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Communitarianism, Charles Taylor, and the Postcommunist Transition

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Summary

The legitimity of the one-party regimes in Soviet type societies was based on the guarantee of providing social security to all members of the society. As the result of the collapse of these regimes, the population of postcommunist countries was seized by the fear of pauperization, ruthless capitalist exploitation, anomie, moral degradation, crime rise, etc. It has tried to find rescue from this fear in the warm bosom of ethnic groups.

The devastating consequences of postcommunist ethnic nationalisms suggest that the citizens of postcommunist countries need other cultural, normative and institutional orientations as the bases of their self-respect and self-confidence. This need can be satisfied in various types of communities.

The article summarizes the communitarian arguments in tavor of this thesis. Since, according to these arguments, belonging to a community is a *sine qua non* of the very morality and dignity of man, modern liberal-democratic societies have to be understood as communities of communities. In order to guarantee the cohesion of these societies, procedural rules have to be supplemented by a number of substantive core values.

The understanding of modern political societies has a far-reaching impact upon the idea of civil society: its increased complexity and fragmentation, mediated interactions between citizens and the state, public sphere as the medium of discussions among communities — especially about their universalist claims and the "politics of difference", etc.

Proceeding from this argumentation, some elements of the optium type of civil society for the postcommunist countries in Europe are proposed: A broad spectrum of communities and associations, deliberations upon the criteria of priority concerning their promotion, high respect for the liberal and democratic constitution, equality of all citizens, rule of law, welfare etc. These elements promise to promote a society in which free citizens constitute a "we" including all of them, enabling them to peacefully live and act within their respective associations and communities.

1) One of the bedrocks of legitimacy of the one party regimes in Soviet type societies was the *guarantee of social security* to all members of the society. The historical project of building the socialist society and the centrally planned economy required that every member of the society be professionally educated and given an adequate job. Because everybody was included in the economic plan, job security was extremely high. By the same token, the whole population had health and pension insurance. Of course, due to the lack of market pressure, a large fraction of the labor

force was underworked, and salaries were correspondingly low. But this hardly reduced the social security. Moreover, many were able to find second jobs in the grey economy and thus improve their standard of living. After all, there is the well-known "socialist" slogan "Nobody can pay me as little as I can work".

In *Yugoslavia* the situation was slightly different. In the 1950s central planning was replaced by self-management and some market mechanisms, were introduced leading to considerable unemployment. However, self-management enabled the employed to avoid layoffs. The victims of unemployment were primarily young and professionally educated people, who for years remained dependent on their families. But despite this anomalous situation, social security in Yugoslavia was not substantially lower than that in other communist countries: the oldies had their jobs, the youngsters their parents.

2) The *1980s* can be considered as *the decade of the collapse of communism.* During this decade people in Soviet type societies (including Yugoslavia) were confronted with the threats of anarchy and ruthless capitalist competition and exploitation. Gone was the job security, and in many cases also the job and regular monthly income. Gone was the social infrastructure guaranteeing regular education, health care and old-age pensions. Also gone was the Marxist-Leninist promise that the whole society was on its way towards a "bright future". And finally, gone was the ruling party, the political organisation in charge of the whole society, ruling paternalistically, displaying daily the same well-known faces of party-leaders, repeating ad nauseam the same ideological phrases, thereby suggesting stability and historical continuity.

As a result of this collapse, numerous *plagues* afflicted the population: the fear of pauperisation and pauperisation itself, uncertainty about the future, fear of ruthless capitalist exploitation, anomie, moral degradation, crime rise, and many others.

3) In what direction could the plagued population look for a rescue? Of course, many people yearned for a western-style standard of living. But, essentially, only a tiny minority understood how western economies and societies work. The ruling communists, by pursuing their aim of a comprehensive cultural revolution and the creation of a "new man", had destroyed most of the older cultural traditions. Thus, people had to culturally cope with overwhelming fears while having at their disposal only several tiny, deformed and incongruous fragments of pre-communist traditions. In many cases they found only one use of these rather poor assets: the ideology of *ethnic nationalism.*

The advantages of ethnic nationalism as an antidote against postcommunist fears and anomie are quite obvious, whereas its drawbacks often become visible only when it is too late:

a. Ethnic nationalism holds out the *prospect of solidarity and security* within the ethnic group.

b. The *"ethnic identity" can be voluntarily construed* from any traditional or contemporary cultural fragments and artefacts, environmental embeddedness and biological determinants of the group, etc.

c. Moreover, if an "ethnic identity" is based on biological factors, the *membership in the ethnic group appears to be unchangeable*.

d. *The group can declare itself to be a "nation" and claim a separate nation-state* — a claim legitimised by the internationally recognised "right to self-determination". Living in such a state seems to promise additional security: its presumably unlimited "sovereignty" seems to guarantee protection against intervention, exploitation etc. by other states and ethnic groups.

e. However, *ethnic nationalism does not offer the population any moral frame*. It does not unite the community by offering it a social good, a set of moral values and norms, etc., but declares the ethnic collective and its nation-state itself to be the ultimate value — however badly defined that five and however repulsive its state might be.[1]

In particular, ethnic nationalism postulates the pre-eminence of "patriotism", i.e. it locates every morally relevant phenomenon along a patriotic/nonpatriotic moral axis. The most important elements of such patriotism are the willingness to waive one's individual rights in favor of the ethnic-national collective, to accept the autocratic, frequently fascist and even mafia-like rule of nationalist elites, and to recognize the preponderance of statehood[2].

f. Consequently, ethnic nationalism provides no moral norms ensuring domestic and external peace, but *stimulates ethnic conflicts. civil and interstate wars*. The most notorious example of such war, the Third Balkan war (between 1991 and 1995), has been misused for isolating the new states from Europe and for bending the scared and impoverished population to the will of the new strongmen in order to pillage it.

