CHARLES TAYLOR’S CRITIQUE OF LIBERALISM:
LIBERAL AUTONOMY AND COMMUNITARIAN HETERONOMY*

INTRODUCTION

The history of liberalism is determined by its opposition to every attempt to limit the scope of an individual’s autonomous choice, limitations imposed by the fossilized aristocratic arrangement of the 17th and 18th centuries, the absolutism of the 19th century and the totalitarian regimes of 20th century Europe. To enable the individual to realize her individual interests is a liberal remedy for all injustice. This aim influences all aspects of public life: the political, legal and economic systems, as well as culture. As a result of this, one can observe a predominating “individualization” and a loosening of social ties, which arises new problems. Individualistic modernity is associated by its critics with a dismantling of public life and a worrisome welfare polarization, which is camouflaged by ubiquitous consumerism. The liberal incentive to give priority to individual interests diminishes the sense of social cooperation within the community. Surprisingly, a concern for the danger of social compulsion is still present, and paradoxically is often noticed in the regime that is popularly named demo-liberal. Anxiety has turned into aversion, which is depicted with a lack of trust in public institutions, decreasing turn-outs, and the withdrawal of a growing number of people from public initiatives. These syndromes show a real jeopardy for the civic society of our time, without which efficiency in organizing the activity of independent individuals the liberal democracy cannot exist.

As an answer to the crisis of the community in the United States, a new stream of political thought appeared in the late 1980’s: “communitarianism”. Since then, communitarianism has gained many followers in the Anglo-Saxon world. Gradually, it has attracted the attention of political theorists and practitioners in continental Europe.

COMMUNITARIAN CRITIQUE OF LIBERALISM

The etymology of the word “communitarianism” indicates ‘community’ as the central idea of this political doctrine. In the last decades the term ‘community’ has become very popular in the language of politics in the United States. It is present in the

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moutns of politicians as well as on the pages of theoretical works. Formerly, it was 'freedom' that was envisioned as the most appropriate weapon with which to fight injustice and all of the world's problems. Nowadays, one can observe a tendency to engage in the struggle – with civic apathy, the increasing rate of juvenile crimes, the growing number of divorces, environmental deterioration, and paralyzing corruption of bureaucracy – the idea of community, a revitalized force. The communitarian call to participate in reconstructing or enforcing the civic values is commonly endorsed. A stormy public debate that was aroused by the books of Robert Bellah and Robert Putnam can serve as the best proof.1

Confronting communitarianism with liberalism in the theoretical field requires the proper identification of adversary, what helps to limit the scope of research. This role was taken by neokantian, deontological liberalism, which full incarnation is the theory of 'justice as fairness' of John Rawls.2 The critique of the Rawlsian concept of the autonomous individual, deontology (priority of the right over the good), and the universality of the liberal rules of justice became the subject of the political writings of Michael Sandel, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Walzer, and Charles Taylor, the main theoreticians of communitarianism.3 In this essay I would like to focus on the last of the above mentioned thinkers.

The communitarian critique usually adopts two forms. First, communitarians maintain that the liberal state lessens our ability to build a civic society and to function in a stable community. Second, they argue that liberal theory inadequately describes the social reality, since it is unreasonable to construct a moral theory founded on a procedural justice, deprived of any community's moral tradition. Obviously, the first argument is aimed at liberal practice, while the second is aimed at liberal theory's false perception of reality.

The main axis of any political theory is its vision of man. Therefore, it is obvious that communitarians, formulating a negative opinion on the liberal theory, focus intensely on the individualistic conception of man. Doing this, they argue that the liberal image of an autonomous person, creating his private world of moral value, stands in strong contradiction to the obvious fact of the role of others in establishing the identity of a person.

