflict with the claims of individuals. Individual and collective rights cannot compete for the same moral space, in liberal theory, since the value of the collective derives from its contribution to the value of individual lives" (1989a: 140).

Canadian Charter of Rights, adopted in 1982, which sets out a schedule of individual rights and equal treatment provisions as a foundation for judicial review of legislation at all levels of the Canadian government (Taylor, 1992: 52-53). Taylor contends that, precisely because these Francophone demands call into question the liberal commitment to equal individual rights for all citizens and equal citizen treatment before the law, advocating instead certain restrictions on these rights and entitlements in the name of collective cultural goods, they have been dismissed by the Anglophone Canadian majority as discriminatory and unjust (2005a). While agreeing with the commitment to universal individual rights and non-discrimination measures, Taylor believes that dismissal of the Francophone cause, which has been a great cause of Canadian division, rides on an inability to perceive how the Francophone demands are compatible with a modified commitment to legal neutrality.

An appeal for Quebeckers to be eligible for differential legal treatment and to benefit from group rights was formulated in the Meech Lake draft constitution in the form of a plea for Quebec to be recognised as a "distinct society" by devolving certain centralised state powers to the province on a federalist model (Taylor, 1992: 52-53; Habermas, 1999: 220). Taylor argues that the premise of this demand is that the particularistic good of French cultural survival within Quebec trump, in certain exceptional circumstances, the common Canadian good of equal citizen treatment before the law (Taylor, 1992: 52-53). Though he provides next to no discussion of empirical cases, Taylor believes that analogous concerns about democratic exclusion inform the demands of the other "cultural" movements that he mentions. We have, in the previous chapter, considered the problem of how individual rights square off with collective goals in relation to goods like the maintenance of a system of equal rights to free expression, or the property rights and labour laws protecting the individual, where we said that, for Taylor, individual rights of this sort must not be allowed to undermine the collective political mobilisation that the defence of these rights calls for. But here we must note that Taylor believes that this same problem arises in relation to the goods essential to the continued flourishing of the cultural values in virtue of which we esteem certain achievements and lifestyles peculiar to certain cultural groups. Where cultural values are systematically denigrated or undermined, there arises a concern among members of the threatened culture for cultural survival that procedural liberals are ill-disposed to accept. Taylor explains:

> There is a form of the politics of equal respect, as enshrined in a liberalism of rights, that is inhospitable to difference, because (a) it insists on uniform application of the rules defining these rights, without exception, and (b) it is suspicious of collective goals. Of course, this doesn't mean that this model seeks to abolish cultural differences. This would be an absurd accusation. But I call it inhospitable because it

> can't accommodate what the members of distinct societies really aspire to, which is survival. This is (b) a collective goal, which (a) almost inevitably will call for some variations in the kinds of law we deem permissible from one cultural context to another (Taylor, 1992: 60-61).

The upshot of these limitations, which undermine appeals for group rights and undercut participatory political initiatives, is that procedural liberalism is incapable of resolving in a satisfying manner cultural disputes arising within a political community and the threat of fragmentation that accompanies these disputes (Taylor, 1991a: 112-13, 115-17; 1992). This is not a concern that people form into diverse groups in accordance with common bases of identification and interest like gender, ethnicity, race or religion. Taylor's ideal of the modern state is deeply committed to a liberal ideal of toleration that sees unity in difference as a goal to be actively furthered. His concern is rather that in a divided or politically fragmented society there will be no difference-respecting common basis of identity available to all members of a political community that can be appealed to as a foundation for the formation of collective purpose and the committed defence of a freedom-respecting society that cuts across cultural divides.

Taylor's concern with the tendency of procedural liberalism to undercut communal ties and collective political action is coupled with a second criticism, which argues that the mode of politics it defines is, in practice, frequently homogenising of individual identities that incorporate cultural understandings and commitments. This is because procedural politics requires of disadvantaged cultural groups that they mute their demands for the accommodation of their particularistic values and ways of life at the level of public deliberation and policy formation and submit only those claims that find justification in the impartial, universally binding norms acknowledged in the countries of which they are citizens. We saw in Chapter Three that Taylor is less concerned that impartiality may not be a real conceptual possibility than that impartial norms would, in practice, be incapable of inspiring widespread allegiance. Here Taylor argues that, again presuming these norms truly are impartial, denying disadvantaged groups any claim to differential treatment at the level of public policy formation forces marginal cultures to choose between, on the one hand, resisting the thrust of assimilation through the formation of dissenting, politically marginal and impotent cultural enclaves within the wider political society and, on the other, conforming to the levelling demands of participation in procedural politics and thereby entering into a phase of cultural decline (1992).

One solution to the problem of homogenisation can be found in Taylor's discussion of inter-cultural accommodation through "deep diversity" in the essay "Shared and Divergent

Values", where Taylor argues that political unity within multicultural societies needn't be based on a uniform model of citizenship alone (2005a: 183). Individual citizens can be "universally" incorporated into the state by possessing the same moral and legal status as their fellows, but they can also belong in a "consociational" fashion, where their incorporation is mediated through the distinct rights and norms that apply to a certain cultural group (Kymlicka, 1989a: 137). Advocates of procedural liberal solutions to issues of justice in multicultural states favour the former model of belonging and work with a normative conception of the state as a body designed to facilitate the respect of people's "first-level diversity" through legal recognition of autonomy-promoting rights and non-discrimination provisions assigned to protect individuals (Taylor, 2005a: 182). These thinkers defend a mode of citizen patriotism where all citizens feel a sense of national unity in virtue of a shared political identity in which the object of citizen patriotism is the set of shared procedural institutions and norms that their societies provide for their defence and flourishing. Citizens may also feel the tug of pre-political identification with sub-national groups on this model, but this is taken to be external to their sense of belonging with others to a single state composed of a multicultural mosaic of equal members (Taylor, 2005a).

Taylor argues that while this form of belonging may be perfectly viable,[79] it is also possible, and indeed quite common, to belong to the state in a consociational manner that "passes through" identification with a cultural community (2005a). People may, for instance, feel bonded to a linguistic and/or regional community in the manner that many French Canadians feel affiliated to Quebec, where this serves as their primary purchase upon a more encompassing sense of Canadian belonging. Something similar holds for many aboriginal groups in Canada, and for groups like the Catalans, Basques and Bretons and within France and Spain, and indeed for most multicultural Western societies (Taylor, 2005a). In such circumstances, instead of requiring that members of these groups submit to the "steamroller of the nation state", we may do better to promote a political ethos of deep diversity that grants legal recognition to cultural groups that facilitates their cultural development and is accepting of the plurality of forms of belonging that members of such groups will feel (Taylor, 2005a: 184).

[79] Taylor, as we saw in the previous chapter, acknowledges that shared commitment to the right may motivate citizen patriotism, although with the important caveat that this allegiance is understood as the affirmation of an irreducibly social (immediately) common good.

5.2.2 *The politics of difference: ontological foundations*

Taylor's deeply diverse solution to the problems associated with multiculturalism in Canada is not without some serious problems. Chief among these is the possibility that fostering deep diversity, which may require decentralising initiatives of the sort discussed in Chapter Four, could render the need to belong to a state a purely instrumental good and thereby undermine the far-reaching political unity that Taylor defends as a condition of republican freedom (Horton, 1998).[80] I do not, however, hope to explore this problem in detail below, and will simply note in passing that Taylor's own observations about communal belonging would seem more likely to push him in the direction that Michael Sandel and Alasdair MacIntyre move when they express scepticism that abiding communal attachments can, in contemporary societies, endure at anything but a local level (MacIntyre, 1982: 221; Sandel, 1984: 93; Kymlicka, 1995: 92). Instead I want to discuss Taylor's belief that the sort of deeply diverse mode of political attachment he envisages requires us to alter our understanding of liberal society, and in particular the belief that the liberal state must seek to further citizen equality by enforcing state neutrality. The two criticisms of procedural liberalism listed above – the claims that it undermines solidarity through a common identity and that it is culturally homogenising – emerge among those thinkers associated with the political movements that oppose procedural liberalism, which Taylor considers together in his discussion of the politics of difference (1992). The grounds for Taylor's dissatisfaction with procedural liberalism and his sympathy for (certain versions of) the politics of difference cannot, however, be understood as

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[80] John Horton points out that Taylor's arguments for the inappropriateness of a procedural liberal solution to securing Canadian unity are poorly substantiated. Even granted Taylor's arguments against the homogenising tendency of procedural forms of patriotic allegiance, a lot more would have to be said for deep diversity to appear as a workable alternative model of democratic citizenship in multicultural states (1998: 170). Moreover, Taylor's arguments for a deeply diverse mode of citizen belonging in Canada evidence a more general conceptual tension within Taylor's own work which may lead him to resolve the problem of homogenisation at the cost of his commitment to inter-group solidarity. Taylor views bureaucratic centralisation, communal divisions and political fragmentation as problems to be remedied through decentralising political initiatives of the sort discussed in the previous chapter, where we saw that Taylor advocates the political empowerment of regional societies and the development of decentralised debate through nested public spheres. The problem here is that there is a danger that our primary mode of communal allegiance will shift to regional communities and other localised groupings. Regional societies like Quebec in the Canadian federation will, as Taylor points out, always retain a need for national belonging for purposes of "law and order, collective provision, regional equality, and mutual self-help" but, as Horton demonstrates, these are the sorts of goods that Taylor himself has argued elsewhere only form the foundation of an instrumentally valuable union (Taylor, 2005a: 183; Horton, 1998: 170).