[1]Ethnic nationalisms are often given metaphysical foundations, in most cases incompatible with their characters. Such foundations contradict their biologistic dimensions which are universalistic, whereas ethnic nationalisms are particularistic and provincial. Metaphysical assumptions presuppose elaborated theological theories, whereas ethnic nationalisms are theoretically helpless. In other words, the metaphysical foundations serve only as decorations of the incoherent folkloristic pictures of most ethnic identities.

[2]In the political jargon of post-Yugoslav ethnic nationalisms: "državotvornost".

4) The incoherence and retrograde character of ethnic/national identities and the barbarism of the postcommunist ethnic wars suggest that *the citizens of postcommunist countries need other cultural ideological and institutional foundations for their ideological and normative orientations as bases for their self-respect and self-confidence.*

Obviously, one of these foundations is a modern, liberal-democratic constitution, guaranteeing human rights and liberties, and democratic political participation to every citizen. However, to the constituencies which are the victims of postcommunist anomie and which lack civic political culture, such a constitution alone does not offer the badly needed ideological orientation and the embeddedness in a solidary community as the functional replacement for the ideological and social security they enjoyed in communism.

Therefore, *the central thesis of this paper is that the best way to reduce the virulence of postcommunist ethnic nationalisms* by reducing the anomie, fear and apathy of the citizens *is to promote various types of communities.* The generally accepted name of this normative orientation in political philosophy is communitarianism.

5) The basic thrust of communitarian critique is to show that liberalism and libertarianism, in connection with modern mobility and global economic competition, are conducive to *atomism*[3]. Atomism thinks of humans as individuals able to think, act, and even exist independently of social ties and dependencies, i.e. as "unencumbered selves", and uses this conception as a theoretical premise of political philosophy. Correspondingly, political theories constructed on this premise grant priority to individuals, considering them as able to define their needs and choose their goals and life plans independently of the social context into which they grew and in which they live. They understand the constitution of the society as the result of a "social contract" among its potential individual members. These join the contract because they expect some individual advantages from it, i.e. advantages having the character of individually ascribable goods.

The paradigm of atomistic thinking is the idea of human rights. These rights are traditionally understood as "natural", because they are supposed to pertain to each individual, whether they are members of a society, or still in a pre-social "natural state". According to Charles Taylor, the pri-

[3]Cf. Charles Taylor, Atomism, in: A. Kontos (ed.), *Powers., Possessions and Freedom. Essays in Honour of C. B. Macpherson*, Univ. of Toronto Press, Toronto 1979; also in: C. T., *Philosophy and the Human Sciences. Philosophical Papers* 2, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 1985, pp. 187—210; C. T., Irreducibly Social Goods, in: Geoffrey Brennan, Cliff Walsh (eds.), *Rationality, Individualism and Public Policy*, Australian National University, Canberra 1990; also in: C. T., *Philosophical Arguments*, Harvard UP, Cambridge Mass. 1995, pp. 127—145.

ority of human rights is justifiable only if individuals are understood as self-sufficient, i.e. as potentially "unencumbered selves".

6) In contrast to the numerous atomistic thinkers, communitarian philosophers stress the insurmountable, existential embeddedness of every individual in society, i.e. in various social groups — families, tribes, neighborhoods, villages, cities, religious communities or communes, civic associations, revolutionary cells, scientific communities, states, etc. Therefore the idea of an "unencumbered self" makes no sense. The *most important ideas of communitarianism* are the following:

a. According to the Bible, on the sixth day of Creation *God created humans,* males and females, "in the image of *God"*[4]*,* i.e. *as equals and as holy.* And he created the woman because he saw that "It is not good for man to be alone"[5]. And the man recognized the woman as "bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh"[6]. In other words, *humans need each other,* they prosper best in close relationships and stable solidary associations. Only in such associations — based upon *a covenant,* a moral bond of love and identity, and not on *contract* — can they develop their capabilities and conduct a satisfactory life[7].

b. Atomistic thinkers believe that all goods can be reduced to goods for single individuals. In contrast, communitarian thinkers distinguish three categories of goods: (1) Goods supplied to single individuals, such as clothing and health care. (2) Goods supplied to collectives, but which could mutatis *mutandis* also be supplied to individuals. Such a collective good is, for instance, a dam protecting a settlement from floods: Every inhabitant of the settlement could get such a protection by building a dam around his house only, were there not the obvious disadvantages of such an individualistic approach. (3) *Irreducibly social goods,* i.e. goods that cannot be related only to single individuals.

