The Politics of Understanding: Language as a Model of Culture

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

by

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The dissertation of David Gideon Leitch is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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To Understanding
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Acknowledgments

A dissertation, such as this, which seeks to illuminate the ways in which cognition is inherently social is bound to acknowledge substantial debts to those around the author. My commitment to this view extends beyond just the content of this dissertation, and into my professional life *en toto*. There are, therefore, a number of people I would like to acknowledge.

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In addition, I would like to thank the UCSD Political Theory Working Group (or, colloquially, Theory Group): Nancy Luxon, Philip Michelbach, David Selby, Antony Lyon, Andrew Poe, Christian Donath, Adam Gomez, and Ivo Gatzinski. Without you, this dissertation could never have been written. I would also like to thank Harlan Wilson, Sonia Kruks, Karen Shelby, Kelly Wurtz, Cullen Hendrix, and Eric Bakovic for their important insights both within and from outside political theory.

Unsurprisingly, in a dissertation incorporating insights from developmental psychology into a model of liberal judgment, I would also like to acknowledge a debt to my parents and sister: Thomas Leitch, Lisa Elliott, and Judith Leitch. Each of you has had a profound affect on who I have become, and this dissertation belongs as much to you as to me. Well, the mistakes, I suppose, are still my own. One of the true pleasures of my life has been the friendships that we have formed.
between us to supplement the familial love that already existed, friendships I have frequently depended on during the long, dark nights writing a dissertation entails.

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A by now widespread critique of political liberalism claims that political liberalism hides liberal preferences in seemingly-neutral policies, which undermines the legitimacy of a political order that claims to maximize the ability of diverse citizens to co-exist. Charles Taylor’s call for a fusion of horizons has been one of the most important of these criticisms of Rawlsian political liberalism. In my dissertation, The Politics of Understanding: Language as a Model of Culture, I develop a positive model of cross-cultural understanding based in language acquisition.

I begin with a criticism of Rawls which looks back to Amartya Sen’s social choice principles, which highlight a contradiction in Rawls’s work: Rawls requires, but also disallows, the incorporation of liberal cultural assumptions to ground his
principles of justice.

The next two chapters critique Taylor’s call for a fusion of horizons. First, I examine Taylor’s turn to Gadamer and Hegel. I argue that Taylor misappropriates Gadamer, and that Hegel’s historical theory has failed. Second, I look within Taylor’s earlier work on language and culture. Taylor here is incomplete; he cannot explain how horizons can be fused to allow members of one culture to understand another culture.

The fifth chapter develops a new model of this cross-cultural understanding, indebted to Taylor, but moving beyond his limitations by looking to resources in developmental psychology, which I locate in the work of early Twentieth Century developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Unlike Taylor, Vygotsky explains how acculturation and language acquisition interact and mutually reinforce.

The sixth chapter develops my model of cross-cultural understanding, which provides a set of resources for local policymakers to respond to the challenges of value pluralism. In addition to revisiting Wisconsin v Yoder, I take up an example from Mozert v Hawkins County Board of Education to demonstrate the value of this new model.

My final chapter explores the exchange between Hannah Arendt and Ralph Ellison over Arendt’s judgment of the desegregation of public schools in Little Rock. This illuminates the connection between models of language and judgment. Neither Arendt nor Ellison articulate compelling models of language, as neither
appreciate language’s constitutive relationship to identity.
Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation starts from a contemporary political problem in American life: the ability of citizens in a liberal state to understand other citizens with, at times, radically different sets of values than themselves. This problem – value pluralism – has been addressed in a number of different ways in the theory literature.\footnote{[Berlin, 1991], [Kateb, 1999], [Gutmann, 1999], [Riley, 2002], [Madsen and Strong, 2003]. I will flesh out the responses to value pluralism in more detail below, but roughly speaking, I adopt a modified version of the model presented in the introduction to [Madsen and Strong, 2003]. While they identify three responses – developing a metavalue against which all systems of value can be judged, developing a minimal state so as to institute a \textit{modus vivendi}, and developing ways to understand other values – I collapse the first two, and instead argue that theorists either want to understand other values, or not (either because they believe firmly in the metavalue, as Rawls does, or because they worry about cross-cultural judgments, as Gray does). Thus, to my mind, there are two real responses to the fact of value pluralism: appeal to something seemingly beyond the particulars of the cultures or value-systems at play, or attempt to understand the different cultures or value-systems.} Against other approaches I address both below and in the following chapter, I argue that modeling different values systems as different languages, and cross-cultural under-
standing as language acquisition, gestures to important new directions for political
theory. Humans, this argument goes, are best characterized through their use of
language; the human condition is a linguistic one. A central problem with this turn
to language has been that previous thinkers have found it difficult to translate this
model into concrete outcomes. In this dissertation, I extend this model by argu-
ing that if a citizen’s values are mediated by language, understood as a system of
communal practice, rather than a set of verbal representations, then other value
systems can be learned in the same way that a second language is acquired.

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2 I address this at greater length below, in Section Three. I do want to distinguish, however,
what I do in this dissertation from previous work in language and political theory. There have
been two major turn to language in political theory (although political theory’s concern with
language has been by no means limited to these moments – see Bourdieu, 1991 – German
thought in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, and the work stemming from the
Vienna Circle in the early Twentieth Century. A good example of the first moment is the debate
between Rousseau and Herder over the origins of language. See Rousseau and Herder, 1986].
This debate was not over the acquisition of any given language, but rather over the question of
how language had been acquired by humans in the first place. Rousseau argued that language was
born out of men expressing themselves, while Herder argued that language was necessarily social,
and was expressive of man’s social condition, rather than any innate feelings. See [Fox, 2003] for
a more complete outline of Herder’s understanding of language, as well as Chapter Three of this
dissertation. The second of these moments, referred to in the current literature as the linguistic
turn, came out of the Vienna Circle and the Oxford analytic philosophers who were influenced
by their work. These thinkers looked to language as a route to truth; to the extent that linguistic
mistakes or ambiguities could be corrected, so could human thought. The most important of these
pieces is [Wittgenstein, 2001]. See [Hacker, 2007] and [Ball, 1997] for a thorough explanation of
the influence of this turn to language in political theory; I also address this at greater length
below, while discussing Pitkin’s contribution to contemporary political theory. My project does
not follow either of these prior turns to language. Instead of investigating the original acquisition
of language by human civilization or uncovering the ways in which language can be used as an
analytic device to move closer to truth, my project argues that language is an effective model of
cultural values, and that cross-cultural understanding can occur through a process modeled on
second-language acquisition. This model opens up a wide new set of concerns for thinkers, noted
above, interested in value pluralism and liberal toleration.

3 See [Taylor, 1985a], especially “Language and Human Nature” (215-247)
4 A full accounting of second language acquisition goes well beyond the scope of this, or frankly
any, dissertation. See [Hinkel, 2005], especially James Lantolf’s “Sociocultural And Second Lan-
guage Learning Research: An Exegesis,” which nicely summarizes some of the major trends in
Vygotskian approaches to second language acquisition. He contends in this chapter that theorists
who follow in the sociocultural school laid down by Lev Vygotsky in collaboration with Alexander
Luria and A. N. Leontiev have developed a way of modeling second language acquisition that,
this way, citizens of contemporary liberal regimes, who are faced with seemingly incomprehensible alternative value systems, can come to understand them as if they were another language.

_Wisconsin v. Yoder_ illustrates the problem of value pluralism in contemporary American society. In it, the Justices of the Supreme Court, while acknowledging existing precedent and legislation, set for themselves the task of evaluating the worth of the Amish way of life for its practitioners.  

Jonas Yoder, along with Wallace Miller, Adin Yutzy, and their children, were residents of Green County, Wisconsin in 1972. At that time, Wisconsin state law required school attendance by children until they were sixteen years old. Once their children were fourteen, the parents, in accordance with their religious beliefs, removed their children from school for two reasons. The first was a belief that attendance in high school (ninth through twelfth grade) would endanger their children’s chances of salvation; the parents were members of two different Amish communities in Wisconsin, and the Amish religion is understood by its members to be incompatible with secular life in a number of ways. The second was a belief that failure to remove their children from the state school system would result in


\[6\] Note that this is precisely the task outlined in [Taylor, 1994] for another take on variation in second language acquisition. See [Preston, 1989] and [Block, 2003] for two more additional focuses on how emphasizing the social aspect of language affects models of second language acquisition. See [de Guerrero, 2005] for a very interesting take on Vygotsky’s concept of inner speech, and second language acquisition’s affect.
communal censure. The sincerity of these two beliefs was stipulated by the state. A third reason, which was given by religious experts on behalf of the parents, was that exposure of Amish children to the secular environment of a state-sponsored high school endangered the survival and continuance of the Amish community.

The state stipulated the sincerity of the Amish belief in the deleterious effects of their children’s exposure to a non-Amish environment. The state, in the trials leading up to the Supreme Court decision, argued for the primacy of education among the duties of the government. Prior court rulings had found that while the Wisconsin statute did, in fact, violate sincerely held religious precepts, that it was nonetheless a reasonable and Constitutional exercise of state power.

Chief Justice Burger found that Amish families could be accommodated under the Free Exercise Clause, and, writing for the majority, structured his rejection of Wisconsin’s claims over the education of the Amish children around the fact that the Amish system of education seemed to prepare their children for a viable and valuable way of life.

It is one thing to say that compulsory education for a year or two beyond the eighth grade may be necessary when its goal is the preparation of the child for life in modern society as the majority live, but it is quite another if the goal of education be viewed as the preparation of the child for life in the separated agrarian community that is the keystone of the Amish faith. See Meyer v. Nebraska, 262 U.S., at 400. The State attacks respondents’ position as one fostering “ignorance” from which the child must be protected by the State. No one can

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7The case was decided 6-1 in favor of Jonas Yoder; Amish children could be excused from high school at the age of fourteen without violating their rights. Burger, Brennan, Stewart, White, Marshall, and Blackmun all found for Jonas Yoder (Stewart and Brennan in one concurring opinion, and White in another), Douglas dissented, and neither Powell nor Rehnquist took part.
question the State’s duty to protect children from ignorance but this argument does not square with the facts disclosed in the record. Whatever their idiosyncrasies as seen by the majority, this record strongly shows that the Amish community has been a highly successful social unit within our society, even if apart from the conventional “mainstream.” Its members are productive and very law-abiding members of society; they reject public welfare in any of its usual modern forms. The Congress itself recognized their self-sufficiency by authorizing exemption of such groups as the Amish from the obligation to pay social security taxes.\(^8\)

This decision has been criticized on the grounds that it undervalues the important democratic value of autonomy;\(^9\) allowing the Amish to shield their children from the influences of the modern, secular world cuts off important avenues for development, according to these writers, and as a primary goal, rather than a unintended consequence. But this view has been criticized as a new imperialism, in which autonomy as a value acts to trump any cultural claims at all.\(^10\)

One could look to the law to adjudicate the conflict. The Amish live in America, and are therefore subject to American laws. Some commentators look either to American jurisprudence or American values to adjudicate these types of claims.\(^11\) But this viewpoint has been criticized on the grounds that a turn to courts serves to both advance core liberal values (such as a belief in the individual as bearer of rights) and obscure that advancement with the gauze of impartiality.\(^12\) Thus, the argument runs, attempts to address problems of differing values through the law end up reinforcing the dominant liberal values in modern societies, because the

\(^8\)[Raz, 1986]; [Gutmann, 1995]; [Arneson and Shapiro, 1996]; [Apperley, 2000] (which does not address \textit{Yoder} by name, but rather defends a weak form of autonomy generally); and [Macedo, 1996]

\(^9\)[Raz, 1986]; [Gutmann, 1995]; [Arneson and Shapiro, 1996]; [Apperley, 2000] (which does not address \textit{Yoder} by name, but rather defends a weak form of autonomy generally); and [Macedo, 1996]

\(^10\)See [Spinner-Halev, 2000] and [Bohman, 2003].

\(^11\)Both [Sullivan, 1992] and [McConnell, 1992] look to jurisprudence to answer questions regarding rights to religious expression in America, although Sullivan attacks the decision and McConnell defends it.

\(^12\)See [Williams, 1995].
idea of turning to law itself comes from liberal values.

In this dissertation, I want to abstract out from the decision as a central piece of case law addressing religion and education, and instead look to this case as an example of the central problem of value pluralism that modern liberal polities face. In *Yoder*, the seven deciding members of the Supreme Court, a group of liberal citizens, attempt to make sense of a radically different set of values — in this case, Amish values — in order to judge the worth of that set of values for its practitioner. I take this attempt to understand another’s values to be central to contemporary debates in value pluralism. But the attempt to understand the values of another raises the question of how such an understanding can occur.\(^\text{13}\)

### 1.2 Value Pluralism in Contemporary Politics

In this respect, then, the *Yoder* case is far from unique. The modern world seems characterized by the fact of value pluralism reflected in the *Yoder* case. Value pluralism presents itself to us as individuals in the choices we make between possibly incommensurable values. Even within a society, we are faced with tragic\(^\text{14}\) choices between values which cannot be reconciled. This problem is heightened when a diverse group of citizens attempts to face the fact of value pluralism collectively.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{13}\)See [Nedelsky, 1991]; [Young, 1994], and [Young, 1997] for two different articulations of the difficulties of cross-cultural communication. Nedelsky explores the problems in verifying cross-cultural understanding, whereas Young looks at how power differentials distort the willingness of groups to understand one another.

\(^{14}\)See [Berlin, 1991] for more on this characterization of incommensurable choice.

\(^{15}\)While a diverse citizenry heightens this problem, it is by no means a necessary condition. This tragedy arises even in ancient societies; for example, this is the situation Antigone faces: she must bury her brother, and thereby perform her familial duties, or obey the political authority to which she is rightfully subject. She cannot resolve her choice between her family and her city be referent to an existing value system. Indeed, it is the Greek ethical framework itself that puts her in this situation where she must choose, and in choosing, must lose some of the good life. See [Markell, 2003], 80-152 for more on Antigone and her tragic choice.
Value pluralism causes an immediate political problem familiar to all liberal theorists: how to develop policies that both protect citizens’ rights to live their lives (largely) in the manner of their choosing and also to draw limits to those rights?\textsuperscript{16} Some limits are obvious: no matter how important it may be to my neighbor to enslave me, this act would go beyond the limit of what liberal societies tolerate. But not all cases are obvious, and as previous thinkers have noted, this grey area between the obvious tolerable and obviously intolerable presents a problem for liberalism.\textsuperscript{17} To the extent that liberal polities enforce policies that abridge the ability of groups, especially religious groups,\textsuperscript{18} to operate, they seem to extend their power beyond the public sphere and into the private sphere; even when the policies affect only public actions,\textsuperscript{19} groups can be hampered in their private activities.\textsuperscript{20}

Writers have generally taken one of three paths to addressing this problem.\textsuperscript{21} Some writers, such as John Rawls, argue that a set of values exist that all reasonable persons would agree on, and that public life can be restricted to the politics that comes out of that common set of values. Other writers, like John Gray, deny that any overlapping set of values exist, but do hold that citizens with different values can co-exist in a \textit{modus vivendi} when the liberal state is radically limited; value

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{16}See [Gutmann, 1993]; [Galston, 1995]; [Williams, 1995]; [Deveaux, 2003]; and [Crowder, 2007].
  \item \textsuperscript{17}See, for example: [Strauss, 1989]; [Walker, 1995]; [Kukathas, 1992]; [Levey, 1997]; [Johnson, 2000]; and [Bohman, 2003].
  \item \textsuperscript{18}See [Way and Burt, 1983]; [Macedo, 1995]; [Murphy, 1997]; [Bader, 1999] and [Bader, 2003]; and [Swaine, 2001].
  \item \textsuperscript{19}Education, taking the \textit{Yoder} case as an example, is frequently characterized by liberal thinkers as an activity in which the public has a significant stake. See [Locke, 1980]; [Rousseau, 1979]; and [Mill, 2000]. See also [Gutmann, 1995] as well as [Gutmann, 2001], in which she summarizes the existing literature on children’s relationship to both state and parent in her reply to Galston, on page 38, note 10.
  \item \textsuperscript{20}This is the essence of stakes of the \textit{Yoder} case.
  \item \textsuperscript{21}[Madsen and Strong, 2003] 4-13. I work here at what they call the cultural level of value pluralism; ethical pluralism at the cultural level “is the recognition that there are in the world different ethical traditions, that these distinguish themselves at least in name one from the other, and differ not only in matters of practical judgment on moral issues...but in modes of reasoning used to reach such judgments.”
\end{itemize}
pluralism ought to lead to a commonly acceptable policy of live-and-let-live which allows individual the autonomy to live their lives as they see fit. Finally, some authors, such as Charles Taylor,\textsuperscript{22} believe that value differences can be overcome in some way, allowing the body of democratic citizens to judge political claims fairly; the fairness comes from the ability of these democratic citizens to access grounds other than their own cultural prejudices.\textsuperscript{23}

All three stances towards value pluralism argue that if we are to judge properly or fairly, we must move beyond our existing moral frameworks, and at least attempt to take a different stance. Otherwise, our judgments are suspect.\textsuperscript{24} For Rawls, this concern that citizens move beyond their existing prejudices is reflected in his use

\textsuperscript{22}Given his denial of metaphysical individuality, does Taylor count as a liberal? I argue that he does, albeit not as a traditional liberal; this line of argument follows \cite{Hunag, 1998}. While his model of the self constituted by social relations does share important characteristics with illiberal writers, both multiculturalists and communitarians, \cite{Young, 1990} and \cite{MacIntyre, 1984}, for example, he differs from them in two ways. First, he believes that the content of the cultural constitution matters more, politically, than the metaphysical status of that constitution. Thus, the fact the most Westerners are constituted by a culture that promotes individuality leads him to, for Westerners at least, defend individuality as a legitimate and important political value. In this, he is more, I suppose, a political liberal than a comprehensive liberal (to adopt the current terminology), although I frankly doubt whether this really matters in evaluating his theory – are we to say that his label seriously affects how we should interact with his work? Second, Taylor defends modifications of liberal institutions in his work; see \cite{Rorty, 1994} and \cite{O'Neill, 1999}. Granted, some of these modifications are significant, as in his “The Politics of Recognition” essay, but liberalism has classically included fairly significant variation within it \cite{Galston, 1995}. Despite owing an intellectual debt to Hegel, certainly, I would argue, an illiberal thinker, he does, in the end, reject Hegel as having failed in the task he set out for himself. Thus, I think it is fair to characterize Taylor as a liberal, albeit an idiosyncratic one.

\textsuperscript{23}These are the examples Madsen and Strong use to typify these threads.

\textsuperscript{24}See \cite{Rawls, 1993}; \cite{Kymlicka, 1995}; \cite{Tully, 1995}; \cite{Raz, 1994}; \cite{Parekh, 2000}; \cite{Carens, 2000}; \cite{Geuss, 2002}; and \cite{Goodin, 2006}. For a historical expression, see \cite{Locke, 1980} Section Two, Paragraph Thirteen: “it is unreasonable for men to be judges in their own cases, that selflove will make men partial to themselves and their friends: and on the other side, that ill nature, passion and revenge will carry them too far in punishing others; and hence nothing but confusion and disorder will follow, and that therefore God hath certainly appointed government to restrain the partiality and violence of men. I easily grant, that civil government is the proper remedy for the inconveniencies of the state of nature, which must certainly be great, where men may be judges in their own case, since it is easy to be imagined, that he who was so unjust as to do his brother an injury, will scarce be so just as to condemn himself for it.”
of the veil of ignorance. Gray advocates a limited state in order to avoid imposing existing prejudices on citizens who may not share them, and the strength of his barrier between the public and the private reflects his concern about the fact of value pluralism. And for thinkers like Taylor, this worry is reflected in their commitment to finding a way to access the value systems of citizens different from ourselves.

I discuss Rawls at length in Chapter Two, arguing that the veil of ignorance prevents precisely the type of reasoning required to legitimate his principles of justice. Rawls does, I argue, lay out the necessary cognitive foundations, but only by building off of a vision of developmental psychology that renders his theory of justice partial towards liberal values in exactly the way he claims to move away from them. I take this type of problem to be endemic to attempts like Rawls’s, to address value pluralism by appealing to metavales above our existing cultural differences, which is why I look to Taylor’s model; it is, I think, more productive to accept the fact of value pluralism and develop models and policies that reflect our differences, than to deny them. Taylor’s model in particular appeals to me precisely because he refuses to turn groups and individuality against one another in a metaphysic; individuals come from groups, which are reinforced by the actions of individuals. In this way, Taylor side-steps the problems other writers face in trying to disentangle these sources of selfhood. Moreover, this side-step is central to his project and model, not incidental to it; it is not a tacked-on addition, but rather a constitutive element of his project of promoting understanding between people faced with a gap between their systems of values.

25I include Gray alongside Rawls here. While there are substantial differences between the thinkers, they do share an unwillingness to engage in cross-cultural evaluation and judgment. See [Gray, 1993].

26See [Boyes and Walker, 88]; [Benhabib, 2002]; and [Kompridis, 2006].
1.3 The Linguistic Turn in Political Theory

An exploration of the nature of language poses an important possibility for Taylor’s project of bridging the gap between different value systems because of the way language serves to both mediate citizens and the external world and to constitute citizens’ value systems. Previous writers have argued that language can be the way that arguments over toleration in plural polities can be addressed in a meaningful way. Language presents a solution because language serves to mediate our engagement with the world, and therefore opens the door to learning how others mediate the world.27 Understanding the lens through which a culture sees the world helps explain a culture’s value system. Because languages can be learnt, they also hold the promise of providing a tool through which democratic citizens can enlarge their mentality through the adoption of concrete standpoints.

In obvious ways, of course, liberal citizens share a language with the Amish: we both speak English. But in important ways, I want to argue, we use different languages. I will flesh this view out in considerably more detail in later chapters, but will introduce it briefly here. Language, conceived of in this way, is really a set of linguistic practices, rather than a set of verbal representations. What I mean by this is that language encompasses both the words we use to mean things and also the social practices that communities use to make and maintain meaning in the world. Language, treated as linguistic practice, acts to mediate between the world and our self.28 Language, understood in this way, is not a tag by which we identify an identity; rather, it is a way of doing or approaching entities. It is

27 Which Benhabib identifies as the way in which democratic citizens can enlarge their mentalities. See [Benhabib, 1992], as well as an important reply in [Young, 1994].
28 [Vygotsky, 1978] and [Vygotsky, 1986] are the central texts for this point of view. See also [Wertsch, 1985a] , especially V. Zinchenko, “Vygotsky’s Ideas about Units of Analysis for the Analysis of Mind,” and [Cole, 1995] and [Cole, 1996].
what makes our world and the objects and concepts in it meaningful. Language is not just the words that represent the world, but also the sets of meaning that judge what is meaningful and what is meaningless.\footnote{Taylor, 1989} It is the full range of cultural connotations that allow us not just to pick one word rather than another to describe a phenomenon, but also to pick which phenomenon is worth discussing at all. Thus, members of different cultures, or people with different value systems, use different values. The Amish, in specifically rejecting the modern world, use a different set of linguistic practices than modern liberals do.\footnote{Of course, as the Amish children at question in Wisconsin v. Yoder have been in school until the age of fourteen, and may have acquired some of the (moral) grammar of the modern world. However, the geographical concentration of Amish communities allows them to dominate their local school boards and guide curricula, which are less normalized across the state than high school curricula. Moreover, the Yoders advanced the claim that the pre-high school curriculum overlapped with their preferences.}

As a medium, language, conceived as linguistic practice, is necessarily social. Linguistic practices occur between people who share a language. It is social because the meaning that it encodes is a social meaning. As meaning is necessarily social, so is language.

The seminal argument for this conception of language as linguistic practice, for contemporary political theory;\footnote{The political theory canon, of course, deals with language in a wide variety of ways, from Thucydides’ description of the linguistic outcomes of the Athenian Plague to Rousseau’s exploration of the origin of language.} has come from Hanna Pitkin’s meditation on Ludwig Wittgenstein’s later work, in which he shifted his focus away from the way the particulars of language use are fundamentally hidden from others, to the ways in which what he called ‘language games’ are necessarily social.\footnote{Pitkin’s book is less an argument and more a rumination on the importance of Wittgenstein’s thought for political theory, which limits its applicability to debates}

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over the importance of this model of language to debates over value pluralism.\textsuperscript{33} In it, she presents Wittgenstein’s later work through its relationship to J. L. Austin and ordinary-language philosophy. The picture of language that comes through in her description is one that emphasizes language’s functional role in mediating action.

In his later writings, then, Wittgenstein develops a radically different view of the nature of language-learning, meaning, and language itself. In the traditional view, words stand for things, and the child must somehow form a correct induction about the class of things for which a particular words stands. In Wittgenstein’s later view, words are used to do things, and the child must master how they are used. Such learning is necessarily a matter of training rather than explanation since it precedes the possibility of explanation. And it rests ultimately on our natural capacities.\textsuperscript{34}

This above quote underscores one of Pitkin’s limitations. While her analysis of Wittgenstein offers a persuasive path to understanding how language functions, her story of language acquisition lacks detail. In Pitkin’s view, language clearly is acquired, and we can even say some important things about how it is acquired,\textsuperscript{35} but we cannot detail the process.\textsuperscript{36} This inability is especially pronounced when Pitkin’s application of Wittgenstein’s later writings is extended to judgment.

Rather than accepting Kant’s view of aesthetic judgment (which Arendt does\textsuperscript{37}) that rendering a judgment requires taking an expanded stance through the use of imagination, Pitkin instead claims that aesthetic judgment is a particular gram-

\textsuperscript{33}“The book...contains little that is original... It is intended to introduce a body of literature—the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein and some related development in contemporary philosophy—and to survey its potential significance for our thinking about political and social life.” [Pitkin, 1972] vii

\textsuperscript{34}[Pitkin, 1972] 49

\textsuperscript{35}For example, that language is acquired through use rather than rule-learning (45) or that language-learners can use family resemblances to guide their inferences (64).

\textsuperscript{36}She does offer an enlarged view of language acquisition in [Pitkin, 1984]) through her discussion of D. W. Winicott’s work.

\textsuperscript{37}[Arendt, 1982]
mar, and that taste, a more personal evaluation than judgment, is another gram-
mar. If I claim that a painting is beautiful, for example, this is a judgment; I
am making a claim that implicitly looks to others for agreement. If I claim that a
painting is beautiful to me, in contrast, this is an expression of taste. The differ-
ence between them, for Pitkin, drawing on Wittgenstein, is that they are different
grammars. In this way, Pitkin avoids the trap of aestheticization that Arendt falls
into; rather than collapse the different grammars that come out of linguistic prac-
tices, Pitkin keeps taste and judgment separated as different grammars. Treating
language as a cultural practice does not, therefore, imply that political judgments
are simply aesthetic ones.

If, then, democratic citizens must advance judgments rather than rely on their
tastes when formulating responses to the problems value-pluralism presents, they
must somehow acquire that grammar. Thus, Pitkin’s failure to present a comp-
pelling story of language acquisition limits her usefulness in generating the pre-
conditions for understanding in a plural polity. For her purposes, this is not a
terrible problem. Her aim in the book is not this; instead, she wants to explore
the importance of Wittgenstein’s understanding of language as a functional sys-
tem of practice, rather than a designative system of representation. But it is
my aim, which is why I look to Taylor, with whom I share the aim of developing
policies to address problems that arise from the fact of value pluralism, rather than

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38233. The difference between judgment and taste is that judgment implicitly requires the
agreement of others, whereas taste does not. More simply, judgments make claims about objects;
taste expresses something about the speaker. Arendt’s use of Kant hinges on this distinction;
she argues in her lectures on Kant that claims regarding values can be judgments, and not just
expressions of taste. Of course, as discussed earlier, this does not necessarily automatically
suggest that judgment comes from an objective standpoint, but rather that a political judgment
given in the public area of a democracy calls upon citizens to either agree or disagree with it,
and that judgments proper will be agreed on by the citizenry, and the speaker will have placed
themself in the standpoints of others in order to make the judgment in the first place.

39That is, words do not mean things; words do things. See [Austin, 1962]
Pitkin, who does not, as the center of this project. Taylor’s essay “The Politics of Recognition,” instead begins to show how modeling human selfhood on linguistic lines can help address the problems of value pluralism.

1.4 Language Acquisition as a Model of Understanding

Treating value systems like languages, as Taylor does in “The Politics of Recognition,” is a powerful model. It suggests, through his call for a fusion of horizons,\textsuperscript{40} a way that liberal citizens can come to access value systems different from their own, as a way of grounding judgments in a plural society with a liberal state. This holds the promise of both making more informed judgments regarding groups who profess radically different values from our own, and of legitimating the judgments made more securely by basing them in an informed, rather than parochial, outlook. Thus, if it could be done well, Taylor’s model presents a way to avoid the charges of liberal imperialism over minority groups in liberal societies. Taylor’s body of work points to the need to understand other value systems, and suggests that language is the path to do so. However, he never fully articulates the practice of horizon fusing he outlines. This is a problem for putting his model into practice. While the metaphor of a fusion of horizons is evocative, it insufficiently explains what goes into it; his take on a ‘fusion of horizons’ owes relatively little to Gadamer; this can be seen in a reflection on Gadamer’s relative conservativism.\textsuperscript{41} Gadamer’s concept of the fusion of horizons is expressly transhistorical but intracultural. Historians can use it to access elements of their own culture that have been lost to time.

\textsuperscript{40}[Taylor, 1994] 67. Taylor draws on [Gadamer, 175] for this hermeneutic model of understanding.
\textsuperscript{41}See [Doppelt, 2003] for an interesting counterargument of this reading of Gadamer.
But they cannot use it to gain access to other cultures. The horizons that are fused are chronological horizons. Thus, the fusion of horizons, at least as Gadamer describes it, cannot accomplish the task Taylor sets for it of allowing Westerners access to the values of other cultures, whether Western or non-Western, in order to evaluate their relative worth; those other values are beyond Gadamer’s grasp. In this dissertation, I argue that what Taylor must mean by a fusion of horizons is language acquisition; the moral horizons to be fused are based in language, and acquiring the language of the other horizon allows them to be fused. If he wants his model to inform policy debates, Taylor, then, needs to have a story of language acquisition, but, neither in the other sources he turns to nor in his own work, is he really able to develop that policy.

Taylor treats language like Pitkin does; in the way Taylor understands it, language is not a system of representation, but rather a system of practice. The practices of language are the medium in which a culture’s values are understood – we are always, ever interacting with the world through value frameworks which are contained in the language we participate in (usually we would say ‘use’, but that trope becomes problematic for Taylor). If we want access to another culture’s values, we must acquire its language. So long as we remain in our own language, we remain in our own values. Cross-cultural understanding, then, can only come about through language acquisition, because values exist in the media of a language.

Thus, to the extent that Taylor wants policymakers (and, I argue in the last chapter, democratic citizens) to be able to engage in recognition, they must also engage in linguistic acquisition. But Taylor offers no model of language acquisition.

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42 Primarily Gadamer, Hegel, and Herder.
43 [Taylor, 1985a], especially “Language and Human Nature” (215-247) and “Theories of Meaning” (248-292).
tion; he instead relies on the philosophical writings of Eighteenth Century German thinkers, most especially Herder, who offers a philosophical anthropology instead of a psychological or political theoretic take on language; these writers concentrated on how human civilization first developed language, not how individual humans acquire specific languages. While this serves the purpose Taylor had at the time of his writing, to attack designative theories of language, it does not serve the purpose he needs it for when he writes “The Politics of Recognition.”

Taylor’s model of recognition can be extended, by incorporating a model of language acquisition I find in the work of Lev Vygotsky. In my reading, Vygotsky’s conclusion can be seen as a sympathetic extension and modification of Taylor’s work. Vygotsky, a Soviet developmental psychologist, comes from a similar set of intellectual forerunners as Taylor does. In fact, while Taylor has never acknowledged reading Vygotsky, he has encountered him before: Taylor draws his model of the self, called the dialogic self, from the writings of one of Vygotsky’s contemporaries, Mikhail Bakhtin, and cites, in the secondary literature on Bakhtin, a book by James Wertsch. This book is Wertsch’s promotion of Bakhtin as a more productive source for contemporary psychology than Vygotsky. Thus, Taylor must have encountered Vygotsky through this source.

This dissertation attempts to marry Taylor and Vygotsky as a way of extending the work of theorists who turn to language to model human selfhood by incorporating language acquisition in order to respond effectively to the challenges of contemporary multiculturalism; it incorporates a model of human psychology substantially related to Taylor’s, Lev Vygotsky’s model of linguistic development, to Taylor’s model of the self and its political implications. My intention is to flesh

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44 [Wertsch, 1991]
45 Indeed, Wertsch cites Taylor in his own work, suggesting some connection between their work.
out just how the activity of recognition entails understanding language as a tool, and then utilizing that tool, in modern liberal societies. Once Western policymakers understand the way language acquisition models a method of coming to understand another culture’s values, they can ground their policies in that understanding and recognition. Thus, while groups making claims on a liberal state may not always get the policies they desire, Western liberals will have additional resources for defending their policies, provided those policies emerge from genuine recognition and understanding of alternative culture’s values stemming from language acquisition.⁴⁶

1.5 Dissertation Outline

My argument begins with Rawls. While this terrain has been substantially covered by others, Rawls remains the most important touchstone for liberals concerned with the political challenges value pluralism entails. My criticism of Rawls looks back to social choice in the work of Amayarta Sen (from whom Rawls acknowledges a tremendous debt, both in substance and method) to argue that Rawls’s principles of justice fail on their own terms; absent group membership, social choice will simply not lead to the conclusion Rawls presents. I argue that group membership is indeed important to Rawls’s theory of justice, and that the vision of group membership that arises from this acknowledgment is one anathema to Rawls’s liberal principles.

I move to Taylor’s model, in two sections. First, I examine the external resources available to Taylor to explain the practice of recognition, concentrating

⁴⁶This project also takes up the challenge laid down in [Eisgruber, 2001], to examine, “to what extent does the state’s power to inculcate values depend upon how we resolve issues of that kind [meaning “questions like the one in Mozert, about whether the state may compel students to read particular texts”]? (70-71)
on Gadamer and Hegel. Neither offers the resources Taylor needs, although for different reasons. Taylor simply misappropriates Gadamer, whereas he argues persuasively that Hegel’s historical theory, in the end, no longer compels modern humans, which undermines its own credibility; Hegel predicts his own acceptance which, once not seen, should lead us to doubt his story altogether. Second, I look within Taylor’s earlier work, and trace out a concern with the link between language and culture through [Taylor, 1989] and his earlier [Taylor, 1985a, Taylor, 1985b]. While this concern is productive, it is incomplete.

It can be completed with the addition of Vygotsky’s work, which I then outline. I argue against Wertsch’s interpretation, both because it provides occasion to explain Vygotsky to readers who may not be familiar with him, and also because it is this interpretation that causes Taylor to turn to Bakhtin rather than Vygotsky. Wertsch overstates the Marxist influence on Vygotsky, and ignores important elements of German influence, which suggest a model of the self in which language is constitutive of the self. My interpretation also puts Taylor and Vygotsky into fairly easy conversation, as they agree on the constitutive nature of language for selfhood, as well as understanding language as a cultural system of practice. After introducing Vygotsky, I spend a chapter showing how the two can be hybridized into a set of thoughts that provides an important and compelling set of resources for policymakers, especially at the local level, who need to respond to the challenges of value pluralism. I take up an example from *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education* to demonstrate the use and value of this hybrid theory.

Finally, I use this hybrid theory to speak to the debate between Hannah Arendt and Ralph Ellison over Arendt’s judgment of the desegregation of schools in Little Rock. Ellison accuses of Arendt of missing an important cultural value – sacrifice – because she judges from a disengaged standpoint. I articulate the elements of
Kant she draws on that cause her to make this error, and connect them to her particular model of language. Ellison presents an alternative model of judgment, also rooted in language, that emphasizes literature as a set of resources; I critique this model as well, arguing that literature can be too easily mistranslated unless grounded in some shared cultural practices.

1.6 Conclusion

Modeling value systems along the lines of linguistic practices opens the door to the sort of genuine cross-cultural understanding that allows liberal citizens to make judgments about more or less radically different cultures that are both fair and can be justified as fair. But this model alone underspecifies what goes into understanding. I address this underspecification by taking the linguistic model of values seriously, and looking to linguistic acquisition as a model of accessing other value systems. By expanding this model to include a model of linguistic acquisition, I explain how citizens can actually come to understand, at least in part, their fellow citizens’ value systems. This understanding both affects the policies of the liberal state and the justification those policies rest on.
The Limits of Ignorance in Rawls and Its Implication for Liberalism

2.1 Introduction

The central question this dissertation examines is how liberal polities can adjudicate the political difficulties that deep diversity\(^1\) presents for these polities. The difficulty stems from liberalism’s commitment to maximize the freedom citizens have to live their lives according to their preferences. These preferences, especially since the fall of colonialism,\(^2\) are no longer assumed to be in line with the Enlightenment’s belief in progress and rationality.\(^3\) Instead, liberalism accepts that some citizens of liberal states will conceptualize the good life in ways that differ from – and at times are in tension with – liberal models of flourishing.\(^4\) This acceptance has pushed a tension within liberalism to the forefront of the political theory literature: to what extent can liberalism tolerate or accommodate beliefs and be-

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1\([Taylor, 1993]\) and \([Redhead, 2002]\)
2\([Euben, 1999]\)
3\([Locke, 1980]\), for example.
4\([Raz, 1986]\)
behavior in the private sphere which fail to conform, or even resist, the liberal public institutions which serve to protect the space citizens of liberal polities enjoy?

On one hand, liberal polities which restrict the ability of citizens to pursue their own conceptions of the good life open themselves up to criticism by thinkers concerned that liberalism’s formal commitments undermine its substantive commitment. Given the deep diversity these thinkers see characterizing liberal political polities, liberal states which limit citizens from pursuing their vision of the good life risk two different violations of their liberal commitment. First, liberal states may reduce themselves to formal institutions only, failing to defend the essential spirit of liberalism. The seemingly-neutral policies may serve to hide their deleterious effect on citizens who differ from the liberal mainstream.\(^5\) Second, liberal states may develop institutions to police the private sphere which violate the traditional separation in liberal theory between a public sphere and a private sphere.\(^6\) This concerns stems from a perceived inability of liberal institutions to police the private sphere without violating its protections. For these critics, the limits on liberal polities’ ability to restrict its citizens stems from the intrusiveness required, rather than a concern about the policing itself.

Both worries can be expressed either philosophically or politically. Of course, both expressions share a distaste of inconsistency, but the stakes of that inconsistency separate the two positions. The philosophical expression of the worry stems from a concern that liberal states ought to behave in liberal ways, and that to the extent that liberal states engage in illiberal policies, that engagement constitutes a philosophical problem.\(^7\) This is especially worrisome for thinkers who take liberal states to be, in some manner, good, just, or beneficial. For them, the devolution

\(^5\)[Carens, 2000]; [Parekh, 2000] and; [Geuss, 2002]
\(^6\)[Locke, 1980]
\(^7\)[Larmore, 1990] and [Apperley, 2000]
of a liberal state into an illiberal one presents a particularly vexing philosophical problem. The political expression of this worry is the concern that liberal states legitimate themselves politically through their liberal policies, and that engagement in illiberal policies tends to undermine a liberal regime’s ability to legitimate itself to its citizens. Undermined legitimacy risks an increase in instability. For these thinkers, the political consequences, rather than the philosophical or ethical problems, of a liberal state’s engagement in illiberal policies are the reason for liberal states to behave in liberal ways.

On the other hand, liberal theorists worry – with, I think, some reason – that liberal polities require some support from their citizens in order to function well. The protections states provide citizens require the state to function well, and if too many citizens defect from the liberal order, the liberal state loses its ability to protect citizens from one another. Perfect liberty may be impossible; protecting some rights may require giving up, or at least abridging, others. Moreover, while citizens living under liberal regimes have broad rights to pursue their own conceptions of the good life, that pursuit might be limited by their fellow citizens and their own cognate rights. For example, enslaving my neighbor may violate his or her right to live freely. Thus, citizens may be limited in two ways: citizens may be limited by the public demands of living in a liberal-democracy, and also by the state’s legitimate interest in protecting all citizens’ ability to pursue their conception of the good life.

Broadly speaking, these twin pulls have been mapped onto two different conceptions of liberalism: comprehensive liberalism and political liberalism. Com-

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8 [Gutmann, 1995], [Riley, 2002]
9 [Barry, 1990]
10 [Locke, 1980] and [Murphy, 1997]
11 Slavery, of course, has a complicated relationship to liberalism.
prehensive liberalism conceptualizes liberalism as a set of philosophical or ethical commitments expressed politically. These thinkers tend to resolve the tension identified above by diminishing the importance of a strong boundary between the public and private sphere. Given their understanding of liberalism, this makes sense; much of the reason to protect the private sphere is to protect the diversity found in the public sphere, and comprehensive liberals, by taking a partisan position on ethical life, are less wedded than other liberals to protection of private diversity. The private sphere, of course, requires some protection, but that protection is for the sake of philosophical commitments, rather than, as in the case of political liberals, prior to particular philosophical commitments.

This dissertation does not examine comprehensive liberalism in great detail; I focus my critical attention on political liberalism instead. While I will address it at times, especially in Chapter Six, when I turn to Gutmann and Thompson’s work on democratic education, there will be no sustained attention paid to it. To my mind, comprehensive liberalism, while an important part of the literature on liberalism, has largely remained a niche, lacking the broad importance and influence of political liberalism. Its partisan commitment to liberalism as a comprehensive doctrine leave it too open to criticism, especially on this dissertation’s central question of adjudicating the limits of toleration of religious difference in an educational setting. If the position staked out by the state in Wisconsin v. Yoder, which I take to be informed by political liberalism, is itself controversial, then I see little reason to think a position informed by comprehensive liberalism will have any greater force.

Thus, I concentrate here on political liberalism, and within political liberalism,
on John Rawls, the most prominent and important thinker in political liberalism, liberalism, and probably political theory, of the past half-century.\textsuperscript{15} Moreover, in examining Rawls, I make the now-unusual choice of concentrating on [Rawls, 1999b] rather than [Rawls, 1993]. This is unusual, in that [Rawls, 1993] is usually taken to be statement of political liberalism, whereas there is considerable debate over whether [Rawls, 1999b] is a piece of political or comprehensive liberalism. In part, I want to reject this distinction, having been convinced that the separation between comprehensive and political liberalism is ultimately unsustainable.

But more importantly than that, the particular problem I see in Rawls is found in both texts, but is more clearly illustrated through an examination of [Rawls, 1999b]. I argue that Rawls work constitutes a non-neutral conception of politics; the standards of reasonableness he invokes to bound legitimate debate are far less broad than he admits, in a way that damages his model’s ability to legitimate itself politically. This criticism is in line with one of the main lines of attack on Rawls’s work. My approach is novel, however, in that I identify the source of the problem not in his conception of reasonableness itself, but rather in his problematic adoption of social choice theory. He presents citizens’ preferences as if they were necessitated by the strictures of rationality his social choice background demands, but this is not the case; social choice gives model builders wide latitude in developing their conceptions of citizens’ preferences. Rawls adoption of the preferences he does – specifically his assumption of risk-aversion in citizens – is necessitated not by assumptions in the social choice literature, but rather by his own particular beliefs regarding what preferences citizens ought to have. But this presumption runs into trouble behind the veil of ignorance, as the particular

\textsuperscript{15}His major works include: [Rawls, 1993]; [Rawls, 1999b] and; [Rawls, 1999a]
cultural background which could explain citizens’ risk aversion must, by the nature of the thought-experiment, be left outside. Thus, the veil of ignorance, far from providing a single set of political principles of liberal justice, could lead to multiple equilibria, none of which can be selected over the others on the basis of anything Rawls allows behind the veil.

The solution Rawls chooses exacerbates the problem he faces. Rawls looks to Lawrence Kohlberg’s work in developmental psychology and moral psychology to help buttress his particular claim for citizens’ risk-aversion. But this turn to developmental psychology opens up Rawls to all the criticisms facing Kohlberg; far from closing himself off from criticism, this turn exposes him to the criticism that his theory is not just bad politics, but is based on bad psychology as well. Thus, Rawls ends up looking more like comprehensive liberalism than his theory can legitimate politically or philosophically, while opening him up to criticism by developmental psychologists, one of whom I turn to in Chapter Five of this dissertation, as a way to buttress my alternative to Rawls.

Thus, while previous critics of Rawls have attacked his gendering, his misunderstanding of primary goods, his over-emphasis of communal attachments, his under-emphasis of communal attachments, and his reading of Western historical development, I want to examine a problem in the very foundation of Rawls’s principles of justice. Rawls posits a mutual disinterest behind the ‘veil of ignorance’, which, if taken seriously, undermines his claim that citizens are averse to risk, and will therefore strike the bargains that ultimately lead to his second prin-

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16 [Gilligan, 1982], for example
17 [Vygotsky, 1978] and [Vygotsky, 1986]
18 [Okin, 1989]
19 [Nussbaum, 2000]
20 [Nozick, 1974]
21 [Sandel, 1996]
22 [Galston, 1995]
principle of justice. That second principle must come, instead, from his advocacy of a particular cultural outlook which Rawls’s thought instantiates. This particular cultural outlook minimizes the space left for engaging with other cultures, as Rawls presumes his citizens already participate in a specific other culture.

2.2 John Rawls’s Liberal Justice

Understanding Vygotsky’s challenge to Rawls requires understanding the relationship between Rawls’s philosophical psychology\(^{23}\) and Jean Piaget\(^{24}\) and Lawrence Kohlberg’s\(^{25}\) developmental psychology. In this section, I sketch out Rawls’s model of moral development itself and its relationship to his politics. In my next section, I outline Piaget and Kohlberg’s vision of development in order to shed some light on its relationship to Rawls’s model of moral development, and show how some criticisms of Kohlberg’s model are applicable to Rawls’s as well. This sets up my later argument that Vygotsky’s response to Piaget (and alternative model to Kohlberg’s) helps aid our understanding of the conceptual puzzle Rawls wrestles with: where to set the limits of toleration in a liberal society.

*Theory of Justice* derives much of its persuasive strength from Rawls’s ‘veil of ignorance’. The veil of ignorance is a thought-experiment in which citizens are asked to develop rules of justice in their society as if they knew basic facts about societies, but nothing about their society or their place in it. Citizens pass through this veil into what Rawls terms the Original Position. Thus, citizens going through the veil will know, for example, both that water is wet and what the rough motivational value of money is. These citizens will not know if they are male or

\(^{23}\)[Rawls, 1999b]\(^{24}\)[Piaget, 1999]\(^{25}\)[Kohlberg, 1981]
female, black or white, rich or poor. In addition, they will not know what their conception of the good or their plan of life is.

