

Goods and life-forms

Relativism in Charles Taylor's political philosophy

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John Gunnell, in a recent paper in *Political Theory*,¹ argues that a concern with the problem or threat of relativism is a, or even *the*, central structuring theme of contemporary political and social philosophy. It is the common element of approaches as different as the Critical Theory of, say, Habermas, the postmodernism of Rorty or Foucault, liberal ideas such as those of Dworkin or Rawls, or more communitarian approaches such as the one advocated by Charles Taylor. Of course, not all of these authors are equally critical of any relativistic implications in their theories or equally anxious categorically to rule out any such consequences from them. On the contrary, for many commentators the ideas of Rorty or Foucault are plainly historicist and relativist. However, virtually no author, not even someone like Peter Winch, would openly accept for him- or herself the label of relativism. They all shy away from this term as if it referred to something like rabies.

By contrast, Charles Taylor, on whom this paper will focus, considers himself as an outright anti-relativist, and he directs quite a substantial amount of his thinking and writing towards refuting what he calls (relativist) Neo-Nietzschean thinking, particularly of the Foucauldian brand. I want to argue in this paper that, contrary to Taylor's intentions, and apparently quite unnoticed by him, his philosophy entails consequences that reintroduce the problem of relativism more radically and pressingly than do most of the other contemporary theories. In opposition to an argument made recently by James Bohman,² according to which Taylor has moved over time from an early, more relativist position to a more value-objective or realist position in his recent writings, I will argue here that Taylor has not really changed his view over time (except perhaps for some change in emphasis). The crucial point is rather an inconsistency between Taylor's fundamental project of a philosophical anthropology – which in a broader sense includes his methodological writings – and his conception of practical reason. In order to bring out this problem to the full, I

want to turn first to Taylor's ideas about the nature of human agency and identity and the central exemplification of these in his analysis of modernity. I will then go on to articulate my critique of Taylor's conception of practical reason and of our alleged obligation to adopt the goods of modernity. In the last, short part of this paper, I will offer a brief, rather preliminary suggestion of my own about how to cope analytically with the problems of cultural and ethical difference and change.

Forms of life and modernity

A recurrent theme in almost all of Taylor's writings is his objection to all kinds of 'naturalist' positions which hold that human agents and/or human societies or forms of life can be analyzed from a disengaged, or *objective*, perspective, that is, from a neutral observer's stance which is independent from the point of view of participants. The crudest forms of naturalism are those which we see in scientific approaches such as behaviourism or empirical positivism. However, naturalist ideas also guide attempts to analyze the predicament of modernity from an *acultural perspective*. The distinction between *cultural* and *acultural* analyses of modernity has recently been taken up again by Taylor in his 'Modernity and the Rise of the Public Sphere'.³ It is of great help for the clarification of his standpoint. Cultural approaches set out to compare the life-form of modernity as just one amongst many possible cultural forms with other, particularly pre-modern, forms of life. The idea of a form of life thereby follows Wittgenstein in that it focuses strongly on the linguistic constitution of culture and personal identity. Inherent in the institutions and practices of every life-form is a distinct, specific view of the essence and nature of the world, of the position and function of the individual in society and the world writ large, of the best or just ordering of the community, of the good life for the individual and of the common good, of what constitutes real or solid

knowledge and so on.

By contrast, *acultural* explanations assume that the central developments of modernity, such as secularization, the rise of instrumental reason, the distinction between facts and values, different processes of rationalization etc. are universal developments which could in principle occur in any traditional culture, or which in fact inevitably will occur in every traditional culture since they enable man to master and use his natural environment and achieve his ends most effectively. Now the problem with such an *acultural* account of modernity is that it fails to realize that the originally *scientific* ideal of disengagement, i.e. naturalism, has in the course of the development of modernity been turned into an overall form or way of life. This is why *acultural* theorists think they discover human universals when in fact they explore just one particular life-form.⁴ The modern individual is thus interpreted, and views herself, as the isolated, disengaged individual who is opposed to a neutral universe which stands at his or her disposal. *Acultural* accounts of modernity hold that such a view of the individual as *homo oeconomicus* and *equal rights bearer* is the natural consequence of the crumbling of false metaphysical and religious beliefs and myths. Once these are rejected, we find that matters of values and of acceptable grounds for association with others in society cannot be taken from the larger order of the universe, or a chain of being or something comparable. According to the naturalist view, no conception of the good or the valuable, or of the good life, can be derived from the way the world *is* or can be rationally defended, and our relationship to our fellows or the community can only be conceived of in instrumental terms, as is exemplified, for example, in contractual theories.

