

At Home in One's Habitus: The Accommodation of Communities of the Good Life

By:

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University of Manitoba, BA (Hons), May 2007

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to offer a particular perspective from which to understand and approach the claims of some social collectivities. By making use of the concept of the habitus as employed by Talal Asad, I introduce the category of communities of the good life, whose members dedicate their lives to ends achievable only by a conscious shaping of their subjectivity. I argue that in light of the exigencies for sustaining a commitment to such a life, current legal rights are insufficient to make these communities feel that they can fully fulfill their aspirations in liberal societies. This in turn makes the basis of social and political solidarity tenuous. Perhaps worse, I argue, the accommodation of groups can only be placated by establishing structures of domination through the creation of assimilative mechanisms. I therefore contend that modern liberal democratic societies should understand their political union not as one based on liberal rights but on a union for the fulfillment of the concrete ends sought by citizens. In arguing for this position, I also seek to respond to two objections. The first is that the heterogeneous nature of all groups makes any accommodation either impossible without privileging some over others or perhaps placing dissenters in a precarious situation. The second is that accommodations will result in the subversion of citizens' freedoms.

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Introduction

I want to begin by tracing a picture of the present. I wish to convey the way in which diversity is accommodated within liberal democratic societies and the arguments for such accommodation in order to show that there is good reason to think of this diversity in different ways than we have so far. I limit myself here to Canada not because my thesis is concerned with Canada in particular, but because more than any other Western country, it has been able to create an atmosphere of inclusion and accommodation for various groups and their practices.¹ Despite this success, at the present historical juncture, it is not clear why or how Canadians should or could accommodate the practices of many groups. There are two mechanisms by which new claims to accommodation of diversity within Canada can be made. The first is multiculturalism and the second is the *Charter* provision for the freedom of religion; neither succeeds in fully countenancing the aspirations of many minorities or in providing Canadians with reasons for why these practices should not be treated like any other individual goal that is reserved for the private sphere.

Multiculturalism as a policy was introduced by the Canadian Federal government in 1971. Following attempts to reconcile French and English Canada, it was noted that a great number of groups, most notable at the time were the Ukrainians, felt that they had their own distinct heritage that mattered to them. These groups argued that integration was easier if it was based on the acceptance of differences. Since then, a certain view of Canada as a mosaic of peoples has been promoted, whether through the funding of community centres, political speeches, the curriculum of schools, and public celebrations

¹ For example, compared to other countries, Canadians look upon new immigrants very favourably; see the survey from Ipsos Public Affairs, May 2006, www.ipsos-na.com/news/client/act_dsp_pdf.cfm?name=mr060606-1topline.pdf&id=3100.

and festivals in which dance, song, visual art, and food are showcased. The most widely accepted academic justification for this multiculturalism makes two claims. First, since every modern state in aiming at nation-building promotes a culture with a distinctive historical narrative and set of symbols or identity markers, by conceiving Canada as a mosaic, we ensure that there is not the inadvertent promotion of the idea that the nation belongs to a single ethno-cultural group, which would then exclude others from economic and civic participation. This is reflected in the Canadian *Multicultural Act* of 1988, which seeks to “recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society.”² Second, culture matters to people: it gives meaning to their lives and it provides them with a context of choice. Thus by funding community centres and encouraging particular cultural activities, one contributes to the flourishing of individuals. This is also reflected in the *Multicultural Act*, which seeks to “promote the reflection and evolving expressions of those cultures.”

The results of the policy of multiculturalism have been laudable insofar as a variety of symbols or identity markers have made their way within the Canadian public sphere. Though some have critiqued it as masking white Anglophone privilege,³ immigrant communities that have had difficulties economically and politically in many European countries often enjoy impressive levels of income, have high praise for the legal and political order of their new country, and feel comfortably at home within it.⁴

² Quoted in Micheline Milot, “Modus Co-Vivendi,” in *International Migration and the Governance of Religion*, eds. Paul Bramadat and Matthias Koenig (Kingston: McGill and Queen’s University Press, 2009), p.112.

³ See for example, Himani Bannerjee, *The Dark Side of the Nation* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar’s Press, 2000).

⁴ In the case of Muslims for example, see Sheema Khan, “Canadian Muslims have a Fondness for Democracy, Peace - and Sharia Law,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto] 28 January 2009: A21.

At the same time, this plurality does not do away with the nation and its tendency towards exclusion, it merely places more importance on the nation's civic identity: whatever one's race or culture, there is nonetheless a tendency to consider the constitution as embodying a universal morality that all citizens share and that all decent human beings should share. Admittedly, the full articulation of this morality would meet with rigorous debate amongst Canadians; but the widespread assumption of universalism is reflected in the portrayal of those who do not embrace this liberal morality as reprehensible. This is evident both in the rhetoric that accompanies Canada's military activities in Afghanistan as well as in the arguments of those who fear that multiculturalism will lead to the establishment of objectionable and iniquitous practices. It is because multiculturalism provides a presumption that all Canadians, regardless of their particular identities, either value liberalism or can quickly come to do so, and thus treats diversity as something benign, that many non-liberal groups have been able to prosper within Canada.

Moreover, if multiculturalism has been concerned mainly with inclusion through the widening of public markers of national identity, freedom of conscience and religion based on section 2a of the *Charter*, as well as the *Charter* provision and provincial legislation against discrimination has allowed for the institutional and public accommodation of many of the practices of non-liberal groups. Thus courts have supported the right of Hassidic Jews to have *succahs* erected on their balconies, they have allowed Sikh boys to wear the *kirpan* to school, and they have upheld the right of Muslim women to wear the *hijab* at work. As Lori Beaman points out, the justification given by courts for this type of accommodation is rooted in the merging of an essentialist and

functionalist definition of religion.⁵ Thus in the *Amselem* case, the Supreme Court stated that:

Defined broadly, religion typically involves a particular and comprehensive system of faith and worship. Religion also tends to involve the belief in a divine, superhuman or controlling power. In essence, religion is about freely and deeply held personal convictions or beliefs connected to an individual's spiritual faith and integrally linked to one's self-definition and spiritual fulfillment, the practices of which allow individuals to foster a connection with the divine or with the subject or object of that spiritual faith.⁶

While to the general public such a definition might seem coherent, Beaman is correct to point out that a great many scholars of religion would take issue with it. To refer to a "superhuman or controlling power" privileges some religions over others and makes questionable the legitimacy of treating some practices as religious in the way that we do. Likewise, the functionalist definition rests on the three assumptions that the notion of spiritual fulfillment is cross-cultural or universal, that the purpose of all religions is spiritual fulfillment, and that this needs a connection with an object of faith. The first and second assumptions are contestable insofar as the language of spirituality is not part of the traditional lexicon of many religions;⁷ and the third is questionable insofar as spiritual fulfillment is often said to be obtained by a moving piece of poetry or music.

We can begin to see the outlines of a strong contrast between the purported intent and justification for multiculturalism and religious accommodation and what has actually happened within Canada. Through its multicultural policy and its right of freedom of religion, Canada has allowed immigrants and minority groups to establish themselves by

⁵ Lori Beaman, "Defining Religion: The Promise and Perils of Legal Interpretation," in *Law and Religious Pluralism in Canada*, ed. Richard Moon (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008).

⁶ Quoted in Beaman, p.194.

⁷ Islamic tradition, for example, speaks of a soul or spirit, but what in contemporary times we would refer to as its spiritual dimension has historically been conceived as *tazkiyat al nafs* or the purification of the self. See al Ghazali's *Ihya Ulum-Din Vol. 1-4*, trans. Fazlul Karim (New Delhi: MS Printers, 1991).

creating ties of solidarity with fellow citizens, acceding to prominent public positions, and prospering economically. And yet, because many of these groups are non-liberal and because it is debatable whether they are in fact religious groups as defined by the Supreme Court, it has done so largely unwittingly. In short then, the consequences of multiculturalism and freedom of religion have been praiseworthy from the perspective of both those accommodated and those accommodating even if they have included non-liberal groups and relied on a contestable category of religion.

I would therefore suggest that Canada presents us with a marvelous situation in which the misguided application of a policy and a law reveals the potential success of another way of confronting the fact of pluralism. It is the prime example that if non-liberal groups are allowed to live out their traditions, there is neither a jeopardization of the political order nor a loss to others. Rather, bonds of solidarity are created between neighbours and citizens who inhabit the same land and who provide each other with mutual aid in participating in various institutions, associations, and market exchanges. Is there then a lens through which we can explain this success? Can this perspective also satisfactorily answer the question why differential treatment and accommodation is legitimized now that the very concept of religion is seen to have exhausted its analytical worth? These questions are not trivial, for even if Canadians overall approve of diversity and there has been an astonishing level of integration, there have been strains on multiculturalism, based on the twofold fear that non-liberal groups will be allowed, through it, to introduce objectionable practices and that national solidarity will eventually

be eroded. Moreover, there has been an increasing willingness among the population to place limitations on the practices of groups.⁸

I believe that the concept of the habitus as defined and employed by Talal Asad has great explanatory force in answering these questions. Thus the three chapters of my thesis seek to highlight how we would look upon the claims for diversity of many, though certainly not all, groups, if we approached them keeping this concept in mind. In Chapter 1, I define what Asad means by habitus and I use the concept to elucidate the importance for many groups of safeguarding their practices, which in turn explains why erecting a nation on rights is perhaps not the best source of solidarity. To say that humans are the bearers of a habitus is to state that they have capacities that are the product of shaping their bodies to achieve certain ends. Their habitus is responsible for their visceral or instinctual responses to the world: that which shocks, pleases, disconcerts, etc., is based on how they habitually engage with people and objects in their environment. Since that which one does shapes what one will both want and be able to do, it is by safeguarding practices that one ensures that one will be able to wholeheartedly pursue and achieve ends which one values. This is particularly important for collectivities that I call communities of the good life. Members of such communities orient their lives in order to pursue well-defined and prioritized internal goods. In the Aristotelian intellectual tradition, an internal good is a good only obtainable by fully immersing oneself in a practice and by seeking to excel in it: humans do not naturally value these goods, but come to see their desirability by shaping themselves through their pursuit. I speak of a

⁸ See for example, John Geddes, "What Canadians think of Sikhs, Jews, Christians, and Muslims," *Maclean's*, 4 May 2009: pp.20-24; or Charles Taylor and Gerard Bouchard, *Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accomodement reliée aux différences culturelles*, Gouvernement du Quebec (2008). <http://www.accommodements.qc.ca/documentation/rapports/rapport-final-abrege-en.pdf>.

community of the good life largely, though not exclusively, as a substitute for religious groups.

Chapter 1 makes no positive conclusions about how our political societies should be organized, but by illustrating that current legal freedoms applied indiscriminately to all are not enough for communities of the good life to flourish, it casts doubts both on the veracity of the claim that liberal democracies maximize the possible lifestyles available to citizens and on the utility of being free to pursue whatever ends are sanctioned by law. The chapter thus points towards conceiving accommodations—both legal and cultural—in public life as a necessary corollary to freedoms in the private sphere. It also points towards a sentiment of resentment, alienation, and withdrawal for these communities that feel burdened by the current social and political order, which makes national solidarity tenuous.

Of course, even once we accept that it is possible to arrange society in such a way that would facilitate the pursuit of certain lifestyles for many communities, there have been great objections both coming from the public and from academics as to the possibility to do so. To accommodate a collectivity is to presuppose the existence of such a collectivity. Since any group will display heterogeneity, it is not clear that policies will not be benefiting some over others. Even worse, it might be reinforcing a certain domination over the more vulnerable members of a group. Chapter 2 therefore seeks to tackle the question of the unity of communities of the good life. It argues that while there is heterogeneity in such groups, their commitment to internal goods provides means of reconciliation of disputes. It also makes the case that their common practices create standards of legitimate behaviour, based on the role of each in the performance of

practices. This then creates reciprocal obligations recognized by the community and makes abuses challengeable. I therefore argue that the fears of many are largely unwarranted.

Chapter 3 then tackles the possibility of accommodation. I seek to answer the claim that we cannot change our socio-political order without constraining the interests of those outside of the group requesting accommodation. Instead of answering this question directly, I begin by highlighting that only by denying some groups full rights of citizenship can we ensure that they will not use their rights to change legal and cultural norms to facilitate the pursuit of their ends. I use both the Danish Cartoons controversy and the sharia debate in Ontario to illustrate this point. We are thus left in a situation in which the alternative to accommodation is to deny groups the right to participate in the democratic formation of laws and to introduce intrusive mechanisms designed to reorient their pursuits. In many ways this is already the case in some European countries and the possibility seems increasingly tolerated in Canada. I then make a positive case for accommodation by suggesting empirical evidence that when citizens of communities of the good life have made requests for changes in norms, they have evinced an awareness of the presence, needs, and aspirations of their fellow citizens. Viewing citizens through the lens of the habitus suggests that it is in living with each other, sharing in a multitude of overlapping common goals, and engaging in politics in a way that necessitates acknowledging others that citizens both naturally think of others in making claims and come to value their belonging to a political community.

To return to pluralism in Canada then, the habitus explains why the tendency towards accommodation—not just through courts, but also through the mutual

understandings of individuals in institutions, market relations, and other associations of civil society—has led many groups to both prosper and love their country. To do otherwise than accommodate to their needs to cultivate a certain habitus in pursuing their internal goods would only limit the possibility of these groups to flourish and would foster ill-will. Likewise, the habitus accounts for the reason that most still express support for multiculturalism in highlighting that inclusion and accommodation does not need to detract from the concrete aspirations of other citizens because facilitating internal goods does not impoverish others, and, in fact, it tends towards their benefit by permitting fuller participation in common ends, such as economic prosperity, education, community activities like sports, political mobilization for environmental preservation or for anti-war and anti-imperial campaigns, etc.

Lastly, the habitus explains that whatever backlash against multiculturalism exists, it is not due to any concrete harm to society, but to a misguided lens through which to evaluate the legitimacy of plurality, namely, a lens that still thinks in terms of a nation founded on ahistorical liberal morality. I thus make the claim in Chapter 3 that it is worth thinking of our political association as a *modus vivendi* specifically designed for the accommodation of citizens to achieve their ends; and since the liberal system currently maximizes primary or external goods, what is needed is a greater focus on the concrete and real internal goods of citizens and the means by which they can fulfill them. The limitless number of possible internal goods means that attempting to establish a final arrangement for society is impossible but that accommodations would be best realized if public decision-making bodies included members of different groups who could articulate their particular community's needs. Such a shift would force us to move

beyond freedom of religion in Canada. As it stands, religious freedom tends to be based on an individual's feeling of obligation. Thus in the *Multani* case, the Supreme Court stated that "in the case at bar, Gurbaj Singh must show that he sincerely believes his faith *requires* him at all times to wear a kirpan made of metal" (emphasis added). Yet from the perspective of the habitus, there are many ways that groups could be accommodated not based on obligation, but on facilitation of their ends.

As a final word, considering my likely readership, the many different topics and arguments of this thesis might best be approached as an extension of the insights of Alasdair MacIntyre's writings on internal goods and virtues to answer current concerns about pluralism. Conceived this way, Chapter 1 addresses the conditions that facilitate the pursuit and attainment of internal goods and highlights that liberal societies give very little regard to them. Chapter 2 examines the consequences of creating these conditions for the achievement of internal goods on the individual members of a community. And Chapter 3 asks what the consequences would be on the greater political society.

Chapter 1: The Good Life and the Life of Plural Goods

Whether in the writings of theorists or in the popular self-images articulated in mainstream media and art, it is widely held that our Western liberal democratic societies allow individuals to seek their own good. It is not that the state does not exercise authority on or make requests upon citizens; but these are legitimated precisely because they create the conditions for the greatest possible ends available to them.⁹ And certainly the demands of the marketplace coupled with the need for a livelihood do constrain the choices of citizens in many ways; but this is to be taken as a necessity of life, inescapable in any society: for most, it is not the market but the extent to which wealth and power are distributed or the effects of production on our planet and future means of livelihood that are often objects of scrutiny.

It has of course long been noted that this picture of society does not countenance how humans come to value some things over others and how liberal societies actually resolve many of their disputes.¹⁰ In a sense, I hope in this chapter to be adding to these critiques; but I do so with a very particular intent in mind. I feel that such studies have not sufficiently explored the ways in which the claims of the legitimacy of the liberal state to allow each to do as they please could not resonate with certain individuals, and this, despite the legal sanction to pursue their ends. What I have in mind is the viewpoint of a

⁹ That constitutional democracies should and can aspire to maximize liberty was the natural conclusion of John Rawls's approach to justice in his *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971); though the justification legitimating such a society has changed, the later Rawls and political liberals still hold on to this view, best described by the notion of "reasonable pluralism," *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers Vol.1 and 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982) were among the earliest to note the relevance for contemporary political philosophy of human embeddedness in a common social life, making the emphasis on individual good rather illusory. Michael Walzer's *Spheres of Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1983) made the point that in practice different principles are in play in different areas of socio-political life, making context of paramount importance to justice.

member of what I call a community of the good life. I define such a group by two characteristics: 1) They have a commitment to ends that are related in a hierarchical manner; and 2) These ends may only be achieved by consciously seeking to develop certain aptitudes. The nature of these goods provides the members of these groups with a way to determine and justify their activities, by arguments of means to ends. On this basis the group can commend or condemn the actions of their followers. A community that lacks these two attributes is one of plural goods. The term plural goods is meant to highlight an equal consideration of all goods. It is a consequence neither of having members with diverse ends nor members who value each and every possible human end equally, but rather, members whose commitments are not solidly anchored enough for them not to redirect their attentions from one good to another throughout their lives. Needless to say, I identify communities of plural goods with our liberal societies. In the barest of terms, my argument is that societies of plural goods place barriers to the pursuits of citizens who are members of communities of the good life; and, in the present, this consequently obviates any hope for these citizens to see liberal societies as anything more than a lesser of evils. This then is the predicament of liberal democratic societies that I wish to tackle in later chapters by exploring ways that society could reconceptualize the basis of its political union and reorganize itself for the purposes of including and accommodating communities of the good life and foster a sense of social solidarity.

To thus argue, I must first address the subject of agency, by which I do not only mean what it is for a subject to act, but also, the causes of the particular actions that subjects effectuate. In fact, individual agency forms the most detailed part of the chapter. It is a topic that is naturally of relevance to political philosophy; but the account that I

present is one that I feel is greatly neglected. I make the claim that because our actions are usually done unreflectively, they are for the most part a manifestation of habitual dispositions that are a result of our past activities. Even when we do deliberate, that which we take to be good and thus pursue, is the product of what we have come to see as good through the development of our capacities as actors. Thus what we do in the present will largely affect what we can and will want to do in the future. In a sense, our actions in the present create a certain self in the future. But it is important to note that it is possible for an agent to struggle in following what she takes to be good, being unable to find it pleasant. Such a view of agency is part of a tradition that finds its most coherent early expression in Aristotle. Thus I begin with a lengthy exposition of agency in Greek thought by tracing changes in the concept of temperance or *sophrosyne*. In order to provide a concept that explains these different facets of agency with great coherence, I then present the anthropologist Talal Asad's notion of the habitus. With this account of agency complete, I go on to point out what should thereupon be evident concerning communities of the good life in liberal societies. I should note that my focus in this chapter is explicitly the individual. The nature of communities of the good life and the way the individual can be conceived within them is a topic reserved for the next chapter.

Sophrosyne and the Limits of Agency

It is well to begin by reminding ourselves that any attempt at speaking of agency will necessarily be partly defined by a contrary state in which a subject's movements are not attributable to her. Whatever conception of agency we produce, it is likely to be intimately associated to, and confirmed by, a certain conception of freedom. This is the

reason that understanding freedom as the contrary state of necessary causation or determinism seems so threatening and inadequate to any account of agency. As Arendt observed, any freedom based on the will is bound to be frustrated by arguments about determinism.¹¹ For despite Kant's best efforts to create a place for morality that is outside of the categories of space and time, we do inevitably find that there are causes for our volitions. Philosophers have at best brought us to a state of aporia concerning such a freedom. But while Arendt was no doubt correct, she was a bit hasty in linking freedom with the citizen of a republic, abandoning any exploration of a viable freedom within individual consciousness for the freedom that stems from the condition of plurality and agonism.¹² For the natural rights tradition as it developed in Athens may also claim a conception of freedom, which just as strongly clashes with the contemporary discussions of determinism and libertarianism. It is of course well known that the Greeks did not possess an equivalent of the term "will," seeing the self as a combination of different parts naturally inclined towards particular ends. Nonetheless, the concepts of *sophrosyne* (temperance), *akrasia* (incontinence), and *enkrateia* (self-control) point us towards a conception of freedom that is based on a certain harmonious combination between these parts, and alternatively, to a view of enslavement that is a result of disharmony between them. Agency and its limits will therefore be explained in relation to such a view of freedom.

¹¹ Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom," in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), pp. 143-146.

¹² For an examination of the discourse of freedom in Greek thought, Max Pohlenz, *Freedom in Greek Thought: The History of an Ideal* (Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing Company, 1966).

