

Taylor on Recovering the Good for Ethical Renewal: Dr. Gord Carkner

Abstract: Many Christians today are discouraged by the moral drift in Western society and wonder if they can have any influence in a 'post-secular' society with such a strong emphasis on individual choice, taste and radical freedom. Freedom currently in the West is often claimed as an ontological position, a reality within which one can justifiably choose one's own moral parameters and construct or re-invent one's self (Foucault). Christian believers feel powerless and a bit odd for holding any moral convictions, but also feel themselves slipping from their own standards because of the cultural drift away from normativity. Where can they turn for help? My suggestion is that Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor can be of strategic assistance in the recovery of a language of the good; it includes a language that a 'mixed audience' can understand and engage. I present in this article an outline of his moral ontology of the good, which reveals that aspiration to the good can be a robust challenge to the solipsism entailed in the ideology of the aesthetic in a radical definition of freedom. Is it freedom or the good that is the valid marker of our moral quest? Moral ontology is central to all other assumptions and convictions about the moral self, its spirituality and its identity, and therefore central to the current debate amidst the crisis of moral consensus in the West.

Taylor proposes a vital relationship with the good, within the context of community, with a narrative trajectory as part of robust and healthy moral self-constitution. His analysis of morality is tightly interwoven with his analysis of the self: Taylor (1989, p. 3) argues that the human self is an inherently moral entity; self is always situated in moral space and addressing moral questions: 'Selfhood and the good ... or selfhood and morality, turn out to be inextricably intertwined themes.' The moral ontology proposed by Taylor sets up a lively tension and contrast with radical continental philosophers like Michel Foucault; it challenges at points, reveals what is hidden beneath the surface, and it shows what is left out of the *aesthetic-freedom*. This dialogue is deemed fruitful because there are insights to be gained by comparing and contrasting a more simple and minimalist ontology (Foucault) with a broader, richer and more complex one (Taylor). There is of course beauty in the simplicity of Foucault, but there remain problems and gaps within this simplicity. This is a good route to comprehending

Foucault's concept of freedom within a larger context. Taylor respects what Foucault is trying to offer but raises some good questions. The discussion begins with a summary of Taylor's case for moral realism

A. Taylor's Case for Moral Realism

The argument for moral realism is five-fold. In terms of moral givens, Taylor argues that certain perennial features of the self are present irrespective of culture or the way they are expressed or understood. He starts his analysis with the question (the phenomenon) of how humans operate as moral beings in their actual moral experiences, and how they reflect upon those experiences. He is interested in both theory and praxis. Beginning with humans and the way they experience morality, he claims that the most plausible explanation of morality is one that takes seriously a human's perception of the *independence* of goods. He does not want to substitute a philosophical abstraction for how people live and think. Firstly, he argues strongly for the ubiquity of moral intuitions and judgments in human experience. These are intuitions that transcend basic human desires for survival, sex, or self-realization. They are also referred to as *second-order desires*, *strong evaluations* or *qualitative discriminations*: each of these terms is used by Taylor. One notes immediately his important emphasis on the *quality of the will*. This concept of second-order desires appeals to the ancient idea of *the good*, one which although interwoven with the self, transcends the self in significant ways. Secondly, he argues that there is a need for a larger moral picture to facilitate the task of making sense of moral experience (debates, deliberations, decisions and actions). He calls this picture (map) a moral framework or *horizon*. Each framework is made up of several goods held together in a coherent relationship with one another, producing a moral worldview. The

moral self is in a dialectical relationship with its framework; it is not a static set of conditions. Thirdly, he recognizes that there is a defining and dominant good within each moral framework, which he calls the *hypergood*. The hypergood is the highest good and operates a controlling influence over the other goods within the framework; it defines the overall character of the framework and thus is central to the discussion of the moral self. Fourthly, Taylor recognizes a narrative and communal texture to the pursuit of the good in moral self-constitution; the good cannot be sustained in isolation of other moral interlocutors. Humans interpret their lives in narrative and communal terms as they pursue moral goods. This narrative articulation helps the self to find a unity and a trajectory or direction amidst the complexity of moral experience and amidst the plurality of goods vying for one's attention. Fifthly, Taylor speaks of the *source* of the moral, which he refers to as the *constitutive good*. The constitutive good (a category of moral motivation) gives meaning to and empowers, the hypergood and the other life goods within the moral framework. It provides the constitutive ground of the worth or value of the life goods, and inspires the self to live the good life, in relationship with certain goods; this is a very significant dimension rather unique to Taylor as a twentieth century moral philosopher. Moral identity therefore is interwoven with a complex pursuit of the good in Taylor's ontology. He discerns these five categories as *givens*, structural features that are common to the life of all morally healthy human beings. Each dimension is essential to moral *human* being; Taylor wants to problematize the occlusion or exclusion of such parameters, such qualitative distinctions for moral reasoning, because he believes that within the life of the self, there is a vibrant multiplicity of goods to be identified, recognized, embraced, acted upon and pursued. Taylor emphasizes the

importance of being circumspect about these goods; he means to challenge contemporary moral philosophy, with a moral ontology of the *self at its best*, a self with ideals.

In contrast, as an anthropological nominalist and anti-essentialist, Foucault has suggested that there is no objective, stable human moral nature either independent of culture or historical formation, or independent of one's own private self-construction. Therefore, on his view, the constructing forces of society and government are in tension with the aesthetic constructing force of the individual self; this is the key battle line of the self. Culture tends to determine the meaning one assigns to, and imposes upon, the world around, and what one takes as *human* and *natural*. Therefore, what is often called *human nature* is very temporary, contingent, local and changeable. The quest for freedom means that change is necessary; every self is involved in the process of defining and shaping its self. There is no universal nature, in Foucault's mind, other than either the ability to acquire or adopt a culture from society or the nature individuals construct within themselves; moral selves are either a cultural product or a self-made product (or perhaps some combination of the two).

Therefore, Foucault's moral ontology of aesthetic-freedom (artistic *poesis*, self-articulation of one's freedom) entails a whole *meta-position* of relativism, multiplicity, difference and diversity, but also one that excludes language of the good as defined by Taylor. For Foucault, there exists no ultimate or final moral position or common set of moral parameters, which is to be seen as more justified than any other; that one position would entail oppression of all others; in this, he agrees with many of his fellow moderns. Attempts at claiming such justification would be seen by him as a fatal flaw. His relativist moral ontology means that he does not believe that it is possible to argue rationally for

the superiority of one moral construction over another, no *totalizing* or final position; this would be to court *domination*. All moral positions are seen as problematic and dangerous, implicated with power, regime-biased. Ethics, in that sense, is *history all the way down* or a historical-cultural predisposition, and therefore must be constantly put under the critical knife. In Foucault's view, moral self-constitution changes from place to place and era to era, and ultimately, individual to individual. The moral vision he offers in an age of moral crisis and nihilism (loss of moral consensus) is that the individual self might gain increased control over self-construction and escape dominating power strategies; the creativity and originality of self is the road to freedom from domination for the individual. He does not offer hope for society as a whole in his ethics; freedom has an individual shape and it is a contest, a struggle (*agonisme*). One must assertively choose and manage one's own identity. Thus, the stage is set for a debate between these two moral philosophers on the contours of moral ontology.

B. Intuitions of Qualitative Discriminations

Taylor recognizes the existence of a plurality of moral positions and constructions, but in tension with Foucault's view, he has a conviction that some features of the self are universal regarding moral self-constitution. He contends that there are certain features of the moral self and its world that are endemic or common to all healthy humans. These features will be explored in this section. He recognizes plurality in the shape of human moralities, but does not follow the tradition of pluralism or the strict constructivism of Foucault. He argues for these features (dimensions of the self) according to the phenomena of reflective human experience.

Ruth Abbey (2000, p. 29), a Taylor scholar, comments that: 'He does not suggest that in trying to explain morality we imagine a moral world devoid of humans and attempt to separate its subject-dependent properties from its objective or real properties.' He begins by claiming that all humans have certain moral intuitions, and all make moral judgments, including judgments about the behaviour of others. They all have a qualitative experience of their moral choices and deliberations; moral agency is not reducible to free choice alone. For example, he points out that respect for human life is one of the deepest and most universally held moral instincts across cultures (1989, pp. 8, 11-12), which includes a concern for the Other; it is not merely a characteristic of self-survival. For example, he writes, 'Human beings command respect in all societies; the West articulates this in the language of rights' (Taylor, 1989, p. 11). All societies condemn murder and even lesser forms of abuse. When this respect is not shown to someone, it is judged negatively; there is moral conviction, a deep intuition about such behaviour. One exercises a moral or qualitative evaluation of the situation, appealing to some moral standard or moral good which transcends at some level the situation and the parties involved.