Rawls uses this hypothetical situation in two ways. First, for those not yet in a well-ordered society, such as Rawls’s colleagues, it demonstrates the strength of his model of political justice. For citizens living under Rawls’s just regime, going through the thought-experiment of the veil of ignorance allows a public demonstration and acceptance of the principles of justice that come out of the discussion in the Original Position. Rawls argues that through this exercise, citizens will arrive at these two principles of justice:

1. Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all

2. Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:
   • to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and
   • attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

These principles are not the result of single citizens thinking through the Original Position, but rather are the result of debate and discussion by citizens behind the veil of ignorance; the two principles of justice are the result of a public process of reasoning. What drives the reasoning process of citizens in the original position is the general psychological model Rawls attributes to them.

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26Habermas offers an interesting critique of Rawls’s conception of the self here, arguing that the citizens behind the veil of ignorance are too similar for their interactions to be reasonably considered debates or even really discussions.
The purpose of the veil of ignorance is, as Rawls claims, to limit the incentives citizens would have to simply attempt to stack the deck, so to speak, for themselves or whatever group(s) they belong to.\footnote{Note that already Rawls is making an important psychological claim: that at least some citizens in modern liberal democracies are motivated by acquisition, rather than fairness. While we might accept this as uncontroversial claim (and certainly large swaths of contemporary political scientists do), it is important to remember that is is, in fact, a claim, and that it is a claim about psychology, rather than, for example, natural law.} He prevents citizens from doing so by denying them information about their place in society and group affiliation, in order to generate debate on general principles rather than particular policies.\footnote{A connection here to Rousseau? Note that the original position is singular. All Rawlsian citizens enter the same original position in moving behind the veil of ignorance, just as citizens in Rousseau’s works access the same sovereign from which to vote. Indeed, it is likely no coincidence that the sovereign rules through principles rather than policies, just as citizens in the original position generate principles of justice, rather than just policies.} The remaining characteristic of a citizen in the original position, behind the veil of ignorance, is rationality; rationality is all that is left by the veil of ignorance.\footnote{\textit{[Rawls, 1999b]} 123} Thus, it is the discussion between rational citizens alone that generates the principles of justice.\footnote{Since all citizens enter into the same original position, then differences between them cannot be generative; only their similarities can generate the principles of justice. And what these citizens have in common is their rationality. Thus, essentially by exclusion, outcomes of discussions between citizens in the original position must be attributable to Rawls’s vision of rationality.} Thus, the principles of justice must come from the model of rationality Rawls presents in the first half of \textit{Theory of Justice}.

However, contrary to Rawls’s claims, his first principle of justice cannot come solely from his model of rationality. We can see this through a criticism presented by Amayarta Sen, whose work in social choice theory Rawls cites as the source of his model of rationality: Rawls models rational citizens without sufficiently explaining their pessimistic outlook, and his insistence on mutual disinterest and pure rationality behind the veil of ignorance precludes a compelling explanation of the source of this outlook. \footnote{\textit{[Rawls, 1999b]} 123}
2.3 Rawls and Rationality

Rawls derives his vision of rationality largely from the work of economic theorists Amayarta Sen and Kenneth Arrow\textsuperscript{31}, rather than psychologists. Sen and Arrow are the founders of the school of social choice, a rationalist set of explanations, predictions, and justifications for collective outcomes that emphasize the importance of individual preference sets in determining eventual outcomes and the use of decision theory in order to predict and explain them. Part of the social choice project is the articulation of a rational self. Rawls incorporates a social choice vision of individual rationality into the original position, with the important difference of mutual disinterest. I address the importance of this below.

The characteristics of Rawlsian rationality, derived from these economists, are:

- a rational person has a coherent set of preferences, meaning that the set of preferences a rational person has are lexically ordered and contain no cycles
- these preferences correspond to the options available in a given political regime, and so the rational person can rank options according to their preferences
- the rational person develops a plan out of ranked options according to maximizing the chance to execute, so they can translate their preferences into a plan of life

Rawls derives his principles of justice primarily from these characteristics, but he adds one feature that Sen explicitly rejects: mutual disinterest.

Mutual disinterest means that envy does not exist; no rational Rawlsian citizen evaluates his or her lot according to what those around her or him have. Instead,\textsuperscript{31}

each citizen, as a rational being, has access to an objective weighting of goods, and they evaluate their basket of goods in terms of this objective weighting and the baskets of goods they would have under other regimes. This may seem like a minor quibble at first. After all, from a certain, appealing perspective, mutual disinterest should hold. Envy is rarely counted among the virtues, and even when it is\textsuperscript{32}, it is in order to ensure an acquisitiveness that Rawls builds into his citizens to begin with.\textsuperscript{33} Even in a purely zero-sum world, in which anything one citizen gains comes out of the pocket of another, we can reconcile acquisitiveness and mutual disinterest: citizens seek to maximize their own share, not minimize the shares of others.

But the introduction of mutual disinterest should give liberals pause, and Sen helps to show why. Sen claims,

\begin{quote}
It will be a mistake to assume that preferences as they actually are do not involve any concern for others. The society in which a person lives, the class to which he belongs, the relation that he has with the social and economic structure of the community, are relevant to a person's choice not merely because they affect the nature of his personal interests but also because they influence his value system.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

Sen elaborates his reasons for claiming this in Chapters Nine and Nine\textsuperscript{*}.\textsuperscript{[Sen, 1970]} is divided into sets of chapters, in which concepts in Sen's theory of social choice are elaborated textually in the primary chapters, and symbolically in the chapters denoted with an asterisk. Thus, Chapter Nine\textsuperscript{*} contains the proofs for concepts Sen works through in prose in Chapter Nine.

\begin{quote}
Sen traces the history of Western conceptions of justice and equality through
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{32}] See [Hundert, 1997]
\item[\textsuperscript{33}] I take the development of a plan of life that maximizes payout of preferences to be acquisitiveness.
\item[\textsuperscript{34}] [Sen, 1970] 6
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotes}
Kant and Sidgwick in Chapter Nine, as Rawls does in [Rawls, 1999b].\footnote{Sen, 1970} For Sen, the importance of Kant and Sidgwick are that they underscore the importance of universalizability, which is the idea that moral codes must be general and universal rather than particular, in developing moral codes. However, Sen sees two problems in using universalizability as an evaluative criterion.\footnote{Sen, 1970}

The first problem has two parts. First, if universalizability is a logical claim about the form of ethics, rather than an ethical claim itself, then it seems to violate Hume’s dictum that morals cannot come solely out of empirical observations (or, one cannot derive an ought from an is). In addition, the concept of universalizability is underspecified by both Kant and Sidgwick; neither of them sufficiently illustrates precisely what aspects of ethical situations must be universalizable. On the one hand, Sen argues that no two situations can be precisely alike, and so in order for the principle of universalizability to have any meaningful content, it must be restricted to some set of relevant similarities. On the other hand, neither Kant nor Sidgwick argues for a way of distinguishing between relevant and trivial similarities. So, for example, if a car-buyer is deciding whether or not to lie on his loan application, and is trying to decide whether the lie is universalizable and therefore ethically appropriate, the arguments of Kant and Sidgwick for the principle of universalizability cannot help the buyer decide whether it matters that the car is blue rather than red.

The second problem with the principle of universalizability comes out of this problem of specification. Sen illustrates this second problem with the principle of universalizability through an example coming out of South Africa under apartheid. If a white Afrikaner is asked to universalize the apartheid system, and imagine...
a political regime in which native Africans persecute the white colonists, she or he may respond that these two situations are not, in fact, similar enough to be comparable permutations, because, “whether [s/]he is white or black is a relevant difference in his system.” What Sen means by this is that the usefulness of the principle of universalizability relies on a common understanding of which dimensions of a situation up for evaluation are suitable for testing through an imaginary universalization. Contemporary liberals would claim that the two situations, white-on-black persecution and black-on-white persecution are comparable because the particular race in power is not a morally relevant distinction, and changing it does not fundamentally alter the moral considerations involved. But this is, in some way, exactly what is at stake in the sorts of debates that invoke principles of justice; the Afrikaaner’s reply is morally outrageous from a very different moral background than the Afrikaaner may share, making any moral claim regarding, for example, apartheid difficult to ground in universal claims, because what is to be universalized may not be agreed-upon.

Thus, the strict principle of universalizability introduced by Kant and elaborated by Sidgwick is problematic in its use. Sen deals with these problems, initially at least, by proposing Rawls’s ‘justice as fairness’ maxim as a less-demanding version of the development of general moral laws. Rawls is less demanding for two reasons: he seeks to limit the scope of his analysis to justice claims in the public sphere, and he uses radical uncertainty as a substitute for working through every possible permutation in ensuring universalizability of laws.

Sen introduces four important problems with Rawls’s position, of which two are exacerbated by Rawls’s insistence on mutual disinterest. First, mutual disinterest

37[Sen, 1970] 134
means that political outcomes may not be strongly Pareto optimal.\textsuperscript{38} In a set of possible worlds, if the worst payoff is equal, Rawls offers no reason to prefer any one to any other, because of mutual disinterest; the worst-off citizen is unconcerned between their possible payoffs, because they are equal, and the unequal payoffs other citizens receive, because they are mutually disinterested.

More importantly, the primacy that Rawls puts in fairness over justice is not obvious from principles of social choice alone. In deriving justice out of fairness, Rawls presumes a maximin strategy on the part of his citizens.\textsuperscript{39} The maximin assumption is what drives his first principle of justice. Sen argues that the primacy of maximin in Rawls is why he claims that justice comes out of fairness: “The link between the concept of ‘fairness’ and the two principles of ‘justice’ that identify the maximin rule lies in the belief that in a ‘fair’ agreement these two principles will be chosen.”\textsuperscript{40}

But the necessity of the maximin strategy does not come out of the social choice literature. Sen outlines a variety of other social choice outlooks that explore a range of optimistic and pessimistic expectations on the part of choosers.\textsuperscript{41} The justification for the extreme pessimism exhibited by Rawlsian citizens choosing behind the veil of ignorance must come from somewhere other than the logical necessity Rawls claims. Earlier, Sen offered his argument for where such a value system would come from; it would develop from the interactions a citizen had with others.\textsuperscript{42} Thus, Rawls’s insistence in mutual disinterest cuts off the road Sen

\textsuperscript{38}See [Sen, 1970] 21-22 for a general discussion of Pareto optimality.
\textsuperscript{39}A maximin strategy is a strategy by a rational chooser that seeks to maximize the minimum payout. For example, a person following a maximin strategy would prefer a guaranteed dollar to a ninety-nine percent chance of $1,000,000 and one percent chance of nothing, since the minimum payout in the first game ($1) is greater than the minimum payout in the second game (nothing).
\textsuperscript{40}[Sen, 1970] 140
\textsuperscript{41}Such as that outlined in [Hurwicz, 1951]
\textsuperscript{42}See note 21 above
sees to the development of the pessimistic value-system that leads to the maximin strategy that drives Rawls’s two principles of justice. We can see from this how Sen, who himself is the source of Rawls’s social choice model of rationality behind the veil of ignorance, develops a strong implicit criticism of Rawls’s condition of mutual disinterest, as it precludes what he sees as the obvious developmental story for arriving at the value system Rawls assumes for his citizens.

In relying on the social choice school of Sen and Arrow in developing his version of rationality, Rawls fails to acknowledge any of the psychology literature dealing with rationality.\textsuperscript{43} In fact, Rawls shies away from connecting his conception of rationality to psychology, preferring instead to talk about it in purely economic terms; he however brings psychology into his analysis in the latter half of \textit{A Theory of Justice}, to help him in justifying the stability of his project.\textsuperscript{44} Rawls’s reasoning here is opaque; he asserts that moral psychology plays the same role in determining stability that economic reasoning plays in determining the outcome of debate in the original position, and that problems with his view of moral psychology are only important insofar as they suggest instability around the principles of justice. But this assertion is left bare for the reader, and it is, I argue, incorrect.

The stabilizing function of his moral psychology is less important than the possibility that the story of moral development Rawls tells in the second half of \textit{A Theory of Justice} fills in the source of the pessimistic preferences Rawlsian citizens bring with them behind the veil of ignorance. As Sen suggests, a Rawlsian model of the rational citizen fails to fully explain the first principle of justice; in order to arrive at Rawls’s two principles, Rawlsian citizens must have preferences unaccounted for in his model of rationality. One likely source for those preferences is

\textsuperscript{43}Of which a substantial amount exists. See large footnote here
\textsuperscript{44}[Rawls, 1999b] 404-405.
the moral development citizens go through in the well-ordered society. Searching beyond Rawlsian rationality for the source of concerns behind the veil of ignorance is fair to both Rawls and his critics, because Rawls presents the veil as a thought-experiment that citizens in the well-ordered society can use to re-affirm their principles and commitments, rather than an actual method of arriving at a social contract; Rawls never suggests that citizens actually go behind the veil in developing a new political regime. Thus, the citizens who go behind the veil of ignorance, in a thought-experiment performed in a well-ordered society, will have gone through the moral development that Rawls describes in the second half of *A Theory of Justice*. While this would require an addition to Rawls's description of the veil of ignorance, such an addition would be a minor one.

This turns out not to be the case, however. Rawls’s use of Kohlberg’s model of moral development opens the door to extensions of state power that are difficult to justify in a liberal regime, because they treat moral difference in a language of maturity and posit a single, universal trajectory of moral development. Such an argument by the state would require much greater attention to policies and limits than Rawls generates, leaving open the probability of state intrusion and interference into the lives of citizens outside of a liberal mainstream.

### 2.4 Moral Development in Rawls

The economic reasoning Rawls developed alone is insufficient to justify his theory of justice, as explored above; in addition to being chosen by citizens behind the veil of ignorance, the principles of justice must be clearly superior to others in the minds of citizens as they live their daily lives. If the principles of justice were only able to be recognized as superior behind the veil of ignorance, according to
Rawls, then the well-ordered society that resulted from them would be an unstable one. Part of the pull of these principles of justice, according to Rawls, is that they encourage the stability of the society that adopts them. This stability cannot just come from their reasonableness, Rawls claims, because citizens require an affective connection to their regime and its underlying principles, in order to help justify state action against the immediate interests of individual citizens.

This is where Rawls turns to developmental and moral psychology. In order to help the well-ordered society maintain itself, it must be stable, and that stability cannot come solely from thought-experiments such as the veil of ignorance, must be buttressed by a set of moral sentiments that encapsulate the public ethic of the liberal state. Without a set of moral sentiments that justify the state, the well-ordered society cannot stand up to the pressures of difference without more state interference than Rawls acknowledges.

Rawls analyzes these moral sentiments through two primary traditions he identifies: social learning theory, and naturalist social rationality. Rawls claims that his theory of justice should only be deemed a success if he can show that the embrace of it by citizens is stable. This stability cannot, in his view, come just from rationality, but must also be rooted in, “moral sentiments.”

The first tradition, found in empiricism and utilitarianism, holds that moral training is necessary to point a citizen in a pro-social direction; moral learning takes place by supplying the motives for pro-social behavior. Authority figures hold behavior that promotes the common good (presumably as understood by the authority figures) to be praiseworthy, and behavior that either subverts or ignores

\[\text{[Rawls, 1999b] 401}\]

\[\text{[Rawls, 1999b] 401. Rawls identifies Hume and Sidgwick as thinkers in this tradition here; the bulk of the Scottish Enlightenment could probably be included as well. See [Smith, 2005], for example.}\]
the common good is treated as wrong and worthy of approbation. This praise or approbation is a reward for the learning citizen.\footnote{Here, on page 401, Rawls starts his gradual shift from talking about citizens to talking about children. This shift is, I would like to suggest, problematic. While a full exploration of this idea goes beyond the scope of this project, it is my suspicion that the lack of acknowledgment of this shift correlates with a difficulty Rawls has in spelling out precisely what ought to happen to those existing adult citizens of developed Western democracies who, for whatever reason, would not subscribe to his principles of justice. While Rawls at times the his principles will necessitate certain ways of life dying out, he is vague as to what specific policies would aid this and to what extent these policies are just. Without being too light-hearted on what is a frankly serious matter, the idea of Rawlsian ‘re-education’ is too intriguing to dismiss entirely. While this is, in essence, a side-issue for this project, I believe that holding Rawlsians’ feet to the fire on this score may be productive, given their insistence that real-world applicability is a strength of their theoretical basis. I should also say that I do not believe that Rawls and his followers are the only liberal writers guilty of this sin-by-omission.}

This strand of Western moral psychology identified by Rawls is one suggesting that our pro-social impulses are aroused prior to our understanding the reasons behind them. The force of this training can be such that the training impacts, “our original nature” to a great extent.\footnote{\cite{Rawls, 1999b} 402. Rawls makes reference on the following page to “our social nature.”} Rawls identifies Freud as a proponent of this first story of moral development, thus introducing psychology into his analysis for the first time. For Rawls, however, the resolution of the Oedipal complex, because it occurs prior to the full flowering of reasoning, cannot be the only mode through which human children cogitate their way through moral quandaries.

Rawls’s argument relies more heavily on another, more cognitively-oriented, strand of Western theories of moral development that he finds in the work of Rousseau, Kant, J. S. Mill, and Piaget. This orientation flows from an assumption that man is naturally sociable. Given this natural sociability, children may need guidance in developing their mental and emotional capacities, but those capacities are already oriented towards sociability. “Thus, this tradition regards the moral feelings as a natural outgrowth of a full appreciation of our social nature.”\footnote{\cite{Rawls, 1999b} 402-403. See note 6 on 403 for a bibliographic note.}
conceptions of moral learning,” is odd, given that he primarily relies on his second story of moral development. Rawls prefers a story of moral psychological development that emphasizes cognition; while Rawls’s claim that he does not assess the merits of these opposing stories is true in a certain limited sense – Rawls never does explicitly assesses either one – he treats the first tradition as a way-station on the developmental path to the second. This can be seen in the developmental sequence Rawls develops in §70 to 72. For Rawls, the development of the moral sentiments takes place through three stages: the morality of authority, the morality of associations, and finally the morality of principles. This sequence is both chronological and developmental; learning members of the well-ordered society individually move through the first to the last, and each stage is superior, in Rawls’s view, to the one preceding it. Thus, the first stage, which Rawls calls morality of authority but seems to be a recapitulation of social learning theory, the first, less cognitively-inclined Western theory of moral development, is supplanted by the latter ones.

He describes the morality of authority as the way in which parents turn a child’s natural, reciprocal love for them into a tool for instantiating moral judgments. In this stage, moral psychology acts in the way described by the first tradition Rawls identifies, social learning theory. However, cognitive developments supplant this model, leading the child to the morality of association, in which the child learns morals appropriate to a role in a community. Finally, if the community that a child belongs to is a well-ordered society, the child can develop into having a morality of principles. A morality of principles is where Rawls’s locates a true sense of

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50 [Rawls, 1999b] 403-404
51 [Rawls, 1999b] 408
52 [Rawls, 1999b] 401-402
53 [Rawls, 1999b] 409. Rawls also seems to want this section to address communitarian concerns, although he does not engage any communitarian argument explicitly in this section (71)
justice. This transition takes place when the child accepts principles as part of her or his own moral principles they had accepted in the second stage for the sake of her or his associations. Thus, at the end of Rawls’s story of moral development, children have accepted pro-social moral principles for their own sake, with the previous aid of their parents and peers in developing their capacities.\textsuperscript{54} This acceptance of principles as their own rules, for that they no longer feel imposed, has obvious parallels to Kant’s description of autonomy, and the second tradition of moral development, naturalist social rationality.

A more detailed examination of this second tradition, naturalist social rationality helps show the apex of Rawls’s model of moral development and its relation to Kohlberg. Rawls elaborates this psychological understanding at the beginning of §75, “The Principles of Moral Psychology,” through his three laws of moral psychology\textsuperscript{55}:

- Children come to love family institutions through evidence of their love and care for them
- Given the first law, and the development of moral sentiments this entails, then citizens living under a just regime known to be just by the citizens develop “ties of friendly feeling and trust” to others, insofar as those others provide evidence of their intention to live up to the ideals of citizenship under their regime
- Given the first two laws, and a recognition of the benefits of the just society, those ties developed towards well-intentioned other citizens become a sense of justice

\textsuperscript{54}[Rawls, 1999b] 414
\textsuperscript{55}[Rawls, 1999b] 429
The status of these three laws is ambiguous in the text. Rawls uses the term 'law' in discussing them, but also says that the reader should, “[take] for granted that they represent tendencies and are effective other things being equal,” which hardly seems like a standard usage of the term 'law'. For the sake of clarity, I keep Rawls’s terminology, but with reservations as to the actual content thereof.

While these laws are clear enough, where they come from, either psychologically or historically, is not. Rather than work through the extensive existing literature on developmental psychology or moral psychology, to assure the reader that this psychology is plausible, Rawls follows this list with an extended defense of the use or moral notions generally in social science, even when treated as motivations: “It may be objected that much social theory does well enough without using any moral ideas. The obvious example is economics. However, the situation in economic theory is peculiar in that one can often assume a fixed structure of rules and constraints that define the actions open to individuals and firms.”

Because of Rawls’s focus on justifying the use or moral sentiments in his analysis, reconstructing the scholarly foundation of Rawls’s story of moral development is a challenging exercise. Rawls cites Rousseau, Kant, and Mill as the three philosophical sources of this cognitivist view of moral development, and Piaget and Kohlberg as the psychological sources. Why does Rawls make a distinction between the psychological and philosophical sources? He gives an answer in note eight of §69:

In the last several paragraphs of §75, I note some differences between the view I present and these writers. Concerning Kohlberg’s theory, I should add here that I believe the morality of association is parallel to his stages three to five. Development within this stage is being

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56 Also see [Okin, 1989].
57 [Rawls, 1999b] 431
58 [Rawls, 1999b] 403n
able to assume more complex, demanding, and comprehensive roles. But more important, I assume that the final stage, the morality of principles, may have different contents given by any of the traditional philosophical doctrines we have discussed. It is true that I argue for the theory of justice as superior, and work out the psychological theory on the presumption; but this superiority is a philosophical question and cannot, I believe, be established by the psychological theory of development alone.

The last sentence is the key to understanding the basis of Rawls’s use of psychology.59

Here, Rawls is making a case for the superiority of his philosophical outcomes, rather than either psychology or philosophy in general. But this move, to argue that his philosophy is superior, undercuts the stability of his theory; the objections made by both communitarian theorists60 and religious parents in education cases61 are objections precisely to the privileging of an economic rationality over communal meanings. Thus, Rawls’s attempt to justify stability rests on an acceptance by the citizenry of his philosophy. While Rawls’s analysis of moral sentiments at work in the just society is an interesting one, its logical force is lessened by its tautological grounding.

Moreover, by identifying moral maturity with what Rawls describes as a morality of principles, Rawls privileges an atomized vision of the self, which serves to obscure the social conditions necessary for itself. Rawls describes the development of moral psychology in a well-ordered society through the actions of parents, peers, and social institutions leading a citizen to principles which come from themselves, or at least, their own relationship to reason. Thus, at the final stage of moral psychological development, a citizen can develop her or his own moral principles to

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59 I deal with Rawls’s specific claim regarding Kohlberg’s stages and their relationship to Rawls’s different moral psychologies both above, and in greater detail in Part Five of this chapter.

60 See [MacIntyre, 1984]; [Taylor, 1989]; [Sandel, 1996] and; [Taylor, 1994]

61 [Bates, 1993]
guide her or his life; the role of others in moral development is over once a citizen becomes mature. But this is an unrealistic depiction of the relationship between citizens and others.

Much like Locke, Rawls finds himself needing to draw a hard line between when one can be influenced by others justly and when one should be one’s own person. This comes out of Rawls’s moral hierarchy. The problem is that, much as Locke’s child does not really come into fully mature faculties upon the hour of her or his majority, Rawls’s mature citizen does not leave behind the input of others in the construction of her or his moral principles. A good amount of psychological evidence suggests that, while the influence of others on a person’s moral beliefs and actions drops somewhat between infancy and adulthood, it never recedes fully.\textsuperscript{62} We see this in the literature surrounding Lawrence Kohlberg, who Rawls identifies as a primary source for his vision of moral development.\textsuperscript{63}

\section*{2.5 Rawls, Kohlberg, and Maturity}

Lawrence Kohlberg’s influential model of moral development comes out of the seminal work of Jean Piaget in [Piaget, 1999], Kohlberg frames his research, in the introduction to his \textit{Essays on Moral Development} as an attempt, “to carry forward into adolescence Piaget’s (1932) pioneering investigation of the development of moral judgment in children.”\textsuperscript{64} Kohlberg takes from Piaget a model of the ’child as philosopher’.\textsuperscript{65} This model has two primary characteristics for Kohlberg. The

\textsuperscript{62}This can be seen in a wide variety of sources, ranging from the Milgram experiments to Bruno Bettelheim’s writings on his experiences in Nazi concentration camps to the Michigan prison experiments.

\textsuperscript{63}Rawls identifies both Piaget and Kohlberg as his intellectual forerunners. The following section focuses primarily on Kohlberg.

\textsuperscript{64}[Kohlberg, 1981] xxvii

\textsuperscript{65}This terminology is used widely in both Piaget and Kohlberg, although it is not the only vocabulary Piaget uses. Frequently, Piaget describes the child as a scientist in describing cognitive
first is an assumption\(^\text{66}\) of structuralism. The primary base for Kohlberg’s work, coming out of Piaget, is his assumption that the developing child’s mind has its own cognitive structure, and that this structure serves to structure both moral outlook at any given stage of development and the development of moral outlooks over time.\(^\text{67}\) The cognitive structure of the child’s mind provides the child with an ability to construct an ethical relationship to the world. This is what causes moral development; as the child develops, the internal mental structures of the child develop, encouraging the construction of different ethical formulas for relating to the world. The second important characteristic is his reliance on an assumption that ethical constructions are themselves unique and that their development proceeds in a predictable fashion; which is to say, moral development proceeds in stages.

For Kohlberg, moral development proceeds in three levels, each consisting of two stages. The first level, preconventional morality, corresponds roughly with Rawls’s first level, morality of authority. A person in the level is egocentric and focused on relatively immediate hedonistic outcomes. This level is composed of Stage One and Stage Two. At Stage One, the actor is primarily motivated by punishments and rewards; all an actor evaluates in deciding what action to take is the personal, usually physical, payoff. At Stage Two, an actor is capable of trust and entering into contracts, but is still solely or largely motivated by physical desires. “I’ll scratch your back if you’ll scratch mine,” summarizes the outlook of development, which for Piaget and Kohlberg is a parallel development, separate but related. Critics of Piaget sometimes criticize his vision of the child as a ‘solitary scientist,’ and even Piaget’s defenders on this point have adopted this language; see [DeVries, 1997] for an example.

\(^{66}\)Kohlberg uses the term ‘assumption’ to describe his relationship to the foundations of his model. While he brings empirical, experimental evidence to bear in support of his conclusions, he is very clear up-front that his evidence provides support rather than truth, and that his model, while supported by evidence, is a model that rests in part on the assumptions of himself and Piaget.

\(^{67}\)[Kohlberg, 1981] xxvii
an actor at Stage Two.\textsuperscript{68}

The second level, conventional morality, corresponds roughly with Rawls’s second level, morality of associations. At this level, actors derive their notions of right and wrong from the groups they associate with: family, friends, nation, and so on. This model of moral reasoning differs from pre-conventional morality in that the reason for this derivation is not the proximity of the groups, and therefore the proximity of punishments and rewards, but rather an authentic loyalty and desire to protect and cultivate the groups to which an actor belongs. Actors at Stage Three are primarily motivated by approval and approbation. Actors want to be seen in a positive light by those to whom they give credence, and intention begins to become a central moral category.\textsuperscript{69} Stage Four is sometimes referred to as the ‘law-and-order stage’. At this stage, actors frequently employ categories of authority and duty in structuring their moral responses to the world. Stage Four actors seek to preserve, “the given social order for its own sake.”\textsuperscript{70}

Kohlberg characterizes the achievement of the third, and final level, postconventional, or principled, morality, as the attempt by a moral actor to universalize moral principles away from either their own desires or the desires of their particular group(s). This stage corresponds to Rawls’s morality of principles. At Stage Five, an actor rejects the law-and-order of Stage Four, and adopts a version of utilitarianism: the rightness of actions depends on their effects on others generally, rather than either their conformance to law (Stage Four) or their effects of particular others (Stages One through Three). The Stage Five actor sees laws as important,
insofar as following laws tends to be beneficial to a society, but laws do not define the limits of Stage Five morality. Kohlberg identifies this stage as, “the ’official’ morality of the United States government and constitution.” The final stage, Stage Six, is the achievement of moral autonomy. Actions are guided by moral laws, formulated personally and followed out of no sense of external obligation. These moral laws are formulated abstractly and generally, and are assumed by adopters to be universal, although an actor in Stage Six adopts them personally.

The concept of a moral stage is central to the work of Piaget, Kohlberg, and Rawls. Kohlberg characterizes developmental stages in three ways:

- Invariant sequence
- Structured wholeness or cross-task or cross-situational consistency
- Hierarchical integration or displacement of lower stages by higher stages

Each of these characteristics, found in Kohlberg and duplicated in Rawls, is important to understanding Rawls’s story of moral development, and each contain important problems for liberal political theory.

First, the sequence of stages does not vary. This has a number of implications important for Rawls. For one, this suggests a universal story of human moral development. If this characterization holds true, then for all humans, and for all possible humans, moral development would occur along the same trajectory. The universality of this trajectory would be a powerful argument against, for example, cultural or religious alternatives to the moral trajectory developed by developmental, moral, and political psychologists; by showing a single possible order of
developmental stages, Kohlberg (and with him, Rawls) would have a strong foundation from which to assert the necessity of that developmental story.\textsuperscript{74} If a single story of moral development is possible for humans, then political institutions that recognize that story of moral development will do no violence. For example, schools could engage more freely in moral education, since the sequence of moral development is invariant. All of this is to say that a primary source of promotion of diversity would be undercut, and with it, some ground for limited government.\textsuperscript{75}

Second, the stages are best understood as whole, consistent sets of beliefs, that lead to consistent moral behavior from situation to situation. Note the ways in which this aspect of stages mirrors the models of social choice theory most closely; we can see a great deal of Rawls’s characterization of rationality in this characterization of moral stages. This characterization runs counter to theoretical conceptions of the self that emphasize internal pluralism, such as the work of Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer.\textsuperscript{76} If moral development proceeds in stages, and stages are best understood as being consistent sets of moral and cognitive structures, then the self, or at least the moral self, ought be seen as a whole, consistent thing. While this conception of the self matches that developed by Arrow and Sen in the social choice literature, it is not an uncontroversial one in the liberal theory literature.\textsuperscript{77} Beyond this, Kohlberg and Rawls enumerate a quite limited set of moral stages. Kohlberg describes six stages, and as described before, Rawls models moral development through three stages. If these stages are consistent, whole sets of beliefs and behaviors, then there is some reason to think that less diversity exists, and, as with the invariance of sequence, the state has

\textsuperscript{74}See [Locke, 1979] and [Locke, 1981] for a summary of criticisms on this point.
\textsuperscript{75}See, for example, J. S. Mill’s reasons for limiting government in [Mill, 2000]
\textsuperscript{76}[Walzer, 1983] and [Taylor, 1994]
\textsuperscript{77}Nor in the philosophy or psychology literature. See [Locke, 1979] and [Locke, 1981]
fewer reasons to restrict its actions or its demands on its citizens.

Finally, the hierarchical integration characterization seems like the least controversial; however, this characterization should in some ways be the most troubling. On the one hand, we should expect that any model which includes progress through steps would describe the later stages as progress over the earlier ones. However, this characterization of moral development could be dangerous if adopted politically. If a liberal regime adopted Kohlberg of Rawls’s stage model of moral development, and took seriously the characterization of the stages as hierarchically integrative, then the regime would have an opening to move away from a neutral stance towards morality. While few liberal theorists take seriously the idea that a liberal state should be nothing but neutral to competing visions of morality (for example, a moral vision that promoted human sacrifice is something that all liberal writers agree should be, at least, hampered), adoption of a hierarchical model of moral reasoning opens the door to a liberal regime evaluating moral reasoning, rather than actions.

The long and the short of this is that, by adopting Kohlberg’s stage model for use in his own story of the moral development necessary for a well-ordered society to legitimate itself, Rawls introduces serious concerns about how his just state will deal with moral difference, and he fails to adequately address these concerns; his adoption of Kohlberg has the feel of a deus ex machina, by which Rawls seeks to avoid discussion by invoking the name of a scientist. However, as discussed above, Kohlberg’s theories are more controversial than Rawls acknowledges, and frequently on similar grounds – the progressive elements of their models make many writers nervous about the political implications of a moral teleology under a

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78 See [Locke, 1979] 173
79 See [Larmore, 1990]
modern regime and the universal claims they make seem designed to explain away what seems to be a brute fact of difference in contemporary polities. Because these problems are introduced into Rawls’s theory through his adoption of Kohlberg’s psychological theories, I want to suggest that productive solutions may be found in the psychology literature criticizing Kohlberg and the cognitivist school of development.

2.6 Conclusion

What does this mean for Rawls’s theory of justice?

At the least, this means that the sustainability of the well-ordered society is underspecified in *Theory of Justice*. In order for citizens to achieve a morality of principles, they must exist in a society that both encourages this development and nurtures its existence. The need for both development and nurturing limits the scope of individual freedom more sharply than Rawls admits to.\(^80\) This would preclude membership in a wide variety of organizations, ranging from cultural-preservation societies\(^81\) to certain religious organizations, the groups central to this project. This is not the worst-case scenario, however.

The importance of non-state institutions in maintaining a political vision of justice suggests a way in which Rawlsian liberalism endorses decidedly illiberal practices. To the extent that the maintenance of Rawls’s ideal of moral psychology cannot be justified on purely logical or rational terms, that maintenance may require a set of commitments outside of the political sphere, which in turn suggests domination by the political regime over the social sphere. While a full exploration

\(^80\) And probably more sharply than Rawls was aware of. I see little evidence of disingenuousness, and the extent of willful ignorance on the part of Rawls is limited.

\(^81\) See [Kymlicka, 1995] for an argument on the importance of these in maintaining multicultural liberal societies.
of this idea moves beyond the scope of this project, I do want to suggest that there is something profoundly perverse about justifying a liberal regime on the back of prioritizing political demands over individual or cultural demands.  

None of this is intended to suggest that individual beliefs, commitments, or attachments are unimportant. Quite the opposite, this project is intended to offer a stronger protection of them then Rawls can offer, by understanding and appreciating the ways in which individuals come out of and depend on groups and group attachments. Thus, while Rawls offers a developmental psychology that is ultimately unconvincing and dangerous for individuals, in the following chapter, I develop my criticism of communitarian thinkers for ignoring the foundational importance of individuals, and the extent to which individuals are the result of group action.

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82See [Gutmann and Thompson, 1996] for more on the priority of cultural demands over political ones in liberalism.
The Social Formation of Ethics in Taylor, Hegel, and Gadamer

3.1 Introduction

Like Rawls, Taylor bases his political theory on a model of the individual’s relationship to outside influences. For Rawls, individuals can function outside of a cultural context; they can conceptualize themselves behind a veil of ignorance, in which the only concerns the individual brings to bear in developing a just social contract are universal concerns. Rawls’s faith in the ability of individuals to divorce themselves from their various forms of group membership drive his normative agenda; the shape of Rawlsian liberal politics, in which the right is prioritized over other goods and the free market can distribute rights equitably, derives from his presumption of the primacy of the individual.

Taylor’s vision of communal ties are as central to his theories as Rawls’s are to his. Unlike Rawls, Taylor conceives of individual selves as existing within a communal context; individuals cannot, for Taylor, be understood in a disengaged
manner, even if only in a thought experiment.¹ For Taylor, politics comes out of who we are, and who we are comes from the groups that we belong to.

“Politics and Recognition” is Taylor’s attempt to answer demands for recognition by groups, frequently illiberal, in liberal polities. For Taylor, evaluating the merits of these claims requires first understanding the groups themselves and the ways in which they promote or hinder the well-being of their members. Taylor recognizes that what qualifies as well-being is in large part constructed by group norms, and that to understand how a group contributes to its members sometimes requires understanding the group from some perspective other than our own. For example, evaluating whether the tradition of the chador contributes to the well-being of Muslim women cannot be done purely from a Christian standpoint, because of the gap between the understanding of well-being between Islam and Christianity. To fairly evaluate claims for recognition requires overcoming radical subjectivity. And overcoming radical subjectivity, in order to engage with a foreign group, requires understanding how all members of groups relate to their own cultural frameworks, including our own. In short, to fairly evaluate claims for recognition, we must understand something about identity.

This is why Taylor treats identity as a political question. Given modern understandings of the liberal state, in which the state is treated increasingly as neutral, bureaucratic, or administrative², it would seem that questions of selfhood and identity are apolitical questions under liberal regimes. Indeed, the depoliticization of personal identity characteristics is in many ways central to liberal theory, from its beginnings³ to its most contemporary formulations.⁴.

¹As in Rawls’s veil of ignorance. See [Rawls, 1999b]).
³[Hobbes, 1998], [Locke, 1980]
But for Taylor, liberal politics can be separated from pre-modern politics by the relationship between it and identity; Taylor argues that recognition of an individualized identity is the foundational legitimating principle for liberal politics in the same way that class identity was the foundational legitimating principle for aristocratic politics. He claims that this occurs through two historical developments: his distinction between honor and dignity and the rise of authenticity as a value. Honor, for Taylor, is based in the existence of legitimized social inequalities of the type found in, for example, a feudal system. Inequality was necessary for the category of honor to make sense, since one had honor in relation to others who did not. If everyone in a society had honor, in this sense, then none of them would; honor was the public recognition of one’s privileged place in a social hierarchy. Dignity operates in the opposite fashion. It is inherently egalitarian and democratic. Taylor links this to the development of contemporary democracy. But the rise of dignity alone does not explain the political importance of identity, precisely because of dignity’s universal nature; as dignity is universal, it is not personal, and is therefore not part of identity for Taylor. The rise of dignity over honor as a legitimation of political forms expresses the depoliticization of personal identity that characterizes early liberalism.

The connection Taylor draws between modern politics and personal identity comes through a later (mid 18th Century) development: individualized identity.

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5 Especially aristocratic politics.
6 [Taylor, 1994] 27
7 [Taylor, 1994] 28
8 Taylor references [Berger, 1983] for further reading. [de Secondat Montesquieu, 1989] is another source, as are both volumes of [de Tocqueville, 2004].
9 "One that is particular to myself, and that I discover in myself." 28. Note Taylor’s word choice here. By choosing to characterize identities as individualized and discovered, rather than individual, he underscores the action that has been taken on the identity to put it into an individual state. This is important in connecting him to Vygotsky; both thinkers treat individuality as epiphenomenal, not natural or foundational.
The individuation of identity\textsuperscript{10} occurs when authenticity\textsuperscript{11} takes on a political value of its own, above and beyond the moral content of the self.\textsuperscript{12}

Taylor associates two thinkers with this shift, Rousseau and Herder.\textsuperscript{13} Both thinkers, in contrast to both defenders of aristocratic privilege and early liberal universalist thinkers, emphasized the importance of individual expression as a thing of moral and political worth:

There is a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else’s life. But this notion gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life; I miss what being human is for me. This is the powerful moral ideal that has come down to us [from Rousseau and Herder]. It accords moral importance to a kind of contact with myself, with my own inner nature, which it sees as in danger of being lost, partly though the pressures toward outward conformity, but also because in taking an instrumental stance toward myself, I may have lost the capacity to listen to this inner voice.\textsuperscript{14}

Taylor is clear in this introductory section that the moral importance of expressivism\textsuperscript{15} is political. We can see this in his use of Herder; Taylor’s reading of Herder emphasizes the dual nature of identity expression. According to Herder, 

\textsuperscript{10}And by 'identity' here, Taylor means 'moral identity'; see [Taylor, 1989] 28.
\textsuperscript{11}Taylor’s language here comes from Lionel Trilling. Note the way in which Taylor already brings literary theory into conversation with political theory. While a full defense goes beyond the scope of this dissertation, I believe those aspects of psychology that liberal theory ought concern itself with are frequently in conversation with literary theory, because psychological stories of the self, including the moral self, often use the idea of a personal narrative, rather than a Freudian ego-ideal as an explanatory variable. Vygotsky’s story of the construction of the personal narrative, which is necessarily dialogical, is put into conversation with the work of Bakhtin by James Wertsch in [Wertsch, 1991]. See also [Lapsley and Narvaez, 2004]) for some additional essays on this idea.
\textsuperscript{12}27-30
\textsuperscript{13}This is in [Taylor, 1994]; in [Taylor, 1989], Taylor identifies, along with Rousseau (356-363) and Herder (375-378), Hegel and Goethe (369), Shelly and Wordsworth (378), and in their own way (see 316 for an explanation of the limits of his claims) both Hume (346-347) and Kant (363-367).
\textsuperscript{14}30
\textsuperscript{15}This is the term Taylor uses in Sources of the Self to refer to writings which valorize the expression of identity in Western thought. I use it here because of its convenience. This should not be confused with MacIntyre’s use of expressivism in his criticism of the West’s movement away from virtue ethics. See [MacIntyre, 1984].
we must be free to express our identity both as individuals and as members of a people (volk). Expression, therefore, always has a communal element to it. To express is to express something about your understanding of yourself, your community, and the relationship between the two. Taylor does not, however, want this dual nature of expressivism to explain alone the link between the moral and the political importance of expression.

The answer Taylor finds is that man is, by nature, dialogical; identity is formed in dialogue with (at least some of) those around us. The social formation of identity that Taylor identifies does three things for his argument. First, it explains why Herder sees the importance of authentic expression on both a micro and macro level. If Taylor is right, and that identity formation has something to do with our social interactions, then freedom at either level alone would be insufficient to secure free expression: freedom at the micro level would be nothing but a cipher if communities lacked freedom to shape identities, and freedom at the macro level alone would be useless if free expression of authentic micro-identities was impossible. Second, it explains something about the link between the moral demands of authenticity and the political consequences of those demands by positing a connection between identity and recognition. Demands for recognition are political demands. Deriving those demands from an individualized identity is hard to justify if we take individuation of identity as prior to politics; early liberal politics which naturalizes identity operates to protect identities that it takes as prior to

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16 Tracy Strong in fact uses this trinity as a definition of political theory – political theory is an attempt to simultaneously answer the questions, "Who am I?" and, "Who are we?" in [Strong, 1992] Strong does not make the third question explicit, but it is, I believe, implicit in his pairing of the questions; to answer one requires something of an answer to the other, because the answers one gives are linked, due to the mutually constitutive nature of self and the political order.

17 See Taylor’s contribution to [Hiley et al., 1991], “The Dialogical Self,” for an additional explication of this concept.
politics.

If identities are epiphenomenal to community interaction, however, then identity is a political phenomenon, not a pre-political one. Claims for recognition of an authentic identity are therefore both moral and political claims. Finally, the social formation of identity offers us a direction to examine just how social interaction relates to identity: through language, broadly understood as modes of expression. This is so because, for Taylor, communities and societies are bounded by the languages they use. Taylor derives this from the works of George Herbert Mead and Mikhail Bakhtin.¹⁹

But while Taylor’s essay offers some provocative directions for research, he fails to follow through fully on his argument; he asserts, rather than argues, that human identity is best understood dialogically. The rest of the introductory section, in which he makes this claim regarding the role of community and language, is devoted to a review of sources for earlier work which incorporates dialogue into moral and political considerations.²⁰ What he does not offer, and what I argue he cannot offer, is an explanation of what a dialogical self looks like, and how it would operate in a liberal polity. He lacks a psychological model of the self.

Thus, when he famously calls for, “what Gadamer has called a ‘fusion of horizons’,” as a way of evaluating which cultures are worth valuing and which are

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¹⁹32. His primary sources are [Mead, 1934] and [Bakhtin, 1981]; see also [Bakhtin, 1986]. The secondary literature which grounds his understanding of Bakhtin is interesting. He cites both [Clark and Holquist, 1984] (see also [Holquist, 2002] and [Wertsch, 1991], in which Wertsch’s analysis of Bakhtin arises from his criticism of Vygotsky. Taylor, then, must surely have been aware of Vygotsky’s presence, despite the fact that he never cites him. I argue in the next chapter that this is especially puzzling, because Wertsch’s criticisms of Vygotsky come from his misunderstanding of the constitutive nature of language in Vygotsky’s work, a mistake Wertsch makes because he over-emphasizes Vygotsky’s Marxist roots and under-emphasizes Vygotsky’s debt to Expressivist German thinkers – thinkers such as Hegel and Herder, who Taylor would likely have been especially sensitive to. I am also curious why Taylor avoids some of Bakhtin’s American counterpoints in literary theory, especially Lionel Trilling, who adopted many of Bakhtin’s tropes regarding speech genres’ role in constituting identity. See [Trilling, 1972] and [Leitch, 1993]²⁰Taylor includes Hegel in this group, as well.
not\textsuperscript{21} the reader cannot be sure what Taylor is actually calling for, because Taylor never clearly explains what a horizon is, how we operate with (or within) one, and how they can be fused; this last problem is particularly sticky, as lacking an explanation of what constitutes a fusion renders his policy prescription somewhat vacuous. While the language he uses is evocative, and the vocabulary of horizons is suggestive, it is not, on its own, instructive.\textsuperscript{22}

3.2 Hegel and Recognition

The most obvious place to look for Taylor's theory of the development of selfhood is in Taylor's \textit{Hegel}, given the lasting influence of Hegel on Taylor's thought.\textsuperscript{23} After all, Hegel's \textit{Phenomenology of Spirit}\textsuperscript{24} attempts to wrestle with the individ-

\textsuperscript{21}The purpose of Taylor's essay is to grapple with the problem of cross-cultural evaluation in liberal polities. He rejects a presumption of equal worth as vitiating the essence of evaluation; if all cultures are equally valuable, then no culture can really be said to have value because value, in this case, is a comparative measure. The fusion of horizons he comes to as a method of evaluation is supposed to move the evaluator to a position from which he can make adjudications from a knowledgable, but non-neutral, standpoint. This avoids the problems in claiming a neutral space of evaluation in the way Rawls, for example, does. In Taylor’s mind, once a person fuses horizons, s/he can judge whether the other culture is one that has added to the happiness and well-being of its members in an ongoing, long-term way, that being Taylor’s rubric of value.

\textsuperscript{22}Taylor cites two of his prior articles for a more extended discussion ([Taylor, 1990], and “Understanding and Ethnocentricity,” in [Taylor, 1985b]), but neither of these articles offers a psychological model of the self; they instead deal with the possibility of cultural evaluation from an outsider's perspective. [Taylor, 1990] is largely an argument against Nagel on grounds of ethnocentrism; Western attempts to understand other cultures from a ‘view from nowhere’ are a result of the Western misapplication of principles of scientific knowledge. His article in his own collection is a similar argument. Neither are sufficient for establishing a compelling psychological model of a horizon in that both bracket the question by referencing Gadamer, and in doing so, both have the same problem [Taylor, 1989] has.