The multitude of cultures and traditions determine the variety of social attitudes and ideas concerning the proper decision at the moment of making a moral choice. Therefore, the liberal trust in the critical, unencumbered rationality of man leads liberals astray. An important source of knowledge of a particular man is the specific culture in which this man lives and which forms him. An independent, autonomous


self is merely a result of theoretical activity, which is characterized by intellectual weakness. Liberal political theory strives for the complete separation of the private and the public. However, the contemporary *Leviathan* is weak. It is characterized by a break of connection between politics and the self. Lack of trust in what is commonly shared leads to a refusal to participate in the articulation, promotion and realization of the common will. The universality of what is public and the particularity of what is private forces the individual to face an insurmountable moral choice. On the one hand, she appreciates the share that others have in constituting her self (in the private dimension); on the other hand, she declares her independence in constructing universal rules of justice (the public dimension). In the atmosphere of a divergence of value systems in private and public lives, the liberal self is doomed to schizophrenia. As a result, the public (not private) face of the liberal individual prohibits her from answering clearly the question of the ends of community: its "good" and uniqueness (peculiarity) of the rules of justice implanted in her community. The autonomous self loses a sense of individual ties with the environment she dwells in. The only hope in overcoming a potential alienation is the restitution of the idea of community, its "good" achieved thanks to a joint effort. Daniel Bell argues that the political implications of communitarian ideas are the proposals that:

"...allow people to experience their life as bound up with the good of the communities which constitute their identity, as opposed to a liberal politics concerned primarily with securing the conditions for individuals to lead autonomous lives."  

Communitarian anti-liberalism is frequently based on an interpretation that identifies the liberal attitude with the realization of the postmodern ideal. A modern man, as many communitarians maintain, acts in an instrumental way, becoming the only measure of everything. He thinks of nature, of others, and – in extreme moments – of himself in an instrumental manner. Lacking a common viewpoint, the moral language of the modern self is incomprehensible to others.

This evaluation of the liberal conception of the person allows communitarians to identify the doctrinal source of the crisis of the civic attitude in modern Western Democracies, and in the United States in particular. This critique of political practice is based on argumentation aimed at liberal doctrine. The crisis of liberal civic society stems, as Michael Sandel contends, from its "public philosophy."  

This philosophy assumes that there is a catalogue of fundamental rights and freedoms, and tools of their articulation, whose unanimous approval guaranties the public peace. This catalogue is one of the fundamental institutions of the liberal public sphere, being an effect of a stable civic consensus. Meanwhile, in liberal democracies in general, and the contemporary United States in particular, one can notice an uncontrolled proliferation of rights and freedoms that deprives them of the feature of fundamental value. Thereby the consensus and public peace are being undermined. A new term, 'rights talk', has been gaining great popularity recently. Everywhere in the language of politics, in mass media, and in everyday life, we hear arguments based on a desire to protect the human rights that are variously understood and evaluated by the participating parties of public debates. Despite the term ‘fundamental rights’ being in

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common use, we are imperceptibly trapped in inconsistency: we are followers of universal rights, while our opponents merely want to realize their particular interests. It is extremely tough to separate the language of rights from the language of interests. All sides of the conflict attempt to disguise themselves as protectors of rights. For example, when the American Left speaks of (1) the economic grounds of human dignity, of (2) the freedom of a woman to make the decision of whether to bear an unwanted baby (pro-choice movement), or of (3) the advantages of affirmative action, the Right answers with arguments of (1) the efficiency of a free market, (2) the rights of the unborn (pro-life movement), and (3) reversed discrimination. As shown, both sides effectively engage in an argument about rights and liberties, proving their fundamental nature. Similarly, other interest groups attempt to lobby for: a common access to guns (National Rifle Association), access to soft drugs, or rights for sexual minorities, etc. Since the rights talks, by nature, do not lead to a stable consensus, a court becomes a preferable arena for rivalry. The institution of the judicial review serves, as liberals believe, to catalyze the public peace. This belief is not shared by communitarians. Courts' decisions do not finish "fundamental" controversies. The state of satisfaction achieved by liberals after the Roe v. Wade trial has been balanced for three decades by sabotage of the abortion law. Abortion is still one of the most controversial topics in the United States.