Taylor further claims that these strong evaluations are humanly inescapable.

Our moral reactions have two facets ... On the one side, they are almost like instincts, comparable to our love of sweet things, or our aversion to nauseous substances ... on the other, they seem to involve claims, implicit or explicit, about the nature and status of human beings. From the second side, a moral reaction is an assent to, an affirmation of a given ontology of the human ... The whole way in which we think, reason, argue, and question ourselves about morality supposes that our moral reactions have these two sides: that they are not only "gut" feelings but also implicit acknowledgments of claims concerning the objects. (1989, pp. 5 & 7)

His form of realism means that the emphasis includes both objective and subjective aspects (poles) of self and morality, both a subjective and objective *givenness*. Humans do not just act, but regularly evaluate, praise and condemn other's actions and motives,

and their own speech and conduct, always appealing to certain *objective* standards. According to Taylor, humans are *strong evaluators* by nature; strong evaluation is an essential feature of identity and a permanent feature of moral life (1989, pp. 3-4, 14, 15). He sees this capacity for this evaluating or judging desires to be a distinctively and universally human one. He believes that human beings experience the goods that command their respect in a non-anthropocentric way, that is, as not deriving solely from human will or choice, nor depending only on the fact of individual affirmation of their value. He challenges the projectivist hypothesis (Taylor, 1989, p. 342). Human interpretation is involved (moral convictions are human convictions), but there is also an objective element in this evaluation process that Taylor wants to explicate.

Taylor's term *strong evaluation* comes from Harry Frankfurt's (1971, pp. 5-20) argument about *second order desires*, that is, desires one has about one's desires, evaluative desires (such as respect, fairness or justice) that transcend other desires (sex, safety, food and survival). These are 'standards by which basic desires and choices are judged' (Taylor, 1989, p. 20). Humans experience a range of desires, but do not view them all equally; some are seen as higher or more admirable than others. There is a hierarchy and contrast in human desires (Taylor, 1989, pp. 4, 20, 47); individuals do not see all their values or desires as being of equal worth. Strong evaluation is inherently contrastive and hierarchical; it appeals to certain goods that are independent of the self and human choice (Taylor, 1989, pp. 58, 68, 74). These goods are always related to the human moral situation, never mere abstract categories. Abbey (2000) captures the nuance of Taylor's view.

The best account of morality must be one that incorporates the fact that individuals experience goods as being worthy of their admiration and respect for reasons that do not depend on their choice of them. Beginning with humans and the way they experience morality, Taylor claims that the most plausible

explanation of morality is one that takes seriously humans' perception of the independence of the goods. (p. 28)

This *independence of goods* is vital to the debate between Taylor and Foucault; it is a point where they differ strongly.

Furthermore, as Flanagan (1996, p. 147) notes in his commentary on Taylor, this concept of strong evaluations is both descriptive of how people are and act, and also normative regarding what is required for full personhood. Individuals do make these working moral assumptions, says Taylor, even if they are not conscious about relating to, evaluating, sorting and ordering goods. The process is often tacit, unconscious or intuitive. Taylor (1985a) emphasizes this essential point and this fine distinction:

I want to speak of strong evaluations when the goods putatively identified are not seen as constituted as good by the fact that we desire them, but rather are seen as normative for desire. That is, they are seen as goods which we ought to desire, even if we do not, goods such that we show ourselves up as inferior or bad by our not desiring them. (p. 120)

There is an attempt to recover some dimension of the normative and a hierarchy of goods.

Moral realism for him, means that (Taylor, 1989, pp. 4, 20) strongly valued goods command the respect of individuals because of their intrinsic value, not one's choice to value them; they are experienced as making calls or demands upon individuals, rather than being freely or arbitrarily chosen by them. This means that Taylor takes moral experience of the good seriously and imputes ontological significance to it; it not just a preferential option. He is resisting the slide towards moral subjectivism, which suggests that one's choice among the various goods can only be justified according to individual preferences or inclinations. These preferences, claims Taylor, can be judged objectively and rationally discussed. Taylor claims that there is an inherent quality (*goodness*) in the good that individual selves ought to recognize. The good is the key element in morality.

Taylor (1989, p. 42) offers a key test of a good: Can it be the basis of attitudes of admiration or contempt? It raises questions about ‘what kind of life is worth living ... what would be a rich, meaningful life, as against an empty one?’ (Ibid.). One can easily discern the difference in the goods appealed to between medical relief work and international prostitution or child pornography; Taylor claims that this discernment, this instinct is linked to a second order desire, or qualitative discrimination which is part of who we are as moral beings. The former garners one’s admiration; the latter draws one’s contempt. Taylor wants to affirm this capacity for evaluating or judging desires, claiming that there is a capacity for discernment within the human self which can be revived and can help it look critically at its own desire and behaviour from the perspective of the good. He resists the allure of the nihilist, where the good is demoted to subjective choice or group values.

Some important qualifications are in order for these qualitative distinctions. Taylor is not suggesting that each and every choice is subject to strong evaluation. This is clearly not true of the choice of flavour of ice cream or style of clothing. Secondly, individuals are not always aware of the hierarchy that is in play; it can be held pre-articulatedly or tacitly as a background to moral understanding. Thirdly, the language of *strong* speaks more about quality than force or power. Fourthly, Taylor believes that all individuals are strong evaluators, but does not believe that they all value the same things strongly. He does however believe that some goods do feature in all moral codes and are strongly valued by all cultures: for example, human life and the dignity of the person. Based on this objective element, there can be rational debate about the various goods held by an individual or a culture. Vital to the whole discussion is the claim that ‘strong value is

both logically and ontologically prior to strong evaluation' (Taylor, 1989, p. 99). Intrinsic high value calls forth strong evaluation.

Thus, the point of Taylor's argument is to challenge Foucault's position, that there exists qualitative discriminations intimately related to the self, yet to some important degree, independent of human choice or will (ontologically prior). The good is something the human self owns personally, yet the good has some independent status from its owner; it has inherent goodness in itself. The good is no mere projection of the self, or the promotion of a certain value; it is not reducible to one's style. Projectivism holds that the world is essentially meaningless and that one must create meaning for life by what one affirms or creates. A moral good, under projectivism, would calculate as only a myth or an illusion, even if a myth by which one lives robustly. Foucault is a projectivist, believing that morality is more about a human self-creation, self-interpretation and self-affirmation.

Realists, on the other hand, say that there are both objective characteristics and interpretations concerning morality, that there is a moral world that is independent of, while intimately interwoven with, the self's interpretation and understanding of it. This complexity is to be affirmed, and not oversimplified or reduced. They therefore assume that some interpretations come closer to explaining the phenomena of human moral experience, that such interpretations are more accurate or plausible than others. Taylor holds that these identified moral instincts are rooted in some greater reality than the self; this is his first indicator that the moral self is not wholly the product of culture or a product of one's self-construction alone or indeed reducible to one's basic desires. This is one of the anthropological givens that Taylor argues for, in contrast to Foucault →/// END

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[Foucault's concept of the moral self, as it stands, does not explain the phenomenon of the self's relationship to the good. Rather, the language of the good and strong evaluations are absent in his ethical discourse; they are repressed or excluded. At best, they are illusions. Taylor's work asks the tough question: Does not Foucault, in the very midst of his enthusiasm for freedom, stylistic self-formation and care of self, work consciously or unconsciously to occlude the good—these important qualitative dimensions of morality? Is his analysis not overly committed to issues of power, freedom and the self? Has he obscured something that could be very enriching to contemporary moral discourse, enhance the moral self, and even his own quest for freedom and creativity? Secondly, has he obscured the goods, *as goods*, which have actually shaped his own moral ontology?]

Taylor does not believe that any moral self-constitution can do without some employment of the good, even if it is covert. Of course, Foucault would not call them *goods* because that would take them out of the realm of radical human self-interpretation. He employs instead the Nietzschean language of *values*: the values which his schema promotes are all human-centred, individualistic, immanent, anthropocentric ones: human-freedom, human-expressive-creativity, human self-control, human self-making, and human care of self. The debate about the good or the place of qualitative discriminations is skewed by Foucault in the direction of individually chosen values and aesthetic subjectivism; he lacks this objective dimension in his schema. As Taylor puts it (1989, p.12) regarding the post-Romantic notion of individual difference: 'individual rights

expands to the demand that we give people the freedom to develop their personality in their own way, however repugnant to ourselves and even to our moral sense.’ This kind of eclectic subjectivism is a serious concern. Another important dimension of the moral self for Taylor is the concept of *horizon*, a larger context for the self and its moral discriminations.