\textsuperscript{24}I primarily here rely on the [Hegel, 1977] translation, rather than the earlier [Hegel, 1967]. Spirit, or \textit{Geist}, is defined by Hegel as, “absolute substance which in the perfect freedom and independence of its opposition, i.e., the opposition of different self-consciousnesses each existing \textit{für sich}, is their unity: an ‘I’ that is a ‘we’ and a ‘we’ that is an ‘I’. In self-consciousness as the concept of \textit{Geist}, consciousness comes to its turning point,” as quoted in [Taylor, 1975], 153. I deal with Taylor’s interpretation of the meaning of \textit{geist} below.
ual subject’s relationship to his community (just as Taylor does in [Taylor, 1994]) as part of Hegel’s argument for his own system of thought.\(^\text{25}\)

Because of Taylor’s interpretation of the relationship between Hegel’s concept of Geist and the modern age, it seems difficult to accept a reading of Taylor that puts his interpretation of Hegel at the center of his understanding of the development of the modern self and its relationship to language.\(^\text{26}\) In Taylor’s reading of Hegel, the self-consciousness that allows man to understand himself comes from his ever-increasing understanding of his role as a vehicle for Geist. Geist, usually translated as ‘spirit’, is the embodiment of the universe’s rational plan for itself. Geist needs to exist in an embodied form, because the universe’s rational plan for itself is to be embodied in geist.\(^\text{27}\) What Geist embodies itself in is man – specifically, the self-conscious man who understands the ways in which he relates, through the objective unity of Geist, to his fellow citizens in a rational community.\(^\text{28}\) The infinite, objective nature of Geist embodies itself in the limited, particular form of man, because man is the only being capable of self-consciousness, and Geist develops fully only when he is conscious of itself.\(^\text{29}\) Thus, Geist demands that man

\(^{25}\) Just what the Phenomenology represents is the subject of substantial debate. [Pippin, 1989] argues that it is essentially metaphysical, whereas Taylor treats it primarily as an ethical treatise on the nature of freedom (arising from Hegel’s attempts to reconcile Kant and Romantic concerns), and Kierkegaard claims that the whole book is essentially a thought-experiment, rather than a description of anything. See [Shklar, 1973], [Solomon, 1983], [Rorty, 1989], [Pinkard, 1994], and [Franco, 1999] for further influential interpretations of Hegel’s thought, and the Phenomenology in particular.

\(^{26}\) [Taylor, 1975] 570: “As I said at the outset, [Hegel’s] conclusions are dead.”

\(^{27}\) In Taylor’s view, the self-legitimating force of geist is something Hegel took as as philosophically desirable, because it required no prior beliefs to justify itself; geist is justified by itself. See [Taylor, 1989] 87. Taylor sees this as the reconciliation of the twin aspects of Expressivist thought that Hegel found himself caught between: “One was the Aristotelian-derived notion of a life-form which can only be in a living body. The other is that of the expression of thought which requires a medium. They come together in the notion of a mode of life which properly expresses what I am as a man, or more appropriately from an expressivist point of view, as this man, member of this community.” (87, author’s emphasis) In Geist, these two forms of embodiment are the same.

\(^{28}\) 171-172 and 194.

\(^{29}\) 88-97
become self-conscious, which is an act he cannot do alone, but rather must do in concert with other men becoming self-conscious themselves. Our personal beliefs, therefore, come through our belonging to a community with beliefs. To understand my identity as an individual, according to Taylor’s reading of Hegel, is to become self-conscious; because my self is a vehicle for the universal, to be self-conscious is to do so communally.

Hegel presents the initial story of the development of self-consciousness through his famous story of the lord and the bondsman which begins Chapter Four of the *Phenomenology*. Each engages in a life-or-death struggle with the other in order to gain recognition from the other of himself without recognizing the other. During the struggle, one agonist will triumph over the other, and subjugate him. This subjugation serves as a pyrrhic victory; the subjugated self’s recognition of the victor is worthless to the victor, because they are unequal. The victor, now the lord, puts the loser, now the bondsman to work on the world in an attempt to recreate it in his own image, but the lord becomes increasingly alienated from the world around him, while the bondsman comes to understand his own power over the world in front of him. That power, according to Taylor, is thought.

The dialectical development of thought from solitary activity by an unrecognized bondsman to the full flowering of *Geist* occurs through a historical progression from Stoicism to skepticism to the Enlightenment to Expressivism and

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30 "The subject depends on external reality. If he is to be fully at home this external reality must reflect back to him what he is." 152
31 157
32 Which fails to bring satisfaction to its adherents because of its impotence; Hegel treats Stoicism as a retreat from the world into thought, because the Stoic does not understand that the world and thought are related. 157-159 and 176-178
33 Which places embodied beings such as ourselves into contradiction by forcing us to philosophically question an inescapable material reality, leading us further along the dialectic. 159 and 178
34 The Enlightenment represents an advance over both Stoicism and Medieval life in that it elevates subjective rationalism over other values, but it is incomplete insofar as Enlightenment
faith (Glaube)\textsuperscript{35} to manifest religion\textsuperscript{36}. Each of these transitions up the dialectical progression involves a cultural shift towards greater universalism: Skepticism universalizes doubt; the Enlightenment, reason and therefore rights; Expressivism, subjectivity; and manifest religion, embodiment.

Thus, in Taylor’s reading of Hegel, the development of self-consciousness and our personal beliefs is inseparable from the story of the development of Geist, precisely because Geist is, fundamentally, man’s drive\textsuperscript{37} to become self-conscious. Without the spur of Geist, the relationship between the lord and bondsman never progresses.\textsuperscript{38} Taylor articulates no resources in Hegel to explain human cultural communities that do not involve the development of Geist in some major way. Given Taylor’s understanding of Hegel’s project, in fact, such an articulation would surely be suspect, not just because Taylor interprets Geist at the center of the Phenomenology, but because he argues that Hegel’s project is fundamentally concerned with synthesis and the development of philosophical unity out of the various threads and debates in Germany’s post-Kantian world.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{35}In Taylor’s reading, faith is the part of the Expressivist movement which reconciles subjectivity and universality, but does so in a different world than our own. This misses the necessarily embodied nature of Geist and reifies the universal outside of ourselves, which undermines the basis for the shared ethical life in the state through which Geist embodies itself (Sittlichkeit in the original German). 182-185

\textsuperscript{36}Which is the endpoint of human development, as Geist is now fully embodied because it is fully self-aware through its vehicles of awareness, human communities and their reconciled members. Taylor separates manifest religion from lower religions which rely on symbolism to re-present their God; in manifest religion, the practicing community makes the Godhead present through the community. 193-194 and 197-213

\textsuperscript{37}As the primary vehicle of geist

\textsuperscript{38}The lord and bondsman may never even arrange themselves thusly in the first place; without Geist, there seems to be no reason for the original life-and-death struggle. Since such a struggle, at least over material resources if not identity, is such a prominent part of early Liberal philosophical anthropologies, I stipulate it. Either way, my point remains.

\textsuperscript{39}“We can now see that there has always only been one philosophy.” 533. See also 47-50.
But the promise of *Geist*, according to Taylor, has died in the modern, industrial world. Since, according to Taylor’s reading of Hegel, *Geist* is self-justifying, then nothing justifies a belief in it beyond its increasingly immanent reality; once *Geist* fails to unfold at a historical point that it predicts itself unfolding at, nothing remains to support a belief in it. In Taylor’s view, the dialectical historical progression Hegel predicted never came fully to fruition, because developments in liberal politics prevented a synthesis between Enlightenment rationalism and Expressivism. The counterpoints to Enlightenment rationalism that Expressivism and Kant offered have since been contained in the private sphere that Enlightenment liberalism created and protected, rather than having been allowed to expose publically the contradictions in industrial Enlightenment cultural institutions. Thus, the modern state remains the *Rechtszustand* rather than *Sittlichkeit*, which deviates from the developmental story of Hegel’s *Geist*; this deviation undermines Hegel’s story.

But Hegel’s synthesis was built on this. Its aim, as I have tried to interpret it, was to combine this vision of nature as the expression of spirit, with the implied call to man to recover expressive unity with it, on one hand, with the aspiration to rational autonomy on the other. Spirit, the ontological foundation of the world in rational necessity, is meant to realize this synthesis. It guarantees that man can give himself to unity with the whole without losing his rational freedom. But if this vision of expressive pantheism wanes, if the aspiration to unity with the ‘all of nature’ ceases to be meaningful, then the very basis disappears for the Absolute Idea, along with Goethe’s *Urphänomene*, Novalis’ ‘magical idealism’, and the wilder creations of the Romantics. Thus Hegel’s synthesis cannot command adherents today not only because it is built in part on the expressivist reaction to the modern identity which contemporary civilization has tended to entrench more and more, but because it is built on an earlier and outmoded form of this reaction. It belongs to the opposition while claiming to give us a vision of reason triumphant; and it belongs moreover to a stage of this
opposition which no longer appears viable.\(^{40}\)

So, while Taylor’s interpretation of the beginning of the *Phenomenology* does offer a rich vision of how individual selves come to hold their beliefs and relate to their communities, this story is one that Taylor ultimately rejects for use in the contemporary age. Thus, Taylor cannot rely on Hegel to complete his model of the individual and his culture, because without accepting Hegel’s argument for *geist*, we cannot accept wholecloth Hegel’s story of recognition, nor use it to ground Taylor’s claim for a fusion of horizons. But, of course, [Taylor, 1994] does not draw the language of the fusion of horizons from Hegel, but rather, from [Gadamer, 175]; it is here I turn to next. Gadamer’s hermeneutic method does help explain, in part, what practices are actually involved in the fusion of horizons, by partially explaining what a horizon is. However, Gadamer’s hermeneutics actually present an argument *against* the use to which Taylor wants to bend Gadamer’s conceptual vocabulary, an argument to which Taylor’s earlier work in the linguistic turn helps respond.

### 3.3 The Limits of Hermeneutics

Hans-Georg Gadamer\(^{41}\) presents a powerful method for what have come to be called the ‘human sciences.’\(^{42}\) Gadamer defines hermeneutics thusly:

> The classical discipline concerned with the art of understanding texts is hermeneutics. If my argument is correct, however, the real

\(^{40}\)545-546

\(^{41}\)Gadamer, 175

\(^{42}\)I refer here to sciences for which humans or human behavior is the object of study, such as anthropology, political theory, and linguistics. These differ from the natural sciences insofar as explanation of phenomenon goes beyond the physical activities undertaken by humans, and into the meaning of these activities. See [Taylor, 1985b] for more on this category.
problem of hermeneutics is quite different from what one might expect. It points in the same direction in which my criticism of aesthetic consciousness has moved the problem of aesthetics. In fact, hermeneutics would then have to be understood in so comprehensive a sense as to embrace the whole sphere of art and its complex of questions. Every work of art, not only literature, must be understood like any other text that requires understanding, and this kind of understanding has to be acquired... Understanding must be conceived as a part of the event in which meaning occurs, the event in which the meaning of all statements—those of art and all other kinds of tradition—is formed and actualized.43

What Gadamer means here is that hermeneutics is a program of study that seeks to understand the meaning of texts.44 A hermeneutical understanding of a text takes account of the cultural milieu in which the text was authored, but is not just a reflection of the intention of a text’s author:

We can say that we understand only when we understand the question to which something [that is, some text] is the answer, but the intention of what is understood in this way does not remain foregrounded against our own intention. Rather, reconstructing the question to which the meaning of a text is understood as an answer merges with our own questioning... This is the reason why understanding is always more than merely re-creating someone else’s meaning. Questioning opens up the possibilities of meaning, and thus what is meaningful passes into one’s own thinking on the subject. Only in an inauthentic sense can we talk about understanding question that one does not power oneself—e.g., questions that are outdated or empty. We understand how certain questions came to be asked in particular historical circumstances. Understanding such questions means, then, understanding the particular presuppositions whose demise makes such questions “dead.”45

Thus texts must be understood as an answer to the problems faced by the author. This does not mean that authors understand their own texts this way. Quite to the

43[Gadamer, 175] 164-165
44‘Texts’ here should be understood broadly, to include works of art or social institutions. See John T. Valauri’s contribution to [Hiley et al., 1991] for an example of a hermeneuticist exploration of the American Constitution, to give an example of what counts as a text.
45[Gadamer, 175] 374-375
contrary, Gadamer’s hermeneutics relies in large part on interpreting texts in ways different from how authors understood them: “We started from the proposition that understanding is already interpretation because it creates the hermeneutical horizon within which the meaning of a text comes into force.”

Understanding a text requires not understanding the author’s intended meaning, but rather requires interpreting the text through what Gadamer calls the hermeneutical horizon. It is here, in unpacking Gadamer’s hermeneutic method of understanding, that we come to the concept of the horizon upon which Taylor’s model of liberal judgment relies. Understanding a text relies on interpreting it in light of the author’s horizon. What, then, is a horizon?

According to Gadamer, “the horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point.” A horizon, in this usage, is a limit to what a given person can comprehend; it provides a limit to understanding. Concepts that fall within a person’s horizon are comprehensible, whereas concepts that fall outside of a person’s horizons are not.

The task of hermeneutics is to understand a text in light of the author’s horizon. This is to say that the task of hermeneutic analysis involves understanding the author’s conceptual vocabulary and its limits. As an example, [Holmes, 1979] argues that the politics of Classical Greece is closed off to us, because the modern idea of fascism, in which the public sphere comes to dominate the private sphere, is beyond the horizon of these thinkers; as a result of the gap between our horizons, calls for returns to republican virtue rooted in ancient Greek thinkers risk dangers.

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46 [Gadamer, 175] 396
47 Presented in [Taylor, 1994].
48 [Gadamer, 175] 302. Gadamer uses this concept to connect the phenomenological philosophies of Husserl and Nietzsche to his hermeneutic project: “Since Nietzsche and Husserl, the word has been used in philosophy to characterize the way in which thought is tied to its finite determinacy, and the way one’s range of vision is gradually expanded.” ibid
that the Greeks themselves did not face in enacting their politics.\textsuperscript{49}

These horizons – these limits on comprehensibility – are not simply given and immutable. As indicated above, horizons can expand, and so a person can bring objects and concepts within her or his horizon which had previously lain outside of it. This expansion comes from what Gadamer describes as transposition: “we must place ourselves in the other situation in order to understand it.”\textsuperscript{50} This transposition, placing ourselves into the situation of another, does not require that we become the other; the historian practicing hermeneutics remains herself or himself, but changes her or his situation to that of the author of the text they are interpreting.\textsuperscript{51} Thus, the historian need not agree with the answer that the author’s text presents, but must understand the question being answered and why that text constitutes an answer to it.

This is not a true conversation—that is, we are not seeking agreement on some subject—because the specific contents of the conversation are only a means to get to know the horizon of the other person. Examples are oral examinations and certain kind of conversations between doctor and patient. Historical consciousness is clearly doing something similar when it transposes itself into the situation of the past and thereby claims to have acquired the right historical horizon. In a conversation, when we have discovered the other person’s standpoint and horizons, his ideas becomes intelligible without our necessarily having to agree with him.”\textsuperscript{52}

What has happened here is that the historian, by transposing herself or himself into the standpoint of another, has fused their own horizons with theirs. But what precisely goes into this transposition?

\textsuperscript{49}Holmes does not use this language here – he is arguing in large part against hermeneutic analysis – but his argument can be, I think, translated into this conceptual vocabulary.

\textsuperscript{50}[Gadamer, 175] 303

\textsuperscript{51}[Gadamer, 175] 305: “For what do we mean by ‘transposing ourselves’? Certainly not just disregarding ourselves.”

\textsuperscript{52}ibid
“It is not the case that we acquire this horizon by transposing ourselves into a historical situation. Rather, we must always already have a horizon in order to be able to transpose ourselves into a situation.”43 Gadamer’s emphasis on the historical relationship between historian and author here is important for his argument, because the historical relationship between the historian and the text provides the shared horizon in which transposition can take place. This necessary historical relationship has caused previous commentators to accuse Gadamer of necessitating political conservatism.54 But this accusation misses the stakes in Gadamer for Taylor’s usage of him; the problem with Taylor’s use of Gadamer is not that Gadamer is too conservative, but rather that his hermeneutics is too rooted in historical analysis to be used to ground the transcultural political judgment Taylor (mis)appropriates it for.

Gadamer’s hermeneutics is transhistorical, but intracultural. It lays out a method by which historians can interpret, and thereby understand, historical texts. This method involves the historian transposing herself or himself out of her or his horizons and into another horizon. But that horizon is not the historical author’s horizon; it is instead a horizon delimited by their shared cultural history. Taylor, however, takes Gadamer’s conceptual vocabulary to perform the opposite operation; he wants something that is transcultural, but intrahistorical. His model of judgment relies on members of one culture being able to transpose themselves across cultural, rather than historical, boundaries. But this transposition cannot be rooted in Gadamer, at least without considerable explanation, because the shared cultural history is where the historian, in Gadamer, transposes themselves to. The cognate in Taylor’s model is unclear, precisely because of the lack of shared

43[Gadamer, 175] 305
44See [Steele, 2002] for example. See [Doppelt, 2003] for an interesting response to this.
cultural history. If the culture being judged was the same culture as the judge, and they shared a similar set of values, the fusion of horizons Taylor calls for in [Taylor, 1994] would be unnecessary.

Language and Hermeneutics

In the following chapter, I will turn away from hermeneutics and towards Taylor’s relationship to structuralism in order to better ground his model of transcultural judgment in liberal societies. Given the extent of writing on language’s relationship to hermeneutics, however, I want to briefly touch on the status of translation in hermeneutics analysis. Examining Gadamer’s writing on translation is important because it provides additional resources, beyond the problematic horizon of transposition, to question Taylor use of Gadamer in [Taylor, 1994]. Gadamer’s model of translation as hermeneutic exercise rests on a circular arrangement between interpretation and a shared horizon; translation requires interpretation, which requires a shared horizon, which itself requires the translation to be done.

Gadamer addresses hermeneutic’s relation to translation in pages 384 to 395 of [Gadamer, 175]. In it, he acknowledges that the primary medium of hermeneutic understanding is language. The primacy of language creates problems when historians attempt to understand texts in languages other than their own. Given this, translation presents special problems for the historian: “where a translation is necessary, the gap between the spirit of the original words and that of their

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55See also [Schmidt, 2000], especially John Sallis’s contribution on translation.
56[Gadamer, 175] 384: “Now we are to note that this whole process is verbal. It is not for nothing that the special problematic of understanding and the attempt to master it as an art—the concern of hermeneutics—belongs traditionally to the sphere of grammar and rhetoric.”
57I am unclear what it would mean for a historian to attempt to understand a text in their own language, given the fluidity Gadamer notes in all horizons, including present-day horizons; is language really an island of stability in a sea of shifting horizons?
reproduction must be taken into account. It is a gap that can never be completely closed.”

The solution, according to Gadamer, is to think of translation as the ultimate exercise of hermeneutic interpretation. “The fact that a foreign language is being translated means that this is simply an extreme case of hermeneutical difficulty—i.e., of alieness [sic] and its conquest.” But this claims involves eliding one of the key features of hermeneutics, the fact that hermeneutics relies not on the transposition of the historian into the author’s standpoint itself, but rather, as discussed above, in the creation of a common horizon in which a conversation can take place; this conversation allows the historian to first locate the limits of their own horizon, and second to expand them by referent to the author’s horizon.

While Gadamer indicates his satisfaction with this solution (“Thus it is perfectly legitimate to speak of a hermeneutical conversation. But from this it follows that hermeneutical conversation, like real conversation, finds a common language. I am not. The presence of the common horizon makes sense when a historian examines their own culture, but in examining another one, I am not sure what constitutes the common horizon.

The solution Gadamer offers is that the common horizon is constituted by the interpretive work done by the translators and historian. But this strikes me as, at best, circular. Take seriously Gadamer’s claim that translation is simply an extreme example of hermeneutics. If this is the case, then translation must, like all hermeneutic analysis, rely on a common horizon in which to perform the interpretation necessary for a hermeneutic fusion of horizons. In most hermeneutic

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58 ibid
59 [Gadamer, 175] 387
60 [Gadamer, 175] 388
61 [Gadamer, 175] 386-387
analyses, this common horizon comes from a shared cultural history. But in the case of translation, this shared cultural history\textsuperscript{62} is precisely what must be created by the historian. What would allow this creation? In most hermeneutic situations, interpretation can occur through the common horizon. Here, the common horizon, which usually grounds interpretive claims, is precisely what is missing, and requires hermeneutic interpretation to be generated.\textsuperscript{63} That is, it must generate its own preconditions for generation.

### 3.4 Conclusion

Neither Hegel nor Gadamer can explain what goes into the practices of the fusion of horizons Taylor identifies as the grounding for his model of liberal judgment in deeply-divided societies. Hegel, while generating some of the original conceptual vocabulary of recognition and the risks of misrecognition, relies on a metaphysic – \textit{Geist} – which Taylor finds historically unpersuasive. The march of liberalism, and its separation between a public and private sphere, undercut \textit{Geist}’s ability to force the synthesis of the twin impulses towards Enlightenment rationalism and Romantic expressivism. Instead of these reconciling themselves in the public sphere, the development of a meaningful private sphere allowed Romanticism to be forced into the private, leaving the public dominated by Enlightenment thought.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{62}Remember, always mediated through a shared language, as per [Gadamer, 175] 384: \textit{“This whole process is verbal.”}

\textsuperscript{63}I do not mean here to overstate the extent to which, for example, French and German are untranslatable. Translation is not impossible; it is, however, always imperfect. Those imperfections will tend to be greater, and less able to be identified, for cultures that are more separate from one another. As the Amish culture deliberately and specifically separates itself from the modern world, translation will be more difficult and more problematic.

\textsuperscript{64}This historical story need not be compelling on its own. As argued above, I do not think that Taylor can simultaneously hold onto this story of \textit{geist}’s failure and also rely on it to help ground [Taylor, 1994]; what is important is not whether I believe it, but whether Taylor does, and what that belief means for his later writings.
Gadamer, while offering some insights about what the fusion of horizons could mean, is too historically-oriented to provide the grounding that Taylor seeks. The fusion of horizons in [Gadamer, 175] requires the existence of a shared horizon which serves as the basis for a historian’s attempt to interpretively understand a historical author’s text as the attempt to answer a question within the author’s horizon. This shared horizon comes from the shared cultural history between the author and the historian, restricting hermeneutic analysis to historians operating within their own culture. Gadamer’s writings on translation offer only a solution rendered unsatisfying by its circularity. If Gadamer is correct that translation is simply an extreme example of hermeneutics, then it relies on its own accomplishment in order to proceed.

Hope remains for Taylor, however. The connection Gadamer draws between horizons, understanding, and language suggests that, while the hermeneutic method may not reliably ground transcultural judgment in liberal societies, language may prove to be the key to the understanding necessary to ground judgment. Looking to Taylor’s theory of language and the ways in which communities of linguistic practices serve to constitute their members values, and therefore strong evaluations and senses of self proves to be more fruitful than looking either to his Hegelian or Gadamerian background, although I will also argue that Taylor’s model of language is ultimately incomplete on its own. As I laid out in the introduction, Taylor’s argument is never fully capitulated in a single piece; in order to understand his policy in “Politics and Recognition,” we must trace a line of his argument through that into Sources of the Self, and from there to an earlier essay, “Language and Human Nature.” This line of argument comes as close as Taylor can to explaining fully what moral horizons are, and how liberal states can adjudicate political claims for recognition. Moreover, the failure of Taylor’s linguistic theory is not total; he lacks
only a model of linguistic internalization, and with the addition of that, which I
develop over the next two chapters of this dissertation, his theory does present a
compelling answer to the problem of recognition in the liberal state.
4

Taylor, Language, and Judgment

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has outlined the ways in which neither Gadamer nor Hegel can ground Taylor’s call for a fusion of horizons in “The Politics of Recognition.”

Rather than turn away from Taylor, however, I believe that his model of judgment can be rendered politically useful, provided the fusion of horizons can be better explained. The promise Taylor holds out – of developing a model of judgment that both takes seriously cultural attachments and remains works within a liberal framework which serves to protect individual rights – is too tempting to dismiss out-of-hand. Moreover, while Taylor may not be able to ground the fusion of horizons in Gadamer (or, in Hegel, as previous commentators have speculated, given the connection between fusing horizons and recognition\(^2\)), that does not mean that his claim is groundless.

While Taylor’s turns to Gadamer and Hegel cannot fully explain the fusion of horizons, two elements of his earlier work on, his writing on the operation and

\(^1\)[Taylor, 1994]
\(^2\)[Markell, 2003]
importance of ethical frameworks on the one hand, and language on the other provides at least a starting point for thinking through what the fusion of horizons he advocates would mean politically. These pieces contain Taylor’s most direct statement of how language mediates an individual’s relationship to their cultural values.

Sources of the Self, while centered around the particular historical story leading to the modern self, articulates a general model of selfhood, which locates the self in the internalization of cultural values. The self, and self, finds its way through the world guided by an ethical framework which serves to provide direction in an otherwise meaningless world. The meaningless world can be made meaningful through referent to a set of values held in common by the members of a culture.

Of course, there is a big difference, on one hand, where I work out where I stand in conversation only with my immediate historic community and where I don’t feel confirmed in what I believe unless we see eye to eye, and the case, on the other hand, where I rely mainly on a community of the like-minded, and where confirmation can take the form of my being satisfied that they give unwitting testimony to my views, that their thought and language bespeak contact with the same reality, which I see clearer than they. The gap gets even bigger when we reflect that in the latter case, the ‘conversation’ will no longer be exclusively with living contemporaries, but will include, e.g., prophets, thinkers, writers who are dead.

This highlights where Taylor thinks the bridge between the internal and external

\[\text{Taylor, 1989}\]

\[\text{Taylor, 1985a} \text{ and } \text{Taylor, 1985b}, \text{ especially the following chapters: “Language and Human Nature” and “Theories of Meaning” in } \text{Taylor, 1985a} \text{ and “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man,” “Understanding and Ethnocentricity,” and “Rationality” in } \text{Taylor, 1985b}.\]

\[\text{Taylor, 1989} \text{ 16 and 499-502. What Taylor means by meaninglessness is a loss of faith in the moral frameworks that serve to guide our actions in the world. The loss of meaning threatening the Western world, Taylor argues, has led people not to question, and possibly reaffirm, their core beliefs, but rather to abandon the quest to articulate or explore their frameworks. “Why speak of this in terms of a loss of meaning? Partly because a framework is that in virtue of which we make sense of our lives spiritually. Not to have a framework is to fall into a life which is spiritually senseless.” } \text{Taylor, 1989} \text{ 17-18}\]

\[\text{Taylor, 1989} \text{ 37-38}\]
worlds lies: in dialogue and language. In some ways, this helps provide Taylor with the model missing from “The Politics of Recognition”; we now have a map of how the modern self has come to be what it is, and the various sources from which it draws itself. The problem with this is that the map, alone, is of limited use, for *Sources of the Self* contains no model of psychological internalization, linguistic or otherwise; while Taylor’s argument in *Sources of the Self* on the way frameworks operate to characterize the self necessitates an argument about how dialogue and linguistic communities serve to develop frameworks, it never develops such a model.⁷ While the map shows his readers the path a variety of Western strands have taken to arrive at the door to their consciousness, he never addresses how they constitute the self. The problem from “The Politics of Recognition” remains; Taylor still, here, offers no model of the connection between the internal and external worlds. He can identify which external elements have become internal ones, but he cannot explain how.

Taylor explores the relationship between the internal self and the external community in more detail in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* and *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2*, written eleven years prior to *Sources of the Self*. In it, he presents a model of selfhood and cross-cultural study in which the language a culture uses contain the moral frameworks through which they understand the world; these linguistically-mediated ethical frameworks constitute selfhood, because language, in a view indebted to the work of J. G. Herder, is best understood as a communal practice, rather than (as in the case of Condillac or Chomsky) a system of representation; we are who we are because of the language we use in communities we belong to.

⁷Previous commentators have noted Taylor’s limitations on this point. See [Calhoun, 1991] and [Redhead, 2002], who points to [Skinner, 1991] echoing this criticism of Taylor, although along specifically communitarian lines.
Taylor uses Herder to connect language and meaning in a different way than he sees in the bulk of Western writing on language; for Taylor, theories that model language as a system of representation or designation\(^8\) misunderstand what language actually is – a system of activity in which we participate. He takes this to answer, on its own, questions about the relationship between individuals, community, and language; individuals are community members by dint of their common participation in linguistic communal activities.\(^9\) But the model of language as an activity fails to explain how communal norms and meanings are translated from conversations into internal norms and concerns, because he concentrates only on how internal concepts and concerns are expressed through linguistic activity, not how they are then internalized by other members after they are shared.\(^{10}\) Without that story, Taylor cannot separate his vision of linguistic activity in which concepts are shared and transmitted from a model of language as a bad student play - a series of monologues, never coalescing into change by the characters. His use of Herder lacks, in short, a story of internalization.

Thus Taylor falters at the end, failing to outline how it is that social practices are translated internally. He asserts, rather than argues, that language is a constitutive communal practice. While I am sympathetic to his project as a whole, without an argument for how language acts as a constitutive practice in \textquoteleft Language and Human Nature,\textquoteright Taylor cannot support his claim that the sources of selfhood are external, let alone that they are the particular external sources he identifies in

\(^8\)Taylor refers to them as \textquoteleft designative theories\textquoteright in \textquoteleft Language and Human Nature\textquoteright. These include [Hobbes, 1998], [Chomsky, 1972] (see also [Chomsky, 1975] and [Chomsky, 1977]), and [Davidson, 1973]. Opposed to these are treatments of language as a system of activity or a practice. See [Vygotsky, 1978] and [Vygotsky, 1986] for my primary example of this. See [Peneul and Wertsch, 1995] and [Tappan, 1997] for some expansions on this. See, for example, [Wittgenstein, 1958] and [Pitkin, 1972] for another branch of this.

\(^9\)e.g., talking

\(^{10}\)See [Rorty, 1989] for more on this
Sources of the Self. Politics, even in liberal polities, relies on a vision of the self, so politics is linked to the linguistic communities which create our selves. To make a political claim requires an understanding of how linguistic communities operate; thus, Taylor’s support for his vision of liberalism\textsuperscript{11} can only be understood by explaining how linguistic internalization works from a psychological standpoint.

This story comes in the following chapter, through an examination of Lev Vygotsky’s work. Vygotsky, an early twentieth century Russian developmental psychologist, shares Taylor’s intellectual background and model of language as a system of social practice which serves to mediate between an individual and the world, and thereby make the world a meaningful place to that individual. Vygotsky’s psychological study of language learning and development fits in nicely with Taylor’s needs in two ways. First, Vygotsky provides a general model of linguistic internalization that explains how cultural values are internalized through language learning. This helps explain both how individuals are connected to their cultures through a shared language, and also how language use affects thought and cognition; thus, Vygotsky helps explain the relationship between thought and language, and why thinkers interested in values should look to language.\textsuperscript{12} Second, and more interestingly, by providing a model of language learning, Vygotsky provides a psychological model of the fusion of horizons.

This chapter will argue, through Sources of the Self and both volumes of his

\textsuperscript{11}Walzer, in his comment to “The Politics of Recognition” in [Taylor, 1994], calls Taylor’s vision of liberalism Liberalism 2 in contrast to Liberalism 1. Liberalism 1 is the view that liberal states must remain neutral in regards to the substance of groups’ claims, and must act in a disinterested manner. Liberalism 2 is Taylor’s conception of Liberalism in which all citizens receive a fairly wide basket of common rights, but adherents to some ethical frameworks, such as those valuing personal freedom, can be given additional rights to practice, as a way of recognizing the ways in which the content of those communal frameworks tend to reinforce the political framework of a liberal state.

\textsuperscript{12}See [Mead, 1934]; [Wittgenstein, 1958]; [Austin, 1962]; [Cavell, 1979]; [Cavell, 1988]; [Bourdieu, 1991]; [Sanders, 1997]; [Jones, 1999]; [Steele, 2002], and; [Jenco, 2007]
Philosophical Papers, that the horizons Taylor refers to in, “The Politics of Recognition” are based in the language a cultural member uses in common with other members of that culture. Alone, however, this only explains what horizons are, and not how they could be fused. My turn to Vygotsky argues that, since horizons are best understood through Taylor’s model of language, the model of language learning articulated in Vygotsky’s work provides a model of their fusion. If language is the key to understanding another’s horizon, then the linguistic basis of that horizon opens up the possibility of understanding that horizon through learning that language. From a psychological perspective, the fusion of horizons is the learning of a new language.

Of course, this next chapter only presents the psychological model. The political ramifications for this are explained in the two chapters which follow. The first chapter re-examines the Wisconsin v Yoder case which frames this dissertation as a whole. Building off of the model of liberal judgment developed through Taylor and Vygotsky, it argues that judging the Amish claim for accommodation requires a judge to learn the language of the Amish through concrete intersubjective linguistic interaction, or, in plain English, talking with Amish in order to learn their moral grammar. Once a judge has accomplished this, they are then in a position to legitimately engage in the cross-cultural judgment which Taylor’s model demands. I then look beyond the Yoder case to another, similar, case: Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education to illustrate precisely how this model of liberal judgment can work, concentrating on the difference between my model of intersubjectivity and the radical democratic project outlined by Romand Coles. In the chapter following that, I turn to Hannah Arendt’s attempt to judge educational policy in her, “Reflections on Little Rock.”¹³ Arendt’s unique model of political

¹³[Arendt, 2003]
judgment, and Ralph Ellison's compelling response, stems from a neo-Kantian view of language worth counterpointing with Taylor's linguistically-grounded model of cross-cultural judgment.

4.2 Horizons and Frameworks

In order to understand Taylor's model of cross-cultural understanding, we must understand what a horizon is, and how it operates. Without that understanding, his argument in “The Politics of Recognition,” falls apart; the fusion of horizons Taylor desires can only be accomplished if we know something about what horizons are, and how they could be fused. The answer to the first part of this questions proves to be easier to understand than the second part – Taylor outlines horizons in *Sources of the Self*, and points to where in his previous work we can find his beginning to answer how a horizon operates. To understand the jump I make to Taylor's earlier work, I first trace Taylor's concept of horizon as much as possible through *Sources of the Self*.

*Sources of the Self* sets out Taylor's history of moral and spiritual tropes in the West as it developed towards (and then through) modernity.¹⁴ sources in Western thought as a way of understanding identity in the West. For Taylor, we are what we value, and we value that which we feel called upon to regard as good. Taylor is careful to specify precisely what valuations he includes in our self-definition. Our preferences, such as preferring vanilla ice cream to chocolate, do

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¹⁴[Taylor, 1989]: "I spoke in the previous paragraph about our ‘moral and spiritual’ intuitions. In fact, I want to consider a gamut of views a bit broader than what is normally described as the ‘moral’. In addition to our notions and reactions on such issues as justice and the respect of other people’s life, well-being, and dignity, I want also to look at our sense of what underlies our own dignity, or questions about what makes our lives meaningful or fulfilling. These might be classed as moral questions on some broad definition, but some are too concerned with the self-regarding, or too much a matter of our ideals, to be classed as moral issues in most people’s lexicon." 4
not characterize us, because we can imagine ourselves with different preferences without being different; they are, in a certain sense then, arbitrary. My love for vanilla ice cream does not (normally) characterize me as a being. On the other hand, we have moral and spiritual beliefs and intuitions that we cannot imagine ourselves without, which he calls strong evaluations. For Taylor, these strong evaluations are what characterize our identities. Thus, to understand identity, we must understand our strong evaluations.\textsuperscript{15}

When we make strong evaluations, according to Taylor, we make reference in our justification to one of three primary strands of Western thought: reason, ordinary life, or nature. These philosophical strands, then, are the titular sources of the self; in order to understand our selves, we must understand our strong evaluations, because those are what characterize our selves, and in order to understand our strong evaluations, we must understand the philosophies from which we make them. Thus, these philosophical strands are the source from which our selfhood is drawn.\textsuperscript{16}

The first source is reason, which stems from a shift Descartes and Locke make away from the Greek understanding of reason to the Enlightenment understanding. In Plato’s view, reason was the alignment of the self with the necessary order of the cosmos around the self; to be disordered was to be untrue to the cosmos that one was a part of, and to be ordered was to be reasonable. Reason, therefore, was right ordering.\textsuperscript{17} In contrast, modern reason comes out of the Scientific Revolution and Cartesian radical skepticism. This view of reason, developed by Descartes and passed on to Locke, Montaigne, and the Puritan settlers of the New World,

\textsuperscript{15}3-8
\textsuperscript{16}See 28 for Taylor’s contrast of this understanding of the self and moral sources with pre- and early modern understandings of identity, which, because of their universalizing character, could not have comprehended the radical plurality that Taylor’s model entails.
\textsuperscript{17}121-124
emphasized the mastery of one’s desires over the acceptance of the order of things. As such, it was inextricably bound to the rise of a process of internalization that took place at the same time; if reason lies in mastery over things, and one’s self is a thing, as Locke held, then reason must also master our selves. Thus we see that the modern self is conscious and open to reflexive understanding.

The second source is ordinary life, which for Taylor includes both productive and reproductive activities, thus encompassing the workplace and homestead. This source springs from the Reformation vision of Christianity, which rejected the category of ‘sacred’ as part of its rejection of the Catholic Church’s mediative role. Drawing on [Weber, 1958]’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Taylor sees the rise of bourgeois concerns with *doux commerce* stemming from the Protestant belief in the worldly evidence of Providence. While Taylor identifies two different ways in which Protestantism becomes translated into ordinary life as a moral source, both ways share the same fundamental root – Luther’s argument against works has the unexpected consequence of valorizing worldliness and ordinary life.

Nature is Taylor’s final source. Nature as a moral source comes from the Romantics of the Nineteenth Century, but Taylor sees our inheritance from them

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18-149-151
19”A man may suspend the act of his choice from being determined for or against the thing proposed, till he has examined whether it be really of a nature, in itself and its consequences, to make him happy or not. For, when he has once chosen it, and thereby it is become part of his happiness, it raises desire, and that proportionality gives him uneasiness.” ([Locke, 1975], *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [2.21.57] cited on 170
20-215
21”We must in one sense love the world, while in another sense detesting it. This is the essence of what Weber called the Puritan’s ‘innerworldly asceticism’.” 222 Thus, Taylor connects Puritan thought to Locke’s *Second Treatise Concerning Government* ([Locke, 1980]. Note that neither Weber nor Taylor make any distinction between Puritans and Pilgrims in this discussion.
22On the one hand, Puritan thought develops through Locke into Deism; on the other hand, a response from the ‘Cambridge Platonists’, especially Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, rejected the Puritan conception of externalized law and articulated what we now term the theory of moral sentiments. 248-265
slightly differently than a reader of the Romantic poets\textsuperscript{23} would expect, largely because of the importance he gives Rousseau, who relocates our access to Nature within ourselves, rather than in Nature. He takes the importance of the order of the outside world from Deism, and moves away from the radical subjectivism of the Enlightenment, but retains a less-radical subjectivism by insisting on “an inner impulse or conviction which tells us of the importance of our own natural fulfilment and of solidarity with our fellow creatures in theirs. This is the voice of nature within us.”\textsuperscript{24} It is this inner impulse, rather than any element of the outside world itself, that connects us to the world around us, and the authenticity of the expression of that inner impulse takes on moral and political significance.\textsuperscript{25} How a person develops is not the result of reasoning through what one ought to be, or even what one is, but rather, by starting to become what one is, and following that direction.\textsuperscript{26} By linking internal acceptance to external expression, Romanticism opened the door to an emphasis on narrative history and the importance of the individual developmental story in moral psychology.

None of these moral sources themselves explains what a horizon is or how multiple horizons could be fused. Their importance lies not in their content, but in their form. Each of these lines of Western thought is a source of that Taylor argues the Western self draws off of in order to develop its own horizon (or, as he describes them early in \textit{Sources of the Self}, framework. What liberal thinkers who want to draw on Taylor must understand from this book is not the particular sources of the self that Taylor identifies, but the way in which these sources serve to

\textsuperscript{23}Notably, Hölderlin, Novalis, and Wordsworth.
\textsuperscript{24}369-370
\textsuperscript{25}Note that specifically what we get connected to through Taylor’s version of Rousseau is a human world, not a Natural world absent humans, or even with humans as one of many objects of moral worth. The providential ordering of Nature in Taylor’s Rousseau, and by extension Taylor’s Romanticism is human-centric.
\textsuperscript{26}376
constitute the self; this angle allows readers to map Taylor’s psychological model, and to see that it lacks a story of internalization – Taylor never fully explains how these sources are internalized by Westerners and used to constitute their moral understandings.

While Taylor never explicitly defines either frameworks or horizons, but his description of their relationship to Weber’s concept of ‘disenchantment’, the Nietzschean concept of ‘horizon’, and Taylor’s own axes of strong evaluations helps the reader understand generally what Taylor means.27 For Taylor, a framewok is a set of cultural meanings through which a person understands the world and his or her own place in it.28 It illuminates which questions can be asked and which responses could count as answers. It hides some possible avenues of understanding, while allowing others. In short, a framework is what mediates the world to allow an individual to make sense of it, which in turn allows individuals to meaningfully affect their world.

The Necessity of Frameworks

Must all individuals have some framework? After all, while frameworks allow individuals access to the world29, they also structure the relationship individuals have to the world around them, which cut off some conceivable lines of thought or inquiry. Is it possible to transcend these cultural limitations? Taylor argues that

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28The world here includes both the physical and the social; frameworks allow us to understand a length of wood with an irregularly-shaped piece of metal on the end as a hammer (which includes an understanding of what a hammer is), and also allow us to understand that the syllables, “hell” and “oh” taken together constitute a greeting (which includes an understanding of what a greeting is). Importantly, frameworks do not dictate set responses to these stimuli. A framework allow us to understand what a hammer is, but not necessarily whether anything need be hammered, or whether or not to greet the interlocuter who has just said, “Hello” to us. I deal with Taylor’s model of linguistic meaning at further length in the following section.

29Insofar as, by ascribing meaning to objects and relationships in the world, they make sense of the world.
it is not, and that frameworks are necessary for human life.\textsuperscript{30}

According to Taylor’s argument, we can answer the question of identity in two different ways, relationally, or for oneself. The first way of describing who one is, relationally, is to give an answer like a name or a role: I am David Leitch, graduate student at UCSD. This way of answering is perfectly accurate, but only makes sense against an existing set of relationships; I define myself here according to the way others stand and treat me. The second way of describing oneself, which answers questions of identity for oneself, according to Taylor, works by situating myself in moral space. Who am I? I am a person who believes in the value of the intellectual marketplace. When I describe who I am for myself, I do so through situating myself not in relation to people, but in relation to questions of value: do I value security or creativity? The extreme or the ordinary? Self-mastery or the naturally sublime? And so, Taylor’s argument runs, we can see that when we define ourselves for ourselves, rather than by our relationships to others, we do so by locating ourselves in moral space. For Taylor, this is true even if we define ourselves in moral space is deliberately individualistically.

By way of arguing for this, Taylor looks to Robert Bellah’s story of the American tradition of leaving home.\textsuperscript{31} This tradition is one specifically of rebellion, and therefore, one can say, of leaving one’s framework. The American adolescent, tired of having his values dictated for him by his family and community, sets off alone to make his own way in the world, to becomes, as it were, a pioneer. His trail may

\textsuperscript{30}“I want to defend the strong thesis that doing without frameworks is utterly impossible for us...Moreover, this is not meant just as a contingently true psychological fact about human beings, which could perhaps turn out one day not to hold for some exceptional individual or new type, some superman of disengaged objectification. Rather the claim is that living within such strongly qualified horizons is constitutive of human agency, that stepping outside these limits would be tantamount to stepping outside what we would recognize as integral, that is, undamaged human personhood.” 27

\textsuperscript{31}See [Bellah et al., 1985]
well bring him back to his hometown, but he relates to it differently, and more meaningfully, by dint of having arrived there independently.

Bellah traces this story through the American Transcendentalists and early Pilgrim and Puritan thought. American Transcendentalists saw all frameworks as existing within an individual, and therefore, the American individual, once divorced from the hometown framework, could search within himself or herself, without reference to external frameworks, for meaning and values. Pilgrims and Puritans valued the independent return to one’s roots; the ideal of the pilgrimage and the journey to the City on a Hill was a powerful trope, and, like many hyper-Protestant sects, they included as full members of the Church only those who had converted or joined independently, after having formed their own religious relationship.

But as Taylor notes, this tradition of breaking away is itself a tradition, and as such, can be understood within particular American frameworks; the value placed on an independent relationship to one’s upbringing is best explained through a Protestant framework that emphasizes bending one’s will, rather than the lack of a framework. “Each young person may take up a stance which is authentically his or her own; but the very possibility of this is enframed in a social understanding of great temporal depth, in fact, in a ‘tradition’.”

And this is not just true of this particular claim to freedom from frameworks; while this is a good test case, Taylor has a more formal argument that humans, as creatures bound to linguistic communities, cannot escape from frameworks generally, although we may be able to move from any given framework.

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32 Emerson, for example
33 The Amish practice of **runspringa** is an extreme example of this view; see [Knudsen, 1974].
34 39
Internalization

But Taylor’s contention that these three sources of value, reason, ordinary life, and Nature, are sources of the self because they are the frameworks through which Western communities have understood their strong evaluations is a problematic causal claim. To say that something is a source of another thing is to say that the source affects or causes the thing. This means that the source must prior to the object affected (or, in the case of constitutive causation, effected) and its characteristics or actions must cause the development of the object of which it is the source. If these three sources cause something in us, then we are at least in part the effect of these sources. In order to demonstrate this causal chain, he must show how these sources exist outside of us, and then enter into us. Otherwise, the causal chain might be reversed – without a compelling story of how external frameworks enter our internal identities, we might instead interpret the relationship between these three sources and our selves as causal in the opposite direction. If that was the case, our frameworks might be radically individual and idiosyncratic, and would only appear to have the causes that Taylor identifies. But, if Taylor can demonstrate how these external cultural frameworks are internalized, and thereby are the source of our individual frameworks, then his historical story makes sense.

Consider this possibility: Taylor can identify philosophical trends in the modern age, not because they are the sources of the self, but because they are the effects of the self; selves might be prior to cultural frameworks, and what Taylor refers to as cultural frameworks is simply the result of aggregation of the most prominent frameworks that cultural members arrived at on their own. The source of the self instead is the sort of reflexive self-consciousness Taylor attributes to Locke and attempts to historicize. But the historical fact of different interpretations
of the source of the self alone is hardly reason, alone, to reject this possibility. Especially since self-consciousness need not be the 'bleached', neutral openness of the Lockean punctual self\textsuperscript{35}; self-consciousness can structure the self’s relationship to moral space, and can therefore be constitutive of the self. This sort of reasoning underlies a great deal of liberal individualism.\textsuperscript{36} In order to further his argument that the self exists in dialogical relationship with others Taylor must show that external frameworks serve to constitute the self, not vice-versa.

Taylor partially addresses this weakness in Sections 1.4 to 2.2, but only partially; he develops an effective argument for modelling the self through frameworks, but does not fully address how those frameworks develop within us. Instead, he indicates that they enter our identities through participation in linguistic communities, which leads to his earlier essay on linguistic communities, “Language and Human Nature,” in Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1.

This is because of the way Taylor characterizes the human self.\textsuperscript{37} We are always at least partly constituted by a particular language because our selves are selves insofar as they exhibit reflexive (or self-) consciousness, and because reflexive consciousness is impossible without language. Let me unpack what Taylor means here and why he argues this.