To understand this conception of freedom, it is best to begin by tracing the historical development of the concept of *sophrosyne*.¹³ In Homer's poetry, it is barely used, and when it is, it refers to "prudence" or "soundness of mind." The martial virtues of this period make it a notion of little consequence to Greek life. In the period straddling the 6th and 5th century, and largely as a consequence of the establishment of democracy, it takes on a meaning that relates it to the virtues of Athenian civic life. In the work of Theognis, it becomes the antonym of *hybris* (hubris) as well as referring to acting appropriately in accordance with *eunomia* (customs). During the same period, it also comes to mean *aidos* (chastity), thereafter designating the central virtue of women.¹⁴

In the great tragedies of the 5th century, the concept begins to be used to refer to self-mastery. In Aeschylus, *sophrosyne* is established by the gods as limits on the proper behaviour of humans, echoing its meaning in relation to custom; but in the writings of Euripides, it refers to the rational part of the self which struggles to control both emotions and appetites (*eros*, *thymos*, and *orge*).¹⁵ The tragedies not only reflect a change in vocabulary, but a type of transvaluation of values in which heroes like Achilles and Ajax are now seen as deficient in character because lacking in restraint.

There is an important turning point in the use of the concept in relation to Socrates. The sophists, such as Protagoras, Antiphon, and Gorgias had employed the term, but the narrators of the life of Socrates make it a defining virtue of his character. This is evident in the portrayals and descriptions found in the writings of Xenophon,

¹³ For detailed examinations on *sophrosyne*, refer to Helen North, *Sophrosyne: Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966); and Adriaan Rademaker, *Sophrosyne and the Rhetoric of Self-Restraint: Polysemy and Persuasive Use of an Ancient Value Term* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

¹⁴ North, p.18.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.33.

Plato, Antisthenes and Aristippus. The virtue is understood in relation to, and is almost synonymous with, *enkrateia* and *autarkeia* (independence). In Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Socrates's *sophrosyne* is divided into *enkrateia*, *karteria* (endurance of cold, heat, and toil) and *autarkeia*. *Enkrateia* is used to refer to both the appetites and emotions and *autarkeia* implies independence because of contentment with little.¹⁶ Because of Socrates, defining and understanding *sophrosyne* becomes a major concern. Moreover, the few propositions that may be ascribed to the historical Socrates, namely that virtues are a form of knowledge, that virtues are one, and that one must care for one's soul all relate to *sophrosyne*.

Plato's theorizations on *sophrosyne* change and develop from early to later dialogues. His earliest writing to deal with *sophrosyne*, the *Charmides*, focuses on its relation to the good and to self-knowledge. The closest the dialogue gets to a plausible definition is that it is "a knowledge of knowledge and a knowledge of non-knowledge;" in other words, it is an awareness of what one knows and does not know.¹⁷ Though the dialogue ends with Socrates dissatisfied with the conclusions of the inquiry, it does unequivocally reject the widely held views that *sophrosyne* is either a type of quietness or modesty. In so doing, Plato emphasizes that the virtue is to be located within the self and not primarily in behaviours observable by society. As one commentator points out about *Charmides*, "The argument moves from doing one's own work to knowing oneself and from doing good to knowing the Good."¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid, p.123.

¹⁷ Plato, *Charmides*, trans. Thomas West and Grace Starry West (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1986), p.39.

¹⁸ North, p. 157.

It is in the *Gorgias* that *sophrosyne* takes on the meaning of controlling one's "passions and appetites," which will subsequently reappear in all future Platonic dialogues.¹⁹ The dialogue inquires into the contrast between the good and pleasure. When Callicles suggests that the good is the limitless pursuit of one's desires, Socrates answers by arguing that desires are insatiable, and consequently bring a great deal of unrest to the one who is only concerned with fulfilling them. After convincing Callicles that good and pleasure are not synonymous, for some pleasures are good and others not, Socrates points out that the good of every craft, whether shipbuilding or medicine, necessitates a certain order and right proportion. Suggesting that the same can be said of the soul, he concludes that obtaining its good is always related to observing a limit. The *Gorgias* reveals two important points about agency. The first is in the soul's comparison to the object of a craft, which suggests that in one way or other we produce ourselves. The second is in the description of order, possible only by observing a limit, suggesting that some actions are precluded because of the arrangement of the soul.

The view of *sophrosyne* as a certain order of the soul is developed in the *Republic*. Within Plato's tripartite division of the soul into reason, spirit, and appetite, *sophrosyne* refers both to moderation, which is the specific virtue of the appetitive part, as well as to a harmony (*symphonia*) between the three parts.²⁰ An individual's inclinations and pursuits will differ depending on which part of the soul is dominant: the rule of reason leads one to pursue eternal truths, that of spirit to military excellence, and the appetites to either the accumulation of wealth or to the fulfillment of any and all whims. This indicates that it is not only the pleasures but also fear of pains that will be

¹⁹ Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Walter Hamilton (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), p.90.

²⁰ Plato, *Republic*, trans. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992), p.65 and p.87.

responsible for a subject's actions. It is the metaphor of the soul as a polis in which some parts rule over others that leads Plato to explicitly speak of the potential for humans to be enslaved by their appetites when they take control of the soul.

The influence of the students of Socrates is such that by the time Aristotle composes the *Nicomachean Ethics* he does not argue for, but presupposes a strong relationship between agency and *sophrosyne*. This is evident in the role *sophrosyne* plays in his discussion of moral responsibility.²¹ As he usually does, Aristotle begins by presenting what is often believed on the topic at hand: he highlights two types of cases in which it is said that a person acts involuntarily. The first is that which is done under compulsion. A proposed method of identifying a case of compulsion is to locate the origins of what happens outside the subject: the event is uncaused by desires or choices, and cannot be linked to a subject's character. On this basis Aristotle accepts that when someone is carried away by the wind or taken by a group of men, he cannot be said to be acting. However, he rejects that when one is placed in constraining circumstances, he is not an agent. That the person would not normally act the way he does may lead us to excuse, and sometimes even praise, him, but not to characterize the act as involuntary. Aristotle has the same view regarding strong emotions or appetites. Nonetheless, he does admit of circumstances in which these passions are simply too strong and a subject is unable to choose contrary to them. This inability to choose correctly is less a sign of compulsion, and more of ignorance, which is the second type of involuntariness. But while ignorance may be an excuse for one's deeds when it refers to the unknowable particulars of a circumstance, the type of ignorance found in one that is overcome by

²¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.37-48.

passions is closer to that of a state of drunkenness in which one has no awareness of the universal principles of morality that one usually espouses. In fact, Aristotle does not consider it acting through ignorance but *in* ignorance. But though such cases might be involuntary, highlighting, again a limit to agency, they are not excusable; rather they are a result of a negligence on the part of the subject. For even if one could not do otherwise at the moment of the event, the state of one's self is the result of past actions, over which choice was possible:

People are themselves responsible for turning out like this, through the slackness of their lives – responsible for being unjust by doing wrong, or intemperate by spending their time in drinking and the like; in each sphere people's activities give them the corresponding character. This is clear from the case of people training for any competition or action, since they practice the relevant activity continually. A person would have to be utterly senseless not to know that states in each sphere arise from their corresponding activities.²²

Thus choice is involved in being the type of person we are, if not always in the particular actions we may perform. How does Aristotle explain this? Like Plato, he considers the virtues to be what orders the soul; but he provides a definition of character virtues that elucidates their nature, attainment, and relationship to agency. He characterizes virtues as habitual dispositions leading to action.²³ Thus on the one hand they are achieved through repetition, and, on the other, they create a constancy of character. These virtues are responses to types of feelings. The first, which is the concern of *sophrosyne*, reacts to objects of bodily pleasure;²⁴ by repeating a certain moderation in response to these pleasures, one's inclination towards them becomes stable, making a

²² Ibid, p. 46.

²³ Ibid, p.29.

²⁴ Aristotle considers *sophrosyne* to be related to touch and taste, or sex, drink, and food. Yet in speaking of *akrasia* in pp.126-127, he speaks of it as related to bodily pleasures in general. He also states that we speak of temperance analogically when we speak of all pleasures.

particular pattern of action possible and inevitable. The second is a reaction to emotions, such as fear in the case of courage, or anger in the case of even temper. To gain these virtues is to shape one's emotional response by acting in response to objects in a particular way. Thus one might fear an action, but by gritting one's teeth and going ahead with it, one overcomes this particular fear and thereby structures one's experience of fear in relation to the world. The point is not to overcome all fear, but to be able to identify what one should and should not truly fear in order to be able to shape one's actions.

Humans have the potential to achieve virtues, but they are not like the gift of sight, to be possessed without effort. In speaking of moral responsibility, Aristotle does state that:

where it is in our power to act, it is also in our power not to act and where saying 'No' is in our power, so is saying 'Yes'; so that if it is in our power to act when it would be noble, it will also be in our power to act when it would be shameful. Now if it is in our power to do noble and shameful actions, and the same goes for not doing them, and if, as we saw, being good and bad consists in this, then it is in our power to be good or bad.²⁵

Thus, on the one hand the absolute limits on agency are few: even the man lacking temperance might succeed in resisting to eat the chocolate cake he wants. But for the most part, how we interact with people and objects is largely a result of how we have acted with them in the past. We identify objects of desire, fear, anger, love, etc. and react viscerally. In terms of agency, then, the capacity to achieve pursuits, feel, and perceive in distinct ways is the product of engagement in practices structuring the self's passions and desires in particular ways.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 45.

Knowledge of the Good

From the above narrative, we could be forgiven if we assumed that the good is identified by a faculty of reason and that the virtues allow us to attain these goods. However, the process of coming to see something as a good is a bit more complicated and cannot be removed from our actions. Our picture of agency, then, is not yet complete, and part of what is missing is a treatment of Aristotle's account of *akrasia* (to act against one's better judgement or incontinence) in relation to *sophrosyne*; for it will allow us to see the link between agency and goods more clearly.

Socrates's teaching that no one seeks other than the good except out of ignorance led Plato to deny the possibility of *akrasia*.²⁶ Oddly enough, the sophist Protagoras arrived at the same conclusion by arguing that good was simply that which one pursued, such that one could not but aim at one's good in acting. But Aristotle rejects both views, arguing for a far more refined theory of *akrasia*. First, instead of saying that everyone aims at the good, he considers it is more accurate to say that there is a good by nature, but that everyone aims or wishes for what appears to them to be good. This subtle distinction, which is scarcely different than what Socrates and Plato had intended by good and its ignorance, is meant to encourage us to see the relative nature of what one finds pleasant or enjoyable.²⁷ For Aristotle admits of a natural link between pleasure and the good on the basis of the observation that if the proper object of human pursuits is the good, how do we explain the fact that we most often pursue pleasure and what is pleasant? The answer comes only in Book X, after Aristotle entertains the possibility that the good is

²⁶ Plato, *Protagoras*, in "*Protagoras*" and "*Meno*," trans. Robert Bartlett (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

²⁷ The passage that defines the good and each's apparent good is immediately followed by an explanation that each state of the soul has its own object of pleasure, p. 45.

pleasure: what makes this claim to identity false is that those considered good and noble seek not pleasure but aim at finding the good pleasant. Pleasures all differ, each being proper to a certain activity, and when one finds an activity pleasant it signals its completion:

When both object and subject of perception are at their best, there will always be pleasure, since what will produce it and what will experience it are both present. Pleasure completes the activity not as the inherent state does, but as a sort of supervening end, like the bloom on the faces of young men.²⁸

When one is truly just, one finds justice pleasant and the same is true of courage. This is saying more than simply what I stated above, namely, that the state of one's soul is such that it leads an agent to act in some ways more than others. For it is easy to characterize disciplined souls as unable to feel pleasure, rather than as finding genuine pleasure in other activities. It is asserting, therefore, that there is nothing natural or inevitable about pleasure; rather, it is a feeling that results from acting in the manner that best reflects the condition of one's soul, such that one could find pleasurable reading books and could feel pity for those who like chocolate. The point is that no individual is born with such dispositions, but one acquires them through training the body, until one possesses one state, with its characteristic dispositions, rather than another. Aristotle thus unashamedly asserts that the whole of ethics is concerned with the management of pleasure and pain.²⁹

The virtues then are concerned not only with producing habitual dispositions that ensure certain types of action, but also that one does such actions feeling that they are noble and pleasant. It is this facet of the virtues that allows Aristotle to provide his account of *akrasia*. For *akrasia* is merely one stage on a scale that measures one's level

²⁸ Ibid, p.189.

²⁹ Ibid, p.27.

of virtue by identifying the relationship between what one thinks is good and what one finds pleasant. This scale consists of *sophrosyne* (temperance), *enkrateia* (continence), *akrasia* (incontinence), and *akolasia* (intemperance).³⁰ The temperate is one that not only abstains from excessive bodily pleasures, but also finds it pleasant to do so. The continent does the same actions as the temperate, but with no pleasure in doing the act. The incontinent knows what is virtuous should be done, but fails to do so. And the intemperate, rationally chooses the bodily pleasures, finding nothing wrong with them.

Aristotle presents several possible ways in which *akrasia* relates to knowledge of the good, all having to do with a variation of the practical syllogism used in deliberation. Perhaps the akratic is she who knows something but is not attending to this knowledge in action; or perhaps she reasons using different facts than those that would lead her to the good; it could also be that she ignores the particulars of the situation; and lastly, perhaps her knowledge is like that of a madman who could utter quite cogent words but which do not resonate with him, being equivalent to mere clamour.

Whatever the source of *akrasia* may be, it is evident that it is a conflict between the rational and non-rational parts of the soul. Aristotle considers this struggle to be one of desires, for only desires can lead to actions. But in the case of the rational desire, thought is mixed with what is often translated as wish (*boulesis*);³¹ and wish is linked to a particular conception of what is suitable for a certain type of subject, or, in other words, its apparent good. Indeed, it is not thought per se, but the object of desire that distinguishes the incontinent from the temperate, for the incontinent may use her intellect

³⁰ Ibid, p.120-125.

³¹ Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. Hugh Lawson-Trancred (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), p.214 (433a). For useful secondary material see Anthony Kenny, *Aristotle's Theory of the Will* (London: Duckworth, 1979); and Terence Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 329-346.

to deliberate in terms of the best means to attain a pleasure, but her deliberation is not concerned with what she takes to be good. It is for this reason that *prohairesis*, translated variously as decision or purposeful choice, is reserved for one deliberating based on the desire of wish. Such a distinction is useful because it gives voice to that difference between ends that give a certain constant character to our lives and those pursuits which in hindsight were passing desires.³²

What becomes manifest from Aristotle's treatment of *akrasia*, is that while reason may have determined that an end should be pursued, it is not unaffected by felt pleasures. The good is supported, on the one hand, by a certain habituation, which allows one to look upon some potential pleasures with indifference or distaste; and, on the other, to find the good itself an object of pleasure. Alternatively, pleasures may redirect the rational desires of humans, making them unable to identify that which they previously thought was the good. In short, wish, or reason, is not divorced from the lived passions of humans, in the way that mathematics is. This is evident in Aristotle's comments on *sophrosyne* in relation to practical reasoning. Practical wisdom is that intellectual virtue which through teaching and experience comes to be able to assess the particularities of circumstances to relate them to principles of ethics and lead one to determine what virtue requires. Practical wisdom is only described as such when it aims towards what is good; the term clever is reserved for one who knows how to achieve ends, but does so for the sake of other than the good. It is temperance and not intelligence that keeps one aware of the principles of ethics on which practical wisdom relies:

³² Though there are important differences between Charles Taylor's notion of strong and weak evaluations and Harry Frankfurt's second and first-order desires, both sets of concepts seem to more or less parallel the difference in Aristotle between wish and other desires. Taylor, "What is Human Agency," in *Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," in *Free Will*, ed. Gary Watson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

This is also how temperance (*sophrosyne*) got its name, because it preserves (*sozein*) practical wisdom (*phronesis*). It preserves the kind of supposition that is ruined and distorted by what is pleasant or painful—not, for example, the supposition that a triangle does or does not have not two right angles—but rather those about what is done. For the first principle of what is done consists in the goal it seeks. But if a person has been ruined by pleasure or pain, it follows that this first principle will not be evident to him, nor the fact that this ought to be the goal and cause of everything he chooses and does; for vice tends to destroy the first principle.³³

Before concluding, I would do well to clarify one point about *sophrosyne*. In his formal treatment of *sophrosyne*, Aristotle considers the virtue to be related to touch and taste, or sex, drink, and food.³⁴ Yet in relation to *akrasia*, he writes of *sophrosyne* slightly differently, relating it to bodily pleasures in general. He considers *akrasia* to refer unqualifiedly to one resisting those bodily pleasures; and that when one excessively seeks non-bodily goods such as wealth, honour, or victory, all of which he considers noble, one is considered incontinent only on analogy, and only qualifiedly, e.g. one is incontinent in respect of honour.³⁵ In another chapter he includes the possibility of being akratic in relation to spirit; thus emotions like anger, fear, or pity, all of which are relevant to other virtues should be viewed as related to what allows one to find certain activities pleasant or to have trouble finding them so.

I have highlighted that from Aristotle we can make the important conclusions that while the good is not pleasure, pleasure hinders or supports one from viewing certain ends as good; and that the more one cultivates a certain habitual disposition, the more one will find oneself disposed towards it, finding it pleasurable, and eventually good. This insight may be extended to practices in general. The master pianist takes pleasure in

³³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, p. 107.

³⁴ *Ibid*, pp.54-59.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 126.

playing the piano, while the beginner finds it difficult. But there is a second point of great relevance. It is that until we have cultivated well-developed dispositions to find such activities pleasurable, we may struggle between what we take to be our rational desires—or second order desires, in today's terminology—for what we have determined to be a suitable good for ourselves, and that towards which we are naturally inclined. It is this gap that offers us the possibility of changing ourselves: for instead of being slave of one desire after another, we are capable of aiming for other ends when we have determined them to be better. But precisely because reason is not divorced from one's passions, this would no longer be true if one succumbed enough times to the passions. This is the reason that Aristotle considers the intemperate, who finds bodily pleasures to be the good, to be incurable.

Talal Asad and the Habitus

I have traced the development of *sophrosyne* in Greek thought and its culmination in Aristotle in an attempt to point out key aspects of an account of agency that I want to emphasize before being able to present a suitable description of a community of the good life. It is, however, the contemporary anthropologist Talal Asad's concept of the habitus that furnishes the final elements of that account. In what follows, I hope to point out the ways this concept gives a certain coherence or explanatory force to what has already been stated about agency and adds certain insights central to the present considerations.

The habitus is an Aristotelian concept in origin; but it is from its more recent reformulation in the work of Marcel Mauss that Asad appropriates it.³⁶ Mauss's essay "Techniques of the Body," represents for Asad an exception to the tendency in anthropology to treat the body as a site of "individual feelings and universal desires" distinct from culture, considered to be a domain of "studied thought, speech and gesture."³⁷ Mauss argues that "man's first and most natural technical object, and at the same time technical means, is his body."³⁸ This leads Mauss to speak of the way in which the human body may be taught and may acquire what might best be characterized not only as habits, but as *habitual abilities* or *habitus*. Mauss sees in the habitus "the techniques and works of collective and individual practical reason," and points out that it varies largely from one society to another. In elaborating upon the concept, Asad notes that the habitus involves "a mutually constituting relationship between body-sense and body-learning."³⁹ This is true in two ways. The first is that there is a trained emotional response in engaging with the world—this parallels Aristotle's discussion of the virtues. The second is that faculties of perception are taught by experience to come to recognize the objects that make up the subject's environment, such that one may come to see, for instance, what the untutored eye can not.

The view of the human body as "an integrated totality" whose shaping through practices is responsible for the ability to know, to feel, to suffer, and to respond in particular ways to internal and external pressures, suggests that the body has a life largely

³⁶ Though the term habitus has been popularized by Pierre Bourdieu, Asad insists that Mauss was the first anthropologist to use the term and did not employ it in the way that Bourdieu has, see *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1993), p. 75.

³⁷ Talal Asad, "Remarks on the Anthropology of the Body," in *Religion and the Body*, ed. Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.45.

³⁸ Quoted in *ibid*, p.47.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p.48.

inaccessible to the conscious probing of the subject; and this goes a long way to explain why there is a visceral proclivity towards the ends of practices in which one is regularly engaged. Moreover, it accounts for why reason as wish is likely to follow from practices and not vice-versa by pointing out that embodied knowledge and passions significantly reduce the importance of reason in either causing or executing one's actions. As Asad points out, we go astray in thinking that we can always find clearly formulated intentions for what agents do.⁴⁰ Often ascribing such intentions is a consequence of describing them in a particular manner that eschews reference to the passions. For, although there is no consensus on the relation between desires and passions, to speak strictly of desires or pro-attitudes as the cause of actions is to hide the ease or difficulty that one's emotional life and know-how play in their performance. In short, the habitus considers that one is impelled from inside to seek out certain ends and to engage with the world in particular ways.

Describing the cause of actions as passions of which one is often unaware makes it difficult to see in what ways humans can be said to be agents. However, Asad suggests that perhaps agency is better understood without reference to intentional desires. He finds support for his view within Susan Wolf's essay "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility." Wolf contends that a popular view in philosophy by which one is a free agent, and hence responsible for one's actions, when one can act in accordance with the desires of a deep self—a self that desires to have and act upon some desires and not others—might yet face the objection that one's deep self is socially constructed, making

⁴⁰ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p.72.

responsibility illusory.⁴¹ But Wolf notes that this objection is misguided; for it stems not from the fear that we are the product of our society, but from the fear that if we are, we might not truly be acting in the way that we should. Our worry according to Wolf is not one of freedom, but of *sanity*, of knowing reality and of knowing standards of right and wrong.⁴² This seems to point out that agency is possible because of an ethical standard that serves to evaluate one's actions. And as Wolf articulates, this involves being "controlled by the world in certain ways and not others."⁴³ Asad therefore concludes that the passions that one experiences may yet be agentive if they agree with one's ethical standard. Since one's habitus shapes what one views as good, the habitus functions very much as a deep self which serves as a criterion, determining which passions are agentive and which are crippling, based on how they correspond to the way the self wishes to relate to the world, or put otherwise, the way that it permits the self to live sanely.