Conspicuous irreducibly social goods are human thinking and speech. They depend on a socially recognized context of meanings, grammatical rules, conditions of validity of statements etc. The broader context of any meaningful speech is the whole culture of the group to which the speaker belongs. In Taylor's words, thoughts and utterances are not "plain events", i.e. events which do not presuppose a background of meaning. They are "meaning events", because they owe their meaning to the semiotic back-

[4]Gen. 1, 26—27.

[5]Gen. 2, 12.

[6]Gen. 2, 23.

[7]Cf. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Rebuilding Civil Society: A Biblical Perspective, *The Responsive Community*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Winter 1996/97, pp. 11—20.

ground pertaining to a linguistic community. In fact, the relation between the background and speech acts is two-way: Not only do speech acts obtain their meaning from the background, they also permanently recreate and modify the background. *A* good of this kind obviously cannot be subdivided into parts pertaining to single individuals[8].

Numerous other goods are two-dimensional in the sense that one of their dimensions is irreducibly social, i.e. dependent on the cultural context. For instance, social statuses, roles, laws etc. are valid/meaningful due to the social context of practices and institutions shaping the life of the respective society, which may be a republic, another irreducibly social good[9]. Thus, the irreducibly social dimension of a good can be recognized by two of its properties: first, its status of good depends on the cultural context, and second, this dependence is generally recognized. Obviously, the cultural context bestowing meaning upon irreducibly social goods is itself such a good[10].

c. *Communities, irreducibly social goods and their semiotic/cultural contexts are immutably and intrinsically interdependent.* Someone who, by free choice or as a result of spontaneous enculturation, shares into a set of meanings, valuations, cultural practices, and other irreducibly social goods, belongs to the community based on and upholding these meanings, evaluations, practices, and goods. The culture of the community bestows meanings upon his convictions, practices, and actions. Reversely, by recognizing these meanings, keeping his convictions and continuing his. practices, he stabilizes and perpetuates his community.

For example, someone who has been baptised in a Catholic church, believes in the Holy Trinity, regularly attends the masses, lives in accordance with the Catholic religious tenets, respects the Pope, etc., belongs to the community of Catholics. If they give up on all this, declare themselves atheists, and break away from the Church, they cease to belong to that community.

[8]Cf. Charles Taylor, Irreducibly Social Goods, in: Geoffrey Brennan, Cliff Walsh (eds.), *Rationality, Individualism and Public Policy*, Australian National University, Canberra 1990; also in: C. T., *Philosophical Arguments*, Harvard UP, Cambridge Mass. 1995, pp. 127—145; C. T., Social Theory as Practice, in: C. T., *Social Theory as Practice*, The B. N. Ganguli Memorial Lectures 1981, Oxford UP, Delhi 1983; also in: C. T., *Philosophy and the Human Sciences. Philosophical Papers 2*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 1985, pp. 91—115; Charles Taylor, Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate, in: Nancy L. Rosenblum (ed.), *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, Harvard UP, Cambridge 1989, pp. 159—182; also in: C. T., *Philosophical Arguments*, Harvard UP, Cambridge Mass. 1995, pp. 181—203.

[9]C. Taylor, Social Theory as Practice, p. 96; idem, Irreducibly Social Goods, p. 135; idem, Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate.

[10]Cf. C. Taylor, Irreducibly Social Goods, passim.

However, such withdrawal may, for all practical purposes, be impossible in the case of a tribe — a community based on kinship, specific beliefs and rituals permeating all spheres of life, a particular language etc. On the one hand, bonds of kinship are inalterable. On the other hand, adults enculturated into their tribe may be unable to learn a foreign language and to reconstruct their beliefs, system of values, habits etc. And the members of other, similarly constituted communities might find it virtually impossible to accept the apostate. Thus, leaving the tribe may be synonymous with cultural suicide.

d. *Community cultures are bases of evaluations.* Each culture contains a number of contrasting concepts (e. g., subjective/objective, rational/irrational, democratic/totalitarian, tolerant/dogmatic etc.) defining the descriptive and evaluative axes along which single objects, events, processes etc. can be positioned and thus integrated into the respective culture. 1.e., these axes define the cognitive and the moral map of the culture[11].

The moral map of a community enables its members to define their moral — axiological, normative — positions within the community, proceeding from their individual needs and desires. Charles Taylor distinguishes first- and second-order desires. The former are objects of the latter. Both categories of desires are under the scrutiny of two categories of evaluations. The weighing of first-order desires Taylor calls "weak evaluation". The objective of weak evaluations is to optimize the results of actions in order to maximize total satisfaction.

By referring to first-order desires, second-order desires can categorize them according to morally relevant motives, e. g. according to moral dichotomies like higher/lower, virtuous/vicious, profound/superficial, noble/base, etc., and as belonging to qualitatively different modes of life described by dichotomies like fragmented/integrated, alienated/free, saintly/merely human ate. Taylor calls the corresponding moral evaluations "strong evaluations". Due to the strong evaluations, first-order desires can be rejected if they are considered immoral[12].

e. Strong evaluations do not refer only to their explicit objects. They are simultaneously moral self-definitions of the evaluating person. By characterizing the first-order need of a person to, for instance, help people in trouble as noble, and by strongly evaluating nobility as preferable to baseness, a person not only expresses her moral view of the helpful person,

[11]Cf. e. g. Hartmut Rosa, Cultural Relativism and Social Criticism from a Taylorian Perspective, *Constellations*, Vol. 3, No. 1, April 1, 1996, pp. 39—60, passim.