For Taylor's conception of deep diversity to connect with the understanding of human identity that is the central focus of his moral work, then, he would have to show that belonging to a political community at the level of the state, and not just at a local level, is an integral, non-instrumental part of the realisation of the common or irreducibly social goods that we all must acknowledge. If belonging to a state is not essential to our identities – if it is merely a contingently useful mode of securing our freedom – then, for reasons that Taylor himself has provided, decentralisation and an ethic of deep diversity threaten to divide political society into competing cultural camps and thereby delegitimate the state. In the absence of just such a conception, we might agree with Horton that "[i]n seeking to accommodate fundamental rights and the recognition of cultural diversity within a polity marked by a genuine sense of a common good, Taylor has posed, rather than resolved, a fundamental problem for democratic theory" (Horton, 1998: 171).

a simple preference for the advocacy orientation of the latter over the former. While Taylor finds fault with what he believes to be the rights-based, litigious and homogenising outcomes of procedural politics, his position can only be properly appreciated in light of his reading of the divergent "underlying intuitions of value" that undergird the social ontologies of advocates of procedural liberalism on the one hand and proponents of the politics of difference on the other (Taylor, 1992: 41).

Pursuing this theme, Taylor hopes to bring to light the background understandings that have given rise to the complaint, voiced in recent years by defenders of the politics of difference, that over and above accelerating the decline of consensual politics and the break-up or political alienation of traditional communities, procedural liberalism defines a mode of politics that rejects the claims that members of disadvantaged groups make for the equal moral worth of their identities (1992: 64). Exploring the validity or otherwise of this complaint, which accuses procedural liberalism not only of promoting communal divisions and cultural homogenisation but also promoting cultural discrimination or ethnocentrism, Taylor attempts to expose a tension between procedural liberalism and the politics of difference that grows out of two different understandings of the principle of equal respect while tracing these tensions to an ontological endorsement (or presumption) of two divergent conceptions of human identity and agency (Taylor, 1992: 43).

Though few advocates of procedural liberalism are willing to concede that there is an important metaphysical background to their arguments – what Taylor has referred to elsewhere as an "ontology of the human" – Taylor believes that these theories are premised on strong intuitions of value that must rely upon such a background as a necessary condition of their intelligibility (Taylor, 1989: 5; 1992: 41). If proponents of this understanding of politics believe that all people are worthy of respect, this can only be because they hold, explicitly or otherwise, to a conception of some human capacity we all share that merits this respect (Taylor, 1992: 41). While procedural liberalism entrenches the rights-based form of recognition that Taylor refers to in SS as "active respect", Taylor believes that it cannot accommodate the need for what he there calls "attitudinal respect" (Taylor, 1989: 15). The demand for attitudinal respect is premised on some strongly valued conception of what we understand our dignity or moral worth to consist in, as well as a corresponding understanding of the appreciation or admiration due us from others to the extent that we have actualised or are pursuing the goods that we prize (Taylor, 1989: 15). In his discussion of "recognition" in EA and MPR it is, I believe, most often to the conferral of what we are calling attitudinal respect that Taylor refers.

The normative endorsement of active respect that surfaces in procedural liberal theories is premised on the belief in a human potential, common to all, to formulate for ourselves a vision of the good life by understanding the human agent as "primarily a subject of self-determining or self-expressive choice" (Taylor, 1992: 57). This conception of human agency is deeply rooted in the modern Western identity and is integral to the background of the individualism of equality. It receives one of its most influential expressions in the Kantian ideal of autonomy and has played an important role in more recent neo-Kantian thought, though its influence extends far beyond such philosophical circles (Taylor, 1992: 41-42; 57-58). On this understanding, we all possess dignity, and are worthy of respect, in virtue of possessing the capacity to formulate our beliefs and determine our actions independently which, we have seen in Chapter Three, Taylor refers to as the universal attribution of moral personality. What is to be respected here is not the content of choice (the specific objects or goals that we seek to realise or obtain) but rather the capacity to freely exercise it which all persons share (Taylor, 1992: 57).

The politics of difference shares with the politics of equal dignity a universalistic understanding of what in people is of value and commands respect – a common "principle of universal equality" (Taylor, 1992: 39). But whereas procedural liberalism normatively prioritises a universalistic ideal of personality, the politics of difference places greatest worth on our ability to create a unique identity at both the individual and the cultural level (Taylor, 1992: 41-42). This concern for original identity comes of accepting the ideal of authenticity that we associated with the expressivist and Romantic form of Western individualism, the individualism of difference.

Given that Taylor has argued at length elsewhere that the formation of identity is inseparable from the act of taking a moral stance on important existential questions, we might ask how this capacity for individual expression differs from that that which Taylor argues is most valued by procedural liberalism and the politics of equal dignity – that is, the ability to autonomously define for oneself a conception of the good life (1985a; 1989; 1992: 57).[81]

[81]Meave Cooke raised this question, arguing that there is no interesting difference between the recognitional demands that procedural liberalism and the politics of difference as I have thus far been describing it – which is the weaker of two versions of the politics of difference discussed by Taylor – seek to facilitate (Cooke, 1997: 261, 266-67). This is because both these orientations call for the recognition of a human *potentiality* for individual identity formation shared by all parties to the recognitional encounter (Cooke, 1997: 261, 266-67; Taylor, 1992: 42). Taylor argues, however, that the politics of difference (in the weaker version he endorses) calls only for an initial *presumption* of equality, which then has to be tested in practice against the substantive values that all parties acknowledge. What members of contemporary Western societies want recognised is not just their shared potential for self-realisation but, beyond this, what they have made, or are in the act of making, of this potential (1992: 66-68). Cooke is aware of this reading of the politics of difference but mistakenly conflates it with the stronger version of the claim, which version Taylor explicitly rejects, and so considers the disagreement between Taylor and procedural liberals about the moral worth of autonomy largely chimerical (Cooke, 1997: 259-60, 263;

Taylor tells us that, for proponents of the politics of difference, this universal potential is only realised in the affirmation of one's particularity: what stands to be realised here – an original identity – is not what is common to all, but, by definition, something that each person possesses and expresses in some unique way. Where this ideal is read holistically, it calls for individuals to affirm or reject the moral understandings that they access through participation in a larger cultural community (Taylor, 1992: 38-39). By placing strong value on particularity in this manner, the politics of difference is therefore motivated by a range of recognition claims that extend beyond those of the politics of equal dignity. It calls for recognition of a universally shared human capacity, but now defines this as the ability to form a unique identity within a given community, and in doing so forces us to look beyond what is commonly possessed by all individuals in abstraction from their cultural embedding to what is peculiar to such individuals as members of the cultural groups in which their universally shared potential for forming an authentic identity is realised (Taylor, 1992: 38-39). Taylor explains this complexity as follows: the principle of universal equality, as interpreted by proponents of the politics of difference,

> asks that we give acknowledgement and status to something that is not universally shared. Or, otherwise put, we give due acknowledgement only to what is universally present – everyone has an identity – through recognizing what is peculiar to each. The universal demand powers an acknowledgement of specificity (1992: 39).

For the politics of difference, then, due respect is granted when we look beyond the universal to the particular by acknowledging a person or a group's identity to be of value. For recognition of any sort to be meaningful, Taylor contends that it must register the incorporation of certain moral ideals that are strongly valued by all parties to the recognitional encounter into the identity of the person or group seeking recognition (1991a: 35-41, 58, 81-82). However unique, these ideals must in part refer to non-subjective sources of meaning because they can only be intelligibly discussed through the languages and moral frameworks that participation in some or other cultural community provides. In this connection Taylor writes:

> Mere difference can't itself be the ground of equal value. If men and women are equal, it is not because they are different, but because overriding the difference are some properties, common or complementary,

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Taylor, 1992: 42, 68-69). Taylor wishes, however, to contrast only the weaker version of the politics of difference that he endorses with procedural liberalism, and there is, indeed, a marked difference between the understandings of legitimate recognitional demands endorsed by these two political orientations as Taylor describes them.

which are of value….To come together on the mutual recognition of difference – that is, of the equal value of different identities – requires that we share more than a belief in this principle; we have to share also some standards of value on which the identities concerned check out as equal (1991a: 51-52).