C. Moral Frameworks or Horizons

Once the case is made for qualitative discriminations, Taylor continues to develop the case for realism by arguing that one has to make sense of these basic human moral intuitions. This means that one has to *articulate* self within a moral framework, in a way that makes sense of that experience. The various goods that vie for attention need to be organized within a defined moral worldview, a big picture of moral thought and action. This process involves the geography metaphor of *moral mapping* of a landscape, producing a map or making explicit the existence within the self of a map which can describe, contextualize and guide one’s moral experience and judgments, through a set of moral parameters. Taylor believes that this is very significant for moral consciousness. He sees that this moral horizon is an essential dimension of the self’s moral reality, claiming that all selves have such a framework, even if it is there in a fragile state or they are entirely unconscious of it. The self is interconnected in dialectical relationship with such a horizon. Taylor (1989) writes:

I want to defend the strong thesis that doing without moral frameworks is utterly impossible for us; otherwise put, that the horizons within which we live our lives and which make sense of them have to include these strong qualitative discriminations. Moreover, this is not meant just as a contingently true psychological fact about human beings ... 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. (p. 27)

He comments on the crisis that emerges with the loss of such a horizon as a disorientation of self, the kind of phenomenon that is endemic to nihilism (1989, pp. 18-19). He notes that to begin to lose one's orientation is to be in crisis—both a moral and identity crisis—and to lose it utterly is to break down and enter a zone of extreme pathology (Ibid., pp. 27-28). Employing the metaphor of physical space, Taylor claims that the framework orients the self in moral space, a space of moral questions of purpose, conduct and direction. One's moral horizon is composed of a series of qualitative discriminations spoken of above, strong evaluations, or judgments about which goods are of higher importance. The moral horizon automatically invokes a hierarchy of goods; it offers structure and guidance concerning how to relate to others, what it is good to be and what is meaningful, important and rewarding, and what one endorses and opposes. Some may lack this orientation but it is not taken as a situation to be normalized or celebrated as a boon of freedom; actually, it is taken as a concern for that individual's moral health, as a form of confusion.

The qualitative nature of the framework reads as follows (Taylor, 1989).

To think, feel, judge within such a framework is to function with a sense that some action, or mode of life, or mode of feeling is incomparably higher than the others ... available to us. Higher means deeper, purer, fuller, more admirable, making an absolute claim ... Higher goods command our respect, awe, admiration—act as a standard. (pp. 19-20)

This reference to *incomparably higher* speaks of the *hypergood*, an important aspect of the framework, which is developed in the next section. The framework or horizon is one's ultimate claim about the nature and contours of the moral world; it is not held lightly but taken as real, as one's moral ontology; it is essential to discerning one's self. Can freedom be that moral ontology? One's map transcends the self, is greater and higher than the self. Examples of such frameworks are found in a theistic religion like Judaism

but also in secular viewpoints such as Marxism or Environmentalism. One's horizon contains a life-shaping, vision-shaping worldview. The self, according to Taylor, lives in a dynamic relationship with, and is moved deeply and captivated by such a framework. The framework is composed of strongly-affirmed goods and inherently, there is a personal resonance with the self; it offers a place to locate one's self, and settle one's moral priorities. Taylor (1989) takes note of this important distinction about the development of identity; one's moral worldview is critical to one's self-understanding.

My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose ... the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand (p. 27).

If the human animal is a self-interpreting entity (both philosophers agree on this), the moral framework is deeply endemic to one's self-interpretation (Taylor, 1989, pp. 34-36).

Of course, there are different moral horizons, different maps, for different selves. Taylor recognizes that the orientation in moral space of an anarchist is quite different from that of a Catholic or a feminist. Various selves live in different moral universes, operating with radically different assumptions, drives and concerns. He feels that it is positive to articulate these differences, rather than hide them philosophically; it works towards better understanding and communication. According to Taylor, the relationship with one's framework is dialectical; the framework is not static. Contrary to Foucault's assumptions, such a framework is not simply something imposed by society, parents or a ruling elite, part of a power/knowledge regime. Taylor believes that one's moral framework or horizon includes a personal spiritual quest or narrative journey (Ibid., pp. 17-18), something that is both invented and discovered 'in virtue of which we make sense of our lives spiritually' (Ibid., p. 18) and refers to the search and discovery of one's moral calling. The quest is to find a fit for one's reflective moral experience: discovering

this fit depends on, and is interwoven with, inventing it. The discovery of a sense to life involves framing meaningful expressions which are adequate and carry moral substance, and have moral currency (Ibid., p. 18). Humans are creatively involved in the development and shaping of their moral horizon; Taylor agrees with Foucault regarding this creative dimension of self-shaping.

Taylor uses a key term *articulate* for the process whereby the aspects of the moral world are identified, clarified and made accessible, so that they can empower moral agents (Ibid., p. 18). To articulate is in a sense to draw the background picture which makes sense of one's life morally speaking. It offers to locate the good *vis-à-vis* the self, and to specify the dynamics of how the self is related, or relates itself, to the good. He suggests that the self naturally has an urge to articulate (make explicit) this background picture (moral map). The articulation produces an awareness of something that is unspoken but presupposed; the *tacit* becomes *explicit*. This process reveals itself when there is a moral challenge to one's framework by another self, a moral dilemma or a challenging circumstance. This elicits the ideals that draw the self to a particular moral outlook, empowers the self, and inspires it to act in accord with its framework. It is also important to realize that one can adopt new goods into one's moral framework as these are deemed valuable in the process of one's quest. Moral horizons can be dynamic and develop over time.

The key benefits of articulation are as follows: (a) It deepens one's understanding of moral goods and responses by showing what underpins them; it backgrounds and contextualizes the moral self, thought and action. (b) It heightens one's awareness of the complexity of moral life and the diverse range of goods to which modern individuals

adhere. (c) It enhances the rational discussion and evaluation of goods because they are brought to the surface of consciousness. This is one place where Taylor's moral ontology stands out; he believes that there is the possibility for rational discussion of ethical ideals and convictions. They are not strictly private affairs.

If articulacy is to open us, to bring us out of the cramped postures of suppression, this is partly because it will allow us to acknowledge the full range of goods we live by. It is also because it will open us to our moral sources, to release their force in our lives. (Taylor, 1989, p. 107)

(d) It provides a correction to the 'self-enforced inarticulacy' (Ibid., pp. 53-90) of much modern moral philosophy with respect to these qualitative discriminations. Taylor (Ibid., pp. 84, 90) disagrees with those who want to obscure these frameworks or remain mute about the place of qualitative distinctions in the moral life.

Through his discussion about frameworks, Taylor recovers an interest in a *commitment* to the good. In his understanding, development of identity emerges in a way that is closely linked to one's orientation within a particular moral framework or horizon, that is, where one is positioned with respect to one's moral map and the goods within one's horizon. This is the defining edge of meaning in one's life; he claims that a self with depth (a *thick* self) must be defined in terms of the good: 'In order to make minimal sense of our lives, in order to have an identity, we need an orientation to the good, which means some sense of qualitative discrimination, of the incomparably higher' (Taylor, 1989, p. 47). What one calls *the good* is the most significant defining factor: 'What I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined by the way things have significance for me and how I orient myself to the good' (Ibid., p. 34). Genuine self-understanding, clarification, moral self-discipline and education require that the self be identified and articulated within such a moral horizon. It also means that, 'one orients oneself in a space which exists independently of one's success or failure in finding one's bearings' (Ibid., p

30). One is able to grow up or mature into one's framework. This adds another dimension to the objective pole in his moral ontology: the moral horizon has a status independent of the self, though intimately and dialectically entwined with the self.