From the insight that all horizons of significance and value have to be set by ourselves, from within ourselves, it follows inevitably that there is a plurality of possible perspectives on life and that all horizons of significance, and therefore of identity, can be challenged and relativized or can be genealogically explained away. Consequently, it seems that all matters of value and of truth can ultimately be reduced to questions of power, and different forms of life appear to be distinguishable only with reference to power-structures.⁵ Accordingly, most of the distinct modern conceptions of morality, of political institutions and of science strive to be neutral towards questions of the good. Now in the view of Charles Taylor, all this is based on a fundamental confusion and misunderstanding of the nature of human existence and of society. For the transcendental conditions of human agency and identity and ultimately

of human knowledge are such that they indispensably require the self-definition of human subjects against a solid background of values and meanings (or significances). This background is linguistically and intersubjectively constituted, but within a specific life-form it is necessarily taken as an ontological given. In other words, human agency, identity and knowledge are unthinkable without the shared, intersubjective acceptance of some final and ultimate or highest goods. 'However understood, the notion of a human identity without such a sense brings us close to the unimaginable limit of total breakdown', Taylor writes in his article on modernity⁶ and this is also one of the central insights in his *Sources of the Self*.⁷ At the same time, our relationships with our fellows and the community we live in cannot be of a purely instrumental character but must be viewed as constitutive of our identity. 'We can only define ourselves in exchange with others, those who bring us up, and those whose society we come to see as constitutive of our identity.'⁸ While these two points – the constitutive roles of goods and of community – represent the central themes around which Taylor's thinking evolves and which instruct his multifaceted methodological, political and ethical writings, they can only be understood in the larger context of his (hermeneutical) philosophical anthropology, which I want to explore a bit further now before returning to the issue of modernity.

Philosophical anthropology: self-interpretation and strong evaluation

Taylor's philosophical anthropology, which centres around his philosophy of agency and identity, is based on two core concepts which are a view of man as *self-interpreting animal* and as a *strong evaluator*.

Early on in his writings Taylor comes up with the idea that man is a self-interpreting animal.⁹ He does not just mean by that that human beings are always forced to interpret and evaluate themselves and their environment. Rather he wants to say that there is nothing like a human self or identity or society outside or prior to such a self-interpretation. Social reality and personal identity only are what they are in virtue of endorsed self-interpretations. Hence self-interpretation is constitutive of human identity and society in a very fundamental way. That is what on the methodological plain accounts for Taylor's angry opposition to all kinds of behaviourist or empiricist approaches in the human sciences which try to explain human behaviour without recourse to the agents' self-understandings. Meaningful scientific explanation for him indispensably requires the

incorporation of the agent's self-interpretation (this is expressed in the *Best-Account-Principle*). Thereby it is beyond doubt for Taylor that self-interpretations are not achieved monologically. For the available patterns of interpretation (and with them the possible contents of experience) are always encoded in language. As such they are a shared social possession and they are intersubjectively conveyed. Furthermore, the ensuing patterns of significance are quite literally manifested or materialized in the predominant social institutions and practices as intersubjective and common meanings.¹⁰

Now it is crucial for Taylor's view of human self- and world-interpretations that these always have to be based on what he calls *strong evaluations*. 'Our self-understanding essentially incorporates our seeing ourselves against a background of what I have called *strong evaluation*. I mean by that a background of distinctions between things which are recognized as of categoric or unconditioned or higher importance or worth, and things which lack this or are of lesser value', he defines in the introduction to his *Philosophical Papers*.¹¹ With this concept of strong evaluation Taylor is drawing on an idea of Harry Frankfurt, who advocated the view that persons are the only beings capable of developing 'second order desires', that is to say the only beings who can or must morally evaluate their own desires and needs and judge them as desired or undesired.¹² However, Taylor strongly insists on the point that these second order volitions are not just desires, but reasoned evaluations or judgements. But we can only make such judgements if we take some intrinsically valuable goods (which direct these *strong evaluations*) as ontological givens. This we must do by transcendental necessity, for otherwise we cannot establish the necessary distance and independence towards our first order desires and needs.¹³