This view of agency allows Asad to consider that passions are not only causes of actions, but that they can themselves be a type of action. Asad gives the example of suffering, which he sees as the paradigmatic case of a passion seen to cripple agency.⁴⁴ He notes that feeling pain at certain times may be an essential action to contributing to one's ends as a certain type of subject. This is the case of a mother who grieves at her daughter's illness or of the early Christians' defiance of Roman authority under torture. Without feeling pain in such situations, one could not be the type of mother or devout Christian one would want to be. In other words, it is the role of passions within the

⁴¹ Susan Wolf, "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility," in *Free Will* ed. Gary Watson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁴² Wolf explicitly relies on a simple definition of sanity that she says is standard in judicial courts. She makes no claims about the accuracy of this definition because it is moot to her argument.

⁴³ Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, p.73.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 79-86.

pursuit of ends that make them agentive. These examples also reflect how Asad considers it possible to respond to the passions in a manner that gradually shapes them.

The thought of Asad manifestly parallels that of Aristotle. However, before listing the relevant facts about agency that follow from their writings, I would like to point out that Asad's notion of sanity may just as easily be extended to environmental constraints as those of passions. The condition of sanity suggests that some forms of human authority, if concordant with an ethical sensibility, will be viewed as agentive, furthering one's ends, whereas others will be regarded with resentment. This might seem rather self-evident. But while physical constraints are often easy to identify, I want to suggest that there exists a distinct type of constraint to agency within the realm of social interactions. In speaking with others, one necessarily draws upon the sensibilities or evaluations that derive from one's habitus. If disclosing these sensibilities in one's interactions is foreclosed by the disapproval of one's interlocutors, then one cannot relate sanely to one's social environment.

The cause of this social insanity bears similarities to what political theorists in the last decades have called misrecognition. But while recognition is often viewed in terms of self-esteem and therefore includes a certain positive valuation of groups, sanity is based on recognizing the particular sensibilities of another's habitus, such that one may let one's behaviour reflect one's most dearly held views. A good example of such social insanity was highlighted by Frantz Fanon in his essay "Algeria Unveiled." Fanon presents the case of an Algerian worker who is subject to two different and incompatible environments:

In connection with a holiday-Christmas or New Year, or simply a social occasion with the firm-the boss will invite the *Algerian employé and his*

wife... Every Algerian is called in the director's office and invited by name to come with "your little family." "The firm being one big family, it would be unseemly for some to come without their wives, you understand..." Before this formal summons, the Algerian sometimes experiences moments of difficulty. If he comes with his wife... it means "prostituting his wife," exhibiting her... On the other hand, going alone means refusing to give satisfaction to his boss; it means running the risk of losing his job.⁴⁵

The point that I want to emphasize, which is admittedly different from Fanon's thesis, is that Algerian culture and gender norms of the time made the worker feel uncomfortable about bringing his wife to a Christmas party and yet because these norms are not tolerated by the French employer, he is placed in a situation in which he cannot reveal about himself that which his habitus makes quite normal. In short then, to live in a socially sane manner is to be able to live one's habitus fully, allowing it to be reflected in all one's interactions.

It is now possible to summarize the account of agency upon which I wish to anchor my claims about groups seeking a good life: 1) The capacity to achieve pursuits, feel, and perceive in distinct ways is the product of engagement in practices; this is because practices shape one's sensorium in particular ways and provide one with certain aptitudes, and because most of what we do is unconscious and not subject to clearly formulated intentions; 2) The apparent good of each is a product of the practices which generate an experienced body; this good is not rooted in arguments but in a certain visceral behaviour; 3) One may for a short term adopt an end which is contrary to one's habitus—this belongs to the domain of rational desires—but if one fails to act to incorporate this end within one's habitus, one will soon abandon it completely. Likewise, one may find one's habitus changing because of the way one is forced to relate to one's

⁴⁵ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p.40.

environment, and may during this period of transition attempt to consciously conserve one's habitus; 4) To be denied the ability to relate to one's social environment in ways concordant with one's habitus is to be in a state of social insanity and to be unable to sustain one's practices is to lead one to a state of *akrasia*, in which one's judgements and one's bodily inclinations diverge; both are particularly painful states that offer obstacles to the pursuit of what one wishes to pursue.

Leading the Good Life in a Society of Plural Goods

I have written much attempting to emphasize what I believe to be the limits of agency and the context that largely accounts for the choices that we make. This has led us to the concept of the habitus, the body's habitual capabilities and orchestrated sensorium as the most immediate cause of our actions. It is the visceral force that impels us to act. But our habitus can also be shaped by a conscious effort to engage in some and not other practices; and thus this suggests an ability to reflect upon and assess our actions. Keeping this view in mind, it is now necessary to ask what is the lot of a community of the good life in societies of plural goods? Moreover, in what ways might a political order based on the latter make claims to legitimate authority to the former?

I have stated two conditions for a group to be qualified as seeking a good life—1) a hierarchy of ends, 2) attained by a conscious shaping of the self. This is scarcely different from saying that its principal good is what has been called in Aristotelian virtue ethics, especially that of MacIntyre's, an internal good.⁴⁶ Internal goods may only be possessed in the exercise of a practice and it necessitates that one values the practice for its own sake. They contrast external goods—most notably wealth and fame—which are

⁴⁶ MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1980), p.188.

separable and may be enjoyed regardless of what one actually does. Thus we often hear that a musician that performs for wealth and fame has betrayed his art because he no longer values its intrinsic worth. Activities whose ends are internal goods are also always founded on a standard of excellence and those who attempt to attain these goods must themselves strive for excellence. For example, when one gains the good of chess or of oration, one does so by striving to be the best one can at it. Internal and external goods are relevant because their attainment generates different relationships between the members of a community. External goods are often limited. If one has wealth, it is because another has less of it. If one has honour, it is because others do not. Internal goods, however, may be pursued without any detriment to others. Indeed, to excel in the pursuit of an internal good sometimes enriches a practice, raising its standards, and offers a model for others to emulate. When I speak of a group seeking a good life, it is always founded on internal goods and their concomitant standards of excellence.

We may again divide internal goods into two categories. One is an end which may only be achieved collectively. We have such an example from Plato's polis dedicated to military excellence.⁴⁷ In this case, the members of the society each play a role in achieving victory over other poleis. Though specific individuals may be honoured, it is the victory that is of greatest value to the citizens and it is the polis as a whole that shares in its good. In more contemporary times, it is possible to think of individuals involved in sports or orchestras seeking a certain end together, yet not necessarily doing the same actions. Thus no one expects the cellist to be able to play the trombone or that a linebacker gain the skills of a quarterback. Each shapes his or her own habitus, but with the aim of attaining the excellence of the whole. The success of this community often

⁴⁷ Plato, *Republic*, pp. 213-221.

goes hand in hand with the creation of unequal honour, wealth, and power. An Achilles within an army or a Diana Ross within The Supremes rapidly leads to a situation in which the attainment of the collective internal good is only possible by providing more external goods to some than to others. The danger of course is that by rewarding members with external goods, the society might altogether forget the value of internal goods. Indeed, this was Plato's fear for his military polis. The second type of end is one in which excellence belongs strictly to the individual, however much she has acquired it from the instruction and guidance of others and however much she may benefit by their contribution to its standards of excellence. A chess player, a painter, and a philosopher are held to have achieved excellence according to what they do *qua* individuals. Within such a community the roles of each are the same, and thus the shaping of the habitus is the same.

It is possible but rare to conceive of a human life without these internal goods. Many of our social roles which define who we are, as fathers, daughters, brothers, and friends, would mean nothing outside of the practices that make them up, e.g. the practice of a friend counseling another; and we would be found to be terribly disingenuous if we did not truly wish to be good at those practices because we find them of value: one would scarcely consider another a friend if his counsel was provided begrudgingly. What distinguishes a seeker of a good life from one of plural goods, however, is an ordering by which these internal goods are ranked. A good life allows for an interconnection between practices and their goods specifically by refusing to compromise a higher good for the sake of a lower one. This also results in a life which is integrated by the relation between actions giving a sort of predictability to the conduct of an individual. In short, a group

that seeks a good life is one that pursues hierarchically arranged internal goods, so as to allow for an organization of one's life in relation to the attainment of these ends.

This definition of a community of the good life naturally admits of great diversity. It is possible to conceive of a single practice to which an individual dedicates her life. We most often associate this with an Olympic athlete, whose determination to succeed in her competition supersedes any other commitments. Thus the internal good of succeeding in the Olympics orders her other practices and goods. Other forms of good life, however, consist of many practices. Most often these are religious communities, whose ethical practices define priorities by which practitioners must abide. But even among religious groups much diversity is possible. A community may be limited to a congregational period of worship during the week with only general prescriptions of morality that neither anchor one's behaviour within a set of practices, nor greatly distinguish one from the rest of one's society.⁴⁸ Other communities, however, might have a greater number of prescriptive practices. These tend to be *nomoi* communities or communities with their own set of laws: the reason is that a community of the good life with a great deal of ethical practices is more likely to need laws to facilitate the achievement of those practices.

What all those that seek a good life have in common, however, is that they involve a great deal of self-discipline. The reason is that any practice with its own standards of excellence cannot but be achieved by gaining a level of proficiency in the practice: the example of the Olympic athlete should make this clear enough. What the Aristotelian tradition of the *habitus* reveals is that this proficiency is only obtained by

⁴⁸ MacIntyre points out the difficulty in distinguishing Christians from non-theists within modern society, *Against the Self-Images of the Age* (London: Duckworth, 1971), p. 24.

doing it repeatedly. This allows one to gain bodily aptitude and practical wisdom. Bodily aptitudes come from the exercising of the body to perform a certain activity with ease and fluidity: no pianist ever begins with an ability to move her fingers without concentration, yet after a certain length of time, it becomes possible for her to effortlessly play quite difficult songs, as though her fingers had a mind of their own. This experience also provides one with practical wisdom: any practice is usually too complex to be accomplished without having acquired through experience an ability to know the different options ahead of oneself in the course of the practice, and the best way to accomplish it. Improvements, it might be added, also come about by taking a detached position from engagement, devising better ways to train oneself: this is the reason athletes have coaches who themselves are not able to do what those they are training can. For these reasons, anyone who would like to succeed at a practice needs to be able to devote time to it.

The first point on agency developed above—that one's ability to perform ends is a function of having produced a self with certain sensibilities and dispositions—suggests two ways in which individuals might get distracted in their pursuit of the ends of practices. The first is by the passions, both emotions and appetites. Strong emotions like anger or love may lead one to act in a manner that is contrary to one's goals. The appetites involving drink, food, and sex also make an individual lax in the attainment of ends. Without taking any position on the value of those who choose what Mill called the lower pleasures, Mill seems correct in stating that these pleasures are easier and more immediate: our Olympic athlete's good of excelling in the Olympics is far more difficult than eating a cheeseburger. The second is simply in having one's habitus shaped in ways

that are contrary to one's training in the pursuit of internal goods. This is both a question of interference and of time. By interference, I mean the type of practices that make one less skillful at another practice. Thus by being trained to deceive others in one setting of one's life, one is likely to have more difficulty remaining truthful and trustworthy in other settings. By time, I mean that by being preoccupied in other practices, those practices begin to affect both the way one approaches the world and the ends that one pursues, taking a necessary focus away from other practices. So for example, the Olympic gymnast's ability to perform are not necessarily lessened by taking up a second sport, say swimming, but the time and dedication to the first is lessened by her new dedication to the second.

The extent to which it is possible for anyone seeking a good life to remain constant in their pursuits and gain proficiency in their practices is therefore not disconnected from the organization of society: some societies can create conditions in which temptations to deviate from one's path are less present and in which there is a level of integration of practices so that one's higher goals are served by all of one's actions. This has important consequences for how such groups view and survive in the societies of plural goods of the modern West. A society of plural goods is one which, through its neutrality with respect to the good of every individual, values all goods the same and therefore promotes socio-political arrangements in which the greatest options of goods exist. But the plurality of goods and the conditions necessary for the production of the plurality of goods usually makes the pursuit of the good life more difficult in just the two ways stated above. The plurality of goods allows most commercial enterprises to appeal to the senses in such a way as to incite desires that lead one away from the more difficult

ends that one pursues. It is true that there are a multitude of lifestyles sold in commercial markets—the punk, the athlete, the successful business, etc.—but none of these are necessarily supposed or expected to be followed faithfully. Within a society of plural goods, one may perhaps not change ends with the same ease as a wardrobe—if one could, the habitus would be a fairly useless concept—but because one is subject to several different practices and sensual appeal throughout one's life, one may gradually shift from one end to another.

This society is partly the result of the increased separation and differentiation of various spheres of life from private beliefs and actions. This is most specifically seen in the way that managing the state and the economy involves a specialized type of knowledge, not governed by concern for a greater good, other than wealth, state power, domestic order, and services for the biological needs of society. For example, notwithstanding some pockets of the economy, there is no longer a view of a moral economy that links one's production to one's values. Consequently the ends of the market or public institutions, though not necessarily inimical to one's life aspirations, can easily make one forget them. This is evident by the countless popular films which depict the overworked business man for whom financial success has made him forget the other goods of life. And this certainly applies to other institutions, such as courts, schools, and hospitals that strive for particular ends without reference to others. Thus even when institutions are necessary for life ends, the way they are established might do quite a bit of harm to the pursuit of a good life.

These comments might appear to some as an unjust portrayal of liberal society. After all, we must learn to manage our time and if we do not, it is difficult to place blame

upon anyone but ourselves. But I think this objection would be a result of an incorrect understanding of the link between knowledge of the good and practices—the second point about agency. If we think good is a product of a certain experienced body, such that there is no mind to dictate to a body with its own desires that which it should do, but rather, that the body shapes our knowledge of the good, we would be forced to treat distractions to our practices not only as depriving us of fulfilling the good life, but as making us unable to see that good at all. As Aristotle states, “vice tends to destroy the first principle” of ethics.

Of course, if we left matters at this, we would not only have to condone liberalism, but any and every political society, for the malleability of humans would make them find good whatever practices are imposed upon them. But the third point about agency makes this impossible. This is because we not only have an ability of thinking reflexively, but that this is exercised particularly in periods in which our habitus is torn between ends, and we are either continent or akratic but neither temperate nor intemperate, neither truthful nor liar, neither courageous nor cowardly, in short, in relation to practices, we are neither committed nor quitter. That many individuals within a liberal society will adopt practices more easily attainable within the arrangement of society in no way negates that others will be able to persist, to reflect carefully about how they should order their lives and to then subscribe to practices so that their habitus remains inclined to particular goods.

However, the fourth point about agency also suggests that this state in which one's habitus is inclined towards two different and incompatible ends is a painful one in the most non-agentive of ways. On the one hand, the continent agent that successfully

maintains the pursuit of certain goods, does so without the ease that gives the mind peace and makes one's activities a source of pleasure. On the other, the akratic is racked with guilt, knowing that he wants that which he is unable to attain. Likewise being unable to relate to society in ways that makes sense of who one is and what one aspires to be, the member of these communities is likely to often feel disoriented and to suffer in one way or other from the condition of social insanity. Having commitments to certain ends and knowing that these commitments necessitate a preoccupation with all that one does means that one will have particular evaluations of much of human conduct; this makes it likely that one's evaluations will sometimes clash with what is prevalent within civil society. At the same time, because there is a tendency in liberal societies to treat all indiscriminately, the particularities that matter to people less in terms of self-respect but rather in terms of a natural expression of who they are can easily be stifled. Charles Taylor notes, for example, that despite the importance of religion in the lives of many Americans, the secular culture of universities makes it very difficult for this facet of a person's identity to come out.⁴⁹ Those among communities of the good life who do flourish within societies of plural goods will mostly withdraw from it in some way or other. The withdrawal need not be physical; it may simply be a withdrawal of concern or of wholehearted engagement in collective activities and in the formation of ties with fellow citizens. It results in a turning away from the public sphere to find shelter within one's particular community.

Thus we may conclude that socio-legal arrangements are perhaps not entirely responsible for any agent's ability to pursue their practices, but they are far from the innocence many would want to attribute to them. We must then countenance that the

⁴⁹ Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity*, ed. James Heft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

claims of legitimacy of the society of plural goods might not resonate as powerfully with those who subscribe to a good life as would be expected, not because they see it as immoral or godless, but because their own goods are jeopardized by it. For the one who pursues the life of plural goods, the laws and institutions of the state create an environment propitious for individuals to accumulate external goods, such as wealth or employment opportunities. They are therefore legitimated by the fact that they offer her the *best* chances to obtain the most goods as possible. There is a kind of equivalent to the Lacanian law of the father: play by the rules and you will get what you want. But for the one who subscribes to a good life, laws and institutions can only be viewed as a burden, the support for which may only be relative to greater hardships. The idea that there is a neutral ground on which all may pursue the goods they wish within the bounds of the law is only possible by overlooking not only the financial advantages of some over others—a point well known—but also the conduciveness of an environment to the shaping of a particular habitus.

Conclusion

I have above sought to present a particular conception of agency in order to highlight the difficulties in living a good life within a society of plural goods. When we begin to think of agency in terms of the habitus, we cannot fail to see a link between what one does and what one can do. Likewise, seeing reason as inextricable from the habitus also encourages us to think that what one thinks is good is largely the result of a visceral register. All this leads us to ponder the ways laws and public institutions, while officially allowing a maximum of options in pursuing goods, in fact make the pursuit of certain

ends a matter of great difficulty. These hardships, in turn make social solidarity precarious. Thus in presenting the concept of a habitus and in highlighting the way it ties in to internal goods, this first chapter points us towards reconsidering the type of pluralism that exists in Western liberal societies and towards rethinking the ways in which laws, institutions, and the norms of civil society could be reshaped so that these communities could fulfill their aspirations to live what they consider to be a good life and could begin to sincerely relate to and cherish their political union. It remains to be seen what this reorganization and accommodation would be and if there are compelling reasons for the national community to accept them. I take this question up in my final chapter. Before doing so, however, I must address the question of the unity of a group seeking a good life in order to get a better grasp both of the possibility of initiating group rights or accommodations that will be desired by a community as a whole and to address whether or not such policies are reconcilable with the rights of the individual in contemporary liberal democratic societies. This is partly to better understand the claims of these groups and to address a central critique of group rights, namely, that they place sub-group members in a vulnerable and iniquitous position.

Chapter 2: The Unity of a Community of the Good Life

In the previous chapter, I began to explain what it is that I mean by a group seeking a good life. I presented a particular conception of agency in order to do so. In this chapter, I focus on the relationship between members of such a community in an attempt to elucidate the ways in which they form *a group*. In particular, the guiding thread throughout my analysis will be to ask how collective decisions are possible. This question is one of the most central to contemporary political thought. It is certainly one of the main points dividing thinkers labeled under the general categories of liberals, communitarians, multiculturalists, and democrats. For the extent to which we can characterize a group's members as common determines the extent to which policies treating them as such are viable.

Despite great differences of opinion, there is currently near unanimity among political theorists that any generalization about the thoughts, actions, and goals of members of a group is bound to be mistaken.⁵⁰ Tersely put, no group is ever identical to itself. Yet in their haste to protect the voices and ends of individuals from misrepresentation, theorists have not paid sufficient attention to the differences between the many politically relevant groups, which would provide us a better grasp of just how they are identified, in what ways this makes their individual ends similar or different, and how this relates to the way we should understand their political mobilization. A few examples should suffice. It would be difficult to contend that all those of a particular race

⁵⁰ This position seems fairly widespread throughout the literature. Thus even proponents of group rights base their claims not on common ends but on common disadvantages vis-à-vis a majority: see Will Kymlicka, "The new Debate on Minority Rights (and Postscript)," in *Multiculturalism and Political Theory*, eds. Anthony Laden and David Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 25-60; and Iris Young, *Justice and Difference*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). For a forceful argument against the homogeneity and static nature of groups, see Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

or phenotype necessarily share a common good in contradistinction to those outside their group. Oftentimes, such groups are politically united by a history of exclusion from the rights or opportunities enjoyed by the rest of the citizenry and, consequently, by a desire for redress. But that one could remain Black or South-Asian without participating in such causes makes any generalizations about ends suspect. A language group is identified by a shared good; but its good nonetheless goes hand-in-hand with a variety of other individual wants: the group may be said to share a world of common practices, emotions, and objects; but unless it can guarantee a common understanding of a good human life, one will still witness within it great personal divergence. This means that political unity mobilized around language cannot guarantee agreement on very many ends. Biological differences, such as age or gender might be a reason for political unity around a distinct good, which unlike race, is rooted in more than historically unequal treatment; but like race, shared ends are difficult to ascertain since one retains the identification of child or woman despite one's ends. Already, what these few examples show is that what we can predicate of a group will depend very much on the reasons for their identification prior to political unity. Claims of heterogeneity need to be more greatly qualified than they currently are.