CHARLES TAYLOR'S COMMUNITARIANISM

Charles Taylor does not limit the scope of his critical argumentation to contemporary Anglo-Saxon liberalism. Neither does he challenge the conclusions reached by Rawls to in A Theory of Justice. The name of John Rawls is mentioned merely on a couple of pages of Taylor's Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity, his best known work. The main target of Taylor's intellectual contemnation is modernity and the naturalism that has taken possession of the way we perceive the world, becoming a real threat to people's social identification. However, since Taylor reduces the defining characteristic of modernity to manifestation of permissive and egoistic individualism, instrumental rationalism and destructive relativism, one can say that convergence with anti-liberal argumentation is obvious. Therefore, assessing Taylor's perspective of the liberal connotation of the Rawlsian theory of 'justice as fairness' is absolutely defensible.

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8 Naturalism, according to common comprehension, presumes implanting biological epistemology in social sciences. Taylor understands naturalism as an attitude that emphasizes the "natural" source of our basic freedoms and rights, liberating their existence from over-personal entities - God, community, and "others". In his opinion, followers of the natural conception of man regard teleological morality (morality as a pursuit of the good) as an empty term. Taylor also notices a resemblance between naturalism and reductionism. The later reduces values to mere projection of our subjective reactions in the world of pluralistic neutrality. In this world we are unable to evaluate critically and objectively any conception of ends. We cannot deem any life-choice as wrong or publicly inadequate.

Charles Taylor is a widely known interpreter of the philosophy and social thought of George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). His fascination with *Phenomenology of the Spirit* left a stamp on his perception of modernity and liberal reality as well. Hegel's ethical system is a counter-proposal to the Kantian philosophy of morality. Comparing the ideological dispute between those great philosophers to the debate of contemporary adversaries of moral choice theories one can conclude that we are witnessing another emanation of that 19th century polemic. Obviously, we should keep a sense of proportion. The debate between liberals and communitarians is still not as influential as its archetype.

To properly evaluate to what extent Taylor got fascinated by Hegel's moral philosophy we shall present the foundations of his ethical system.

**HEGEL'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY**

Hegel rebuts the Kantian conviction that the only motive of our activity is located in our severe obligation to fulfill a moral duty. According to Hegel, ignoring feelings, penchants and interests at the moment of making moral choices is equal to dehumanization. Since the basic question of every individual is not what an obligation is but what our ends are, the aim of each of our actions should be considered in the context of good and freedom. However, identification of the personal good is not individualistic. A self should consider her well-being within the perspective of the common good. Autonomy cannot be fully subjective, as it is in Kantian ethics. Thereby, Hegel negates the empirical validity of the Kantian moral project. Subjecting a moral judgment to an unrealistic knowledge based on an inner sense of what is right (Kantian 'practical reason') makes objectivity of the good impossible. Subjectivity leads to the deformation of conscience that is eventually transformed into a "bad conscience". Kant's assertion that ethics must be based on a sense of duty is, according to Hegel, too vague and empty. One question persists: how to indicate that duty and its content? In Hegel's opinion, the only justification for Kantian duty is that duty in itself, which is tautological. Neglecting the social and historical context of moral choice deprives Kant's theory of any logical content. An individual, using the 'categorical imperative', is not able to properly interpret her real needs, wants, affections, intentions, and interests since she is encumbered by her community. The 'categorical imperative' is a mere formalism that leads to a "bad conscience".

Hegel presents his ethics using a dialectical methodology. The first step of dialectical development is to deny what he calls "abstract law". It is an objective law that is also accidental, poor in subjective feelings and attitudes. Individuals find it strange and burdensome. Its negation, leading to the absorption of the "abstract
law”, is *Moralität*. 10 *Moralität* means to find an inner law – as a declaration of conscience – that potentially can turn into a “bad conscience”. The synthesis of this negation is *Sittlichkeit* – a German term that means “social morality”. At this very moment, objectivity is complemented by subjectivity, losing at the same time its abstraction and immunizing *Moralität* against becoming a bad, totally subjective conscience. Thereby, law becomes personally owned, while remaining public. A bondage of the “abstract law” in connection with a license of *Moralität* finally gives the true moral freedom (*Sittlichkeit*) that is realized in actual interpersonal relations. Objective law and subjective conscience transform into socially moralized law. In place of the arid, impassive ‘categorical imperative’ Hegel proposes the bright and calm conscience of *Sittlichkeit*.