As part of his break with behaviorist explanations of human selfhood, Taylor emphasizes the importance of understanding human selfhood if we are to understand the human condition. Indeed, the purpose of Sources of the Self seems pointless unless we grant Taylor an anti-behaviorist stance. And as part of his anti-behaviorist stance, Taylor wants to claim not just that humans have internal

\textsuperscript{35}[Taylor, 1989] 160-173
\textsuperscript{36}See [Locke, 1980] (as Taylor notes), [Mill, 2000], and [Rawls, 1999b] for the most influential of these claims.
\textsuperscript{37}34-36
selves that go beyond simple tables of responses to stimuli, but also that under-
standing of human selfhood must go beyond those scientific modes of understand-
ing that behaviorism relies on. Selves are objects that cannot be understood by
modes of understanding developed for the physical sciences because selves are not
like physical objects. They are psychic, rather than physical. As such, they must
be understood in other ways, and one of the most important of those other ways is
an acceptance of a certain amount of insurmountable subjectivity; the self exists
in part only ever in its own self-understanding. The self is reflectively conscious.

And reflective consciousness cannot exist outside of a linguistic community because of the jobs language does for humans: articulating and clarifying con-
cepts, bringing concepts into a common space, and infusing concepts with human
meaning and concern. These three jobs, taken together, allow the reflective con-
sciousness that constitutes selfhood for Taylor. In order for a self to reflect on itself,
it must articulate its own position in moral space. This, according to Taylor, re-
quires language, because language provides an externalized model of subjective
states, such as feelings, which can be shaped and reshaped, until the word matches
the subjective state; without language, subjective states remain vague, their bor-
ders unknown, their contents unclear. Once a self has a clear idea of its subjective
state or position in moral space, it can then publicize it by communicating it to

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38See “Theories of Meaning” for more on Taylor’s rejection of psychologies based on the physical
sciences.
3933-36
4034-35. Note a tension here – reflective consciousness is a feature coming from subjectivity,
but can only exist through the use of language, which itself is necessarily communal. Thus, for
Taylor, subjectivity is only possible communally; without the communal structure of language, we
cannot come to know ourselves, which is what makes our selfhood at least partially unknowable
to others.
41These come from 256-263 in Taylor’s essay, “Theories of Meaning,” in [Taylor, 1985a]. I
move to this piece because Taylor notes in endnote 9 on 35 of [Taylor, 1989] that he expands on
the role of language in constituting human selfhood in this piece.
42257-258. Vygotsky will discuss the same phenomenon through a distinction between sense
and meaning in his semiotics.
another self. This is important insofar as the language used to clarify the subjective positioning in the first place cannot have been a purely private language, because all language is public. And the reflective self, in order to understand if it has clarified correctly, needs an external check; not because that external check is in a standing authority position, but rather because the externally-checking self participates in the linguistic community as well, but in a slightly different way and from a slightly different standpoint. Thus, checking assures that the conceptual clarity comes from proper use of the language. Finally, language is necessary for the reflectively conscious self because it infuses its subjective state with human meaning. When a speaker publicizes a concern one of the participants has, the responses to the concern by the rest of the community help show the concerned member why the concern is a human one. In doing so, they create an underlying universality; they delineate which concerns are human universal concerns, even if they do not advance universal human answers.

Taylor leaves out one important task language has to accomplish. In addition to publically representing concerns and concepts for public clarification and for creation of meaning, language must also bring the clarified, meaningful concepts back into the individual community members. After all, if the clarified, meaningful concepts simply stay out in the public, inaccessible to all, they cannot seem to be of much help; the individuals remain as confused as ever, adrift in a meaningless world. Meaning and clarity are only useful insofar as people have access to them. Even if the meaning never becomes exclusively learned and internalized, indi-

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43259-260
44260-263
45Meaning and clarity are not like physical objects; my possession of them is non-exclusive. Rather, insofar as they are possessed at all, they are held in common, non-exclusively. They are more like a television broadcast than a book; one person’s access has nothing immediate to do with another’s.
Individuals must be able to internalize the meaning and clarity worked out in public. Language here must allow internalization as much as it allows externalization. In order for reason (to pick one of Taylor’s examples) to be a moral source, it must not only be clarified and given meaning in public, through discussion, that discussion must affect the internal state of those who wish to use it as a moral source. Taylor models the self through the work of language precisely because it can both externalize and internalize.

Taylor’s argument about the role of frameworks in determining our strong evaluations, and therefore the ways in which we can evaluate other cultural values, therefore rests on his theory of language and internalization. In Western European communities, the self has been articulated, through conversation, along three axes in moral space: reason, ordinary life, and Nature. Taylor claims that these three axes are the sources of value that Westerners have internalized through their use of language. In order for that internalization of community norms or conceptual definitions to occur, language, for Taylor, must do three things: it must articulate and clarify concepts; it must bring concepts into public consideration, and; it must infuse concepts with human meaning. He claims, in “Theories of Meaning,” that language does all of these things through a reference to the work of Herder and Humboldt. But his understanding the importance of their theory of language is articulated elsewhere, in his essay, “Language and Human Nature,” which I now turn to.

If, in that essay, he presented a theory of language that could sufficiently explain how language performs the three tasks he assigns it, and is thereby internalized by community members then he would have a compelling story of how cross-cultural understanding could take place, even given cultural differences. This would make his theory more useful than Rawls’s since it could simultaneously model liberal
citizens to maintain their own cultural identities while allowing them to make
principled stands on the boundary of acceptable and unacceptable difference in
a liberal society. Unfortunately, Taylor’s account of language and community is
incomplete; he never advances beyond a gesture towards early German thinkers, a
gesture I follow in the next chapter.

4.3 Language and Communities

Taylor discusses the relationship between language and communities most ex-
plicitly in his essay, “Language and Human Nature,” in Human Agency and Lan-
guage: Philosophical Papers 1, a collection of early essays. In it, Taylor frames
his discussion on human nature and its relationship to language and community
structures with a discussion of two types of linguistics theories: designative and
expressive.46 He rejects the notion, advanced by contemporary linguists47 that
language should be understood primarily in terms of how words designate objects,
and instead draws out language as a communal activity through which individu-
als express who they are, and thereby constitute themselves. He relies heavily on
Herder and Humboldt to show this. This understanding of language, as linking
expression and constitution through its communal activity, lies under the idea of
frameworks and horizons so important to his understanding of the form of the self
from Sources of the Self, but he never explains how we come to have enough lan-
guage to even participate in linguistic communities – persons begin fully formed
and integrated in his world. In this way, his preference for expressive theories of
language over designative are curious. Designative theories at least have a story

46[Taylor, 1985a] 255-257
47Notably Chomsky, drawing on a neo-Platonic historical tradition through Augustine and
Condillac.
of how individuals come to language.\footnote{This story varies from theorist to theorist, of course: Condillac’s philosophical anthropology of linguistic development is very different from Chomsky’s Language Acquisition Device (LAD); see \cite{Chomsky, 1972}.}

According to “Language and Human Nature,” Herder’s conception of language in \textit{On the Origins of Language}\footnote{See \cite{Rousseau and Herder, 1986}. See also \cite{Fox, 2003} for an excellent take on the political elements of Herder’s model of language.} is superior to previous, designative theories of language, represented by Condillac. Condillac wrote about the origin of language as a collection of representations in \textit{Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines} through a fable of two children meeting in the desert. One child feels pain, and cries out. The second child, recognizing the emotion as pain, comes to associate the sound of crying with that which causes pain. Over time, the cry becomes stylized and connected to the abstract concept of the causation of pain; this becomes the first word in the common lexicon of the children, and other words gradually crystallize from there. According to this conception of language, words mean things, and language is an agreed-upon mapping of the representations of things by words. The things represented can be abstract things, of course, but the essential linguistic relationship remains a simple designative one.

Taylor puts \textit{On the Origins of Language} against this conception of language. Taylor correctly points out the designative, representational view of language avoids serious discussion of one of the central mysteries of language acquisition: prelinguistic designation. Condillac assumes that the second child will recognize the cry for pain, and will know how to associate the sound of crying with the concept of pain. But that association is difficult to justify prelinguistically. If the second child understands the first child’s cry as a designative one, then the two children already share a proto-language; they may not have all of the nouns and verbs figured out, but the fundamental question of designation and representation
what does a sound have to do with meaning – is stipulated by Condillac.\footnote{Taylor, 1985a} Taylor points to Herder as the first to question this stipulation.

According to Taylor’s interpretation of Herder, language is better understood by thinking about it as the result of reflexive awareness. Taylor compares human understanding of language to a behaviorist experiment, in which a rat is trained to respond to seeing a triangle. Taylor grants that the rat must have some comprehension of a triangle, if it is trained to respond to the triangle and not other shapes, but that this differential response is different from true understanding, because the rat does not understand what the triangle means, and therefore cannot use it. And, without being able to use a word, we (rats and humans alike) cannot be said to understand the word:

Only beings who can describe things as triangles can be said to recognize them as triangles, at least in the strong sense. They do not just react to triangles, but recognize them as such. Beings who can do this are conscious of the things they experience in a fuller way. They are more reflectively aware, we might say. And this is Herder’s point. To learn a word, to grasp that ‘triangle’ stands for triangles, is to be capable of this reflective awareness. That is what needs to be explained. To account for language by saying that we learn that the word ‘a’ stands for a’s, the word ‘b’ for b’s, is to explain nothing. How do we learn what ‘standing for’ involves, what it is to describe things, briefly, to acquire reflective awareness of the language user?\footnote{228}

Language, then, cannot simply be a list of representations, in which certain verbal constructs designate certain objects or activities or states, because the idea of designation and representation itself requires language. To understand what a word means, in a meaningful sense, is to be able to use it. And being able to use a word requires an awareness of the speaker of the word; words are used, for Taylor, to express something from the standpoint of the speaker. Hence, being able
to use a word requires a reflexive awareness, and therefore, because the ability to understand a word only comes with the ability to use a word, being able to understand a word requires a reflexive awareness. Taylor notes that the roots this conception of language has in Expressivism link individuals to communities. Language is used by creatures that make and use meaning. That meaning is, at least partially, communal, because the meaning is found through the use of language, and the use of language is communal.\textsuperscript{52}

Language, because it allows the creation of meaning which serves to guide us through our moral frameworks to make our strong evaluations, is therefore constitutive of what we would call the self. And because language is communal, linguistic communities are therefore constitutive of selfhood. This is the central point that Taylor has led us to through these works. In order to evaluate the claims that different groups make in a liberal polity, we must work to fuse our horizons with theirs. Horizons are bound by language, which is a communal activity, and so those parts of our selves that are bound to different groups can be understood by understanding the use of language that takes place within those different groups.

But here is where Taylor’s story is incomplete. He assumes that, once a concept is clarified and invested with meaning in the common linguistic activity, that clarified, invested concept will be internalized by the speakers, and it is understandably tempting to assume that, because it fits with the spatial analogy Taylor invokes. If we meet in a common area to create something together, why would we not bring it back, changed, with us? To fail to do so would be to render conversation meaningless, a position few writers (or, indeed, speakers!) would want to take seriously. But Taylor never explains how it is brought back. And his model of how a concept is brought into the public is insufficient to explain how it is then internalized.

\textsuperscript{52}229
There are two possible ways to explain internalization from Taylor’s Herderian model, neither of which ends up working. The first is both the simplest, and the most obviously problematic. Taylor could argue that the clarification and investment that takes place in the public leads the speakers to modify their own beliefs to line up with the beliefs established during conversation. Letting alone the lack of a psychological mechanism for changing one’s mind\textsuperscript{53}, this is clearly not an accurate description of most conversations. Any teacher who has argued with a student over a low grade on a paper has likely had the experience of a conversation in which neither side convinced the other of its position. So agreement is not always reached. Even when it is, people forget, or fail to update, or fall back on old, established habits at least as often as not. Clearly, then, it cannot simply be the case that internalization occurs mechanically.

The second possibility is more subtle and interesting than the first, but equally problematic. The model of language Taylor borrows from Herder is essentially expressivist; conversation occurs when a being expresses something important or meaningful. Because the use of language requires the understanding of language, the speaker must be reflexively self-aware, and it is that reflexive self-awareness that links language to selfhood; language is constitutive of our self-understandings, because our awareness of our self is mediated through language. If language is communal as well as constitutive, then, Taylor could argue, those linguistic elements held in common serve to constitute individual selves as well, which is a form of internalization; communal norms, instantiated in language, serve to constitute the ethical frameworks through which we make strong evaluations. Therefore, Taylor could\textsuperscript{54} conclude that internalization must occur.

\textsuperscript{53}A surprisingly difficult mental phenomenon to explain, its commonness notwithstanding.

\textsuperscript{54}Taylor does not actually argue this. As indicated above, his argument, from “The Politics of Recognition” through “Language and Human Nature” takes internalization for granted. I
But that self-awareness, and therefore the reflexivity, is the result of the internal use of language, not the external use of language, at least as far as Taylor’s use of Herder can take us. Granted, language itself is necessarily communal, but the use of a communal activity like language does not, on the face of it, explain the internalization that Taylor argues takes place, because Taylor’s psychological (as opposed to cultural) model of the self is too underdeveloped. What Taylor would need, in order to make this argument work, is a story of what language self-reflection takes place in. If it is the case that self-reflection occurs through the same language that serves to clarify and invest concepts externally, then this argument would be relatively strong – while the precise moment of internalization might be difficult to pin down, the connection between one’s own horizon and group meanings would be clear.

There is a reason to avoid identifying internal language with external language, however. The primary uses of language Taylor presents, to clarify concepts, bring them into the public space, and invest them with human meaning, seem to be odd uses for an internal language. For example, Taylor is unclear in describing how an internal dialogue could clarify a concept. The process of clarification seems to rely, in Taylor’s story, on the differences between interlocuters; I can clarify a concept that troubles you because I have knowledge, or experience, or wisdom, or reason, that you lack, and the application of that knowledge, etc., serves to bring clarity, through conversation, to a concept that originally puzzled you. When there are two or more participants in a conversation, it makes sense to see how one of them could have some angle on a concept that others lacked. But internal dialogues only provide these two arguments as possible extensions of his theory to show that the limitations of Taylor’s theory are part of his theoretical apparatus, and not just a lack of attention to this problem.

Vygotsky has a different argument, which I present in the next chapter.

[Taylor, 1985a] 257-258
have one participant, and that participant, being only one, has as much knowledge, etc., as any other participant, because, in an internal dialogue, they are the same person. Unless the self is fractured in some way, it seems difficult to understand how it could be that an internal dialogue could clarify a concept; a unified self has little reason to engage in internal dialogue.

Of course, Taylor’s model of the modern self from *Sources of the Self* is a fractured one, caught between the three primary sources of moral force in Western cultures. So it makes sense to think that an individual, fractured self, with access to reason, everyday life, and nature as moral sources would be able to engage productively in internal dialogue. But in what language? If we take Taylor’s account of the way language captures and communicates communal norms seriously (and I think that we ought to), than the part of me that looks to reason as a moral source will use a different language than the part that looks to nature. This different language will provide a barrier to understanding; thus, Taylor cannot explain how we engage in the meaningful internal dialogue that reflective awareness would seem to demand. Given Taylor’s model of the self, either internal dialogues are meaningless or they are impossible.

Common sense teaches us that neither of these is the case. Internal dialogues are, in fact, both meaningful and possible. Reflection can lead to clarity. The different parts of ourselves can come into conversation with one another. But Taylor’s model of the relationship between group membership and language cannot explain that, because he ultimately cannot explain internalization of group norms in a compelling way; the stories he would have to tell undermine his understanding of the self. Taylor’s political policies, outlined in “The Politics of Recognition,” therefore rest on an internally-contradictory model of the self. If the self is frac-

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57 [Taylor, 1989] 316-319
tured in the way Taylor argues that it is, then the internal language it uses may
well be different from the external one it uses, which undermines his story of the
internalization of norms through participation in linguistic communities.

4.4 Conclusion

Taylor’s model of the self has advantages over Rawls’s for addressing problems of
difference in liberal societies. Rawlsian models deny the importance of group
attachments in the self, and assume that there exists a self separate from these
attachments – a self that can step behind the veil of ignorance. Not surprisingly,
this self strongly resembles an Enlightenment vision of the self: rational, logical,
and recognizing the meaning of market forces, but little else. Rawls’s valorization
of this model of the self fails to take difference seriously enough, and therefore ends
up advocating illiberal policies for the sake of a liberal state.

In contrast, Taylor assumes the central importance of cultural attachments for
citizens of liberal states. Because of this, while his political prescription denies
some claims for recognition, it also can justify those denials in a compelling way:
through an understanding of the meaning of those claims from the standpoint
of those making the claims. But understanding Taylor’s method for coming to
that understanding is difficult to understand. His description, in “The Politics
of Recognition,” of the necessity of a fusion of horizons only makes sense in the
context of his earlier work, especially Sources of the Self and his earlier essays on
language collected in his Philosophical Papers One.

In Sources of the Self, Taylor describes horizons as the mental frameworks
through which we ascribe meaning to elements of the world around us. We use
these ascriptions to make deep evaluations – ethical decisions regarding both judg-
ments of good and evil and judgments of worthy and worthless. Without these frameworks, Taylor argues, we would be unable to make decisions beyond the most basic necessary for survival.

In Taylor’s model, our language, understood as a set of linguistic practices rather than a system of representation, contains our ethical frameworks. This distinction between understandings of language is important for Taylor, since the designative model of language misses significant elements of value expression. Taylor demonstrates this by contrasting the story of language acquisition that the designative model tells with the story of language acquisition that stems from a vision of language as a set of cultural practices. As Taylor argues, the designative system of language has difficulty in explaining precisely how language is acquired because of the ambiguity of gestures.58

This is important for Taylor, because the fusion of horizons that legitimates judgments about different cultures for the purpose of adjudicating claims for recognition looks, once I have traced out Taylor’s model of horizons, like it involves language acquisition; horizons are frameworks of meaning that are contained in language, so understanding these frameworks of meaning must involve learning those languages.

But while Taylor is correct in directing attention to this failing of the designative model of language, he does not recognize the extent to which his model suffers the same problem. While shifting focus to the cultural practices of language usage seems intuitively to get him closer to the problem of language acquisition, I argue

58For example, if a parent points to a glass and says to his child, “Glass,” the child has little way of knowing precisely what her parent is signifying in language, even assuming the child understands what representation and verbal designation are. This is a classic problem in developmental psychology. The psychology literature breaks into four primary attempts to account for linguistic acquisition: learning theory (Skinner [1957]), nativist theory ([Chomsky, 1972] and the Language Acquisition Device [LAD]), cognitive interactionist ([Meltzoff and Gopnik, 1989]), and cultural mediation ([Vygotsky, 1986]). See [Cole and Cole, 1996] 315-321 for more on this.
that substantial problems remain. If, as Taylor argues in *Philosophical Papers One*, we come to learn a language through participation in linguistic practices, why is that? That is to say, what is it about participation that educates non-speakers? Taylor has no easy answer to this question; he takes it as simply a given that participation serves to educate. Without an answer to this question of language acquisition, Taylor’s model in “The Politics of Recognition” would be intuitively appealing but unusable.

In the next chapter, I present the work of Twentieth Century Soviet pedologist Lev Vygotsky as a way of answering this question. Vygotsky shares Taylor’s model of language as a system of cultural practices, but instead of extending this model into its political implications, he focuses on precisely how it is that participation in linguistic communities teaches language. This model of linguistic acquisition can be incorporated, I argue, into Taylor’s method of cultural evaluation. After Taylor’s model incorporates Vygotsky’s model of linguistic acquisition, it can be used successfully by liberal thinkers to adjudicate claims for recognition from a standpoint that recognizes the meaning and cultural values of the cultural advancing the recognition claim.
Lev Vygotsky, Language Acquisition, and the Zone of Proximal Development

5.1 Introduction

While Charles Taylor’s model of judgment improves on John Rawls’s, by taking the constitutive cultural differences between citizens seriously, it remains problematic on its own. Explaining the practices of the fusion of horizons which ground and legitimate transcultural judgment requires developing a model of language acquisition. The insight Taylor offers that cultural frameworks are bound up in cultural language practices only brings us part of the way to a model of the practices of the fusion of horizons. In order to explain language acquisition, I turn to the work of Lev Vygotsky, a pedologist working under the Soviet Union during the beginning of Stalin’s consolidation of the Bolshevik Party.

This chapter explains the basics of Vygotsky’s model of the self and human
development, and emphasizes the ways in which communities help create selves through language. I begin with a review of the literature, not on the plausibility of Vygotsky’s theories, but rather on the ways to interpret Vygotsky’s intellectual roots; a complicated thinker, Vygotsky is nearly impenetrable without some interpretive context. Moreover, his application, as a thinker working under Stalin in the Soviet Union, to a liberal project like mine, is eased by explaining where Vygotsky deviates from Marx and Marxism.

Vygotsky’s work emphasized the ways in which human communities mediate between individuals and the world around them.\(^1\) Rejecting both Cartesian dualism and crude materialism, Vygotsky sought a third way of understanding human relationships to the world, which emphasized the ways in which human interaction had a dual aspect: we always interact with the world directly and indirectly. Thus, the mediational school of thought today is symbolized by the semiotic pyramid, in which the subject S interacts with the object O both directly and through the medium M.\(^2\)

\(^{1}\)Mediation is a complicated concept, and I elaborate on it below. For now, just think as the act of standing between two things, and allowing them to interact in ways structured by the mediating body.

\(^{2}\)An example: having bought a new desk chair at IKEA, I bring it home flat-packed, and open up the box to see the various pieces of the chair, an Allen wrench, and a bag full of nuts and bolts. Looking at the bag, I will already suspect it of being incomplete, and my affect towards the chair will change; I will tense my shoulders, and snap at anyone helping me to be careful and keep track of every little piece. I may even curse the Swedes under my breath, and will not relax until the chair is assembled. What has happened here? From a mediational point of view, I (the subject S) interacted with the bag of bolts and nuts (the object O) in both a direct and indirect way. In one interaction, I took the bag, opened it, carefully kept track of its contents, and (hopefully) placed the bolts and nuts in the appropriate places in the chair such that the chair was assembled. Clearly something else has gone on, however. The physical characteristics of the bag are insufficient to explain my change in affect; the bag has not wounded me, for example, or fallen on my toe. The change in affect comes from my indirect interaction with the bag through my mediated experiences with the bag. I have an association, through my culture, with the bag being incomplete. This is true whether or not I have had incomplete bags before myself. If I have had incomplete bags before, then my history with the bag is the cultural medium through which I interact indirectly with the bag; the bag is both a physical and historical object, and as a historical object, I have a symbolic relationship to it, rather than a physical one. This medium is cultural, because my treatment of the bag as one of a class of objects is
Indirect interaction is no less true than the direct interaction from this standpoint; it is, however, different. It can become difficult to assign traits cleanly to either the object or to the medium. However, the constancy of the dual-aspect of all interaction prevents this from becoming an intractable problem; we always apprehend and interact with objects twice, directly and indirectly, and so long as we are analytically clear about the relevant medium, then we can keep traits of the object separated into direct and indirect traits without having to further separate indirectly understood traits into object and medium. In short, so long as we are careful about specifying the medium, we do not need to worry about where precisely to assign mediated traits. For this reason, much of the work coming out of Vygotsky’s models is called activity theory. Activity theory emphasizes the analytic importance of the actual systems of activities that people engage in, and treats cultural phenomena, such as language, music, or work, as individual systems that people engage in through both direct and mediated actions. This is not crudely materialist, however, because understanding mediated aspects of activity systems requires understanding something of the cultural meanings participants assign to objects. Thus, activity theory both emphasizes the importance
of activity and also requires an understanding of cultural webs of meaning.

Because we do need to be careful in understanding and specifying a cultural context for understanding objects, therefore, I move now into a section contextualizing Vygotsky’s thought before moving into his understanding of the self, consciousness, and language.

5.2 The Higher Mental Functions

Understanding what higher mental functions are and how they operate is essential to understanding Vygotsky and his mediational developmental model.

The higher mental functions can be defined in two different ways. The higher mental functions are those functions that require cognition or analysis, rather than instinct or direct memorization. In Vygotsky’s technical terms, higher mental functions refer, “to the combination of tool and sign in psychological activity.” Both moral development and critical reason fall into this category, and in order to understand Vygotsky’s theory of their development, therefore, we must understand what he means by tool and sign.

Vygotsky begins Chapter Four of Mind in Society with a contention that, “the sign acts as an instrument of psychological activity in a manner analogous to the role of a tool in labor.” Here Vygotsky cautions against treating this analogy as an identity. On the one hand, treating the two as identical can lead, in Vygotsky’s view, to meaningless expressions pretending to content: “The tongue is the tool of thought,” for example. Once someone tries to interrogate this phrase for meaning, its vacuousness becomes clear. On the other hand, treating sign and tool as identi-

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5[Vygotsky, 1978] 38 begins Vygotsky’s discussion of the social aspects of memorization and the transformation of memorization from direct to mediated.
6[Vygotsky, 1978] 55
7[Vygotsky, 1978] 52
cal can lead other psychologists, such as Dewey and other American pragmatists, to forget the important differences between them.

In order to avoid this, Vygotsky reaches back to Hegel’s famous aphorism regarding reason.

Reason is just as cunning as she is powerful. Her cunning consists principally in her mediating activity which, by causing objects to act and react on each other in accordance with their own nature, in this way, without any direct interference in the process, carries out reason’s intentions.8

Both tools and signs are like reason in that they cause intended actions without any direct interference in the process; they are subcategories of the general category of mediated activity. The difference between them is that tools are used to mediate the physical world, and signs are used to mediate the psychological world. Therefore, tools are physical objects that mediate the physical world, such as wheels, pulleys, levers, and machines, and signs are psychological objects that mediate the mental world, such as mnemonics, gestures, and language. The physical and psychological worlds are analogous9 but not identical. A crucial difference between the two is their orientation. The physical world is external to tool-user. The psychological world is internal to the sign-user. Therefore, tools orient the user externally and signs orient the user internally. These orientations are different things, but can take place together.

Indeed, this combination is the defining characteristic of higher mental functions. The development of pointing, for example, takes place in Vygotsky’s model through the combination of tools and signs. The parent acts as a tool, in that they act upon the physical world to give the child the child reaches for, and the gesture

8[Vygotsky, 1978] 54 quoting “Encyklopadie, Eter Theil, Die Logik,” which Vygotsky draws on from Marx’s Capital 199

9Note even the use of the term ‘world’ to describe what is psychologically mediated by signs; the term ‘world’ is itself a physical analogy, as there is no locatable psychological world.
towards the object and the failed attempt to grasp it is the beginning of a sign, in that it acts indirectly upon the world, mediating the child’s desires through the rubric of the cultural significance of pointing. More centrally to my project, language and its use is a higher mental function.

5.3 Internalization

“We call the internal reconstruction of an external operation internalization.”\textsuperscript{10} In order to understand how internalization occurs, we must understand two things: what an external operation is and how it becomes reconstructed internally. Already from this sentence, however, we can see an important difference in Vygotsky’s model from Piaget’s. For Vygotsky, the higher mental functions\textsuperscript{11} begin externally, and move into the child, rather than vice-versa. This model opposes Piaget’s conception of development as the increased external expression of internal development. This reversal is central for understanding Vygotsky because it encompasses the uniqueness of Vygotsky’s thought. Modelling development as the external entering the internal emphasizes the need for a developmental model to account the transition from the external to the internal. For Vygotsky, this has two important effects, one of which I concentrate on in this account. First, this emphasis leads Vygotsky to the mediational aspects of his thought; signs and tools becomes central conceptual objects for Vygotsky because of the work they do in

\textsuperscript{10}[\textit{Vygotsky, 1978}] 56

\textsuperscript{11}I discuss these below. One problem with the completeness of Vygotsky’s thought is that it can be difficult to know precisely where to begin; his developmental models are both complete and largely free-standing (despite his arrangement of [\textit{Vygotsky, 1986}] as a response to Piaget). Explaining even basic mental operations require a substantial amount of conceptual vocabulary to be deployed, and the effective deployment of that vocabulary absent a concrete example is beyond my writing ability. Thus, in explaining Vygotsky one always finds oneself starting in the middle.
explaining the transition from the external to the internal. Second, Vygotksy’s approach to signs and tools as conceptual categories forces Vygotsky to take account of culture in a much more nuanced, central way than previous thinkers had; as we will see, our innate sociability is the reason that operations begin externally. This accounting is not just a reaction against the Pavlovian Behaviorism that characterized the mainstream of Soviet psychology. Rather, it is the birth of a new way of approaching psychology, a way that takes an individuals’ cultural memberships into account without denying the presence of the individual.

Vygotsky uses the example of a child pointing to outline the process of internalization. At first, a child sees and recognizes an object, and reaches out to grasp it. If the child is successful, the child grasps the object and, given the child’s age when they begin to point, will frequently put the object into their mouth. If the child is unsuccessful, the attempt is either witnessed or not. If the attempt is not witnessed, then the child will either locomote over to the object and attempt to grasp it again, or the child will give up. If, however, the failed attempt is witnessed, by a parent for example, then the process of internalization can begin.

The parent, seeing the child’s failed attempt to grasp the object, understands that the child wishes to possess the object. Loving the child, the parent will frequently pass the object to the child. Consider this from the child’s point of view. The attempt to grasp the object has succeeded, although through an unexpected means; rather than the gesture successfully interacting with the world directly, the gesture successfully acted on the world indirectly, mediated through a successful social interaction with the parent. “Consequently, the primary meaning of that

\[ \text{12And, incidentally, back again. This becomes important much later in explaining why Vygot-} \]

\[ \text{sky’s thought may be conventional but is not conservative.} \]

\[ \text{13ibid} \]
unsuccessful grasping movement is established by others.” After some time, the child eventually comes to realize the primary meaning that has been established by the parent. At this point, the action of attempting to grasp an object becomes the action of pointing. The movement becomes simplified and oriented towards another person. So long as others respond to the gesture in the way the child has now come to expect (by fetching the object), the social meaning of the gesture will be reinforced.

See what has happened here. The child no longer acts directly on the world in order to grasp an object, but rather indirectly upon the world through others. The child’s interaction with the objective world has become mediated through the cultural convention of pointing. In this way, a cultural meaning has been internalized by the child through a series of three transformations:

- An operation that initially represents an external activity is reconstructed and begins to occur internally;

- An interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal one; and

- The transformation of an interpersonal process into an intrapersonal one is the result of a long series of developmental events.

For Vygotsky, this process of internalization is the defining characteristic of the development of higher mental functions. Vygotsky unpacks each of these transformations in greatest detail in his examination of the zone of proximal development in [Vygotsky, 1978] and [Vygotsky, 1986].

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14 Ibid
15 This is commonly shortened to zoped.
5.4 The Zone of Proximal Development

While it is useful to be able to understand development retrospectively, Vygotsky argues that understanding the process of internalization allows us to understand development prospectively; we can understand how development will occur, and not just how it has occurred. This is possible due to the final transformation in internalization: the transformation of an interpersonal process into an intrapersonal one. Traditional psychological models, which treat intrapersonal processes as prior to interpersonal ones have difficulty in understanding development prospectively because of the barrier of subjectivity. The intrapersonal is at least partially closed off to us.\(^\text{16}\)

The transformation of an interpersonal process into an intrapersonal one can be seen in the zone of proximal development that is created when two persons of differing levels of ability at a task attempt the task jointly. In Vygotsky’s words, “it is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problems solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.” Vygotsky discovered the presence of a zone of proximal development in his fourth study on development and instruction, outlined in [Vygotsky, 1986]. Vygotsky and his collaborators were dissatisfied with the standard ways of measuring development; at the time, the standard measure was to give the child a set of standardized problems and see which ones the child could solve. This could accurately measure the child’s mental age or ability level, but told the researchers nothing about the child’s developmental trajectory.

\(^\text{16}\)Of course it is not totally so. A wide variety of tools existed during Vygotsky’s time to try and measure the purely internal, including the early polygraph machine Vygotsky and Luria developed. However, all tools that measure the internal do so indirectly, and lead to outcomes or measures that are uncertain or otherwise problematic.
The emphasis by Piaget, for instance, on measurement of a child’s individual achievement was both caused by and caused a blind spot in Western psychology. Psychological theories prior to Vygotsky’s had modeled development as an essentially solitary activity. All children were assumed to have the ability to imitate others, and their performance in doing gave no sign as to their development; imitation was common to all primates, not just developed humans. Western psychologists’ inability to understand imitation as learning was the result of their misunderstanding of the relationship between learning, imitation, and development. Vygotsky theorized a more sophisticated model of imitation, in which imitation could lead to genuine learning, and therefore to development. This was possible because of the previous work he had done on internalization and his criticisms of Piaget.

Vygotsky sought this finding by giving children problems beyond their own level of competence to solve with some assistance, in the form of a leading question or starting point. He found significant variation in the amount by which children could exceed their own levels of competence; some could exceed it by one year, solving problems with assistance that children a year older could solve on their own, whereas some could exceed it by four years, solving problems that children four years older could solve on their own.\textsuperscript{17} Invoking a Romantic floral metaphor, Vygotsky describes the zoped as the ‘buds’ of mental development: not yet flowered, but containing the seeds of mental activity.\textsuperscript{18}

By re-modeling development in a way that acknowledged the theoretical importance of developmental trajectory, Vygotsky was able to look to an entirely new set of explanations for development: social and cultural factors. Emphasizing solitary achievement had led psychologists to concentrate exclusively on the child

\textsuperscript{17}[Vygotsky, 1986] 187. This phenomenon had been noticed before, in [McCarthy, 1930], for example.

\textsuperscript{18}[Vygotsky, 1978] 86-87
itself as the cause of development. Vygotsky argued that childhood development is an essentially social process. Learning is much more closely related to imitation than previous psychologists had acknowledged. And imitation is necessarily social. Thus, to the extent that learning and development are related to imitation, we should also expect that learning and development are social.

In the following section, I outline Vygotsky’s vision of linguistic development both to explain how the three transformations revolving around the zoped that lead to internalization work generally, and to show how central language is to understanding the role culture plays in cognitive and moral development. I use this connection between language and culture to extend Charles Taylor’s call to root judgment in a fusion of horizons by explaining how learning a culture is like learning a language – the practices of fusing horizons are therefore the practices of language acquisition.

### 5.5 Linguistic Development

Language is linked to cognitive development in Vygotsky’s theories through the category of culture. Culture, for Vygotsky, is a mediating process that language works through, and allows the social interactions that promote development of a self. Understanding selves, in Vygotsky’s view, requires understanding how those selves developed. And understanding how selves develop requires understanding the communities that selves develop in, and how they act with one another.

Understanding the relationship between cognition and language in Vygotsky requires understanding two other relationships: the relationship between sense and

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19 Vygotsky, 1986] 8-9, 68. See also [Wertsch, 1985b]
20 Vygotsky uses the term ‘thought’ for cognition and ‘word’ for language. For the rest of this section, I adopt his vocabulary. So, when I say ‘thought’, I refer to cognition and when I refer to ‘word’, I mean language.
meaning and the relationship between inner speech and social speech. In contrast to earlier psychological theories of language, the relationship between thought and word in Vygotsky’s work is not simply the same as the relationship between inner and outer speech; inner speech works as a “distinct plane of verbal thought,” according to Vygotsky.21 It is the relationship between sense and meaning, rather than the relationship between thought and word, that corresponds to the relationship between inner speech and social speech; inner speech is speech in which an abbreviation of the subject can occur because of the predomination of sense over meaning.

Sense is the category in Vygotsky’s semiotic analysis that is “rooted in contextualization.”22 According to Vygotsky, any given word has wide range of psychological associations with it. The sum of these associations makes up the sense [smyśl] of the word.23 As the sum of psychological associations, it is dynamic, and constantly in flux as we build and change associations with the word. As a result of this dynamism, the context in which a word is used helps to determine what its sense is at the time; this context extends from the phrase through to the culture in which mediation occurs. Thus, when the Ant tells the Dragonfly to “Go and dance!” at the end of Krylov’s fable “The Dragonfly and the Ant,” the context of the story, and the story’s place in Russian culture infuse the sentence with a dual sense of “Enjoy yourself,” and “Perish,” neither of which are knowable solely through the meaning of the words.

For Vygotsky, meaning is the analytic category in which words are used without context.24 Meaning is a psychological sub-category of sense; one zone of our sense

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21 [Vygotsky, 1986] 248, author’s emphasis
22 [Wertsch, 1985b] 95
23 [Vygotsky, 1986] 244
24 [Wertsch, 1985b] 95
of a word is its decontextualized, and therefore generalized, meaning. As such, meaning is the most stable zone of sense.\textsuperscript{25} “Meaning remains stable throughout the changes of sense. The dictionary meaning of a word is no more than a stone in the edifice of sense, no more than a potentiality that finds diversified realization in speech.”\textsuperscript{26} Speech here refers to both the inner and social speech that sense and meaning correspond to.

Previous thinkers had taken inner speech to be identical to social speech, minus the particulars of expression.\textsuperscript{27} Vygotsky advanced the claim that inner speech needed to be understood on its own terms, with governing rules different from those of social speech, because of the relationship between them; social speech precedes inner speech, not vice-versa as previous thinkers had contended, and so the motivations for each must differ, resulting in different rules.\textsuperscript{28} Inner speech is characterized by abbreviation, usually of the subject and connected words, because of the lack of need for an elaborated specification of subject. The thought itself provides the context needed to assign the predicate a subject.

Social speech, on the other hand, must frequently be spelled out completely in order to assure communication. Miscommunication can often occur in social speech

\textsuperscript{25} Note the contradiction in the characterization of meaning’s stability between this section and page 217 (“Word meanings are dynamic rather than static formations.”)

\textsuperscript{26} [Vygotsky, 1986] 245

\textsuperscript{27} [Vygotsky, 1986] 224

\textsuperscript{28} Vygotsky looks at inner speech primarily through examination of egocentric speech. This approach goes against Piaget’s view of the relationship between inner speech and egocentric speech. However, experimental data (228-229) shows that egocentric speech resembles social speech most when a person is youngest and becomes less comprehensible to an audience over time, which suggests that egocentric speech is the retreat of social speech into inner speech, rather than the developing outer realization of inner speech; if egocentric speech developed along Piaget’s line, we would expect it to resemble social speech more and more, rather than less and less, over time. Vygotsky goes on to argue that the vocalization of egocentric speech dies out over time, creating inner speech; Wertsch describes this as “going underground” [Wertsch, 1985b] 111. Thus, egocentric speech, not social speech, is the outer aspect of inner speech, and an examination of egocentric speech can proxy for an examination of inner speech, which would otherwise be impossible. [Vygotsky, 1986] 226
even with full speech, as the example of Pushkin’s poem demonstrates.\textsuperscript{29} In order to prevent miscommunication in social speech, there must be a prior discourse to provide context. As an example, Wertsch posits a two-sentence statement: “I saw a man walking down the street. He was very tall.”\textsuperscript{30} Because of the first sentence, we know that the subject of the second sentence, referred to by ‘he,’ is the man walking down the street. Without that context, the sentence, “He was very tall,” would be unintelligible as social speech.

Among intimates, social speech can come to resemble inner speech in its use of abbreviation. This situation is characterized by Vygotsky as when the thoughts of two people coincide, as in the novels of Leo Tolstoy.\textsuperscript{31} In that situation, the subject of utterances is known by both interlocutor, and can therefore be abbreviated out, just as inner speech is primarily based around predicates. Without that existing understanding, the decontextualized meanings of words must try and serve the coordinating functions of understanding.

The meanings, as opposed to senses, of words serve the same function for social speech that previous discourse or intimacy between interlocutor does. They are the stable linguistic structures that allow speech between two people who share word meanings as part of their word senses.\textsuperscript{32} Thus, if I want to express a thought to another person, I can try to translate the thought into words which have meanings that we share enough to generally express the thought I wish to articulate. However, because my ideas must first pass through sense into the subcategory of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{29}[Vygotsky, 1986] 236, 239
\item \textsuperscript{30}[Wertsch, 1985b] 109
\item \textsuperscript{31}[Vygotsky, 1986] 237
\item \textsuperscript{32}By meaning, Vygotsky did not just mean reference (\textit{predmetnaya otnesennost}). By way of explanation of the difference, Wertsch gives Husserl’s example of referring to Napoleon as “the victor at Jena,” which has a different meaning than referring to him as “the loser at Waterloo.” While each phrase has the same referent, Napoleon, they have distinctly different meanings. These meanings are themselves different from the senses we may have of either phrase. [Wertsch, 1985b] 96
\end{itemize}
meaning before finding themselves in words, the outer utterance is always both more and less than the inner idea. Understanding the limitations of this translation between thought and word requires understanding the relationships between sense and meaning and inner and social speech.

The difficulty in translating thought into word is the fact that thoughts do not have automatic counterparts in speech; the translation will always be imperfect, because thoughts are unitary in a way that words are not. Thus, “thought must first pass through meanings and only then through words.” This is why one can have a thought that one is unable to express properly. If we have access to words which have meanings that correspond generally to our thought, we still may not be able to communicate successfully, if others do not have access to those words or if their meanings are different, or if we cannot use a context to specify what we mean. This last possibility is used by Vygotsky to specify subtext and motivations as the key to understanding thought through words. Without knowing the speaker’s motivations for speaking, we miss the subtext of the words, and therefore the meaning, and therefore the thought.

Motivation provides a large part of the context lost in translating from the sense of a word to the meaning of a word. Vygotsky gives the example of a director, Stanislavsky, giving his actors directions by providing the motivations for their characters’ lines in *Woe From Wit.* The motivation behind an utterance points to its meaning, which is itself a subcategory of the sense of a word. Even with knowledge of motivation, however, communication can never be direct, because

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33 This parallels the relationship between a contextualized and decontextualized word. A word in context gains through the context it is in, but also has potentialities closed off to it by that context. [Vygotsky, 1986] 245
34 [Vygotsky, 1986] 252
35 See the example of the peasant on [Vygotsky, 1986] 249-250
36 [Vygotsky, 1986] 252-253
37 [Vygotsky, 1986] 252-253
thoughts pass through meaning into words even during inner speech.

Thus the relationship between thought and word is not the same as the relationship between inner and outer speech, as previous theorists had assumed. Instead, thought and word relate to one another through the relationship between sense and meaning. Inner speech is characterized by sense, rather than meaning. In order to become social speech, an idea must move from sense to meaning, which is a potentially imperfect translation, because meaning is only one zone of sense. Once this translation occurs, a word can be spoken which has a relationship to the thought, but is not simply the thought itself given sound. Thus, thought can be translated into meaning, which can be translated into words, which can be spoken, but even for thought to be spoken in inner speech requires some translation. The relationship between inner speech and outer speech, in which inner speech resembles the social speech of intimates in its use of abbreviation, is what allows Vygotsky to see this difference between thought and word. The relationship between sense and meaning, in which meaning is a subcategory of the fluid sense of a word, is what allowed him to characterize this difference, and to explain both how word meanings change and how one could have an inexpressible thought. Vygotsky begins the chapter in which he outlines these relationships with part of a poem by Osip Mandelstam:

*The word I forgot*

*Which once I wished to say*

*And voiceless thought*

*Returns to shadows’ chambers*

This just as easily could end the chapter as begin it, since it summarizes poetically the thoughts that Vygotsky tried to express through his work.

Now this model of the relationship between thought and word stems in large
part from Vygotsky’s relationship to Marxism, and, incorporating this model into
Taylor’s liberal project therefore introduces certain problems; to the extent that
Vygotsky’s relationship to Marx stems from a shared illiberal psychology (or a psy-
chology deeply critical of liberal psychology), adopting Vygotsky’s practices might
undermine Taylor’s commitment to a liberal state. Fortunately, while Vygotsky
clearly understood himself working within Marxist philosophy, his relationship to
Marx is a complicated one. I expand on the biographical reasons for this in the
Appendix, but I want to briefly lay out Vygotsky’s relationship to Marxism and
outline why incorporating his work into Taylor’s liberal project makes sense.

5.6 Consciousness and Marxism

This section uses the work of James Wertsch to both explain the importance of
the links Vygotsky draws between thought and language in understanding cogni-
tive development generally and to offer additional evidence that Vygotsky should
not be treated solely as a Marxist, in the form of a presentation of Wertsch’s
criticism of Vygotsky presented along this line. Earlier in this chapter, I sug-
gested that Vygotsky’s primary use of Marxism was as a philosophical grounding
that connected individuals to their social environments. In this, Vygotsky takes
from Marx what he today could borrow from multiculturalism, Foucaultian post-
structuralism, communitarianism, or even the work of the Scottish Enlightenment.
In Section Two I outlined why I think it makes most sense to trace the roots of
Vygotsky’s attention to Marxism further back, to Hegel.

This vision of the link between thought and language has been criticized by later
writers, especially coming out of the Soviet developmental tradition that Vygotsky
participated in. Wertsch presents a history of that criticism, capped off by his
own criticism of Vygotsky’s reliance on meaning, rather than action, as a unit of analysis. Understanding Wertsch’s criticisms of Vygotsky’s choice of word meaning as the basic unit of his analysis of consciousness helps us understand some of the limits Vygotsky’s short life imposed on his theories. However, Wertsch’s primary criticism of Vygotsky’s use of meaning seems to come from an unsympathetic interpretation of meaning’s relationship to consciousness. Wertsch’s interpretation of the role of meaning in Vygotsky’s theories over-emphasizes its meditative role and under-emphasizes its constitutive role; Wertsch treats meaning as something that exists primarily as a bridge between an existing individual and the objective world, rather than something that serves to make up the individual. By understanding the ways in which meaning are constitutive, rather than solely meditative, we can see why understanding language is central for understanding development in Vygotsky.

Vygotsky defines consciousness as “the subjective reflection of material reality by animate matter.”\textsuperscript{38} This definition derives in part from Lenin’s technical usage of ‘reflection’, which is neither passive nor necessarily self-oriented.\textsuperscript{39} While Vygotsky’s definition of consciousness was intended to be applicable to any animate matter, he concentrated his studies on human consciousness, and its development.\textsuperscript{40} The highest analytic level of human consciousness is composed of intellect and affect.\textsuperscript{41} While Vygotsky considered any vision of psychology that dichotomized intellect and affect, as the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment did, to be problematic, he did not fully research their integration; he instead concentrated on the composition of intellect. In Vygotsky’s topography of mind, higher mental functions, “such as memory, attention, thinking, and perception [are] the

\textsuperscript{38}[Wertsch, 1985b] 187
\textsuperscript{39}[Wertsch, 1985b] 188
\textsuperscript{40}See above in section 5.2
\textsuperscript{41}[Wertsch, 1985b] 189
subcomponents” of intellect.\(^{42}\) The organization of these higher mental functions is dynamic rather than static.\(^{43}\) Changes in the interrelationships of higher mental functions leads to qualitative changes in consciousness.\(^{44}\) In order to study qualitative changes in a unified consciousness, Vygotsky sought a basic unit of analysis that would be manageable; without developing analytic categories of consciousness, research into consciousness would be unmanageable.