What distinguishes communities of the good life from the groups mentioned above is that they are both identified and united around a single or many internal goods. As with language, then, the group is based on a practice: one cannot remain a hockey player if one forsakes the game. But unlike most language-users, members consciously seek excellence within the practice. The consequence is that not only the practice but the means by which to attain excellence become a common concern to the group. As the last

chapter highlighted, this is not only a question of gaining embodied and theoretical aptitudes and a developed practical rationality, but also of sustaining motivation and avoiding that which interferes with one's training. Depending on both the nature of the practice and the importance one gives to it, this could potentially influence much of an individual's life. As a consequence, members have a common interest in organizing much of their lives in ways that address these concerns. Whereas most politically relevant groups are mobilized to achieve primary goods or goods whose use will be applicable within innumerable ends, such as wealth, self-respect, and language, communities of the good life will be able more readily to determine how members should act in their quotidian and how the state and civil society can accommodate them. Heterogeneity will be locatable in those matters of relative unimportance to the achievement of internal goods. Moreover, communities of the good life have a particular incentive to negotiate equitably in matters of dispute that are benign to achieving common internal goods, since members know that their own good depends on other members' support, and therefore good-will.

Our societies readily admit the existence of such unity in some groups. Few raise concern that supporting sports or the arts does harm to the ends of some of the athletes or artists because it generalizes what athletes and artists want. And we usually agree that if one wishes to be part of a sporting event or art exhibition, one will need to devote time and effort beforehand to train oneself. Yet there is a reluctance to extend the same logic to other communities of practice, and in particular, religious groups. The reason is that what it means to be a member of these groups is contested. So long, for example, as the essence of being a Jew, a Buddhist, or a Muslim is not beyond dispute, it is assumed that

treating its members in one way rather than another will necessarily privilege one perspective and voice over others of the group. However, I think this point is misleading. Disagreements in argument are not the same as disagreements in practice; to miss this is to assume that one cannot do something without a theory justifying one's actions. This means that though self-descriptions and justifications for what a group does or should do will inevitably be discordant, a core set of practices, the performance of which provides members with their most significant goods, might yet sustain itself. This then becomes the basis upon which the many arguments of the community as to how it should organize itself may find resolution.

My argument in this chapter, then, is that since communities have genuinely shared ends, which deeply affect their lives, group accommodation should neither be viewed as impossible, nor as privileging some within a group over others. In order to advance my claims, I begin by presenting Alasdair MacIntyre's notion of a tradition, for I consider my definition of a community of the good life to be derived from it. Moreover, MacIntyre's theorizations on traditions offer the strongest argument for considering these communities as having common ends, central to the lives of individuals. But I think the reason that the proponents of heterogeneity within all groups have yet to be convinced is that MacIntyre focused on the arguments of a tradition and has not a theory of human motivations similar to Asad's habitus. By using the implications of the concept of the habitus, I think we can move beyond seeing tradition as argument and highlight the source of unity for communities of practice. I afterwards examine the writings of al Ghazali and Syed Qutb, two important theorists of Islam who wrote centuries apart, in order to highlight this.

In spite of these arguments, it is necessary to countenance two objections to accommodation. The first is that these groups disadvantage some members by granting them less dignity and freedom. The second is that some might not wish to subscribe to all practices or place the same importance on them, making both the uniform treatment of all members an imposition upon some, and the presupposition of the above-mentioned mechanisms for resolving disputes illusory. Thus, in my last section, I examine the question of who controls practices. This allows me to tackle the concern about the invidious relations between members of communities of the good life and the case of communities whose members no longer follow the same practices and therefore have nothing that can guarantee commonality.

MacIntyre and Tradition

MacIntyre conceives of a tradition as the mode of understanding of a set of practices of a community, necessary for their transmission, preservation, or modification. When a tradition is “vital” and “in good order,” it is centrally defined by argument about the goods that make up the tradition. Thus MacIntyre states that “A living tradition is a historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods that constitute the tradition.”⁵¹ The two main concerns or questions of these traditions are an assessment of current practices and arguments for what they should be. The notion of tradition applies as much to the practices of physicians and logicians as to the moral life of a community. In MacIntyre’s ethics, a tradition serves to answer the question what is the good and the best human life, and it therefore offers members of a

⁵¹ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p.222.

community the resources by which they can determine what they should do in light of their particular circumstances.

The concept of a tradition entails a very particular understanding of any and all rational enquiry. For the mode of understanding of practices and arguments that evaluate them are not only unique because of the distinctive practices of communities, but because MacIntyre considers reason to be historical: rational enquiry is always situated. Indeed, tradition as a form of enquiry will always be locatable within two contexts. The first context is that of the community of practice. The concepts with which one makes sense of one's activities are prior to any enquiry: they are to be found within the "beliefs, institutions, and practices" of a community.⁵² Thus to understand any tradition, one must first look to what MacIntyre calls the structure of normality:

In the case of human action most of the time in most circumstances the processes and procedures on which good or bad reasons for action impinge causally are those of the normal day with its schedule of routine activities and cessation from activity. This conception of the normal day, and of the normal month, the normal year, and so on, is of the first importance to understanding action and reasoning about action in any culture. The structure of normality provides the most basic framework for understanding action.⁵³

For this reason, it is impossible to make claims divorced from concrete examples in the life of a community. Thus the beginning of Plato's theorizations on excellence stemmed from the fact that already in the writings of Homer and the oration of Pericles, excellence was something for which warriors and citizens were to strive. Likewise, Aristotle's theorizations in the context of Athens could not but see justice as a matter for the polis, something that Aquinas, whose thought was embedded in the *civitas dei* could not accept.

⁵² MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1989), p.354.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p.24.

The rootedness of a tradition of enquiry within a form of life is in part an inevitable consequence of MacIntyre's epistemology. MacIntyre follows those such as Heidegger and Wittgenstein who have rejected the view of the mind which, divorced from the world, can provide an objective representation of it. He states,

[i]t is important to remember that the presupposed conception of mind is not Cartesian. It is rather of mind as activity, of mind as engaging with the natural and social world in such activities as identification, reidentification, collecting separating, classifying, and naming and all this by touching, grasping, pointing, breaking down, building up, calling to, answering to, and so on.⁵⁴

In short, there are no concepts outside of one's engagement with the world that could allow the disengaged subject to represent that world. All theorizations begin from what is already given.

This also means that the practices of a community are such that they are not in need of any theoretical justification. Indeed MacIntyre notes that quite often people are unconscious of their tradition, and justify their practices through customary ways of acting. What makes them engage in reflective thought is usually necessity: "confrontation by new-situations, engendering new questions, may reveal a lack of resources for offering or for justifying answers to these new questions."⁵⁵ These new situations could be provoked by the inevitable modifications in the concepts and beliefs of a community through time, like when virtues such as *sophrosyne* began to be used differently in the period after Homer. It may be the result of interactions with another community whose thought poses a challenge to the validity of their tradition, such as the re-introduction of Aristotelian thought in 13th century Europe, which challenged the Augustinian tradition of Latin Christendom. Finally, it may be that the need for adopting a certain course of

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 356.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.355.

action raises questions about the standards of one's current actions: an example of this is the way in which the establishment of Athenian democracy made the topic of practical rationality and justice relevant, becoming the subject of exploration of the Sophists, Thucydides, Socrates, and Plato, in a manner quite unknown to the generation of Homer or to other contemporary poleis. In any case, to respond to these confrontations, individuals within a community will need to argue from what they already believe, elucidate their beliefs by clarifying what they mean by the terms they employ, bring out what is already latent within their actions, and demonstrate inventiveness in suggesting new ways of understanding themselves. It should be noted that MacIntyre makes a distinction between the development of a tradition and changes in beliefs by the former's "systematic and deliberate character."

This brings us to the second context of traditions, which is their extension through time. To argue within a tradition is always to "narrate how the argument has gone so far;"⁵⁶ it is to use the accepted premises or conceptual tools of one's predecessors to answer questions in the present. MacIntyre thus identifies stages by which a tradition becomes increasingly aware of itself and its mode of reasoning becomes increasingly complex. In the first stage, reasons are usually derivative of texts and authoritative figures—"bards, priests, prophets, kings, and, on occasion, fools and jesters will all be heard."⁵⁷ However in surmounting challenges, a community is able to contrast its past beliefs with those of the present and, in so doing, it provides arguments for their inadequacy. At this point, it will begin to test its claims to truth by subjecting them to as many objections as possible. In so doing, it will have arrived at a more or less developed

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.8.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.354.

form of enquiry, examining virtues, practices, and goods with greater rigour and seeing how they relate to each other. Even certain standards of rationality begin to take shape, as evinced by the difference between the method of epagoge, employed by Aristotle, or the type of epistemological foundation and clarity championed by Descartes.

The progress of a tradition is recognizable by four signs. First, the later stages presuppose the earlier, not necessarily in upholding their veracity, but certainly in being able to make sense of their claims and in possessing some criteria for their evaluation. Second, it provides an account as to why the disagreement occurred. Third, there is an ability to account for a clearer conception of the goal of the enquiry, making it better directed. Lastly, it offers the possibility of a single, unified explanation of the subject matter and of the course of the enquiry, leading to the *arche* or first principles of which particular cases can be made sense of.⁵⁸

The notion of enquiry which MacIntyre promotes is clearly one of progress, but that in no way means that there is a guarantee that traditions in the present are immune from possible objections and ameliorations in the future. In this way, it differs not only from the Cartesian mode of enquiry but also from the Hegelian. There is a tension in MacIntyre between what is to be discovered and what is created. For he writes as though the development of a tradition could not be other than what it is insofar as the inadequacies of its predecessors “lie in wait.” At the same time, he acknowledges that this is a view from retrospect and that the progress of an argument is largely through inventiveness and its success is in how the argument is presented, what it emphasizes, and what it hides from view. Perhaps more importantly, MacIntyre stresses that each tradition will have its own standards of rationality, and so there is no reason to think that

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp.78-79.

a single tradition of enquiry will prove all others wrong: “each has its own standards of reasoning; each provides its own background beliefs.” Truth in this scheme is relative to expectations: “The mind is adequate to its objects insofar as the expectations which it frames on the basis of these activities are not liable to disappointment.”⁵⁹

Nonetheless, MacIntyre does consider it possible for traditions to understand each other and to occasionally offer insightful positions that would allow one tradition to either become sturdier by the adoption of the other’s positions or by being provoked into self-interrogations by the questions it raises. To be able to share ideas, traditions must at least have enough in common to recognize that they are tackling the same subject. Beyond this, there might be very many variations: sometimes common concepts and beliefs will be found, and sometimes there will be no counterpart at all.

In many ways I subscribe to MacIntyre’s understanding of tradition. His contention that the validity of enquiry is dependent on the development of concepts embedded in a context is both substantiated by history and offers an explanation for the divergences among thinkers of ethics. At the same time, that traditions can be applied across different forms of social organization explains why those who follow Aristotle today can understand and make use of his concepts to answer questions particular to their circumstances. But in focusing on tradition as an argument evaluating, justifying, amending, and transmitting practices, MacIntyre fails to adequately theorize the relationship between practice and theory.

To begin, MacIntyre acknowledges that practices are not in need of theory, for in its early stages, the practitioners of a tradition appeal to custom or to the natural order of things in justifying and evaluating their deeds. MacIntyre notes, for example, how

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.356.

Homeric poetry was employed to guide the training of Greek youth. However, he nonetheless seems to believe that if a tradition cannot rationally defend itself, it does not deserve respect, suggesting that to articulate reasons for practices is to provide legitimacy for them. Rational progress, though far from infallible, remains progress. I believe MacIntyre is giving too much credit to the great minds of a tradition. I suspect that a very small percentage among the past generations of humankind to inhabit the earth have been Aristotelians—just as few as there are utilitarians or Kantians today. For in both cases, the questions of tradition are the questions of a privileged caste of thinkers. If a tradition was transmitted through argument, those we could count as ethical would number very few.

We must then look elsewhere to understand both how a tradition is sustained and transmitted, and how individuals evaluate their practices. I think Asad's concept of the habitus succeeds in answering this question to a large extent. For it suggests that one acts the way one does because the body and its senses have become disposed to carrying out such activities, viewing their aims as good or proper, and because they have come to perceive the world in a way that is the effect of these activities. The know-how involved in interactions with people and objects form for us our most concrete reality, and guide both our visceral reactions and our thoughts. What such a view of humans forces us to consider is that regardless of the theory articulated, people will pursue certain ends for their own sake; and from their involvement within those practices with internal standards of excellence, they will naturally seek to excel. To offer reasons to be a good hockey player or a good friend is trivial once one has been raised in a community in which hockey and friendships form part of one's structure of normality.

Most of the time then, we do not search for reasons for acting as we do. This is not to say that I follow Hume's contention that reason in the sense Aristotle meant in his use of wish, cannot motivate action; rather it is to state that one is rarely reflective about one's ends. But of course it would be wrong to discount that one may be reflective and ask oneself if one should do what one does. In other instances too, one may be forced to be reflective because of the need to make a decision in the presence of alternatives, neither of which is obviously the right choice. But in these cases, we rarely pick up the *Nicomachean Ethics* or Kant's *Groundworks*; rather if we refer to anyone at all, it will most likely be friends and family, counselors, and religious and community leaders; and the reasons that we offer ourselves or obtain will rest on many considerations, such as custom, human nature, the natural order of things, divine injunction, rights, the greater good, probable outcomes, preservation of honour, etc.; some of these might indeed be intellectually sturdier, which simply means that they can withstand a greater amount of questioning at the present time, but they all figure within the reasons we offer ourselves and others, and most of the arguments that we accept cannot be assimilated to a more foundational argument. We would do well to recall Wittgenstein's comment that one's reasons for action can always be questioned and that once one exhausts one's reasons, one might very well be tempted to state "this is simply what I do."⁶⁰ What this should point us towards is realizing that the practices of a society are transmitted not by a mode of understanding, but by being inducted into them. Indeed, even those communities that appear to be founded on clear justifications, such as the Hellenistic and Roman schools of philosophy which appealed to a particular cosmology or religious groups that defer to the

⁶⁰ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p.85.

divine, are sustained not by appeal to their followers' reason, so much as by the practices that shape their habitus.

What then is the place of a tradition of enquiry like that of Aristotle's, which aims not at explicitly founding a new community of practice, but at answering the question "what constitutes a good reason for action?" Theory will at best provide for those who have been privileged enough to study it, one more argument to appeal to in certain situations of deliberation. Its influence will vary from total neglect to great influence depending on the position that such intellectuals hold in society. But theory will always appear in the form of brief interventions, and not a continual and systematic questioning of the goods of a tradition. And MacIntyre is right that the development of theory and its importance will be greatest in times in which the practices of a community are the object of intense scrutiny and the followers are therefore confronted with doubts about whether what they do is defensible.

Locating the transmission of tradition and the cause of everyday actions within a subject's habitus is particularly important for my consideration of groups that seek a good life, because it suggests that despite the myriad of arguments, disputes, and conflicting evaluations that the members of such groups advance for their actions, they might yet display great unity in what they actually do. Their unity would rest in their dedication to a practice or a set of practices whose value might not even be articulated but is manifest in their constant commitment to it.

This agreement in practice also offers communities of the good life a privileged mode of deciding on how they should organize their social relations. Because humans are possessors of a habitus, whatever they do can potentially impact their ability to pursue

internal goods. This makes possible positive knowledge on which very different people are brought together and may be given reasons to organize in one way rather than another based on the consequences on their commonly held ends. This is analogous to athletes who agree to their trainer's prescription of a certain diet, of particular exercises, and of limiting certain social endeavours on the assumption that she knows how they might attain their desired ends. Thus common practices constitute a background of agreement on which a community can through means-ends considerations determine what course of action they should take in many situations.

Of course, being part of a community of the good life does not prevent heterogeneity. One's habitus might share with one's community those sensibilities relating to common internal goods, but not necessarily all of one's internal goods. Whereas a professional hockey team might have members that in their time away from the hockey rink enjoy reading philosophy, others might prefer fishing. In addition to goods, members of a community might be subject to very different norms such that they have different visceral reactions in some situations than other members do. In short, having a core set of practices and internal goods does not do away with the contestation of norms of governance that is so central to contemporary politics. It is possible that one should wish to make requests of the members of one's community so as to be able to achieve other internal goods, that one should find the current division of external goods in need of reform, or that one should consider institutional norms or laws worthy of contestation. In such cases, it is the sentiment of friendship and partnership in the good life that makes a compromise likely. Here it is not means-ends calculations, but an acknowledgement that only by keeping good relations can the pursuit of a community's

most central ends be maintained. This is because members offer each other support through advice and exhortations, and through their own strivings, they offer an example to follow.

For the type of dispute resolution based on means-ends to be the case, however, I have to remedy another oversight in MacIntyre's writings. MacIntyre considers not only tradition as argument to be dynamic, but also thinks that practices are constantly changing through the excellence of practitioners. As he states,

What is distinctive in a practice is in part the way in which conceptions of the relevant goods and ends which the technical skills serve...are transformed and enriched by these extensions of human powers and by that regard for its own internal goods which are partially definitive of each particular practice or type of practice. Practices never have a goal or goals fixed for all time—painting has no such goal nor has physics—but the goals themselves are transmuted by the history of the activity.⁶¹

And yet practices such as painting or physics differ from those such as chess and cricket insofar as the latter has fixed rules, which endure throughout centuries. Take chess, for instance: it was introduced into Europe from Muslim lands, and since the 15th century, its rules have more or less remained the same.

This distinction is something that MacIntyre never fully addresses, yet he does at one point state that the game of cricket was enriched by the batting technique of W.G. Grace. Thus it may be presumed that MacIntyre has in mind that since it is the excellence of a practice that constitutes its internal good, even within practices with fixed rules, standards of excellence change, allowing for a discovery of new goods. Yet it is not inconceivable that an individual should attain a state of such perfection in a practice that its standards could not be revised. It is also conceivable that the followers of a practice realize this, and yet wish to continue to engage in it. Indeed if new standards were truly

⁶¹ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp.193-194.

needed for members of a community to value their practices, few would even engage in them, knowing that they will never surpass Tiger Woods at Golf or Michael Jordan at Basketball. What remains the case is that as one excels vis-à-vis one's personal achievements, one comes to value the practice increasingly and comes to see oneself as inseparable from it.

Moreover, even if we were to speak of different ends through different standards of excellence, continuity through rules links a community together since it allows members to coordinate their actions to seek common ends. Think for example of different paradigms of physics: despite sharing in a common practice, the 19th century physicist will be lost if transported in the modern context of physics without first learning the new theories developed at the beginning of the 20th century. Likewise, painters of different eras might not be able without undergoing a new process of education to conform to the styles of a different context. In contrast, the chess player of 16th century France could sit at a table with a Japanese speaker of the 21st century and both would succeed in achieving their intended ends, though perhaps each would be surprised by the style of play of the other. Why this is important is that if practices are always changing, it is far more difficult to envisage the unity of a community. Though linked by standards of excellence, the changing standards make such unity precarious.

Much has been written in relation to rules. In particular those influenced by Wittgenstein have argued that rules are continually being changed in our interactions, and in particular, in our use of language.⁶² Even if we were able to legislate the meaning of words, there is no guarantee that others will continue to use them as such. But in many

⁶² See for example James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.103-113.

practices, the consequence of innovation is expulsion. If one were to move a chess piece in an unconventional way, one could tell one's opponent that playing chess with this new rule improves the game in some way, and indeed sometimes new games emerge out of old ones; but often also, the weight of tradition might demand the innovator to retract or to leave the community of chess players. Is it then very difficult to understand that one of theology's main concerns in so many faiths has been to establish what constitutes heresy, and to claim that those who persist are to be excommunicated?

One objection to the possible preservation of practices is that many practices involve propositional content. Words are employed in such a variety of circumstances that a practice may not be hermetically sealed from others and from the use of language. But historically, there have been examples of attempts at the defining the meaning of words, or at least of those used in particular practices. Thus the meaning of the attributes of God in Islam became the object of definition by scholars in the 8th century only in response to changed contexts and to the possibility of language use that would differ from tradition. But perhaps more importantly, since words derive their meanings from their use in the mode of life of a community, so long as there is an ability to identify constant patterns of activity, the meaning of those words need not be assumed to have changed. Thus the vocabulary that is essential to the proper completion of an activity, whether within chess or prayer, need not be said to be object of change.

What must also be emphasized is that it is not because of the possibility of retaining practices that a society is static. Indeed, the immense resources required to be able to prevent a practice from changing reveals the extent to which change is the norm for any society and shows the limits of establishing boundaries from it. But there is also a

natural consequence which follows from my analysis of devoting oneself to practices: since one cannot succeed at any practice except by a judicious use of one's time and by coordinating other activities, if life were truly dictated to the fullest extent, there would not be the possibility of preserving practices. In other words the preservation of practices is contingent on the change in other practices, permitting a dedication of resources to the cultivation of the most important practices. If and when core practices of a community do change, they usually go through a strenuous and public process through institutions that have popular support from followers.