[12]Cf. Charles Taylor, What is Human Agency, in: T. Mischel (ed.), *The Self. Psychological and Philosophical Issues*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1977; also in: C. Taylor, *Human Agency and Language, Philosophical Papers 1*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 1985, pp. 16—44.

but she also defines her own moral position. She makes it clear that, in her eyes, she herself should be a helpful and noble person, and if she acts otherwise, she may legitimately be criticized because of inconsistency. Consequently, a person abstaining from strong evaluations cannot be considered a person with a clearly defined and stable character and morality.

Due to the strong evaluations, l. e. the possibility to evaluate evaluations, persons are considered to be responsible not only for their actions, but also for their evaluations of actions and, in the last analysis, for their personal character and morality.

The constitution of one's own moral map as a system of strong evaluations is synonymous with defining one's own identity. Taylor insists that personal identity cannot be understood as a set of given, more or less alterable properties such as origin, native language, capabilities etc. These become relevant elements of a person's identity only after they have been included into the individual's system of strong evaluations. Such self-definition is possible due to the modern concept of positive liberty, i.e. the ability to control one's own life, including not only the ability for political participation, but also the ability for self-realization[13].

The moral ideal of sincerity towards oneself and the corresponding self fulfilment Taylor calls authenticity. Obviously, the construction of one's moral map based on sincere strong evaluations and the consequent striving for self-fulfilment on the base of this identity construction, have to be considered as authentic.

However, in the modern western world the ideals of sincerity and self-fulfilment are often given an egoistic and relativistic interpretation. By invoking moral relativism, people grant priority to their first order desires and brush aside the rather difficult task of building a strong moral identity based on coherent strong evaluations. A case in point is accepting the actions and the way of life of a person as morally legitimate simply because they are sincerely desired, i.e. result from that person's striving for self-fulfilment. By such stunted morality many people not only sever their social ties, but also lose orientation, become conformist and susceptible to manipulation by mass media, exotic sects, etc.

This misinterpretation of identity and authenticity can be avoided by rejecting moral relativism and recognizing the relevance of meaningful moral argumentation. This reestablishes the priority of a coherent moral map of strong evaluations, embedded in the semiotic structures of one's community. Self-fulfilment understood as authentic manifestation of one's identity is then nothing but acting and living in accordance with this

[13]Op. cit; C. Taylor, What's wrong with Negative Liberty, in: A. Ryan (ed.), *The Idea of Freedom. Essays in Honour of Sir Isaiah Berlin*, Oxford UP, Oxford 1979, pp. 175—193; also in: C. T., *Philosophy and the Human Sciences. Philosophical Papers 2*, op. cit., pp. 211—229.

moral map[14]. "Only if I exist in a world in which history, or the demands of nature, or the needs of my fellow human beings, or the duties of citizenship, or the call of God, or something else of this order *matters* crucially, can I define an identity for myself that is not trivial. Authenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands"[15].

f. Thus, identity and authenticity of a person depend on her/his creativity and expressivity, but also on her/his comprehensive moral map of strong evaluations. Young people can develop such moral maps only by enculturation into their communities. Adults are supposed to be capable of autonomous and competent moral judgement and, consequently, of modifications of their moral maps. However, these modifications can be only gradual, because otherwise both the identity and the communal affiliation of the person would be jeopardized.

On the individual level, the gradualness of modifications is ensured by the requirements of coherence and continuity of the personal identity. Communal affiliation adds the requirement that the modifications be morally, acceptable to the community.

If further facts are taken into account — that the best way of defining and developing an authentic personal identity is by interacting with other members of one's community, that membership in a community extends the personal moral map to a number of irreducibly social goods, etc., it becomes obvious that the *authentic identity of a person is inseparable from her communal affiliation.* Because of this, the largest part of the identity of a person is hardly ever at disposal[16]. "If authenticity is being true to ourselves, ..., then perhaps we can only achieve it integrally if we recognize that this sentiment connects us to a wider whole".[17]

g. The above arguments clearly demonstrate that it is a vested interest of most individuals and of all societies to foster the communal bonds

[14]Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Harvard UP, Cambridge Mass. 1991, passim; Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, Anansi Press, Concord, Ontario 1991.

[15]Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, op. cit., pp. 40—41.

[16]It follows that personal identities cannot be construed as a system of voluntary radical choices (Sartre), because such choices would threaten the coherence, long term stability, and continuity of the personal moral map. Therefore Taylor considers the (Sartrean) agents of radical choices as persons without identity. What is at disposition cannot be part of one's identity. The final result of the process of objectification of all personal needs, desires, weak and strong evaluations is a situation in which everything can be chosen, but there are no value criteria for those choices. The radically "unencumbered self" floats in the total axiological vacuum, i.e. is no self at all.