From his perspective, Foucault rejects the validity of moral frameworks as a necessity, denying any moral reality beyond the *horizon of freedom*, or what the self invents, or what is socially constructed (what other people invent). He rejects them along with *archaic* code-based morality. One definition of nihilism is the denial or loss of such frameworks. The great tendency in Foucault is to view these frameworks negatively through the lens of a weapon of the controlling agent or the disciplinary (carceral) society, infected with power; he does not recognize any fruitful results in their application. Foucault's understanding of the self is that it does not relate to, and is not accountable to any framework or moral horizon; self is accountable to itself. As Taylor hints, Foucault stops the discussion at exactly the point where it could become most fruitful, that is, at his critique of poor or oppressive moral systems, at domination analysis. But one can critique and even reject a particular destructive horizon such as fascism, and yet look for others that are more suitable and noble, which involves both critique and a search for a better alternative. Foucault rejects this possibility and considers all horizons imprisoning, the enemy of free moral self-constitution. So, he would warn Taylor about the negative effects of moral horizons with their exclusionary powers, and these warnings can be taken seriously as part of a helpful balance to the dialogue.

There is another important distinction in Taylor's proposal. He identifies the existence of many different and conflicting horizons that frame individual moral space. Is

he merely proposing another sophisticated form of relativism, one of moral frameworks? In this regard, he does clarify an important qualifier about frameworks in a response to critical papers on his work, *Philosophy in An Age of Pluralism* (J. Tully, Ed., 1994). He denies the arbitrariness of one's framework, or the equality of all frameworks, in favour of a more critical and thoughtful perspective, where some frameworks actually calculate as being of higher value than others. This is part of his realism.

Realism involves ranking (some) schemes and ranking them in terms of their ability to cope with, allow us to know, describe, come to understand reality. Some schemes are better or worse than others ... Moral realism requires one be able to identify certain moral changes as gains or losses, yet it can be sensitive to the complexities of life and of moral choice. (Taylor, 1994, pp. 220 and 224)

This is not exactly the same as scientific realism (although there is some overlap in intent) where the forces of nature operate in a certain way whether humans observe them in that way or not, and where the scientist bends his analysis or theory to fit newly discovered facts. The moral goods do not exist outside of the human realm; it is human beings only that see significance in a moral good and a particular moral framework; this is Taylor's concept of *resonance*. Moral realism means that some frameworks are truer to authentic human experience and make more sense than others, that is, that they are more plausible, and nobler. This is an important nuance.

Yet there are no final criteria, according to Taylor, for evaluating or judging between different frameworks, except to reveal what they actually claim. Frameworks are evaluated rationally by their highest ideals—hypergoods—and by their personal resonance with the self (sense of fitness). They are deeply connected to one's self-interpretation, one's sense of self in the relationship to other selves. Taylor puts forward an honest appraisal of the actual situation, a critique of the superficial notion of soft relativism.

The point of view from which we might constatae that all orders are equally arbitrary, in particular that all moral views are equally so, is just not available to us as humans. It is a form of self-delusion to think that we do not speak from a moral orientation which we take to be right. That is a condition of being a functioning self, not a metaphysical view we can put on or off. (1989, p. 99)

Significantly, it is not possible to hold a position where all horizons are created equal, or to hold one's moral horizon lightly or superficially, because it shapes one's very identity; it is a serious matter. Does Foucault claim this vantage point inadvertently? Certainly, he has very deep convictions about his ontology of aesthetic-freedom.

Taylor does offer hope that when one becomes dissatisfied with one's current horizon, there is a way forward of searching through it to a better alternative. This is the way of *error reduction* or filling the gaps within one's view. He also emphasizes that one must be able to live consistently and non-ambivalently within one's horizon; it must have *liveability*. This is the direction of increased plausibility, which will be discussed later in Chapter Six, but it entails a major shift within self's convictions. Both dimensions—strong subjective and objective—are recognized together in his ethics; therefore, one can engage in intelligent rational dialogue about horizons, and across horizons. Moral maps are to be respected and not to be feared or shunned as a mere ploy of controlling forces.

D. Communal and Narrative Character as the Shape of the Self

As stated earlier, one's map is an articulation of one's *moral ontology*. Taylor extends the concept of one's moral map to include terms of community and narrative. How is identity formation interwoven with the constitution of the good life? A strong qualification in Taylor's notion of the moral self is the communal or inter-subjective aspect of self-constitution. The good is not a free-floating ideal, but truly something embedded in human story and community. This aspect of his moral ontology stands in stark contrast to

Foucault's individualistic moral subjectivity. In Taylor's view, the self is partly constituted by a language, one that necessarily exists and is maintained within a language community, among other selves, other moral interlocutors.

There is a sense in which one cannot be a self on one's own. I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors: in one way in relation to those conversation partners who are essential to my achieving self-definition; in another in relation to those who are now crucial to my continuing grasp of language of self-understanding ... a self exists only within ...'webs of interlocution'. (1989, p. 36)

These webs of interlocution prove significant for Taylor; the communal *Other* is critical to one's moral self-constitution; in his view, there is a necessary, ongoing conversation with significant others which is critical to one's moral identity development. In Taylor's terms, there is a *myth* in Foucault's moral self, which says that one can define self in terms of a relationship with oneself, and explicitly in relation to no communal web, that true creativity and originality demands that one should work out their own unique identity (Taylor, 1989, p. 39). For Taylor, this is not possible at a practical level; it is rather an artificial and unhealthy abstraction of what it means to be human. Thus, against the backdrop of Taylor's convictions, the character of Foucault's quest for freedom can lead in an unhealthy direction, towards the isolation of self. It opens a key question of what is important to moral constitution and what feeds healthy agency and subjectivity.

These two philosophers are in fundamental disagreement on this issue of self-definition: Taylor's *communal* self contrasts starkly with the Foucault's radically *individualistic* self. Taylor (1989) contests that:

I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to the ones I love, and also crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out. (p. 35)

Foucault's moral self-constitution means that one defines oneself over against the social matrix, while Taylor sees the benefits of a self which is integrated into a social matrix.

One sees the need for disruption; the other pursues integration. Taylor notes that even from one's earliest years, one's language for the moral must be tested on others; gradually through this sort of relational-moral-conversation, the individual self gains confidence in what it means and in *who* it is as a moral being. The Other must be granted her intrinsic integrity, voice and presence as well. One is moved, even transformed, by the lives, the wisdom and the deeper understanding of the Other. Taking his picture of moral ontology a step further, Taylor argues for self as socially embedded in its moral constitution. One relates to the good, not only as an individual self, but within a communal context, where the community also relates to and incarnates some good or goods. This stands in contrast to the distinct lack of *we* (communal) language in Foucault's grammar of the moral self; he promotes a more decontextualized, aesthetic self, which embraces an *agonisme* with respect to the social, and especially social constructions of the good. The communal and narrative dimensions of self are not on Foucault's map. He makes a move to return to agency, and yet lacks a full, robust version of subjectivity. This point will be developed as the chapter proceeds.

Community in Taylor does not necessarily entail uniformity, or a dull conformity and conventionalism, but rather can be a dynamic economy of *being-with-others*. Community occurs even where there is disagreement. But one cannot have community without some sort of normativity, some common commitment to the good; there is no value-neutral inter-subjective state of affairs. There is a notable link between Foucault's avoidance of community and his avoidance of normativity; community cannot exist without the normative; it is essential to trust and mutual respect. The interpretation of self in terms of its relation to the good can only proceed in recognition of self's

interdependence with other selves. Taylor (1989, p. 37) presses: ‘The drive to original vision will be hampered, will ultimately be lost in inner confusion, unless it can be placed in some way in relation to the language and vision of others.’ Foucault’s *thin* self is abstracted out of community, and out of narrative continuity, because of a concern to avoid domination, and a need to resist power relations.

Furthermore, in his articulation of moral mapping, Taylor looks to narrative depth as a defining feature of the moral self, identity and agency. Narrative is consequential to the stability and continuity of the moral self over time; it is in the shape of a personal quest. Taylor gets this notion of self involved in a narrative quest from A. MacIntyre (1989, pp. 17, 48). Narration of the quest for the good allows one to discover a unity amidst the diversity of goods that demand one’s attention; the continuity in the self is a necessary part of a life lived in moral space. He sees narrative as a deep structure, a temporal depth in his *thick* concept of self, adding another texture to its communal richness. The good is more than a concept outside the self, an ideal of life lived well; it is also something embodied, carried in one’s story and the story of one’s community. Community is a way to understand and mediate the good. Taylor (1989) writes,

This sense of the good has to be woven into my understanding of my life as an unfolding story ... Making sense of my life as a story is not an optional extra ... There is a space of questions which only a coherent narrative can answer. (p. 47)

The key issue here for Taylor is the unity and past-present-future continuity of a life, over against a strong focus of the self-as-discontinuity promoted by Foucault, where the quest is to *get free of oneself*.