**HEGELIAN INSPIRATIONS**

Proving the special role of the community in the creation of our personality and our moral growth, Taylor invokes Hegel’s notion of *Sittlichkeit*. For both Hegel and Taylor, our moral decisions are not based on the outcomes of individual rationalism – the Kantian ‘categorical imperative’ for example – but on the need to fulfill our obligation to the community. There is no morality outside community. The Kantian separation of the will and nature is a chimera. Hegel argues that freedom is complete only when nature – a society in this case – is superior to individual reasoning. This hierarchy is based on proper understanding and the voluntary acceptance of the goals of the dominant entity: the society. However, it does not mean that Hegel is in opposition to rationalism as such. Rationality, in his understanding, is reduced to individual, reflective contemplation of what is expected by society, its traditions and the particularity of its relation with individuals. The heteronomy of morality does not exclude the very idea of ethical choice, because the only acceptable *Sittlichkeit* has a reasonable form – reasonable, at least, in the particular historical and cultural conditions. The individual needs to be aware and eager in fulfilling her obligations delivered from the idea of *Sittlichkeit*. Therefore, *Sittlichkeit* does not contradict freedom, but identifies it with the rational necessity which the individual must be aware of and ready to accept. However, it did not refrain Hegel from contending that *Sittlichkeit* reached its ideal in the Prussian absolute monarchy of Friedrich Wilhelm IV.

To Hegel, individuals gain justification of their existence only thanks to participation in society. This thought obviously contradicts liberalism, which was shown by Karl Popper in his *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. However, Popper’s accusation of the totalitarian inclinations of Hegel’s philosophy is refutable to Taylor. The citizens are not a means to ends indicated by the State. The organic perspective of society does not have to result in treating individuals in an instrumental way. Let’s invoke one of Hegel’s thoughts from *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, where he states:

10 According to Hegel, Kantian ethics is a full realization of what he calls *Moralität*. The reason for this opinion is Kant’s interpretation of individual motivation that is based on undetermined intellect – when a person is to make an ethical choice – and the ‘categorical imperative’ as such.
“The state is not there for the sake of the citizens; one could say, it is the goal and they are the instrument. But this relation of ends and means is quite inappropriate here. For the state is not something abstract, standing over against the citizens; but rather they are moments as in organic life, where no member is end and none means. (...) The essence of the state is ethical life.”

These words, in Taylor’s opinion, overcome the weaknesses of Kant’s subjective ethics. Hegel’s transcendental moral choice is very useful to the communitarian position of Taylor. It is an attempt to overcome the dualism characteristic of Kant’s thought, and of liberalism in general; contrasting thought with life and rationality with nature. Thus, it is a return to the “higher” unity, which allows the individual to realize her “higher” aspirations. According to Hegel, there is no distinction between the ends of an individual and the ends of a community. So, there exists no situation in which the individual serves the ends of her community. If this is true, the liberal accusation of the inferior role of the individual is unfounded. Taylor says in *Hegel and Modern Society*:

“The state or the community has a higher life; its parts are related as the parts of an organism. Thus the individual is not serving an end separate from him; rather he is serving a larger goal which is the ground of his identity, for he only is the individual he is in this larger life. We have gone beyond the opposition of self-goal and other-goal.”