[17]Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, op. cit., p. 91.

among their members. All communities compatible with the constitution of the society can, and probably should be supported. After all, *belonging to a community is a sine Qua non* not only of a relevant identity and authenticity, but *of the very morality and dignity of man:* "(W)hat man derives from society is not some aid in realizing his good, but the very possibility of being an agent seeking that good. ... (S)ocial views see some form of society as essentially bound up with human dignity, since outside of society the very potentiality to realize that wherein this dignity consists is undermined; whereas atomist views see human dignity as quite independent of society..."[18].

h. As a rule, modern societies are composed of several culturally different communities. There are two main reasons for this: First, the world consists of thousands of communities upholding different cultural traditions. Migrations and changes of political borders have resulted in cultural heterogeneity of most existing states. Second, liberalism, in particular its far-reaching individual and group rights, is highly conducive to the development of new communities, based on new ideologies, religions, world-views and other comprehensive doctrines. Therefore *modern liberal-democratic societies have to be considered communities of communities.*

This cultural plurality (multiculturality) renders the task of keeping the society together more difficult: "(T)he stronger the communities, the less they are inclined to see themselves as, and to act as, members of a more encompassing whole"[19]. Amitai Etzioni therefore argues that procedural rules are not a sufficiently solid framework of society. That framework has to include some substantive core values — but not a rigid comprehensive doctrinal canon — to enable the social order to sustain itself. He proposes the following elements of that framework[20]:

(i) *A more-than-procedural commitment to democracy* is necessary because if democracy is viewed as merely an instrument, it may be abandoned when a big social group finds its instrumental value waning.

(ii) *Commitment to the constitution and human rights* is necessary because they draw the borders and fix mutual relationships between the spheres of responsibility of single communities and the overarching society/state. From the perspective of human rights, this border is, *grosso modo* congruent with the border between matters subject to majority rule and those protected by the unalienable individual and group rights.

[18]Charles Taylor, The Nature and Scope of Distributive Justice in: C. Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences. Philosophical Papers 2*, op. cit., pp. 289—317, p. 292.

[19]Amitai Etzioni, "The Community of Communities, *The Responsive Community*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Winter 1996/97, pp. 21—32, p. 21.

[20]Op. cit., p. 25—32.

(iii) Because the overarching society/state also claims substantial loyalty, *layered or split loyalties of the citizens* are necessary. Each citizen has to be loyal both to her/his particular communities, and to the liberal-democratic constitution keeping the society together.

(iv) The *respect for difference* is necessary as the principal condition of peaceful coexistence of different communities. In a way, this respect is implied in the loyalty of all citizens to the common liberal-democratic constitution. However, tolerance does not exclude moral refusal of the views and values tolerated. On the contrary, "(r)espect means that while these are not values I hold, I have no normative objections to others holding them"[21]. "Civility" is another word for the readiness to accept diversity, respect autonomy, and peacefully resolve conflicts.

(v) *Limiting[] identity politics* is necessary because, first, the escalating claims of different communities to state subsidies and support intensifies the competition among them, and second, these subsidies may increase the cultural differences and incompatibilities.

(vi) *Society-wide dialogues* are the right antidote against competition and growing incompatibilities.

(vii) Finally, *a means for the reconciliation of individuals who have harmed the community* has to be conceived and institutionalized, i.e. some sort of jurisdiction taking into account both the common constitution and laws, and the particularities of single communities.

(viii) The last (vii) core value points beyond Etzioni's list to *social 'L slice as a foundation of community*. Philip Selznick[22] accentuates four basic principles of social justice and morality of community: equality, mutuality, stewardship, and inclusion. Equality guarantees the dignity of al) individuals as moral persons, thus synthetizing Biblical and Enlightenment thought. It requires that everyone's needs for life, health, liberty, and hope are respected and addressed. Mutuality refers to the communal bonds of interdependence, reciprocity, sharing, trust, good faith, reliance, and commonality. It does not exclude self-interest, but creates the moral infrastructure of cooperation. "Stewardship is the exercise of comprehensive and dedicated responsibility for a valued practice, institution, resource, relationship, or group", thus binding social power to moral ideals beyond equality and mutuality[23]. Finally, the principle of inclusion requires balancing the

[21]Op. cit, p. 31. Unfortunately, this definition of "respect" does not solve the problem of value pluralism. It either implies moral relativism, or a systematic abstention from normative discussions with adherents of different values, moral maps, comprehensive doctrines etc. Such an abstention is difficult to justify, especially in view of the requirement (no. vi) of society-wide dialogues.

[22]Philip Selznick, Social Justice: A Communitarian Perspective, *The Responsive Community*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Fall 1996, pp. 13—25.

[23]Op. cit., p. 22

universalistic norms of human rights, tolerance, equality, and legality, and of particularistic attachments to family, locality, religion, language, and tradition. After all, particular attachments often help preserve the more universalistic political societies as communities of communities.