The movement for Foucault is towards the ever-new, re-invented self, a self which dislikes vulnerability, and tries to avoid being known by the Other, wedging itself from history and community. The narrative depth is not a priority, and there is a minimum of

interest in continuity of the life with the past. Foucault's is a very future-oriented self, one that desires to escape the self of oppression history, the self normalized. Taylor believes that one's story, properly understood and grappled with, is an essential part of what constitutes the moral self. Thus, for him it becomes relevant to ask, 'What has shaped me thus far?' and 'What direction is my life taking in terms of the good?', 'Does my life have weight and substance?' (Taylor, 1989, p. 50). Taylor suggests that a healthy self asks the questions about the span of one's life and is not only interested in the immediate present, or an escape into a fantastic future: 'my sense of the good has to be woven into my life as an unfolding story' (Taylor, 1989, p. 47). The pressing question in this dialogue between Taylor and Foucault is: Which is the way to substantial freedom? Is it denial or deconstruction of the burdensome past, or is it fathoming one's narrative depth of identity and marking out the trajectory of one's narrative quest, in order to make sense of one's story?

In this argument for narrative dimensions of the self, Taylor draws on P. Ricoeur (1992, pp. 113-68) who has written on the important difference between *ipse* and *idem*-identity. *Idem*-identity refers to the objective stability of one's identity over time (read as a succession of moments) and outside time, character traits that don't change with time. *Ips*e-identity is more fluid and dynamic, as per one's personal identity as an unfolding character in a novel; it develops in the temporal becoming of the self. It is carried through memory and anticipation, and linked with narrative temporality. Crucial to *ipse*-identity is the ongoing integration of past, present and future in a unified fashion, a narrative unity (Taylor, 1989, p. 50). There are two significant implications of these two features of identity through time. One is the possibility of the future as different from the present and

past, the possibility of redeeming the past, to make it a part of the meaning of one's life story (Ibid., p. 51); it is to bring a fresh interpretation of, for instance, one's suffering and disappointments. Foucault wants a new future as well. But narrative does not allow for a discontinuity with the past, a refusal of past identity or origins which one finds as a strong feature in Foucault (see Chapter Two). Taylor cautions against any avoidance of wrestling with the past:

To repudiate my childhood as unredeemable in this sense is to accept a kind of mutilation as a person; it is to fail to meet the full challenge involved in making sense of my life. This is the sense in which it is not up for arbitrary determination what the temporal limits of my personhood are. (Ibid., p. 51)

The past, grappling with the meaning of the past, seeking healing from past hurts and failures, is vital to the healthy self as a narrative.

Taylor agrees with Foucault that it makes sense to set a future trajectory for one's life, to project a future story, to have what MacIntyre calls 'a quest'.² This promotes the sense that one's life has a direction (Ibid., p. 48). Taylor (1989)

Because we cannot but orient ourselves to the good, and thus determine our place relative to it and hence the direction of our lives, we must inescapably understand our lives in narrative form, as a 'quest'. (pp. 51, 52)

This quest requires a *telos* or goal, and for this, some knowledge of the good is required. Taylor believes in narrative in the *strong* sense—a structure inherent in human experience and action, narrative as a human given, part of reflection and self-interpretative in the human moral agent. This narrative is embedded in community where one is accountable to other narratives; he sees these conditions as connected facets of the

¹ D.F. Ford (1999, pp. 82-93), elaborates on the contribution of Ricoeur to this discussion of narrative as well as the theological space of the self. Ricoeur believes that narrative is the crucial genre for description of the self in time.

² A. MacIntyre (1984, pp. 204-225, esp. 217-219) carries a parallel conviction to Taylor on this issue of the narrative structure of the self. 'The unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest.' (p. 219)

same reality. For Foucault, the trajectory of the quest is definitely towards the beautiful rather than the good.

There is, in Foucault's self-constitution, the will to escape the past, especially with his heavy emphasis on the continual reinvention of self. He does not want to leave a trail in the character of the self; it is a very limited relationship to narrative. This is where Taylor can correct or complement Foucault. Taylor seems to be pressing the question as to whether one can so easily accomplish this escape, and whether this attempt is a boon or a problem for the self. There appears to be a deficit in the narrative unity and continuity of the self that is endemic to Foucault's liberation strategy for the future; the continuity of the self is heavily in question.

In Taylor's sense, Foucault is suggesting a self-articulation that attempts an escape or liberation from one's earlier, historical self, untying self from past identity. This was discussed in detail in Chapter Two. The assumption is that the earlier self is in the cage of power/knowledge, which prevents the future self from a positive emergence in freedom. Foucault's focus of concern is the *becoming* of the self (ipse-identity), the *re-scripting* of the self in the future, the self re-written. There is a common interest in both Taylor and Foucault, in the future of the self, but a sharp disagreement on the relationship with the past. The outcome is that there would also be a major difference in the possibilities for the future self. One scenario (Taylor's) maintains continuity with the past attempting to resolve past issues and pain. The other scenario (Foucault's) maintains a radical discontinuity with the past seeing a need to deconstruct it, escape it, disrupt its hold on self, and change one's identity in order to hide from the chains or the pain of the past (the fugitive). There is difficulty here: the pursuit of a complete, discontinuous re-invention of

self (which he celebrates) is to court psychosis and possibly to do oneself personal damage (Taylor, 1989, p. 51). It is easy to imagine that some very extreme forms of life could emerge out of assuming such discontinuity and experimentation. In Taylor, on the other hand, the good is interlaced with narrative and community in order to provide the self with more infrastructure, roots and depth of meaning.

What can one conclude from the above discussion? With Taylor's vision as a corrective to Foucault, one can build on Foucault's strengths in the arts of escaping domination with its strong sense of responsibility for one's self-creativity and self-empowerment, and moderate his extremes (the strongest being social anarchy). Foucault seems to miss the point of the *idem-identity* (the continuous aspect) as an essential and healthy part of the self—the unifying aspect of character. The individual self does have a significant part to play in the process of the development of character; all selves have creative possibilities. Both philosophers agree that taking responsibility for one's self-constitution is a mature strategy. Nevertheless, the two disagree dramatically on the importance of a thoroughly situated self with a freedom that is also intimately contextualized in a relationship to the good, to community and narrative. Taylor does offer insights on the contours of the self that Foucault was philosophically blind to; his is a more complex dimensionality. These insights seem to be important in making intelligible sense of the moral self, and also to offer a dimension of normative accountability and structure for meaning. This will be developed further in Chapter Six. In general, Foucault over-plays the factor of *power* to exclusion of the *good* in the moral self; Foucault's moral self is very *power-laden*. The moral horizon is a clear additive to Foucault's thinking and a critique of his stripped down moral self. One of the other

significant items within the moral horizon, which has an organizing role within it, is the *hypergood*, or highest good.

E. The Supremacy of the Hypergood.

E1. The Multiplicity of Goods

Within the moral horizon, according to Taylor, the domain of the moral includes many different goods that vie for one's attention. This can be frustrating and confusing; there is often competition and even conflict between these goods, especially in society at large. Taylor wants to strongly affirm these goods for the self, in their plurality; he does not want to stifle their potential just because they come into conflict. He believes that the tensions between goods are a healthy sign, and thus he does not want to resolve these tensions in any facile way by allowing, for example, one good to devour, repress or eliminate the rest. This does happen in various schools of moral thought (e.g. utilitarianism). He, however, believes that within the framework, one good—the *hypergood*—tends to surpass in value and organize the others in some priority. This is a very significant factor in understanding the dynamics of the moral framework.

Why is this diversity of goods important to Taylor? He tries to explain in his tome *Sources of the Self* with a chapter entitled 'The Conflicts of Modernity' (1989, pp. 495-521), a broad reflection on the diversity of goods and the conflicts of the good among the major movements within modernity. Taylor is quite convinced that there exists a diversity of goods for which a valid claim can be made; he means that they have a legitimate claim on the self. Ethics, in his view, ought not be reduced to the choice of just one good or principle, such as happiness, efficiency or aesthetic-freedom, to the exclusion of all others. This kind of choice is too simplistic and narrow, and it is Taylor's

conviction that the denial of certain goods or families of goods has led to serious imbalance (one-sidedness) within Western moral philosophy. This has eventually led to negative consequences for how people live together in the world. He cautions against a selective denial or exclusion of certain goods.