The anthropological argument that we cannot but make strong evaluations rests on Taylor's idea that the self, by anthropological necessity, finds itself placed in a multidimensional moral space in which subjects have to orient and define themselves quite in analogy to physical space. More detailed, we have to define ourselves in relation to our fellow human beings, with respect to a conception of the good life, and with respect to our own status or dignity in this moral space.¹⁴ In order to define our own standpoint and sense of direction in moral space, we need a kind of *moral map* that defines the horizons of the important and the unimportant, the good and the bad, the beautiful and noble, as well as the ugly and mean etc. Hence, we all are by anthropological necessity equipped with such a moral map from which we read off our strong evaluations. Moral maps are thus substantive ethical or

evaluative frameworks which implicitly contain an ontological account of what 'really matters'. For Taylor, human agency and personal identity as well as human community are inconceivable outside such horizons of significance or evaluative frameworks.¹⁵

Consequences for the analysis of modernity

Now it seems clear for Taylor that different cultures, languages and life-forms contain different moral maps or evaluative frameworks and consequently live within different horizons of significance. (This is why, in my view, Taylor should not be seen as a moral realist.¹⁶) And since all of these frameworks implicitly or explicitly must contain some conception of the relevant hypergoods or constitutive goods which inspire and motivate human agency within such a life-form, and with recourse to which conflicts between incompatible life goods are resolved,¹⁷ it follows necessarily that modernity as a life-form must contain such an evaluative framework and hypergood conception as well. And the hypergoods which motivate and constitute us moderns must inspire our moral and scientific visions as well, no matter how hard we try to achieve neutrality with respect to the question of the good. This is why Taylor in almost all of his writings (apart from the early, strictly methodological ones) is concerned with uncovering the *motives* behind the theories and practices which are distinct from the modern 'naturalist' life-form. Thus he tries to uncover or identify in a host of articles the motives or the ideals or goods which inspire and guide procedural ethics¹⁸ and utilitarianism,¹⁹ political liberalism, individualism and atomism,²⁰ scientific behaviourism²¹ and so on.

He thinks that at the fundamental root of all these theories and practices which together could be said to determine the naturalist life-form lie the hypergoods of disengaged reason (respectively disengaged identity, radical autonomy or freedom and instrumental rationality) which go together with the affirmation of ordinary life. Now the central problem of naturalism for Taylor lies in the fact that the ideals of disengagement and radical autonomy in the last resort force us with epistemological necessity radically to deny any dependence on these very ideals. For dependence on any constitutive good entails engagement, the loss of neutrality and the end of full autonomy. But this urge to deny the effective and constitutive goods in the long run endangers and eventually destroys the very goods and the derivative vision of the good life that lie at the heart of the naturalist form of life, since a good which is not

recognized, but denied, cannot be motivating and inspiring and action-guiding; in short, it loses its status as a moral source. Thus, Taylor feels that one of the dangers of modernity and the main source of the *malaise of modernity*²² might be that naturalism could turn out to be merely parasitic and in the long run self-destructive. It depends on prior moral goods (which originally have Christian roots), but it cannot recognize these goods as effective moral sources. At the same time it is incapable of creating new visions of the good.²³

However, this does not mean for Taylor that the project of modernity is lost. Quite to the contrary, he is rather optimistic on the positive potentialities of our predicament. This optimism is supported by two main pillars. In the first place, he thinks that all we need to do is to recover and regain our fundamental constitutive goods as effective moral sources. This, he thinks, can best be done by trying to *articulate* them as fully as possible, for only articulated goods can be truly motivating and can constitute identity, which in turn explains Taylor's emphasis on issues of articulation. Since these moral sources are already out there in our culture, all we have to do is to resist the misguided epistemological urge to deny their recognition. This urge only arises when some goods, such as autonomy, are one-sidedly taken to the extreme and pursued exclusively.²⁴ In order to avoid such a catastrophic one-sidedness, it will greatly help us that the goods of naturalism are not the only ones effective in modern Western society. Quite to the contrary, Taylor insists that there is a wholly different 'rival paradigm' which he calls *romantic expressivism* and which is the second pillar of his optimism. By this he means a set of ideas and ideals which, following Herder and the Romantics, centres around the hypergoods of authenticity, creativity, and expressive fulfilment or expressive unity. One of the central aspirations of this paradigm is the overcoming of the naturalist dualisms between mind and body, individual and society or cosmos, spirit and nature and so on.²⁵ Taylor argues that in our aspirations and ideas about our private lives (e.g. in our family lives, love relationships or ideas about art) we are all pretty much romantic expressivists striving for authentic self-fulfilment, whereas in our public or political practices and ideas we are naturalists.²⁶ Furthermore, he thinks that quite a substantial part of the earlier, theistic set of goods has also survived in one form or other. And since these three sets of goods are not easily, or may not be at all, compatible, most of our political and moral conflicts are the result of clashes between naturalism and expressivism and, to a lesser extent, theism. For example, he thinks that the Green Movement, Marxism and