The state is not an end in itself. It is a means to a wholesome society. It is characterized by the full synchronization of the needs and ends of individuals with the ends of the community – the individual is completely socialized. The correct vision of the proper life is based on the social identification of the individual. It is not a harness. If we assume that the state’s compulsion is not an always successful means of coordinating the common actions taken by individuals, we need a notion of the common good. Instrumental, liberal rationalism will fail this task. Modern, western societies are, in Taylor’s opinion, plunged into a deep crisis. The individual’s trust in the democratic decision-making process and the political class is permanently deteriorating. Taylor argues:

“Many people can no longer accept the legitimacy of voting and the surrounding institutions, elections, parliaments etc., as vehicles of social decision. They have redrawn their conceptions of the relation of individual to society, so that the mediation and distance which any large-scale voting system produces between individual decision and social outcome seems unacceptable. Nothing can claim to be a real social decision which is not arrived at in a full and intense discussion in which all participants are fully conscious of what is at stake. Decisions made by elected representatives are branded as sham, as manipulation masquerading as consensus. With this redefinition of the norm of collective decision (that is, of a decision made by people and not just for them, our present representative institutions begin to be portrayed as an imposture; and a substantial proportion of the population is alienated from them.”

The decline of *Sittlichheit* causes alienation. The liberal division into public and private results in treating the latter as the core of our being; while our approach to

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the former is ambivalent at best, and sometimes even hostile. Modern man is seeking signposts in the universalism of liberal morality, negating at the same time the authority of Sittlichkeit. Liberal modernity, adopting romantic individualism and utilitarian instrumentalism, undermines the very idea of Sittlichkeit and becomes responsible for alienation, against which revolutionists of various provenance try to fight. Their activity has been a threat to freedom and in consequence to liberalism as such.\textsuperscript{15} Political radicals, under banners of "absolute freedom", have been trying to reshape social structures and the rules of social life by invoking the idea of massive participation in public life. Putting the notion of freedom at the center of the message has not guaranteed eliminating the threat of enslavement, as liberals assumed. The idea of absolute freedom taken over by radicals requires a full homogeneity. In this assumption one can perceive the root of chauvinism and communism. The former demanded national homogeneity (in the case of nazism, both racial and national), while the latter demanded the liquidation of classes. Today the world is created by mass media, consumerism, and an idea of boundless progress – the new signs of homogeneity. Modern societies are characterized by economic interdependence and paralyzing bureaucracy whereas liberal freedom is defined as the ability to choose, no matter what the worth is of what has been chosen. Uniformity is as imminent today as in the first half of the 20th century.

In sum, Hegel's ethical program is of great importance to the communitarian position of Charles Taylor, even if the philosophy of Hegel cannot be fully adopted to the ideological debate between liberals and communitarians. In \textit{Hegel and the Modern Society} Taylor clearly indicates his inspiration:

"Hegel is important today because we recurrently feel the need for a critique of the illusions and distortions of perspective which spring from the atomistic, utilitarian, instrumental conceptions of man and nature, while at the same time puncturing the Romantic counter-illusions they continually generate. It is because Hegel is constantly engaged in doing just this, and with an exceptional depth and penetration of insight, that he has something to say to us even though his own ontology of the necessary unfolding of reason may seem as illusionary to us as some of the doctrines he attacks."\textsuperscript{16}

A careful reading of \textit{Hegel and Modern Society} and the following works by Taylor allows us to see that Hegel's works carried great meaning for Taylor.

\textbf{CRITIQUE OF THE SELF-CREATING INDIVIDUAL; THE 'LINGUAL COMMUNITY' AND MORAL MOTIVATIONS}

However, the idea that was the greatest inspiration for Taylor was the concept of lingual identification. This became the core of Taylor's communitarianism. A deepened presentation of the theory of lingual identification and its role in personal self-comprehending was the main challenge to Taylor in \textit{Sources of the Self}. In his opinion, man is a self-interpreting being, who conditions his understanding on identification of his connections with a conception of good contained in the lingual pattern


\textsuperscript{16} Taylor C., \textit{Hegel...}, op.cit., p. 72.
of his community. This vision is in obvious contradiction with liberal anthropology, devoted to an autonomous conception of the self.