This kind of problem can be detected in Foucault's ethics as aesthetics—an ethic of one good to the exclusion of many other legitimate goods. The *one-good ethics* takes on various expressions as outlined in the first three chapters of this thesis: freedom, aesthetic creativity, empowerment of the self, and care of self. This vision is helpful and important (if only partially sufficient) in its own right, revealing important aspects of moral self-constitution. In summary, these elements of Foucault's ethics seem to be conceptually captured by the general good of *aesthetic-freedom*, the freedom to be creative and to self-determine, self-construct, and also self-deconstruct. Aesthetic-freedom is the determinative category. One's moral responsibilities and concerns, one's moral accountability is chiefly determined within the parameters of one's self and its well-being. In terms of his starting point in nominalism, Foucault denies the legitimacy of any good that transcends the self. Then at the same time, he proceeds to actually posit his one-good ethics of self—aesthetic-freedom—as a kind of norm. In the very denial of the good, he still affirms Taylor's conviction that the self's relationship to the good is inescapable, even if hidden philosophically or psychologically.

How is this denial of the good played out in Foucault's ethics of the self? Taylor thinks that Foucault's sympathies are too one-sided, with too much focus on the good of individual self-determining freedom, articulated as a negative freedom, an escape from domination. Taylor (1989, p. 503) speaks of such a view: 'They find their way through

the dilemmas of modernity by invalidating some of the crucial goods in contest.’ There is an avoidance of such goods as benevolence or one’s moral responsibility to the Other; justice is articulated as justice for oneself. It is clear from the exposition of Foucault in Chapter Two that he does not want anything to thwart individual freedom. For example, in his exposition of classical ethics in *The Use of Pleasure* (1984a), there is no discussion of the possibility that the privileged Greek aristocratic male abused, or destroyed the freedom of boys, women or slaves in that culture. This power male’s freedom although stylish, dominated and did not seek to create space for the freedom of other selves who had few rights of their own. One good (the freedom and stylization of the aristocrat) overrode the goods of others, the freedom and dignity of those he exploited for his own pleasures. Foucault’s sole focus is on the way the aristocrat freely stylized *his* own sexual and social existence, which involved keeping things under his control. Values are wrapped around the interest of the free, literate male who holds the power, while communal concerns are demoted. This style of self-construction leads to an unjust social construction, even amidst self-discipline; it thwarts social cooperation and entails oppression.

Taylor, in contrast, affirms the plurality of goods, and he does not see wisdom in always trying to resolve all the conflicts of the good; the tension between goods can instruct us. Relationship to a good comes with a cost; there are times when one good has to be sacrificed for another, especially a lower for a higher. He strongly claims that a conflict between goods should not entail or require the conclusion that one must refute or cancel out other goods, nor even worse, to refute the general validity of goods. This is a negative extreme for him, and yet Foucault would seem to set the good of aesthetic-

freedom in hostile opposition to other known goods, resulting in their repression or exclusion from his moral horizon; he allows it a position of dominance, even hegemony. Taylor, in a different view, wants to revive these goods in moral currency to ‘uncover buried goods through rearticulation—and thereby to make these sources again that empower’ (1989, p. 520); he is committed to affirming the complexity of multiple moral goods in his type of realism. It is a commitment to a richness of moral vision.

He contests the reaction of Foucault to eliminate moral goods because of their periodic abuse. Taylor (1989) exposes an important error of thought.

What leads to a wrong answer must be a false principle. [This outlook] is quick to jump to the conclusion that whatever has generated bad action must be vicious ... What it loses from sight is that there may be genuine dilemmas here, that following one good to the end may be catastrophic, not because it isn’t good, but because there are others that cannot be sacrificed without evil. (p. 503)

This is an important nuance. Extreme repudiations and denials of the good are not just intellectual errors; they are also ‘self-stultifying, assuming that a particular good can empower one to positive action’ (Taylor, 1989, p. 504). Crucially, according to Taylor, it is the affirmation of the tension between these goods that keeps an ethical theory and praxis in healthy balance. The tensions are not beyond resolution, but resolution requires the recognition of multiple goods and the need for a hierarchy among the goods. Taylor (1989, pp. 503-507 & 514) promotes an important inclusive, anti-reductionist stance on the good. This is important background information in order to explain the key function of the hypergood.

There is a strong tendency for Foucault’s vision of the moral self to slide into a radical form of subjectivism, sensuality and narcissism. The primacy of self-flourishing aesthetic-freedom (also known as care of self) reproduces and reinforces some negative consequences that tend toward the use and sacrifice of others in the process of this

fulfilment of self. Firstly, it narcissistically invites others to celebrate one's self as that unique, original work of art worth admiring. Community affiliations, solidarities of birth, marriage, the family, all relations with the other, or the polis, all take second place to one's concern with oneself. All values are wrapped around the primary concerns of self-interest, and if incompatible, they are rejected out of hand. The Other can be employed, ignored or discarded at will, as the need is perceived. All other relationships, except the one with oneself, are held tentatively. Taylor (1989) counters this imbalance with a fuller, more robust picture of his *authentic self*.

Our normal understanding of self-realization presupposes that some things are important beyond the self, that there are some goods or purposes the furthering of which have significance for us and hence which can provide the significance of fulfilling life needs ... A totally and fully consistent subjectivism would tend toward emptiness: nothing would count as fulfilment in a world in which literally nothing was important but self-fulfilment. (p. 507)

A society of self-fulfillers, whose affiliations are more and more seen as tentative, revocable and mobile, cannot sustain a strong identification with community of any sort. In Foucault; the goods of community and friendship become a means to one's end of self-fulfilment (or self-indulgence); others exist, on one hand, as a threat to self-actualization, or on the other hand, as a potential assistance to serve one's own interests. Either way, the dangerous path must be carefully negotiated, showing one of the implications of his power-laden perspective. Taylor raises a significant question.

Foucault would counter that the self-controlled, moderate, aesthetic self would not exploit or dominate the Other. This is at least part of his vision for his ethics as aesthetics, to reduce domination. Domination of others is in poor taste; we must try to resist various forms of domination; domination destroys freedom and shuts down ethics. A plurality of viewpoints and lifestyles deserve respect and tolerance; it is possible that this would

promote more respect among people of different moral persuasion at some level. This posited evaluation, however, is suspect read from a broader experience in human history and society of selves who display strong self-interest. Some very self-controlled people have been shown to be quite exploitive and oppressive: for example, corrupt politicians, or super-ambitious business and professional leaders. In fact, it seems very likely that someone who would celebrate their accomplishments and themselves as a work of art (self-idolatry), and anticipate others to join in this celebration of self, would in fact be less accountable to, and less in touch with the interests and well-being of the Other. They might lose touch with reality at some level, become increasingly abusive, whether overtly or covertly. Narcissism and radical subjectivism easily morphs into negative relations of negligence, greed and even violence as shown in Chapter Four; the moral stakes are high. The epiphany of a beautiful self could be of harm to the Other.

With this discussion of the plurality of goods as background, it is now prudent to seek to understand the play of the hypergood in Taylor's moral ontology.

E2. The Significance and Function of the Hypergood

According to Taylor, the resolution of this dilemma of the plurality of goods comes by way of a highest good among the *strongly-valued* goods within each moral framework—the 'hypergood' (1989, pp. 63-73, 100-102, 104-106). 'Let me call higher-order goods of this kind "hypergoods", i.e. goods which are incomparably more important than others but provide the standpoint from which these [other goods] must be weighed, judged, decided about.' (Ibid., p. 63) The hypergood has hierarchical priority and dominance; it has the most significant shaping power within the moral framework. It is the good that

the individual self is most conscious of, and is most passionate about, a good which rests at the core of one's identity. The hypergood effectively orchestrates the arrangement and hierarchy of the other goods; it interprets their priority and their moral play. It can raise or lower their priority, promote or demote other life goods, or even eliminate certain goods from moral play altogether. It is vital that the self be very conscious of, and be well-positioned with respect to, this particular good. This pre-eminent good grounds and directs one's overall moral beliefs, goals, and aspirations; it works to define and give shape to one's moral framework.

Examples (Ibid., p. 65) given by Taylor are: happiness, equal respect, universal justice, divine will, self-respect and self-fulfilment. There can also be conflict between these hypergoods as there are between persons who hold them; one can see this conflict among the three major hypergoods in Western culture: (a) universal justice and reduction of human suffering, (b) self-determining freedom, and (c) the hypergood of affirmation of everyday life or equal respect. This good has a major influence on how one's individual moral horizon gets articulated, the hierarchy of life goods, how a moral life is lived and finally one's general moral orientation. The hypergood is independent, and shapes the desires and choices of the self, and yet can also be embedded in a community. It is not merely an ideal or the mere object of a high admiration or contemplation (no mere poetic entity); the hypergood can be quite demanding on the self, and often requires great sacrifice. It is central to one's moral convictions.