Vygotsky’s studies of the development of consciousness look to word meaning as this basic unit of analysis. Vygotsky argues that an analysis of units of a subject is preferable to an analysis of elements of a subject, offering water as an example: a research program emphasizing elements would have difficulty explaining why water, composed a mixture of flammable hydrogen and oxygen, would be useful in putting out fires. By analyzing the unit of water, however, researchers can begin to explain water’s actual relationship to fire.\(^{45}\) This example helps to illustrate Vygotsky’s belief that the primary feature a basic unit of analysis must have is that it must be a microcosm of the phenomenon to be studied. Wertsch claims that, for Vygotsky, “the meaningful word is a microcosm of human consciousness.”\(^{46}\) Thus, Vygotsky’s basic unit of his analysis of human consciousness was word meaning.

Why word meaning? Because meaning, for Vygotsky, was a part of both speech and thinking because it contains all of the essential properties of speech as well as all the essential properties of thinking.\(^{47}\) This is discussed at length in Chapter Seven, “Thought and Word,” of *Thought and Language*; briefly, meaning is the mental category in which thoughts find themselves and are transmitted in both

\(^{42}\) [Wertsch, 1985b] 190
\(^{43}\) See [Vygotsky, 1986] 249-253
\(^{44}\) [Wertsch, 1985b] 191
\(^{45}\) [Wertsch, 1985b] 193-194
\(^{46}\) [Wertsch, 1985b] 196
\(^{47}\) [Wertsch, 1985b] 195
inner and outer speech. While one of Wertsch’s criticisms of Vygotsky revolves around this, it seems likely that word meaning appealed to Vygotsky as a basic unit because it would also force an analyst to maintain awareness of the dynamic properties of consciousness.

Wertsch presents three criticisms of word meaning as a basic unit of analysis of consciousness. The least serious, for Wertsch, is that Vygotsky never illuminates the natural forces that interact with social forces to produce human consciousness: “very little was known about early development in the natural line. The discoveries by Piaget about sensorimotor intelligence were yet to be made.” 48 Of moderate seriousness was Vygotsky’s failure to fully explain the relationship of word meaning to propositional and discourse referentiality. 49 I claim that this of only moderate seriousness for Wertsch, despite the amount of time he spends on updating Vygotsky’s general semiotic theory for two reasons. First, as Wertsch points out, many of these extensions are a result of advances made in semiotics after Vygotsky’s death. 50 Second, as seen in how Wertsch argues for “tool-mediated, goal-directed action,” as the basic unit of analysis of human consciousness, Wertsch’s real problem with word meaning as the basic unit that he does not understand it as a microcosm of human consciousness en toto, but rather just a microcosm of the “semiotic mediation of human consciousness.” 51

Wertsch moves from his criticisms of Vygotsky’s use of word meaning as a basic

48 [Wertsch, 1985b] 198
49 Wertsch gives an extended account of Vygotsky’s semiotic failures in [Wertsch, 1985b] 129-157. Briefly, as summarized on page 157, Wertsch shows necessary extensions if one shifts to using a sentence as a unit of analysis, rather than a word, and criticizes Vygotsky for a failure to distinguish between the extralinguistic and intralinguistic contexts.
50 [Wertsch, 1985b] 129
51 [Wertsch, 1985b] 196. Also, on page 206, “another one of my criticisms was that word meaning is not really a unit that reflects the interfunctional relationships that define consciousness. Of course this is the most serious criticism one can raise, since it means that the analytic unit chosen by Vygotsky cannot fulfill the very requirements he assigned to it.”
unit of analysis to his support for Leont’ev’s use of activity as the ordinal unit of any analysis of consciousness through a brief examination of Spinoza’s rejection of Cartesian dualism. This shift proposes a set of interrelated levels of analysis in his theory of activity: activity, action, and operation, which correspond to motive, goal, and instrumental conditions, as conditioning circumstances which determine movement within each level. Leont’ev defines activity as “the nonaditive, molar unit of life for the material, corporeal subject. In a narrower sense (that is, on the psychological level) it is the unit of life that is mediated by mental reflection.” Action corresponds roughly to Vygotsky’s formulation of the proper level of analysis: it is an individual acting in a context defined by his/her sociocultural context. A variety of actions can take place within a given realm of activity. Operations are those concrete functions that move an agent closer to a goal through a set of means. They are linked to instrumental conditions because they are proscribed by the temporal-spatial conditions of the agent. Activity theory is preferable to word meaning as a basic unit of analysis because it provides a “manageable microcosm,” of consciousness, while incorporating a consciousness’s use of all the higher mental functions.

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52 [Wertsch, 1985b] 200. Note Wertsch’s use of Spinoza here, even though he does not outline Vygotsky’s relationship to Spinoza in the same way Kozulin does on page xiv: ”Vygotsky sought in Spinoza an alternative to Cartesian dualism, which, by splitting the human being into machine-like body and spiritual mind, established for centuries to come the conflict between materialistic, scientific psychology and idealistic, philosophical psychology.”


54 [Wertsch, 1985b] 203. I am somewhat unclear on whether or not ‘reflection’ here is used in Lenin’s technical sense or not.

55 “To say that an individual is engaged in a particular activity says nothing about the specific means-end relationships that are involved. It simply tells us that the individual is functioning in some socioculturally defined context. The best indication that the two levels of analysis must be distinguished in that an action can vary independently of an activity.” [Wertsch, 1985b] 203

56 [Wertsch, 1985b] 204

57 My shift here to a vocabulary of agency is not accidental. Activity-based theories of consciousness accentuate the agency of the consciousness. [Wertsch, 1985b] 204

58 [Wertsch, 1985b] 207
Wertsch’s move to activity theory may not be necessary to understand Vygotsky, however. Take his explication of his contention that word meaning fails to fulfill the microcosmic function Vygotsky needs his basic unit to fulfill:

Given the central role that dynamic interfunctional relationships play in the macrocosm of consciousness, one must know how they are reflected in the microcosm of word meaning. In fact, they are not reflected there. In no sense are mental functions such as memory or attention, let alone their interrelationships, reflected in word meaning. If one considers word meaning as defined by the sign-type-sign-type relationships of genuine concepts, one sees that Vygotsky’s concern as categorization and systems of categorization inherent in the linguistic code. Such categorization serves an essential function as a means for *mediating* consciousness, but is is not consciousness itself.\(^{59}\)

This formulation begs the question. To begin with, it is hard to see how memory and attention in particular can not be tied to word meaning: meaning is accessed in large part through memory, and attention is centrally tied to concept formation, which for Vygotsky, occurs through word meaning.\(^{60}\) Thus, it seems as though word meaning does in fact reflect the interfunctional relationships between the higher mental functions. While that reflection does not itself tell the researcher what the interrelationship is, a proper understanding of word meaning in Vygotsky requires an understanding both of what the higher mental functions are and that they interrelate; the particulars of the interrelationships change over time and across sociocultural contexts.\(^{61}\)

Beyond the particulars of the mental functions Wertsch points to, his criticism of Vygotsky seems to rest on his presumption of distance between mediativ functions of mind and consciousness. But this seemingly ignores the relationship

\(^{59}\) [Wertsch, 1985b] 196

\(^{60}\) “The development of concepts, or word meanings, presupposes the development of many intellectual functions: deliberate attention, logical memory...” [Vygotsky, 1986] 150

\(^{61}\) [Vygotsky, 1986] 151. See also Vygotsky's explanation of the role of schooling in intellectualizing memory, [Vygotsky, 1986] 166
Vygotsky calls to in his invocation of Mandelstam at the beginning of Chapter Seven of *Thought and Language*. To the extent that thought itself is found in word meanings, and bearing in mind Lenin’s technical definition of ‘reflect’, in which reflection on the part of animate matter is active and implicated, rather than passive and removed, then it seems perfectly reasonable to identify consciousness and thought. Vygotsky chooses word meaning as his basic unit of analysis of human consciousness not just because meaning is a bridge between speaking and thinking, as Wertsch claims⁶² but because meaning is the locus of thinking, which can reasonably be interpreted as consciousness as Vygotsky defines it.⁶³

And this emphasis Vygotsky gives to meaning and consciousness over action is, as noted in Section Two above, a break between Vygotsky and Soviet Marxism and a connection between Vygotsky and Hegel; Vygotsky was criticized, both by his peers and by later scholars, for being insufficiently Marxist. These criticisms, as such, are well-founded; Vygotsky’s psychological theories have idealist elements and fail to treat activity as the locus of human development or the proper level of analysis of human life. While this may present a problem for Marxists, it provides an opportunity for liberals.

As I outline below and in Chapter Six, Vygotsky’s theories of development and the relationship between the internal and the external can, when combined with Taylor’s historical story and liberal ethos, provide a powerful theory of moral development in the modern age that can account for the development of critical reason while remaining sensitive to and cognizant of the importance of cultural differences. The active nature of the reflection that the subject performs on his

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⁶²[Wertsch, 1985b] 195

⁶³Thought, in Vygotsky’s work, is subjective, reflective of material reality, and performed by animate matter. Note also the change in Wertsch’s characterization of Vygotsky’s definition of consciousness on page 207 of [Wertsch, 1985b].
environment allows a space for individuality; the emphasis on the cultural roots
of the individuality help ground this theory of development more soundly than
Rawls’s Kohlbergian model of moral development. In the following section, I ex-
plain Vygotsky’s own writing on the relationship between linguistic and moral
development, and discuss how later interpreters have expanded on this base. This
helps sets the stage for articulating the political implications for the general model
of human selfhood articulated here.

5.7 Moral Development in Vygotsky

I have outlined Vygotsky’s psychological model above, focusing on the two ele-
ments most important for my purposes: his story of the development of thought,
and the implications of that story of how learning happens. Vygotsky’s work
on thought and development places language at the very center of the human
experience. Following late nineteenth century developments in German psycho-
logical thought, Vygotsky treats language as the primary medium through which
humans understand the world around him. By this, he means that objects in the
world require interpretation in order to be useful to humans, and that the way a
particular person interprets the world has influenced by an interpretive grammar
and vocabulary.64 This way of understanding language is both broader and more
particular than our commonsense view of language, which treat languages as the
specific conventions of a given tongue: American English, in the commonsense
view, differs from British English because certain words (e.g. lift) mean differ-
ent things in different languages. But language in the way Vygotsky uses it, a
way that I adopt here, is the set of practices through which members of a given

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64 See [Strong, 1990] 77-78 for a focused description of this way of using the term grammar. See the same volume, 16-19 and 76-82 for a discussion of that use.
community communicate with one another. Thus, a British speaker may speak a different language than another British speaker in that the former is a member of Parliament and the latter is an unschooled janitor working in Orkney; while they will have many of the same words available to them, and speak the same tongue, in the way Vygotsky uses the term language, they could be said to use different languages insofar as they use language in dramatically different ways. This is a complicated view of language, which a number of previous thinkers have addressed in a variety of different ways.\footnote{I address this view of language in both the introductory chapter and Chapter Four of this dissertation. This view of language stems from J. G. Herder’s view of language as a functional system, embedded in a particular way of life and serving to mediate, and thereby make meaningful, events and objects for followers of that way of life. Thus, the view of language includes not just non-prose elements, such as tone of voice and affect, but also non-verbal elements such as posture and words left unsaid. See [Rousseau and Herder, 1986]. For more on Herder and language, see also [Singer, 1997]; [Lecours, 2000]; and [Fox, 2003]. This view of language has been subscribed to by a number of different thinkers, including – most importantly for this dissertation – Taylor and Vygotsky, but also including [Wittgenstein, 1958] and [Cavell, 1988]. For a nuanced discussion of the limits of the term ‘language’ in translations of Vygotsky’s work, see [Gillen, 2000]. While I disagree with her seeming distaste for approaching Vygotsky philosophically, I think stipulating her point regarding the distance between speech \textit{per se} and language as I am using it here, made on page 187 of her article, actually supports my argument in this and previous chapters even more strongly, as it is clear that speech is a subset of language, and wholly bounded by it. Thus, if Vygotsky was really focused on speech, he was certainly focused on language, according to the terms of her criticisms.}

In addition to relying on this unusual (although far from unique) model of language, Vygotsky reverses the relationship previous thinkers saw between thought and language.\footnote{Vygotsky focuses his attention on Jean Piaget; see [Vygotsky, 1986] 12-58.} Most previous work in psychology treated thought as prior to language and speech. Vygotsky, however, reversed this relationship by treating thought as epiphenomenal to speech. A child learns to accomplish tasks in the world in large part by coordinating social activity; that coordination requires speech. As the child communicates with those around it, it eventually learns the speech patterns that accomplish its goals. These speech patterns are gradually internalized, first as speech that is external but directed towards the self, and
then finally as fully internal speech. This internal speech becomes crystallized as thought.

Thus, the language a child must use to accomplish its social goals becomes internalized in its thought. There will be certain grammars that the child will use that will work better, and others that will work less well. This will be determined in large part by the grammars those surrounding the child use themselves, especially the ones they value. On the whole, the child will tend to return to those grammars that worked better than those that worked less well. Those more successful grammars will be the ones that become internalized as thought. These more successful grammars will be more successful because those around the child will recognize and value those grammars themselves. Over time, the child will tend to return to grammars useful for those around them, which will encourage the child to think in a grammar similar to those around them.67

In this way, the grammar of a person’s thought is influenced by the conversations they have with those around them. When a person encounters situations afterwards, the previous conversations serve to structure the grammar through which they understand the elements of the situation, as well as the possible responses. This simplifies the process considerably, but is enough to help explain Vygotsky’s model of learning.

As Vygotsky puts interactions with others at the center of his psychological model, he also puts interactions with others at the center of his model of learning. In response to earlier attempts to define intelligence, which treated it as a single set of competences, Vygotsky articulated a model of intelligence with two elements: individual competence and competence working alongside others. He recognized that individuals could often accomplish tasks working in concert that

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67[Vygotsky, 1978] 56
they could not when working alone. He called the gap between one’s individual level of competence and one’s communal level of competence the zone of proximal development (frequently shortened to zoped or ZPD). This zone of proximal development was the area in which learning could occur.  

As a child worked on a task alongside another, they would need to communicate. Those communications went through the process of internalization outlined above. First the communication existed as a dialog between the child and their group. Next, the dialog would be partially internalized in the form of externalized egocentric speech. Finally, the child would achieve sufficient mastery of the task and accompanying dialog to fully internalize the speech. At this stage, the internalized speech would crystallize into thought.

While Vygotsky’s writings concentrated on child development, the literature continuing his work has applied this model to learning at all developmental levels. Although children are more plastic than adults, leading them to have larger zones of proximal development which are easier to work with experimentally, recent research has indicated that adults learn in roughly the same way that children do, albeit frequently at a slower pace, especially when learning languages. But while the pace of learning language may be slower, this is a reflection of the relative plasticity of adult brains and child brains, not a different mode of learning. Indeed, studies in language acquisition suggest, contrary to what intuition may suggest, that the presence of a first language competence has little effect on the acquisition of a second language.  

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68 [Vygotsky, 1978] 86  
69 [Preston, 1989], [Bayley and Preston, 1996], and [Block, 2003]
seems not to involve any bootstrapping from the first language.

This is important for my argument because it suggests that speakers of one moral language will be able to acquire a second moral language that is an actual version of that second language, rather than a version primarily filtered through their primary language. This is a concern voiced by both multiculturalists such as Iris Marion Young\(^{70}\) and critics of multiculturalism, such as Jean Elshtain\(^{71}\), who both argue that one’s own moral grammar and identity preclude the possibility of learning another culture’s value system. I have expanded on the relationship between language and values at greater length in Chapters Three and Four; both Taylor and Vygotsky argue that moral thoughts and values are structured by the language in which they are thought in the same way language structures other types of thought.\(^{72}\)

The way in which language, which undergirds value systems, is learnt helps flesh out the actual practices of fusing horizons. Taylor sets the political need for understanding; liberal states can develop policies to accommodate cultural minorities if they can judge those cultures in a way that does not misrecognize them.\(^{73}\) Fusing one’s horizons with those of the culture to be judged is a precondition for judging the culture, but a precondition Taylor does not substantially elaborate. Vygotsky’s model of learning, which is built on a psychological model sympathetic to Taylor’s in that they share an unusual understanding of language and the way

\(^{70}\) [Young, 1997]
\(^{71}\) [Elshtain, 1996]
\(^{72}\) As a reminder, according to Vygotsky, thought develops after language, and is epiphenomenal to language. While thought and language are not the same, the way thought differs from language – in that it is radically abbreviated, especially regarding subjects and objects – does not constitute a break of type. Thus, the way in which language is used by speakers constitutes the way in which they think, which, of course, then helps constitute the way they think, and so on. See [Vygotsky, 1986] 226-236 for more on this. See also [Emerson, 1983], [Peneul and Wertsch, 1995], and [Gillen, 2000].
\(^{73}\) Such as judging the other culture according to terms solely laid out by the judging culture. See [Taylor, 1994].
it allows the self to be constructed in dialog with others, elaborates how horizons are fused. Another culture’s moral grammar can be learned through the concrete communicative interactions that foster all other kinds of learning; humans attempt to engage in cooperative activity, and in doing so, they communicate with one another. Those communications are gradually internalized and mastered, until they take the form of thought.\textsuperscript{74} At that point, when the judge has internalized the language of the judged, they have fused their horizons, and can ground their judgment in recognition of the values of the judged culture.

This new moral grammar is a language, and thinking about it as such usefully illustrates at one point a judge can be said to have sufficiently mastered the new moral grammar, and therefore fused their horizons. Mastery of this new moral grammar lies along a continuum, rather than in a category; rather than thinking of mastery as something one either has or fails to have, I think it is more accurate to say instead that one is more or less proficient in it. This is like a language. One is more or less competent at a language, but there is no clear line defining when one has mastered a language.

There are, however, two tasks I think important for any speaker, which can be adopted to determine mastery of the moral grammar and fusion of horizons. The first is comprehension. In order to be said to know any language, one must be able to understand it and comprehend it. I hesitate to offer any single point of comprehension to be indicative of mastery – I certainly think I know English despite not knowing every word – but at least a basic level of comprehension is a reasonable expectation of anyone professing to know a language. The second task is novel production of statements in the language in which one claims proficiency. If the only way I can communicate in a language is by repeating statements I have

\textsuperscript{74} See [Vygotsky, 1978] 56
heard before, there is little way of telling whether I understand the underlying grammar of a language. While a speaker with an excellent memory might be able to accomplish many of the tasks of social coordination in a new language that would give the appearance of mastery, without being able to generate new statements, if a person was known to only be able to mimic previous statements, then I suspect fluent speakers would be hesitant, if they knew that, to describe the mimic as having mastered the language.\textsuperscript{75} Note here that since communication occurs through a particular context, and a statement cannot, at least in Taylor and Vygotsky’s view, be decontextualized without changing the meaning of a statement,\textsuperscript{76} then repeating a previously-heard statement in a new, appropriate, context might count as novel production; certainly, it would intuitively suggest a mastery of the underlying communicative grammar.

## 5.8 Conclusion

Vygotsky’s model of consciousness incorporates cultural contributions without reducing human selves to cultural nodes. Moreover, because of his training in psychology, rather than political science, Vygotsky avoids the Aristotelean claims in both Herder and Hegel; linguistic communities need not be co-incident with national communities, or with any particular type of community at all. Thus, Vygotsky’s model of human development is unique. By emphasizing the psychological

\textsuperscript{75} This situation resembles, in many ways, John Searle’s famous example of the Chinese Room, and the literature surrounding the Turing test. See [Searle, 1980] and [Searle, 1984] for the original statement of this problem. This example has birthed a sizable literature surrounding it; even presenting the most basic elements of that literature would constitute a dissertation in itself. See [Preston and Bishop, 2002] for a recent edited volume both summarizing the existing literature and articulating relatively recent extensions.

\textsuperscript{76} For an example, see [Taylor, 1985b] 120-121 on translating Azande concepts into Western concepts. For the moment, I want to bracket the problem of translation generally – I will discuss this below – and simply note that, for Taylor, decontextualization alters the meaning of a statement.
processes through which humans interact with their communities and the limits of those processes, Vygotsky is able to move away from dichotomous debates between individualists and communitarians. And he does this through his understanding of the constitutive nature of language, which is possible because of his focus on mediation.

Language acts as the primary medium through which we develop and understand the world. Words in language have two parts to their meaning: sense, the individualized aspect, and meaning, the communal aspect. In addition to word meaning acting as a microcosm of human cognition, then, it also acts as a microcosm of our interactions with others – it contains within it a dual aspect, reflective of both the dual aspects of our interaction with reality that mediative theories of mind posit and the dual aspects of Taylor’s reconciliation of community and individuality. So it should be no surprise that Vygotsky scholars have noted Taylor’s rejection, alongside Vygotsky, of Cartesian dualism and separation of the self and others.

Parallels between Vygotsky and Taylor suggest the possibility of each informing the work of the other. My next chapter examines the policies that arise from the fusion of Taylor’s model of judgment with Vygotsky’s model of language acquisition. And we can see this through the way in which language structures our selves. Language mediates our relationship to the world, but language is not purely social; it has a social aspect (meaning) and an individual aspect (sense). Understanding a culture’s system of values – the central function of the fusion of horizons – requires learning their language, insofar as these cultural horizons are contained in their cultural language practices. But while Vygotsky’s work in language acquisition and its relationship to the higher mental functions is suggestive, his writing on the relationship between language development and moral development is limited.
6

Revisiting *Yoder* and *Mozert*

6.1 Introduction

Many of the central articles debating the state’s role in accommodation in educational policies for religious groups have centered on the *Yoder* case.\(^1\) The case, pitting the rights of Amish parents to educate their children to the traditional values of the Old Order Amish against the state’s claims over its future citizens, has been treated in the literature as a microcosm of the larger debate over the extent to which a liberal state can enforce demands on its citizens who may, at times radically, disagree not just with the state’s choice of means, but with the state’s end goal of developing modern citizens. One argument emphasizes the extent official neutrality over conceptions of the goods serves to legitimate liberal states.\(^2\) Another emphasizes that individual’s choices are valued for their having been freely chosen by citizens, and that traditional forms of life may, at times,


\(^2\) [Larmore, 1987], [Moon, 1993], and [Rawls, 1993]
disrupt the ability of adherents to make choices freely. Yet another argues that autonomy is a core liberal value, and liberal states can legitimately ground policies designed to foster autonomy in their citizens in that core liberal value.

Against this backdrop, Charles Taylor deploys a set of arguments that center around the importance of cultural membership for meaningful human activity, and the harms that can come when a dominant group misrecognizes cultural values. Members of a misrecognized group may find themselves without the values necessary for meaningful action in the world; the values that allow them to identify and judge what is meaningful, and interpret what it means, are denigrated. This stems from the essentially dialogical psychology Taylor relies on. Humans never form their systems of values fully independent from one another. Instead, humans develop systems of values in dialog with others around them, through conversations and interactions. When their interlocutors misrecognize them, humans can develop systems of values that are unable to effectively guide their action, leaving them unable to develop or execute plans of life.

But not all claims for recognition can be recognized without making that recognition meaningless. The category of “valuable” can only exist if there is an opposing category of “valueless.” If all cultural systems of value are themselves valuable, then they are all equally valueless. A claim for universal recognition therefore undermines exactly the good it intends to provide. Rather than provid-

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3 [Rawls, 1999b]. See also [Abbey, 2007] for a claim that, in fact, Rawls’s later work should be understood more as a version of comprehensive liberalism, of the type addressed immediately after this. Abbey’s work builds on feminist interpretations of Rawls, most notably [Okin, 1989] and [Okin, 1994].

4 See [Gutmann, 1993], [Gutmann and Thompson, 1996], and [Macedo, 1996].

5 [Taylor, 1994]. See also [Fraser, 1998].

6 Taylor borrows this psychological model from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin ([Bakhtin, 1981]). I have described Taylor’s use of this model at length in earlier chapters.

7 [Taylor, 1985a], [Taylor, 1985b], [Taylor, 1989], [Taylor, 1990], [Taylor, 1993], and [Taylor, 1994].
ing all cultures with the recognition their members need to act effectively in the world, a claim for universal recognition disrupts the ability of any culture to be recognized.\footnote{\cite{Taylor, 1994} 37}

Faced with the plethora of cultural claims for recognition, liberal states need a way to adjudicate the relative value of claims. Those claims that are valuable, moreover, should be accommodated in some way, to preserve the way of life judged valuable. Thus, Taylor’s alternative model of liberalism is one that places judgment at its center.

This turn to a judging state contains tensions and risks. By granting liberal states the right to judge cultural worth in order to grant accommodation in some cases and not others – required in order to maintain the usefulness of the category of “valuable” at all – Taylor risks undermining one of the traditionally-articulated tenets of the liberal state: political neutrality. Reasons given for this neutrality have varied,\footnote{See, for example, \cite{Geuss, 2002}.} but one of the most important recent reasons has been the limit of judgment across cultural barriers.\footnote{See \cite{Young, 1997}. I discuss this article at considerably greater length in the following chapter. I want to especially underscore Young’s claim, made in footnote fourteen, that James Tully misunderstands her as claiming understanding is impossible. See \cite{Tully, 1995}, especially 132-134 for his own take on Young’s claims. There is also a well-developed literature on this subject in anthropology and philosophy, usually revolving around \cite{Winch, 1972}. Winch appears to argue for the essential impossibility of judging claims made in one culture from the standpoint of another culture. See Pitkin’s comments in \cite{Pitkin, 1972} I address this line of argument at significantly greater length below in this chapter.} Judging a cultural value stems from a conception of what counts as valuable. Advancing a claim regarding the relative value of one culture requires some conception of what is valuable; judgment requires some standard of judgment. But this creates a particularly acute problem for Taylor’s alternative model of liberalism. Judging the culture from the standpoint of the dominant culture’s values
opens the door to the misrecognition Taylor originally identifies as a problem.\footnote{Taylor indicates the problems with judging one culture purely from the standpoint of another prior to [Taylor, 1994]. See [Taylor, 1985b] 123, for example. At this point in his thought, Taylor describes this problem through the lens of his criticism of treating social science as an extension of natural science. By 1994, however, this criticism has been transmuted into a claim regarding recognition. While I see no obvious tension between his claims in 1985 and 1994, I do want to note that the terms through which Taylor describes the problem of cross-cultural understanding change significantly. For more, see [Jones, 1999]; [Kateb, 1999]; [Parekh, 2000]; and [Carens, 2000].}

But judging the culture from its own standpoint seems to guarantee a particular judgment, rendering the judgment meaningless. How, then, can a judgment recognize the worth of a culture whose values differ radically from its own without either engaging in misrecognition or vacating the judgment of any of its meaning?

Taylor’s solution is to expand the grounds on which a state official judges through a process he terms the fusion of horizons.\footnote{I have discussed the way in which Taylor shifts away Hans-Georg Gadamer’s original coining of this term in Chapter Three of this dissertation. In short, Gadamer intends the fusion of horizons to be a tool for historians, which allows them to understand previous historical instantiations of their own culture’s interpretive conditions. It is transhistorical, but intracultural. Taylor uses the fusion of horizons to describe the preconditions for judging the worth of another culture without risking misrecognition. For Taylor, unlike Gadamer, it is transcultural, and intrahistorical. See [Gadamer, 175] for Gadamer’s original description. See [Feldman, 1999] as an additional example of a political theorist’s misunderstanding of this point.}

The fusion of horizons is a process in which a member of one culture comes to understand the system of values of another culture. This understanding brings the value-system of the other culture into fuser’s horizon of meaning. The fuser, after the fusion of horizons, can move between their previous system of values and the newly-understood system of values, as they both now exist within their horizon of meaning. This new horizon of meaning provides a space in which judgments can be rendered that neither disregards the judged culture’s standards of judgment nor simply grants them.

While Taylor makes a compelling case for his alternative form of liberalism, and the importance in it of the practice of the fusion of horizons, he never fully articulates what is bound up in that practice, and what psychological model makes
I have argued in Chapter Three that the fusion of horizons is challenging, but possible. The key lies in recognizing the constitutive role language plays for humans. Language is not a set of vocabulary signifying already-understood objects in the world, but is instead a system by which cultures structure the world around them by ascribing values to and relationships between objects which would otherwise prove confusing or unimportant. As such, language mediates our relationship to the world, and links us in a common culture with those with whom we speak. Understanding language in this way shows why the fusion of horizons is a linguistic process – the horizons themselves are contained in linguistic practices, and are therefore learnt in the same way any language is learnt.

When the judge considering an accommodation requested by a minority group fuses her or his horizons with those of the group requesting the accommodation, as he or she must in Taylor’s view of judgment, he or she must acquire their grammar, an acquisition that happens in the same way other languages are learnt: through a zone of proximal development. Vygotsky’s model of the zone of proximal development explains how concrete linguistic interactions facilitate learning, including learning of the language of the linguistic interaction itself. The zone of proximal development articulates the practices necessary to fuse horizons; Taylor’s model of judgment explains the political importance of this fusion.

While a full analysis of the possible policy changes is beyond the scope of this dissertation, one of the advances my model of cross-cultural understanding makes over Taylor’s writing is a more concrete set of practices than previous writers have

\[13\] See [Watson-Franke et al., 1975], [Tully, 1995], [Feldman, 1999], [Jones, 1999], [Young, 1997], [Lecours, 2000], and [Chambers, 2005].
articulated. This chapter aims to set these out and ground them in my extension of Taylor’s 1994 model of recognition. First, I describe the limitations of Justice Douglas’s partial dissent in the *Yoder* case. Second, I re-examine the *Yoder* case, based on the practices suggested by incorporating Vygotsky into Taylor’s thought. This re-examination proposes granting greater authority to local officials, leaving the judiciary to adjudicate challenges to the local officials judging petitions for accommodation, as well as a description of how the practices of fusing horizons could take place in this case. The limited role I envision for the judiciary stems from the limited role expert witnesses can play in translating concepts across cultural lines; I discuss these limits through Peter Winch’s work on cross-cultural understanding of the Azande.\(^\text{14}\) Finally, I examine another important case on religious accommodation in public education, *Mozert v Hawkins County Board of Education*, in order to provide an additional example of how my model of cross-cultural understanding might look in practice, and where it differs from Romand Coles’s call for a risky engagement between the Mozerts and the larger community.\(^\text{15}\)

### 6.2 The Limitations of Douglas’s Dissent

While the *Yoder* case was decided by an unanimous vote of seven to zero, Justice Douglas took the unusual step of writing a partial dissent, designed to limit the decision to the particular facts of the *Yoder* case. Specifically, he expresses reservations about using the general principles of the case to justify parents who wish to remove their children from school against the wishes of the children themselves. Douglas’s comfort with the *Yoder* decision stems in large part from the alignment between the wishes of the parents and the wishes of the children.

\(^{14}\)[Winch, 1972]  
\(^{15}\)[Coles, 2005]
Douglas’s discomfort stems from the majority decision, written by Justice Burger, unproblematically identifying the religious preferences of the parents with the religious preferences of their children:

Respondents’ experts testified at trial, without challenge, that the value of all education must be assessed in terms of its capacity to prepare the child for life. It is one thing to say that compulsory education for a year or two beyond the eighth grade may be necessary when its goal is the preparation of the child for life in modern society as the majority live, but it is quite another if the goal of education be viewed as the preparation of the child for life in the separated agrarian community that is the keystone of the Amish faith.\textsuperscript{16}

While Burger’s opinion acknowledges the possibility that Amish children will want to leave their communities, the only concern regarding the fate of these children he articulates is the larger society’s concern that these children will become a burden, unable to care for themselves:

There is no specific evidence of the loss of Amish adherents by attrition, nor is there any showing that upon leaving the Amish community Amish children, with their practical agricultural training and habits of industry and self-reliance, would become burdens on society because of educational short-comings.\textsuperscript{17}

At no point in the majority opinion does Burger explain why the children of Amish parents should be presumed to want to follow in the paths of their parents. Douglas’s partial dissent revolves around specifying that the circumstances of the case, in which children expressed agreement with their parents, in large part determines his concurrence with the majority.

If the parents in this case are allowed a religious exemption, the inevitable effect is to impose the parents’ notions of religious duty upon their children. Where the child is mature enough to express potentially conflicting desires, it would be an invasion of the child’s rights to

\textsuperscript{16} 406 U.S. 205, 222-223
\textsuperscript{17} 406 U.S. 205, 225
permit such an imposition without canvassing his views. As in *Prince v. Massachusetts*, 321 U.S. 158, it is an imposition resulting from this very litigation. As the child has no other effective forum, it is in this litigation that his rights should be considered. And, if an Amish child desires to attend high school, and is mature enough to have that desire respected, the State may well be able to override the parents’ religiously motivated objections. Religion is an individual experience. It is not necessary, nor even appropriate, for every Amish child to express his views on the subject in a prosecution of a single adult. Crucial, however, are the views of the child whose parent is the subject of the suit.18

Douglas presents an intuitively appealing alternative set of policies. If the preferences of the parents and children align, the state should respect them, and allow the child to leave school early. If, however, the child wishes to remain in school, then in deference to the fact that it is the child’s future at stake, the court should curtail the parents’ abilities to determine their child’s education. Importantly, Douglas sidesteps the thorny question of whether or not the child or parent is the best judge of what is good for the child – his principle that the person most affected by the education should dominate the decision avoids the difficulties presented by the fact that children are still children.

Douglas here suggests the right policy, but for the wrong reason. His claim that religion is an individual experience reflects an implicit prejudice for understanding religion along lines radically different from the Amish understanding of religion. This understanding of religion’s relationship to community is too particular to form the basis of an objection to Amish religious practices, the bulk of which seem to be communal. It situates judgment on the judge’s particular understanding of Amish life, rather than making an attempt to understand what communal practice means in the context of Amish religious life.

This imposition is exactly the sort of imposition Taylor identifies in [Taylor, 1994]

18406 U.S. 205, 243-244
as an inappropriate stance in which to judge a claim for accommodation. Douglas misrecognizes the communal nature of Amish religious practices. This comes through in Section II of Douglas’s partial dissent.

In it, he clarifies that children need an effective forum for expressing their view because, “these children are ‘persons’ within the meaning of the Bill of Rights.” Here Douglas is explicit that the basis of his dissent is the conception of personhood embedded in the majority culture’s legal tradition of individual rights. But the basis of the Yoder parents’ case is the fact that the Amish do not share the majority culture’s tradition. Insisting that children be understood as individuals rather than community members begs the question at stake in the case.

Taylor addresses the problem with this presumption in section IV of [Taylor, 1994]. Douglas, in arguing that religion is an individual experience and that children have rights insofar as they are constitutionally recognized as persons, adopts the liberal, proceduralist approach Taylor identifies as “inhospitable to difference.” This approach denies the authentically different life experiences of members of cultures who do not hold individuality to be a primary virtue. Forcing these cultural members to adopt those tropes in order to advance claims for accommodation runs two risks.

First, insisting that claims for accommodation be made only on the basis of individual rights risks obscuring the value of these cultural bonds, leading policymakers to devalue the cultural membership central to some cultures members’ plans of life. This devaluation makes it less likely that accommodations will be

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19 On page 56
20 [Taylor, 1994] 61
21 Are children best understood as members of a culture? I think Douglas here has to concede that they count, insofar as he is willing to grant them the right to guide their own education on the grounds of their interest in the outcome. And so, at least on the terms Douglas lays out in his partial dissent, children have sufficient standing for their self-understanding to be taken seriously.
granted, as the goods these minority cultures provide will be devalued. That is, to the extent that a liberal state understands the good life solely along individualist lines, it will tend to disrupt the ability of citizens to make choices according to their own preferences, as only some types of preferences will be valued.

Second, insisting that claims for accommodation be made only on the basis of individual rights also risks forcing cultural members to adopt positions in their cases significantly different, and possibly quite hostile, to their authentic beliefs. Forcing citizens to act contrary to their fundamental beliefs requires devaluing authentic expressions of selfhood – authentic expressions that are ironically central to the liberal state’s lionization of individualized identity. By radically limiting the basis of claims for accommodation, the state ends up undermining the putative basis for that limitation. Amish children (or, rather, children of Amish parents) must adopt an individualized stance to assert their agreement with their parents that they wish to lead an Amish life which denigrates the individualized stance the state requires them to take.

An insistence on cashing this difficulty out in terms of individual rights is, I think, self-abnegating here. But Douglas is surely right about the individualized nature of constitutional law; in America, rights adhere to persons, not to groups. How, then, can the law reflect these differences?

The answer I advance below is to look away from the judiciary as an arena for adjudicating these claims, and towards investing local officials with this authority. Douglas is right, I think, that children need an institution to act as an effective forum for them to express their preferences, but he is wrong to locate that institution within the judicial branch. Local officials are in a better position to understand the fundamental differences that undergird many claims for accommodation. The judiciary still has an important role to play in this process, but a very
different one than Douglas envisions. Rather than adjudicating these claims, the judiciary should act as the arena in which to resolve disputes over whether or not local authorities have sufficiently fused their horizons with those of the petitioning minority community.

6.3 Re-Examining *Yoder* Through Taylor and Vygotsky

Footnote three of the majority opinion suggests an alternative path to resolving this conflict, which could be modified to incorporate these practices of cross-cultural understanding. In it, the court outlines a plan the Amish parents had taken to the Wisconsin State Superintendent of Public Instruction as a compromise settlement. The plan, based on an existing plan operating in Pennsylvania, standardized the Amish home-schooling by ensuring three hours a week of classes on English, mathematics, health, and social studies, taught by an Amish teacher, and requiring the students to keep a journal of their household and farm duties during the rest of the week. The Wisconsin State Superintendent rejected this plan on the grounds that this education would differ substantially from the education given to children from other backgrounds. The general model presented here—in which parents work with local authorities to develop accommodations—holds the potential for developing better policies than shifting the power over to a court system which must rely on expert testimony for understanding the particular cultures involved in this type of case.

The superintendent’s rejection of the plan on the basis that it differs substantially from the education offered other students in the state assumes the necessity

\[22\ 406\ U.S.\ 205\ 209\]
of providing all students in the state a “substantially equivalent education,” implicitly resting on the same foundation as John Rawls’s claims regarding justice as fairness. As discussed at length in Chapter Two of this dissertation, this Rawlsian foundation is ultimately unable to legitimate itself; his principles of justice are not derivable solely from what citizens can bring with them behind the veil of ignorance, and instead rely on a set of cultural assumptions and preferences.\textsuperscript{23} These preferences fatally undermine the claim to neutrality that legitimates the principles of justice themselves. While these principles represent an important philosophical reworking of liberal claims, and may present plausible political possibilities for substantially unified nation-states, the fact of cases such as \textit{Wisconsin v. Yoder} indicates substantial cultural pluralism in contemporary America; this substantial cultural pluralism precludes Rawls’s principles of justice from being adopted through public deliberation in the manner necessary to legitimate them. Thus, to the extent that Rawls’s argument for his seemingly-neutral principles of justice ought to be rejected, so should the superintendent’s claims in this case. Students are not obviously due substantially similar education; instead, as argued in Chapter Three, accommodations can be permitted, so long as they serve to enhance the ability of cultural minorities to operate effectively in the state – with the definition of effective operation emerging through a fusion of horizons, rather than the standpoint of either the majority or minority culture solely.

But the superintendent’s resistance is not the only grounds of resistance. Note that the claim for substantially equivalent education advanced by the superintendent in this case differs from the grounds that many critics of this decision rely on; for many political theorists, the problem with accommodating Amish parents is not the non-neutrality of accommodation, but the potential for denying children the

\textsuperscript{23} See [Galeotti, 2002], [Jones, 2006], and [Abbey, 2007]
possibility of an independently-chosen future.\textsuperscript{24} Indeed, this is the basis of Justice Douglas’s dissent, especially in the first two sections.\textsuperscript{25} The worry shared by these thinkers is that the parents’ rights to religious expression are being accommodated at the costs of their children’s rights.

Two rights in particular concern critics; these different criticisms conform, very roughly, to political liberalism on the one hand, and comprehensive liberalism on the other. One set of criticisms claims that children ought to be exposed to the different possible forms of life so that their choice, when they come of age, is a more muscular choice that it would be if their experience was more limited. This criticism connects the validity of choices to the conditions in which they are made. Some conditions vitiate the essence of what it means to choose, and that vitiation robs the choice of the meaningfulness required in order to be politically defensible. To the extent my important life-choices are limited, those choices are more representative of the limited conditions of choice than of any real expression of my selfhood.\textsuperscript{26} Another set of criticisms focuses on the substance of Amish education, which denies the importance of autonomy and civic membership. These critics argue that illiberal groups are due more limited accommodations than liberal groups, as the substance of their value-systems conflicts directly with what they take to be core liberal civic values. Rather than concerning themselves with the conditions of choice, as the first group of critics does, they understand liberalism in terms of a substantive political agenda which promotes autonomy as a civic good; autonomy is good, because choices made autonomously have a greater value, both for the individual and for the civic polity, than choice made that serve to restrict

\textsuperscript{24} See [Macedo, 1995]; [Levey, 1997]; [Moon, 1993]; and [Gill, 2001]
\textsuperscript{25} 406 U.S. 52 242-247
\textsuperscript{26}[Rawls, 1993], [Larmore, 1987], and [Riley, 2002]
Earlier chapters have already addressed these two criticisms at some length, but my responses bear recapitulation. Charles Taylor, I argue, responds effectively to both of these critical positions. The context of choice certainly matters; choices made in conditions that serve to limit choices are limited by their context. A choice made in a context that maximizes possibilities is more muscular, because there are fewer possible alternative avenues left unexplored. If I choose black as the color of my Model T, that choice indicates less about my color preferences – since the Model T was offered only in one color – than if I had sixteen colors to choose from; the more colors I have to choose from, the more I can identify the choice I make with my actual preferences. But, as Taylor argues, the context of choice is not restricted solely to the number of choices in front of me, but also my own ability to navigate those choices. That ability to rooted in large part in my system of values and cultural horizon. A cultural horizon that I operate through securely allows me a more secure foundation on which to make choices at all. Absent a secure cultural horizon and system of values, my ability to make choice, even in a choice-rich context, is limited, and my choices cannot be strongly identified with my preferences. Thus, Taylor and these critics of cultural accommodation agree on ends, but disagree on means; he agrees with these critics who valorize effective choosing, but enlarges the scope of what makes choosing effective as a representation of the self to include the chooser’s ability to choose – which the first group of critics take largely for granted. Thus, Taylor is able to defend cultural accommodation that may initially seem to restrict choice on the grounds that it secures the chooser’s ability to make meaningful choices at all.

27 [Gutmann, 1980], [Gutmann, 1995], and [Abbey, 2007]
28 [Taylor, 1989] 21
29 [Taylor, 1994] 42
Taylor responds to the second set of criticisms of accommodation – those grounded in an insistence that autonomy operates as a trump value – along different, but related lines. Continuing in modeling values through their cultural expression in horizons of meaning, Taylor argues that while autonomy is an important value, it cannot ultimately be justified as the important value. Values, for Taylor, rest ultimately on foundations of cultural beliefs and practices. Thus, while autonomy could be defended as the core value of a specific cultural group, it cannot be defended, either empirically or philosophically, as a necessary value for all cultural groups. Empirically, he notes, it is clear that many cultures have allowed their members to live rich and fulfilling lives without promoting autonomy over other goods, or, indeed, at times, at all.\[30\] Philosophically, he argues that attempts to promote autonomy as a trump value either misunderstand the nature of systems of value or are engaged in what is essentially an imperial project. Those who misunderstand the nature of systems of value treat autonomy as a trump value because they see value systems as reconcilable, and believe that autonomy and autonomous choice is what gives value to whatever choices a citizen makes. Taylor emphasizes the irreconcilability of value-systems.\[31\] Treating autonomy as a trump value makes sense within a value system, but cannot make sense between value systems. Thinkers who engage in a project of cultural imperialism ought be resisted, according to Taylor, for much the same reasons that political imperialists ought to be resisted; people do not have the right to capture one another and compel them to act according to one’s own wishes, whether the force used is physical or mental. Instituting political institutions that misrecognize the legitimate cultural values of minority cultures damages their ability to make any meaningful choices.

\[30\] [Taylor, 1989] 14 and 245

\[31\] [Taylor, 1989] 17
in the world. Ironically then, political demands for autonomy undermine, rather than enhance, the ability of minority cultural members to make effective choices.\footnote{Taylor, 1994} 57-60

In the Yoder case, the court attempts to avoid the problems of misrecognition by relying on expert witnesses. Witnesses on both sides attempted to put Amish values in terms understandable by the court. These witnesses do partially address these problems of misrecognition, by providing a translation of Amish values into values recognizable by the justices. But these expert witnesses, in their capacity as translators, necessarily fall short of allowing the judges direct access to Amish values. The judiciary’s reliance on expert witnesses in cases like these acknowledges the risks of misrecognition and at least attempts to solve to problems presented by the limited time and resources judges can devote to learning about each petitioning group. But this reliance has significant problems.

### 6.4 Expert Testimony and the Problems with Translation

While expert testimony can provide judges some insight into the differing forms of life they are asked to judge, that insight is a limited one. Peter Winch’s writings on language and cultural meaning help explain the limits of this form of translation.\footnote{Winch, 1972} 25-26. Many interpreters draw a line between the Wittgenstein of \cite{Wittgenstein, 2001} and the Wittgenstein of \cite{Wittgenstein, 1958}, arguing that the latter book essentially aims to refute his former book. See \cite{Pitkin, 1972}; \cite{Cavell, 1979}; \cite{Kripke, 1982}; and, \cite{Lima and Strong, 2006} for more on Wittgenstein and political theory.
part from their speaker’s lived context. Without understanding the underlying grammar of a language game, translators may misunderstand what a particular language game or utterance does in a cultural context. Understanding this underlying grammar is necessary to understand in order to fully understand another culture’s way of life.\(^\text{35}\)

Winch frames this argument through a response to E. E. Evans-Pritchard’s rejection of the Azande belief system.\(^\text{36}\) Members of the Zande culture, for example, believe in a form of magic MacIntyre rejects as unscientific. Under this system of belief, both humans and witches, who are physically indistinguishable from humans, inhabit the world. Witches possess a magical power, enabling them to cause mischief for the humans among whom they live. Magical influence can be detected by the Azande through a number of different oracles; the power of oracles to detect witchcraft can, however, be diminished by the influence of witches, and so witchcraft is frequently claimed to exist \textit{ex post facto}, as a way of explaining both mischievous action and the failure of an oracle to confirm the presence of witchcraft. According to Evans-Pritchard, this belief, and its retrospective emphasis, is tautological; the confirmatory procedures do not correspond to a scientific procedure for testing a hypothesis. The tautological nature of these tests leads Evans-Pritchard to reject them: according to Evans-Pritchard, “the European is right and the Zande wrong.”\(^\text{37}\)

Winch accepts Evans-Pritchard’s first claim, that the Zande belief system is unscientific, but not the second; for Winch, evaluating the unscientific Zande belief system misunderstands the relationship between the rules of their language game

\[^{35}\text{Winch, 1972}\] 45
\[^{36}\text{Winch, 1972}\] 8. See \[^{37}\text{Evans-Pritchard, 1937}\].
\[^{37}\text{Winch, 1972}\] 22
The Zande belief system is rooted in a largely alien form of life in which the tautological basis of oracles is specifically functional – important elements of Zande culture rely on the very fallibility of oracles which Evans-Pritchard identifies as its failure. This functionality leads Winch to draw on Wittgenstein’s philosophical investigation of the incommensurability of languages and ways of life.