Informed by a dialogical reading of the ideal of authenticity, the politics of difference calls for the respect of other people's potential to freely determine which values they will endorse, and for them to be treated in a way that recognises them favourably as bearers of these values to the extent that we also share and endorse their evaluational frameworks. But it is important to emphasise that for Taylor what is valued here is not just a potential: due recognition must begin with a presumption of the equal value of the other's identity, but this presumption must be tested in practice, and can be disappointed (Taylor, 1992: 66-68). [82]

5.2.3 *The politics of difference: political advocacy*

We should, form the above, be in a better position to see how Taylor might accuse procedural liberalism of undermining social solidarity by failing to protect disadvantaged cultures from decline. But we also said that for this to really count as oppression, Taylor has to demonstrate that this political condition eventuates in some sort of *moral* harm. Here Taylor takes his lead from the theoretical framework largely pioneered by Frantz Fanon and later developed by prominent thinkers in the feminist movement and multiculturalism debates, for whom "misrecognition shows not just a lack of due respect. It can inflict a grievous wound, saddling

[82] Taylor identifies a stronger version of the politics of difference than the one we have been discussing here, which calls for the recognition of the equal value of what people have actually made of this potential *as a matter of principle*. In the intercultural context, where this claim usually arises, this translates into a demand for the equal respect of "actually evolved cultures" (Taylor, 1992: 42). Taylor must not be read as defending this stronger recognitional claim. If this were the case, then we might well agree with Cillian McBride that the politics of recognition endorsed by Taylor is inimical to the ideal of a fusion of horizons through democratic debate and the liberal conception of inter-cultural toleration that Taylor wishes to advance (McBride, 2005).

McBride claims that "the politics of authentic recognition demands that we *endorse* particular identities, regardless of the misgivings we may have about them, which clearly diminishes our freedom to form our own view of the matter." (2005: 502; emphasis in original). But Taylor is dismissive of this stronger claim and the idea that we owe other cultures equal respect as a matter unbending principle that informs it. Conferring respect entails recognising the value of others, but this recognition must be the freely given outcome of a process of open-ended, well-informed and deliberative evaluation. For recognition to be a predetermined outcome of interaction detracts from its moral value by making its conferral arbitrary, reducing it to an act of condescension rather than an expression of genuine respect (Taylor, 1992: 68-73). While ruling out the possibility of explicitly denigrating other cultures, the stronger claim eradicates the distinction between sincere praise of other cultures and a patronising gesture of acceptance. It also discourages intimate contact and exchange between cultures, with the result that whatever value we do find in another culture can only come of its ability to satisfy our own parochially formed standards of value (Taylor, 1992: 70-71). While McBride may very well be correct in arguing that "a politics of authentic recognition, divorced from respect for others' right to form diverging judgements, offers us a fantasy of social transparency driven by the demand for total control over my self-understanding" (2005: 503), and that "we can only have *guarantees* that we will receive the recognition we seek if we eliminate diversity of perspective" (2005: 504; emphasis in original), this offers nothing as a criticism of *Taylor*, who is numbered among the targets of McBride's criticism of the politics of difference.

its victims with a crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need" (Taylor, 1992: 26).

Taylor believes that accepting this ontological claim concerning the harmfulness of misrecognition has important spin-offs for how political theory needs to normatively conceptualise the role of the state. If it is the case that people need to be guaranteed active respect through a system of individual rights and liberties due them simply as potentially autonomous life-choosers, it might be no less true that safeguarding the conditions required for receiving *attitudinal* respect requires that the state takes measures to secure the requisites of authentic identity formation. Assuming Taylor's thesis about the cultural prerequisites of expressive freedom is persuasive, then this protection might also seem to necessitate that the state safeguard from perceived threats the continued existence of cultural groups where affiliation to such groups demonstrably promotes freedom of the individual. This, at least, is the line of reasoning that Taylor follows in MPR to argue from the need individuals possess for the positive recognition of their cultural identities to the need for state protection of threatened cultures.

Taylor argues that, given the need for attitudinal respect, measures such as the promotion of culturally-specific rights interpretation have an important place within any liberal theory that aspires to further the liberal value of toleration (1992). This commitment doesn't undermine the foundational liberal commitment to securing freedom of the individual; rather, where members of freedom-respecting cultural groups are subject to systematic denigration, or where the dissolution of traditional modes of living threatens to undermine the cultural conditions of individual self-realisation, it must be viewed as a vital precondition of safeguarding individual freedom. Taylor also believes that measures designed to promote inter-cultural awareness and respect, such as modifying educational curricula to include the contributions of members of diverse cultures, can function to promote tolerant interchange and accommodation between members of diverse cultures (1992).

Adopting such measures, Taylor argues, requires a modification of the procedural liberal principle of state neutrality without completely overhauling it. Considering the Canadian issue of group rights for Quebeckers, Taylor envisages a model of liberalism which distinguishes truly inviolable fundamental rights to such things as life, liberty, free speech, due process, and free practice of religion on the one hand from entitlements to freely choosing the language of commercial signage and conduct of business, or to unconstrained access to educational facilities, on the other (Taylor, 1992: 59). While these fundamental liberal rights appear too deeply rooted in our shared (modern Western) moral sensibility to ever be passed up, the others are of the sort that can be weighed against other goods like the survival of

French culture and, *given* a further range of good arguments that engage with the historical specificities of both French- and English-speaking cultures in Canada, sometimes be sacrificed. But for this other range of empirically informed augments to even gain a respectable hearing procedural liberals would have to forsake their atomistic individualism and acknowledge that goals like cultural survival that we hold through our participation in particular enterprises are *in principle* legitimate claims, even if, in practice, there turn out to be good reasons for rejecting them (Taylor, 1992).

The liberal state envisaged by Taylor, then, would secure individual recognition for all citizens insofar as they are persons possessed of universally shared potentialities by enshrining difference-blind principles in its constitution and/or legal practices. At the same time, the state might seek to promote "deep diversity" by ensuring that individuals may be recognised as bearers of particular cultural identities legally and/or in public institutions and the norms of state by actively advancing the conditions required for the continued flourishing of their cultural associations (Taylor, 1992, 2005a; Kenny, 2004: 153). This, Taylor believes, would be a step beyond the neutral state that ensures only blanket measures defending the active respect for its citizens' negative freedoms to a perfectionist state that aims to safeguard the cultural conditions required for members of disadvantaged cultures to receive the attitudinal respect that, as citizens of an equal moral standing with their compatriots, is their due.

5.3 Questioning the politics of difference

In both his therapeutic attempt to highlight the shortcomings of procedural liberalism and in formulating his constructive alternative, Taylor advances a number of philosophical and historical claims that are not a little contentious. But even granted the reading of moral psychology and historical developments in the modern West that inform Taylor's understanding of modern struggles for recognition, there still remain plenty of reasons to question why accepting his ontological interpretation of these issues recommends the sort of state perfectionism that the politics of difference endorses at the advocacy level. I believe that here, more than elsewhere, Taylor's attempt to work out a normative political orientation from a more basic set of ontological considerations about individual identity formation and communal belonging moves from ontology to advocacy in a manner that is ultimately question-begging.

Taylor's contention that many liberal societies of today require a politics of difference if they are to remain true to their liberal values and his associated arguments in favour of a perfectionist state assume, firstly, that the political decision-making bodies of the state are an appropriate locus for discussions of perfectionist ideals. Secondly, even granted this

contentious position, Taylor believes that the identity concerns informing the politics of difference are such that they could function as standards to guide the state in its defence of specific disadvantaged cultures. Thirdly, Taylor believes that these identity concerns are of the sort that they may justify the restriction of individual rights in the name of group rights without compromising the authentic development of individual identity. While all of these positions are, I believe, rather problematic elements of Taylor's political thought, I do not consider the first of these below, which raises concerns that are largely external to Taylor's project, and discuss only the second and third below insofar as they draw attention to certain internal difficulties with Taylor's attempt to derive normative political content from his ontological reflections. I proceed below by asking whether, given the appropriateness of state perfectionism in principle, we should follow Taylor's contention that a concern for the authentic self-realisation of the individual would offer any determinate content for state policies and would be furthered by group rights ascription.

5.3.1 *Authenticity of experience as a criterion of state perfectionism*

Taylor's understanding of the desirable role of the state in multicultural societies may be considered a "perfectionist" account of the role of the state in the sense that he believes substantive conceptions of the good life shouldn't only guide our action in our private lives but must inform the decisions that the state makes. Unlike liberals like Rawls, who believe that the state must refrain from privileging any particular life plan or set of life plans when distributing resources, rights and duties, Taylor argues that the state must do just this in order to prevent valuable ways of life from being eclipsed by other less virtuous or dignified alternatives (Kymlicka, 1989a: 33-34; Mulhall & Swift, 1993: 26-28). This is not just because concern for threatened cultures promotes social solidarity and heads off political fragmentation but, more fundamentally, because the defence of cultural structures is necessary for protecting the expressive freedom of the individual. One particularly vexing problem for Taylor's formulation of the politics of difference, however, concerns the idea, implicit in his account of state protection of disadvantaged cultures, that deviation from state neutrality can be justified on the grounds of the authenticity of experience that such policies are intended to facilitate (Digeser, 1995).

Taylor argues in EA and MPR that our sense of dignity or self-worth relies upon our receiving validation from people within our broader societies of the moral values upon which we construct our identities. Where we are truly deserving of this affirmation, its denial constitutes a species of moral harm. But there remains a very difficult question of how agreement can be reached about such desert. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that

deviations from state neutrality may in principle be justified in the name of cultural toleration and the defence of cultures that fear systematic denigration or assimilation, how, in practice, do we decide when this is to be the case? In terms of the issue of recognition considered here, the question would then be: What standards do we have to appeal to in practical reason in determining when public recognition is justifiably denied and when it should be granted?