Charles Taylor comments on the problem of justice in a community of communities with the following words: "It may be argued that in certain cases the community within which we sustain our sense of liberty, personality, individuality is smaller than our political society. ... It might be argued that more intense or culturally vital relations of a local community give rise to more far-reaching obligations of distributive justice. For instance, the level of equality one can demand might be more far-reaching within a local community than between such communities.

What all this means is that we have to abandon the search for a single set of principles of distributive justice. ... So that we may have to think both of justice between individuals, as well as between communities, and also perhaps within communities"[24].

7) *The idea of modern political societies, understood as communities of communities, has far-reaching implications concernina the idea of civil society:*

a. By interpolation of the level of communities and associations between the state/society and individual citizens (and micro-communities such as families), *unmediated interactions between citizens and state become more difficult and less frequent*. The communities absorb a considerable part of the political energy of the citizens, which would otherwise be spent on the state level. On the other hand, they also absorb part of the pressure that the state would otherwise exert upon its atomized citizens. The result of this absorption is the reduced immediate impact of citizen activities upon the common state/society, and the relative protection of the citizens within their communities against coercive interventions of the state.

A fragmented and thus weakened civil society increases the proneness of the state to develop in the direction of a paternalistic, soft despotism, and the tendency of the citizens to become politically passive private consumers, finding the sense of their lives in families, local communities, religious groups etc.

However, there are also opposing tendencies and mechanisms: strong associations and a richly textured civil society may check governmental power, and citizens active in their associations and communities may use the acquired political skills in the institutions of state/society.

[24]Charles Taylor, The Nature and Scope of Distributive Justice, in: C. Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences. Philosophical Papers 2*, op. cit., pp. 289—317, p. 312.

b. Associations and communities can gradually integrate into the institutional structures of the state/society, thus constituting a *corporatist state*. Such a state favors the developments described in a. above.

c. Charles Taylor distinguishes *three types of civil society* depending on their ability to influence the government: (l) Civil society as a set of free associations and communities independent of state power, but unable to influence it. (ii) Civil society enabled by the interactions of the associations and communities to structure itself and coordinate its activities. (iii) Civil society able to significantly influence the government policies by its coordinated activities[25]. Only the last type of civil society, the one able to influence the government policies, can secure the conditions of its own existence: legality, the satisfaction of basic needs etc.

d. One of the necessary conditions of an effective civil society is an *independent public sphere*. In the public sphere the citizens articulate their political opinions and expectations, presuming that these expectations will be served by the democratically elected political authorities. Therefore, a public sphere free of all idelogical prejudications is of utmost importance as a school of public deliberation, discussion, and formulation of a broadly accepted consensus.

Obviously, in a culturally plural society the public sphere must be open to the cultural particularities of the various communities, and not limited only to the topics of "general" or "common" interest, i.e. those belonging to the sphere of Rawls's "overlapping consensus". It has to be the locus of public deliberations among the different cultural communities and of their mutual quest for respect and recognition[26].

Due to its freedom, the public sphere transcends the limits of local communities, associations, religious groups, and even the state borders, and thus contributes decisively to the constitution of an encompassing solidarity of the whole humanity. Its ultimate goal is to tame political power by reasoning on all levels of the community of communities[27].

Notwithstanding its universalistic potentiality, the public sphere should not be centralized, i.e. reduced to a small number of mass media impervious to local inputs. Also necessary are smaller, local public spheres

[25]Charles Taylor, Invoking Civil Society, in: C. Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, Harvard UP, Cambridge Mass. 1995, pp. 204—224, p. 208.

[26]Cf. Yael Tamir, The Land of the Fearful and the Free, *Constellations*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Jan. 1997, pp. 296—314, pp. 305—312.

[27]Charles Taylor, op. cit., p. 216—220; idem, Liberal Politics and the Public Sphere, in: idem, *Philosophical Arguments*, op. cit., pp. 257—287, passim.

nested within the larger ones, opening the doors of the latter for local concerns[28].

e. The common public sphere is the institution within which the society as a whole can formulate some common objectives and mobilize the necessary political forces to realize them, possibly against the resistance or inertia of the Leviathan state. Such *periodical common political mobilization* is necessary to prevent the fragmentation of society, i.e. its loss of character of a community of communities.

f. The type of associations of civil society most suitable for mass political mobilization are not the bureaucratized political parties, but *"single objective organizations" or "advocacy movements"*[29].

g. On the other hand, beyond the political sphere, *comprehensive ethical, religious, philosophical and other doctrines offer the best orientation to the citizens in their daily practice*. As a rule, *these doctrines claim universal validity of their central tenets*. In other words, their adherents strive for broad recognition and positive evaluation of these tenets not as cultural particularities, but as doctrinal elements legitimately claiming universal validity.

h. The claim of universality points to *the risks of the politics known as "politics of difference" or "politics of recognition"*, addressing the various cultural communities[30]. The objective of this politics is *prima facie* a universalist one: Every community whose doctrine does not contradict the constitutional essentials should be adequately respected and recognized, i.e. its cultural and doctrinal particularities should be accepted and positively valued.