Winch identifies a parallel between Evans-Pritchard’s attempt to understand the Zande culture and Wittgenstein’s rejection of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in his later *Philosophical Investigations*. Evans-Pritchard joins Wittgenstein’s claim in the *Tractatus* that language forms the limits of a speaker’s understanding and limits the ability of a speaker to be skeptical about certain features of their own experiences by obscuring the critical stance from which that skepticism could be borne. Thus, the Azande are capable of maintaining a culture dependent on an incorrect belief in witchcraft.

Against this, Winch turns to Wittgenstein’s claim in the *Philosophical Investigations* that the Western and Zande systems of belief are different, but that the fact of difference itself discounts an ability for one belief system to judge the correctness of the other. Judgments like this are possible only within cultural systems of belief, not between them. The standard invoked by Evans-Pritchard (and later in Winch’s article, Alsadair MacIntyre, where Winch draws on [MacIntyre, 1964]) in order to judge cultures – rationality – is, according to Winch’s interpretation of Wittgenstein, as deeply embedded in Western ways of life as the Zande belief in witchcraft is in the Zande way of life. We can criticize Zande beliefs on the grounds that they are irrational, but only to fellow cultural members who already recognize rationality as legitimate grounds for judgment; moreover, the Zande could

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[Winch, 1972] 23
equally well judge Western skepticism of witchcraft to be naïve, but only to other Azande.\textsuperscript{39}

Winch’s point in criticizing Evans-Pritchard is that attempting to translate the beliefs of one cultural way of life into the language of another is a risky endeavor because the moving concepts from one cultural context to another obscures the grounds on which those concepts could be judged. Rather than attempting these risky translations, Winch advocates something that sounds to me much like Taylor’s call for a fusion of horizons:

“We must somehow bring S’s conception of intelligibility (b) into (intelligible!) relation with our own conception of intelligibility (a). That is, we have to create a new unity for the concept of intelligibility, having a certain relation to our old one and perhaps requiring a considerable realignment of our categories. We are not seeking a state in which things will appear to us just as they do to members of A, and perhaps such a state is unattainable anyway. But we are seeking a way of looking at things which goes beyond our previous way of looking at things which goes beyond our previous way in that it has in some way taken account of and incorporated the other way that members of S have of looking at things.”\textsuperscript{40}  

I not only agree with Winch here, but seek to go further: incorporating Lev Vygotsky’s model of learning through a zone of proximal development offers at least the possibility of members of one culture seeing things just as members of another culture do, at least insofar as members of a given culture see things the same way themselves.\textsuperscript{41} While Winch correctly identifies the problems with translation – that moving concepts out of their cultural context into another creates a

\textsuperscript{39}[Winch, 1972] 25-26
\textsuperscript{40}[Winch, 1972] 33. $S$ here is a generic other culture.
\textsuperscript{41} In this, I agree broadly with [Strong, 1990] and his criticism of Winch noted in footnote nineteen, 180. This criticism, however, could be more sympathetic to Winch’s claims that, “I do not want to say that we are quite powerless to find ways of thinking in our own society that will help us to see the Zande institution in a clearer light. I only think that the direction in which we should look is quite different from what MacIntyre suggests.” (38)
problem in evaluating those concepts – he overstates the difficulty of cross-cultural understanding.

As I have argued previously, modeling cultural systems of values on Wittgenstein’s understanding of language opens up the prospect of learning another culture’s values in the same way that we learn languages. Systems of cultural values are no more closed off to members of other cultures than English is closed off to French speakers. Moreover, while the field of second language acquisition is a relatively young one, the bulk of research suggests that a second language diverges very quickly in the learning process from the first language. English speakers learn French in the same way German speakers do. Thus, in learning the Zande language, broadly understood to encompass their strong evaluations, I am able to effectively put my existing language aside long enough to learn theirs; I can learn the Zande language, rather than just a version of the Zande language constructed by my existing Western language.

The type of translations offered by expert witnesses do not move the judges further towards the type of intelligible relation Winch identifies as a precondition for cross-cultural judgment. Judges are left with the same conceptions of intelligibility they began the case with – conceptions of intelligibility that will, at least in some cases, misrecognize the petitioning culture’s particular standards of intelligibility. This misrecognition risks damaging the ability of members of

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42 Second language acquisition does differ from first language acquisition in that a student of a new language has some idea of what a language is when they learn their second language, unlike a student learning their first language. There is a considerable literature dealing with the seeming impossibility of learning a first language. See [Cavell, 1979], especially Chapter Seven.

43 [Taylor, 1989]

44 I will draw the implications of this out at greater length in the following chapter by discussing the way this possibility undermines the position reflected by [Young, 1997] that the powerful cannot access the viewpoint of the powerless, because they instead construct anima of the powerless, based on their prior beliefs, in their mind, and come to inhabit those instead; thus, for Young, the powerful only ever see from their own eyes, occasionally misattributing those eyes to others.
the petitioning culture to act meaningfully in the world around them. Are these expert witnesses better than nothing? Certainly. But they fail to prevent misrecognition by decontextualizing elements of the petitioning culture. While the expert witnesses may not misunderstand the petitioning culture, the difficulties in translation at least run serious risk of the judges relying on the testimony of expert witnesses to misunderstand the petitioning culture.

This misunderstanding is why I look to the proposal discussed in footnote three of the majority opinion, rather than accepting the accommodation offered in the majority decision. Because of the superintendent’s role as a local official, he is in a better position to fuse his horizons with Amish horizons; while the superintendent relies on a problematic claim to deny the accommodation, he is a local official, closer to the petitioning group, and therefore in a better position to adjudicate the claim for accommodation than the court. While the court grants the accommodation, it does so on a problematic basis – the testimony of expert witnesses. Translators of cultural values may be able to communicate some of the broad trends in another culture’s set of values, but will lack the nuance necessary for the fusion of horizons that Taylor argues anchors the cross-cultural judgment. Instead of fusing its horizons with Amish horizons, the ruling majority in the Yoder case ruled on the basis of Amish horizons filtered through its own horizons and conceptual categories. Because of the court’s necessary reliance on expert testimony, it is an inappropriate vehicle through which to adjudicate these claims for accommodation.

A preferable vehicle is the one the Amish parents attempted to engage – local officials. Local officials, in this case the school superintendent, can engage in the fusion of horizons Taylor calls for as the legitimate grounding of judgment across cultural lines, because they are in a position to enter in the conversations with the
Amish necessary to open up a zone of proximal development. Opening up a zone of proximal development allows the local officials to learn the moral grammar of the culture petitioning for accommodation, in this case the Amish parents. This is why decisions on accommodation should be made at a relatively local level. It is only local officials who have the time and opportunity to engage in the fusion of horizons necessary to validate a judgment regarding the worth of another culture. Vygotsky’s model of learning helps explain why.

As I have argued earlier, the fusion of horizons that Taylor calls for as a precondition for judgment takes place through a zone of proximal development. Rather than denying the compromise plan on the problematic basis of non-neutrality in education, that superintendent could have opened up a zone of proximal development with the Amish in order to learn their moral grammar. Such an education would have given the superintendent sufficient access to Amish values to ground his judgments regarding the relative worth of Amish culture in a fused set of horizons, rather than either his own values, which deny the importance of many core Amish values, or the Amish values themselves, which would render the necessity of judgment moot. What would this look like?

The zone of proximal development operates as outlined in the previous chapter: dialogues between a student and teacher are gradually internalized, first as externalized dialogues in which the student repeats both side of the dialogue as a way of using external speech to coordinate her or his thought, and then second as increasingly abbreviated internal speech which becomes the basis on which the local official can think.45 At this point, the student can accomplish more on the task in question than she or he could originally, and has increased her or his

45I clarify the relationship between thought and inner speech in the preceding chapter – thought and inner speech are distinct planes, but thought finds itself in inner speech.
mastery. As the local authority increases her or his mastery over the petitioning group’s moral grammar, he or she becomes increasingly able to take on the perspective of that group, giving her or him access to the group’s cultural values. This access serves to ground her or his judgments. By grounding this judgment in a fused set of horizons, aware of the values on which the petitioning group bases its request for accommodation, the local official can adjudicate the request on a basis which recognizes the values of the petitioning group. This both legitimates the judgment itself, and also allows the group to advance the petition on the terms of its own moral horizon, rather than forcing it to adopt the conceptual language of the majority group.

In this case, the superintendent could engage in dialog with the Amish parents with the goal of understanding Amish values; the obvious task for mutual engagement would be the development of an accommodating policy for the Amish students in question. The superintendent would need to approach the dialog as a student, seeking to learn Amish values.

Importantly, grounding judgment of claims for accommodation in a fusion of horizons does not necessitate granting the petition. Taylor’s purpose in advocating the need for recognition in judgment is to ground the judgment in an understanding of the values of the group petitioning for accommodation, but not solely in that group’s values. A judge who has fused their horizons with another group’s horizons may understand the values at stake but still reject those values as insufficient to necessitate the accommodation requested. Fusing horizons does not dictate any particular judgment – it dictates a stance the judge must adopt to ground their...

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46 [Vygotsky, 1978] 56
47 See [Tappan, 1997], [Tappan, 1998], and [Tappan, 2000].
48 I will argue below that the courts do have a role in adjudicating whether or not the local officials have actually gone through the fusion of horizons.
judgment (and, as I argue, a set of dialogical practices necessary to adopt that stance). Adopting this stance, through dialogs with the petitioning groups, with the goal of understanding their values, occurs before developing the policy itself; in this case, the superintendent would have to achieve a certain level of mastery of Amish values, as a sign that he or she had, in fact, fused cultural horizons with those of the Amish.

While the judiciary is not in a position to fuse its horizons with the wide variety of groups who may advance claims for accommodation, it may be able to adjudicate the extent to which a local official has or has not fused their horizon with that of the petitioning group. This is the role the judiciary can play in the process of developing accommodating policies: adjudicating whether or not the local official has or has not gone through the process of fusing horizons with the petitioning group.

This introduces an obvious political problem. Groups denied accommodations may claim that the official failed to fuse horizons regardless of whether he or she in fact did, simply as a way of keeping alive their petition for accommodation. The rejection of the local authority could become a political tactic in this way. This need not come solely from a group’s disingenuousness, either; a group may think the accommodation so obvious from their standpoint that a rejection of it could only come from a stance other than its own. A local official who rejects the petition for accommodation, in this view, must do so only because they have failed to recognize the petitioning group’s values.

To avoid this, I think it is reasonable to ask the group to authorize a given official as ready to render their judgment prior to the judgment actually being rendered. That is to say, taking the Yoder case as an example, before the superintendent actually gave his judgment of the petition for accommodation, the Amish
parents either accepted or rejected the superintendent as having fused their horizon with the Amish horizon. While the courts have specific trouble fusing their horizons with those of petitioning groups, they can serve as the arena in which to address disputes over the local officials prior to the official rendering judgment; the Amish rejection can occur through the legal system.

Determining the level of mastery presents some challenges, but keeping the linguistic nature of cultural horizons in mind provides the courts some initial guidance. Much like a language, understanding cultural horizons is best understood operating on a continuum rather than through discrete categories. One understands more or less of another culture’s value systems, just as one is more or less competent in a language. This is because cultural value systems are bound up in the way a culture uses words. A speaker becomes increasingly competent at effectively using words to accomplish tasks, and in doing so, signals their increasing mastery of the language; someone learning a different culture’s values becomes increasingly competent at navigating the values and meanings a culture assigns to objects and choices, and in doing so, signals their increasing mastery of the values. The connection between language and systems of values, which Taylor articulates, suggests an interesting way to evaluate success in the fusion of horizons; since fusing horizons is like learning a language, the same criteria can be used for each. Thus I turn to language mastery to understand understanding values.

Broadly speaking, there are two important criteria for language mastery: understanding it, and speaking it. Each criterion is worth complicating just a bit; while our commonsense notions of understanding and speaking roughly correspond to the criteria of language mastery, there are some gaps to note.\footnote{I take the below to be a more specific, language-oriented version of [Taylor, 1985b] 17 and 123-126.} First, un-
derstanding here really means comprehension. No one could really be said to understand a language unless they were able to comprehend statements made in it. Of course, not all statements need to be comprehensible in order to indicate mastery. Most languages contain at least some words that the majority of speakers would fail to understand. Words or turns of phrase may be arcane, technical, or out-of-date. Given this, creating an objective standard of mastery would end up as an exercise in futility; any standard created outside of actual language usage would likely end up misidentifying some speakers as masters when they were not, and leaving some speakers out who actually would be considered masters of the language by other speakers. This last point leads to what ought to be the standard of language mastery — if acknowledged speakers take the student to have mastered comprehension, then their judgment ought be respected. This criterion reflects the lived nature of systems of language.\footnote{Taylor, 1985b: 9-11} Thus, shifting back towards defining successful fusion of horizons, a student can be said to understand claims given on the basis of the other set of cultural values when members of that culture recognize him or her as such.

When a student has mastered speaking in a new language is harder to judge. A tourist who can successfully participate in conversations only be by constant reference to their her phrasebook could not be said to have mastered the language. And the problem is less the physicality of the phrasebook than it is the tourist’s inability to speak a phrase that does not appear in the phrasebook. Remember, given Vygotsky’s model of the zone of proximal development, the fact that a speaker makes referent to prior conversations does not indicate a lack of mastery, since someone who has mastered a skill is still drawing on their previous experience and learning in order to execute the skill. However, production by someone who
has mastered a language should not simply be reproduction. Novel production is an intuitively plausible bar to set for mastery.\textsuperscript{51} Novel production demands that someone who has mastered a language understands the underlying grammar of a language. This underlying grammar is more important to mastering a language than most elements of vocabulary; indeed, when Taylor writes about cultural horizons’ relationship to language, he uses the phrase ‘grammar,’ suggesting that he identifies the horizon itself less with the particular terms that make it up, and more with the general rules and themes that organize it.\textsuperscript{52} Much like comprehension, acknowledged masters of a language will best judge novel production. Once speakers of a language recognize a student as capable of novel production, those around the student should share in that recognition.

A citizen who wants to fuse their horizons with that of another culture will have succeeded once members of that other culture recognize his or her ability both to understand that culture’s ethical claims and to formulate new ethical claims or arguments on the basis of that other culture’s moral horizon or ethical framework. Rather than developing policies of accommodation without going through a fusion of horizons, the judicial system should instead concentrate on locating and fostering individual recognized in this way. Judges, especially in the federal system, the likely venue for these cases, are in a deeply problematic position to go through the fusion of horizons themselves. Too many different groups exist within each federal court’s jurisdiction for the judges to effectively respond to each different culture’s claim for recognition. The resources, especially time, are simply not available.

Thus, I return to my earlier advocacy of an increase in local control. Local officials are in the best position to fuse their horizons with those of the minority

\textsuperscript{51} I draw here again on [Searle, 1980]
\textsuperscript{52}[Taylor, 1985a]
groups living in their district. Local school officials can, by entering into a zone of proximal development with petitioning group members, develop an understanding of the other culture at issue, and develop a policy from that standpoint which both recognizes the cultural distinctiveness and keeps the demands of the liberal state in mind. The courts do still have a role: the courts can operate as the arena in which the conditions for judgment are contested. If the Amish, for example, do not believe the school superintendent has fused his or her horizons with theirs, they can petition the court for mediation or shifting the authority to develop the relevant policies to someone else who they recognize as, so to speak, a fluent speaker of Amish norms.

In this way, local control can be expanded while moderating against the risks that local control entails. Minority groups maintain significant control, effected through the legal system, over which local official develops relevant policy, but not over policies themselves. By conceptualizing the fusion of horizons as learning a language, the courts have a concrete basis for evaluating minority group claims regarding cultural fluency: local officials authorized to develop policies will be able to both understand a minority group’s ethical claims, and make novel ethical claims comprehensible by the ethical group in question. The fact that this basis is always contestable is a virtue, rather than a vice; the constancy of its contestability keeps claims to understand political rather than procedural. This politicization of understanding prevents the depoliticization of these types of policies that some writers identify as a problem endemic to liberal modes of cultural toleration.

53 These risks are exemplified by Virginia’s policy of ‘massive resistance’ to the Brown v. Board of Education decision.
6.5 Re-examining Mozert

I want to move now to a re-examination of the Mozert decision, emphasizing Romand Coles’s recent work on how the case frames his criticisms of liberal toleration. I want to look to Coles’s work because it is compelling, engaging work, written from a standpoint I find appealing, and advocating policy changes that are broadly similar to mine, but is, in the end, too dismissive of the complexities of liberal thought to ground a fully compelling alternative; while Coles is transparent about the political risks his democratic policies entail, these risks, especially in the arena bounded by the Yoder and Mozert cases, are too risky.

While I share his criticisms of much existing liberal theory, I believe that Taylor’s form of liberalism can reply to the lack Coles and I see in the bulk of liberal theory. Rather than turning to democratic theory as a way of responding to the limitations of liberal theory, as Coles does, I believe that liberalism can be reformed along the lines Taylor has described; this Taylorian reformulation of liberal toleration improves on earlier, more disengaged forms of liberal toleration by highlighting the importance of interaction between citizens of different cultural backgrounds. Moreover, remaining rooted in a liberal theory cognizant of the need for individual rights helps moderate the risks inherent in local control.

While recent authors grappling with the limits of liberal toleration have increasingly acknowledged the importance of the Mozert decision, most political theorists are more familiar with the Yoder case, and I therefore briefly lay out the facts of the Mozert case before proceeding.54

In 1983, Vicki Frost, a self-professed born-again Christian mother of four living in Mozert County in Tennessee, happened to read a story out of her daughter’s sixth

54 The following section summarizes the facts of Mozert v. Hawkins City Board of Education 827 F.2d.
grade reader. The story, “A Visit to Mars,” described a situation involving mental telepathy. This disturbed her. The idea of telepathy, she would testify later, went against her religious beliefs. For her, telepathy fell into the same broad category as occultism, Satanism, secular humanism, and futuristic supernaturalism; all of these themes, for Mrs. Frost, were unified by their rejection of the Christian Bible. Upset, she went to the school principal to have her children exempted. After talking, they reached an agreement, whereby the Frost children worked from an older set of textbooks, which their mother found less objectionable.

But later that year, the Mozert City school board unanimously voted to require all children in first through eighth grade to follow the curriculum outlined by the Holt series, from which Mrs. Frost’s daughter’s book had come. She was told that the curriculum was necessary to teach children what they called critical reading. Critical reading was a combination of basic reading skills along with logic and rhetoric; its goal was the “development of higher order cognitive skills that enable students to evaluate the material they read, to contrast the ideas presented, and to understand complex characters that appear in reading material.”

On December second, Vicki Frost, along with thirteen other parents, sued the school board.

They based their case on the First Amendment’s Free Exercise Clause, bolstered by the Yoder precedent. The readings, they argued, substantially burdened their sincere religious beliefs, because they presented alternatives to the Christian Bible without informing the reader that these alternatives were wrong. They had the right, they argued, to raise their children in their religious belief, which held that the Christian Bible was the totality of truth. They were forced, by the choice of reading material, to give up their right to a free public education. They asked the judge for both an exemption from the Holt series, as well as damages to cover the

55 827 F.2d 1061
costs they incurred in sending their children to private alternatives.

The District Court found in their favor. It enjoined the school board from requiring the students at issue to read the Holt, and mandated that the children be excused during that time. The opinion held that there was a compelling state interest in educating its future citizens, but that the school board did not have to further that interest through a single line of books. Children could be provided with alternative readings that accommodated the religious beliefs of the parents without disrupting the educational mission of the school. The district appealed, and on August Twenty-Fourth, Justice Lively rendered his verdict.

Justice Lively’s opinion reversed the lower court’s ruling, finding instead that the Board of Education had acted properly in requiring the Holt series for its children; his opinion centered on whether or not exposure to alternative ideas themselves burdened parents’ ability to raise their children in their own religion. Drawing on three previous Supreme Court cases, he argued that exposure did not itself constitute an unconstitutional burden on the students’ Free Exercise rights.

Romand Coles’s criticism of the bulk of liberal writings on the Yoder and Mozert cases is, I think, largely on point; indeed, I take my earlier chapter criticizing Rawls to operate in much the same spirit as Coles’s criticisms of political liberals on the one hand, and liberal pluralists on the other. The essence of Coles’s criticism of the former group’s support of the Mozert decision stems from their embrace of Justice Lively’s claim that “the readers ‘appear to us to contain no religious or anti-religious messages’.” Lively’s articulation of the standpoint from which the

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56 827 F.2d 1070-1071
58 Coles here includes [Macedo, 1995], [Macedo, 1996], and [Gutmann and Thompson, 1996]. Obviously, I would include [Rawls, 1993] in this category as well.
60 [Coles, 2005] 244, quoting 827 F.2d 1069, emphasis added by Coles.
readers have no apparent religious or secular message rests on the same theoretical foundation that Gutmann, Macedo, and Thompson’s defense of the decision do: that “groups of communities like the Mozart families stand outside the legitimate bounds of liberal citizenship and that hence their fellow citizens are under no obligation to consider their appeals with solicitude or to respond generously to their claims.”

There are two bounds to the liberal citizenship these thinkers articulate. The first is support for traditional liberal civic goals, such as toleration of diversity. To the extent that citizens, drawing on their cultural backgrounds, reject this civic goal, their rejection falls outside the bounds of reasonableness necessary to ensure rights for all. This reasonableness, according to its proponents, is a purely political reasonableness – liberal citizens must be willing to act to promote these civic goods, even if they privately disagree with them. These goods are civic goods because they can be held purely politically and publicly, and do not require private support or adherence. The second bound is that of reciprocity. Groups, in order to engage in, again, reasonable public life within a liberal regime, must be willing to articulate their claims for accommodation in reciprocal terms, such that their claims do not rest on anything particular about their own situation, but rather are claims abstracted away from their own situation and parsed in general terms. This bound maintains liberal neutrality, which itself, proponents claim, is necessary in order to prevent state favoritism which would allow for the arbitrary state action which liberalism is committed, fundamentally, to preventing.

Coles criticizes these bounds, arguing that “the notion of ‘public reason’ and its corresponding virtues are mightily contested in both theory and practice.”

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61[Coles, 2005] 246
63[Coles, 2005] 246 – especially footnote two.
move similar to the one I introduce in my earlier discussion of Rawls, Coles argues that the bounds articulated by political liberals are compelling only to citizens who already largely agree with them. In cases of deep diversity, where citizens disagree not just on policies but on fundamental question of political aims and values, political liberals cannot offer a compelling argument for their positions. The grounds of political liberalism, which take themselves to be neutral between cultural positions, are instead reflections of a particular liberal cultural position. Of course, liberal cultural members are as entitled to articulate a liberal political position that stems from cultural beliefs; it is, however, disingenuous for political liberals to claim legitimacy on the grounds of neutrality when that neutrality comes only after excluding all serious dissent. Against these problematic political liberal positions, Coles describes a modification, liberal pluralism, which he argues goes further, although not far enough.

Liberal pluralism articulates a core set of civic values, much like political liberalism, but structured around toleration and accommodation of groups, rather than around a contested notion of public reason; this position displaces the need for consensus on a controversial concept of public reason, and replaces it instead with a virtue of tolerating groups which, in its model of liberal democracy, are simply seeking the right to live as they desire. Thus, the parents in the Mozert case are presented through the lens of liberal pluralism in what Coles describes as a defensive posture. The parents are described as having no interest in converting the secular school officials to their own way of life or changing the essential terms of political debate in American life. Rather, they simply seek to carve out a space in which they can practice their religion on their own terms. According to the

64 ibid
65 [Coles, 2005] 247
tenets of liberal pluralism, they should have this right; it is good for citizens to be able to engage in their preferred mode of life, and it is bad for the state to be empowered to prevent citizens from practicing the ideas they leave the marketplace of ideas with.66

Coles attacks the idea that cultural minorities are best understood as defensive. Minority groups frequently take a more evangelical posture towards the majority culture in which they live. Misrecognizing this posture effectively defangs the threat minority cultural claims pose by depoliticizing the groups. While liberal pluralism practices a form of presumptive generosity, “it is less a political generosity than a depoliticized and a depoliticizing generosity. It is depoliticized in that it strongly resists the possibility of engaging in a politics that involves vulnerable contestability of its own positions...it is depoliticizing in that it descriptively converts political challenges into a diversity that would be at home within it.”67 Thus, as Coles points out, liberal pluralism centers around a process of misrecognition, of the type Taylor identifies as risking cultural members’ ability to act meaningfully in the world.

But while Coles’s diagnosis of the limitations of political liberalism and liberal pluralism is compelling, the solution he offers – a move towards what he terms, “a politics of receptive generosity”68 – entails both unexamined conceptual difficulties in translation, which Coles identifies as a primary element of his political model, and the assumption of unnecessary political risks. I want to address these problems separately, first dealing with the former, and then addressing the latter. The conceptual problems translation poses for Coles are broadly similar to the problems

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67[Coles, 2005] 249, author’s emphasis
68[Coles, 2005] 252. The term here is taken from Chapter Four of the same book, and his analysis of John Howard Yoder’s Christian model of worldly engagement.
in translation addressed above, and so that section largely recapitulates what I have already said regarding cross-cultural translation. The political problem, that of unnecessary risk, will reintroduce the liberal elements of Taylor’s model of cross-cultural understanding; while Taylor’s model of liberalism differs substantially from political liberalism and liberal pluralism, it does maintain the important liberal protection of a guaranteed basket of rights for all citizens, which helps to guard against the types of risk Coles is willing to assume.

By way of a good-faith measure with his reader, Coles acknowledges the fact that, in presenting the work of a Mennonite thinker, John Howard Yoder (not the Yoder of Wisconsin v. Yoder), as the basis for his model of political engagement, he must translate between a religious language and a secularized one. This translation is not simply a methodological problem in his work, though; rather, Coles treats the problem of translating Yoder into a comprehensible form as part of the problem that Yoder’s writings address substantively address:

Anyone familiar with Yoder’s writings will already observe the work of translation in my essay. This is, on Yoder’s terms and mine, what must occur in any particular encounter, and it opens up hopeful possibilities and risks. I have tried to avoid the latter and to pursue the former through a variety of strategies. I have tried to let ring throughout the very specific language of Jesus and Scripture that provides the root from which Yoder’s efforts grow and to which they always return. Simultaneously, I have entwined with these melodies contrapuntal phrasings that translate and develop it with terms drawn from the radical democratic struggles, theorizing, and concerns that I bring to the engagement. In translating and developing, I have attempted to let Yoder’s work inflect and transfigure the language closest to me with his meanings, and I know I have done the reverse as well—sometimes in ways that I do not know. By juxtaposing these two languages, neither uncontaminated by nor reducible to the other, I have tried to present some of what each might learn from the other. Each voice discovers a new yet strangely familiar sound."69

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69[Coles, 2005] 112-113
What Yoder opens up, in Coles’s view, is the political importance of not just translation but, at times, mistranslation. Cole’s goal here is less to understand Yoder’s view himself and more to use Yoder’s view to gain critical distance on his own views, in order to move to another stance, informed by both his own original (pre-Yoder) stance and what he takes to be Yoder’s stance. My phrasing in the previous sentence is intentional. Specifically because of the limits of translation that Coles acknowledges in the above passage, he cannot claim that the encounter between himself and Yoder moves him to a stance informed by both his previous stance and Yoder’s stance. This claim is closed off by his acknowledgement of the gaps in his translation of Yoder. What he understands Yoder to say is different from what Yoder understood himself to say, as Coles himself says.

Coles takes this mistranslation to be one of the primary benefits of his model of cross-cultural encounter. When two cultures encounter one another, they will, to the extent of their differences, have difficulty understanding one another’s ethical grammar. In order to engage in politics with one another, they must attempt to translate one another’s ethical grammar into categories familiar to themselves. This translation is always imperfect. This imperfection, from Coles’s point of view, provides the benefit of the encounter.\(^7\) The encounter, and the subsequent attempt at translation, opens up a field of possibilities for each group in which to imagine different possibilities of ethical grammar, of ways of life. While this is an admirable goal, it also ignores the reality of power differences in formulating educational policy. The state, as an institution, seems unlikely to engage in the kind of unsettling discourse Coles advocates as a solution to the tensions in deeply diverse states. Indeed, when Coles discusses the political theory literature’s treatment of the Mozart case, he shifts his attention away from the state, and

\(^7\)[Coles, 2005] 125
towards the possibilities open to groups organizing politically around the issues of state control and religious accommodation.\textsuperscript{71}

Shifting attention away from the state allows Coles to depoliticize, and therefore hide the risks of, his own misrecognition of minority groups. As Cole’s acknowledges, the translation between groups is always imperfect. The grammar used by a given group to discuss and acknowledge meaningful issues is intimately tied to that group’s particular way of life. To the extent that way of life differs between groups – to the extent meaningful cultural practices differ between groups – then the categories translated from one language to another will differ. Shoehorning concepts into a conceptual vocabulary different from the one in which they are meaningful will necessarily shift, if not eliminate, their meaning. While this type of misrecognition may be beneficial between individual citizens in situations of relative power equality, this misrecognition is precisely what Taylor identifies as problematic when it occurs between citizens of vastly differing power, or between individual citizens and the vastly more-powerful state. So while Coles provides a compelling model of how equal citizens could interact with one another, he does not address the limits of this model; because of its greater relative power, the state cannot safely take on this risks of mistranslation – and therefore misrecognition – run under Coles’s model.

6.6 Conclusion

Shifting attention away from the relationship between the state and its citizens and towards citizens and one another obscures the political cost of this misrecognition. Coles’s model of democratic education, “affirm[s] educational practices that

\textsuperscript{71}[Coles, 2005] 254
engender the arts of patience, forbearance, vulnerable dialogical negotiation, receptive generosity toward others who are different, capacities to tolerate and even acquire a taste for restrained agonism, and so forth. Yet though this position can should be proclaimed, its substance requires that it also be made manifest (perhaps by junior high school) in texts that discuss ethical-political life from a wide variety of contending positions, including many that may be antagonistic toward the ethical postures we articulate in this chapter and wish to see strongly cultivated in educational practices. But what happens when a student’s culture is misrepresented in these texts?

Taylor helps explain the risks this type of policy entails. The fact of mistranslation ensures that mistranslation will, at least at times, occur. This mistranslation causes few problems in situations of relative power equality, as in the multidenominational work groups Coles works with. But when the state engages in this type of project, the possibility arises that the mistranslation could interfere with the ability of minority cultural members to maintain their ethical grammar and moral frameworks that allow them to act meaningfully in the world. While not all human interactions are determined simply by power relations and disparities, power is an important element in interactions between citizens and the state; ignoring power does not make it go away, so much as obscure its operation. Power seems to be roughly equal in the context Coles emphasizes – interfaith political working groups. I take his lack of interest in power to limit the applicability of his model to those contexts he is primarily interested in, rather than undermining

\[\text{[Coles, 2005] 258. Note here that Coles advocates, in practice, a strategy I understand to be largely similar to the educational practices Galston advocates. Not to put too fine a point on it, but Coles does not, so far as I can see, meaningfully distinguish his policies from the policies he criticizes. His lack of focus on the actual mechanics of education – his advocacy of texts as teaching tools in junior high school, for example, indicates a rather profound failure to remember the adolescent mindset – limits his analysis in this chapter significantly. For my purposes, this is a secondary issue, however.}\]
his whole model of presumptive generosity and acceptance of political risk and bounded agonism. Which is to say, the fact that his model cannot, in the end, help address the preconditions for political judgment of minority cultures’ values should not lead to throwing the baby out with the bathwater. It is, however, too accepting of political risk.

In contrast, Taylorian liberalism, fleshed out through Vygotsky’s psychological model, moderates that risk by recognizing the power disparity between citizens and the state and ensuring at least some minimal rights for minority groups. Given the irreducible reality of that power disparity – could a state remain a state if radically disempowered? – Taylor takes the responsibility of that power head on. Citizens in a liberal polity, whether in a mainstream or a minority culture, are all due a basket of goods that allows them, at least largely, to live lives of their own choosing. For those citizens whose cultural framework corresponds least well to the cultural framework in which the state is constituted, the possibility of accommodation must always remain politically open, even if the state at any given point does not grant the accommodation itself. Judgment regarding the accommodation, in order to avoid misrecognizing the basis of request, must come from a party who has fused their horizons with the petitioning group; this helps guard against the sort of internal imperialism that Rawls and other theorists concerned with public reason tend to advocate, at least at the fringes.

This fusion of horizons requires learning another language and moral grammar. Thus, fusing one’s horizon with another culture’s happens in the same way one learns another language. Humans acquire language through concrete verbal interactions, which are gradually internalized. Those gradually-internalized dialogues eventually take the form of thought. At the point when a person can both comprehend and make novel claims on the basis of the other cultural framework,
they have mastered that language and fused their horizon. They are then able to judge the claim for cultural accommodation in a way that recognizes the values at stakes for both the dominant liberal culture and the minority petitioning culture. That judgment is always idiosyncratic to the cultures and state policies involved, and should always remain open to political challenge. Moreover, the concreteness of the required interactions puts local officials in the best position to actually engage in the necessary practices of the fusion of horizons. Distant officials, such as the federal court are, however, important as providing a check on the possible reluctance of local officials to engage in the necessary practices; while distant officials should not themselves formulate or judge accommodating policies, they are in a position to adjudicate whether the local authority empowered to judge is acknowledged as a (relatively) fluent speaker of the language in question.

Coles’s provocative model opens up a set of concerns regarding the radical democracy literature I address in the next chapter. The policies I advocate, coming out of Taylor’s form of liberalism, may seem, at first blush, similar to policies advocated by deliberative democrats. In the next chapter, I take up this possibility, and outline what I take my model of cross-cultural judgment contributes to the debate over Hannah Arendt’s conception of enlarged mentality, and the debate between Arendt and Ralph Ellison over the possibility of rooting judgment in an enlarged mentality.
7

Speaking After Little Rock

7.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, I argued that Taylor’s model of judgment, when fleshed out with Vygotsky’s psychology, provided a set of policy proposals preferable to those advanced by Romand Coles’s model of agonistic democracy. The lynchpin of that argument was that Coles’s model invited unnecessary risk, by failing to recognize the real power differences between citizens. Thus, whatever virtues Coles’s model has, and I do think it has some, the risk his vision of agonistic democracy ran of allowing, and at times even legitimating, oppressive outcomes was too high. That chapter did not identify the specific risks run, leaving it to the reader’s intuition and a reference to Taylor’s highly-formal model of misrecognition.

In this chapter, I want to flesh out the risks of misrecognition more concretely through an examination of misrecognition in the work of another agonistic democrat: Hannah Arendt. Hannah Arendt’s model of judgment is itself worth comparing to the model this dissertation has developed,¹ but at least as interesting is

¹Especially given the possible connection between its implications and the discursive elements implicit in Taylor’s. See [Benhabib, 1988] for more on this connection.
her application of that model to public education in her 1959 essay, “Reflections on Little Rock.” This widely-criticized essay argued that the parents of African-American schoolchildren were misusing their children for political ends; to arrive at this conclusion, Arendt engages in an attempt to ‘go visiting’ in order to ground her political judgment of the parents’ actions. While Arendt’s argument has been broadly criticized, in this chapter, I will concentrate on the criticism Arendt took most seriously – Ralph Ellison’s. Ellison argued that Arendt simply misunderstood the values at stake, and that in doing so, she exposed the weakness of her model of judgment.

This chapter moves in four primary sections. In the first, I unpack Arendt’s controversial essay on Little Rock and how her judgment there stems necessarily from her use of Kantian aesthetic judgment as a ground for her political judgment. This section contains an extended examination of the role of Kant in Arendt’s model of political judgment. Second, I turn to Ellison’s judgment of Arendt’s essay, and her response to it. Ellison identifies a cultural value – sacrifice – which Arendt admittedly fails to appreciate, and which serves to explain the action of the parents who sent their children to school in Little Rock. Following this, I examine the linguistic underpinnings of both modes of judgment, drawing on a recent article by Meili Steele, and argue that understanding the differences in how Arendt and Ellison judge the actions of parents in Little Rock can be understood through the

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2Reprinted in [Arendt, 2003].
3The concept of “going visiting,” is a central element of Arendt’s model of judgment, which I will address at considerably greater length in the following section. See [Benhabib, 1988] and [Disch, 1993] for introductory comments on this concept.
4[Young-Bruehl, 1984] 318
5See [Ellison, 1964]). See also [Young-Bruehl, 1984] and her discussion of Arendt’s replies to other critics of her Little Rock essay on page 316.
6Ellison, 1964] and [Warren, 1965]
7[Warren, 1965] 343
different ways they model language and its relationship to selfhood and judgment.\textsuperscript{8} Fourth, I try to work out how my model of liberal judgment and interpretation of Taylor through Vygotsky offers more promise than either Arendt’s model or Ellison’s.

\section*{7.2 Judging Little Rock}

“Reflections on Little Rock” was one of Arendt’s most contentious pieces of writing.\textsuperscript{9} Critics concentrated on Arendt’s alignment with a politics they understood as retrograde, exclusionary, denying of the pluralism which Arendt’s other work seemed determined to protect, and deriving from aristocratic elements best done away with in contemporary America.\textsuperscript{10}

Arendt begins her reflection by referencing the source of her discontent: a newspaper picture of an African-American student being harassed by a mob of white students. What, Arendt asks, could justify exposing a child to this level of humiliation? Arendt’s concern here is less with the immediate risk of danger, but rather with the potential for damaging the child’s pride.\textsuperscript{11} By “pride,” here, Arendt does not refer to a personal pride in accomplishment, but rather a sense of belonging. This second definition of pride risks being damaged in the photographed child not by the persecution itself, but rather by the content of the persecution: a sense that the child does not belong, and is being pushed away. As Arendt says, “psychologically, the situation of being unwanted (a typical social predicament) is more difficult to bear than outright persecution (a political predicament).”\textsuperscript{12}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{8}This occurs largely through a response to [Steele, 2002]
\textsuperscript{9}Awarded in no way by default; \textit{Eichmann in Jerusalem} was, at least in the popular press, attacked nearly on publication, and Arendt has garnered at least her share of academic critics.
\textsuperscript{10}See [Arendt, 1959] and [Young-Bruehl, 1984] 309
\textsuperscript{11}[Arendt, 2003] 193
\textsuperscript{12}ibid
here the parallel between Arendt’s sense of the stakes and the way Taylor defines the risks of misrecognition.\textsuperscript{13}

It quickly becomes clear that Arendt does not approve of the actions of the parents of the African-American schoolchildren affected by the ruling:

My first question was, what would I do if I were a Negro mother? The answer: under no circumstances would I expose my child to conditions which made it appear as though it wanted to push its way into a group where it was not wanted... Moreover, if I were a Negro I would feel that the very attempt to start desegregation in education and in schools had not only, and very unfairly, shifted the burden of responsibility from the shoulders of adults to those of children.\textsuperscript{14}

The frame Arendt invokes here is instructive: this essay is, I believe, an extended attempt to engage in political judgment.\textsuperscript{15} Arendt wants to judge the actions of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13}[Taylor, 1989]. See also [Fraser, 1997] for a rejection of Taylor’s psychological conception of misrecognition in favor of a structural one. This follows Axel Honneth’s reconceptualization of misrecognition along largely-distributive lines. As explained in the first of my earlier chapters on Taylor, I believe that the extension of misrecognition into questions of distribution is interesting, but am disheartened to see questions of distribution replace the psychological model Taylor develops; this replacement seems to me to be a reduction, rather than a respecification.
\item \textsuperscript{14}[Arendt, 2003] 193-194
\item \textsuperscript{15}There are two important barriers to this interpretation. First, the bulk of the essay moves into an exploration of the modern phenomenon of the social and its opposition to the political. Second, this essay preceded Arendt’s work on Kant by several years, raising the question of whether Arendt could have been engaging in an exercise the outlines of which she would articulate years later. In answering the first challenge, I think we have to understand the barrier between the political and the social in at least partially political terms, especially when examining a particular event such as this. Once a city is occupied by a national army on the grounds of national sovereignty, it is hard to see how the only issues involved is the social right to free association. Indeed, in “Reflections on Little Rock,” Arendt cedes the political nature of the fight when she criticizes the federal government for having acted against states’ rights; Arendt does not explicitly label this as political as the fight between different state apparati over sovereign authority could be nothing else. As to the second problem, of the fact that an example of political judgment precedes her model of political judgment, the model of political judgment she develops is based on reflective judgment, rather than determinative judgment – that it to say, judgment that moves from the particular to the general. Thus, it should not be surprising that she begins working out her model of political judgment in the same way, beginning with the specific case of Little Rock (and Eichmann) and moving later to the general model. Moreover, her criticism of the parents in Little Rock seems, at least so far as I can tell (and I see no rebuttal in the secondary literature) to conform to her commitment to imagination and going visiting which comprise a major part of her method of political judgment.
\end{itemize}
the parents in question.\textsuperscript{16} Therefore, before moving to Ellison’s criticism, it is worth briefly laying out Arendt’s general model of judgment; Ellison does not just disagree with the particular judgment Arendt come to, but also, at least implicitly, her method of judgment – that is, Ellison believes that Arendt cannot make a successful judgment, not just that she did not properly execute a workable model of judgment.

Since Arendt died before finishing the third volume of her \textit{Life of the Mind}, in which she intended to turn her attention from thinking and willing to judging, her model of judgment has had to be reconstructed from other sources, particularly her lectures on Kant’s political philosophy, especially Sections Thirty through Forty of Kant’s \textit{Critique of Judgment}.\textsuperscript{17} and so I begin there in the Kant, before moving on to Arendt’s interpretation.

Here, the “Deduction of Pure Aesthetical Judgments,”\textsuperscript{18} shows Kant wrestling with two peculiarities of aesthetic judgments, peculiarities which will later motivate Arendt to draw on Kant’s aesthetic, rather than political, judgment for her own work. The first is that an aesthetic judgment presents a subjective evaluation as if it were an objective evaluation: “The judgment of taste determines its object in respect of satisfaction (in its beauty) with an accompanying claim for the assent of everyone, just as if it were objective.”\textsuperscript{19} The second is that an aesthetic judgment cannot be determined simply \textit{a priori} from logical grounds: “The judgment of taste is not determinable simply \textit{a priori} from logical grounds: "The judgment of taste is not determinable by grounds of proof, just as if it were merely \textit{subjective}.”\textsuperscript{20}

Together, what these peculiarities mean is that aesthetic judgment is neither purely

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16}I am presuming, of course, that Arendt is interested in the mothers in their role as parents, rather than mothers to the exclusion of fathers.
\item \textsuperscript{17}[Arendt, 1982]. See also [Kant, 2005] as the primary source. See [Villa, 1992] and [Benhabib, 1988]
\item \textsuperscript{18}The qualifier ‘pure’ was added in the second edition.
\item \textsuperscript{19}[Kant, 2005] Section 32, p 92
\item \textsuperscript{20}[Kant, 2005] Section 33, 94
\end{itemize}
objective nor purely subjective. Aesthetic claims go beyond the purely personal, but not to the wholly universal.

This is partially resolved by Kant when he draws a distinction between judgments that apply known general principles to novel specific examples – determinative judgment – and judgments from known specific examples to novel general principles – reflective judgment.21 Aesthetic judgments are subjective insofar as they do not draw on known, provable, objective criteria for their validity;22 aesthetic judgments are reflective, rather than determinative judgments. They move from particular examples to general principles and back down to other particular examples.23 Aesthetic judgment’s status as reflective judgment helps explain the peculiar relationship aesthetic judgment has to objectivity and subjectivity. Aesthetic judgment cannot be wholly objective, because insofar as they are reflective rather than determinative, they do not stem from objectively knowable general principles. The reflective element of aesthetic judgment, in which the claimant moves from a particular example to a general principles, introduces an element of subjectivity, insofar as the general principle is one generated, rather than discovered, by the claimant. However, the general principles arrived at by the subjective aesthetic claim are themselves objective general principles. Aesthetic judgment here requires movement from the subjective to the objective. So the distinction between determinative and reflective judgment helps in part to explain the status of aesthetic judgment.24

This only partially addresses the problem, though. There remains the problem

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21 [Kant, 2005] Section 35, 96
22 The categorical imperative would be an example of an objective criterion in Kant.
23 Hence the “re” in reflection. The determinative judgment moves from specific example to other specific examples, mediated through the creation of a general principle.
24 “It is easy to see that judgments of taste are synthetical, because they go beyond the concept and even beyond the intuition of the Object, and add to that intuition as predicate something that is not a cognition, viz. a feeling of pleasure (or pain),” [Kant, 2005] Section 36, 98
of, “how is a judgment possible, in which merely from our own feelings of pleasure in an object, independent of its concept, we judge that this pleasure attaches to the representation of the same Object in every other subject, and that a priori without waiting for the accordance of others?”

This unique status, I must think, is what initially draws Arendt to aesthetic judgments as a grounds for her political judgments. Consider the contradictions in her desires for politics. Politics must be, for her, absolutely free if it is to remain political. This absolute freedom, however, must be bounded in some way; the politics that leads to totalitarianism, for example, must be avoided. Her discussions of the particular failings of totalitarian states give a shallow answer for how to navigate these contradictory political demands – that totalitarianism by its nature restricts the possibility of free political action – but nothing deeper or obviously applicable beyond the particular case of totalitarianism. Kant’s model of aesthetic judgment offers Arendt the possibility of a deeper answer; aesthetic claims look like political claims, insofar as they are neither wholly subjective nor wholly objective. They are both absolutely free, but bounded as well. But what bounds aesthetic judgment in Kant’s view?

The posited judgment of the community bounds aesthetic judgment. An aesthetic judgment is not a judgment regarding the pleasure an individual gains from an Object; this type of purely subjective judgment does not rise up to the level of an aesthetic judgment. “And so it is not the pleasure, but the universal validity

\[25\text{Kant, 2005} \text{ Section 36, 97-98}\]
\[26\text{See [Benhabib, 1988] for a take on the shift between Arendt’s understanding of her model of political judgment as purely political, and Benhabib’s contention that Arendtian citizens must bring moral consideration to bear, preferably through a discursive model of democracy. See [Villa, 1992] for a different take on this.}\]
\[27\text{See [Young-Bruehl, 1984] 292 and [Strong, 1990], 114. See also citeArendt99 and [Arendt, 1965] 225. Note a connection to determinism here.}\]
\[28\text{See [Arendt, 1973] and [Honig, 1993]}\]
of this pleasure, perceived as mentally bound up with the mere judgment upon an object, which is represented *a priori* in a judgment of taste as a universal rule for the Judgment and valid for everyone.” 29 An example of this would be, for example, preference for a particular piece of art. I like Picasso’s “Guernica,” but you do not. My preference for “Guernica” is not, in Kant’s model, an aesthetic judgment. However, were I to claim that “Guernica” is beautiful (rather than that I enjoy it), I am making an aesthetic claim, and must ground it in reflective judgment: I must articulate the features of the painting which are particular instantiations of generally valid, universal, and therefore objective, principles of taste.