At this point, I believe, Taylor's ontological reflections on identity seem unable to guide us. Taylor may provide us with reasons for defending freedom-respecting cultures in general but not for defending any *particular* culture from decline. When discussing the ontological constants of human identity, as we saw in Section One, Taylor incessantly draws our attention back to the holist idea that an integrated and fulfilled identity incorporates a self-understanding that necessarily passes through a linguistic and moral background that we access through our cultural and political associations. Within these very general parameters, however, Taylor acknowledges that the individual is free to modify her inherited languages and enter into a diverse range of affiliations in pursuing her individual self-fulfilment. This is particularly true if we consider that, at least with regard to our cultural affiliations, these relationships needn't be established with the living or those concretely present, but can also be formed in thought with the absent or the dead (Taylor, 1989: 37). Thus Taylor allows that individuals may criticise or reject the received values of their historical communities and enter into associations with others who share and confirm their individual understanding of the good life even while retaining their attachment to what he calls pre-given "webs of interlocution" or "webs of birth and history" (1989: 36). The only limit upon individual diversity here seems to be a civilisational limit beyond which individuals would be incapable of accessing *any* moral framework whatsoever because they would lack the common languages of intelligibility that this requires, or else a purely associational limit outside of which we would lack partners with whom to realise the immediately common goods that we value.

The understanding of communal attachment found in the trans-historical claims of Taylor's philosophical anthropology, which highlights what Taylor calls in SS "the transcendental embedding of independence in interlocution", and his arguments for the need that people possess to realise common goods through common action, is, however, some distance from the far more articulated mode of attachment that Taylor envisages in his appeal to communal horizons of meaning as a standard for state perfectionism in his political thought (1989: 39). Where, in this latter body of work, Taylor follows Herder in attributing an original mode of being to a whole culture, the potentiality for individual diversity allowed by the former seems to be grossly diminished (Digeser, 1995). And it would appear that only by narrowing the scope of legitimate individual expressivism in just this way can Taylor hope to

defend the idea that there are relatively clear-cut interpersonal standards of judgement that can be appealed to when reaching political consensus about what constitutes a curtailment of human freedom and causes moral harm.

Taylor's approach to the issue of recognition and state perfectionism in his political writing would thus seem to overlook the complexity and uniqueness of individual experiences of moral harm because of a tendency to overemphasise the embedding of individuals within cultural communities. Even granted the dialogical formation of our identities and our need to belong to larger cultural and political groups, Taylor only establishes at an ontological level our commitment to a common history and language. When it comes to debating advocacy issues, however, Taylor speaks as if cultures will for this reason share a relatively clear common understanding of the good and a common way of life. This seems to overlook the fact that individuals in modern liberal societies can, and frequently do, identify with a number of sub-cultures existing within and across these historic and linguistic groups and form their individual identities by combining desired elements of each (Rorty, A., 1994; Benhabib, 2002; Kukathas in Paul E. et al., 1996: 86; McBride, 2005; Redhead, 2004: 128). This is true of contemporary Quebec no less than of other societies:

> Before the 'Quiet Revolution' (1960-1966), the Quebecois generally shared a rural, Catholic, conservative and patriarchal conception of the good. Today, after a rapid period of liberalization, most people have abandoned this traditional way of life, and Quebecois society now exhibits all the diversity that any modern society contains – e.g., atheists and Catholics, gays and heterosexuals, urban yuppies and rural farmers, socialists and conservatives, etc. Being a 'Quebecois' today, therefore, simply means being a participant in the francophone society of Quebec; and Francophones in Quebec no more agree about conceptions of the good than do Anglophones in the United States" (Kymlicka in Paul, E. et al., 1996: 130; cf. Kymlicka, 1995: 87-89).

One consequence of this is that defending and promoting concrete measures deemed to accord with cultural survival will be more contested, because potentially more restrictive of individual freedoms, than Taylor appears to acknowledge. In this sense Taylor is less heedful of the dangers of anything but minimal state interventions geared toward furthering individual development than a thinker like John Stuart Mill, whose political thought was also informed by a conception individual self-realisation that closely approximates Taylor's conception of authenticity (Digeser, 1995: 186). For Mill it was evident that "the same things which are helps to one person towards the cultivation of higher nature are hindrances to another" (cited in Digeser, 1995: 186).

5.3.2 *Ascriptive group identity as a criterion of state perfectionism*

If the meaningful pursuit of individual authenticity is less constrained than Taylor appears to acknowledge in his political writing, then his whole approach to the politics of recognition may suffer from an unacknowledged tension in the idea that the recognition of individual authenticity in pluralistic societies requires the preservation of cultural authenticity (Digeser, 1995: 187; Descombes, 1994). In this connection, another serious problem accompanying Taylor's defence of the politics of difference is his belief that accepting the ontological understandings about the importance of authentic identity formation that inform it will incline us, at a normative level, to accept that members of disadvantaged cultures might justifiably be legally prevented from integrating into cultures other than those of their birth. It could, however, be argued that the commonplace liberal emphasis on free or autonomous individual choice, which Taylor accepts, requires that we encourage not only the flourishing of a diversity of cultures but that all these cultures be maximally porous. State perfectionism of the sort that Taylor defends in the Quebec case might therefore not only be contingently undesirable (as Taylor concedes it might be) but unacceptable in principle.

Taylor's Herderian talk of group authenticity does little to consider the problem that, in cultures founded on ascription where identity is not self-generated but rather imposed, it would appear to fit better with the authenticity needs of all that individuals be recognised on the terms that they themselves choose (Wolf, 1992: 76; Kenny, 2004: 36-42). Taylor acknowledges that collective identities are frequently imposed, and that they can serve to entrench political oppression by undermining the expressive freedom of members of disadvantaged groups, but his defence of state perfectionism seems to nonetheless presume both that communal identities are always internally generated and that they are invariably a positive source of self-esteem for their members, while the reverse of either of these conditions could, for reasons Taylor himself is at pains to make evident, equally be the case.[83] Individuals might wish to be understood and respected in terms that make their being Muslim,

[83] As Patchen Markell points out, given that group identity is never stable, and given that it is both internally and externally generated, recognition seems an inherently ambivalent affair. It posses a cognitive dimension, through which pre-existing, internally-generated identities are recognized (or fail to be), as well as a creative, politically charged dimension in virtue of which identity is an ongoing locus of normative contestation traversed with social power dynamics. Attending to the first dimension with the aid of a concept like authenticity allows us to sensibly distinguish between successful and failed recognitive transactions. Similarly, the motivational force behind political struggles for recognition only becomes apparent when we consider the second dimension, which underscores our mutual vulnerability by appeal to a conception of the inter-subjective or dialogical aspect of identity-formation (Markell, 2000). Put in Markell's terms, my claim is that, without explicitly drawing these distinctions, Taylor highlights the interplay of both cognitive and political dimensions of recognition in his ontological accounts of identity formation, while his advocacy of state perfectionism appears to factor in only the cognitive element. Moreover, we could add that even if Taylor could rightly presume some mechanism to ensure that political acts of recognition are benign and steer free of externally recognitional forms of oppression, he seems unconcerned that internally-generated identities within a group may be stifling of the authentic development of its individual members.

or a woman, or homosexual, or an immigrant, or whatever the case may be, a relatively peripheral aspect of their identity just as much as they may wish for these to be regarded as central foci of allegiance and promoted or praised in the public life of a wider political community (Wolf, 1992: 76; Kenny, 2004: 41, 157). As Michael Kenny explains:

> Underpinning Taylor's argument for recognition is the dubious proposition that members of subordinated groups are inherently prone to moral harm because of the process of misrecognition that liberal culture produces. Such a claim radically underplays the degree to which individuals forge a sense of themselves as much by rejecting and refining collective identity as by immersion within it (2004: 157).

Taylor's ontological conflation of individual and cultural authenticity needs in this fashion creates problems for his advocacy of state perfectionism in the form of group rights ascription. Discussing Taylor's own example of prohibitions on English-language schooling in Quebec, Peter Digeser argues that the defence of individual authenticity would allow Francophone parents to send their children to a school of the parents' choosing, or for children of a suitable age to choose their schools for themselves. The demand for cultural authenticity, as this is expressed in the Francophone demands for cultural survival, always threatens to run counter to the requirements of ensuring individual authenticity, and Taylor's ontological reflections on human identity provide no adequate grounds for why the state should decide against the individual and in favour of the group through measures like group rights ascription (Digeser, 1995).

Of course, Taylor's project in MPR is not a defence of specific policies. While Taylor frankly confesses his sympathy for the Francophone cause in Quebec, he only intends to establish that measures such as legally restricting free access to schooling are *in principle* defensible where they would promote toleration of disadvantaged groups and social solidarity within a political community by taking the demands for cultural survival that members of these groups make seriously, and only where truly fundamental human rights are not threatened. But Digeser uses this example to illustrate a more general point, which appears to undermine Taylor's argument from individual authenticity needs to state perfectionism: if authenticity can apply equally to individuals and groups, then we can always appeal to authenticity as an argument *against* group rights, and legally privileging the demands of the group over the individual may therefore constitute a standing threat to individual freedoms (1995).

