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Multiculturalism and Its Implications
A Critical Analysis of Charles Taylor’s Theory on Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition

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Abstract

This thesis relies on the works of Charles Taylor in the field of multiculturalism, more specifically the well-known essay *The Politics of Recognition*. Through a theoretical analysis, arguments from Kenan Malik as well as Amelie Rorty are used as tools to highlight challenges with communitarian theory in the face of multiculturalism. The study exposes that communitarianism in the face of diversity can prove to be challenging, and that cultural identity is too comprehensive to substantially define. It is much more feasible to attain individual dignity, identity and worth in a multicultural society so as to promote personal freedom and negate the misrepresentation of groups.
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Studying the phenomenon that is the peaceful (or at times non-peaceful) coexistence of multiple cultures within one society, has never before been this important. The refugee crisis which is, among others, the result of one of the most dreadful civil wars of our time has caused international attention to the future prospects of states accepting massive numbers of foreign cultures within their borders. How will they handle the massive influx of cultures, and how will they function in a shifting society? We are facing a large scale refugee crisis, and it brings with it a need for understanding cultures different than our own. We have already seen both warm embraces of these groups of people, and in contrast, we have seen violence and inhospitality. Civil groups such as the Norwegian Dråpen i havet have been created to assist in ensuring refugees taking to the sea in a rubber boat can be met at the shores of Greece with food and blankets.\(^1\) Groups like this functioning solely on volunteer work are consistently growing and shows us that not only are we capable of compassion for others in critical situations, but also that multicultural societies are welcomed by many.

On the other hand, the Western world is also simultaneously showing more and more fear of the unknown and worry about what this influx of refugees might mean for these established democracies. There is reason to believe that this fear is rooted in the lack of knowledge. Understanding of others and how different they are from us as well as, and possibly most importantly, lack of knowledge in how similar they are to us. In regards to the Western reaction and growing hostility towards refugees following the attacks in Paris in 2015 Bollfrass et. al. write for Foreign Affairs:

> “Fear of refugees following a terrorist attack is a natural reaction, and some confusion over the relationship between refugees and violence is understandable. Even the academic community, which has studied the topic for years, has yet to settle on an understanding of the relationship between the two. But making efforts to block people fleeing to the West from war zones is the wrong response to the horrors of Paris. The latest evidence suggests that the connection between refugees and terrorism is tenuous. The West can take in refugees without jeopardizing its national security.”\(^2\)

This article pokes holes in several theories regarding terrorists crossing borders posing as refugees as well as disproving the fears heard about today. It is my understanding that these fears are partially rooted in the unknown, and this consistent misconstrued image of the

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world from the perspective of “us” and “them” as opposed to “we”. For example, the article refers to the fact that almost half of the world’s refugees today are considered children. If we dismiss the fact that these children and their families are fleeing from the very same horror that we fear, there can be much greater consequences.

The reason why this is brought up is that we need to make sure that (1) these children do not become a lost generation, and miss out on their educational rights and (2) these children are not recruited to extremist groups. The latter perhaps being the most important, as vulnerable children become even more apt to recruitment if they are already labeled as possible terrorists and find no other way to ensure their survival. Sure, one could target the challenges from a political and socio-economic aspect, but this is not the aim of this thesis. However, this is discussed here marginally because in order to avoid fear, there needs to be understanding and education on how a multicultural society functions, thereby essentially creating a somewhat more well-prepared west.

The quote above suggests that the connection between refugees and terrorism is weak, and my input here would be that this statement is true. This is true due to the importance of identity, which we will dive deeper into in this thesis. When we tend to connect terrorism and refugees we forget the smaller picture per se, and sort of brush all of “them” under the same rug, in this constant “us” vs “them” way of thinking. We forget the identity of man, which will be a major point of deliberation in this thesis. It is a human rights disgrace to place vulnerable people in the same group as the very same terrorists they are escaping.

This thesis will aim to interpret and critically analyze Charles Taylor’s views on multiculturalism and recognition through a human rights perspective. The famous essay The Politics of Recognition, which will be the focus of this thesis, will be examined through a human rights perspective on how we should face the challenges of increasing minorities in Europe. Malik and his book Multiculturalism and Its Discontents along with Rorty’s essay The Hidden Politics of Cultural Identification will work as contrasts and critiques to Charles Taylor. The aim is to interpret Taylor from a human rights perspective and to clarify his views on the research questions listed below.