Thus, judgment requires communicability. When I make an aesthetic judgment, I issue it publicly; the public nature of the judgment reflects Kant’s precision regarding what I am judging. Should I make the claim that “Guernica” is beautiful, I am not, strictly speaking, making a claim regarding the painting itself, but rather a claim that the particular pleasure I get from viewing the painting is a legitimate universal pleasure. 30 Thus, in order for this claim to be subject to the public verifiability of the universality of the pleasure, I must be able to communicate something about the pleasure I receive from the painting judged. What I communicate, according to Kant, is the pleasure I get from experiencing a pleasure I know to be pleasurable to others:

Pleasure in the Sublime in nature, regarded as a pleasure of rational contemplation, also makes claim to universal participation; but it presupposes, besides, a different feeling, viz. that of our supersensible destination, which, however obscurely, has a moral foundation. But that other men will take account of it, and will find a satisfaction in the consideration of the wild greatness of nature...I am not absolutely justified in supposing. Nevertheless, in consideration of the fact that

29 Kant, 2005] Section 37, 98
30 ibid. Note that Kant here is focused on aesthetic pleasure (and, in fact, specifically aesthetic from the sublime – a focus ignored in the larger literature).
on every suitable occasion regard should be had to these moral dispositions, I can impute such satisfaction to every man, but only by means of the moral law which on its side again is based on concepts of Reason. On the contrary, pleasure in the Beautiful is neither a pleasure of enjoyment nor of a law-abiding activity, nor even of rational contemplation in accordance with Ideas, but of mere reflection. Without having as rule any purpose or fundamental proposition, this pleasure accompanies the ordinary apprehension of an object by the Imagination, as faculty of intuition, in relation with the Understanding, as faculty of concepts, by means of a procedure of the Judgment which it must also exercise on behalf of the commonest experience... Therefore he who judges with taste...may impute to everyone subjective purposiveness, i.e. his satisfaction in the Object, and may assume his feeling to be universally communicable and that with the mediation of concepts.31

As an aid to this reflective judgment, Kant looks to common sense – or sensus communis – as a ground on which to base these aesthetic judgments. Common sense, “must include the Idea of a communal sense, i.e. of a faculty of judgment, which in its reflection takes account (a priori) of the mode of representation of all other men in thought.”32 This comparison is public, in a sense, even if performed privately by an individual, insofar as it “compare[s] its judgment with the collective Reason of humanity, and thus...escape[s] the illusion arising from the private condition that could be so easily taken for objective.”33 Taste differs here from understanding for Kant, insofar as the referent – the Object judged – is experienced without being mediated by a concept. Taste is the governing faculty, then, of reflexive judgment; understanding, the governing faculty of determinative judgment.34 Absent a common sense in which judgment is grounded, taste, and therefore aesthetic judgment, would be wholly subjective because it would be incommunicable. Since it is an unmediated representation, judges cannot rely on commonly-understood concepts

31[Kant, 2005] Section 39, 100-101
32[Kant, 2005] Section 40, 101. See also [Hinchman, 1984] and [Norris, 1996]
33[Kant, 2005] Section 40, 101-102
34ibid
through which to communicate their judgments, as they can in the case of understand- 
ing a mediated, conceptually-bounded Object.\textsuperscript{35} Because aesthetic judgment 
is reflective, and because the sensation that requires communication precedes (and, 
indeed, seems at least in Arendt to structure the creation of) the general prin-
ciples which then come to subsume the judgment, communication of the grounds of 
judgment must operate through something distinct from the objectively-provable 
concepts that govern understanding. Common sense is that distinct grounds.

Kant’s reliance on common sense provides a challenge in Arendt’s writing; 
after the rise of totalitarianism in Europe leading up to World War II, there is 
no longer a common sense on which political judgment can rest.\textsuperscript{36} Had common 
sense existed, European citizens would have been able to distinguish between good 
and evil, and rejected totalitarianism. Their failure to do so – the fact that many 
people embraced it – indicates that the common sense that Kant identifies as 
the grounding of aesthetic reflective judgment no longer holds sufficient sway for 
citizens to be trusted. Thus it would seem like post-World War II Europe would 
be unable to ground judgment, leaving political judgment purely subjective, with 
no objective character.

Arendt, however, sees a way out of this conundrum. Rather than abandon her 
inclusion of Kantian aesthetic judgment into her model of political judgment, 
Arendt instead develops a method by which the imagination can be trained to 
generate a new common sense. This training harnesses the creative powers of the 
imagination to posit the standpoint of different fellow-citizens, and, in Arendt’s 

\textsuperscript{35}Kant does maintain some relationship between Imagination and Understanding: intuitions, 
out of which come imaginative aesthetic judgments, rely on Understanding to associate the 
concepts created through reflective judgment with other, existing, provable concepts. In this 
way, aesthetic judgments become incorporated into Kant’s larger theory of thought. [Kant, 2005] 
Section 40, 103

\textsuperscript{36}[Arendt, 2005], especially “Understanding and Politics (The Difficulties of Understanding),” 
and “On the Nature of Totalitarianism: An Essay on Understanding”.
words, to “go visiting”\(^{37}\) to those other standpoints. As the imagination becomes increasingly proficient at this movement, and as the mind adopts more and more of the posited standpoints, the mentality exercising the imagination enlarges, leaving behind both its own and the visited particular prejudices, to move towards an Enlightened standpoint.

Because of the historical circumstances under which she writes, Arendt cannot ground that transcendence in the common sense that Kant has recourse to. The intrusion of totalitarianism has rendered common sense, at least in Europe, too risky and suspect.\(^{38}\) Common sense has failed in two ways. First, common sense failed to prevent the rise of totalitarianism in Europe. This symbolizes the failure of common sense; if common sense is secure enough to ground political judgment, it must demonstrate that it will not allow, for example, the Holocaust and the accompanying terrors of the National Socialist regime in Germany and the Fascist regime in Italy. Its failure to have done so renders it too risky on which to ground judgment.\(^{39}\) Second, even if Arendt has some reason to think that the rise of totalitarianism was a singular, irreplicable historical event, the fact of totalitarianism in Europe has destroyed whatever common sense there remained in the face of World War II. All that remains, as she says, is the language.\(^{40}\)

Thus, Arendt must look beyond the \textit{sensus communis} to ground the faculties of judgment she wants to draw out of Kant. She does this by emphasizing the role

\(^{37}\)[Disch, 1993]
\(^{38}\)[Arendt, 2005] 313-314
\(^{39}\)[Arendt, 2005] 356
\(^{40}\)[Arendt, 2005] 12-13. Of course, I think that this is a peculiar remark. I take it that what she means here is that all that remains is the tongue, e.g. French. To the extent that the tongue remains but the language fails to match up to the lived, common (which I mean in both senses of the word here) experiences of European citizens, then the language (grammar) might be lost while the language (tongue) remains. See George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language,” (1946) for a contemporaneous take on the ways World War II have affected the relationship between the words Europeans speak and the lives that they live.
of the imagination, and grounds political judgment not in common sense but in
enlarged mentality. The work of imaginatively going visiting to other viewpoints,
we might say, creates a new, limited common sense, sufficient, if accomplished
properly and with an eye towards Enlightenment, to ground political judgment
within a particular political community even after the horrors of the Holocaust
and the revelation of Eichmann’s particular brand of evil.\textsuperscript{41}

Her turn away from common sense as a ground for judgment leads her to the
cognitive faculty Kant identified most closely with aesthetic judgment and taste:
imagination. Imagination, according to Arendt, can be trained to grow beyond
the private prejudices of the imaginer by generating a vision of what alternative
standpoints might looks like, and then placing itself in them in order to gain a
different perspective on the judged object. In this way, judgment is grounded not
in a common sense that totalitarianism has rendered suspect, but rather in the
ability of the judge to transcend her or his particularity and generate a new sense,
made common insofar as any person whose imagination has been trained would
reach it through using the imagination to enlarge his or her mentality to encompass
other possible viewpoints.

Such judgment must liberate itself from the “subjective private con-
ditions,” that is, from the idiosyncrasies which naturally determine the
outlook of each individual in his privacy and are legitimate as long as
they are only privately held opinions but which are not fit to enter the
marketplace, and lack all validity in the public realm.\textsuperscript{42}

We can judge politically through a critical stance if we enlarge our mentality
beyond what our own prejudices and situation determine.\textsuperscript{43}

This sort of enlarged mentality is possible through the faculty of imagination.

\textsuperscript{41}[Arendt, 2006]
\textsuperscript{42}[Arendt, 1965] 961
\textsuperscript{43}[Arendt, 1982] 42
Imagination allows us to ‘go visiting’ into the situation of another, and to view a political situation as if we were in the position of another. By imagining ourselves from another’s standpoint, we transcend our particular situation, and begin to advance to the critical stance that allows good political judgment. As we imagine ourselves in more and more possible alternative situations and standpoints, we increasingly enlarge our mentality, advancing further and further down the path to complete impartiality and, with that, the best possible judgment. “The greater the reach—the larger the realm in which the enlightened individual is able to move from standpoint to standpoint—the more ‘general’ will be his thinking.”

As noted above, the rise of totalitarianism in Europe has led, in Arendt’s view, to a “loss of common sense,” which makes concrete inter-subjectivity too risky. To engage in concrete inter-subjectivity would be to take on the prejudices of a population which, because its history has been erased, has no yardsticks with which to judge. “If *phronesis*, representative thinking, and an ‘enlarged mentality’ were ever characteristics of active citizens, they are no longer: their basic conditions of possibility have been destroyed by ‘the moral and spiritual breakdown of occidental society,’ on the one hand, and the rise of mass culture, on the other.” We cannot judge on the basis of a *sensus communis* because such a sense no longer exists in any meaningful way. Thus, judgment in the post-totalitarian West must come from an enlarged mentality that is free from any particular prejudices. All existing prejudices and standpoints are insufficient to the demands of post-totalitarian judgment.

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44 This terminology comes from [Disch, 1994] 687. See also [Zerilli, 2005]
45 [Arendt, 1982] 42
46 ibid
47 [Arendt, 2005]
48 [Villa, 1999] 22
49 This is true regardless of whether it ever did.
Thus, when Arendt issues a judgment regarding what she would do as the mother of an African-American schoolchild in Little Rock, she comes to that political judgment through an exercise in enlarged mentality that seeks to move beyond the particular prejudices both of Arendt, as a Jewish intellectual, and the posited African-American parent in question. To do otherwise, to put oneself into the standpoint of a concrete or particular parent in Little Rock at the time, would be to simply exchange one set of prejudices for another, according to Arendt. This exchange would fail to move the judge further towards an Enlightened stance from which to issue judgment. Thus, Arendt’s use of Kant does not just not demand that she learn anything about the standpoints the judge will go visiting to, but actually demands that the judge not consult concretely the persons whose standpoint they intend to posit and adopt. What Arendt seeks through her particular use of imagination is ‘thinking without a banister’. By moving ourselves to the standpoint, not of a particular other, but of many others, we can, as we visit more and more different standpoints, identify which elements of judgment are particular, are part of an idiosyncratic set of beliefs, or are rooted in an ethical framework that can no longer order the world we live in.

We can see this in her judgment of Eichmann, at the end of *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. She judges Eichmann for his crimes, but not on the basis of his breaking existing rules. Instead, her judgment stems from a reflexive, retrospective judgment of his place in the world; he can be sentenced to death not because his crimes broke a prospective law (indeed, his crimes went well beyond what law could address) but because he was a person with whom no other person would want to share a world. The inability of any person to find a common world to share with Eichmann condemns him; there is no general principle
that Eichmann’s example can be used to generate in a democratic public.\textsuperscript{50} This model of judgment derives from Arendt’s turn to Kantian aesthetic judgment and the fact that reflective judgment requires reflecting from imagined standpoint of others, not the standpoints they actually hold.

This is centrally important for Arendt: when we enlarge our mentality through imagining ourselves from different standpoints, we do not adopt actual standpoints, but rather imagine ourselves, as we are, in other possible standpoints.\textsuperscript{51} Adopting the actual standpoint of another risks undermining the imagination’s ability to lead us to a critical stance form which to form judgments. Arendt, drawing on Kant, claims that:

I must warn you here of a very common and easy misunderstanding. The trick of critical thinking does not consist in an enormously enlarged empathy through which one can know what actually goes on in the mind of all others. To think, according to Kant’s understanding of enlightenment, means \textit{Selbstdenken}, to think for oneself, “which is the maxim of a never-passive reason. To be given to such passivity is called prejudice,” and enlightenment is, first of all, liberation from prejudice. To accept what goes on in the minds of those whose “standpoint” (actually, the place where they stand, the conditions they are subject to, which always differ from one individual to the next, from one class or group as compared to another) is not my own would mean no more than passively to accept their thought, that is, to exchange their prejudices for the prejudices proper to my station. “Enlarged thought” is the result of first “abstracting from the limitations which contingently attach to our own judgment,” of disregarding its “subjective private conditions..., by which so many are limited,” that is, disregarding what we usually call self-interest, which, according to Kant, is not enlightened or capable of enlightenment but is in fact limiting.\textsuperscript{52}

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\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{50}[Arendt, 2006]
  \item \textsuperscript{51}[Arendt, 1982] 43. Note that Taylor’s model of the self (as well as others’) precludes being oneself from the standpoint of another from making sense, because the standpoint helps to constitute the self.
  \item \textsuperscript{52}ibid
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
goal of enlarged mentality is dropping away from one’s own prejudices, not acquiring the prejudices of another citizen. To the extent that imagining oneself in the standpoint of another leads to a recognition on one’s own part of the particularity of one’s own prejudices, which obscure the neutral outcome of judgment, then that use of imagination is enlightening. But, in Arendt’s view, that use of imagination must remain bounded. We cannot take on the standpoint of others totally; when we go visiting, we are still fundamentally ourselves. We are just ourselves in a different position.54 Concrete inter-subjectivity, in which two subjects come to understand the viewpoint of the other, carries dangers in a post-totalitarian age.

While Arendt’s model of judgment contains an element of Kantian enlightenment designed to acknowledge the plurality of standpoints which comprise modern political communities, this commitment leads Arendt away from concretizing this vision of Arendt’s relationship to judgment, in which her earlier work looks to judgment as the root of political action and her later work sees judgment as profoundly apolitical, and possibly anti-political. This coincides, in their view, with Arendt’s shift from examining the judgment of actors to the judgment of spectators. But Villa’s response is compelling. The change is not a change in the political orientation of judgment, but a change in focus that comes from a shift from judgment for actors to judgment for spectators. We should not be surprised to see a depoliticization of judgment when Arendt shifts her focus away from political actors. Of course, I criticize Villa’s defense of Arendt’s Kantian understanding of judgment below, but I do think that his analysis of what Arendt’s shift means is correct.

54 Note the extent to which this implicitly denies the constitutive nature of cultural experience. See [Taylor, 1994]. But Taylor would not be alone in his disagreement with Arendt’s position. Leaving alone Seyla Benhabib’s and Lisa Disch’s criticism of Arendt’s abstract vision of judgment (which I address in the following section), a host of other thinkers, especially communitarians and multiculturalists such as Michael Sandel on the one hand and Iris Marion Young on the other conceptualize human nature as determined, in large part, by cultural heritage. Indeed, it strikes me as ironic that Arendt, so concerned with pluralism in [Arendt, 1999] is willing to embrace a vision of Kant that has come under such heavy fire for denying pluralism when outlining her view of judgment. Obviously, given her relationship to Kant (see [Arendt, 1982] 64-78), she understands Kantian autonomy as leading to greater, rather than less, pluralism in the world. Additionally, some authors have emphasized the tight relationship Arendt sees between Kantian freedom and the freedom of political action she advocates throughout her work; see [Hinchman, 1984] and [Norris, 1996]. Note that both Hinchman and Norris emphasize the role of the sensus communis in a political community, which has a complicated relationship with pluralism, both bounding it and allowing it. Arendt’s commitment to political action in concert with other citizens commits her to delimiting a range of the common (see, for example, [Villa, 1992] but promoting unique action within that range.
acknowledgment in concrete intersubjectivity. Judgment is possible, for Arendt, even in situations where citizens’ value systems differ radically because our faculty of imagination allows us, if trained, to stand in the viewpoint of another. When we encounter a political situation that demands a judgment, our first instinct may be to judge it from our own position. But Arendt argues that this type of judgment is a mistake; to judge from a position simply your own is simply to impose your own preferences. Proper judgment requires the use of critical reason, which is simply reason exercised outside of one’s own particular prejudices and circumstances; going visiting through the use of imagination is what enables one to reason critically in order to judge politically. We can distinguish critical reason from personal prejudice through coming to agreement with our fellow citizens; the stance that causes all citizens, when they adopt it, to agree on a given judgment is the proper critical stance. This critical stance garners agreement because of its impartiality. The impartial viewpoint is one that takes others into account, and in doing so, allows agreement between citizens who otherwise differ; once they have taken this stance, they see and understand the situation from a variety of viewpoints, and can render a judgment that those who see it through the eyes of others will agree with as well. In order to reason critically, as a way of judging political situations, citizens must transcend their particularities. This is why Arendt’s model of judgment, including the judgment Arendt had previously exercised regarding the attempts to integrate public schools in Arkansas, looked away from concrete intersubjectivity, and towards imagination.

55Arendt is never clear on how this training takes place. See [Young-Bruehl, 1984]; Disch97, and [Zerilli, 2005] for more on the issues surrounding training the imagination.
56[Arendt, 1982] 42. Note here that particularity is treated as tainting the purity of critical reason. I argue against this view below.
57[Arendt, 1982] 41
7.3 Judging Arendt

Arendt’s essay on Little Rock came under considerable attack shortly after its publication.\(^\text{58}\) Arendt ignored all but one of the attacks, the exception coming from Ralph Ellison.\(^\text{59}\) Ellison’s criticism was couched in his response to a previous essay, criticizing Ellison and Baldwin, written by Irving Howe;\(^\text{60}\) Ellison lumped together Howe and Arendt’s misrepresentation, stemming in his mind from a misunderstanding of the black experience in the South:

First three questions: Why is it so often true that when critics confront the American as Negro they suddenly drop their advanced critical armament and revert with an air of confident superiority to quite primitive modes of analysis? Why is it that sociology-oriented critics seem to rate literature so far below politics and ideology that they would rather kill a novel than modify their presumptions concerning a given reality which it seeks in its own terms to project? Finally, why is it that so many of those who would tell us the meaning of Negro life never bother to learn how varied it really is? These questions are aroused by “Black Boys and Native Sons,” an essay by Irving Howe, the well-known critic and editor of Dissent, in the Autumn 1963 issue of that magazine. It is a lively piece, written with something of the Olympian authority that characterized Hannah Arendt’s “Reflections on Little Rock” in the Winter 1959 Dissent (a dark foreshadowing of the Eichmann blowup).\(^\text{61}\)

Ellison later fleshed out this criticism in conversation with Robert Penn Warren:

At any rate, this too has been part of the American Negro experience, and I believe that one of the important clues to the meaning of that experience lies in the idea, the ideal of sacrifice. Hannah Arendt’s failure to grasp the importance of this ideal among Southern Negroes caused her to fly way off into left field in her “Reflections on Little Rock,” in which she charged Negro parents with exploiting their children during the struggle to integrate the schools. But she has absolutely no conception of what does on in the minds of Negro parents

\(^\text{58}\) [Young-Bruehl, 1984] 308-318.
\(^\text{59}\) [Young-Bruehl, 1984] 315-316
\(^\text{60}\) [Howe, 1953]
\(^\text{61}\) [Ellison, 1964] 115-116
when they send their kids through those lines of hostile people. Yet they are aware of the overtones of a rite of initiation which such events actually constitute for the child, a confrontation of the terrors of social life with all the mysteries stripped away. And in the outlook of many of these parents (who wish that the problem didn’t exist), the child is expected to face the terror and contain his fear and anger precisely because he is a Negro American. Thus he’s required to master the inner tensions created by his racial situation, and if he gets hurt—then his is one more sacrifice. It is a harsh requirement, but if he fails this basic test, his life will be even harsher.62

Ellison criticizes Arendt on two distinct, but deeply interrelated grounds. First, he claims that Arendt has failed to appreciate the differences within the community she presumes to judge. This failure, at least as he understands it, stems from her failure to “never bother to learn how varied it really is.”63 Which is to say, Ellison in his initial criticism attacks not just Arendt’s conclusions, but also her method; Arendt’s attempt to enlarge her mentality seems, in Ellison’s view, to betray her because, implicitly, it is overly formal. Ellison’s implication here is that the understanding in which judgment must be rooted comes from concrete interactions. Note his use of the term ‘learn’ here, which suggests a different cognitive capacity from Arendt’s preferred capacity for grounding judgment, imagination. Second, Ellison criticizes the content of Arendt’s (mis)understanding of the cultural community she attempts to judge. There is an important value, in this case sacrifice, which Arendt simply fails to understand and appreciate. Had she understood the cultural importance of sacrifice, and the vital role it played in black Southern life at the time, she would have understood what the act of sending their children out in Little Rock meant for the parents, and what it would come to mean for the children.

63 [Ellison, 1964] 116
The interrelationship between these criticisms opens the door to treating Ellison’s criticism of Arendt’s “Reflections on Little Rock,” not just as a criticism of Arendt’s finding in this particular instance of judgment, but rather as an indictment of Arendt’s model of judgment as a whole. It is not just the case that Arendt failed to understand the importance of sacrifice, but rather that Arendt believes she can grasp the subtleties of communal life from her perch on Mount Olympus. The center of Ellison’s criticism is his implicit contention that judgment must come from a stance which actually understands the community to be judged; hence, Ellison criticizes Arendt (and Howe) not just for their failure to understand in this case, but from the fact that, “so many of those who would tell us the meaning of Negro life never bother to learn how varied it really is?”

Arendt fails to understand the values at play because she has attempted to learn them only through her imagination, rather than in a more concrete manner; Arendt avoids concrete intersubjective activity because her model of judgment denigrates it as counter-Enlightenment. Understanding this requires turning back to Kant’s influence on Arendt, and specifically, Kant’s vision of language’s designative, rather than constitutive, role in human nature.

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64 Ellison, 1964, 115
65 I take this language from Taylor, 1985a. Designative models of language treat words as symbols of objects that exist in the world, and grammar as way of ordering those symbols in order to transmit information about the objects to others. Constitutive models of language treat the language through which humans discuss the world as a process through which the objects in the world and their meaning are decided upon. As a short-hand (which does lose some of the nuance, designative models see the world as prior to language, and constitutive models see language, in at least some ways, as prior to a conception of the world
7.4 Language in Judgment

A recent article by Meili Steele on Arendt and Ellison’s exchange has located their differences in conceptions of language’s mediating function in the world.\(^{66}\) Steele argues that Arendt adopts a Kantian conception of language,\(^{67}\) where Ellison presents, both in his criticism of Arendt and elsewhere, a model of language which emphasizes its partially-constitutive function; Ellison, on this reading, adopts neither a designative model of language nor a model of language in which selfhood, either individual or communal, is fully constituted by language. Arendt’s adherence to a Kantian model of judgment, dependent on a Kantian model of language and its relationship to Truth, prevents her from understanding the constitutive function of cultural narratives by positing a realm of truth beyond language.\(^{68}\) This failure, in turn, prevents her from understanding the meaningful differences in cultural values. Her attempt to turn to common sense – a *sensus communis* –

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\(^{66}\) [Steele, 2002]

\(^{67}\) [Steele, 2002], 185. Steele notes four categories of relating language to judgment, the last three of which are important for this chapter. First are structuralists such as Hayden White, who see narrative as a tool for individuals to organize their otherwise-chaotic lives retrospectively; these narratives can inform historians of how individuals understood their situations, but as they are retrospective, they remain suspect as a tool, both for historians and for the subjects constructing the narratives. Second is an approach Steele calls the Third Critique, and is where he places Arendt, along with Paul Ricoeur. The Third Critique, “brings the resources of Husserlian phenomenology together with Kantian reflective judgment. Narrative is still formal rather than substantive, but the emplotment emerges from a reflective rather than determinant, referential judgment.” (185) There is hermeneuticism, typified by MacIntyre, Taylor, and Gadamer. Hermeneutics treats language as medium through which subjects interpret the world, and is therefore inseparable from subjects’ historical self-understanding; narratives serve to constitute the self in ways related to their substance, rather than simply through the narrative form (as in the Third Critique). As I have argued previously – and expand on at length below – this grouping has problems, because Taylor and Gadamer part ways at important points for both my purposes and Steele’s. Finally are post-structuralists, such as Michel Foucault, who agree with the hermeneutists’ model of a self constituted in part by narrative structures, but who locate social ills within the power-laden structure of language itself, rather than, as in the case of hermeneutics, in the content of modern subject-centered narratives.

\(^{68}\) “Was it not precisely the discovery of a discrepancy between words, the medium in which we think, and the world of appearances, the medium in which we live, that led to philosophy and metaphysics in the first place?” [Arendt, 1978], 8
stems from this misunderstanding of language’s role in constituting the self, and causes her to invoke common understandings where none exist. Thus, her attempt to judge the parents of the children sent to the first racially-integrated schools in Little Rock cannot help but fail, so long as a meaningful cultural distinction exists between Arendt and the parents involved, as Ellison claims there is. Arendt issues a judgment that simply misunderstands the cultural values involved, because her commitment to Kantian ontology forces her to deny the importance of the value of sacrifice embodied in the child’s harrowing walk to school through a throng of jeering white citizens. Ellison’s description of Arendt’s failure here is convincing.

But the most recent articulation of the linguistic basis of judgment in Ellison, that of Meili Steele, misunderstands Taylor’s model of the discursive self, and in doing so, over-identifies him with the hermeneutic position staked out by Gadamer.\footnote{Steele, 2002} 197. See also Chapter Three of this dissertation. This ignores the way in which Taylor deploys a model of judgment in which cultural narratives serve to structure, but not determine, judgment.\footnote{This claim is controversial enough when focused simply on Gadamer. See [Doppelt, 2003] for a recapitulation of the debate over Gadamer’s perceived conservativism and a compelling rejoinder.} Judgment, for Taylor, is always situated within linguistic structures, but is never simply determined by them.\footnote{[Taylor, 1989]} Thus, Taylor, especially the interpretation of Taylor which this dissertation advances, takes into account Arendt’s failures to understand the cultural values involved in decisions made by African-American parents in Little Rock, while also articulating a model of judgment that is not simply a reflection of those cultural values.\footnote{Incidentally, much like [Benhabib, 1988], I take my criticism of Arendt to be, in part, an attempt to think with Arendt against Arendt; the model of judgment Taylor and Vygotsky lead us to is a model I take to have substantial points of overlap with Arendt’s overarching goals, if not methods. Specifically, conceptualizing thought along linguistic lines opens up a new ways of thinking about rule-following: grammatical rules, which are partially constitutive, but still contain both slack in reinterpretation and space for novel moves; I take these to be central to}
While at a basic level, the differences in judgment seem to come from a disagreement regarding content – Ellison contends that Arendt fails to understand the content of African-American cultural values in the South – this leaves open the question of why Arendt has failed to understand this content. Or, to expand this question slightly, does Ellison’s criticism, and especially Arendt’s acceptance of it, show the limitations of Arendt’s model of judgment in general?

As indicated above, I believe that it does. This is not simply an inexplicable lacuna in Arendt’s thought, but rather a limitation of her model more generally. Enlarged thought, at least in the way Arendt describes it, is simply not up to the challenges of exercising judgment in a deeply diverse society. While this is a criticism that previous writers have leveled at Arendt, the basis of my criticism goes beyond these critics by offering a corrective.

This section builds off of Steele’s examination of the exchange between Arendt and Ellison which emphasizes how different models of language serve to undergird their models of political judgment. It does, however, misunderstand how Charles Taylor’s model of language and judgment can fruitfully be brought into conversation with Arendt and Ellison to transcend the limitations of their models of judgment, because it over-identifies Taylor with Gadamer and a hermeneutic method; as argued earlier, Taylor shares an intellectual background with hermeneutic thinkers, but ultimately moves beyond them, in a way made intelligible by turning to Vygotsky’s work on language learning and human development.

We have seen how Taylor’s vision of language connects to the debate in mid-twentieth century anthropology between E. E. Evans-Pritchard and Peter Winch.

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Arendt’s turn to Kant’s aesthetic judgment, rather than political judgment, and address this at length below.

73[Benhabib, 1988] etc.

74[Steele, 2002]
over the ability of members of one culture to judge the practices of another, radically different, culture. Winch, in replying to Evans-Pritchard’s dismissal of Azande cultural practices as magical, and therefore incorrect, invoked a model of culture owing a significant debt to Ludwig Wittgenstein’s later work on language and rule-following.\textsuperscript{75} Winch argued that cultures had certain rules which operated in much the way that grammatical rules did; some moves which were possible were not correct according to the rules laid out in common by the participants. Even if those the rules were fully endogenous to the activity of the community, one member could not, by herself or himself, reject the rules and substitute her or his own rules; such a move was instead a claim that could be evaluated by others, in common, and largely within the context of the existing rules.\textsuperscript{76}

Taylor’s model of judgment draws on a similar understanding of the nature of judgment, but takes language even more seriously as a model of cultural rules. For Taylor, cultural rules do not just mirror grammatical rules in their form, but in fact language practices serve to reinforce and transmit cultural values; a culture’s values are contained in the way it uses language. Language usage serves to transmit evaluations of worth – what Taylor terms strong evaluations – which in turn allow the world to be made meaningful. Once the world is made meaningful through the evaluations contained in a given culture’s use of language, cultural members can act effectively within it, by setting goals, priorities, and tactics. If the world cannot be rendered meaningful, through a failure of culture or language, cultural members cannot develop or act on any particular plan of life: they cannot act effectively in the world. This, then, in the risk of misrecognition. If a culture’s values are misrecognized, especially by a more-powerful group,\textsuperscript{77}, cultural members

\textsuperscript{75}[Wittgenstein, 1958]

\textsuperscript{76}See the commentary surrounding [Winch, 1972], especially [Cavell, 1979]

\textsuperscript{77}[Taylor, 1989] and [Taylor, 1994]. See [Young, 1997] for an example of this.
cannot harness them in order to make the world around them meaningful, and they therefore have increased difficulty in acting effectively in the world.

Now, Arendt understands these cultural traditions in a very different way. Rather than considering the ways in which cultural uses of language and narratives serve to constitute the self, Arendt understands narrative through a Kantian lens. For her, narrative is constructed reflexively and retrospectively (looking towards the past), rather than prospectively (looking towards the future). \(^{78}\) In large part, this stems from her commitment to Kant’s model of reflexive judgment, which undergirds her own model of political judgment; if judgment were determinative, it would no longer be perfectly free; this is true regardless of whether the determination comes from logical necessity or from preexisting historical narratives. The presence of a prefiguration is enough to scare Arendt away.

Thus we can already see, in the way Arendt understands the limits of historical narrative, how judgment cannot depend on the sort of pre-existing understandings that Taylor looks to. Arendt’s ability to look away from these grounds, however, can only be sustained by her insistence that such grounds already exist. \(^{79}\) This is true, less problematically, in her judgment of Eichmann, and, more problematically, in her judgment of the mothers of African-American students in Little Rock:

In her dispute with Ellison, Arendt assumes the existence of a common world that is in good enough shape to articulate and draw together her own position with that of black mothers. Arendt’s idea of the world includes plurality but presupposes that there is a language and an inter-subjective visibility that provide adequate resources for the articulation of difference... This idealized assumption inscribed in the metaphorics of vision and aestheticized appearances operates in her judgment about black mothers, who cannot “appear” in the world except as objects of white media. Her understanding of the world is reinforced by a subject-to-subject theory of judgment, as we’ll see later.

\(^{78}\) [Steele, 2002] 185
\(^{79}\) [Steele, 2002] 187
on, in which the imagination “goes visiting” without interrogating the historical medium of language and culture.\textsuperscript{80}

Arendt’s Kantian commitment blinds her to the real differences between her standpoint and that of black mothers; it is the blindness, not the difference, which prevents Arendt from exercising judgment, as Steele argues, in expanding on Ellison’s original criticism:

In her effort to avoid philosophy’s habitual denigration of appearance – and to avoid Heidegger’s conception of being in the world, in which \textit{Dasein} seeks isolated authenticity in the midst of idle talk – Arendt is forced to flatten all language’s unavoidable influence over the constitution of into the neutral vocabulary of appearances; hence, she leaves undeveloped the question of our being in language.\textsuperscript{81}

But Ellison’s alternative is unclear in two ways, which limits his analysis dramatically. First, and less importantly, Ellison’s model of the relationship between individual identity and group affiliation is never fully clarified. Ellison seems to see individuals as both group members and also individuals, but at no point fully explains the relationship between identity and affiliation. For example, Ellison criticizes Irving Howe for his monolithic treatment of black literature in [Howe, 1953] “One unfamiliar with what Howe stands for would get the impression that when he looks at a Negro he sees not human being but an abstract embodiment of living hell. He seems never to have considered that American Negro life (and here he is encouraged by certain Negro ‘spokesmen’) is, for the Negro who must live it, not only a burden (and not always that) but also a \textit{discipline}... Because it is \textit{human} life.\textsuperscript{82} So here we encounter a model, from Ellison, in which both individuality and universality trump group affiliation: Negro writers cannot, according to Ellison, be

\textsuperscript{80}ibid
\textsuperscript{81}[Steele, 2002] 191
\textsuperscript{82}[Ellison, 1964] 119
characterized according to their shared outlook, even if they have a bank of shared experiences on which to draw, because they are both individual and commonly human. At other times, however, Ellison seems to treat group affiliation as more determinative of outlook, as in the distinction he draws between whites and Jews in America: “In situations such as this many Negroes, like myself, make a positive distinction between ‘whites’ and ‘Jews.’ Not to do so could be either offensive, embarrassing, unjust or even dangerous. If I would know who I am and preserve who I am, then I must see others distinctly whether they see me so or no.” From the context here, it seems clear that Ellison’s reference to who he is must be, at least in large part, a reference to his racial or cultural background. And so Ellison, at least in part, seems to want to have his cake and eat it too; race is both more and less important than individual identity.

Of course, Ellison’s goal in responding to Howe, and Arendt, is less to develop a clear model of the relationship between self and community – as is my goal in this dissertation – and so this lack of clarity can be forgiven; his criticism of Howe and Arendt’s attempt to think in the place of African-Americans in the American South, as outlined above, still stands. More important, and meaningfully limiting in his attempt to respond to these attempts, is his lack of a clear alternative. While at times Ellison gestures towards how white thinkers could understand the black experience, these gestures never coalesce into an alternative model to the one presented implicitly in Howe and explicitly in Arendt; Ellison makes claims like, “How awful that Wright found the facile answers of Marxism before he learned to use literature as a means for discovering the form of American Negro humanity,”

83Note how closely this mirrors Arendt’s description of the human condition of plurality: all humans are alike insofar as, unlike animals, they are distinctive. Their plurality serves to unite them.

84[Ellison, 1964] 132

85[Ellison, 1964] 126
and, “Here the basic unity of human experience that assures us of some possibility of empathic and symbolic identification with those of other backgrounds is blasted in the interests of specious political and philosophical conceits.”86 While I can agree with Ellison’s criticism of white (or, in Arendt’s case, Jewish) writers’ creation of, “Prefabricated Negroes...sketched on sheets of aper and superimposed upon the Negro community,”87 Ellison never suggests a way that authors interested in the black community, whose “hearts are in the right place,”88 can place their minds in the right place.

The closest he comes is his implicit claim that literature allows white (again, or Jewish) thinkers to understand the African-American experience. This comes through most clearly in “Some Questions and Some Answers.”89 When asked what he thinks about the adoption of European languages by fellow African-American writers, Ellison answers, in part:

To whom do these poets wish to speak? Each poet creates his own language from that which he finds around him. Thus if these poets find the language of Shakespeare or Racine inadequate to reach their own peoples, then the other choice is to re-create their original language to the point where they may express their complex emotions. This is the manner in which the poet makes his contribution to literature, and the greatest literary creation of any culture is its language. Further, language is most alive when it is capable of dealing with the realities in which it operates. In the myth, God gave man the task of naming the objects of the world, thus one of the functions of the poet is to insist upon a correspondence between words and ever-changing reality, between ideal and actualities. The domain of the unstated, the undefined is his to conquer. In my own case, having inherited the language of Shakespeare and Melville, Mark Twain and Lincoln and no other, I try to do my part in keeping the American language alive and rich by using in my work the music and idiom of American Negro speech, and by insisting that the words of that language correspond with the

86[Ellison, 1964] 130  
87ibid  
88[Ellison, 1964] 129  
89[Ellison, 1964] 253-263
reality of American life as seen by my own people. Perhaps if I were a member of a bilingual society I would approach my task differently, but my work is addressed primarily to those who have my immediate group experience, for I am not protesting, nor pleading, my humanity; I am trying to communicate, to articulate and define a group experience.  

This is a rich response, and before tackling it, I want to briefly digest it and lay it out. Ellison here advances four different claims. First, he claims that language is epiphenomenal to literature, rather than vice-versa. Second, he describes the ideal relationship between language and the world functionally; language should be “capable of dealing with the realities in which it operates.” Third, he identifies his own language as that of white authors. Finally, he notes the divided nature of American readers, and clams to be writing to other African-Americans (albeit through white language). Let me address each claim in order, as Ellison’s final claim – that he is writing through white language to other African-Americans – is the most interesting for teasing out the relationship between language and judgment in his thought.

Is language epiphenomenal to literature? On the face of it, this seems like a difficult claim to sustain, given literature’s reliance on language. To make sense of it, I think, requires conceptualizing the relationship between literature and language as a cycle, rather than a unidirectional vector. Language allows the development of literature, but literature, at least in Ellison’s model, allows the re-development of language. Thus, while literature requires language, language is also the result of literature’s need to re-create (in Ellison’s terms) its own language. Literature highlights ways in which a culture’s language is insufficient to express its members’ lived reality, and attempts to re-create language in order to expand the vocabulary.

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90 [Ellison, 1964] 257-258
91 [Ellison, 1964] 257
available to express members’ “complex emotions.”

Literature’s need to re-create language stems from Ellison’s second claim, that language ought to relate functionally to the world the speakers inhabit. I think it is important to note that Ellison here is making a very different type of functionalist claim than Arendt does. Whereas Arendt, drawing on Kant, sees language’s functionalism stemming from reality’s ontological certainty, I think Ellison is making a claim of cultural constructivism. Let me explain this briefly.

For Arendt, difficulty in understanding the world comes from epistemological limitations, not ontological ones. The world exists in some commonly-understandable (if not commonly-understood) way. There is a world, and that world can be described in terms of language. Speakers, then, have a duty to use language sufficient for describing the nature of the world, since the world has a nature that is at least in principle knowable. This is different from the way Ellison sees the world.

For Ellison, difficulty in understanding the world can come from either epistemological or ontological limitations. The world is not something knowable in itself, but always from a particular standpoint. Now, these standpoints can be misunderstood. Indeed, his response to Arendt and Howe is in large part an explication of exactly how they misunderstand the world that Southern African-Americans inhabit. But this specification is important; Arendt and Howe do not misunderstand the world they live in, but rather the world that the mothers in Little Rock live in, and the ones their children must learn discipline if they are to thrive in. From Ellison’s perspective, Arendt and Howe live in different worlds than the mothers they criticize and himself.

Interestingly, then, Ellison does not see his exclusive use of white authors’ language putting him into a different world than other African-Americans. While

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ibid
his own language is that of Melville and Lincoln, he also claims to be writing, “to those who have my immediate group experience.”93 I find myself confused by this claim, because of the tension I see between it and Ellison’s other claims.

The tension stems from Ellison using white language to write about an African-American experience to other African-Americans. If it is the case, as he claims it is, that literature re-creates language in order to best reflect the lived reality of the culture from which the literature stems, then the literature’s language ought to be a language suited to that culture’s shared experience of the world. That is, Ellison demands a correspondence between the world inhabited and the language used in literature regarding that world. But Ellison’s own work precisely violates that demand; he uses the language of one set of experiences to write about a different set of experiences.

This is less a contradiction than it is a tension. But it does complicate Ellison’s criticism of Arendt. If he is writing in the same language she uses, and if the language a literature uses is one that, ideally, corresponds well to speakers’ common cultural understanding of the world, why can Arendt not understand the value of sacrifice Ellison identifies? The language Ellison uses, self-consciously a white language, should be one that Arendt can understand because it comes out of a culture he shares with Arendt. In order for Ellison’s criticism to make sense, him and Arendt must be simultaneously in the same and different cultures.

But at least as I understand it, Ellison’s model of language cannot account for how this simultaneous existence could be. While Ellison’s turn to literature is provocative, it also highlights to problematic status of group membership in his thought. Language must correspond to a shared cultural reality, but Ellison uses the language of one group to write to another group about their own problems and

\footnote{93ibid}
shared cultural reality. Either he is intentionally using a language ineffective to the cultural task he sets it to, an unlikely possibility, or he needs a model of cultural membership, mediated through language use, that allows for simultaneous mutual belonging and difference. He needs a model of fused horizons.

Thus, while there is some suggestion in the literature that Ellison develops a model of how language influences culture and a cultural member’s self-understanding, as when he claims that, “For one thing, Negro American consciousness is not a product (as so often seems true of so many American groups) of a will to historical forgetfulness. It is a product of our memory, sustained and constantly reinforced by events, by our watchful waiting, and by our hopeful suspension of final judgment as to the meaning of our grievances,”\textsuperscript{94} and “I am as writer no less a custodian of the American language than is Irving Howe. Indeed, to the extent that I am a writer—I lay no claims to being a thinker—the American language, including the Negro idiom, is all that I have,”\textsuperscript{95} these gestures never coalesce into a fully-realized model of how language could allow the fused horizons he lays claims to in his own writing. The model of liberal judgment this dissertation has previously developed offers at least the beginning to making sense of Ellison’s complicated model of language’s relationship to literature and cultural membership.

7.5 Vygotsky and Taylor on the Limits of Imagination and Literature

As I have argued previous in this dissertation, by the time Taylor writes specifically on judgment in “The Politics of Recognition,” his relationship with Gadamer

\textsuperscript{94}[Ellison, 1964] 130
\textsuperscript{95}[Ellison, 1964] 132
is complicated; he invokes the fusion of horizons, but to a vastly different task—cross-cultural understanding—than Gadamer had intended it—intracultural historical understanding. Moreover, looking to Vygotsky’s model of the relationship between thought and language helps explain the dangers when one, “puts the question of our ontological embedding—e.g., play versus power—beyond the scope of our judgment rather than within it.”\textsuperscript{96} Indeed, Taylor’s use of the fusion of horizons precisely aims to enlarge the judge’s mentality beyond their own ontological embedding \textit{through} the operation of language. That is, much like Peter Winch, Ellison takes too seriously the ways language separates cultures, and fails to recognize the ways language acquisition can promote cultural understanding.

Let us take Ellison’s criticism of Arendt seriously. If Ellison is right, that Arendt’s judgment of the situation in Little Rock fails because she fails to understand the value of sacrifice in the African-American community, then, broadly speaking, two possible implications come out of this. Either it is the case that Arendt cannot learn that value, or that she can in some way. If the former is the case, that Ellison means that Arendt cannot learn the value of sacrifice within the African-American community, I think the criticism he would have written would have been a very, very different one; rather than criticizing Arendt for failing to understand the values involved he would have, I think, criticized her for having misunderstood the boundary between her cultural values and the cultural values involved. Rather than characterize her judgment as Olympian, he would have characterized it as Jewish; the problem would not have been her presumption that she understood, but the impossibility of understanding at all. His central metaphor in “The World and the Jug,” in which Ellison argues that the barrier between African-Americans and their Southern white neighbors was transparent and porous, “on

\textsuperscript{96}[Steele, 2002] 197
the level of culture,"^97 would make little sense on this reading. Ellison must, I believe, see some way for Arendt to understand African-American values. Her failure is her failure to try, not any claim that all attempts are doomed.^98

But while Ellison never proposes a fully-realized model of how to learn a conceptual vocabulary radically different from one’s own, Taylor, fleshed out with Vygotsky, does. If Arendt wanted to judge the situation she saw in Little Rock, her first step would be, in that model, to actually go to the parents involved and ask them why they subjected their children to such a risky engagement with their community; to ask the children why they accepted the burden their parents had placed on them; to ask the NAACP leadership why they concentrated on the only quasi-political arena of public schooling to make their major push. That is, Arendt, before judging, must understand the communal self-understanding which birthed the policy.^99

This understanding must stem from a fusion of horizons,^100 in which Arendt, as a student, goes to those she wishes to understand, and engages them in conversation. During those conversations, a zone of proximal development opens up between the relatively low level of Arendt’s understanding of African-American values (at least, according to Ellison) and the higher levels she can understand when trying to formulate the moral grammar, in a process detailed in Chapter Five of this dissertation.^101 with the guidance of a fluent speaker.^102 As the teacher and Arendt engage in a dialogue, that dialogue becomes gradually internalized, Arendt

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^97[Ellison, 1964]) 123
^98For a version of this, see [Elshtain, 1996]
^99See [Taylor, 1985b], especially “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man,” and “Understanding and Ethnocentricity” in which Taylor argues persuasively that understanding cultural phenomena requires understanding them as intentional, which requires understanding the intention, and therefore self-understanding, of the cultures studied.
^100[Gadamer, 175]; [Taylor, 1985a]; and [Taylor, 1989]
^101[Tappan, 1997]; [Tappan, 1998]
^102[Vygotsky, 1978], 56
would become more and more able to think in that grammar on her own, first exter-

nalizing the dialogue explaining the importance of sacrifice and its relationship to the phenomenology of being black in America but taking both sides of the dia-

logue, and second fully internalizing the dialogue. That internalized dialogue begins to become thought when it becomes abbreviated.

This abbreviation of external speech changes the language into thought, which exists as a distinct plane, structured by language but not dependent on language. When Arendt later tries to think in the place of an African-American – when she tries to go visiting – her thoughts are completely free, but, unless they find themselves in the language she has available for the relevant grammar, they are unstable. Language provides stability to the thoughts she tries to have from the standpoint of an African-American parent. Thus, the grammar she has learnt though a zone of proximal development does not determine the thoughts she can have (which remain free), but does structure them insofar as thoughts inexpressible in a language cannot maintain themselves as thoughts.

This policy clearly differs from the model of judgment Arendt develops through Kant. In Arendt’s view, imagination can proxy for the outlook of fellow citizens, once trained to go visiting. Inhabiting actual standpoints risks exchanging the thinker’s own set of prejudices for a different set of prejudices. This trade does not move the judge closer to a political judgment, because, rather than moving away from prejudices altogether, it simply adopts a different set of them. Political judgment, in Arendt’s view, works only when the judge does away with prejudices

\[\text{Vygotsky, 1986}\] 224. See also [Wertsch, 1985b], 111
\[\text{Vygotsky, 1986}\] 225
\[\text{Vygotsky, 1986}\] 226
\[\text{Vygotsky, 1986}\] 248-252. See also Wertsch (1985) 95
\[\text{Vygotsky, 1986}\] 252
\[\text{Vygotsky, 1986}\] 249-250
altogether. This model of political judgment makes sense only if we accept Arendt’s model of the world as agreed-upon by members of the political community in which judge lives. In that case, the prejudices each citizen has are distortions of a knowable world. Language provides no barrier to understanding because language does not serve a constitutive function either of the world or a citizen’s identity; language is purely nomitive, symbolizing uncontroversial objects, features, and relations in the world.