According to Taylor, a feeling of participation in a community is not limited to identifying connections, but also values and beliefs depicted in a kind of framework, that is a moral background to the individual. A language is an integral part of our common legacy, a manifestation of culture that plays a crucial role in exploring, developing, and understanding this framework, and finally a tool for self-definition. A conversation with a widely understood social environment makes self-comprehending possible. I am who I am thanks to my existence among others. Gaining knowledge of myself goes along with improving the language I use. Taylor says:

"This is the sense in which one cannot be a self on one's own. I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors; in one way in relation to those conversation partners who were essential to my achieving self-definition; in another in relation to those who are now crucial to my continuing grasp of languages of self-understanding – and, of course, these classes may overlap. A self exists only within what I call 'webs of interlocution'."  

As Taylor maintains, our self-definition depends on the place we talk from and to whom we talk. Language in itself is a product of community and its heritage. This leads to the conclusion that we cannot comprehend the self in isolation from others. This postulate is vividly heteronomous in nature.

But language should be seen here in a wider context than only a verbal means of communication, because in this way it would be private. But defining 'language' one should mention elections, political meetings, or religious events. In other words, taking part in social practices and establishing social institutions should be understood as elements of language of the particular community.

According to Taylor, there are two types of sources in making moral decisions. Firstly, an instinct similar to nausea. We simply feel what should be done and what we should resist. Immoral behavior makes us sick; we feel discomfort or distaste. This approach to the nature of moral choice amounts to physiological reactions. The other motive behind our moral behavior is based on our strong belief that we should realize our humanity, our dignity as human beings. The manner in which we act confirms our existence as: the children of God; the chosen nation; rational beings trying to determine life-ends and value systems; or a part of the cosmos seeking harmony with other elements. As Taylor argues, the latter, ontological motive is more interesting and challenging. The functioning of our sense of morality is possible within the framework, mentioned above, discovered in the process of lingual self-interpretation. The framework is three-dimensional (three axes):

1. Our relations with other people – appreciation of their individual value and dignity, and awareness of our obligation to them.
2. Our conception of a good life – good for humanity as such.
3. Awareness of our social status and dignity; endorsement of our exceptional nature.

18 Taylor C., Hegel..., op.cit., p. 87.
19 Taylor C., Sources ..., op.cit., pp. 14–16.
Taylor wants us to treat these axes as a tool with which to set the right direction of our moral decisions, like a compass in the moral world. Using them we will be able to recognize the proper path through life, and to decide what ends are worthy of effort.

Perceiving the accurateness of our moral choice in terms of our obligation to others and living up to their expectations is in clear opposition to the Kantian 'categorical imperative'. For Kant, the autonomous individual is independent from the place she stands in. Her morality should not be seen in the context of moral obligations to others. There is no social horizon for an individual trusting in 'practical reason'. But Taylor contends that if we want to act rightly and to reach our self-understanding, we should give up adhering to some individual moral horizon, specific to concrete person. There is no monological moral language. True morality requires an interpersonal conversation. This thought is similar to Hegel's idea of Sittlichkeit – dialogical morality within a particular society, in historical and cultural terms.²⁰

TAYLOR'S CRITIQUE OF RAWL'S'S A THEORY OF JUSTICE

Taylor's critique of Rawlsian liberalism is focused on its deontological base. The concept of 'justice as fairness' is probably the most widely known and discussed theoretical Anglo-Saxon political and social proposal of our times. The Kantian ethical program was the main source of inspiration for Rawls. Therefore, it is not surprising that Taylor, who finds in Hegel his intellectual ancestor, tries to undermine the basis of Rawls's philosophy. The main target to him is the deontological aspect of 'justice as fairness'. Rawls, in his theory, focuses mainly on what is right (fair), not on what is good; on what is individual, not on what is common. His theory of justice is deontological since what is right is derived, in his ethical project, independently from what is good. Excluding the need to justify morality in the context of what is good for individuals, groups, and society is an absolute condition for deontology. Rawls takes this path. However, as Taylor argues, accepting this necessity may result in decreasing the sense of good as such. Moreover, the procedural theory of justice proposed by Rawls must seek support in some concrete concept of good, at least implicitly, in order to be adequate. Otherwise, breaking its principles would be nothing more than an instinctive feeling of nausea. Yet, in his theory of 'justice as fairness' Rawls divides the meaning of "good" into a "thin" and "full" sense. The good in the thin sense is everything that lets us identify the primary goods. It is: liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the base of self-respect. We talk about "good" in the full sense when we try to name a concrete way of life we prefer, a set of values, and things worth doing or aspiring to. Rawls assumes that his theory of justice is independent from what is classified as good in the full sense.