1.1. Research Purpose

The need for this research stems from the aforementioned refugee crisis currently shaping international discourse. It is vital that there is a common ground of understanding and intelligible knowledge on how to face a society of different backgrounds and interests and how to also make it function properly. There are reasons to believe that the western perspective on how cultures and religions should be treated in society is a highly confident while at the same time an irresponsible view that needs to be researched further. Taylor brings up a great argument here that will support this statement where he talks about the
faults of the western world and how we constantly measure the success of other cultures through our own measuring stick. Not only is this wrong but it is highly ignorant for two reasons.

The first is the self-assured idea that our form of measurement, as in measuring success up against what the western world thinks success is, is all encompassing and includes the values of the entire world. The other is the idea that our way is the way to be measured up against. Here, the word *up* is key, for we tend to believe that countries in development are attempting to develop a system similar to ours and that we are at least one step ahead. Although work has been done in the field of cultural relativity and multicultural societies it is now more than before important to further pursue research in this arena due to the changing nature of Europe and the growing multicultural states it is projected to hold. Furthermore the purpose of this research is to critically analyze the philosophical viewpoints of Charles Taylor in regards to multiculturalism and the research questions listed below.

### 1.2. Research Questions

Outlined below are three research questions that will determine the course of this study

My first research question is: *The politics of recognition; what is the theory’s implication and purpose?*

The drive behind this question is to lay forth Taylor’s theory on the politics of recognition as well as reel in on some of the most important aspects of this piece. In order to see which, if any, resources Taylor’s theory on multiculturalism and the politics of recognition can contribute to developments in multicultural societies today. This question is important to start with and will aid in answering the succeeding questions of this thesis as it will in broad strokes lay out the entire perspective of the politics of recognition. A thorough investigation of Taylor’s theory will be conducted in order to answer this question, and come to grips with what his meaning is with the politics of recognition.

My second research question is: *How should we balance the rights of minorities and individual rights within multiculturalism?*

The human rights system is very individualistic in a way that the rights bearer is mostly an individual and the state is the guarantor of rights. This is not always the case in cultures where minorities and groups are very vital rights holder as well as in communitarian theory. I will here conduct a theoretical discussion on the subject based on the works of Taylor. In this section we will lead a broad discussion on Taylor’s account of liberalism in terms of

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distributive rights as well as his defense to include the protection of collective rights in this discourse.

My third research question is: *In what ways does Taylor’s politics of recognition contribute to a more sustainable diverse democratic society?*

This final research question will tie this thesis together and be related to the analysis of the two questions mentioned above. Firstly, we must determine what is included in the term “sustainable diverse democratic society”. Does this in our case simply mean a liberal democratic state that creates a peaceful atmosphere for diversity to survive and thrive? How do we interpret Taylor’s ideal function of a diverse multicultural society where respective groups or possibly individuals enjoy the same democratic respect and acknowledgment?

### 1.3 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This thesis will have a theoretical framework throughout and will be in its nature a critical analysis of theories provided by Charles Taylor, whereas the critique lies namely within the theories of Kenan Malikin and Amelie Oksenberg Rorty.

In terms of analyzing Taylor, the theoretical framework that this process will fall under is of communitarian perspective as this is Taylor’s main perspective. However a human rights perspective will also be implemented and will aid in answering the research questions. What will be interesting in terms of Taylor’s communitarian background will be to place it in contrast with classic liberalist theory. Namely how do we theoretically reason in terms of the distribution of rights and freedoms? On the one hand we have communitarian theory that speaks of groups and their common identity, as well as acknowledging them and adapting to their respective views much like what Taylor seems to prescribe. On the other hand, classic liberalism seeks to individualize the distribution of rights and freedoms, something that Taylor intricately challenges.

What is theoretically interesting about Taylor is that his ideas can pose a challenge to the European mindset on minorities. The freedoms and rights that he believes should be attributed to minority groups are and should to some extent be considered realistic, but today they are viewed as challenging. His thoughts on the right to self-governance, by minority groups are thought-provoking. It may seem as though Taylor’s approach to minorities are more easily implemented in Quebec, which he prescribes, but more difficult in a growing slightly more diverse multicultural country or society. However, Taylor may in the future be remembered as ahead of his time and there is reason to believe that his theories might be implemented and applied as the world grows closer.

