Charles Taylor's Moral Ontology

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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" world 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. Christian believers can feel powerless and a bit odd for holding any moral convictions, but also feel themselves slipping from their own standards under the weight of the cultural slippage toward nihilistic relativism and radical individualism. Where can they turn for help? This article suggests that eminent Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor, can be of strategic assistance to moral grounding in the recovery of a language of the good and a renewal of normativity. Taylor employs a language that a "pluralistic audience" can both understand and be engaged by, both intellectually and personally. This article outlines his moral ontology of the good, with a particular emphasis on the vital concept of qualitative discriminations. It reveals that aspirations towards the good can be a robust challenge to the solipsism and a framework in which robust moral dialogue can take place.

A. Taylor's Case for Moral Realism

Taylor's argument for moral realism is five-fold. In terms of moral givens, he 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 of how humans operate as moral beings in their actual moral experiences, and how they reflect upon those experiences. So he is interested in praxis as well as moral theory. Beginning with humans and the way they experience morality, he claims that the most plausible explanation of morality is one that takes seriously humans' perception of the independence of goods. He does not want to substitute a philosophical abstraction for how people live and think.

Firstly, he argues 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*. One notes the important reference to 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, but rather dynamic and developmental. Thirdly, he recognizes that there is a key defining good within each moral framework, which he calls the *hypergood*. The hypergood is the highest/preminent good and operates a controlling influence and organizer of 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. Humans interpret their lives in narrative and communal terms as they pursue moral goods; these goods give vision and mission to life. This important narrative articulation helps the self to find a unity amidst the complexity of moral experience and a plurality of goods vying for one's attention. Fifthly, Taylor speaks of the *sources* of the moral/sources of the self, 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 acts as a moral driver. It provides the constitutive ground of the worth or value of the life goods, and allows the self to live the good life; this is a very significant dimension. Moral identity is interwoven with the pursuit of the good in life 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. 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 multiplicity of goods to be recognized, acted upon and pursued. Taylor emphasizes the importance of being circumspect about these goods. It is quite an ambitious and challenging proposal, a moral ontology of the *self at its best*, noblest or most whole. It offers a useful framework for this dialogue on moral self-constitution.

B. Intuitions of Qualitative Discriminations: a Common Experience

Taylor recognizes the existence of a plurality of moral positions and constructions, but in tension with relativism, 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. He recognizes plurality in the shape of human moralities, but does not follow the tradition of pluralism (relativism where all are of equal value in exploring one's morality).

Taylor scholar Ruth Abbey (2000, p. 29) comments on this point 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* sense of their moral choices and deliberations; moral agency is not reducible to mere choice. For example, he points out that respect for human life is one of the deepest and most universally held moral instincts across cultures (Taylor, 1989, pp. 8, 11-12), which includes a concern for the Other; it is not merely a characteristic of self-survival. For example, '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 lesser forms of abuse. When this respect is not shown to someone, it is judged negatively; there is moral conviction, an intuition about such behaviour. One exercises/engages 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)

Taylor's 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 evaluating or judging desires to be a distinctively and universally human one. He believes that human beings experience the goods that

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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 make explicit and clear.

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, 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 ethics of Taylor.

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 a key dimension of the normative and a hierarchy of goods. Not all moral philosophers agree to the hierarchy of course.

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. 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 (e.g. clothing fashion). These preferences, claims Taylor, can be judged objectively and can be rationally discussed and debated. 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, claims Taylor, that helps an individual self transcend the animal level of desires for food, sex, and survival. 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 actually discern the difference in the goods appealed to between medical relief work and international sex trafficking or child pornography;

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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 the moral self to affirm this capacity for evaluating or judging desires, claiming that there is a capacity within the human self (discernment) which can be revived and can help us look critically at our own desires and behaviour from the perspective of the good. It gives the individual a position from which to self-critique as well. He resists the stance of the nihilist, where the good is demoted to subjective choice, projection or group values (Weber).

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-articulately 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, the dignity of the person, respect. Based on this objective element, there can be rational debate about, and critique of 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 first point of Taylor's argument about morality is 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 and with which it can build a relationship, yet the good has some independent status from its owner. The good is no mere projection, or the promotion/valorization 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, or seems to flourish.

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 articulation, interpretation and understanding of it. The 'moral world' is something one can grapple with, embrace and get to know intimately. They therefore assume that some interpretations come closer to explaining well the phenomena of human moral experience, that they 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 the distinctive and important anthropological space in which Taylor positions himself.