5.4 Conclusion

We must agree with Jürgen Habermas that, while cultures may reproduce themselves by convincing their members to creatively reappropriate their cultural traditions, the decision to do so must, for modern liberals, always remain a freely-chosen option for the individual. In the societies of the contemporary West, which are inescapably pluralistic and given to innovation,

> the only traditions and forms of life that can sustain themselves are those that *bind* their members, while at the same time allowing members to subject the traditions to critical examination and leaving later generations the *option* of learning from other traditions or converting and setting out for other shores (1999: 222; emphases in original).

This is not just a condition of avoiding cultural ossification but a basic requirement of human freedom.

Of course, the liberal view that modern societies must make the acceptance of tradition a matter of individual choice is not in itself a value that Taylor would dispute provided only that we give due consideration to the dialogical contexts within which this choice is meaningful and rich. As we saw in Chapter Three, Taylor is deeply committed to furthering the transformative power of uncoerced and respectful debate among deliberators of different cultural orientations who, through open-ended conversation, may learn from one another and reshape their cultural understandings and political and social practices accordingly. But this ideal of mutually yielding, reciprocal cultural exchange fits uncomfortably with the idea that states must protect existing cultures by ensuring their indefinite perpetuation through policies that "actively seek to *create* members of the community" (Taylor, 1992: 58; emphasis in original).

While Taylor might be right to argue that disadvantaged cultures require difference-sensitive measures to defend imperilled practices from decline, doing so through perfectionist state policies that operate outside of a framework of equal individual rights always threatens to slide into what Habermas calls "a kind of preservation of the species by administrative means", and it is not certain that Taylor manages to steer round this problem (1999: 222). This is because accepting Taylor's interesting account of expressive freedom and his exciting historical reading of struggles for recognition of authentic identity as a major driving force within the political life of the modern West might as easily decide us against a perfectionist state committed to upholding group-specific rights as for it.

Conclusion

If the discussion that has occupied us in the foregoing chapters has been at all successful, it will have demonstrated that Charles Taylor's political philosophy is a search for moral and political principles that will serve to guide us in our pursuit of solidarity and just reconciliation in the pluralistic societies of the contemporary West. This project proceeds best, Taylor believes, if we take into account the identity needs that we possess both as human beings and as members of modern Western societies for whom freedom will have negative, republican and expressivist dimensions.

I have tried, in Section One, to reconstruct Taylor's account of human identity formation and communal belonging. Taylor believes that the naturalist understanding of human agency is inescapably given to reductionism because it fails to appreciate that strong evaluation is a capacity both peculiar to and inescapable for persons. Naturalism gives rise to a constructivist notion of selfhood that emphasises the indispensability of individual choice and subjective evaluation in the formation of human identity at the expense of the equally indispensable determinations within which this choice and evaluation may be meaningfully exercised. For Taylor, we are neither simply the thralls of our desires, nor are we limitlessly free to invent and reinvent ourselves at will, as theories of radical choice and a widespread tradition of modern individualism would have it. This is because all moral choice is governed by background conditions that are not fully subject to individual determination, and in acknowledging these conditions we will opt for holism over atomism in our description of social life.

Because we are situated in the world in such a way that we practically engage with our surroundings through interpreting the meaning that situations bear for us, Taylor believes a minimally coherent self-understanding or identity is an inescapable feature of all human agency. Taylor's holism is built on the notion that individual self-understanding requires cultural frameworks of meaning that render our individual choices intelligible. This view, we said, is best appreciated in light if Taylor's philosophy of language. Taylor believes that, like George Steiner, we must understand man as above all the "language animal" (1985a: 217). Language not only expresses our most basic purposes but orders and shapes them, and as such is partially "constitutive" of human agency. But if, as expressivist views of language affirm, a language is located outside of individual minds, within a speech community, then our linguistically formed identities will situate us, as individuals, in a relationship with this larger

community and to have an identity is to be able to express one's position in the world to these other interlocutors. It is these others who induct us into communities of speech and shared value and we remain inescapably within a space of interlocution with concrete or symbolically present others throughout our lives (Taylor, 1989: 29, 35-36). These others are not only intimate acquaintances but those with whom we share both the mediately common goods of a culture and the immediately common goods internal to the practices and institutions through which a society co-ordinates its collective activity. This, at any rate, is the meaning that Taylor assigns to Wittgenstein's maxim that "to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life" (1985a: 281).

But what, if anything, do these reflections on identity formation and language use mean for political theory? This is the question that runs throughout Section Two, where I have attempted both to expand on the ontological arguments explicitly or implicitly informing Taylor's political claims and to assess whether the normative content that Taylor draws from these reflections does indeed succeed in structuring the field of available advocacy positions in the manner that Taylor believes it will. To this end I distinguished three basic normative political claims that Taylor makes; he argues that the grounds upon which we justify public policies must not of necessity be culturally neutral, that we endorse a model of civic virtue that assigns a non-instrumental value to public service, and that appeal to perfectionist criteria by state actors may, in multicultural societies, be a prerequisite of securing citizen equality.

The first of these claims, considered in Chapter Three, holds that social solidarity within pluralistic societies is best advanced if we adopt a model of public deliberation that does not seek to abstract from difference when justifying socially prevailing norms and laws but rather seeks to identify or create difference-sensitive measures that all deliberators will deem acceptable. There we saw that, while Taylor might be right to claim that neutral agreement cannot be forged around universal principles of the right or justice formulated in total abstraction from the good, this observation appears to offer very little as a critique of contemporary procedural liberals like Rawls. Rawls, as well as formalists like Habermas, do acknowledge that their theories are informed by an understanding of the good, only they do not see it as a *particular* good. But we also saw that even if we construe liberal justificatory neutrality as the endorsement of those universally cherished goods that all reasonable people are likely to require as a precondition of whatever other goods they strongly value, Taylor believes that procedural liberals fail to account for why we should infallibly choose these goods when they square off against other goods that we hold in virtue of our attachments to particular cultural communities or out of a desire for personal self-realisation. We might, of course, be obliged to do so by adopting the moral point of view, and the moral point of view

might be usefully defined through a set of formal testing procedures, but this still begs the question of why the moral point of view should claim deliberative priority. While this may not be a problem that procedural liberals feel their theories are required to address, Taylor believes that this theoretical oversight will predispose political actors defending procedural liberal practices to downplay the demands of local justice *in principle*, and this will frustrate attempts to reach rational consensus about public goods. Thus, while seeking to further toleration and social solidarity within pluralistic societies, procedural liberals might, in practice, unwittingly endorse an exclusionary creed that undermines their most laudable ends.

Yet another of Taylor's claims, which was the subject of discussion in Chapter Four, was that freedom requires patriotic commitment. Procedural liberals, Taylor maintains, tend to view the political requisites of freedom simply as the absence of constraints. Assuming this negative view of freedom overlooks the much-neglected liberal value of collective self-rule, or else downplays this value by considering self-rule through collective action a purely *instrumental* good. Taylor believes that the wide diffusion of this outlook throughout the societies of the West eventuates in the decline of participatory politics that he observes in contemporary procedural republics and that in doing so it opens the door to bureaucratic centralisation. He argues that political commitment must not be seen as a burden we undertake out of self-interest, and it cannot only be seen as that which we do from altruistic devotion to a universal ideal or set of ideals, though it may also encompass such ideals.

Taylor holds that we are, for the most part, patriotic out of a love of the particular, and we are justifiably patriotic when this attachment to particularity comes from an awareness that our freedom as individuals is expressed in collective acts that work to maintain or fortify the institutions of a freedom-protecting culture that enable us to realise vital human goods that we couldn't otherwise seek. In its most theoretically interesting form – the stronger republican thesis – this is an ontological claim that acts of public service, when performed by agents whose individual conceptions of the good are essentially linked to the collective good of a free society, are valuable not only as instrumental guarantors of negative freedoms but also as integral expressions of freedom through which they exercise a form of self-determination that would not otherwise be open to us. Where this is understood, Taylor believes that we will, at the advocacy level, better appreciate the need for broad-based citizen mobilisation facilitated by decentralised forums for collective debate and common action, and in so doing we can offset the soft despotism that procedural politics promotes.

The concern with working out the political conditions required for the fullest possible realisation of human freedom and dignity that leads Taylor to endorse participatory patriotism as an essential citizen virtue also leads him to defend state perfectionism. This advocacy

position, as we saw in Chapter Five, Taylor considers a working out of the need to secure from threats the cultural conditions for the realisation of our expressive freedom. This is a particularly urgent problem in procedural republics that wish to uphold the liberal commitment to safeguarding cultural pluralism but which, by seeking to resolve disputes through difference-blind legal practices, render the state incapable of addressing the systematic inequalities that threaten the very survival of minority groups united in their commitment to sustaining in perpetuity a common language or set of historical traditions. This is regrettable not just because it threatens to undermine the state's legitimacy and promote cultural enclavism, but also because it constitutes a form of oppression.