Furthermore it is interesting to implement criticism upon Taylor especially in this context as it is vital to show depth in regards to these highly relevant questions, and for this Kenan Malik’s opinions and work will be a very interesting view to contrast to Taylor. Malik is an
admitted critic of not only multiculturalism but also the critics of multiculturalism. This may seem like a complicated paradox, but the book *Multiculturalism and its Discontents* explains his views and lays forth different critics of multiculturalism.

For this thesis the research method will be to theoretically analyze Charles Taylor. I begin by interpreting the Politics of Recognition as well as a small insertion of analysis from *Boundaries of Toleration*. My aim will be to critically analyze his theory on minority rights as well as to discover the intent of the politics of recognition as a phenomenon and theory. After interpreting the Politics of Recognition as well as our critics we will allow our three research questions guide the way for the analytical process. Malik and Rorty will serve as critical tools to fully analyze Taylor’s perspectives on the respective research questions in this thesis. This method will do two things for the purpose of clarification. It will firstly allow us to thoroughly understand the politics of recognition by inserting other work of the author as well as interpreting the meaning behind the actual essay. The aim is that the politics of recognition will shed light on this analysis of multiculturalism and Taylor’s perspective on the rights of individuals versus group rights. Keeping in mind Taylor’s communitarian perspective, the most likely would be here to favor groups; we will also dive into why that is and how Taylor justifies his arguments.

Secondly, this method will allow us to get into the depth of views on identity and recognition. These are two major concerns and topics for discussion not just for Taylor, but many more philosophers on multiculturalism. Recognition and identity politics are taking a bigger and bigger role in this discourse. One of the main concerns for this thesis is to interpret whether or not the discourse revolves mainly on individuals or groups, as well as why. Furthermore, by investigating and understanding Taylor’s view on multiculturalism and a reasonable version of this phenomenon, we will examine whether or not this can lead to a more sustainable diverse democratic society. For this latter point, Malik will come in handy as he makes the division of two different forms of multiculturalism as he sees them, and his theories will be contrasted to Taylor’s on the subject.

Theoretically this thesis will make use of Taylor’s communitarian perspective. As this is crucial to him as a philosopher and hues the way he thinks, it has been determined that this framework is important to retain for the sake of understanding Taylor and comprehending his objects from the same school of thought. Furthermore, utilized in this thesis in addition to a communitarian theoretical framework as provided by Taylor will be those of his critics. These theories as well as a human rights perspective through all will aid in creating well-rounded answers to our research questions. In order to expansively grasp the works and theoretical agenda of Taylor it is significant to keep in mind his background and his school of thought. Charles Taylor is a communitarian in his thinking and this seeps through into his theoretical work.

The other question is here the following: why has Charles Taylor been chosen here as a means for analysis and interpretation as opposed to another philosopher? This thesis was at the very beginning supposed to be about cultural relativism and one question that kept
coming back to mind was; what form and degree of cultural relativism is just, and how do we legitimize this? The reason for the interest behind this question was the same as this thesis, namely the refugee crisis at hand and how we best can understand the so-called other.

After much thinking and research on the subject, it seemed more logical to focus on multiculturalism, a field in which I was not very familiar. The research subject would fall on either Will Kymlicka or Charles Taylor and the latter was chosen. This is due to the many reviews and critiques that exist of Taylor, making it very interesting to dive into his work. This is in no way claiming that Will Kymlicka is not highly discussed. Furthermore, the biggest draw to the relevancy of Taylor as a philosopher in relation to these research questions is the famous essay the Politics of Recognition.

Taylor manages to place recognition in society so high on the agenda and explains his views at the same time very clearly. In addition, and perhaps the most important aspect is that Taylor was chosen due to the way he discusses repair after misrecognition and nonrecognition, which is evaluated here as being a highly relevant subject as most of the new members of society may be suffering from both those things. Taylor places importance on how recognition and identity are interconnected, which also makes for an interesting theoretical framework and means for analysis in this thesis.