Rawls – reserving for the good in the thin sense a higher, crucial role and making independent what is right from what is good in the full sense – assumes implicitly in his theory that the good dominates the right. Therefore, as Taylor maintains, deontological proceduralism of 'justice as fairness' is troublesome.

Taylor's concept of 'lingual encumbrance' is akin to the communitarian postulate of the social base of our moral choice. Acting within a sphere of lingual culture results in accepting a particular code of its highest, constitutive good that Taylor calls 'hypergood'. Discovering what is our hypergood follows our individual interpretation. However, contrasting the liberal doctrine, this interpretation is limited by the social matrix of the language we use, which describes the main values. Thus, this situation is heteronomous. Using the 'lingual tool' in defining the hypergood serves as Taylor's vision of situating the self.

In A Theory of Justice Rawls assumes that there is no such thing as hypergood. There is nothing in time or space, even within a particular community, that we can describe as a dominating concept of good. Abstracting from any moral vision, Rawls prioritizes the "right". However, accepting Taylor's argumentation, this abstraction is not so obvious. The very 'justice as fairness' that is supposed to guarantee our autonomy can be seen as the hypergood of liberal order. As Taylor contends, 'justice as fairness' is a framework that limits spectrum of our moral choice. The neutrality presumed in Rawls's theory and liberalism in general is mythical. 'Justice as fairness' concretizes a definition of autonomy, freedom, liberal law, and equality in access to socially meaningful positions, perceiving these values as the primary good of liberal order. We should pay special attention here to autonomy. Autonomy is that element of liberal ethics that allows us to notice the priority of fairness. Thus, it becomes the main, constitutive good of the liberal society; the main point of its matrix which constitutes its members. It has a social perspective, so we can argue it is social by nature. We can notice here a surprising paradox, which can be understood when using Hegel's dialectic. Autonomy becomes a heteronomous good of liberal society. Defining and redefining individual concepts of good must be done in the context of the common good. If this happens, the very existence of society, as a crucial factor, as a superstructure for making any choice, needs no further justification. The postulate of the autonomy of contemporary liberalism is different form the Kantian ideal. Such an understanding of autonomy can be awkwardly named a 'situated autonomy'. This kind of autonomy does not require us to locate ourselves outside the society. On the contrary, its comprehension is based on the liberal, pluralistic political culture, functioning in a particular community. Our critical prioritizing of some appearances of the shared culture over others is possible, as Taylor maintains, when we use concepts that are a cultural product. Moreover, if liberalism is to survive it must cease limiting autonomy to the public sphere. The liberal matrix determines us as public persons as well as private.

To the argument presented above, we should add another one that rejects the liberal notion of neutrality when talking about the good, and similarly when considering the universal character of liberal principles, which was done by Taylor in The Politics of Recognition. According to Taylor, liberalism is not able to secure all possible groups an equal chance to develop their potential. Taking as the starting point liberal ideology, which generates the particular code of accepted behavior in the public forum, we shall realize that we are authorized to recognize only some

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21 Taylor C., Sources..., op.cit., p. 63.
groups: groups that fulfil the liberal ideal. The rest of them are sentenced to cultural oppression. The liberal world condemned Iran after its reaction to the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. The inability of fundamentalist Muslims to separate *sacrum* from *profanum* precludes their political recognition. Therefore, liberalism has a serious problem with the adoption of multiculturalism, in spite of the contention that it is the only answer to the challenges of modernity.