What is the role of the hypergood in self-constitution? What is one's possible relationship to this good? How does it impact one's identity? According to Taylor, a self with the requisite depth and complexity to have an identity, must be defined in terms of

such a good, and is interwoven with it; one's identity is essentially defined by one's orientation to the good, but especially what one takes as the hypergood. It is a core concept in the idea of one's sense of calling; it provides the point against which the individual measures her direction in life. Taylor (Ibid., p. 63) notes that, 'It is orientation to this which comes closest to defining my identity, and therefore my direction to this good is of unique importance to me.' It is something which one grows towards and something that moves and motivates the individual moral self deeply. Taylor (Ibid., p. 73) says significantly, 'Our acceptance of any hypergood is connected in a complex way with our being *moved* by it.' It is no mere theory of the good or charming principle; for Taylor, there is no such thing as moral neutrality, a space where one can take *no* stance on such a good.

To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I try to decide from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done or what I endorse or oppose ... It is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand ... It is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary. (Ibid., pp. 27, 28)

The hypergood has a major impact on one's moral stance in life. His strong claim is that this is not only a phenomenological account of some selves, but also an exploration of the very limits of the conceivable in human life, an anthropological *given*.

Foucault, on the other hand, wants to define the self apart from the hypergood, counting these limits as something undesirable, possibly even dangerous, something to be resisted and surpassed (Taylor, 1989, pp. 70-72, 98-102) in the process of human growth. They may cause self-hatred or self-negation. He attempts to dissolve the conflict of the goods by discrediting the hypergood altogether. All moral views appear to Foucault to be 'impositions of a biased order on reality, based on fiat alone—a "regime of truth"'

(Taylor, 1989, p. 99), a mask of power-interests. His concern is validated when it comes to a hypergood such as colonial imperialist ideology, which tries to squeeze all selves into the mould of the regime. Foucault rejects the place of hypergoods because he has tried to show how,

Various forms of social exclusion and domination are built into the very definitions by which a hypergood perspective is constituted. Just as certain models of religious order excluded and dominated women, as ideals and disciplines of rational control, excluded and dominated the lower classes, as definitions of health and fulfilment exclude and marginalize dissidents, as other notions of civilization exclude subject races, so these hypergoods are dangerous forms of control. (Taylor, 1989, p. 71)

Taylor agrees with him that a hypergood can have negative impact, and thus he suggests that some hypergoods must be illusory (1989, p. 32). But by rejecting hypergoods in general as repressive, Foucault runs into the error of extreme anti-normativity. He should not be blind to positive hypergoods such as benevolence or social responsibility. In effect, he has substituted his own hypergood, (*aesthetic-freedom*), and in process, he sacrifices a host of other legitimate goods. Aesthetic-freedom (which assumes a level of respect and tolerance for variant views) can lead to a very constructive peaceable life, or perhaps also to a celebration of boundless and dangerous personal indulgence. As argued earlier, his ethics as aesthetics aspires to an unqualified, unrestricted agency of the self.

One senses a tedious ambivalence here. Foucault reads the affirmation of life and freedom as involving a repudiation of the kind of qualitative distinctions, and yet he himself must dishonestly and covertly insert into his system some conception of qualitative good; he is guilty of denial or trying to have it both ways. Taylor exposes the denial and warns that 'Foucault fails to realize that his meta-position is powered by a certain vision of the good' (Ibid., p. 99). He has no concept of how one can deny one desire within the self in order to arrive at or enhance a higher desire, one related to a higher good. But still, he is willing to sacrifice so much to his hypergood of aesthetic-

freedom. This belies an internal contradiction. It really is a question of which hypergood one espouses: for example, the hypergood of universal justice and reduction of human suffering is often in conflict with the hypergood of self-determining freedom; they cannot co-exist, because they entail two different postures. Foucault cannot avoid hypergood assumptions or hypergood drive in his ethics of self.

With some leverage, Taylor provocatively suggests that the hypergood that shapes the moral self could include the fulfilment of one's duties and obligations (responsibility) to others. 'Responsibility for the Other transports the self beyond the sphere of self-interest. Other-responsibility could also be seen as the greatest form of self-realization, featuring as the highest vocation of human subjectivity' (Taylor, 1989, p. 112). As a hypergood, Other-responsibility is integrated into the structure of selfhood without compromising the exteriority of the claims of the Other. Taylor posits another scenario for the self with respect to the hypergood, and in a sense releases Foucault's position on the self from its bondage to self-interest and self-protection. There is yet one other significant dimension of Taylor's moral ontology, which produces fruitful dialogue with Foucault, the concept of moral sources.

F. Moral Sources: the Constitutive Good

One further parameter is important to Taylor's moral ontology and his dialogue with Foucault, that is, the constitutive good (Taylor, 1989, pp. 91-107). The moral framework operates at two levels. At one level, there are the general *life goods*, those that are valued by the individual self. The life goods are things that make life worth living or the virtues they advocate: such as justice, reason, piety, courage, freedom, moderation, respect. They

are features of human life that possess intrinsic worth. At another, motivational level, Taylor reveals the vital category of the *constitutive good*; this good he also calls the *moral source*. With this emphasis, Taylor wants to recover the category of moral motivation (inspiration) for the self along with the other categories of the good. The constitutive good can be (but is not necessarily) transcendent of the self; this source of inspiration and motivation for the good can be outside the self, or higher than the self. Moral sources provide the inspiration or motivation to live in line with life goods. This is especially the case for the dominant hypergood. Taylor (1989, p. 516) writes concerning this phenomenon, 'High standards need strong sources.' The moral source empowers the individual self to realize the hypergood in moral life, at the level of both inspiration and praxis. It is also a source of the self and its agency, or ability to do the good. The constitutive good empowers the moral agent and the moral horizon, and gives to the life goods their quality of *goodness* (Ibid., pp. 93, 122); it animates them. Many selves are not consciously aware of this motivating good, but all selves seek for inspiration and they do not flourish in its absence.

Constitutive refers to that which is essential to the particular nature or character of something; it has sustaining, energizing and nurturing power (Ibid., p. 264); it is the type of good that provides enabling conditions for the realization of strong qualifications in one's life. Therefore, one's relationship to such a good is vital to building the moral capacity of the self; knowing such a good also means loving it, wanting to act in accord with it (Ibid., pp. 533-4), growing toward it. Crucial to the position of the constitutive good is that it has independence of the self, even though it relates itself to the self. Taylor writes in an e-mail to the thesis writer:

A constitutive good is a term I used for what I also called moral sources, something the recognition of which can make you stronger or more focused in seeking or doing the good. It's a matter of motivation, and not just definition of your moral position.

This is a vital concept because without the empowerment of the constitutive good, the pursuit of the hypergood could be perceived to be a tremendous burden, even oppressive. Foucault had fear of hypergoods for this reason. The source offers hope for benefits of embracing the good, and allowing the hypergood to rule in one's life. One concludes that it also builds into the meaning structure of the self. He wants to broaden the definition of morality to include questions of what one should admire and love. 'The constitutive good does more than just define the content of the moral theory. Love of it is what empowers us to be good' (Taylor, 1989, p. 93).

A constitutive good tells one what it is about a human being (sets the value of said being) that makes them worthy of non-discriminating care and respect. Examples of the constitutive good help illustrate the category. Romantics would consider their source of the good to be in nature: in this case, things are good because they are natural to human beings. Nature inspires and finds a resonance with the self. Theists would take God as a divine source of the good: the self is inspired to mediate God's goodness and take other humans as worthy of respect because they are made in God's image. Post-Romantics like Foucault would see the self, in itself, as the major source of the good: the autonomous individual makes things good by choice (subjectivism) or positing and promoting a value (projectivism). A certain value such as creativity, autonomy or style is counted worthy because it is freely chosen or posited and valorized by Foucault and his schema of the moral self, not because it has inherent worth.³ Foucault substitutes the category of *telos*

³ Note that a particular value is not necessarily a good in Taylor's terms.

for constitutive good within his four fold schema (Chapter Three, section A); it is the desired and imagined ethos, style of life or mode of being (vision of a work of art) which motivates and inspires the self rather than a source of inspiration from other-than-self.