However, the politics of recognition runs the risk of failure because of some intrinsic contradictions. First, by granting recognition to in some cases incompatible doctrines, values etc., it undermines the universalist impetus of the constitution and tendentiously narrows the "overlapping consensus" (Rawls). Second, it may thus stir conflicts between communities. Third, by insisting vn the particularity of these doctrines, it hardly satisfies their adherents, convinced of their universal validity. And fourth, the answer to the legitimate question of who grants recognition to whom may be that it is western liberals recognizing non-European cultures, suggesting the ethnocentrism of the whole idea.

[28]Op. cit., pp. 279—280.

[29]Ibidem, p. 286.

[30]Cf. Charles Taylor, The Politics of Recognition, in: Amy Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"*, Princeton UP, Princeton 1992; and in: C. Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* op. cit., pp. 225—256; Linda Nicholson, To be or not to be: Charles Taylor and the Politics of Recognition, *Constellations*, Vol. 3, No. 1, April 1996, pp. 1—16.

i. *These risks can porobably be reduced by accepting the following principles*: (1) All cultures are recognized as being potentially equally valuable, as containing potentially attractive conceptions of the good, to be discovered by learning more about these cultures. (2) It is accepted that some cultures contain universalist ideas and legitimately claim universality. (3) Intercultural dialogue is highly valued. (4) The priority of discussing the ideas claiming universality is accepted[31]. (5) The necessity of maximal flexibilization of all comprehensive doctrines and universalist ideas in order to facilitate dialogue and compromise is recognized. In other words, the universalist doctrines should have blurred edges.

These principles offer the basis for a permanent public deliberation about the universalist claims of the involved doctrines, their areas of overlapping, areas of doctrinal conflict, ways toward compromise and consensus, methods of avoiding political conflicts and disintegration of society etc. Such openness to compromise does not threaten the liberal-democratic constitutions. It was modern liberalism that put the topic of multiculturality on its agenda, and the ongoing discussion of this topic confirms its undiminished vitality. But it has to accept the possibility of far-reaching changes[32].

Obviously, the growing mutual familiarity of different cultures necessarily results in modifications of their value systems and, consequently, of the character and extension of their mutual recognition and respect. In order to respect someone, he has to be known not from theoretical distance, but through communication. And communication implies some common ground, which may be the result of former communication. This is the *circulus virtuosos* which has to be put in motion to counteract the centrifugal forces in any plural society.

j. *Stable and solidary communities and associations promote the selfreliance and responsibility of the citizens*. They learn to be active out of their inner motivations and to rely on their fellow-citizens. In contrast, atomized individuals often feel helpless and need a strong state to lean on.

[31]This contradicts the conviction that the best way of approaching an unknown, alien culture is to look first at the differences from one's own culture. It is proposed, on the contrary, that the interest in, openness toward and dialogue with the alien culture should be based primarily on the universalist claims on both sides. Such unversalistically oriented dialogue is most likely to extend the area of overlapping of the two cultures.

[32]Cf. Linda Nicholson, op. cit.. In Nicholson's own words: "These more challenging voices are not those saying "recognize my worth" but rather those saying, "let my presence make you aware of the limitations of what you have so far judged to be true and of worth" (p. 10).

8) Based on the idea of civil society as depicted above, the question about *the optimum type of civil society for the postcommunist countries in Europe* should be tackled. In Central Europe, the idea of civil society was used to delegitimize Soviet communism and imperialism in favor of local interests more than one decade before its collapse[33]. After all, the intention of social theory is not to describe the structure and the self-understanding of existing societies, but to change them[34]. The following theses seem to be of central importance for this topic:

a. Due to the lack of civic traditions and the decades of totalitarian rule, *the members of postcommunist societies lack the civic political culture* necessary for the establishment of an autonomous, vigorous and effective civil society. If the elected political leaders possess such culture, they usually play the role of paragons in the process of the development of civic culture of the population. If they don't, the tendencies towards autocratic rule are to be expected, retarding the development of civil society[35]. Another factor may also impede the development of the civic political culture and the civil society: the unavoidable and far-reaching interventions of the state in society and economy during the process of postcommunist transition.

b. In order to avoid the trap of ethnic nationalism, *all political forces* political parties, movements, NGOs, citizen associations, local councils, and the state — *should engage in the promotion of a broad spectrum of communities and associations of citizens*, primarily the following ones:

(i) Communities formed around some irreducibly social goods, for instance particular traditions, religious doctrines, but also ideological, ethical and even philosophical ones, can play a crucial role in the formation and stabilization of new, postcommunist identities of citizens, and thus decisively reduce the dangers resulting from the postcommunist anomie.

(ii) Political parties, professional associations, trade-unions, NGOs, neighborhoods, councils of city quarters and cities, regional councils etc., can motivate citizens to become self-confident and active participants in social and political life. They can, first, help citizens to overcome their deeply inculcated fear of state power and coercion. Second, they can check the autocratic tendencies of the state, either as independent organizations, or as organizations included in the corporatist structure of the state. Third, they can play a decisive role in the implementation of the

[33]Cf. Charles Taylor, Invoking Civil Society, op. cit., p. 204.

[34]Charles Taylor, Social Theory as Practice, op. cit.