nationalism can in part be explained as romantic protests against the dominant naturalist ideology.²⁷ Nevertheless he hopes that the different goods involved will in the end turn out to be combinable and simultaneously realizable.

However, I do not want to go into this in depth; rather I want to put into question the status of these goods that Taylor invokes. In particular, the question arises about how far, if at all, these *goods* are identifiable with *the good* per se. Or, put differently, is there any good in pursuing these particular goods or are they just the contingent outcome of innumerable ideological conflicts and manoeuvres which are ultimately bound up with struggles of interest and power, as Quentin Skinner critically argues against Taylor?²⁸

Goods and the good: the dilemma of practical reason

Skinner's critique closely resembles Michel Foucault's arguments, as put forward, for example, in 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History': 'To follow the complex course of descent is ... to identify the accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – *the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us*; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents.'²⁹ Against this, Charles Taylor, in my view, has a clear tendency to conflate the cultural goods with the good per se and to account for historical change in terms of progress and moral growth etc.³⁰ The reason for that might be on the one hand his Hegelian vein and on the other the fact that, as I have tried to show, his very anthropology demands of us that we take our goods as ontological givens. At the same time, Taylor defends a conception of practical reason which holds that it is possible to judge or evaluate different conceptions of the good or different ethical positions and to show, for example, that one form of life or individual moral standpoint is superior to another one. This is the essence of Taylor's article 'Explanation and Practical Reason'.³¹ He tries to show there that, although we cannot know whether an ethical standpoint or a moral position is ultimately right, i.e. we can't make apodeictic judgements, we can still judge, for example, one position B as superior to a different position A if we can give a plausible narrative account of the transition from A to B in historical and theoretical terms but not the other way round. In particular, Taylor thinks that we do achieve individual or cultural growth when our new position is more lucid, less self-delusive and truer to our real feelings, which he now wants to see at least partially

grounded in human constants, that is, in universal anthropological givens. But with this argument, from my perspective, Taylor falls prey to what can be called the 'fallacy of presentism' when he – following MacIntyre³² – holds that 'real progress' or 'progress towards the truth' can be identified by the plausibility of the narrative reconstruction of the transition from a position (or life-form) A to a position (or life-form) B. For once this transition has been made, it is clear that the language of B and the corresponding conception of the good, which is embedded in a *particular* horizon of significance, only allow for a plausible defence of B, which seems to preserve all the values and achievements of A while avoiding its errors and failures. However, it is simply mistaken to consider such a parochial narrative of transition to be a valid meta-narrative.

If on the other hand Taylor wants to claim that the narrative of transition is convincing even for someone within the horizon and language of A, then this transition cannot be anything resembling a paradigm-shift in the sense of Thomas Kuhn, with whom in fact both Taylor and MacIntyre are concerned here. For a change which is a veritable improvement from both perspectives is not a ('revolutionary') transition between two incommensurable paradigms, but a piece of evolutionary progress *within* a prefixed horizon. Kuhn has been stressing all along that a paradigm-shift in his sense involves gains as well as losses and, first of all, a radical change in the standards of measurement, in the range of possible questions and answers and in the lexical structure of the perceived world, such that those within different paradigms literally live 'in different worlds'.³³