But if we challenge this assumption, as Taylor and Ellison both do, Arendt’s model of judgment takes on a set of risks. Citizens with greater power than other citizens can substitute their particular vision of the world as if it was a shared world. Judges judge on the basis of their own prejudices, cloaked from criticism by claims to neutrality and Enlightenment which are acceptable only within the standpoint of the judge. The imagination, far from going visiting, instead creates a simulacrum of other standpoints, intelligible to itself, and imputes that simulacrum to other citizens. Instead of journeying towards Enlightenment, imagination in this model confuses moral judgment, and its particularity, for political judgment. Hiding the power disparity that allows this slip runs the same risk for Arendtians that, in the last chapter, I identified for radical democrats like Romand Coles.109

Ellison’s response is limited, however, by the complicated relationship between language, cultural membership, and literature. While he identifies literature as the way for members of one culture to understand the way another culture understands the world, his use of language calls literature’s ability to do that into question. He demands that language correspond to the world the author wants to describe, but uses white language to describe African-American life; either he is writing to African-Americans, as he claims sometimes, in which case he, according to

109See [Coles, 2005]
his demand for correspondence, should be writing in the language of African-Americans, or he is writing to white Americans, and using a language he shares with them, but in a language possibly unsuited to the world he is describing. What this tension pushes at is the relationship between written language and culture. While previous chapters have described the relationship in Vygotsky and Taylor between spoken language and culture, especially a culture’s moral horizons and ethical frameworks, but I have not yet taken up relationship between writing and culture.

The bulk of Vygotsky’s writing on writing revolves around the pedagogical issues of when and how to introduce writing to children. Because of this focus, he concentrates on the transition between drawing pictures and writing words. This focus helps to clarify the semiotic function of the written word, but, by itself, does not help explain the relationship between writing and culture that Ellison calls into question.

We do see, however, at least the beginnings of a model when Vygotsky notes that:

> We have had the opportunity of observing experimentally how children’s drawing becomes real written language by giving them the task of symbolically depicting some more or less complex phrase. What was most clear in these experiments was a tendency on the part of school-age children to change from purely pictographic to ideographic writing, that is, to represent individual relations and meaning by abstract symbolic signs. We observed this dominance of speech over writing in one school child who wrote each word of the phrase in question as a separate drawing.  

Vygotsky’s observation that children learning to read led to the use of ideographic writings led him to assert that literacy in general led to an increased ability for an

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110 See [Vygotsky, 1978], especially Chapter Eight, “The Prehistory of Written Language”.

111 [Vygotsky, 1978] 113-114
individual to engage in decontextualized thinking, by which he meant thinking in self-contained terms, rather than keeping concepts wholly wedded to the context in which they are learnt.\footnote{\cite{Wertsch, 1985b} 33-40 and \cite{Cole and Scribner, 1974}. Decontextualized thinking was important to Vygotsky because of the connection he saw between the ability to use a concept in contexts different from the one in which that concept is learned because of the demands modern industrialization placed on a populace; modern industry demanded a mobile populace, and mobility is easier if the populace is comfortable using mental concepts in a variety of contexts, not just the one in which they were first learnt.} If that was true, then Ellison’s use of literature as a way of teaching white thinkers what African-American life is like would make sense; writing would allow concepts and ideas to become decoupled and decontextualized from the cultural context in which the verbal speech and speech-practices\footnote{Wittgenstein on nonverbal speech} took place. That decontextualization could then provide the basis for transferring knowledge across cultural divides. Ellison’s adoption of white language to express African-American culture would make sense, because the African-American concepts he wished to communicate, such as the value of sacrifice and the relationship between childhood and discipline, would no longer be intelligible only within the context of African-American life; they could be communicated beyond that context.

Unfortunately, research indicates that the relationship between literacy and the ability to engage in decontextualized thought stems from a common source: greater general development of higher mental processes. Individuals who are literate are more likely to be able to engage in decontextualized thought, it is true, but not because they are literate. Indeed, later researchers have noted a tendency within schools to teach students to read in ways that contextualize that reading too much within the school’s context, leading to children who associate reading and writing purely with being in school.\footnote{\cite{Cole and Scribner, 1974}; \cite{Wertsch, 1985b} 36 And in some ways, this should not be surprising;
after all, Vygotsky’s model of learning emphasizes the role a community plays in encouraging learning and development, and it appears that literacy operates just as other higher psychological processes do. There is, then, nothing different about reading and writing *per se* which encourages students to decontextualize the knowledge they gain through the written word.

This research sounds a discouraging note to the promise Ellison seems to see in literature to provide the kind insight that cross-cultural judgment requires about cultures other than one’s own. Despite the intuitive appeal of connecting the written word – itself more obviously a mediating sign than the spoken word – to the decontextualization of mental concepts, research seems to indicate that the transition to writing alone does not allow or demand that ability to use concepts beyond the context originally learnt. While literate subjects tends to be more able to transfer mental concepts from one context to another, the cause seems to be greater education and mental development generally, not any particular function of the written word and literature.

Given this, it makes sense to turn away from Arendt’s reliance on imagination and Ellison’s reliance on literature both. Judgment, in a liberal society, must be grounded in an understanding of the judged culture and its ethical grammar. This understanding cannot reliably be achieved through the exercise of imagination that Arendt describes, because language serves to separate citizens more seriously than Arendt gives credence for; she sees a common language where none exists. Similarly, this understanding cannot reliably be achieved through literature alone. Ellison set language what appear to be an seemingly-impossible task – to simultaneously divide and unite a group of citizens. If the written word allowed what it said to be taken out of its cultural context, this tension might be resolvable. Ellison could introduce concepts through the written word which members of an-
other culture could understand. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case. Writing is an activity like any other, taking place within a particular cultural context. While this does not preclude the possibility of cross-cultural understanding, it does suggest that it cannot take place through decontextualized literature.

Vygotsky’s insistence on concrete intersubjective interactions in which to contextualize learning and development could be supplemented by the use of literature, of course; in no ways should this section be taken as a denigration of literature as a tool for understanding as such. But there is an important limit to literature’s ability to teach across cultural barriers, a limit best addressed, for the purposes of developing a model of liberal judgment, by treating literature as a supplement to conversation which opens up a zone of proximal development. Literature will work best once the reader has already mastered a basic vocabulary and grammar.

7.6 Conclusion

In this way Arendt, by engaging in concrete inter-subjectivity with those she wishes to judge, enters into a fusion of horizons with them that provides her with the tools she needs to comprehend the different sensus communis found in the African-American community: she can come to understand and adopt, at least in part or with an accent (so to speak), the mediating lens through which African-Americans make the world around them meaningful; she can understand what the action of sending their children to school in an attempt to integrate the schools meant, and how the risk to pride was rendered meaningful by reference to the value of sacrifice and initiation in the African-American community. Moreover, this mediating lens, contrary to her worry about adopting the particular prejudices of another, is not determinative, but rather reflective; thoughts reflect to
language in an attempt to find a grammar under which to subsume themselves, much as Kantian aesthetic judgments seek general principles under which to subsume themselves. The rules of grammar are as free as the rules of taste, because they operate under similar formal rules. The freedom Arendt seeks in her turn to aesthetics is preserved through a turn to language.

By acknowledging the constitutive nature of language, but also understanding the difference between sense and meaning, Arendt can preserve the freedom she turns to Kant to preserve. Failing to acknowledge the constitutive nature of language forces Arendt to misrecognize the value-system of southern African-Americans. This misrecognition follows the risks outlined both by Taylor and Iris Marion Young in her article on Arendt’s limitations.\(^{116}\)

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\(^{115}\)Vygotsky. Meaning is the communally-accepted definition of a word. Sense is the meaning of a word informed by personal experiences and connotations, as well as the accepted meaning.

\(^{116}\)\cite{Taylor, 1989}, \cite{Young, 1997}
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Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

Situating judgment in a pluralist society has been one of the central problems facing political theorists, and current political trends suggest that this problem will remain for the foreseeable future. Under conditions of deep diversity, in which citizens disagree on the most basic questions of human life, few common beliefs remain on which to base judgments across the various cultures which comprise the landscape of modern liberal polities. The lack of common space presents serious challenges to modern polities. Policies one cultural group see as necessary and obvious are seen by others to be detrimental to themselves, or to the polity as a whole.

Moreover, numerous writers worry about the possibility of common rule under cultural conditions so pluralized that the very concept of the common seems chimerical. What could it mean for us to rule ourselves when the depth of diversity in modern America questions who the pronoun ‘us’ means, or whether there is any referent behind it? And to the extent that the ‘we’ in “We the people...” takes on
an at-best uncertain reality, this question takes on central political stakes; if ‘we’
cannot rule ourselves (assuming, of course, that we ever did) democratic control
takes on a mythic quality, hiding the possibility of a raw majoritarianism, reducing
politics to the Thrasymachean equalization of justice with power. Even for those
in power, this must seem an unsatisfying prospect; for minorities, this prospect
invites terror of political power unrestrained by any principles beyond the whim
of the majority.

The intuitive response to this problem for many political theorists has been to
search for a common ground of politics. The earliest liberal theorists, shaken by the
ferocity of religious differences threatening to plunge Europe into civil war, set the
tone for future political theorists. These thinkers argued, frequently eloquently
and persuasively, against the centrality of religious difference. Protestants and
Catholics both, in these models, are scared of death. This shared fear of death
formed the basis of the earliest conceptions of liberal politics.

But while these articulations have their defenders and adherents today, they
clearly no longer set the basic agenda for political debate (assuming they ever fully
did). Too many intervening wars have come and gone for modern political theorists
to agree that humans are united in a fear of death over all else; unfortunately,
humans seem perfectly willing to kill and die for the sake of cultural claims. At
least empirically, the common political space that mortality used to promise has
closed off.

The closing of one common space, of course, leaves space for others. The most
prominent of these has been the strain of thought stemming from Immanuel Kant
which identifies the human capacity for autonomous reason, and develops a liberal
politics around the implications of a common reason. This common reason, and
the implied demands that humans treat one another as ends instead of means –
respecting the plans of life each autonomous being lays down for itself – has proven to be the most important and fecund rearticulation of the politics stemming from the search for a common space.

But these articulations of a new common space on which to base judgment too frequently devolve into denials of the importance of difference. We are, in these formulations, all secretly the same. Multicultural critics of liberal regimes rightly point to the risks contained in this claim: regardless of this claim’s philosophical appeal, the fact remains that politically instantiating this claim are tremendous. A surprising willingness to expand the scope of state power lies hidden within claims to universality. Despite the protests of Rawls and his followers, few principles prevent the deployment of state power to silence citizens who dissent from the basic structure and demands for public reason. The lack of restraints on the Rawlsian state undercuts its claims to liberal neutrality; serious dissent is silenced on the grounds of its own dissent.

I worry that this attempt to articulate a single common ground for modern American politics is doomed to failure, which is why I look away from an overarching common principle to guide judgment, and towards a model of how new, local commons can be developed through fusing the horizons of members of radically different cultural groups. Thus, this dissertation draws on Charles Taylor’s model of judgment and recognition rather than neo-Kantian theories of justice or politics. Taylor’s model of judgment offers an important advantage to neo-Kantian conceptions of politics: for Taylor, liberal polities need not be neutral in order to be liberal. Under the right conditions, accommodations for difference can be extended to groups without violating core liberal principles.

Taylor clearly articulates the risk of searching for a single common ground for politics; modern North American polities are too diverse, and this diversity runs
too deep, for any single common ground for politics to exist. Any articulation of a single ground for politics will inevitably privilege some citizens over others. Thus, liberal neutrality is a myth. At best, liberal states can maintain neutrality between liberal conceptions of the good. While this may be philosophically defensible, it fails acknowledge the costs borne by illiberal citizens of liberal states.

Denying the possibility of a single common ground for politics may avoid the problems faced in neo-Kantian models of politics, but introduces the new problem of situating judgment; for all their shortcomings, neo-Kantian models of politics offer clear models for how to judge political claims. There are two separate risks to judging across cultural lines. The first is the possibility that judges will simply accept all cultural claims as equally legitimate. To the extent that judges treat all cultural claims as if they were equally valuable, they vacate the category of valuable of any meaning. If all cultures are valuable, then none are valuable; value is a relational claim, not an absolute one. In order to be able to call any cultures valuable, there must be cultures that are not valuable. Some cultures must therefore be judged lacking.

This prompts the second risk: that all cultures besides the dominant one will be judged lacking, as the dominant culture will set the standards by which cultural claims are judged. To the extent that this occurs, the goods the judged culture provides to its members will be denigrated. Addressing this risk dominates the essay, and provides the terms on which he develops a relationship between recognition and liberal politics. Judging cultures according to the standards of another culture misrecognizes the other culture. This misrecognition risks destabilizing the cultural horizons and ethical frameworks of the misrecognized cultural members, because of the dialogical nature of the self.

Selves, according to Taylor, are not autonomous in the way Kant describes.
Instead, selves are constructed in conversation with others. We understand who we are in large part because of the ways others see us. Conversation constitute our sense of self; they can either reinforce our sense of who we are or disrupt that sense. Our sense of our self, of who we are, and what we value, is what allows us to make what Taylor calls strong evaluations of the world: we can decide what is valuable and what is valueless by referent to our understanding of who we are. The world does not simply reveal itself through reason. The world must be rendered meaningful. We use our self-understanding to make the world meaningful. Without a strong understanding of who we are, the world cannot be a meaningful place. And so when constitutive conversations reinforce our self-understanding, we are better able to use our sense of self, developed in concert with others, to make decisions in the world. However, when those conversation disrupt our self-understanding, we are less able to act effectively in the world.

And so politics in plural societies can neither judge all cultural claims equally valuable nor judge all cultural claims on the basis of the dominant culture’s values. On what basis can cultural claims be judged that will neither accept them all nor misrecognize them? I locate two of the obvious sources for Taylor to draw on – Hegel and Gadamer – and argue that a third source – his earlier work on language – provides a better basis on which to answer this question.

Taylor owes a substantial intellectual debt to Hegel, especially for the centrality of his concept of recognition for liberalism. But Taylor ultimately presents too compelling an argument for Hegel’s irrelevance in the modern world to look to him for answers to this question of the basis for judgment. According to Taylor, the liberal split between the private and the public prevented the thesis of Enlightenment rationality and antithesis of Romantic expression from reconciling in a synthesis. Instead, liberalism assigned rationality to the public and expression
to the private. These assignments lessened the tension between them, but also prevented that tension from bearing fruit. As such, the synthesis Hegel foresaw never came to pass. Hegelian concepts therefore can hold relatively limited sway over contemporary citizens.

Taylor provides a partial answer to this question by gesturing to Gadamer and his hermeneutic method. In that method, the historian must recognize the distance between her or his historical context – and therefore her or his interpretive lens – and the historical context in which the examined author wrote. According to Gadamer, this distance can be bridged by treating the text as the author’s solution to a problem, and to locate the historical problems faced by the author which the text responds to. I characterize this as a partial answer, insofar as it evokes a compelling model of how judgment in plural societies could simultaneously recognize cultural differences without valuing all possible cultures. But while the model is compelling, Gadamer’s hermeneutics per se cannot provide the grounding for the exercise of judgment. The hermeneutic method reaches across temporal, not cultural, distance. It relies in large part of the presumption of a shared culture between the historian and historical subject. It therefore presumes exactly what the exercise of judgment in a plural society lacks: a common cultural grounding.

Taylor’s location of judgment within a fusion of horizons does, however, constitute a partial answer. Judgment in plural societies should be based in a fused cultural horizon; while Gadamer’s hermeneutic method cannot explain how to fuse cultural horizons, Taylor’s earlier work in language suggests a possible path. In his earlier work, Taylor argues that language should be understood as a set of cultural practices through which cultural members ascribe meaning to the world. Language, in other words, mediates the world in the same way cultural horizons do. Taylor explains the connection by arguing that acculturation happens through
linguistic interactions. Humans reinforce their cultural memberships through their conversations with other cultural members. This description of language’s operation mirrors the roots of his concern with recognition and misrecognition.

Identifying the connection between cultural values and language use points to the path I follow in this dissertation. Since acculturation within a culture happens through conversation, acculturation between cultures must happen the same way. Cultural values are contained in the linguistic interactions between cultural members. Acquiring access to a culture’s values therefore can be treated as acquiring access to a culture’s language. Cultural acquisition is language acquisition. Taylor, unfortunately, does not provide a model of language acquisition. He lacks the model of the practices of fusing horizons required by his politics.

Lev Vygotsky does. His model of language and culture is sufficiently sympathetic to Taylor’s, because of overlapping intellectual debts, to incorporate his model of language acquisition as a model of cultural understanding. Vygotsky’s model of learning occurs through three stages of a zone of proximal development. First, the student and teacher work together on a task to be learnt, during which the teacher explains the reason for each step to the student. This helps coordinate the student’s actions by explaining the reason and meaning of each element of the task. Over time, the student enters the second stage, and begins to internalize the dialog. As the internalization is incomplete, the dialog remains external; the student has an insufficient grasp of the task to accomplish it without the additional coordinating mechanism of external speech. The student is, however, able to take both parts of the dialog; they have partially-internalized the teacher’s role. Finally, the internalization process completes, and the dialog becomes internalized fully. At this point, the dialog remains, but in the guise of inner speech, through which thoughts find themselves. Students who have fully internalized these dialogs
have increased their mastery of the task.

The practice of fusing horizons follows this model. Horizons are fused when students of the culture, through the gradual internalization of cross-cultural dialogs, can render the world meaningful in a way recognizable by members of the culture they are trying to understand. This does not displace the student’s previously existing culture. Instead, it enlarges the horizon in which they can situate their own ethical framework. By enlarging their horizon, the student can now attempt to judge the culture they have learnt. This judgment, based in the fused horizon rather than either the student’s own culture or the petitioning culture, neither misrecognizes the petitioning culture nor automatically accepts all cultures as equally valuable. In doing so, it fulfills the conditions set forward by Taylor in his essay on judgment in plural societies.

8.2 Extensions

Rather than developing a system of rules used to render judgments, this dissertation explains the practices through which judgments could be made. In doing so, it remains necessarily abstract; promoting particular judgments goes beyond the scope of this dissertation insofar as a central point in my argument is that judgment must be situated within the context judged. To this end, in addition to disavowing my own ability to render judgment on the Amish claims in the Yoder case, I also argue that the judiciary is poorly-positioned to render such judgments. Judgment of the Amish case must stem from a judge who has gone through a zone of proximal development with the Amish. Ideally, the Amish would authorize a judge prior to her or his rendering a judgment; the judge needs to understand the world through Amish eyes, but understanding need not always lead to accep-
tance (I can understand the racism of a Ku Klux Klan member without accepting it myself). One obvious extension of this dissertation is the concretization of its principles in particular cases, such as the Amish case.

The other extension I want to discuss in concluding this dissertation goes more fully to the heart of the project. In large part, I argue that culture should be considered, in considering judgment in a plural society, based on its relationship to language: language is a model of culture. One of the primary appeals of this approach is the way language navigates the tension between rules and novelty. Language has rules: rules of grammar, rules of syntax, and rules of vocabulary. But language in its practice also allows speakers considerable freedom. This freedom exists on two levels: substance and form.

First, while the grammar of language use, broadly understood, structures what a speaker will talk about, few determinative rules exist governing topics of conversation. While some speech may strike listeners as inappropriate in given contexts, the speaker is always free to speak of whatever he or she wishes, provided they are willing to accept the approbation of listeners. The content of speech, therefore, is structured but free. Cultural context provides guidelines, but speakers are always able to improvise. This suggests a character to cultural rules that takes cultural structures seriously but not determinatively. Cultural rules operate in the way language use rules operate. They provide guidance which the speaker can accept or reject as they choose.

Second, the improvisations speakers attempt can be judged on a profoundly democratic basis; language is successful insofar as listeners judge it to be successful. Every lexicon accepts new words, but no lexicon accepts every new word. The basis on which words are accepted or rejected lies in the lived practices of speakers. New words or turns of phrase become legitimated through use, rather
than through referent to any system external to the culture itself. Linguistic forms respond directly to changes in use. Moreover, cultures need not accept or reject new language as one entity; some cultural members can accept it, while others reject it. While this freedom has an intuitive appeal, it also prompts a concern which this dissertation could be future research could turn to address.

I treat cultures throughout this dissertation as if they were unified entities. This choice stems from the analytic difficulties that acknowledging the very real divisions within cultures would present. My sense is that, at the level of abstraction this dissertation works at, the difficulties of analyzing the variety of different forms cultural unity or diffusion could take would make the project intractable. But a more fine-grained analysis of particular cultures might be able to acknowledge the variety of standpoints existing within every culture or the different dialects, we might say, within each culture.

Ultimately, however, I think such analyses could stem from the general model presented herein. By modeling cultures as if they were languages, students of particular cultures may be able to locate useful tools for understanding the internal complexities of cultural membership through reference to the tools linguists use to parse linguistic variation. In that way, while this would represent an extension of my work, I suspect this dissertation could provide a valuable starting place and framework for such analyses.
Appendix

9.1 Vygotsky’s Intellectual Context and History

Vygotsky was a Marxist, and as such, his theories must be understood at least in part in a Marxist context. My project in this dissertation is not a Marxist one; it is about the ways in which a mediational theory of mind can enrich our understanding of issues surrounding critical reason’s place in a liberal educational curriculum. In order to use Vygotsky effectively, therefore, I have first explore his theory from a Marxist perspective, and develop a vision of what in Vygotsky is not reliant on Marxist background principles. In some ways, this is an impossible task – Vygotsky claimed his overarching project was the development of a Marxist psychology, and as such, he attempted to root his psychology as thoroughly in Marxist philosophy as he could.\(^1\) However, the elements of Marxism most important to Vygotsky were the elements that we can trace back to Hegel through Lenin. This is not to say

\(^1\)This is not the only way in which Russian scientists attempted to deal with Marxism. For example, Vygotsky’s student Luria is now thought to have adopted only the faintest of Marxist modes as a way of escaping the central Party’s attention. Bakhtin wrote under two different pseudonyms, according to recent scholarship, and still found himself arrested by the Party. I expand on both of the examples at length below.
that Vygotsky is best understood as a Hegelian; his commitment to a form of materialism and reconfiguration of the relative place of the material and idealist worlds in human life preclude that label.²

In this section, I give an overview of the intellectual milieu into which Vygotsky was born, concentrating on those books that he and his associates are known or thought to have read. I follow with a brief biography of Vygotsky, drawn primarily from Alex Kozulin’s excellent essay, ”Vygotsky in Context,” ([Kozulin, 1986] that precedes the 1986 edition of Thought and Language. I move from there into a review of the literature that examines Vygotsky’s influences and connection to the West; I break the literature down into four parts: Marx, Mead and the American pragmatists, Hegel and other German thinkers, and Ilyenkov and other Russian thinkers. This establishes an intellectual context in which I then lay out a basic interpretation of Vygotsky’s concept of mind, consciousness, and how language operates to create the latter from the former. In the following chapter, I take Vygotsky’s mediational theory of mind, and describe a combination with Taylor’s writings on the West to help establish a new direction for liberal thinkers concerned with an education to reason in a liberal society characterized by openness to opposition to reason.

Lev Semenovich Vygotsky was born to a middle-class Russian-Jewish family in 1896.³ He was educated privately until middle-school, at which point he enrolled in a Jewish gymnasium. Semyon Dobkin’s essay ”Ages and Days” in Levitin’s One Is Not Born a Personality claims that as early as high-school, Vygotsky was

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²Indeed, as I argue in later in this chapter, critics of Vygotsky misunderstand the role of individuality in Vygotsky precisely because they misconstrue his relationship to Marxism and German thought, as in [Wertsch, 1991]

³As noted above, this sketch is largely drawn from [Kozulin, 1986]. I note where I incorporate other sources.
enthralled with Hegel and dialectical reasoning.\footnote{[Davydov, 1982] 26} Vygotsky graduated from gymnastics with honors and a gold medal, which normally would have given him a high probability of qualifying for admission into Moscow University’s Medical School, but an executive order in 1913 shifted the Jewish quota of three percent from competition to lots. Vygotsky fortunately qualified, and attended for one semester before transferring to the law school. Bored with his classes (his attendance at law school was a compromise with his family, who had wanted him to finish medical school), he enrolled concurrently at Shaniavsky University in Moscow, a private institution housing many former professors who had left Moscow University to escape the regime of the Tsar’s Minister of Education. He majored in history and philosophy, and developed a keen interest in art criticism.

Vygotsky’s first major work was an analysis of Hamlet, \textit{The Psychology of Art}, published to positive reviews in 1915.\footnote{[Vygotsky, 1978] 141} In it, the young Vygotsky incorporated elements of Structuralism\footnote{Notably Jakobson, Jakubinsky and Shklovsky. [Kozulin, 1986] xiii} as well as Formalism. He did not contain his readings to literary theory only, however. According to Kozulin, Vygotsky read widely in Spinoza, Descartes, Hegel and Marx, Husserl, and especially James; both Vygotsky and his followers were especially taken with \textit{The Varieties of Religious Experience}. James’s work had a lasting affect on Vygotsky’s literary theories, which culminated in his doctoral thesis, defended in 1917, \textit{The Psychology of Art}, which expanded his earlier essay on Hamlet, but incorporated elements of Freudian psychoanalysis to focus his investigation on purely human functions.\footnote{Both ‘investigation’ and ‘human’ are important to understanding the importance of this work on his later work. Vygotsky regarded psychology as investigative because it could not confine itself to the directly observable, but rather had to investigate and discover the hidden through indirect methods. Vygotsky was also always concerned first and foremost with humanity and modes of life that were peculiarly human; hence his interest in language as a mediating force and the subsequent centrality of consciousness in his writings.} This new emphasis on
psychological investigation led Vygotsky to submit and present a paper at the Second Psychoneurological Congress on January 6th, 1924.

The paper, "The Methodology of Reflexological and Psychological Studies," promoted the role of consciousness in psychological studies as an important explanatory category for Soviet Behavioralists, especially Pavlovians. As Luria relates, "Both Bekhterev and Pavlov were well known for the opposition to subjective psychology, in which consciousness as a concept had to remain in psychology, arguing that it must be studied by objective means. Although Vygotsky failed to convince everyone of the correctness of his view, it was clear that this man from a small provincial town in western Russia was an intellectual force who would have to be listened to."\(^8\) Luria invited Vygotsky and his wife, Roza, to the Moscow Institute of Psychology, and they moved in the fall of that year, with Vygotsky accepting a position at the institute alongside Luria and Leont’ev. According to Luria, the three of them, dubbing themselves the Troika, began a project of assembling a new approach to psychological processes; this work would take up the rest of Vygotsky’s short life.\(^9\) They began through a criticism of Pavlov and Wundt that expanded on the themes Vygotsky introduced in his paper earlier that year. During this time, the three read widely, especially in German circles; Luria cites Kurt Lewin, Heinz Werner, William Stern, Karl and Charlotte Buhler and Wolfgang Kohler among their German influences.\(^10\) Piaget, the subject of Vygotsky’s last and most well-known book, *Thought and Language*, was an important influence first read during this time period as well.

Deciphering Vygotsky’s influences is particularly complicated by the Soviet system under which Vygotsky worked. Intellectuals worked under the threat of their...
work, and therefore their selves, being found to be out of step with the Communist Party’s teachings, sometimes even years after having written; Kozulin offers the aftermath of Vygotsky’s work in the Soviet Union as a textbook example of how the Communist Party’s influence on Russian science served to retard progress and obscure connections.

Vygotsky’s clearest intellectual forerunners are Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels. Growing up during the Bolshevik Revolution and triumph of the Red Army, Vygotsky and his classmates write about the atmosphere of freedom and possibility that Marxism generated in intellectual circles which suffused their work; any advance seemed, more than possible, almost probable, and solutions to some of mankind’s most constant problems felt just barely out of reach. Without an autobiography, it can be difficult to see precisely how Marxism influenced Vygotsky’s work, but it comes through, both in Vygotsky’s own claims regarding his work, and the work of later scholars who have excavated some of the missing linkages.

There are important reasons to suspect that Vygotsky and his followers may have overstated Vygotsky’s debt to Marx and Marxism. Starting in 1929, “Soviet psychologists were expected to derive psychological categories directly from the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Such a turn of events seriously undermined Vygotsky’s research program, which relied upon such ‘bourgeois’ theories and methods as psychoanalysis, Gestalt psychology, and the cross-cultural analysis of consciousness. All these trends were labeled anti-Marxist, and Vygotsky’s

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12See [Vygotsky, 1986] and [Cole et al., 2005] for more on this.

13What remain of Vygotsky’s work is, at time, sketchy, especially in his notes; while his record of work is better preserved than, say, Socrates’, most English language publications have required extensive reconstruction by a small cadre of scholars, including James Wertsch and Michael Cole.
work pronounced 'eclectic' and 'erroneous'.”

Luria and Leont’ev, Vygotsky’s collaborators moved into different fields of work around this time, and Vygotsky’s students moved to Kharkov and founded the Kharkovite school of psychological analysis. This school, led by Vladimir Zinchenko sought to distance itself from Vygotsky’s work through an insistence on the importance of the so-called ‘actual relations with reality’.


Mikhail Bakhtin provides a clear example of the role Stalinist policies has had in making scholarship on Soviet-era Russian thinkers difficult. Bakhtin avoided a death sentence only because of the earliness of his 1929 arrest (the reason for which is unknown, but thought to be related to his work reconciling Christianity with Marxism). As a result of these early troubles, it is now difficult for modern scholars to simply attribute works to him; there are at least three names, including ‘Bakhtin’ under which he is suspected to have published post-exile, and serious debate exists as to what was his work, what was not, and what was partially his

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14 [Vygotsky, 1986] xliii
15 [Vygotsky, 1978] 5
16 Coincidentally, Cole and Levitin credit Zinchenko, the leader of the Kharkovite school that had earlier rejected Vygotsky’s work once it had been deemed reactionary, for editing the epilogue so artfully that Soviet censors approved it, despite a series of revelations embarrassing to the Party which only Soviet citizens could decode: “At the same time, the absence of just these materials made it impossible for English language readers, unfamiliar with Soviet reality, to understand the real circumstances of Luria’s life and work.” [Cole et al., 2005] xv
17 [Cole et al., 2005] 248-252. Note that Cole and Levitin lay nearly all the blame for this at Stalin’s feet.
18 See [Wertsch, 1985b] 48, and [Clark and Holquist, 1984]
work. These are just a few examples of the kind of difficulties faced by Soviet scholars and the difficulties modern scholars have as a result of the coping strategies necessarily adopted by writers under Stalin.

The most recent interpretive work on Vygotsky has emphasized his breaks with the prevalent Marxism of his times. Rene Van der Veer, both in [van der Veer, 1993] and [van der Veer, 1996], offers evidence that Vygotsky’s contemporaries, notably Leont’ev, had difficulty in seeing the Marxism in Vygotsky’s work; Leont’ev argued in 1935 that Vygotsky’s emphasis on word meaning and cultural influences on the individual neglected material reality and its cultural reflection, economic classes. In Leont’ev’s view, this placed Vygotsky within both the French and German sociolinguistic traditions, exemplified by Humboldt and Shpet; for Vygotsky, culture was best understood through language rather than control over the means of production, which put him at odds with Soviet Marxism. Nikolaj Veresov goes further that Van der Veer does in connecting Vygotsky to German thought rather than Marxist. In [Veresov, 2005], Veresov points to Gustav Shpet as a primary contributor to a young Vygotsky’s approach to language, since Vygotsky had heard him lecture between 1913 and 1916. Veresov identifies two parts of Vygotsky’s thought likely influenced by Shpet. First, both theorists attempted to combine, ”individual senses and social meanings into a single structure,” which did not lose its objective nature by falling into pure subjectivism. Secondly, both theorists explicitly reject monicausal approaches in favor of deal-nature systems: in Shpet’s case, natural and spiritual, for Vygotsky natural and social. According to Veresov, Vygotsky would have been unable to cite Shpet’s influence. To do so

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19 See [Wertsch, 1985b] 48-50 for a fairly complete discussion of this debate.
20 [van der Veer, 1996] 259. What matters here is not whether or not Leont’ev is correct (although I argue below in my section on James Wertsch that Leont’ev, along with Wertsch, is in fact correct), but rather that Vygotsky’s contemporaries criticized his lack of a Marxist foundation.
21
would be to invoke a seemingly-bourgeois and decadent psychology that deviated too far from materialist orthodoxy.

9.2 Hegel and the German Psychological Tradition

The intellectual links between Vygotsky and Hegel have been less well-established in the secondary literature on Vygotsky, but are vital in understanding the breaks Vygotsky makes with Marxist philosophy. I argue in the final section of this chapter that Marxist interpretations of Vygotsky misunderstand the relationship between language and consciousness in Vygotsky’s writings. They do because of a lack of focus, on the part of Vygotsky’s interpreters, on the importance of Nineteenth Century German thought in Vygotsky’s philosophical rooting. Specifically, we can see clear foreshadowing of Vygotsky’s use of language as an intellectual and analytic category and his concern with individual consciousness’s relationship to communities in the work of Herder and Hegel.

This absence of focus is particularly curious because of the importance modern scholars have seen in a link between Vygotsky and the American pragmatist school, especially George Herbert Mead and the Chicago Pragmatists. A small literature examines the ways in which Mead and Vygotsky are similar, usually concentrating on the thinkers’ mutual rejection of Cartesian dualism. The specific ways in which this similarity cashes out varies from writer to writer, but some

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22 The literature emphasizes Mead, but also addresses similarities between Vygotsky and Dewey. See Garrison, 1995 724-727, and especially Popkewitz, 1998 for more on this connection. The Popkewitz is especially interesting, as it argues that Dewey and Vygotsky were connected through the early Twentieth Century ‘New Man’ projects, which is the only suggestion of a political, rather than philosophical or scientific, connection between Vygotsky and any Western thinker.

23 See, for example, Joas, 1985; Glock, 1986; Kozulin, 1986; Vari-Szilagyi, 1991
consensus seems to exist that the mutual rejection of Cartesian dualism led both Mead and Vygotsky to model the development of the human mind around the social relationships a mind is involved in.\textsuperscript{24} A full explanation of the rich work of Mead goes well beyond the scope of this project. However, the essential points in Mead’s argument are that the mind is epiphenomenal to social interactions, interaction with the world is always at least partially mediated, and that language and conversation are important mediators. Glock’s 1986 article, \textit{Vygotsky and Mead on the Self, Meaning and Internalisation} is typical of this genre. It traces parallels between Mead and Vygotsky back to their shared understandings of three theoretical elements: a socially generated self, the process of internalization, and the beginnings of language meaning and use.\textsuperscript{25}

Scholars examining both Vygotsky’s relationship to Marxism and the connections between Vygotsky and Mead and the Chicago pragmatists have largely neglected the role German psychology and philosophy may have played in Vygotsky’s thought. This is puzzling: the secondary literature on Vygotsky’s influences includes numerous thinkers influenced by Nineteenth Century German thinkers, among them G. G. Shpet\textsuperscript{27}, Mead\textsuperscript{28}, Dewey\textsuperscript{29}, Humboldt\textsuperscript{30}, and Wundt\textsuperscript{31}. Under-

\textsuperscript{24}See [Miller, 1982]
\textsuperscript{25}131. Other authors note other similarities. [Vari-Szilagyi, 1991] emphasizes their common interest in a theory of action.\textsuperscript{26} [Glock, 1986] suggests that both thinkers were responding to a similar problem: the gulf between introspectionism and behaviorism; according to Glock, both Mead and Vygotsky found this dichotomy to be a false one; behavior comes from a self, and that self is in part epiphenomenal to this history (which includes the culture) of the individual in question. For Glock, the parallels in their thought are the result of parallel problems in the disciplines they respond to, rather than any common intellectual ancestors.
\textsuperscript{27}[Veresov, 2005], who uses this connection to criticize presumptions of Marxism on Vygotsky’s part.
\textsuperscript{28}[Joas, 1985]. See above for a more complete discussion of this literature.
\textsuperscript{29}[Garrison, 1995] and [Popkewitz, 1998]
\textsuperscript{30}[van der Veer, 1993], [van der Veer, 1996] and [Veresov, 2005]
\textsuperscript{31}[Cole and Scribner, 1974] and [Cole, 1995], espacially on the \textit{Völkerpsychologie} 24-37. Of especial note should be Cole’s discussion of J. S. Mill 24-26, drawing on the connection between Mill and German Romanticism. See [Berlin, 1999] and [Berlin, 2002]
standing Vygotsky’s relationship to earlier German thinkers allows us to see two things. First, it shows us the places where Vygotsky breaks with Russian Marxism. This is important, because the next chapter begins constructing a model of the developing self for use in liberal polities; this construction relies on understanding which parts of Vygotsky’s work rely on Marxism and which do not. Secondly, it allows us to see the places where Vygotsky breaks with his German roots intellectual roots.\textsuperscript{32} The thinkers we can learn the most about Vygotsky by studying are Herder, and most importantly Hegel.

Some elements of Herder’s thought are clearly reflected in Vygotsky’s writings, especially in their mutual concern with language as constitutive of human selves. Herder and Vygotsky share a rejection of any presumption that children understand the signification role of language; for both thinkers, that development is what must be explained, not what explains language acquisition.\textsuperscript{33} They both emphasize the important role reflection plays in language, and therefore in consciousness, which is based in the ways reflection and language are mutually constructed; to be conscious is to be able to use language to mean things, which requires linguistic reflection on the language one uses.\textsuperscript{34} For both thinkers, our consciousness is reflected in our capacity to express ourselves in language, which causes us to inhabit the words we choose. But these similarities only go so far. Herder is far more of an expressivist than Vygotsky, which stems from Herder’s naturalist vision of nationalism: “Language is the obvious basis for a theory of nationalism founded on

\textsuperscript{32}It may seem strange to invoke both a connection and a limitation to that connection in the same section. But I believe it is important. In underscoring where Vygotsky differs from Nineteenth Century German thinkers, we can better understand what is unique about Vygotsky, and prevent ourselves from attempting to apply his models or theories in ways that his differences with these thinkers preclude. The differences between Vygotsky and the Germans are as illustrative as the parallels.

\textsuperscript{33}For Herder, this is a response to [de Condillac, 2001]; for Vygotsky, a response to Piaget in [Vygotsky, 1986].

\textsuperscript{34}See [Rousseau and Herder, 1986] and [Vygotsky, 1986]
the expressivist notion of the special character of each people, language conceived in Herderian fashion, that is, in terms of an ‘expressive’ theory.”

In a 1987 reply to Glock’s article, Rene van der Veer suggests that the connection, noted earlier, between Mead and Vygotsky is the result of a mutual appreciation of Hegel. Van der Veer cites his 1985 paper, ”Similarities between the Theories of G. H. Mead and L. S. Vygotskij [sic]: An Explanation?” in this brief reply. In it, van der Veer suggests that the reason Mead and Vygotsky read so similarly is because both can be understood as intellectual descendents of Hegel.

While a number of scholars have connected Mead to Hegel, the connection between Vygotsky and Hegel is significantly less well-developed; only van der Veer’s 1985 paper examines this connection in any detail.

There are two primary ways to connect Vygotsky to Hegel. The first is through the struggle between the subject and the other that Hegel explores in the first

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36 Van der Veer characterizes both Mead and Vygotsky as theorists for whom mental development, especially of a concept of a ‘self’ occurs through social interaction. ([van der Veer, 1985] 2-5) For Mead, the mother treats utterances the child makes as parts of a conversation, which gradually leads the child to adopt a conversational mode of interaction, which serves to reinforce the differences between the self of the child and the other of the mother (for the child). Thus, the model of the child as a prisoner in a cell, who develops abilities to free himself, is incorrect; this presumes an existing self that develops tools for expression, rather than understanding mental development as the ontogenesis of the self. Vygotsky’s criticisms of Piaget lead him, in the same vein, to reject the prisoner in a cell (or solitary scientist, as other critics of Piaget have described Piaget’s model) model, and to treat the self as epiphenomenal to social interaction and the use of signs and tools, of which language is the most important. These characterizations, though brief, strike me as accurate in the essence.

37 Scholars describe this connection in two ways. First, some writers see indirect (mediated, if you will) links between Mead and Hegel. These writers emphasize the ways in Hegel has influenced the American pragmatist school of thought, which includes John Dewey and, more noteworthy for this project, William James; recall that Vygotsky was especially taken with The Varieties of Religious Experience while writing The Psychology of Art. Other scholars ([Miller, 1982] for example), see the connection as direct, and attribute Mead’s model to Hegel’s The Phenomenology of Spirit.

38 Other sources treat it filtered through Marxism. The latter is, I think, particularly problematic, as I allude to above; Soviet scientists had little choice but to filter their theories through a Marxist lens, which should therefore introduce considerable doubt into any intellectual historian as to the real role of Marxism in the work of mid-Twentieth Century Soviet scientists, especially those in the social sciences.
section of Chapter Four of the *Phenomenology* and the resultant identities, and the second is the importance of *activity* as a human category. The first connection makes intuitive sense, and I take it to be central not just to the connection between Vygotsky and Hegel, but more importantly (for my project), it is central to the connection between Vygotsky and Taylor through Hegel. Hegel’s story of the development of, first, an authentic sense of self as the result of recognition by another who is demonstrably not oneself\(^{39}\), and second, the ways in which the assignation of social categories of ‘master’ and ‘servant’ (or ‘lord’ and ‘bondsman’) fill out the substance of that sense of self\(^{40}\) do seem to argue for a model of the development of the mind that is inherently social; for Hegel in the *Phenomenology*, it seems fair to say that the concept of the ‘self’ occurs through social interaction; Hegel provides additional support for this view throughout the *Phenomenology*, including his rejection of objective universal knowledge in favor of a knowledge aware of its preconditions and assumptions.\(^{41}\) The fact that he is a position in social space makes the self-conscious (that is, conscious of the fact of having a self) subject worry about his independence: he needs, “his conception of himself mirrored back to him in the acts of recognition from another agent.”\(^{42}\) This position in social

\(^{39}\)Hegel, 1977 Chapter Four, Section A  
\(^{40}\)Hegel, 1977 Chapter Four, Section B  
\(^{41}\)Hegel, 1977 Chapter Two, Part Three. See also [Solomon, 1983] 179; I reference Solomon here, because van der Veer relies on Solomon’s *In the Spirit of Hegel* (1983), and his peculiarly anti-metaphysical take on Hegel’s *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. While Solomon’s interpretation of Hegel is within the mainstream of the secondary literature on Hegel, it is neither recent nor uncontroversial. A more recent, less controversial interpretation of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, [Pinkard, 1994], supports van der Veer’s first claim. According to Pinkard, “a self-conscious agent is conscious of a world of sensuously perceived objects that exist independently of him, and he is aware of himself as a position in ‘social space,’ as *taking things as such and such*.” (47, author’s emphasis) Note that this supports van der Veer’s claim, made through Solomon, that the Hegelian model of the self is inherently tied to the social, as well as my contention that Hegel rejects objective universal knowledge in favor of a knowledge aware of its social nature. See also [Pippin, 1989].  
\(^{42}\)Solomon, 1983 53
space is determined in large part by the relationship one has to both others and to
the material world; a slave who is used to mediate his master’s relationship to the
material world has a different self, because of his relationship to both the material
world and his master. Thus, Hegel saw the self emerge through social interaction,
which leads to his characterization of geist as a reconciliation of the individual
and their culture\textsuperscript{43}; this mirrors Vygotsky’s understanding of mental functions
as essentially cultural.\textsuperscript{44} The strength of the first connection between Mead and
Vygotsky to Hegel is important to understand, because the second connection is, I
think, weaker than van der Veer presents. While followers of Vygotsky (especially
Michael Cole, James Wertsch, and Yrjö Engeström) have gone on to emphasize
the importance of activity as the unit of sociological analysis, some of them have
done so through a criticism of Vygotsky for not having moved in this direction
himself.\textsuperscript{45}

More importantly to my project, this characterization of Hegel’s connection
to Vygotsky also introduces the connection between Vygotsky and Taylor. While
Taylor, in [Taylor, 1975], rejects the possibility of Hegel’s vision of the modern
world coming to pass because of the failures of the modern constitutional state,
he accepts Hegel’s vision of the historically situated central question that faces
modern man: how to combine radical autonomy and Romantic unity. And in
accepting this question, and in tying it to the development of the modern self in
the way he does in Sources of the Self, Taylor implicitly accepts Hegel’s model of
the relationship between the self and social interactions. Taylor’s break with Hegel
\textsuperscript{43}[Hegel, 1977] Chapter Six, Section A, subsection A, Part Two. See also [Solomon, 1983]
196-203 and 284).

\textsuperscript{44}See[Kozulin, 1986] xxv; “Vygotsky used the Hegelian term ‘superseded’ (aufgehoben) to des-
ignate the transformation of natural functions into cultural ones [which corresponds to higher
functions].”

\textsuperscript{45}James Wertsch makes this criticism, for example, in both [Wertsch, 1985b] and
[Wertsch, 1991]. I address this at length below.
is over the location of those social interactions that becomes constitutive of the self; he sees each of us having the power to choose, rather than having to use the state.\footnote{Taylor, 1994}

And this is one important way in which Vygotsky breaks with Hegel and the German tradition.\footnote{Especially Herder. See [Taylor, 1989] 415} While an important connection between Vygotsky and Hegel (along with other Nineteenth Century German thinkers) exists, Vygotsky’s focus on psychology, rather than politics. This comes through in two ways. First, we can see this in the ways the master/bondsman model of recognition fails to be mirrored by Vygotsky; for Vygotsky, recognition is not hierarchical. Our social nature comes from co-equal participation in a linguistic community or activity, rather than a hierarchical distribution of power. Vygotsky’s theories are essentially social or cultural, not political. The second is his break from Hegel’s claim that the state is the proper community in and from which the self constitutes itself. For Hegel, this is important because the self can be linked to only one community. Vygotsky implicitly rejects this argument in his distinction between word meaning and word sense.\footnote{See below. Also see [Wertsch, 1991] on the links between Vygotsky and Bakhtin; these are important to understand, as dialogicity in Bakhtin rejects explicitly what Vygotsky rejects implicitly in Hegel’s state-centrism.} The distinction between meaning and sense is the culmination of Vygotsky’s model of the mind and its relationship to other minds. Understanding how it works, and why it is important, requires understanding Vygotsky’s general model of the human mind and how the higher mental functions are and come to be.\footnote{Indeed, Vygotsky refers to himself at times as a geneticist, not because of his interest in heredity or DNA, but because of his belief that sophisticated mental elements and their use are based on their origins. See [Vygotsky, 1986], [Vygotsky, 1986], and [Wertsch, 1985b]. Thus, how mental functions operate depends on how they have come to be.}
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