Sources of the good (spiritual sources),⁴ according to Taylor, tend to be embedded in a particular culture and function for moral agents of that culture and historical moment. Key to his argument is the insight that there have been major shifts in what people take to be the inspirational sources of the good down through the centuries. Modernization, in particular, involves a massive cultural shift with the replacement of one set of views about the self, nature and the good with another. The constitutive good is located differently, and therefore the relationship with this good can vary from one era to another. According to Taylor, sources tend to vary from (a) those solely external to the self, to (b) those both internal and external, to (c) those totally internal. As Taylor notes, at one time, the good was wholly external to the self as it was perceived in Plato's moral ontology. Taylor (1994) notes the big transition in moral sources in the last four centuries:

Moving from an epoch in which people could find it plausible to see the order of the cosmos as a moral source, to one in which a very common view presents us a universe which is very neutral, and finds the moral sources in human capacities. (p. 215)

He takes Plato as his representative of the first. 'The cosmos, ordered by the good, set standards of goodness for human beings, and is properly the object of moral awe and admiration, inspiring us to act rightly' (Ibid.). This is, however, an important distinction: Taylor himself is a strong realist, but not a neo-Platonist: the view that the good is part of the metaphysical structure of the world. Platonic moral realism has been discredited because it leans too heavily on the idea of an *ontic logos*, a meaningful order. Nor is

⁴ In this context spiritual does not necessarily mean religious, but that which animates or inspires the self.

Taylor, on the other hand, a radical subjectivist. His view of realism lies somewhere between the Romantic subjectivist Rilke, and the Platonic objectivist. He wants to champion both the subjective and objective dimensions of the moral self, and maintain that there are sources outside as well as inside the self. Taylor (1989, pp. 127-143) notes that Augustine first articulated the whole idea of a reflexivity of self. In this case, the constitutive good is both internal and external, and the relationship is one of both reaching inside and reaching out— from within to gain access to what lies beyond the self in God. In Foucault’s case, as with many other moderns, the constitutive good is reduced to one that is internal to the self: the source of the good and the self is taken as inside the self and its capacities—revealed through artistic self-expression and self-shaping in a radically reflexive relationship with self. Taylor’s great concern about the constitution of the moral self is the loss of outside-the-self moral sources (1994, p. 216). It puts a heavy burden on the self to inspire itself and decide the value of everything; he considers that the exclusion of outside sources is quite costly to the moral self and issues in the draining of moral culture.

Why is the constitutive good important? For Taylor, it is vital that one articulate, or make explicit, the constitutive good, in order to understand from where this inspiration or moral empowerment comes. It is a terrible thing to waste. It can also reveal the less honourable sources of a certain moral ontology, and expose false or less authentic motivations. Taylor challenges that the dedicated silence of many modern moral outlooks (including that of Foucault) about such external sources of the good prevents these outlooks from fully understanding themselves; they are cut off from their own history. Taylor counts it a vital task to put moral sources back on the philosophical agenda. It has

practical consequences for moral agents: if one does not reflect on moral sources, one is in danger of losing contact with them altogether. One is also in danger of losing the life goods which they both ground and empower. Both philosophers agree that agency must be empowered. Taylor argues for an independent constitutive good that resources the self. Foucault, on the other hand, sees the sources located within the self alone; sources of the self are human constructions, based in self-interest, and should not have imputed to them too high a worth.

Thus, there seems to be in Foucault the strong potential of a slide toward celebration of one's own creative powers and the reduction of sources of the good to the individual creative imagination. From Taylor's perspective, this is a problem, a loss (read deficit) of a significant dimension in moral self-constitution. Sources of the self are severely limited in the quest for self-sufficiency and freedom of action. Taylor (1989) gives an example of the resulting problems.

People agree surprisingly well, across great differences of theological and metaphysical belief, about the demands of justice and benevolence, and their importance ... The issue is what sources can support our far-reaching moral commitments to benevolence and justice. (p. 515)

This is his famous dilemma of modernity—strong hypergood without strong sources—a dilemma that often leads to cynicism. Chapter Six, section C. unpacks and answers the dilemma. Taylor, over against Foucault, is not suggesting that one give up on these high ideals for justice, benevolence and the care of the Other. Foucault seems to fear that the demands of benevolence can exact a high cost in self-care and self-fulfilment, which may in the end require a payment of either self-negation, or even self-destruction. Taylor (Ibid.) does recognize the cost in the general truth that,

The highest spiritual ideals and aspirations also threaten to lay the most crushing burdens on humankind. The great spiritual visions [and ideologies] of human history have also been poisoned chalices, the causes of untold misery and even savagery. (p. 516)

This is especially true of certain Marxist and Fascist political ideologies that reigned in various decades of the twentieth century. Morality as benevolence and responsibility for the Other can, in fact, breed self-condemnation for those who feel its import and yet fall short of its ideals. This can challenge the impulses to self-contentment or harmony within the self. Taylor (Ibid., p. 516) understands, along with Foucault, some other negative results of an ethic of benevolence without proper moral sources: (a) threatened sense of unworthiness can lead to projection of evil outward on the Other as happens in racism and bigotry, or (b) some try to recover meaning through political extremisms.

So Taylor, in dialogue with Foucault, would agree that high ideals can lead to destructive ends, and might do so without a constitutive good, but he disagrees that this is the only possible outcome. Not all humanisms are destructive humanisms for him; he believes that it is possible to move towards justice and a better social order, to have just relations and just institutions. He sees the potential of the good for positive results in the individual and communal realm, especially as the proper sources of such good is realized from outside the self. In Chapter Six, the argument shows how this is possible, building on Taylor's lead and drawing from theological sources. The pursuit of justice and benevolence, for instance, often does require self-sacrifice, but this self-sacrifice can benefit both the giver and the recipient, and contribute to communal mutual benefits, enhance personal freedom, and inspire yet others to pursue such ends. Thus, the issue of sources is vital to this debate as Taylor strongly emphasizes.

What can one conclude about this dialogue between Michel Foucault and Charles Taylor on the issue of moral ontology? Perhaps most ironic is Foucault's talk of ethics

and freedom: its intelligibility presupposes the notion of an ethical or moral agent that can be free and that can master itself. Upon critical reflection, he fails to explicate this sense of agency; he assumes a transcendence of the self which is not actually there. In fact, his articulation of self renders this possibility weakened. He promotes a *thin*, non-substantial concept of subjectivity. Perhaps this is so because he moves from a frozen agency and controlled subject (genealogy of domination) in his previous work, and he has only been able to come so far philosophically in his work on ethics. It is very likely that his ethics is a half-finished project of thought, as he died tragically in 1984 in the midst of his plans for further volumes on the self. His self as agent is quite ephemeral, leaving the reader with ambivalence about the possibilities of Foucault's goal of self-constitution and freedom for the self.

Taylor offers much help at exactly this point—with a more substantial subject entwined with the good as agent—promoting key dimensions of self to produce a robust subject, one with broader and richer horizons. Foucault is missing dimensions of subjectivity that Taylor claims as necessary for agency. Secondly, Foucault posits an ontology of *aesthetic-freedom*, which could just reduce to a sophisticated articulation of self-will. Taylor offers some good critical questions about this ontology, especially emphasizing that what is lacking in his moral ontology is the very important qualitative category of the good. There is in Foucault a tendency to implode ethics into the desires, self-protection, and self-interest. The move with Taylor is towards a more embedded, situated self, which is developed further in Part II of this chapter: 'Foucault and Taylor on the Situatedness of Freedom.'

Foucault might respond to Taylor's critique in the following way. He would be suspicious of Taylor's return to metaphysics with the transcendent idea of the good and qualitative conditions for freedom. Who determines the good or goods to which one relates? He might be suspicious of a will to power motive in this return to the good. He might also claim that the majority culture of the West is on his side with a strong interest in individual autonomy, will to freedom and creativity. He would be suspicious that there is a hidden agenda to control the self once again in this ontology of the good, the confinement and coercion of a carceral society.

In Part II of this chapter, the argument focuses on freedom and its relationship to the self, including Taylor's critique of Foucault's de-contextualized freedom.

Iris Murdoch quote: "On 'God' and 'Good' p. 354 from book Iris Murdoch: Existentialists and Mystics, Writings on Philosophy and Literature. (Ed. P. Conradi) Londong: Chattot and Windus 1997.

"Freedom is not strictly the exercise of the will but rather the experience of accurate vision which, when this becomes appropriate, occasions action."