In what ways does viewing practices like this change our perception of what it means to be part of a group? Political theory tends to point to the plurality of voices within groups in order to suggest that any treatment of groups as groups is bound to lead to the suppression of the voice of the minority. MacIntyre's notion of tradition cannot counter these claims, nor did it seek to do so. MacIntyre sought to point out that only a tradition which took into account a human life as a narrative whole, guided by a telos, could offer moderns a *rational* foundation for settling their moral disputes. This was possible precisely because he recognized that moderns partake in practices and are embedded in contexts that give their lives meaning. But this led him to privilege the role of argument over lived engagement. My contention is simply that disagreements between groups of the good life may only be explained by understanding the disparity between theory and practice in the life of any community seeking a good life and by understanding the ability to maintain practices through time. To come to see these points is to be able to make two claims. The first is that beneath the disagreement in speech, one finds a great deal of agreement in action. What we can expect is that there will be verbal agreement in

the rules of practices of a tradition, not in what they amount to in terms of a justification nor in how members should act when not engaged in such practices. The second is that this agreement in action makes resolution in arguments possible—particularly those relating to how a community should be organized and how its members should act in various spheres of life. This claim is based on the one hand, on what I take to be a truism that if one seeks an end, showing full dedication to it, then one cannot continue to support that which leads to its frustration, once one comes to realize that which will frustrate it. Thus even when there are a variety of arguments and even though these might serve to solve disputes, there is also always a means-ends manner of finding agreement. On the other hand, it is based on a type of friendship that makes good-will and cooperation the basis of one's interactions.

Theory and Practice in the Islamic Tradition

I now want to examine the theory of two distinguished Muslim thinkers, the 11th century philosopher and mystic al Ghazali and the 20th century philosopher of Islamism, Syed Qutb. The brevity of my treatment highlights that I do not attempt a sustained engagement with their intellectual thought; rather I simply want to illustrate the points articulated above, namely, that communities of the good life have the opportunity to settle their disputes by appealing to their common habitus and that different articulations of what one is and different justifications for one's actions do not mean one does not share the same practices or ends. The reason for my choice of thinkers is twofold. On the one hand both thinkers wrote in an environment marked by great intellectual disagreements and yet succeeded to provide arguments which attained a great deal of consensus and that

have endured in the Muslim intellectual tradition. The second is that because of their distance in time and their embeddedness in different scientific languages they present and justify the same Muslim practices very differently, highlighting that practices do not depend centrally on arguments.

Al Ghazali was born in Tus in Northern Persia in 1058 during the height of Islamic learning and culture, supported by great wealth and by the patronage of the Buwaihid and Seljuk dynasties. Despite this great level of affluence, it was a period of intense divisions within the Muslim world. This was true politically: the two great empires, the Ismaili Fatimids in Egypt and the Sunni Seljuk Turks—under nominal Abbassid rule—vied for control and hegemony of Muslim lands. But it was even truer at the level of scholarship. It is possible to find scholars following five intellectual approaches or trends at the time.⁶³ The first were the philosophers who had inherited Greek philosophy and relied principally on unaided reason. Their interests were mostly in matters of metaphysics. The second were theologians who sought reconciliation between scripture and philosophy. The third were the legal scholars who based themselves on scriptures and hermeneutical techniques to derive proper rules of worship and the laws of the community. The fourth were the esoteric (batini) Shia' who took it that there was an infallible leader among them that could show them right guidance. The last were the mystics or Sufis, who lived ascetic lifestyles and emphasized purifying the self to gain nearness to God.

⁶³ Elton Daniel, "Preface," in *The Alchemy of Happiness*, by al Ghazali, trans. Claud Field, ed. Elton Daniel (New York: M.E. Sharpe inc., 1991).

Trained at an early age in jurisprudence and theology, al Ghazali went on to explore the doctrines and beliefs of all the groups of prominence within the Muslim world. In fact, he stated in his autobiography, entitled *The Deliverance from Error*,

I have ever recklessly launched out into the midst of these ocean depths, I have ever bravely embarked on this open sea, throwing aside all craven caution, I have poked into every dark recess, I have made an assault on every problem, I have plunged into every abyss, I have scrutinized the creed of every sect, I have tried to lay bare the inmost doctrines of every community.⁶⁴

With regards to philosophy, al Ghazali committed himself to the examination of its doctrines and found that parading for infallible rational knowledge was much that could be disputed. His critique of philosophy led to a defense of orthodox Islamic doctrine in relation to theology. In doing so, however, he had to himself learn and evaluate the claims of the philosophers carefully. He therefore did not reject philosophy but raised orthodoxy to a level where it could engage with it. In relation to mysticism, he maintained that any claims to monism were to be denied based again on scripture, and yet he found the pursuits of the Sufis accorded best with the intent of the religion: “it is above all the mystics who walk in the path of God; their life is the best life, their method the soundest method, their character the purest character.” This, in turn, helped al Ghazali to review law, emphasizing its purpose or the wisdom behind injunctions.

It is therefore commonplace to see al Ghazali as the figure that succeeded in synthesizing and creating the greatest coherence amongst these schools of thought. Ebrahim Moosa’s recent book *Ghazali and the Poetics of the Imagination* continues this

⁶⁴ Al-Ghazali, *The Deliverance from Error*, in *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazali*, trans. Montgomery Watt (Oxford: Oneworld Oxford, 2004), p.18.

trend.⁶⁵ It claims that al Ghazali was a liminal figure whose dabbling in all the sciences allowed Muslims to gain a certain unity of thought. Moosa takes it that the Muslim world needs a new al Ghazali that will succeed in updating Islamic knowledge to cohere with the discourses of modernity.

There is however an astonishing silence in the literature on why al Ghazali's synthesis succeeded. After all, both the philosophers like al Kindi and Ibn Sina and the theologians like the Mu'tazilites were often very knowledgeable of and participated in the orthodox legal scholarship of Islam, such that their ideas could be considered attempts to synthesize. And today there are countless books on Islam that make use of a plurality of sources of scholarship without resonating much with the general Muslim population—Moosa's book is an example. Thus, we should look beyond what al Ghazali did and ask why what he did has been so enduring.

A good way to broach this question is to look at al Ghazali's magnum opus, *The Revival of the Religious Sciences (Ihya Ulum id Din)*.⁶⁶ *The Revival* is a book that deals with ontology and mysticism; but these two aspects are integrated within an Islamic ethics whose bedrock is nothing outside of what was already practiced within the community of Muslims. Thus half the work merely reiterates the laws of Islam as based in scriptures and accepted by the majority. But by incorporating within them a vision of the human soul, of virtues, and of happiness, al Ghazali ends up tying practices into a system that explains their necessity with reference to human nature itself.

Al Ghazali's soul may be divided into four parts. First, there is the beastly part, which corresponds to spirit in Greek thought, and is related to anger, hatred, and enmity.

⁶⁵ See Ebrahim Moosa, *Ghazali and the Poetics of the Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

⁶⁶ Al Ghazali, *Ihya Ulum id Din Vol.1-4*.

Second is the animal part which relates to appetites. Third is the devilish part of humans, which manifests itself in deceit, fraud, and conspiracy. Last is the angelic part, which relates to divine contemplation. Since the angelic is the noblest part of humans, it must govern over the other faculties. In doing so, the soul is purified of that which distracts it from the remembrance of God. Human happiness comes about when one is in constant remembrance of God, making His will one's own, and contemplating His glory. This is only possible by engaging in particular practices: "The aim of moral discipline is to purify the heart from the rust of passion and resentment, till, like a clear mirror, it reflects the light of God."⁶⁷ The rewards of paradise are a fulfillment and intensification of this worldly happiness, through the beatific vision.

To the extent that he defends an account of Muslim practices, it could be said that al Ghazali is contributing to a tradition of enquiry into ethics. But it is neither the synthesis nor justification which is the source of the assent of the masses. It is rather that by beginning with practices, al Ghazali points out what is already implicit in their actions. This is so in two ways. First, these practices are inextricable from the goods that give the community its most basic orientation, expressed by the link between happiness and nearness to God. Second, not all the practices are as important in being able to live a fulfilled life. By pointing this out, the community of practice is reoriented from their disputes in relation to metaphysics towards asking what it must do to be able to preserve those practices that it already values. This then allows them also to rethink aspects of the legal tradition within which different textual readings place undue pressures on the individual or community and make the attainment of its principal goods more difficult.

⁶⁷ Al Ghazali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, trans. Claud Field, ed. Elton Daniel (New York: M.E. Sharpe inc., 1991), p. 8.

Likewise, it permits a reconsideration of the mystical tradition by asking which among its practices foster the pursuit of the most important practices of a Muslim and which hinder it. In short the success of al Ghazali is neither in producing an account of Islam so rational that none could deny it, nor in producing the best argument so far for what Muslims should do, but rather by pointing out what is already an agreed upon good, based on common practices. It is not in what Muslims say—and therefore not in synthesis—but in what they do, that agreement becomes a potential outcome of disputes.

I think this conclusion is confirmed by the influence of the writings of Syed Qutb. Qutb was born in 1906 in the village of Musha in Egypt. At the time of his birth, Egypt had been under colonial rule since 1882. Though the majority, still mostly peasants, was educated primarily within traditional or religious educational systems, the elites were increasingly embracing a secular nationalist outlook in their understanding of proper government.⁶⁸ This group was at the forefront of the nationalist movement. As Egyptians gained partial independence in 1922, the role of this group in government, combined with increased urbanization, led to a decline in religion in the public sphere. Qutb himself gained notoriety first as a writer amongst this group of secularists. Following Nasser's revolution in 1952, Arab socialism also became popular. Thus, unlike in al Ghazali's century, what divided Egyptians during Qutb's lifetime were neither issues of metaphysics or of laws in general, but law relating to the social and institutional organization of a Muslim society.

Of course, there was a strong contingent within society who thought that religion should continue to be the source of legislation even in modern times. The most influential

⁶⁸ Sayyid Qutb's *A Child from the Village* highlights the everyday life of most Egyptians at the beginning of the 20th century, trans. John Calvert (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005).

of these organizations, founded in 1929, was the Muslim Brotherhood. In the 1940s, Qutb began to embrace their views. In the 1950s and 1960s, he became the leading writer of the Muslim Brotherhood and editor of its *Ikhwan* newspaper. He was imprisoned by Nasser in 1956 in his crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood and was executed in 1966 for his most famous book, *Milestones*, written while imprisoned and offering a program for Muslims to build an Islamic society.

It is unfortunate that Qutb's ideas have been analyzed in the West mostly in relation to his influence on groups committed to violent revolution.⁶⁹ The truth is that *Milestones* has been the most influential book written in the last century in the Muslim world, an equivalent of Marx's *The Communist Manifesto* for the generation which is responsible for what is known as the *sahwat ul islamiya* or Islamic Resurgence. As with al Ghazali, we have to ask ourselves, why did Qutb inspire so many? The usual socio-economic claims have been made, notably by Gilles Kepel, who takes the Islamic Resurgence to be a result of the economic failures of modern ideologies. Others have pointed to identity, speaking of the embarrassment of Arab nationalists in the Six Days War of 1967.⁷⁰ Roxanne Euben has presented the thesis that Qutb represents a rebellion against modernity and its emphasis on universal rationality that resonated with the anxieties of many, a position she states is not so foreign from political thinkers like Arendt, Taylor, and MacIntyre.⁷¹

⁶⁹ John Esposito, otherwise a fine scholar of Islamic movements, is in no small part responsible for this view, describing Qutb as "the godfather" of Muslim extremists. *Unholy War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁷⁰ Nikki Keddie, "Islamic Revival as Third Worldism," in *Le Cuisinier et le Philosophe: Hommage a Maxime Rodinson*, ed. JP Digard (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1982).

⁷¹ Roxanne Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Rationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

These positions, however, give the impression that the Weberian march of secularism was advancing in the Middle East until certain events opposed it. What it never asks is the level of everyday worship or practice of the population. We know, for example, that the Muslim Brotherhood was not a political organization as much as it was a presence within civil society: it encouraged people to be dutiful to God and their fellow humans, served as a means of helping people find employment, provided education, and gave food to the needy.⁷² Even before its formation, its leader Hassan al Banna had been part of many organizations whose members encouraged each other by meetings, exhortations, and common practices, to shape themselves in ways that allowed them to attain certain virtues.⁷³ To see Qutb as embedded in this context makes us view his writings far less like *The Communist Manifesto*, which offered a program for a movement with an objective for the future unrelated to ends cherished by the proletariat in their quotidian, than like a policy recommendation to those with whom he already shared so much at the level of practice. *Milestones* addresses neither a party based on membership, nor a general readership for whom Qutb's arguments could be received as an intellectual attack on socialism and capitalism. It explicitly addresses the faithful who live in a secular state but cannot identify with its goals, not because they want a utopian order, but because their practices are both inimical and threatened by secularist ends. According to Qutb, part of what made the first generations of Muslims exemplars of the faith is the extent to which they made their faith a living force, not a faith of belief, but of actions.⁷⁴ It is because Islam is based on actions that laws cannot be ignored. For Qutb, a Muslim

⁷² See David Commins, "Hassan al-Banna," in *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, ed. Ali Rahnama (London: Zed Books, 2005), pp. 125-153.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁷⁴ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, ed. A.B. al Mahri (Birmingham: Maktabah, 1996), pp. 29-37.

state aims very broadly at freeing the self from becoming enslaved to worldly things, such as “money, power, rank, or lineage.”⁷⁵ These external goods are not to be denigrated, but must be given their appropriate weight, which means that while both honour and wealth are important they should not hinder the individual conscience from turning to God. It also seeks to free the conscience from desires by facilitating practices like fasting that turn the soul away from the ephemeral towards the eternal. Lastly, it must ensure that citizens are protected against biological wants, for without this, the conscience would be burdened by fear of not finding its sustenance. I would therefore submit that Qutb’s argument, like al Ghazali’s, is pointing out what was already implicit for many Muslims, namely, that they were committed to certain ends and that these ends would be better served by a government that adheres to Muslim law. As a result, Qutb had produced for many a decisive argument against those Muslims who believed secular governments to be benign or compatible with their religious practices.

In the case of both al Ghazali and Qutb, it is possible to identify a means-ends argument based on what is already agreed upon, despite what seemed at the time to be an irreconcilable plurality of voices. It might be argued that not all Muslims were convinced that secularism should be abandoned and not all Islamists thought they should follow Qutb’s vision—indeed today the Qutbian inspired vision of the Islamic state is largely defunct.⁷⁶ Likewise, we might point out that al Ghazali was attacked for both his critique of Greek philosophy by Averroes and for his excessive acceptance of Sufi practices by Ibn Taymiyyah. In short, then, neither case reflects unity: the plurality of voices inevitably continues. However, this misses my point. Both thinkers did gain wide

⁷⁵ Sayyid Kotb, *Social Justice in Islam*, trans. John Hardie (New York: Octagon Books, 1970), p.31.

⁷⁶ See John Esposito’s *Islam and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

acceptance for their ideas but it was not because they appealed to either irrefutable rationalist claims about human ontology or the good as would be thought by Western ethics since the Reformation, or by introducing ideas and concepts that, considering the beliefs, forms of argument, and moral intuitions of society, convinced the members of society to reconsider their pursuits or aims, as MacIntyre would have us think. Rather, they did so by appealing to what was known to be a good in practice, not theory. What changes in practices they did advocate—whether in politics for Qutb or in legal rulings for al Ghazali—were for the sake of preserving other, agreed upon, practices.

In comparing al Ghazali to Qutb we also find that their understanding of what it is to be Muslim and their arguments as to why one should be a Muslim employ divergent languages despite referring to the same practices. If we examine the ontology of al Ghazali and Qutb, we would rightly conclude that al Ghazali was a product of an intellectual culture that had imbibed Greek thought, and that Qutb was likewise a product of the spread of modern political values. Indeed, we find in al Ghazali a view of the soul and its good that mirrors in most ways that of Plato and Aristotle. This is of course quite natural. The scientific paradigm of the Greeks had become that of the Muslims in such a way that al Ghazali had no other language he could employ to describe humans. Likewise, his interlocutors, from among the rationalist philosophers and the theologians, employed this same language: without himself adopting it, al Ghazali could not have answered their claims and challenges. In contrast, Qutb embraces a language that makes the human essence one of freedom. His interlocutors are the secular Egyptians who had imbibed the ideals of liberalism and socialism. Thus we have two thinkers, centuries apart, that defend the same core Muslim practices, such as prayer, fasting, charity, etc.,

but inevitably do so using very different languages and very different arguments because of their environment. This seems to confirm that both modes of self-understanding and arguments matter little in sustaining the actual practices of a community.

However, I will conclude this section by pointing out that it is possible to find two parallel claims in the two thinkers: 1) that humans have a certain nature due to the way God created them; 2) that this nature is only realized by following the proper rules of Muslim practices. To recall, al Ghazali divides the soul into different parts. He writes that the rational and angelic represent the most distinctly and naturally human. Happiness is the product of the realization of one's nature through following God's commands and becoming absorbed solely in contemplation of Him. As for Qutb, his *Social Justice in Islam* presents an ontology in which from the will of God, "all things are sustained, ordered, and energized." Likewise, humans are given a particular principle or purpose relating them to this unity of creation. Qutb then introduces freedom as the objective of humans. Qutb's freedom divides itself into a positive and negative freedom. It is a freedom to live for God as well as a freedom from that which oppresses human nature: "Islam began by freeing the human conscience from servitude to any one except Allah and from submission to any save Him."⁷⁷ Thus Qutbian negative freedom translates into a Ghazalian order of the soul in which desires, pride, anger, etc. are mastered. His positive freedom is often equivalent to the happiness of which al Ghazali speaks. I point this similarity out because I think that it lends support to the view that humans are possessors of a habitus: the habitus suggests that practices are the key to a transformed subjectivity by creating within the individual her most cherished ends. It was in thinking reflexively about the impact of their practices on the lives of Muslims that the thinkers came to

⁷⁷ Korb, *Social Justice*, p.32.

emphasize the transformative nature of these practices in creating for them internal goods, which were the source of some fulfillment, be it freedom or happiness.

Privilege and Disagreement in Practice

I have tried to point out that there is good reason to believe that there are groups whose ends are common and who have an interest in organizing themselves as a community to achieve these ends. But there is a position within political theory that critiques accommodation less from the perspective of heterogeneity and more specifically by arguing that these groups openly treat members in an unjustifiably unequal manner. In one way or another, proponents of this view articulate two concerns presented by Susan Moller Okin, namely, that these communities provide less dignity to some members and prevent them from living free lives because of differential treatment and expected roles.⁷⁸ While Okin made these comments in relation to gender, others extend it to all subgroups within these communities.⁷⁹ It should be pointed out that the claim to a lack of freedom is based on two considerations. The first is that wealth and decision-making is often deferred to some members and not others, thereby limiting their choices in acting. So for example, perhaps a congregation leader is freer than other men, men are freer than their wives, and parents constrict the future life options of their children. The second is that community pressures impose conformity to tradition upon these disadvantaged members, making consent precarious. The solution for many is to empower individuals by

⁷⁸ Susan Moller Okin, "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?," in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, eds Nussbaum et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.12. While Okin is concerned with culture, most of her examples are about religious groups that I would consider communities of the good life.

⁷⁹ For example, Janet Halley, "Culture Constrains," in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, eds Nussbaum et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

liberalizing minority communities, raising the importance they give to individual choice. Deference, therefore, is to be done away with and equal treatment enforced.

To answer these concerns, what must be highlighted is the nature of a practice in relation to the authorities of a community. The image of a religious leader dictating to a community what it ought to do is as pervasive as it is mistaken. For practices generate standards of action based both on how excellence within them is defined and on the means to attain that excellence. Leadership, and its concomitant authority, is oftentimes simply a necessary consequence of the desire of a community to achieve its internal goods. It might be dictated by the correct performance of a practice itself, like the role of the head of an orchestra or a priest within communal rituals, and it might be mandated by the need for knowledge on how to lead an individual or group towards excellence, like a hockey coach or spiritual guides in various religious traditions.

Leadership is consequently a trust that goes hand-in-hand with responsibilities and standards to determine abuse. The leader must usually embody the virtues that make her worthy of her position. To this extent whatever extra wealth or decision-making opportunities she might be granted are to be used in at least generally specifiable ways. When the leader either lacks the requisite virtues or uses wealth and authority in ways other than those expected for the ends of the community, she is liable to be faced with claims of abuse and processes either of impeachment or redress by those whose trust has been violated. It is also of the nature of being part of a community with specific goods that one should feel pressures to excel in the form of strong exhortations and disapprovals from others, regardless of what one's position may be. There is no reason to presuppose that this is truer of those that follow than it is of a leader.

Moreover, standards of practice are beyond the control, and therefore, the manipulation of any party of practitioners. This does not mean that privilege of authority cannot be found in the historical origins of a tradition. Many of the Tamil nationalist critiques of Brahmanism and the caste system were based on a historical theory that it was instituted by Central Asian Aryan conquerors upon Dravidians, and its perpetuation is but an extension of this original act of subjugation.⁸⁰ But even if this historical account were true, what such a critique hides is that as soon as rules intrinsic to practices were embraced within the ends and identities of the members of the community, the Brahmans became as constrained as anyone else by its prescriptive standards.⁸¹ Power centers not on individuals but on the practices that permit the achievement of the internal goods of the community. Whatever the origins of their system of practice, those who are expected to defer to the authorities of a tradition are now full participants, entitled to recognition and to make claims against other members based on established standards of practice.