Hence, Taylor gives Rawls an option: he can argue for his vision of the self as an unencumbered entity, which makes him susceptible to attacks (illusion of individualism and subjectivism of 'justice as fairness'); or he can accept a presumption that his theory is based on the system of moral values, shaped within the lingual community of contemporary, liberal society. In any case, Rawls is unable to retain his original position. Liberal deontology cannot be defended successfully.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, Charles Taylor clearly presents himself as a theorist who shares the communitarian belief that being a member of community, in this case a community of language, determines our perception of the world around us and our absorption of the ethical values specific to our community. This notion is taken by Taylor *a priori* to serve as a base for his whole argumentation. In his opinion, good exists for us only through some articulation. A different understanding of the same good in different cultures is correlated with the different languages that have developed in those cultures. Understanding (a vision) of a particular good becomes available for individuals of a given society thanks to being expressed in some manner.

Meanwhile, liberal ideology attempts to liberalize the individual and his good from 'anthropocentric language' and builds a conception of the good in absolutistic categories, separated from the lingual culture of a given community.

Taylor, in all of his publications, expresses his concern with the future of freedom, which allegedly enjoys a special treatment in liberalism. The liberal concept of freedom, being a fetish of liberal society, becomes valueless. Taylor maintains that liberalism reserves higher value for freedom to choose in comparison with the value of what is chosen. Deontology forces liberalism to abstain from evaluating the final result and to be focused on the very process of making a choice, i.e. procedures; while, as Taylor argues, the society should constitute a moral horizon for our choice. Ignoring the question of chosen option value or approving its relativity makes the choice trivial. Giving the individual priority over the community causes the individual to pursue autonomy - read: self-sufficiency. This results in isolation and atomism, when the social institutions are no longer interested in sustaining the full extent of choice. The social context of our individual choice is commonly ignored in contemporary liberalism. The current liberal society is - as communitarians, and Taylor among them, contend - suicidal. The theory of 'justice as fairness', being its

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theoretical base, shares responsibility for the moral deprivation of postmodern man.24

Taylor, in his critique of liberalism, does not limit himself to indicating the falsity of the liberal vision of the self. He also attempts to argue that liberal political practice is a real threat to the democratic regime. Democratic society cannot survive without the public sphere. The public sphere is a space in which people in a freely shape their opinions of the community in which they live. In this sphere a social agreement in crucial matters should be reached. The existence of the public sphere depends on the following conditions: (1) people who operate in this space treat each other as members of the community – share the common goal they identify themselves with; (2) groups, types and classes of citizens have a real chance to articulate their position and have the ability to influence the development of public discussion; (3) decisions that are made are consistent with the will of the majority.25 Meanwhile, liberal proceduralism is, as Taylor argues, fully satisfied when the third condition is fulfilled, when the first is ignored and even the second to some extent. It causes the public sphere of the liberal order to be in a state of clear and present danger at all times. Lack of strong identification with the community results in alienation when ability to accept the legality of decisions made by the majority is revealed only by individuals with a Kantian conscience, tempered like steel. Lack of solidarity, as Taylor contends, is a weakness of contemporary liberalism. There is no consultative connection between public and private interests. Citizens try to find support for their expectations in the court, not in the political process of selecting political representatives. The court gradually becomes the main center of articulating the rights of individuals. It is a great disadvantage to the democratic order. When legislative regulations treat rights and obligations simultaneously, the court decisions concern only the former. It contradicts the communitarian postulate of balancing rights with obligations. Taylor is not satisfied with the vision of politics promoted, for example by, Joseph Schumpeter, who presumed to entrust public issues to the aware elite and who accepted that the common goal is merely a conglomerate of individual goals.26 This atomistic view of politics – worked out during World War II and in the following years – is still attractive to liberals of our time.

REFERENCES:


24 The postmodern, autonomous self suffers from disembodiment. Our rationality has become the instrumental one. As a result we have lost the dialogical context and we face the crisis of our moral entity. The pure self, behind the Rawlsian 'veil of ignorance', is able to propose the procedures of a well-designed society but is not able to show the road to those seeking a good life.