Taylor does not believe that any moral self-constitution can do without some employment of the good, even if it is covert. He (Taylor, 1989, p.12) contrasts with 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 for today's society.

C. Moral Frameworks or Horizons

Another important dimension of the moral self for Taylor is the concept of *horizon*, a larger context for the self and its moral discriminations. 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 (reality); it is essential to discerning oneself. 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 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 set one's moral priorities (a moral home). 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 being, 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 in this sense, operating with radically different assumptions, drives and concerns. He feels that it is positive to articulate and reveal 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 dynamic. Contrary to some contemporary assumptions, such a framework is not simply something imposed by society, parents or a ruling élite, part of a power/knowledge regime, although the original version is often first received from parents or village culture. Clearly, one can be schooled in such a frame of moral reference, formally or informally. 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, articulating 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), have resonance. Humans are creatively involved in the development and shaping of their moral horizon both individually and socially (e.g. those formative university years).

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* means 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); a discourse emerges. The articulation produces an awareness of something that is unspoken but presupposed; the *tacit* becomes *explicit*. This process reveals itself, for instance, 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 quite dynamic and develop over time in response to experience.

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 or property.

> 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 also 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. One definition of nihilism is the denial/refusal or loss of such a framework.

There is another important distinction in Taylor's proposal. He identifies the existence of many different and conflicting horizons (maps) that frame and discern individual moral space. Is he merely proposing another sophisticated form of relativism, one of moral frameworks? In this regard, he does offer 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, reflective and thoughtful perspective, where some frameworks actually calculate as being of higher value than others.

> 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 quite 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*. An important nuance in moral realism states that some frameworks are truer to authentic human experience and make more sense than others, that is, that they are more plausible, and nobler.

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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 constate 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 personal matter.

Taylor does offer hope that when one becomes dissatisfied with one's current horizon, there is a non-coercive 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* or increased plausibility, a shift within the self's convictions.

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. 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.

> 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 current *myth* which says that one can define self in terms of a relationship with oneself alone, 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. It opens a key question of what is important to moral constitution and what feeds healthy agency and subjectivity.

Taylor's *communal* self contrasts starkly with the *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)

He sees the benefits of a self which is integrated into a social matrix. He 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* they are 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, carries and cherishes some good or goods.

Communality in Taylor does not necessarily entail uniformity, or a dull conformity and conventionalism, but rather can be a dynamic, reflective 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.[1] Normativity is essential to trust and mutual respect, and for future planning or development. 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.'

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 a 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

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[1] This is part of the moral crisis of contemporary societies—challenge of finding this common good that holds society together—loss of social glue; one could call this narrative brokenness.

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 key 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, where the quest is to *get free of oneself*, or one's past.

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 for Taylor 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. Ipse-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. 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)[2]

Grappling with the meaning of the past, seeking healing from past hurts and failures, are vital to the healthy development of self as narrative.

Taylor agrees with the constructionist 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'.[3] This promotes the sense that one's life has a direction (Ibid., p. 48).

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[2] 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.

Taylor (1989) notes:

> 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 same reality.

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, but even within the self. Taylor wants to strongly affirm these goods for the benefit of the self, in their plurality; he does not want to stifle their potential just because they come into conflict. This may seem counter-intuitive, but 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 that, for example, one good should devour, repress or eliminate the rest. This does happen in various schools of moral thought. He, however, believes that within the framework, one good—the *hypergood*—tends to surpass in value, and it organizes the

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[3] 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)

other lesser goods in some priority. This is a very significant factor in 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 (utilitarianism), efficiency, unfettered-freedom, or self-interest, 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; a one-good ethics can become a destructive ideology. He cautions against a selective denial or exclusion of certain goods: (Taylor, 1989, p. 503), '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 over against the corporate good.

Taylor affirms that the tension between goods can instruct us and need not hinder 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. He 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 wants to affirm the complexity of multiple moral goods in his type of moderate realism.

Taylor (1989) also contests the reaction of eliminating moral goods due to their periodic abuse, which calculates as an important error of thought with a reactionary response.

> 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)

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 robust and in healthy balance. The tensions are not beyond resolution, but resolution requires the recognition of the need for a hierarchy of the goods (concept of a greater good). 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 importance and key function of the *hypergood*.