As holders of a trust relating to practices to which they themselves are subject, leaders should be seen to be just as constrained as those who defer to them. It is only by imagining that they use wealth and authority for whatever fancy or personal ambition they might have that gives the critique of greater freedom any credibility. But more importantly, this alleged lack of freedom of both leaders and followers rests on needs to attain ends which both equally value as members of the community of practice. To have a

⁸⁰ Arun Swamy, "Sense, Sentiment and Populist Coalitions: The Strange Career of Cultural Nationalism in Tamil Nadu," in *Subnational Movements in South Asia*, eds. Subra K. Mitra et al. and R. Alison Lewis (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996).

⁸¹ Aloysius has argued that the principal reason for the lower caste movement in India in the 19th century was neither the spread of ideas of freedom and equality nor of the opportunity to rebel against the domination of the upper caste, but that the incorporation of many Brahmans within the British colonial system made them renege on their obligations towards the lower caste, thus leading the lower caste to find their behaviour intolerable and to rebel against them. "Nation: Homogenization of Power within Culture," in *Nationalism without a Nation in India*. (New Delhi: OUP 1998).

good is usually to accept the means necessary for its attainment. Moreover, to be engaged in a practice is inextricable from taking ownership of the development of one's capacities.⁸² Likewise, the critique of equal dignity only holds water if dignity is solely measured by the distribution of wealth or decision-making. But the respect conferred to members of a community of practice is usually based on their excellence or proficiency in pursuing goods. Virtue, not power, matters most. Moreover, since leadership may be questioned, authority will often be humbled. I suspect that both the critique of freedom and of equal dignity is the consequence of theorists who transpose the political context of their Western societies in which citizens *qua* citizens are not linked by internal goods. In such a context, those who have less wealth and authority are manifestly disadvantaged relative to others and, oftentimes, this is both caused by and cause of obtaining less respect.

Of course, if the internal goods that are considered most important to a community are only afforded to some of its members at the expense of others, then there might be reason to conclude that some are truly oppressed. Thus it is possible to state that women and slaves in Aristotle's polis were oppressed specifically because they had no access to the two activities that Aristotle believed were of chief importance for a life to be good—*theoria* and politics. Even here, however, one must be careful, for it is quite possible that a community envisages different goods for different members based on how it conceives of their nature, and despite a disparity between the hyper-goods of the members of society, the members of each group might be able to flourish and give to the other recognition for their respective achievements. Moreover, this might be the case,

⁸² This is a point made quite clearly by Saba Mahmood's study of the active engagement of Muslim Egyptian women in community associations aiming at the attainment of the virtues of their tradition. *Politics of Piety* (Princeton University Press, 2005).

even if it is acknowledged that the good of one is somehow better than that of the other. I admit that to the extent that goods are not shared, this becomes less probable, but I do not think it can be discounted as a possibility.

In any case, what is clear is that it is not the lack of access to the internal goods of a community that the critics of communities seeking a good life point out as object of their lament. For it is not that women are unable to adequately devote their lives to God that critics of halakhic and sharia law impugn, but their unequal treatment. Indeed, thinking about practices and their internal goods as the source of divisions of authority makes us reconsider the possibility of critiquing the organization of a community without first considering the concrete ends of its members. The concerns of these members cannot be reducible to a desire for formal equality or to a position of optimal choice. If they desire anything short of exit from the community, they will evaluate the actual practices and the division of authority of their community in ways that are particular to their habitus.

However, this does not mean that some members are not more vulnerable than others. This stems not from the intrinsically oppressive nature of their societies, but because authority easily lends itself to abuse, especially if it is free from scrutiny. I would suggest that, ironically, liberal societies pose a special problem for the vulnerable members of such communities. Often being divorced from either extended family structures as well as from the authority of community leaders, the abuses of authority within families might not be subjected to traditional methods of scrutiny or to mechanisms by which vulnerable members may seek some sort of redress. Thus there is currently a lamentable state of affairs in which we often ostracize members of society for

subscribing to practices in which authority and wealth are not distributed in an egalitarian manner instead of paying attention to those forms of abuse that vulnerable members of a community suffer as a result of what they take to be a gross misapplication of the authority legitimated by their way of life. If we are to create a society that offers the possibility for individuals to be part of communities of the good life, we must permit the vulnerable within these groups to speak for themselves and support mechanisms within communities that prevent or remedy abuses of power as defined by the community itself.

Of course, the considerations above relate only to those that genuinely view the practices of a community as goods. I have gone to considerable pains to argue that some groups do display unity in their pursuit of common practices, and that the centrality of these practices to their individual lives provides them with the basis and desire to solve their disputes. But I have also suggested that the extent to which any is able to maintain these practices depends on a level of continual commitment, renewed through training one's habitus. The objection then presents itself that if members of a community do not maintain constancy in practices, my claims on the ability of reaching agreement or on finding authority legitimate cannot be presumed. It turns out that unless one is part of a community of strict devotees there will always be both a willingness to change or abandon practices by those who do not fully embrace their worth and a likely refusal of means-ends arguments since the ends are not themselves agreed upon. And yet even when one does not commit completely to certain practices, one might still feel a sense of belonging to a community, either rooted in belief in its main tenets, occasional performance of some practices, or from an insider's familiarity with the workings of the community. This is particularly the case in contemporary Western societies, specifically

for two reasons: first, because religion is seen by many as consisting mainly in the subscription to knowledge claims about the nature of the universe and not in commitments, making practice idiosyncratic for many; and second, because of a tendency to define oneself in terms of one's origins, so that it is common to hear that one is from a Catholic background or is culturally Jewish, by which what is meant is that the sense of appurtenance is one of insider's knowledge but not of adherence. Moreover, this appurtenance combined with a lack of practical commitment occasionally results in a hostility to some traditional practices that is far more impassioned than from those who consider themselves outsiders.

Thus it turns out that in at least some cases, the plurality within a certain community of practice cannot be neatly explained away through appeal to deeper agreement: agreement and disagreement will criss-cross in ways that will lead to more or less agreement on some issues, but certainly not unanimity. It is therefore relevant to inquire into the extent to which it is possible within communities of practice to compel others to practice when they no longer wish to do so. In turn, the most important question to ask now is not who benefits from practices, but who decides which practices will endure and which will be amenable to modification or abandonment?

For those who have been dedicated to a particular practice, any change or modification to it will most likely be deferred to a body of experts, who, based on the theoretical knowledge of their tradition, command great respect, like Talmudic scholars, the Sunni Muslim *ulama*, or the Vatican. Whatever the pronouncements of those in authority may be, however, practices have a democratic quality to them: if dissenters possess strength through numbers, they will likely either be the source of change within a

community as a whole or they will be able to establish a separate congregation with its own distinct institutions. This follows from two considerations. The first is based on the nature of internal goods. If a community seeks the achievement of internal goods, it does not wish only that its members fulfill certain actions, but that they achieve genuine excellence within them. A person who values painting does not want others to paint carelessly by throwing colours on a canvass, but that they sincerely seek to see the art form flourish. Likewise, the community that is united by the worship of God does not wish followers to perfunctorily perform certain gestures or utter words, but to grant importance to what they do. Thus it is not really in the interest of a community to attempt to impose practices on a group of dissenters, for it is likely to vitiate the internal goods of sincerely devoted practitioners. The second consideration is that it is highly improbable that compulsion should succeed. When a group is convinced that certain practices should no longer be enforced, they are likely to view any imposition with great resentment. Indeed, the history of European wars of religion is testimony not to the inherently coercive nature of communities of practice, but to their *inability* to coerce populations whose habitus no longer corresponds to official prescriptions. This realization is at the foundation of the modern right of freedom of religion, as both Locke's *Essay Concerning Toleration* and Roger Williams's *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for the Cause of Conscience* indicate. The rare successful conversions through persecution have demanded quite severe mechanisms of surveillance and punishment of non-conformity. The Spanish Inquisition is one example. Surely, belief and practice can be shaped by cultural hegemony and economic opportunities that make conversion or conformity enticing. This is the case for many of those who converted to Christianity outside of Europe and most of

the lands that are predominantly Muslim. But this demands quite strong policies of discrimination over many generations. Historically, dissenters have more easily been exterminated than brought back into the fold. But what I want to emphasize is that these three methods—surveillance and punishment, discrimination and cultural hegemony, and extermination—that hinder a group from separating itself from the majority cannot be hidden from view. Within modern liberal states, these methods are not available to any community—save the state itself—and the establishment of different congregations, originally part of a single community, that have subtle, yet important, differences in doctrine and practice is a suitable means to allow all to cultivate their habitus in ways that they think appropriate.

Considering the privacy offered to the family, what I do not wish to deny is the possibility that members of the family might be constrained by other members to engage in a practice against their will. This is usually motivated by one of two factors. First, the constraining person has a sincere concern for the good of a loved one and thinks that in acting as such, she is providing for his best interest. Second, there is the possibility that the respect that she receives from the rest of her community depends on the virtues of the members of her family. However, I think these two reasons make constraint an unfortunate possibility for any community that has a commitment to specific internal goods and cannot be changed without loosening those commitments. It should however not be presumed to be the norm. And while Western liberal states have a legal duty to uphold individuals' rights, they fall into double standards if they do so by violating the freedoms of the vast majority of the members of these communities that are not found to coerce their family members. Demanding that a community change so that it neglects or

alters its good in favour of the potential empowerment of subjects may be just as coercive, disempowering, and painful for a far greater population. It should be sufficient that the state not tolerate physical constraints on any adult, that it not tolerate physical violence, and that it punish the prevention of exit from the community.

Considering the easy tendency to see certain pressures as excessively constraining an individual, it is worth stating that there must be a distinction between physical coercion or threats of violence and the type of coercion that comes with threats of severed ties or ostracization. While for an outsider to the group, the perceived innocence of the dissent of a member of such a community might make his lot appear tragic, it is necessary to recall three points. The first is that the community's judgements issue not from malice but from the sensibilities that make their way of life possible. The second is that we are all faced with pressures and we tend to value pressures differently depending on our own sensibilities: thus if we value education, we will usually applaud a mother who employs stern measures to encourage her children, even as adults, to study. We must be careful not to dismiss the pressures of a community because we judge their ends as false, irrational, or worthless. Third, we must be careful not to empathize in an erroneous manner by placing ourselves in the position of one who is embedded within the practices of a tradition and oftentimes has deep attachments to family members, despite wishing not to partake in a particular practice.

By giving a serious examination to practices that seek the achievement of internal goods, I have in this section attempted to tackle three popular concerns in regards to communities of the good life. The first is that some members are exploited for the benefit of others since they are deprived of positions of leadership or wealth. I have attempted to

argue that this position forgets that all members of a community are constrained because of their role within practices, and that differences in authority and wealth are oftentimes legitimated by the way they facilitate the performance of particular ends. The second is that when a community has not the ability to either exterminate or impose structures of surveillance and punishment on a sizable group of dissenters, the most likely outcome of dissent will be the establishment of different congregations within a broader tradition of practice. Third, physical constraints and violence on a member of a family are more plausible within any and all communities that subscribe to a specific set of goods, but the threat is not as pronounced as popular media and political theorists make them out to be; and considering the type of intrusion and pain inflicted upon a community in an attempt to liberalize it, it is a threat that must be met by punishing those that violate the law, not the community as a whole.

Conclusion

I have tackled here many subjects, and I would do well to piece them together. My aim has been to contend that because communities of the good life are united by common internal goods, they have an interest in organizing much of their daily lives in similar ways. This position however, would be difficult to defend were we to embrace MacIntyre's view on the relationship between theory and practice, for if traditions are sustained and transmitted through argument then it is undeniable that traditions do not admit of consensus and are continually changing. Thus I have argued that we need to place more emphasis on practices than on their mode of understanding or justification, and that when we do so, we shall see that their primary means of transmission and

preservation is through the shaping of a habitus and agreement about the rules that stipulate the correct exercise of a practice. It is these commitments that allow for a settling of disputes either by highlighting the means to their preservation or by a desire to treat those who help one achieve one's most valued goods in a way that fosters good-will. I have attempted to show this through the writings of al Ghazali and Syed Qutb: both thinkers were writing in a context of profound disagreement among Muslims about a multitude of issues and both attempted to solve these disputes by highlighting primarily what Muslims already agreed upon. Likewise, that arguments are not imperative for a community to sustain the pursuit of ends is clear from the fact that al Ghazali's language is undeniably that of the paradigm of Greek ethics and science, and Syed Qutb's is clearly that of European modernity, even as they seek to defend the importance of the same Muslim practices.

This analysis has been the background against which I have sought to make claims about the present. It suggests that a state and civil society can make provisions that accommodate these groups without the fear that they are lending support to the individual ends of some over others. Of course, this position is difficult to support when groups often advocate conformity and are hierarchically organized. However, by referring to the nature of practices, I have argued that authority is a trust legitimated by the goods of the community. It is rather the possibility of those that have authority to be remiss in their widely recognized duties that should be most worrisome in liberal societies. Instead of seeking to change a community such that the vulnerable are no longer so at the expense of losing their most cherished goods, there needs to be a system by which members of these communities can hold accountable those who do not treat them according to

traditionally expected reciprocity. I think this is best done by providing funding to community organizations to offer to those who are vulnerable a setting in which they may receive advice and redress against their leaders. As for pressures to conform, it is an integral part of being a member of a community of the good life that one should be subject to them, leader or not—they are usually understood as well-intended encouragements from the perspective of the insider. But as for those who no longer subscribe to one or more practices of a community, liberal societies offer the wonderful possibility of establishing a new congregation and protection against violent or physical coercion.

Chapter 3: New Political Arrangements

Insofar as this chapter seeks to analyze liberal political societies through the use of the concept of the habitus, it mirrors and complements the first and second chapters, which attempted to do the same, but focused upon the individual and sub-national communities respectively. However, the chapter also seeks to advance some tentative conclusions about the way that Western democracies should be organized faced with the fact that their diversity includes individuals who are part of communities of the good life. To do so, it relies on the conclusions of previous chapters. What has been established thus far is the existence of communities united around common internal goods, who have an interest in organizing themselves collectively to preserve a habitus that helps them achieve these goods. I have also argued that liberal societies or societies of plural goods offer formidable obstacles to the preservation of this habitus, often reducing members to a state of akrasia and social insanity. In light of the needs of members of communities of the good life to pursue their internal goods, how should society organize or adjust itself for their accommodation? More importantly, can or should it?

Instead of immediately presenting arguments for or against accommodating the practices of these communities, I think the first sensible task is to describe the status quo. In particular, it is necessary to highlight the current causes of tensions between communities and national majorities. To do so, I wish to explain the behaviour and judgements of each group as rooted in its respective habitus. To recall, to speak of a habitus is to emphasize the bodily capacities of

humans to achieve their ends: these capacities are the product of a certain bodily and practical knowledge and of the passions that one experiences when interacting with people or objects. This means that one's habitus encompasses not only practices for the achievement of internal goods—distinguished by their standards of excellence—but also norms that are not the source of goods, such as interdictions to commit certain actions: for example, one stops at an intersection rather unreflectively because one has been shaped to know how to respond to a red light, but one does not see the action as a good itself, divorced from its consequences. Whereas the habitus of communities of the good life are rooted in internal goods, liberal societies are united by common legal and institutional norms. Since the perspective of the habitus makes a strong distinction between lived sensibilities and discourse, it is not surprising that citizens do not justify these norms in the same manner and that when a situation arises in which a change to laws or institutions is necessary, they possess many different perspectives. Nonetheless, by virtue of the fact that they are governed by them, their sensibilities are attuned to what they feel to be their violation or wrongful application. Constitutional rights are norms that impact virtually all public institutions and so citizens are particularly shaped by them. Unless the arguments of those who wish to change such foundational laws are particularly compelling, what citizens' share in terms of their habitus itself legitimates these norms.

I begin my description by suggesting that the sensibilities and interests of communities of the good life will lead their members to interpret and employ laws in ways that are advantageous to the life they seek to lead. This in turn tends to

shock and disconcert the national community whose different habitus precludes immediate comprehension of the motives of the minority community. In earnest fear that its institutions may be subverted or that some injustice may be perpetrated, the national community tends to react by shutting out the voices of the minority. I hope to show this by examples of the treatment of Muslims in Europe and Canada. Beyond the exclusion that thereafter denies these groups full democratic rights, there is also a tendency towards imposing mechanisms of assimilation in order to change opinions, beliefs, and practices: thus community members are often stripped of civil liberties as well. But beyond elucidating the current situation, analysis through the habitus also allows us to assess whether the fears of the majority are proportionate to reality. The conclusion that I draw is that the fears are largely unfounded for two reasons. First, communities of the good life wish only to safeguard those practices of most concern to them and hence their demands are not totalizing or uncompromising. Second, one should expect that by taking part in politics, which includes making requests for accommodation and making common cause with other citizens on a variety of issues, and by achieving one's personal ends through the support of other citizens—in civil society as much as in the official public sphere—members of these communities could not but gain an awareness of the presence of others and of the need to take them into consideration in their actions as citizens.

Against the backdrop of this description, I feel that there are three arguments for the accommodation of communities of the good life. The first is that by accommodating them we are allowing for greater freedom. The second is

that it will serve to build greater social unity: civic solidarity will be better served if we replace the notion of a civic nation with one that addresses the particular goods of citizens and communities. Since questions of freedom and solidarity are often invoked by those that oppose group accommodation, these points should serve as important considerations. The third is that all citizens will have their own ends furthered by the participation of these groups since they contribute to many public sectors like the economy, community services, and common activities.

I conclude by presenting conditions that would need to be met for all members of a plural society to have the ability to shape their habitus in ways that they choose. In short, then, I want to argue in this chapter that the freedom over the shaping of one's habitus must and can be considered in a truly plural society. To prove this argument is also the objective of this thesis.

An Inarticulate Debate

It is best to begin by highlighting that according to the view of humans as possessors of a habitus, in giving individuals that are part of groups seeking the good life a right to vote and to participate in the workings of government, there is an inevitable consequence that they will influence law and culture in two ways. The first is conscious and results from a crucial interest in being able to establish policies that allow for their pursuit of the good life. The second is largely unconscious and stems from the sensibilities and perspectives gained through the crafting of their habitus: it is that their judgements, and consequently their motivations in voting and in mobilizing politically, will stem from their engagement with the world. In both cases, since much of law is a

matter of interpretation, the minority itself might feel that it is faithful to the law when acting. Nonetheless, if their actions differ significantly from the norms of the majority, there is more than a likelihood that the majority will find itself partly dumbfounded, unable to comprehend what exactly the group is attempting to achieve, and partly indignant, interpreting and evaluating the consequences and motivations of its actions through the lens of its own sensibilities. This has been at the root of two anxieties of the majority in Western countries in relation to their Muslim minorities. The first of these anxieties is the fear of a subversion of the liberal culture and legal system. The second is the introduction of inhuman or barbaric practices that reflect the oppression and degradation of humans, and particularly women.

These two anxieties are best understood through examples. The Danish Cartoons controversy provides a means to get at the roots of the fear of subversion. In September 2005, the Danish newspaper *Jyllends-Posten* published twelve cartoons or caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad. They accompanied an article on the need to overcome self-censorship in speaking on Islam. In January of 2006, the issue gained international attention when newspapers in Norway and Belgium republished the cartoons. Protests erupted throughout the Middle East. Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen issued public condemnations. Libya recalled its ambassador. In Gaza, Palestinians occupied the European Union office demanding an apology. This merely encouraged other newspapers in Germany, Italy, France, Spain, and the Netherlands to republish the cartoons in a show of solidarity with *Jyllends-Posten*. Protests then turned violent. Danish flags were burnt and in Damascus and Beirut the Danish embassies were set on fire.

I think that the internationalization of the conflict, and particularly the spectacular and violent protests in the Middle East, tends to obscure a few important points about the motivations, actions, and perceptions of both Muslim and non-Muslim Danes. When the cartoons were first published, the Islamic Society of Denmark demanded an apology of the newspaper: a peaceful protest was organized outside of its office, numbering approximately 5000 people. The next steps taken were the filing of a complaint under Denmark's criminal code appealing both to hate speech and the little used blasphemy law, and the petitioning of foreign representatives of the Muslim world to appeal to the Danish government on what appeared to be an increasing demonization of Islam and Muslims in Danish media. Both of these steps came to nothing. Muslim organizations subsequently attempted to sue the newspaper for libel, claiming it suggested Muslims were terrorists; they lost their case in October of 2006.⁸³ What is evident from this is that Danish Muslims, and Muslims in Europe in general, approached the conflict from within the boundaries of the law. This is why the rhetoric of the danger to free speech seems quite inadequate to understand the confrontation that took place: legal procedures and peaceful protests have neither the power nor display the intent of obviating a constitutionally enshrined right. But certainly, these actions can shape freedom of speech in both its legal interpretation and cultural use. In terms of the law, there are very few that support unrestrained freedom of speech. In all Western liberal democracies, defamation is illegal and, in most, so is hate speech. Both are defined differently from country to country. Thus by following their right to seek certain ends within the bounds of the law, Muslims were inevitably shaping the legal norms of freedom of speech. Culturally, there

⁸³ Gelu Sulugiuc, "Danish Paper Cleared in Muslim Libel Lawsuit," *National Post* [Toronto] 27 Oct. 2006: A12.

is usually even more restraint to speech: this includes vulgarities, racism, sexism, xenophobic and homophobic remarks—it is not surprising that Muslims appealed to anti-racism to gain support for their position.⁸⁴ By protesting against the newspaper, Muslims were attempting to coerce the media into respecting certain standards of debate, thus shaping law and culture. The consequence, however, was to alarm a national majority who viewed the actions of Muslims as a threat to both its legal and cultural rules.