[35]Well-known positive models for the respective populations are Lech Valesa in Poland and Vaclav Havel in the Czech Republic. Examples of autocratic rulers abusing the lack of civic culture in the population are Franjo Tuđman of Croatia and Slobodan Milošević of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

necessary reforms in the society and the economy. These associations and organizations can, but do not have to, be based on irreducibly social goods; it suffices that they are based on convergent individual goods and interests.

(iii) Enlarged and solidary families offer to their members two kinds of support: First, many people consider the solidarity based on kinship, i.e. biological bonds, to be more reliable than that based on ideological bonds. Second, in a situation of rapid social transformation and instability, the family appears as the last foothold. And third, cultural traditions as bases of larger communities, are perpetuated in the form of families[36].

c. Since in modern plural societies many different communities or associations coexist, *criteria of priority concerning promotion* are necessary. Having in mind the existing experiences with postcommunism, groups with following qualities should be given priority:

(i) The group is constituted around a clearly defined common objective, purpose or social good.

(ii) The cohesion of the group does not depend on the charisma of a leader, but on the attraction of that objective or good.

(iii) Individual liberty, autonomy, and civic culture are highly valued. (iv) Especially highly valued is the free communication within the group (local public sphere).

(v) The relationships within the group are democratic.

(vi) The ideology and activities of the group strengthen the individual responsibility of its members towards the group, and the responsibility of the group towards the rest of the society. Group members learn to be active out of their inner motivations, and to count on the help from their colleagues[37].

[36]The importance of enlarged families in situations of social turmoil, weakened institutions, instability, and sudden change of social environment, is well illustrated by the case of migrants. In their new, alien environment, they are thrown upon their families and, eventually, the already existing local group of migrants of similar cultural background. A stable familiar environment furnishes the migrants with the security and self-confidence necessary for successfully coping with the new environment. Well-known examples of such role of families are the Asian immigrants to the USA and the Turkish immigrants to Germany.

[37]"Personal responsibility is most likely to flourish when there is genuine opportunity to participate in communal life", Philip Selznick, Social Justice: A Communitarian Perspective, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Self-reliant and responsible associated citizens are the antidote to the heteronomous subjects dependent on the mercy of the state, the standard products of communist totalitarianism and paternalism[38].

(vii) The education of children and young people, including civic education, has high priority. Learning to share a commitment to a common goal or purpose of the group, and to work collectively on its realization, is important not only for the prosperity of the group, but also for the society as a whole, for the community of communities.

d. Of course, in postcommunist societies there is also the danger that the various communities and associations, after their consolidation, attract most of the citizens' public energy, thus preventing the constitution of an effective civil society, the democratic "body politic" to be able to counterbalance the autocratic tendencies of the state.

The best foundation of a coherent and effective civil society are irreducibly social goods that can be secured only on the level of the common state. The f*ollowing irreducibly social goods can prevent both ethnic nationalism and the fragmentation of civil society*:

(i) *A* liberal and democratic constitution has to guarantee the basic rights to all citizens. The principle of equality demands that there are no groups with special status, such as members of a vanguard party, a nobility of office (German "Beamte"), ethnic minorities realizing their true "statehood" in their own — possibly nonexistent — ethnic states, immigrants with infringed rights etc. Only as equals can free citizens constitute a "we" including all of them and thus guarantee to each other the basic rights enabling them to peacefully live and act within their particular associations and communities.

(ii) Similar is the role of legality. Although laws can be understood as goods resulting primarily from the convergence of individual interests, they are also irreducibly social goods.

(iii) *A* free public sphere on the level of the community of communities enables the members of all communities and associations to formulate common interests, thus exerting some control over political processes and

[38]The lack of responsible and self-reliant citizens on the Balkans has led, during and after the Third Balkan war, to an absurd situation: The newly discovered ethnic identities and the new "sovereign and internationally recognized", more or less "ethnically cleansed" states are cherished more than anything else. On the other hand, all the necessary aid for postvar reconstruction is expected to come from abroad, while at the same time the "international community" is made responsible for not stopping the war, for its ravages, and for its outcome. In other words, someone else is responsible for the whole disaster, and has to pay for its consequences.

constituting the common identity, securing the long term stability of the state[39].

(iv) Modern welfare states legitimize themselves by providing a number of social services to their citizens. The most important of these services have the character of insurances (e. g. health, unemployment, pension insurance). Welfare institutions therefore appear to be primarily the results of convergence of individual interests. Nonetheless, they foster the solidarity of civil society. All the more so in post-communism, after the corresponding communist institutions have collapsed.

9) Finally, the question arises *who, and by what methods, has the duty to promote a communitarian civil socieity in postcommunist countries. The answer: all and everyone who can!*

Translated by the author

[39]In the post-Yugoslav states the public sphere has to fulfil another important function: The ideology and the — rather crooked — practice of self-management at the work place, and social selfgovernment as an extension of self-management over the whole society, have left some traces in the political consciousness of the Yugoslav population. Since selfmanagement in privatized firms is not possible, and the political democracy is still in its years of apprenticeship, a functioning public sphere is probably the most appropriate substitute for the social self-government and the best antidote against the mafia-structures emerging in many spheres not yet permeated by the legal power and institutions of the state. Thereby, local public spheres may be of primary importance.