Now the point is that Taylor must defend something like his view of practical reason if he wants to avoid relativistic consequences in his theory. And Taylor is under much greater pressure to reject ethical relativism than for example Jürgen Habermas, since he holds that rights are derivative of goods and in this respect refuses to distinguish between morals and ethics. Hence he seems to be forced either to defend a kind of ethical realism (or *strong hermeneutics*, as Nick Smith would have it³⁴) or to accept moral relativism. At the same time, the relativism problem weighs much more for Taylor than it does for postmodern theorists such as Richard Rorty. For, contrary to the latter, Taylor does not think that we, as human agents and selves, can accept with a sense of irony the plurality of incompatible goods and values and life-forms, since we are forced by transcendental necessity to give an ontological grounding to what we see as the fundamental goods. Nevertheless, I want to argue that Taylor's understanding of practical reason is untenable when viewed in the light

of his own philosophical anthropology.

It is obvious that there is little to oppose to Taylor's idea that we, as individuals as well as a community, can scrutinize some of our everyday, or superficial, beliefs and practices in order to find out whether they are compatible with our sense of the *highest goods* or with our most fundamental strong evaluations and aspirations. And we might justly be said to achieve greater self-clarity and growth if we reduce some contradictions, errors, or inconsistencies between our beliefs and practices and our basic vision of the good or evaluative framework. By doing this, we might indeed acquire a truer sense of 'what we really are'. But this talk of growth, progress and truth only makes sense as long as we consistently apply one coherent evaluative framework, or one consistent set of hypergoods. If we take one such set as our basis, then different self-interpretations might rightly be judged as more or less adequate or 'self-lucid'. But as soon as we allow for a plurality of ethical frameworks and hypergood conceptions, the problem of incommensurability and hence of relativism reappears.

This is because ethical positions, visions of the goods, are ineradicably bound up with languages, social practices and life-forms. As Taylor puts it, without appropriate language some goods are not even options. Hence, to judge neutrally between two very different life-forms would mean to possess a neutral language, but this is something the possibility of which Taylor always rejected. Thus, to use an example, although it is not altogether clear what exactly Taylor considers to be the most fundamental hypergoods of modernity writ large, if we take, for example, the three elements of modernity which are identified by Russell Hittinger³⁵ in his interpretation of *Sources of the Self* as the decisive moral sources of our age, the problem becomes obvious. These three are 'inwardness', the affirmation of 'ordinary life,' and an 'expressive view of nature'. Now without making the attempt to explore what these three terms involve in detail, it immediately springs to mind that apart from these a variety of other moral sources are conceivable and in historically or geographically different cultures do or did obtain. As Taylor himself shows in *Sources of the Self*, it has been a long, gradual historical development with many contingencies which led to this distinct modern world-view or paradigm. Before that, very different horizons of significance or conceptions of the good life prevailed, which included, for example, the ideals of the monk and a contemplative life or the ideal of a knight which in our modern world no longer make much sense. Thus with the rise of the modern self quite a lot was lost, for instance the idea of our embeddedness in a meaningful larger order. As Skinner puts it, 'the march

of the modern self left a number of casualties lying on the roadside of history.³⁶

Now, Taylor would have to show that the gains are greater than the losses, for otherwise our allegiance to the modern goods would indeed suffer a serious blow. But against this demand stand his own claim that there is no acultural analysis of life-forms and his invocation of *Thomas Kuhn's* idea of (partially) incommensurable paradigms in this context.³⁷ One of his central insights is that subjects only are what they are and social reality only exists by virtue of the agents' self-interpretations. He even stresses over and over again that not only human goods but also the relevant and important human *feelings* are at least partially shaped and constituted by language. Furthermore, they are reshaped and altered by our attempts to articulate them, and some level of articulacy is a prerequisite of strong evaluations. But since every articulation is at the same time one among several possible interpretations of those feelings or senses of the good, it becomes ever more clear that life-forms cannot be evaluatively or comparatively judged in an exhaustive sense. For if the language and the corresponding social practices within a culture allow for just one specific set of feelings and ideas, and if this set may in turn be reshaped by attempts to further articulate them, then it simply doesn't make sense in a cross-cultural confrontation to ask about who possesses 'the truer, more authentic, more illusion-free' self-interpretation.³⁸ As Taylor himself argued in other contexts, there is no reality outside or independent of these different self-interpretations. We literally live in different worlds, with different lexical structures, as the Kuhnians would have it, and therefore with different goods, feelings and selves. That is why I think that Taylor's attempt to have recourse to some (substantive) universal human constants at this point is incompatible with his view of man as a fundamentally open and self-interpreting animal, and without this recourse, his talk of growth and progress and 'truer grasps of the human condition'³⁹ becomes implausible and unfounded.