That Muslims were attempting through legal channels to modify norms of discourse was recognized by many Europeans. This is evident when we pay enough attention to the main justification offered by the representatives of the newspapers and by politicians in their refusal to apologize for, censure, or censor the cartoons. Their assertions of defending freedom of speech were often coupled with the norm of the society and the need for Muslims to recognize it. Thus Karl Ropper, editor of *Die Welt*, associated the view of newspapers with a specific cultural heritage: “In our culture, we have a tradition that even our most holy things can be subjected to satire or criticism...Muslims have to understand that in our culture, the representation of a holy man has another meaning.”⁸⁵ This was made even more explicit by Flemming Rose, the cultural-affairs editor that asked the artists to draw the caricatures, who consistently associated the legitimacy of the caricatures with the right of Danes to live out their customs, “The cartoons did nothing that transcends the cultural norms of secular Denmark, and this was not a provocation to insult Muslims.” Again he uttered, “I respect the Muslim religion by behaving in accordance of their rules when I go to a mosque... I will not draw a cartoon of the Prophet in a mosque . . . but when they ask me to submit to

⁸⁴ Tariq Modood, “The Liberal Dilemma: Integration or Vilification,” *Danish Cartoon Affair: Free Speech, Racism: Islamism, and Integration* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp.4-17.

⁸⁵ David Rennie, “Allah Cartoons Spark Muslim Fury,” *The Windsor Star* [Windsor] 2 Feb. 2006: B2

their taboos and rules in the public domain, I do not think they are asking for my respect. I think they are asking for my submission.”⁸⁶

Rose’s attitude supports Cindy Holder’s argument that the publication of the cartoons and the subsequent statements defending them represented an exercise of power over Muslims, specifically because Muslims were not taken as interlocutors in any debate.⁸⁷ The fact that the cartoons accompanied a piece on self-censorship and were expected to cause protest, implied not only that Danes should be able to say whatever they want about Islam, but that they *will* say whatever they want. Thus Muslims were not invited to question the validity of their taboo on criticizing certain aspects of their faith, but were told that they needed to respect that Danes would. Nor were they able to engage with any message about Muhammad that the cartoonists conveyed, because, as Holder points out, Rose asked the cartoonist to draw Muhammad as they saw him, not to draw a veridical depiction of him: it is the fact that the newspaper did not wish to make an argument that explains why no occasion for refutation was offered. Instead, there was merely an attempt to reinforce the majority’s norms, and to tell Muslims that willy-nilly they would have to accept it.

While Holder is naturally critical of a democratic state for silencing a large contingent of its population, I would suggest first attempting to understand the Europeans who insisted on their right to publish this material, not because I agree with them, but because it will allow us to reconsider the consequences of granting full rights of citizenship to a minority that seeks a good life. Muslims would and do alter the nature of

⁸⁶ Doug Saunders, “Danes Fear Cartoon Furor will Lead to Terror Attacks,” *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto] 7 Feb. 2006: A1.

⁸⁷ Cindy Holder, “Debating the Danish Cartoons: Civil Rights or Civil Power?” *UNB Law Journal* 55 (2006), pp.179-185.

free speech in Europe and North America, largely in spite of themselves, in relation to certain issues—the fact that this is true was the impetus for Rose to order the publication of the cartoons and attempt to reverse the tide. It seems obvious that they do not seek to end all critiques of their religion for there are plenty of negative comments about Islam that do not incite strong responses. But Muslims do cultivate a habitus that makes the insulting of Muhammad a source of profound hurt and generates in them a need to defend him. Both the Rushdie Affair and the Danish Cartoons illustrate that when they possess the legal means, they will protest against such insults.⁸⁸ This then leaves the majority society at an impasse, either they engage with their fellow citizens and arrive at some sort of accord, legally and culturally, which takes into consideration the interests and sensibilities of Muslims and the majority or else they exclude them from the debate altogether, which is what Holder points out happened. In short then, the aim of the majority is an understandable desire to protect its habitus.

I think the second anxiety about the introduction of oppressive or barbaric practices is exemplified in the debate on the introduction of sharia law in Ontario in relation to family disputes. The sharia debate began in 2003 when the Islamic Institute of Civil Justice (IICJ) was formed proposing the establishment of an Islamic arbitration tribunal to allow Muslims of Ontario the opportunity of resolving disputes of personal law by recourse to the sharia. Catholics, Jews, and Ismailis already had recourse to such communal tribunals under the *Arbitration Act* which for over a decade permitted religious and non-religious individuals to settle disputes outside state courts. The International Campaign Against Sharia was formed in order to oppose the IICJ's proposals, wishing to

⁸⁸ Bhikhu Parekh points out that the reason there were protests in the UK against Rushdie's book, and not in America, was precisely because the UK had an anti-blasphemy law. *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p.312.

protect vulnerable Muslim women from what many perceive as the gender biases of the sharia. Among its supporters were The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, the National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL), the Metropolitan Toronto Action Committee on Violence Against Women (METRAC), and the National Council of University Women. Though the *Arbitration Act* would have made the use of the tribunal consensual for both parties, worries from the public that women would be coerced into its use, prompted the Ontario government to request Marion Boyd, a respected voice in campaigns of anti-violence against women to investigate "use of private arbitration to resolve family and inheritance cases, and the impact that using arbitration may have on vulnerable people." After consulting with fifty individuals and organizations within a three month period, Boyd produced a report, in which she suggested that the *Arbitration Act* be maintained as it is.⁸⁹ She proposed safeguards to ensure that Muslim women knew their rights. Boyd answered the calls of the anti-sharia groups by stating that there was a strange tendency to view Muslim women as exceptionally vulnerable. Public pressure, however, continued, finally causing the provincial government to announce in September of 2005 that it would end all religious tribunals rather than accept the introduction of the sharia within Canada.⁹⁰ The *Arbitration Act* was subsequently amended such that family-law disputes would need to conform to the provisions of Canadian law.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Marion Boyd, *Dispute Resolution in Family Law : Protecting Choice, Promoting Inclusion* (2004), <http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/about/pubs/boyd/fullreport.pdf>.

⁹⁰ "McGuinty Rules Out use of Sharia Law in Ontario." *CTV News*, Sep. 12, 2005.

⁹¹ Jeremy Webber, "Canadian Muslims are Fellow Citizens," *Times - Colonist* [Victoria] Nov 24, 2006: A.19.

Again, one finds a striking parallel to the case of the Danish Cartoons in the use of public policy by Muslims to change norms. Muslims who pushed for the introduction of the sharia worked within the legal system, not only appealing to the existing *Arbitration Act*, but also referring to multiculturalism in order to legitimize their position. Avigail Eisenberg has highlighted this nicely, pointing out how Syed Mumtaz Ali representing the IICJ used the language of multiculturalism to suggest both that it naturally legitimized the sharia, and thus that those who opposed it, opposed multiculturalism.⁹² Mumtaz Ali made statements like “the government of Ontario is the most enlightened in the world. This is the multiculturalism of my friend Pierre Trudeau;” and when facing opposition, he stated “In the barnyard of multicultural Canada, some are more equal than others.”⁹³ As Eisenberg wittily points out, it is doubtful that the architects of multiculturalism believed that their policies would one day serve to legitimize the sharia.⁹⁴

Nonetheless, the public outcry was also, like in the case of the Danish Cartoons, one of silencing and not of engagement. As Sherene Razack notes, those who opposed the sharia tended to seal the Muslim woman in the role of a vulnerable victim of the dangerous Muslim male, needing to be rescued by civilized Canadians.⁹⁵ That this was an illusion was more difficult to see because of the active participation of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women in the anti-sharia movement. Nonetheless, old colonial and Orientalist categories were in full view for anyone who bothered to pay attention. Muslim law was portrayed as a “regressive step,” and as a “barbaric, misogynistic, and anti-child

⁹² Avigail Eisenberg, “Identity, Multiculturalism, and Religious Arbitration : The Debate over Sharia Law in Canada,” *Sexual Justice/Cultural Justice*, eds Barbara Arneil et al. (New York: Routledge, 2007).

⁹³ Quoted in Eisenberg, p.215.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Sherene Razack, *Casting Out : The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics* (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 2008).

tool of oppression,” leading the public to fall back on a narrative of modernity and universalism versus primitivism and parochialism.⁹⁶ Rosie Dimanno of the Toronto Star, for example, did not hesitate to state that “we should not be labeled racist for daring to champion the secular over the infantizing religious.”⁹⁷ These categories therefore legitimated the silencing of Muslim women who did not fall neatly within them. Indeed, the voices of Muslim women who gave support for the sharia tended to be rationalized away in order to avoid taking them at face value: the assumption was that these women must be deluded in some way or other, stuck in a form of partly self-imposed oppression. Razack highlights the way in which Somali women who iterated to the International Campaign to End Sharia that the sharia was more applicable to their lives than Canadian law “were dismissed by the speakers on the platform on the basis that the young women did not know how fundamentalism operated. Dismissed as naïve, and told that they had been coerced into wearing the veil, some of the young women chose to leave the meeting.”⁹⁸ Consent, which was the principal concern of the Boyd Report, was manipulated by various organizations, the press, and the population in general, to mean what Muslims should want, not what they do want. Interestingly enough, a year after the controversy ended, a survey revealed that 55% of Muslim women and 59% of Muslim men were in favour of some form of sharia accommodation within family law;⁹⁹ a more recent survey suggests that only 3% of the Canadian population support such an

⁹⁶ Quoted in Razack, p.156.

⁹⁷ Razack, p.156.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p.155.

⁹⁹ Sheema Khan, “Canadian Muslims have a Fondness for Democracy, Peace - and Sharia Law,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto] 28 January 2009: A21.

accommodation—it is not negligible that Muslims form just under 3% of the current Canadian population.¹⁰⁰

Moreover, the language in which the controversy was dealt with also meant that some forms of critiques by Muslim women of these tribunals, which could only be understood by taking into account their situatedness as Muslim women with certain interests and sensibilities relating to their religion, were also not given the time of day. Razack herself is a perfect example. Though a self-ascribed feminist with misgivings about the introduction of sharia tribunals, she felt caught in a position in which voicing opposition to the sharia tribunals meant having her voice framed as an outright opponent of the barbarity of the sharia, and inevitably reinforcing the image of vulnerability and naiveté of Muslim women. That there are complaints from some Muslim women against the current organization of their community is unquestionable, but when the only shape these critiques can take is to advocate a limit on practices and forms of life of their community according to the sensibilities of the majority, then we foreclose the possibility that one's habitus might lead to a different form of contestation, or to a different set of concerns than those raised by those looking at the group from outside.

On the surface, the sharia debate seems quite different from the Danish Cartoons controversy, for while the concern of the majority in the latter case was the protection of their cultural and political norms, in the former case, the result would only have affected Muslims. Had the *Arbitration Act* not been amended, presumably an Ontarian Christian, Atheist, or Sikh could go along with his daily affairs without ever noticing a change to his environment or lifestyle. This is why I think it is useful to characterize this not as a case

¹⁰⁰ John Geddes, "What Canadians think of Sikhs, Jews, Christians, and Muslims," *Macleans*, 4 May 2009: pp.20-24.

of anxiety of subversion, but of intolerable behaviour. Nonetheless, seen from the perspective of the habitus, the two cases are not so different: at stake in the sharia debate were the norms of treatment of human beings, and what offended Canadian sensibilities was precisely the thought that they would reform their political and legal culture in ways that were morally unacceptable. The juxtaposition of Muslim women's experiences with those of the White Western woman seemed unproblematic: *women* tout court had fought for the right of equality, the sharia jeopardized this equality. So in both cases, thinking in terms of the habitus allows us to understand the source of the reactions of the majority faced with the participation of Muslims within their political and cultural life.

We also find similar patterns of dealing with Muslims: there is a process of exclusion from the debate, justified by an appeal to the political culture, whether of the official legal realm or the unofficial public sphere, which cannot be questioned. In both cases, there is an openness to tell a minority how it should act.

When a minority's possession of constitutional and democratic rights jeopardizes the habitus of the majority through the contestation of its legal and cultural norms, the majority is faced with three possible responses. It may enter into discussion with the minority to find an arrangement that potentially alters its habitus; it may strip the minority of all rights; or finally, it may establish structures of domination, by which I mean the imposition of norms that one neither approves nor is able to contest, in certain areas of public life, in order to oppose any changes to them, and attempt through curtailing practices of a minority, to assimilate it in distinct ways and render it benign. The tradition of equal rights makes the second option less than feasible—though not impossible. The third option, however, seems increasingly accepted. Both the Danish

Cartoons affair and the sharia debate were a form of domination in their willingness to impose rules on Muslims without regard for their consent, which, in turn, affects their ability to sustain a certain subjectivity or habitus.

A turn towards an assimilative domination appears itself to be increasingly tolerated in both Europe and Canada. This is of course more evident in Europe and predates the Danish Cartoons episode. European examples include the various regulations in relation to the *hijab*, the refusal in several Italian cities to allow Muslims to build new mosques, the recent ruling of a French judge to refuse to annul a wedding in spite of the law, based on the fear that it promoted a view of women's sexuality which the majority find unacceptable, and the introduction within the process of immigration in the Netherlands of forcing new citizens to watch a video showing women's breasts and men kissing.¹⁰¹ All these are cases of intruding into the practices of Muslims to prevent them from possessing the views that they do about particular subjects.

In Canada there have scarcely been such forms of intrusion from the state. Nonetheless, we can point towards signs of acceptance of assimilation among the population since the sharia debate that do not bode well for the future. The most notable cases have been in Quebec. Following many public complaints given prominent attention in the media, the provincial government in the spring of 2007 established a commission led by Charles Taylor and Gerard Bouchard to investigate the causes of conflict in relation to reasonable accommodations in Quebec and to suggest possible remedies.¹⁰²

The commission revealed popular concerns and resentment about the accommodation of

¹⁰¹ See the volume *Multiculturalism, Muslims and citizenship : A European approach*, eds. Tariq Modood et al. (New York: Routledge, 2006); and "When Town Halls turn to Mecca," *The Economist*, 4 Dec 2008, http://rss.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story_id=12724966.

¹⁰² Charles Taylor and Gerard Bouchard, *Commission de Consultation sur les pratiques d'Accommodement reliee aux differences culturelles*, p.59.

Muslims and other groups. Common remarks were made about the threat to Quebec culture, the archaism and fundamentalism of Muslims, and their lack of propriety in bringing their faith outside of the home. Following the Bouchard-Taylor Report, the Conseil du Statut de la Femme petitioned the government to have an amendment to the Quebec *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* explicitly stating the equality of men and women in an attempt to make it a provision to override claims of freedom of religion. The amendment was passed in June 2008. The Conseil du Statut de la Femme is currently pushing for the proscription of the veil for government workers. It possesses the support of the main opposition parties in the Assemblée Nationale and the governing party has yet to express itself on the matter.¹⁰³

In English Canada, the Harper government in response to the stir caused after a statement of Elections Canada's Chief Electoral Officer that there was no legal provision to stop Muslim women wearing the *niqab* (a veil covering most of the face) from voting, moved to pass legislation against it.¹⁰⁴ The measure, though negligible in the life and community of Muslims could not but be interpreted as a sign of showing of power over them, when it is considered that people can send their ballots by mail—showing far less than their faces. More importantly, some associations within civil society have shown resistance to accommodation. In the fall of 2007, for example, an 11 year-old girl in Manitoba was expelled from playing judo because of her headscarf. While the referee appealed to safety, there had been a long history of Muslim women wearing headscarves participating in such events. Finally in December of 2007, the tragic murder of Aqsa

¹⁰³ "La Polémique Reprend," *Radio-Canada*, Mai 13, 2009.

¹⁰⁴ "Harper Slams Elections Canada Ruling on Veils," *CBC News*, 9 Sep. 2007. The measure was of course tied to Quebec since it is there that it made the biggest stir, but there were no indications in English Canada of opposition to the actions of the Harper government.

Pervez, a young Muslim girl in Ontario, by her father, became an occasion to point out that Islam demanded the submission of women and Muslim men permitted themselves to be violent towards women.¹⁰⁵ That a recent survey articulates that 62% of Canadians do not think that “norms should be modified to accommodate religious minorities,” reveals feelings of willingness towards assimilation that is likely to affect government legislation, policies, and, with time, interpretation of laws by courts.¹⁰⁶

Clarifying the Claims

In some ways, it seems sufficient to speak of exclusion and domination, of adopting policies that allow some voices to be heard and others not, and that impose policies on a group without their approval, to raise concern and to offer an argument for rethinking the status quo. Yet from the majority’s perspective, the fear of the subversion of cultural and legal norms, coupled with the belief that some Muslim practices are barbaric and oppressive, particularly for women, puts exactly this in question. I have suggested that the fear of subversion is not completely ill-founded as it is true that the sensibilities that Muslims cultivate in practices tend to grant them perspectives on some issues that are different from the majority, who while by no means homogeneous, do interpret rights, laws, and public norms of interaction in a way that comes out of their historical evolution and current application. If domination in relation to race, gender, class, and sexual orientation must be militated against, perhaps we meet a reasonable limit with several groups seeking a good life. Moreover, much of mainstream political philosophy would justify the majority’s position on the need for a common civic culture

¹⁰⁵ “Mourners Upset at Decision to Cancel Public Funeral for Slain Ontario Girl: Family Decides to have Private Burial,” *CBC News*, Dec. 15, 2007.

¹⁰⁶ John Gedes, “What Canadians think of Sikhs, Jews, Christians, and Muslims.”

and the fairly prevalent position that some actions, even if supported by a group, simply are intolerable. The question then is whether or not domination of Muslims and other groups seeking a good life, is a necessary evil?

Once again, thinking about humans as possessors of habitual capabilities and particular sensibilities, and thinking about how these are cultivated, help us clarify what is at stake in claims of accommodation and inclusion, and therefore allow us to evaluate the legitimacy of domination. What needs to be asked in relation to the fear of subversion is the extent to which the protection of one's habitus and the pursuit of a good life is totalizing, meaning that it involves an almost pre-scripted social arrangement covering every sphere of life, or is uncompromising, meaning that the ends of the other will necessarily be dismissed or constrained.

I have explained in Chapter 1 that our environment continually shapes our habitus, so that in the case of Muslims, it is possible to think of society as facilitating the creation and maintenance of their habitus, or as generating burdens to it. This being said, I have also argued that groups seeking a good life will have a hierarchy of ends: in other words, safeguarding some practices is more imperative than others. Faced with laws and the claims of other individuals and communities, Muslims, it may be expected, would begin by making only those claims most important for the pursuit of their good life. Empirical evidence seems to support this conclusion if we look to Canada. First, Muslims seek to protect these practices on the basis of the freedom of conscience and religion, freedom of association, freedom of speech, and various provincial codes against discrimination in the work place. Within their homes and mosques, they do not encounter difficulties in performing their practices; however within the public sphere—meaning

both government institutions and the “visible” sphere— they encounter obstacles to the integrity of their habitus. Muslims cannot abandon this public sphere, since it includes both the economic sector in which they obtain their livelihood, as well as institutions and community centres that provide desirable services. Consequently there are demands for some form of accommodation. So far, records on accommodation show three types of requests Muslims make which demand adjustments from their fellow-citizens.¹⁰⁷ The first consists of the norms of interaction. Thus a Muslim man or woman might request their employer or colleagues of the opposite gender to avoid the type of casual and friendly physical contact that is usually viewed as harmless in many work environments. The second makes demands on the use of space or time for their practices: many request spaces for the five daily prayers, as well as time off on Fridays for the congregational prayer. The last type of request is an exemption from rules. This includes adjustment of uniforms for the requirement of modesty and permission to take leave from mandatory work gatherings in which there is the consumption of alcohol. That the requests made are not in relation to all that has been part of the Muslim heritage, but only those areas of life that are deemed mandatory to the pursuit of the good life, are only noticeable by those familiar with Muslims and their habitual practices; those who are should be able to perceive that the fact that the *hijab* has been so present in debates of accommodation and not polygamy is rooted in the former being taken by the vast majority of practicing Muslims to be an obligation, imperative to their faith, and the latter as a mere permission. Thus the suggestion that only the greatest goods and those practices that sustain them are made objects of protection of Muslims is not negligible, because it shows that protecting

¹⁰⁷ This is based on the type of requests documented through the Bouchard-Taylor Report on Accommodations and the reports and press releases of the Council for American Islamic Relations-Canada, see website, www.cair-can.ca.

one's habitus and seeking the good life is not totalizing: there are issues that cannot be compromised without severely crippling one's habitus and depriving one of goods, and there are issues that must be decided by taking circumstances into consideration.