Taylor’s views are in addition what could be described as somewhat unorthodox, especially with his ideas about Quebec and how he thinks a multicultural society should function. These somewhat daring ideas, as they were written originally in 1992, are major aspects to the draw towards Taylor. Some might disagree and claim that Taylor is not that progressive, and claim that his work lacks legitimacy for many reasons. One of these is Glenn Coulthard who writes an essay challenging the thoughts of among others Charles Taylor and demands that the colonial past of Canada and its native people is not one that can be altered and improved using the politics of recognition. Coulthard further challenges Taylor’s interpretation of the Hegelian master and the slave dialogue. The argument is that this interdependence that supposedly would exist in colonial relationships cannot be the truth.5

1.4 Material, Previous Research and Limitations

As described above my focus will be on the work of communitarian philosopher Charles Taylor. The famous essay the Politics of Recognition will be the main material and focus for this analysis. In addition to this I will also add to the equation, in order to challenge Taylor, Kenan Malik and Amelie Rorty and use their theories as a way to pursue clarification on the aforementioned research questions. Another way to implement this research was investigated,

namely to include a liberal philosopher such as Will Kymlicka and carry out a comparative analysis of the two thinkers in order to see which would provide the most helpful theoretical framework for answering the questions provided. However due to spacing it was decided that it would be more qualitative to focus on one major philosopher. Other viewpoints to Taylor and critique from Malik and Rorty will instead serve as analytical tools.

Charles Taylor and the essay the Politics of Recognition will be like aforementioned the biggest focus of this thesis. This essay is highly discussed in the field of multiculturalism and offers the communitarian opinions of Taylor in a very clear way. Taylor will allow us to dive into the main issue of this thesis. Not only is Taylor a communitarian in his theories but bases a lot of his work on Hegel. The work shown in the Politics of Recognition will be analyzed from a human rights perspective as well as keeping in mind Taylor’s communitarian background as mentioned before. One of the most vital components of the essay for this thesis will be the discussion on what Taylor refers to as the politics of universalism as opposed to the politics of difference. In this section we will dive into different forms of equality and why Taylor prescribes one form above the other. This will enlighten the discussion on multiculturalism as well as develop the dialogue further on how rights should be prioritized and distributed, whether it is in group form or the classic liberal individual form. Furthermore we will observe which components, if any, of this essay that could contribute to a more sustainable diverse democratic society.6

Amelie Rorty, an American philosopher writes in the essay The Hidden Politics of Cultural Identification in great detail about the politics of recognition and what Taylor really puts in the theory. Her essay deals with other works of Taylor in order to base a larger ground for a valuable critical analysis. Rorty discusses Taylor’s significance of individual identity which is put in connection with a cultural identity. In other words, she challenges and brings into discussion Taylor’s call for protection of cultural history and heritage in order to correctly protect individual identity. Why must one go the route of protecting cultures to protect individuals? Taylor makes the point that culture shapes, if not fully, at least to some significant degree our individual identity.7

A thorough overview of Taylor’s theory is provided in regards with the prominence of recognizing an individual’s cultural identity in order to fully recognize their full individual identity. Rorty further sees the difficulty in truly identifying these cultural groups and contrasts them with other socioeconomic groups, where the critique is that this identification is too theoretical, and does not hold a strong enough practical standpoint.8

Kenan Malik’s Multiculturalism and Its Discontents will play a central role in this thesis. The book from 2013 is an illuminating while at the same time provoking piece on diverse

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societies today. This book has been chosen due to the relevance of the subjects involved as well as the substance it adds to the subject in newer times. Malik takes into account what has changed in the western world post 9/11 (as opposed to the politics of recognition) and how it has colored the way we view multiple cultures in a place where we constantly pursue discourse in the sense of “us” and “them”. The changes that we might discover have occurred in both societal and political planes might be of great relevance to this discussion and might even disprove some points from the past. Therefore Malik will take on a strong role in this thesis, as being the head opponent of multiculturalism, his points explaining why that is will serve as a tool to investigating Taylor and his theories.

Multiculturalism is an important issue and area of study and has been researched thoroughly by actors that are very influential to the field, whether it is from a communitarian, liberal or other perspective. However, this area cannot truthfully be said to be static. Cultures, as well as the people that claim to belong to the respective cultures are dynamic beings that change with time as well as with geography (by geography, I am referring to a physical move to another location and its effect on their respective culture). Therefore it is important to continually add research to this highly complex area in order to be able to amend our societies to changes that occur in the field.