Relativism and dimensional commensurability

It follows from all this that Taylor's philosophical anthropology, contrary to his intention, is relativistic in that it does not allow for talk of growth or superiority of one ethical position or life-form over another in context-transcending terms.⁴⁰ But this does not mean that it is relativistic in the sense that life-forms or ethical positions cannot be compared at all or that choices between them cannot be defended with *any* arguments. For although

we cannot prove the absolute superiority of one position over another, we can come to find a *dimensional* superiority.⁴¹

There is no space to go into this in depth here, but it seems clear that we can show even in cross-cultural comparisons that one form of life is superior to another in one or several *special dimensions* or respects, for example in protecting human rights, or in establishing socio-economic equality, or maybe with respect to avoiding physical suffering, or to saving the environmental resources and so on. However, this does not establish or require an assessment of the relative importance of these different dimensions. Furthermore, these dimensions of qualitative contrast should not be understood as ontological givens, and not as *human constants* either. They are simply the results of particular human self-interpretations and views of the world and of their attempted articulation in the appropriate systems of discourse. Therefore we cannot simply assume that the same dimensions of qualitative distinctions, which would require the same horizons of significance, exist in other cultures as well. However, as language animals we can come to explore and *learn* the significant dimensions that prevail in the moral maps of other cultures and we can then go on to develop a language of critical difference⁴² which allows for a sort of *dimensional commensurability*. The idea here is that with the help of this language of critical difference we can come to indicate where our own culture would stand on *their* (i.e. the other culture's) significant dimensions and vice versa. If it then comes to a choice between rival conceptions, we can perhaps give an account of the relative gains and losses with one or the other decision.

To accomplish something like this would not be at all easy, for cultures are always partially constituted by language, and to reinterpret them in the light of a comparative language is always potentially to alter their character. Dimensional commensurability, therefore, requires something like a fusion of horizons in the sense of Gadamer.⁴³ A comparative judgement made on such a ground would not have to claim to be context-transcending, rather it could claim to be made from a new, comparative context, but it could not avoid including arbitrary elements in what concerns the *ranking* of the established dimensions.

All these ideas, I think, are in one way or other already present in Taylor's writings, but they are not explicitly developed and they get blurred and even blundered by his desperate attempts to avoid the air of relativism. If Taylor finally accepted the full implications of his own theory he would, I think, find that he is much more Nietzschean than he ever feared in his nightmares. But

he would also find that this is not the end of our attempts to make sense of our lives and to struggle for the good.