There is a strong tendency in today's Western societies for the moral self to slide into a radical form of subjectivism, sensuality or narcissism. The overemphasis on the primacy of self-flourishing reproduces and reinforces some negative consequences that tend toward the use and sacrifice of the Other in the process. Community affiliations, solidarities of birth, marriage, the family, all relations with the other, or the polis, all are subjected to one's concern with oneself. Under such moral conditions, the Other can be

employed, ignored or discarded at will. All relationships, except the one with oneself, are held tentatively. Taylor (1989) counters this imbalance with a fuller, more robust picture of the *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 tentative, revocable (without covenant) and mobile, cannot sustain a strong identification with community.

E2. The Significance and Function of the Hypergood

According to Taylor, the resolution of this dilemma of the plurality of goods, this tension between goods, comes by way of a highest good among the *strongly-valued* goods within the 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 the 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 a significant shaping power within the moral framework. It is the good that the individual self is most conscious of, is most passionate about, a good that rests at the core of one's identity. The hypergood effectively orchestrates the arrangement and hierarchy of other goods; it interprets their priority and their moral play. It can raise or lower their priority, promote or demote them, or even eliminate certain goods from moral play altogether. It is vital that the individual 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 important shape to one's moral framework.

Examples of the hypergood (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 (concern for the victim), (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 and how one is generally oriented in moral life. The hypergood is independent, and shapes the desires and choices of the self. 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.

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 such a hypergood. It is a core concept at the centre 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 an exploration of the very limits of the conceivable in the reflective human life, an anthropological *given*.

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.

F. Moral Sources: the Constitutive Good

One further parameter is important to Taylor's moral ontology, 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 reason, piety, courage, freedom, moderation, respect, all 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 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 as goods. 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 to the self. Taylor writes in an e-mail to the author of this paper:

> 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. 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).

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

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

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; the good was endemic to the structure of reality. 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 moral 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 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

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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, moral motivation and issues in the weakening 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 works both ways; 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 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. Agency must be empowered. Taylor argues for an independent constitutive good that resources the self.

Without moral sources outside the self, there is 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. This shapes a kind of moral implosion. 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. 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 speaks to his famous 'dilemma of modernity'—strong hypergood without strong sources—a dilemma that often leads to cynicism. Taylor is not suggesting that one give up on these high ideals for justice, benevolence and the care of the Other. He 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. (Ibid., p. 516)

This is especially true of certain Marxist and Fascist political ideologies that contributed to theatres of violence in 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 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 he would agree that high ideals can lead to destructive ends, and might do so without a robust constitutive good (strong sources), 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. 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.

Taylor offers us a substantial subject entwined with the good as agent—promoting key dimensions of self to produce a robust subject, one with broader and richer identity horizons. These qualitative discriminations offer a profound alternative to the nihilistic ethics of Weber et al—that of value positing. It is a subject not merely choosing values, but building a relationship with a good that is greater than the self, not reducible to choice or preference. One can grow to love this good and be transformed by it. This has tremendous implications for Christian moral self-consciousness and dialogue on ethics and meaning with secular friends and colleagues.

G. Connection with the Christian Faith

Throughout his work *Sources of the Self*, Taylor (1989) makes the irenic suggestion that there is no good reason to exclude *agape* love of the Judeo-Christian heritage as a viable hypergood for the moral self. He sees it as the highest form of human relationship. Taylor (1989) writes, 'Nothing prevents *a priori* our coming to see God or the Good as essential to our best account of the human world' (p. 73). As a significant percentage of the world population holds to be true, 'God is also one of those contemporary sources of the good in the West, the love of which has empowered people to do and be good' (Ibid., p. 34). Michael Morgan (1994) can claim that Taylor's account in *Sources of the Self* re-establishes the plausibility of the divine-human relationship for moral experience: 'God is

one of those entities that has figured in our moral ontology, has provided a standard or ground of value, and has given our beliefs and actions meaning and significance' (p. 53). This relationship is generally occluded in contemporary Western culture and philosophical ethics, and so it remains significant that Taylor clarifies it through his language of *articulation* and that he illuminates its possibilities for ethical discourse.

Taylor attempts to recover something lost in Western moral consciousness in his language of moral sources. From his perspective, moral sources are not about highest principles; they are all about the *quality of the will*, a concept which has been largely absent in moral philosophy for over a century. For instance, the primary question for Taylor's moral ontology is: What or whom do I love? (motivation), not What am I obliged to do? (right action). He wants to broaden the domain of moral discourse. The latter, to him, is the last question to ask, even though it is often the main concern of the contemporary ethics debates. The second question is 'What do I want to be?' (character), a question that is in recovery to some degree in the late twentieth century through Virtue Ethics, heralded by such intellectuals as A. MacIntyre (1984).