To appreciate the moral complexity of these claims, which he believes is self-evident to those voicing them but may be quite opaque to outsiders, Taylor argues that we benefit from reflecting upon the nature of the modern Western understanding of individualism. This shows us that we have come to view ourselves as equals, not only through our possession of universally shared moral capacities like the capacity for autonomous choice, but also insofar as we all possess the ability to realise an authentic identity that is true to us as individuals and reflects our singularity. The needs accruing to the exercise of autonomous choice are widely recognised in our political cultures and are accommodated within procedural republics through difference-blind schedules of negative individual rights designed to ensure that all citizens have a legally defensible claim to active respect of their human dignity, but the second range of needs, in virtue of which we demand attitudinal respect, is largely neglected. The need for attitudinal respect, which is what Taylor refers to when discussing demands for "recognition", is misunderstood by those who interpret the ideal of individual authenticity in an atomistic fashion. While atomists correctly see that authenticity is partly an aesthetic ideal that requires of us an originality and self-discovery that may lead us to reject moral obligations and communal ties to a broader culture, this can slide all too easily into a self-indulgent understanding of human identity formation that disregards the essentially dialogical contexts in which integrated and expressively rich identities are worked out.

In MPR and other works Taylor is chiefly concerned with emphasising the indispensability of cultural contexts of shared meaning and experience, as well as the languages that embody these cultural formations, to the healthy formation of individual identity. Because our cultural commitments are considered by procedural liberals to be derivative of universal moral demands, or because they may be understood by atomists as obstructions to authentic self-development, such demands are normatively downplayed as valid political objectives and calls for cultural survival, like those expressed by the French-speaking majority in Quebec, will accordingly go unheeded. I have argued, however, that

while all this may be true, and while it may indeed explain the persistence of major political divisions in culturally plural societies, it doesn't follow at all unproblematically that state perfectionism will remedy the problem. The appeal to individual authenticity of experience as a regulative norm informing state policies will always be less determinate and potentially more oppressive than Taylor seems to acknowledge. I have tried to argue that this is not so through any *oversight* on Taylor's part so much as a failure to establish compelling continuities between his complex and, I believe, deeply insightful views on identity formation and the normative political positions that he wishes to recommend on the strength of these ontological claims.

In his political thought as much as in his moral work Taylor hopes to oppose what he calls a "rage for reduction" in contemporary Western culture (1994a: 262). By seeking to finesse moral conflicts through procedures and the universally valid goods that such procedures are designed to further, Taylor believes that we evade the moral dilemmas that confront us and obfuscate the real issues in contention. We do better to realise that "following one good to the end may be catastrophic, not because it isn't a good, but because there are others which can't be sacrificed without evil" (Taylor, 1989: 503). We might say that, for Taylor, we can't escape tragedy; we can only hope to limit it by reconciling as many of the legitimate goods that make a strongly valued claim upon us into a more or less coherent, though always provisional, whole. This is what is entailed in forming an identity, both as an individual and as a political society. Thus Taylor hopes that in pursuing the private goods that we rightly cherish we don't overlook the common goods that both facilitate the provision of our private goods *and* those that possess an inherent human worth. These goods are given to us through social and political associations that safeguard our human dignity as well as through immersion in the thought and common sensibility carried in the expressive languages of cultural traditions.

It is of course an open question whether the discursive receptivity to non-universal goods in public debate, the active model of citizenship and the perfectionist state defending group-specific rights that Taylor recommends really will remedy the political malaises that afflict procedural republics. This is a question I have largely avoided, as conviction here would have to follow on from a range of empirically informed arguments that take cognisance of the political conditions prevailing in particular countries. Instead I have posed the more modest question of whether, or to what extent, Taylor's political thought can be viewed as a working out, at the advocacy level, of his ontological reflections on identity. Throughout Section Two I have attempted to argue that Taylor may have an interesting argument with atomists, or at least with those of us who endorse the atomistic social outlook that he

polemicises against, and that he has something important to say to non-realist holists like Rorty. As a critic of procedural liberalism, however, Taylor may offer less than he promises. This is particularly true of his arguments for state perfectionism, which shift from ontology to advocacy a little too assuredly.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Taylor's narratively unified moral subject

Although, in discussing strong evaluation, we have spoken about the indispensable conditions of identity *formation*, Taylor believes that this way of putting the issue may be somewhat misleading if it were taken to mean that an identity is created in one decisive act, or isolated series of acts, of self-interpretation (Taylor, 1989: 36-37; 47). Taylor believes that the unity of self is not something that can be established definitively; human identity may solidify at some important developmental stages, but it is always vulnerable to challenges that our interlocutors or, in another form, our engaged situation in the world, are constantly throwing up (1989: 47). "We live in time", writes Taylor, "not just self-enclosed in the present, but essentially related to a past which has helped define our identity, and a future which again puts it in question" (1985b: 182). Because of this temporality and mutability of identity, Taylor's claim that people exist in a space of questions that only practical deliberation guided by strong evaluation can suffice to answer also entails that a healthy or coherent identity has to be actively sustained throughout our lives as we respond to the challenges or questions that arise for us out of our strong conceptions of the good.

Viewed from this perspective, identity is more in the nature of a perpetually unfolding project of self-interpretation than a possession or achievement that can be definitively secured. But if identity is a project unfolding in time, and if it is vulnerable to challenge and disruption, then it makes sense to inquire into what lends this project its coherence as a temporal sequence of inter-related judgements and actions. Taylor believes that philosophical discussions of personal identity of the sort that Locke and Hume initiated, in which the unity of life or lack thereof turns on whether we can reflexively apprehend our lives as a unified succession of events, and where discerning this unity this is understood as a purely cognitive operation of disengaged self-reflection, provide an inadequate framework for conceptualising what is at stake in discussions of identity (1989: 49-50; 1991c: 306). If the issue of the unity of self arose only out of disinterested reflection, or out of concern only for our relationship towards the weakly valued or goods that we contingently happen to desire at certain times and in varying intensities, then there would be no a priori need for an integral sense of self. Whatever unity

we attributed to the self would depend on what the inquirer happened to be looking for; a point which Taylor believes Dereck Parfit has persuasively argued (1989: 49-50; 1991c: 306).

The act of self-inquiry that Taylor envisages in his discussion of strong evaluation is, however, one that necessarily seeks to find, or to establish, a unified and minimally coherent sense of self. Taylor believes that the search for a cohesive self is one that, in some form, must be undertaken by all competent persons. It is spontaneously posed as the question of whether or not we, in our lives as a whole, have realised, or are striving toward, the goods that we have integrated into our frameworks of strong evaluation. This "aspiration to fulness" or "aspiration to connection" is, like strong evaluation, an inescapable human constant arising from the fact that we cannot be indifferent to the good (Taylor, 1989: 43, 45). Our relation to the strong goods we identify defines a mode of self-concern which, because it is that by which we define the self and exercise our agency, we can never regard with indifference. While strong evaluation points us in the right direction by allowing us to determine what the good is at any one time, this does not exhaust our concern. Our concern embraces our lives as a whole, and because we can fail to live up to our conception of the good, or lose contact with it, or have our understanding of what it consists in challenged or undermined, we require some faculty for tracking our progress or failure across our entire lives (Taylor, 1989: 50). As Taylor explains,

> My sense of myself is of a being who is growing and becoming. In the very nature of things this cannot be instantaneous. It is not only that I need time and many incidents to sort out what is relatively fixed and stable in my character, temperament and desires from what is variable and changing, thought that is true. It is also that as a being who grows and becomes I can only know myself through the history of my maturations and regressions, overcomings and defeats (1989: 50).

This understanding of ourselves as beings who are what we have become is also that by which we gauge our potentialities and plan future courses of action. By sequencing our past and present sense of self we also develop an orientation towards an anticipated future (1989: 48, 50).

Taylor claims that only by viewing our lives in *narrative* – by seeking a meaning in our pasts, determining what goods are available to us in the present, and projecting out of these possibilities for the future – can we effect this unity of purpose, and that this is in fact what healthy agents do throughout their lives (1989: 47). Grasping identity in narrative terms entails principled selection among, and an ordering of, life events in relation to the good. In

practice this understanding of life finds expression either in living by a pattern or standard that gives expression to our vision of the good, or else by linking our lives up to some greater meaningful reality or "story", or some combination of both. In the former case, people may strive to devote themselves to their family lives, or to mastering some mode of artistic or intellectual expression, or to living by some principle of rational self-control, and so on. The latter mode of "contact" or connection may take the form of ritual or religious devotion to some cosmic order, participating in or witnessing great public events, committing to a collective cause, or something of the sort (Taylor, 1989: 43-44).