Yet this might not be very comforting to those that suspect Muslims of wanting to overturn their political system. Is not the capacity of Muslims to factor in the presence of others simply that state power stops them from establishing an alternate social and legal arrangement? In other words, how do we know that these minimal requests are not merely a stepping stone to more imposing and controversial ones—the fears expressed most strongly by the little Quebec town of Herouville who believed that Muslims might eventually try to stone women and throw acid on them? The answer to this is found again in examining what the concept of the habitus presupposes. For it is a central implication of this concept that humans are influenced by their habitual engagements. The benefits that Muslims gain from public institutions and services, associations of civil society, and the economic sector leads them both to see a large part of the good of their life as coming from the structure of society as well as from cooperation with other citizens. Indeed, what is noticeable about claims of accommodation is that they appear to be guided by an awareness of others, and a concern at minimizing the disruption of the current order. They are meant to be self-regarding and to impose the least difficulties on others as possible. This is important, because it demonstrates a care not only for the law, but for the *ends* of others. It is in becoming habituated to pursuing one's good at the same time as considering others' concrete interests, beyond formal rules, that ensures the possibility of both accommodations and changes in laws, without severe disruption of the habitus of others. In short then, the claims of groups seeking the good life are not uncompromising.

Looking at matters from this perspective allows the majority not only to abandon its fear of subversion, but also to think of the way in which the minority helps it attain many of its own goods.

This awareness of others was not absent even in the protests of Muslims against the Danish Cartoons. Though it might not ease the heart of those who fervently defended freedom of speech as an immutable principle, I do not think it is negligible that based on the sensibilities of Muslims, it is just as offensive to have depictions of Jesus, Moses, David, or other biblical prophets as it is of Muhammad. This would include icons in churches or renaissance works of art just as well as demeaning images. Yet no Muslim group has ever felt impelled to protest against these depictions in the West; and I do not think it can be for any reason other than the recognition that these figures belong to the Western heritage as much as to the Islamic one. This is not to extol or even suppose a tolerance of Muslims in opposition to the intolerance of the West; rather my illustration is simply meant to convey what viewing communities through a habitus already suggests, namely that we cannot but be influenced and impressed by our habitual engagement with the world. In other words, Muslims in the West cannot but be aware of inhabiting a common political community with others, and through their dealings within the public sphere cannot but have their visceral register shaped by this participation. Though this does not suggest that they do not possess different sensibilities, it does make these sensibilities less threatening to the national majority.

The second concern is that Muslim practices are simply barbaric and oppressive, and that by fully embracing the universal validity of the legal norms of the West, it will be possible for them to reform that which is inhuman about their actions. Here, the

habitus forces us to rethink not the consequences of non-accommodation but the validity of the claim to moral ascendancy. The habitus makes no claims about the possibility of one life truly being more worthy of choice than another. Rather, it simply suggests that what one finds pleasant naturally comes out of one's engagement with the world, responding to internal pressures (passions) in relation to external pressures (people and objects) in distinct and habitual ways. The consequence is that there are a plurality of ways in which the human body can be shaped. Because the visceral reactions from one habitus to another differ, any judgement of either the pain, pleasure, meaning or purpose of an action will not be easy to ascertain. Indeed, even if one became fluent in the meaning of different acts, relating them to distinct goals, one might not be able to understand the range of concrete experiences that come about from them. Moreover, as I have pointed out in chapter 2, to share internal goods is to have both a source of critique against abuse of authority in relation to the practice as well as a unique relationship of friendship in the Aristotelian sense. What follows in thinking these concerns through the lens of the habitus is a new perspective which largely discredits the claims of universalism about barbarism or oppression and consequently lessens the perils of accommodating Muslims.

I have tried to clarify the extent to which including and accommodating Muslims threatens to subvert the current political order or to lead to an oppression that violates universal norms. It appears both of these charges are tenuous. It might nonetheless be claimed that in emphasizing that the denial of Muslims' practices disfigure their habitus and therefore cripple them, I am giving greater importance to their habitus than that of the majority. Though the members of a liberal society will manifest great diversity in their

habitus, depending on whether one chooses to be a musician or a lawyer, a family man or a bachelor, a churchgoer or an environmentalist, what is common to the habitus of the great majority is but their sensibilities with regards to fundamental subjective rights, interpreted similarly if not identically. Is not to see a religious leader beyond the pale of satire or to see women requesting and embracing gender segregation in many of their social interactions to do violence to the habitus of the majority? I think it is in many ways. It is to ask that the values that most guide public discourse be suspended and leave the majority in a state of insanity, unsure as to how it should relate to fellow citizens or interpret their actions. And yet, I also think the habitus offers an imminent critique to the claims of the majority based upon two arguments. First, it is a prominent part of public discourse that freedom to pursue one's good is the value that is at the foundation of constitutional rights and freedoms. Equality between citizens is meant to allow all to pursue their good. Yet if what the habitus suggests is true, then freedom cannot be limited to a system that maximizes primary or external goods; it will necessarily refer to the ability to shape one's subjectivity in relation to the world. Thus to move beyond the historical interpretation of rights is to allow for greater opportunities of freedom. Moreover, this will always be based on the concrete and specific internal goods sought by the population in the present. There is no definitive arrangement for such a freedom, because there are innumerable ways of being in the world. Such an understanding therefore motivates us to view equality differently. Just as in the last decades, we have moved beyond thinking of equality as treating people in the same way, to addressing systemic ways in which they, as members of groups, face greater hardships to obtaining wealth, opportunities to develop their capacities, autonomy, and respect, it is possible to

now also think of equality as equality of opportunity to shape oneself in distinct ways.¹⁰⁸ Second, it is also part of the public discourse that a civic culture is needed to provide society with the basis of a unity necessary to maintain democratic institutions. Yet since the denial of accommodation is the source of exclusion, domination, and resentment, it frustrates the goal of solidarity, which would better be served by rethinking the public norms. The example of Muslims indicates that equal freedom of shaping one's habitus for minorities seeking a good life need neither clash with the internal and external goods of others, nor preclude the possibility of solidarity arising from participation in a common political order.

Reconceiving the Political Community

I want to begin to think about the ways in which we can reconceive our liberal political orders to give members of groups seeking a good life the opportunity to shape their subjectivity in ways that they choose. I think that in particular three conditions would be needed. The first is to see our political order as a historical contingency or a *modus vivendi*. Its institutions and laws represent neither the best political order that humans can create, nor the best so far in the history of humanity. More importantly, it should aspire to neither. Rather, it should aspire to be the best in relation to the concrete conditions in which we currently find ourselves, or put otherwise, relative to the needs of each to fashion his or her habitus in ways that make certain pursuits possible, without falling either into insanity or *akrasia*. Considering the existing institutions and rules, needed for the stability of society, we might follow Rawls in seeing our current order as

¹⁰⁸ For a good account of how the literature understands equality and difference, see Iris Young, *Justice and Difference*.

an overlapping consensus in which many different communities, possessing different habituses find support for these rights and laws within their own beliefs and morals.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, we would need to move beyond Rawls, who strongly rejected the possibility that this consensus be based on a *modus vivendi*. In doing so, we would avoid two problems with Rawls's overlapping consensus. The first is a singular interpretation of rights through the imposition of a public form of reason, which through the creation of a homogeneous civic culture, inevitably shapes both the subjectivity of private selves and the types of requests they can make to protect that subjectivity. The latter point has been made by Charles Taylor, who sees in the combination of an overlapping consensus and a *modus vivendi* the advantage of each group interpreting rights within their own comprehensive doctrines, allowing disagreements to be resolved by negotiation and not by a form of reason that leads to a resolution which many cannot reconcile with their beliefs.¹¹⁰

The second problem the *modus vivendi* avoids is imposing a judgement on ways of life that find good reason to cherish the current liberal order but might believe that there is nothing morally wrong with a different form of government under different circumstances. The point is to allow both respect for other ways of life—and this has great importance in the international realm as well—and for receptivity to the claims for the protection of practices and the development of the habitus of these groups. Rawls and those who followed him believed that if each group did not consider the values of a free and democratic society to be rooted in their morals, the unity of the people risked being jeopardized. As I have noted above, however, solidarity comes out, on the one hand, of

¹⁰⁹ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

¹¹⁰ Charles Taylor, "Modes of Secularism," in *Secularism and its Critics*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

an appreciation of the possibility of living out one's habitus to a full extent, coupled with the shaping of one's habitus in political participation with others, which makes the concerns of other citizens known and relevant to oneself. Instead of encouraging citizens to reinterpret their beliefs in light of the common understanding of justice in the public sphere, what should be fostered is the type ethos of engagement that William Connolly has articulated. An ethos of engagement requires supplanting the conception of a homogeneous nation, civic as much as ethnic, with that of a nation of minorities, so that one sees oneself as a minority among minorities.¹¹¹ Different constituencies find alliances on innumerable issues of common interest.¹¹² Thus the overlapping consensus extends to various interests, not just to Rawls's basic structure of society. Unlike Connolly, however, I do not conceive this moral order as a product of humility or doubt about one's own tradition; rather it is founded on the positive goods that one achieves in cooperation with others, and the habitual dispositions that result from it. Cooperation and contestation are the processes under which one develops ties with one's fellow citizens—what Professor James Tully has called a second-order sense of belonging.¹¹³

The second condition is to ensure that mechanisms for the contestation of norms within the different areas of public life are available. That this is needed follows from the remarkable plurality of ways that the human subject can shape itself, which makes it more or less impossible to know *a priori* what is imperative to a community, what is source of preference, indifference, or profound aversion. With time, such mechanisms, it

¹¹¹ William Connolly, "Pluralism, Multiculturalism and the Nation-State: Re-thinking the Connections," *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. I, no.1 (1996), p.58.

¹¹² Connolly, *Why I am not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) ; Edward Said makes a similar argument for the possibilities of contemporary struggles for social justice in "The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals," in *The Public Intellectual*, ed. Helen Small (London: Blackwell 2002).

¹¹³ James Tully, "The Practice of Law-Making and the Problem of Difference: An Introduction to the Field." *Multiculturalism and Law: A Critical Debate*, ed. Omid. A. Payrow Shabani (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007).

is hoped, will also make us aware of this diversity and avoid the facile transposition of the needs and aspirations of one community upon those of another. This is particularly true of our treatment of religion, whose accommodation still takes on the paradigm of post-Reformation Christianity. For example, a recent report on accommodation in Quebec schools articulates that to be equal, all groups should be accommodated for their religious days of celebration. It takes little thought to realize that equal here means providing the same benefits that Christians receive in having time off for Easter and Christmas, not the time off that each community itself articulates it needs. Anyone familiar with religion in Canada knows that if Christians attend a single mass all year, it will be for Christmas, thus giving it a certain importance to one's faith. In Islam, however, neither of the two festival prayers is deemed compulsory, and yet the five daily prayers are. It is therefore paradoxical that the report recommends that Muslims have time off for the two Eids, but that schools have no obligation to provide a permanent prayer space.¹¹⁴ Likewise, in the Bouchard-Taylor Report, in discussing equality of services for both genders, there is a truly unfortunate footnote that reads that exceptions to equal services to both genders may be made for "A woman [who] requests for religious reasons that a female driving examiner conduct her driving test as she fears reprisals from her spouse if a male examiner is assigned."¹¹⁵ Considering the context of the accommodations requested from the Société de l'Assurance Automobile du Québec, this seems to imply that either Hassidic Jewish or Muslim women could not on the basis of their own religious convictions seek an examiner of their own gender. It may also be interpreted that if accommodation is requested on the basis of their convictions, it should

¹¹⁴ Bergman Fleury. *Inclusive Québec Schools: Dialogue, Values and Common Reference Points*. Report submitted to Québec Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports Michelle Courchesne, Québec (2007).

¹¹⁵ Charles Taylor and Gerard Bouchard, p.59.

be denied. Both interpretations are deeply problematic: the first assumes too much about the requests of a religious party without caring to understand the context in which it is made, and the second flatly rejects what seems to be important to those requesting it and allows them to fully benefit from public programs.

In short then, these mechanisms are to allow for a smoother adjustment of needs of different groups. Each context will impose different burdens on others and thus it will be important for citizens to explain their needs. I am reluctant to make positive assertions, but I imagine that in most cases, the burdens of these requests will consist in the need to readjust attitudes and office and institutional organization. Any loss of external goods through time off can usually be substituted in one way or other. Moreover, the plural nature of society means that consent of individuals is needed. No resolution of accommodation would impose itself on a group as such, only on those who wish it to.

In addition to mechanisms to challenge current norms, we should not shy away from reserving seats for different groups on important bodies, whether legislatures, municipal councils, school boards, etc. As Tariq Modood has argued, this need not be tied to the view that groups are homogeneous.¹¹⁶ It is not necessary to state that those holding these reserved offices represent the interests of their groups instead of society in general. For Modood, it is that these groups equally face disadvantages, despite their heterogeneity, that warrants such special measures. The point that I want to emphasize is that the *likely* perspective of these different members will hopefully make exclusion and domination a less probable outcome in finding resolutions tolerable to all.

The third condition is continuity: we should not expect claims upon the adjustment of our interactions, public institutions, and laws to come to an end. This

¹¹⁶ Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (London: Polity Press, 2007), p. 84.

follows from three points. First, it is not certain that accommodation of social space has been sufficient. It is quite possible that a group's needs were not fully taken into account or even understood. Second, there is the possibility that changing circumstances could justify alternative and more favourable accommodations for a group. Third, it is not certain that members of society, either from a group of the good life or from a pool of individuals cutting across communities, will not at some point find the norms to which they are subject unacceptable. It follows from moving away from the model of a just society towards one of accommodation that there can be no final arrangements for society. What may be suggested, however, is that as further claims are made, citizens would come to know each other and be able to anticipate the needs of others based on the circumstances.

The point in short is to think of society neither as a collection of individuals who want the law to grant them the most legal options possible within their private life nor as possessing a correct model of public morality or justice, but to come to know and adjust ourselves according to the immediate and real ends dearly held by citizens. This forces us to think of society as cooperating not only in right or the attainment of external goods, but in the pursuit of internal goods as well.

Conclusion

I have argued above that thinking in terms of the habitus allows us to understand and make room for a greater number of ways of being in the world. Part of the reason to move towards this expanded realm is rooted in necessity. While I think that the pains of insanity and akrasia imposed upon groups seeking a good life when their pursuits are not

accommodated is deplorable, I have tried to show that the consequence of remaining fixed in our current way of thinking is more severe still. For without thinking about humans as possessors of a habitus, we become gripped by two worries, namely, that groups that interpret the law differently than the majority are attempting to subvert it, and that they risk introducing objectionable practices that degrade and oppress humans. The natural response to these anxieties has been to exclude certain groups seeking a good life from discussion and to impose structures of assimilative domination to render them benign. Not only does this type of assimilation often end up failing for at least some members of these groups—tending instead to simply marginalize them—but it is also not warranted since their requests are neither totalizing nor uncompromising. Indeed when one's particular needs to live a good life are taken into account, the impetus for compromise is not one of resentful frustration but of cooperation. More importantly, because humans are creatures of habitual engagement, one comes to see one's fellow citizens as invaluable to the goods one pursues and as worthy of consideration to such a degree that one cannot but think of them in one's actions in the public sphere. In the same way that we do not make room for another on a sidewalk begrudgingly, but from our very sensibilities that we should loathe to do otherwise, if we begin to think of others as having concrete ends instead of as anonymous figures who have narrowly interpreted rights, we naturally attempt to make matters easier for them.

I have presented three brief conditions in reconceiving our social order that I think follow from viewing ourselves as having the freedom to shape our subjectivity and in the process make greater room for groups seeking a good life. The first is viewing our community as a *modus vivendi* in which laws do not express an immutable morality

interpreted in limited ways, but are at the service of the specific needs of the current population. The second is the establishment of mechanisms to question the current legal and institutional norms and the reservation of seats for different minorities within various bodies that hold authority. The last is recognition of continuity, stemming from the fallibility of human understanding, from the introduction of new forms of subjectivity, new social circumstances, and new felt needs.

I want to conclude by addressing whether or not asking us to understand the workings of our society through a theory that humans are possessors of a habitus that shapes their vision of the good, their pleasures, and their visceral reactions is an imposition that some cannot accept? Is there here an analogy to the early Rawls whose Kantian conception of humans made his theory of justice unacceptable for those who did not share it? Though the habitus legitimates a *modus vivendi*, is it rooted in a questionable metaphysics? There is reason to believe so. There is little doubt, for example, that in the division between the good and the right, I am favouring the good to the point of making the right irrelevant to modern societies. However, there are two responses to this. The first is that the habitus does not suggest that some laws are not the right ones, issued in the dictates of universal reason, discourse ethics, or divine command. What it does suggest, however, is that these laws will tend towards the type of domination, insanity, and *akrasia* of many within plural societies. Nor does the habitus impose relativism about goods upon us: for it is possible that there are truer, purer, or better goods than what people who cultivate a certain habitus believe. Again, all that it suggests is that there are those who cannot see those goods as goods in the present, and so it is again only with a significant amount of domination that one could succeed in

changing perceptions. I leave it up to each to see which alternative they think more worthy. Indeed the first and third of the three conditions I have offered for a new socio-political arrangement are only viable if citizens themselves choose to reconceive their mode of belonging. Without this, the institutional changes of the second condition would likely result in more acrimony than cooperation and good will.

The second response is that this is a best account that I can give to make sense of the diversity around us and the political tensions that have resulted from it. Throughout the 1990s, Will Kymlicka continued to articulate that talk of Muslims being unable to abandon non-liberal ways was similar to the historical talk of Eastern Europeans not being able to integrate.¹¹⁷ He thought history proved the latter case wrong, and that it would soon prove the former as well. In 2005, he had to admit that he was too optimistic in his conclusions. If we have met an impasse in our multicultural policies, instead of retrenchment, which seems to be the route some are taking, perhaps we need a theory with greater explanatory force. I feel the habitus does just this and in the same spirit as MacIntyre, I invite us to think of critiques of the habitus in order to ameliorate our ways of thinking about our political predicaments, to predict likely outcomes, and to foresee more acceptable social arrangements.

¹¹⁷ Will Kymlicka, "The new Debate on Minority Rights (and Postscript)."

Conclusion

I want to review the main arguments of my thesis. I have attempted to introduce the notion of a group seeking a good life to define certain collectivities within society. It is a substitute mainly for the term religious group because the analytical use of religion is limited and because we can extend some of our conclusions about these groups to non-religious groups. The concept of the habitus, which suggests that the human body is shaped by habitual capacities and sensibilities, has served as the main explanatory force for explaining what a group seeking a good life is. First, thinking about humans as possessors of a habitus suggests that one fashions oneself, meaning that through one's characteristic engagements with the world, one comes to see some things as goods. Part of the reason one sees these as goods is that they are the source of a pleasure derived from the exercise of one's bodily capacities within particular practices. This then makes possible the definition of a group that seeks a good life as a group that is dedicated to a hierarchy of goods internal to one's practices.

Second, the habitus suggests that groups seeking a good life need not have to articulate a justification or even a certain interpretation of the ends that they pursue. They pursue them out of a certain sensibility and from habit. Indeed, it is even possible that they articulate great disagreement about the justification for their practices or about the way they should act or respond to a particular situation, and yet exhibit an astonishing congruence in practice, simply knowing what to do, when, and how. This means that heterogeneity in some areas of life need not lead us to dismiss that groups genuinely do have common ends, which makes the coordination of these ends on a means-ends basis possible. The fact that groups seeking the good life have common practical ends also

makes possible the establishment of means for their achievement. Expertise becomes a necessity and with it authority is both legitimized and accountability becomes possible.

Since, the pursuit of a good life is dependent on possessing the right sensibilities, one cannot say that any social conditions are benign. Being distracted by appetites and being absorbed within certain practices that develop different dispositions than those needed for pursuing prescribed ends can lead one to a state of *akrasia*, in which one is unable to do what one knows one should. One may also find that when one cannot relate to the world in the ways that one's *habitus* requires, one is in a state of insanity, a state of profound disorientation, which demands either a form of readjustment or a withdrawal from such a surrounding. It is this that makes accommodation of practices so important.

The importance of these practices has unfortunately not been sufficiently identified by the masses and political theorists alike. This has led some to identify the practices of these groups as barbarous or oppressive to their practitioners. Alternatively, it has led some to worry that the need for accommodation necessarily demands the subversion of current legal and cultural norms to the detriment of the majority. If there is a crisis of multiculturalism, these are the two anxieties that fuel it. When seen through the lens of the *habitus*, both charges are unfounded. What appears oppressive to the majority group is simply part what allows for the good for others. The *habitus* asks us to reconsider the multitude of ways in which one may live a good human life. It also asks us not to judge the societies and structures of authority that differ from our own too hastily: they might be necessary and legitimated by common internal goods. Likewise, the *habitus* invites us to realize that as creatures whose sensibilities are shaped by engagement with the world, we will most likely be shaped by our actions with others,

gaining an appreciation of their role in our own pursuits of the good, having an immediate and unreflective awareness of their goods when pursuing our own, coming to see cooperation with them as a good itself, and coming to see ourselves as part of a political community.

In short, I have tried to present the habitus as a very important facet of human subjectivity which allows us to better conceive of the needs and claims of groups that I have designated as seeking a good life, and to accommodate all within society. I have argued that such a more inclusive society would include three characteristics. The first is a vision of society as a *modus vivendi* composed of minorities with overlapping interests, the principal of which is cooperation in attainment of their ends. The second is the proliferation of mechanisms to voice concerns about forms of government throughout public life and an apportionment of different constituencies as a means to hear the voices. The last is the awareness that no settlement is definitive. If these suggestions appear whimsical in light of our current political climate, I hope that thinking of groups seeking the good life in terms of the habitus will still lessen tensions between different constituencies and, at minimum, bring in its place a spirit of cooperation.

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