Notes

1. 'Relativism. The Return of the Repressed', *Political Theory* 21, 1993, pp. 563-84.
2. James Bohman, *New Philosophy of Social Science: Problems of Indeterminacy*, Oxford, 1991, pp. 132ff.
3. *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* 14, 1993, pp. 203-60; cf. 'Inwardness and the Culture of Modernity', in Axel Honneth et al., *Zwischenbetrachtungen im Prozess der Aufklärung*, Frankfurt, 1989, pp. 601-23.
4. A similar point has been made by Richard Bernstein, who stressed the pernicious ideological consequences of such an approach; cf. his *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory*, New York and London, 1976, p. 106.
5. This line of thought is reflected in modern philosophies that lead from Nietzsche's genealogy of morals and Weber's disenchanted universe to Foucault's relativist analysis of power regimes.
6. 'Modernity', *The Tanner Lectures*, p. 257.
7. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Mass., 1989.
8. 'Modernity', *The Tanner Lectures*, p. 257.
9. See e.g. 'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man' (1971) and 'Self-Interpreting Animals' (1977) in Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985, Vol. II, pp. 15-57, and Vol. I, pp. 45-76; resp.
10. See 'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man', pp. 33f., where he writes: 'The situation we have here is one in which the vocabulary of a given social dimension is grounded in the shape of social practice in the dimension; that is, the vocabulary would not make sense, could not be applied sensibly, where this range of practices did not prevail. And yet this range of practices could not exist without the prevalence of this or some related vocabulary. There is no simple one-way dependence here. We can speak of mutual dependence if we like, but really what this points up is the artificiality of the distinction between social reality and the language of description of that social reality. The language is constitutive of the reality, is essential to its being the kind of reality it is. To separate the two and distinguish them as we quite rightly distinguish the heavens from our theories about them is forever to miss the point.'
11. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
12. Harry Frankfurt, 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person', *Journal of Philosophy* 67 1971, pp. 5-20.
13. This point was stressed at this conference by Maeve Cooke in her paper on 'Selfhood and Solidarity' when she argued that authenticity requires the acceptance of normative claims that emanate from beyond the self. This is one of Taylor's central insights in *Ethics of Authenticity*.
14. Cf. *Sources of the Self*, pp. 14ff.
15. See Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1991, particularly pp. 35ff.
16. In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor originally described his position as being one of moral realism, but somewhat modified his view subsequent to Michael Rosen's critique in 'Must We Return to Moral Realism?', *Inquiry* 34, 1990, pp. 183-94; cf. Taylor's reply, *ibid.*, pp. 245f.
17. Taylor distinguishes between life-goods, which are the goals I seek to achieve in my life according to my idea of the *good life*, and more fundamental or higher goods (hypergoods), which as *constitutive goods* provide the standards and measure to judge or evaluate my life-goods.
18. E.g. 'Die Motive einer Verfahrensethik' in *Moralität und Sittlichkeit*, ed. by Wolfgang Kuhlmann, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1986, pp. 101-34.
19. See e.g. 'The Diversity of Goods', in: *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. II, pp. 230-47.
20. Cf. 'Atomism', in *ibid.*, pp. 187-210.
21. Cf. *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. I, pp. 4f.
22. This concept, which at first was the title of his 1991 book (*Ethics of Authenticity*), provides a kind of red thread through Taylor's writings.
23. See e.g. *Sources of the Self*, p. 517.
24. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 503.
25. See *ibid.*, pp. 368ff. and 495ff., as well as *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge, 1979, and 'Legitimation Crisis?' in *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. II, pp. 248-88.
26. The divergence between private and public ideals and goods naturally entails great dangers of deep alienation and crises of identity as well as loss of social cohesion, as *Hegel* already saw.
27. See *Hegel and Modern Society*, and 'Legitimation Crisis?'.
28. Quentin Skinner, 'Who Are "We"? Ambiguities of the Modern Self', *Inquiry* 34, 1990, Symposium on *Sources of the Self*, pp. 133-53.
29. In *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow, Pantheon Books, New York, 1984, p. 81 (emphasis added).
30. Cf. for example his 'Foucault on Freedom and Truth', in: *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. II, pp. 152-84, pp. 180ff.
31. In *The Quality of Life*, ed. by M. Nussbaum and A. Sen, Oxford, pp. 208-31.
32. 'Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative, and the Philosophy of Science', in Gary Gutting ed., *Paradigms and Revolutions. Appraisals and Applications of Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science*, Notre Dame and London, 1980, pp. 54-74.
33. Cf. Paul Horwich ed., *World Changes. Thomas Kuhn and the Nature of Science*, Cambridge Mass. and London, 1993.
34. 'Identity and Difference in Taylor's Hermeneutics', paper given at the Prague Conference on Philosophy and Social Science in April 1994.
35. Review of *Sources of the Self*, in *Review of Metaphysics* 44, 1990, pp. 111-30.
36. *Ambiguities of the Modern Self*, p. 143.
37. *Explanation and Practical Reason*, pp. 214ff.
38. Charles Taylor, 'What is Human Agency?', in *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. I, pp. 15-44, p. 27.
39. *Explanation and Practical Reason*, p. 229.
40. Contrary to Nick Smith (see footnote 34), I interpret Taylor's position here as being one of *weak hermeneutics*.
41. With this term I want to delineate my own suggestion as to how Taylor could overcome his difficulties.
42. For this idea, cf. Taylor's 'Understanding and Ethnocentricity', in *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. II, pp. 116-33.
43. See the closing pages of Part II of Gadamer's monumental *Truth and Method* (1960). Taylor himself suggests something closely analogous to this in 'Theories of Meaning', in *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. I, pp. 248-92; cf. also pp. 180ff.