The first question addresses the issue of sources of moral inspiration and motivation, or the moral power behind decision and action. Taylor muses about the current problem of weakened moral sources. How does one maintain a commitment to high ideals under the condition of weak moral motivation (constitutive good), due to a weakening of moral vision? He asks,

> Whether we can maintain the high level of philanthropy and solidarity we now demand of ourselves, without these degenerating into their opposites: contempt and the need to control. The issue here is the quality of our moral motivation—in more old-fashioned terms, the quality of our will and the nature of the vision that sustains it. (Taylor, 1999, p.120)

He points out that this first question was part of normal philosophical discourse for the ancients, Plato, Augustine and Aristotle, and he contends that it is pertinent to current moral discussion. He writes:

> It is clear that, for Plato, the very definition of justice requires a higher and a lower and distinguishes our love of one from our love of the other. Christian faith could take this idea over while giving it a different content, and so Augustine speaks explicitly of "two loves". Recognition that there is a difference in us between higher and lower, straight and crooked, or loving and self-absorbed desires opens an intellectual space in which philosophy has a crucial role—as the attempt to articulate and define the deepest and most general features of some subject matter—here moral being. (Ibid., pp. 120-21)

The gradation of moral decision or action (including the question of motives), what Taylor has called *strong qualitative considerations*, fell under a deep suspicion in the eighteenth century, especially under exclusive secular humanism, and continues to be kept under suspicion by Post-Romantics. Thus, it may be perceived as a foreign concept in today's ethical debate, but it is still deeply relevant according to Taylor.

Taylor proposes something significant. The secular humanist and Post-Romantic perspectives are both radically immanent; their vision sees the good largely in terms of human flourishing, without any demand to give allegiance or worship to anything higher, anything *transcendent* (strong sense) of the self. Loyalty to self, and freedom to express its desires, is the first priority. Concepts of universal justice and benevolence were maintained in moral discourse of the early Enlightenment, from both Christian and Stoic sources, although they have been lost in the Post-Romantic discourse. But, the mainstream Enlightenment sidelined the issue of moral motivation and the quality of the will by what Taylor (1999, pp. 122-23) calls a 'rehabilitation of ordinary, untransformed human desire and self-love, previously seen as an obstacle to universal justice and benevolence, which is now cast either as innocent or a positive force for good'. It is a claim of innocence for the moral will: human motivation is neutral, and all motivation is,

on these terms, appropriate motivation, a mode of self-love. Therefore all choices and all lifestyles are automatically endorsed; we ought to tolerate divergent lifestyles. Self-love (self-care) as human flourishing is a major aspiration. Could there be a problem here? It seems to lack proper balance to Taylor.

> Take any conception of human flourishing, that makes no reference to anything of intrinsic value beyond human flourishing, and we have something that is dangerously partial and incomplete, particularly because it cannot see that even things that negate this flourishing—solitary death, unremarked suffering, waning powers—can have the deepest human significance, just because they have more than human significance. (Taylor, 1999, p. 109)

He refers to international figures like Jean Vanier and Mother Teresa in their care and advocacy of human compassion and respect for those who are weak or broken mentally and physically. These lives are connected to the transcendent, and given significance by a story larger than the human story of social or economic usefulness. For Taylor, tapping into these pre-Enlightenment moral traditions, the quality of the will is a critical concern for ethics; the orientation of the will impacts every other moral concern. Nothing is more central to his project.

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Addendum

Taylor's Moral Self-Construction Diagnostics

Category A (Creativity)

(i) Creation and construction (as well as discovery) of the self.
(ii) Pursuit of originality in one's self-crafting.
(iii) Opposition to the rules of society and even potentially to what one recognizes as morality, or the moral order.

Category B (Social and Moral Accountability)

(i) Openness to horizons of significance prevents one's self-creation from losing the background that can save it from insignificance and trivialization (self-destructive).
(ii) Self-definition needs to be developed in dialogue with significant Others, that is, fellow moral interlocutors. (Taylor, 1991, pp. 65, 66)[5]

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[5] There have been slight changes made to Taylor's language by the thesis writer, for the sake of clarity and application. The chart is used to reveal Foucault's reductionism regarding the moral self and its horizon.