Taylor's account of narrative reason clearly points toward an important human faculty but, as Nicholas H. Smith argues, it is contestable whether it qualifies as a *transcendental* condition of identity (2002: 99-101). Taylor's position would be more compelling if he managed to demonstrate that in the absence of narrative unity our sense of self would disintegrate entirely, as he contends it would were we to be unable to strongly evaluate. Even if we were to agree with Taylor that a life without narrative unity would be pervaded by a sense of condemnation, failure, or worthlessness, this doesn't necessarily amount to the sort of identity crisis that lacking a framework of strong evaluation would entail (Taylor, 1989: 44-45; Smith, 2002: 99-101). Indeed, Taylor's own praise of modernist literature in SS, which he believes explores *meaningful* ways in which narratives of biographical identity break down and fragment, suggests that his commitment to the narrative unity of identity may not be immune to the criticism that imposing a narrative unity on our lives may amount to a falsification of, or at least an overly rigid constriction upon, our authentic experience of the self (Taylor, 1989: 456-493; Smith, 2002: 100-01).

Galen Strawson has recently argued this case, contending that construing one's life as a narrative is a dispensable, individual character predisposition and one, moreover, that is likely to distort our perception of the self (2004). Strawson writes: "My guess is that…the Narrative tendency to look for story or narrative coherence in one's life is, in general, a gross hindrance to self-understanding: to a just, general, practically real sense, implicit or explicit, of one's nature" (2004: 447). His criticisms explicitly target Taylor, as well as Alisdair MacIntyre, Paul Ricoeur and a host of others who adopt some version of the narrativity thesis, especially where (as is the case with Taylor) this is indebted to Heidegger's views on temporality and authentic self-concern in *Being and Time*.

Appendix 2: Taylor and Rorty on value

The disagreement between Taylor and Rorty over value realism ultimately centres on their different understandings of what is means to reject foundationalism. Taylor and Rorty both agree that we need to do away with or supplement the foundationalism of traditional Western epistemology, which builds on a "representationalist" model of human beings as subjects who negotiate the world through framing thoughts that either correspond with a subject-independent reality or fail to do so, with the peculiar dignity of human life residing in our capacity to construct knowledge built on more accurate symbolic representations of reality than non-humans. But Taylor disagrees with Rorty that we must for this reason also reject "realism" and assume that the truth of a belief can only ever be its correspondence with another belief (Rorty, R., 1991; 1994a; Taylor, 1985a, 1990; 1995a; Dreyfus in Abbey ed., 2004: 54-55).

Working with an account of language use that he attributes to Heidegger and Wittgenstein, among others, Rorty holds that the inability of our language to refer to any subject-transcendent reality confines us to moving between world-views in a fashion that suits our individual preferences or which conforms to some set of commonly accepted pubic norms, but we cannot justify these moves by appeal to any better fit with an objective reality that might come of doing so (Rorty, R., 1991). Taylor, for his part, believes that these same theories point to a conception of language use in which language is not (as it is for representationalists, as well as for Rorty) a screen between us and the world, but an ontologically basic opening onto the world without which we could not exercise our agency in any recognisably human form at all. Taylor builds on this claim, which we considered when discussing the expressive functions of language in Chapter One, to further argue that if our engagement with the world about us is defined by the linguistic descriptions of our selves and our worlds that we adopt, then by considering the sort of engagement that our descriptions facilitate we are provided with a measure for weighing competing beliefs and selecting from among rival goods in our practical deliberations (Taylor, 1990; Guignon in Hiley et al. eds., 1991). Thus while both Taylor and Rorty agree that the inherent reliance of persons upon self-interpretation through a shared communal language means that we have to understand human beings in holistic terms, as related to a community in a manner that is definitive of their identities, Rorty believes that we can and must have this holism without value realism while Taylor wishes to maintain both (Rorty, R., 1991; 1994a; 1994b; Taylor, 1990). Taylor argues that the anti-representationalism that both he and Rorty defend entails that some forms of

understanding will be truer than others, where this means not only that these understandings are more internally coherent but also more capable of orienting us within our worlds relative to our purposes (Taylor, 1990).

Taylor argues that Rorty's position demonstrates an incomplete break with the representationalism that they both repudiate:

> [Rorty's] notion of what it is to reject representationalism still seems commanded by the doctrine being rejected. So to learn that our thoughts don't correspond to things-in-themselves is to conclude that they don't correspond to anything at all….Rorty seems to be operating within the logic of the old [epistemological] system that linked us to transcendent reality through a screen of representations, even while distancing himself from it (Taylor, 1990: 271).

This leads Rorty into the belief that people with different understandings are

> situated behind incompatible representations, without there being anything these representations are about which can arbitrate. They are not seen as situated in a common world, with a framework understanding developed partly dialogically, which defines for them the constraints and demands on their representations (Taylor, 1990: 271).

As I understand him, Taylor wants to argue that we can view our beliefs to be true or false, or more and less perceptive, not in accordance with their fit with a reality that could ever be known independently of our representations of it, but rather by determining whether these beliefs enable us to engage with the people and things in our worlds in a manner that constitutes an improvement upon some previous mode of engagement, relative to a background of our most basic purposes and consonant with the shared understandings through which these can be intelligibly expressed. It is only in relation to a pre-given background of this sort that we can speak of truth and degrees of truth and in relation to which we will have anything but the most capricious of motives for choosing one set of beliefs over another but, within these limits, doing so is perfectly sensible. Thus accepting the cultural context of interpretation in no way commits us to non-realism *a priori*. We may struggle to understand the move from one interpretation of our experience to another as a gain or a loss, but such a move is in principle possible; likewise, people from different cultures may lack a shared vocabulary in which to contrast their beliefs but, at least in principle, there are common criteria that all might appeal to in such undertakings.

Appendix 3: Taylor and Habermas on justification and application

Georgia Warnke offers an insightful discussion of the relationship between the justification of liberal norms and their practical implementation by contrasting Habermas's ideal of just political association that emerges through the discourse ethical approach to practical reason articulated in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984) and elsewhere with Taylor's substantive model of practical deliberation and asks what these two approaches might dictate at what we have been calling the advocacy level of political discussion (Warnke, 1995). This issue has also been taken up directly by Habermas in "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State" (1999).

When applying rationally justified norms, Habermas acknowledges that an agreement on universal principles can dictate a number of distinct practical solutions. He therefore insists that "any universalistic morality is dependent upon a form of life that *meets it halfway*" (Habermas in Warnke, 1995: 129; emphasis in original). Habermas agrees with Taylor that justificatory discourses need to be supplemented by discourses of application, but he rejects the idea that deliberation of the latter sort proceeds best when guided by an Atistotlean notion of *phronēsis* because of the unreflective and partisan nature of the solutions that such a deliberative approach is likely to produce. Rather, concrete actors in situated contexts must learn to follow established principles of application such as considering all relevant aspects of a case and fitting the means to the ends (Warnke, 1995: 130-31). Warnke argues that this issues in a "top down" conception of the relationship between justification and application in the sense that the relevant question at the level of application is how specific cultural groups must adapt their moral understandings and institutions in order for the application of rationally justified norms to proceed (Warnke, 1995: 133).

In contrast to Habermas, Taylor demonstrates a "bottom up" approach to application insofar as the question he appears to be asking concerns how rationally justified norms and the legal processes governing their implementation may be adapted to best accommodate the institutional and cultural life of agents within existing societies (Warnke, 1995: 133). This is, I believe, what Warnke is gesturing at when she argues that, for Taylor, "cultural values and orientations must be acknowledged not just as elements of the concrete situations to which principles of justice apply but as codeterminers of their meaning" (Warnke, 1995: 135).

This approach is exemplified, as we shall see in more detail in Chapter Five, in Taylor's discussion of the political aspirations of minority groups like Francophone Canadians pressing for group-specific interpretations of language laws in Quebec. Taylor believes it can

be argued that respecting the commitment to cultural survival that he attributes to the Francophone majority in the province allows us to apply rights not only to individuals but also, in some cases, to such groups. Such arguments do not require a rejection of liberal principles of freedom and equality but rather call into question the notion that difference-blind public policies across an entire spectrum of social issues necessarily further these values (Taylor, 1992).

Habermas has highlighted these differences between himself and Taylor while contending that Taylor's challenge to the system of individual rights upheld by modern liberal societies is unnecessary because this system bears within itself the resources for protecting minority or threatened groups (1999). This owes to the fact that democratic legislative decisions, while upholding an ethically neutral system of law, are informed not only by universally valid moral norms and principles but also by practical discourses concerning how best to actualise these principles in accordance with the needs of concrete political actors whose demands express the ethical values of particular communities possessing unique self-understandings and traditions (Habermas, 1999). Thus legal systems are "ethically permeated": "every legal system is *also* the expression of a particular form of life and not merely the reflection of the universal content of basic rights" (Habermas, 1999: 217, 227; emphasis in original). Taylor and Habermas clearly agree on this point, but unlike Taylor, who believes that this constitutes a compelling argument for modifying legal systems in culturally plural political societies, Habermas concludes from this that legitimate challenge to the legal system should be channelled not at the ethical neutrality of the law but at the ethically patterned fashion in which the law is inevitably interpreted and applied (Habermas, 1999).

Habermas contends that this misguided belief that the legal system itself (as opposed to the legal experts and legislative authorities that interpret it) is inherently hostile to group difference leads Taylor to endorse a model of practical reasoning where the goal of understanding is not to ensure equal respect for all individuals through granting individual rights but to preserve the existence of particular cultures through provisions such as awarding group rights (Habermas, 1999). Taylor takes as his hermeneutical starting point a presumption of the equal value of all cultures and, provided this presumption is confirmed in the course of close engagement with the culture in question, seeks to establish how practical deliberation can best secure the flourishing of such a culture, which includes its reproduction across succeeding generations (Taylor, 1992). Habermas objects to this approach, which "represent[s] a kind of preservation of the species by administrative means" (1999: 222). The sort of

cultural preservation envisaged by Taylor closes down individual choice by preventing members of certain cultures from engaging with other cultures and challenging or abandoning their own traditions, and this ultimately leads to the ossification of cultural structures and understandings as they become incapable of adapting to the ever-changing conditions of modern life (Habermas, 1999).

This second objection, to the effect that Taylor's presumption in favour of cultural survival promotes sectarianism and intolerance, may well be overstated. While measures taken to secure cultural survival do restrict individual choice, they do not *of necessity* foster contempt and disregard for other cultures and modes of being or a complacent attitude towards one's own cultural milieu. At any rate, the sort of parochialism Habermas warns against is the very opposite of the model of open exchange that Taylor endorses, where every advance in the understanding of the other necessarily involves a corresponding advance in self-understanding (1992; 2002). As Warnke points out, Gadamer's model would seem to imply that cultural groups have an investment in promoting the survival and flourishing of other cultures as a condition of their own self-development (1995: 140).

Habermas's top-down and Taylor's bottom-up approaches to discourses of application needn't, however, be configured as irreconcilable opposites. The differences and also the possible complementarities between these approaches come into view when considering that both are animated by a fundamental commitment to furthering political tolerance (Warnke, 1995). For Habermas, the political accommodation of diverse cultural groups requires fairness and flexibility in the application of universally valid and legally impartial norms to concrete situations. This entails interpreting the nature of the practical political measures required in open, non-discriminatory democratic debate that channels the demands of diverse cultures (1999). For Taylor, however, the democratic receptivity to cultural values envisioned by Habermas must extend beyond discourses of application to discourses of justification themselves. Taylor's dissatisfaction on this score is best understood, I believe, in light of his arguments to the effect that universal commitments should not trump particularistic commitments as a matter of course and that frequently what appear to be culturally impartial moral norms or principles turn out upon closer philosophical probing to be intelligible only in relation to the practices and evaluative frameworks of particular cultural groups. This does not entail the non-realism and the inescapable cultural parochialism of which Rorty speaks, but it does mean that properly self-aware practical deliberation must therefore proceed from *within* a basic substantive framework of value worked out by all parties to the deliberation and not, as

proceduralists like Habermas would have it, by sequestering a realm of culturally neutral moral values believed to command the universal assent of all rational agents. While Taylor's preferred model of practical reasoning confronts deliberators with great obstacles toward reaching mutual understanding and ensuring co-operation, he holds that it is inherently more accommodating of the identity needs of members of minority or disadvantaged groups because it is willing to *assume* at the outset that their particularistic values may square off against the purportedly universal values of other deliberators.

But, as Taylor stresses, this receptivity to diverse goods must be a presumption and not a foredrawn conclusion: toleration must have a limit and liberalism will always be "a fighting creed" (1992: 62). While toleration of groups like Francophone Quebeckers might, in unique circumstances and supported by compelling arguments, allow governments to legally restrict important privileges and immunities in the course of regulating the operations of businesses and education policies, it must never allow for compromise on fundamental rights to life, liberty, free speech, due process, free practice of religion and the like (Taylor, 1992: 59). What Warnke suggests is that, given Taylor's claims about identity and his ideal of practical deliberation through a fusion of horizons, we might usefully appeal to a modified version of Habermas's procedurally defined understanding of the ideal conditions of discourse when determining through deliberation the contours of this substantive boundary to tolerance. Habermas's discourse-ethical approach to mutual understanding and co-operation holds that agreement between deliberators will only be fair to all parties if the basic conditions of rational discourse are adhered to. An architectonic presupposition of rational discourse is that the force of the better argument, and not relationships of power or overt coercion, must determine the outcome of deliberation (Warnke, 1995: 139-40). This entails that exclusion, discrimination and manipulation of any sort will be unacceptable to all deliberators, and for this formal reason they will be motivated to take whatever concrete measures are needed to ensure that basic conditions of tolerant deliberation prevail (Warnke, 1995: 139-40). Warnke's argument fits well with Taylor's own belief that a proceduralist ethics – of which Habermas's stands out as "the most interesting and rich such theory ever produced" – may considerably advance political thought provided it comes clean about its own substantive value orientations (Taylor, 1993: 349, n.2).

Appendix 4: Taylor on practical reason and freedom

In *Hegel and Modern Society* Taylor argues that to avoid vacuity or arbitrariness in our choices people must realise that "the individual is part of, inheres in, a larger life, and…he is only what he is by doing so" (Taylor, 1988a: 87). To the extent that that the modes of experience that we understand to be essentially constitutive of human agency are sustained by language, and granted too that languages are sustained by speech communities, "what we are as human beings we are only in a cultural community. Perhaps once we have fully grown up in a culture we can leave it and still retain much of it. But this kind of case is exceptional…." (Taylor, 1988a: 87).

These passages, taken from Taylor's *Hegel and Modern Society*, might suggest that Taylor plays down our capacity for moral autonomy, construed in the Kantian sense of rational revisability of our most basic ends. But insofar as Taylor might accurately be said to endorse some version of Michael Sandel's criticisms of rational revisability, I believe that one would have to reject this position on both descriptive and normative grounds. Descriptively, people clearly are capable of separating themselves from their communal ends and denying this is exceedingly counter-intuitive. It may be impossible to conceive of oneself as capable of forming beliefs and making choices in isolation from *all* communal ends, but it is certainly possible to envisage ourselves in isolation from our *present* ends, and this is all that rational self-determination requires (Kymlicka, 1989a: 47-53; Carse, 1994: 191; Mulhall & Swift: 1992: 177; 2003: 465). To fail to appreciate this is to commit a genetic fallacy; to reason from the ontological priority of particular communal relationships in the formation of individual identity to a normative commitment to defending the values of this same community is to beg important questions about the moral value of particular identity-defining goods and says nothing about how these square off with other possibilities (Carse, 1994). Taken as a normative thesis, the denigration of this voluntaristic capacity is no more appealing as it threatens to discredit rational agency per se in favour of an "unreflective herd solidarity" and nullify the moral distinction between principled social commitment on the one hand and "blind obsession" or "wholly non-rational attachment" on the other (Buchanan, 1989: 871, 872).

Taylor's associated claims or suggestions that the only alternative to this mode of belonging is a radically unattached or (in Sandel's lexicon) "unencumbered"[84] form of social

[84] Sandel argues that the subject in the original position is unencumbered insofar as it is "a self understood as prior to and independent of purposes and ends" (1984: 86). For a subject so conceived "[n]o role or commitment

belonging that rules out meaningful social commitment and tends towards nihilism, and that liberals endorse such a mode of belonging, are undoubtedly misleading, and neither Rawls nor any other of the more influential thinkers in the contemporary liberal tradition affirm, or need to affirm, this view of the self (Taylor, 1988a: 159; Sandel, 1982: 150-165; 1984: 86; Buchanan, 1989; Kymlicka, 1989a; Digeser, 1995; Mulhall & Swift, 2003).

There are, however, places where Sandel does allow for rational revisability, and Will Kymlicka argues that the difference he claims to find between himself and Rawls is to that extent overblown (Kymlicka, 1989a: 55-56; Sandel, 1982: 152, 179; Carse, 1994: 195). Much the same, I believe, is true of Taylor. While Taylor comes very close, at points, to endorsing an understanding of communal belonging in *Hegel and Modern Society* that resembles Sandel's, he silently drops it in those of his works that I focus upon. In these works Taylor makes it clear that, while we derive our identities from our participation in the practices of particular communities, we are always capable of critically revising the beliefs and norms that are constitutive of our identities both as individuals and through collective deliberation. Taylor only wishes to establish that whether conforming to or rejecting received practices – the common "roles, offices, statuses, rules, laws, customs" and the languages that partly constitute them, of which we spoke in the previous chapter – we necessarily do so within the limits of what our shared expressive languages render intelligible (1995a: 130). Our identities are always *related* to this background, but this does not prevent us from assuming a critical stance toward it; indeed, Taylor's holism establishes no more than that one could neither intelligibly affirm nor negate social practices without first being situated within or closely studying the shared linguistic traditions that are essentially bound up with them.

In *Hegel and Modern Society* Taylor stretches this concept by arguing that certain of our paradigm purposes are set for us by our communal embedding, and that free choice is only meaningful and responsible in relation to these pre-given purposes, while downplaying the capacity that individuals possess to distance themselves from these communal ends and rationally redefine their most fundamental commitments. As this approach is unconvincing and morally unappealing, and as he dispenses with it in the works that I have chosen to focus upon, I will largely overlook it in what follows. We will nonetheless see that Taylor continues, in places, to argue *as if* something like this held, but this I consider an *inconsistency* in his work.

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could define me so completely that I could not understand myself without it. No project could be so essential that turning away from it would question the person I am" (Sandel, 1984: 86).