Thompson and the Political Theory of Recognition offer a direct discussion about Taylor’s essay the Politics of Recognition. Thompson researches Taylor with a very enlightened perspective on some key questions and contrasts Taylor to Nancy Fraser as well as Axel Honneth. Thompson also includes a wide and insightful discussion of Taylor’s politics of difference versus his politics of universalism and this discussion will prove highly valuable to this thesis to comprehend what exactly Taylor places in the word “multiculturalism”. Thompson would have been a great third addition to our previously mentioned critics, however due to space constrictions Thompson will be utilized in this thesis to highlight and comment on the politics of recognition, however with a lesser impact than Malik and Rorty.9

Will Kymlicka, arguing from a liberal perspective, claims in Multicultural Citizenship that certain minority rights have not gained the ground they deserve in modern democracies.10 Kymlicka has over the years raised very relevant issues to the field and become a well-known name in theoretical multiculturalism. Often times Kymlicka is placed on the other side of the spectrum of Taylor due to the differences in their respective schools. Taylor is basing his theories on his communitarian outlook, whereas Kymlicka is considered more liberal in this field. These two philosophers would have been, if contrasted as well as analyzed separately, a great recipe for this thesis. However, as mentioned in the previous section the time and space is not on our side to give such a project the due respect it deserves. Therefore it is determined that Kymlicka, although highly relevant and has done valuable work in the field of multiculturalism, will not play a vital role in this thesis.

As aforementioned, Coulthard goes in to greater detail and analysis on Taylor in his article *Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the ‘Politics of Recognition’ in Canada*, and this thesis could have taken use of Coulthard as a critic to Taylor. However due to his focus on Canada in particular as well as colonialism, this thesis will not include Coulthard even though his points are highly relevant and difficult to dismiss when it comes to Taylor.\(^\text{11}\) As my focus lies within the rights of individuals as opposed to rights of groups as well as the politics of recognition and its possible contribution to a more sustainable democratic society, I have chosen to include critics that are slightly more general in their theories. Thereby, and therefore the decision on critics of Taylor’s theories finally fell on Malik and Rorty.

### 1.5 Disposition

This thesis is divided into 5 chapters in total. The first chapter offers an outline for the actual study, including an introduction section, the purpose of the study as well as questions that are to be raised. In addition there will be a discussion of the theoretical framework and methodology of the thesis where they are laid forth and defended. Lastly in chapter 1 there is a section discussing previous research, limitations and the material within the field and within the study. Chapter 2 will introduce Charles Taylor and his views and theories. This chapter will include my interpretation and analysis of selected works from the well-known philosopher. Chapter 3 – the voice of critics – will offer a critical light on the chapter before, namely on the selected work of Taylor. Here there will be a discussion including known theoretic figures that do not necessarily share the same view of Taylor, namely Kenan Malik and Amelie Oksenberg Rorty. Chapter 4, which will be the largest and most vital chapter of this study, will be an analysis of the material collected above, in chapter 2 and 3. Here the research questions will be the basis for an analysis of the chosen literature. Chapter 5, which is the final chapter, will be the concluding section where highlights of the analysis will be reiterated and the research questions will be answered. In the final part of chapter 5 you will also find a reference list.

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Chapter 2 – Understanding Charles Taylor

The following chapter will introduce Charles Taylor in a comprehensive matter with specific focus on *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. The object is to interpret and examine Taylor in a way that offers legitimate and scientific context to the aforementioned research questions. After the following interpretation there will be a critical analysis of the material with light of several critiques to Taylor’s framework in regards to multiculturalism and recognition.

2. Charles Taylor and the Politics of Recognition

2.1. Exploring the Politics of Recognition

The main object of this section is to comprehend what Taylor means by the politics of recognition, what does this term hold in meaning and scope? Per Taylor the politics of recognition and identity are interconnected. This is by the way that we can assume that we are recognized by our identity and who we are as inner beings as I will go into greater detail in the section below.

Two changes in history as recognized by Taylor have occurred that call for the importance of identity and recognition in the public sphere. The first was the fall of a hierarchical system with its basis in honor. The idea that one’s worth is measured up or down against someone else and where equality had no space to exist. The system that replaced the one based on honor as described by Taylor was *dignity*.12 This term is highly recognized in the world of human rights discourse. It is an equal podium shared by all human beings given to us at birth. Theoretically, and for the sake of reiteration in human rights discourse, human dignity is universal. This first change and shift in perspective on the place of a human being in society called for not only the politics of recognition but have also laid the groundwork for equality within a democratic society.13

The system of honor (which still exists today in some parts of the world) is the process of being compared to everyone else in society and thereby determining a person’s worth. To thrive in a society based upon this system there needs to be someone simultaneously struggling, one oppressor and one being oppressed if you will. This is not necessarily in the terms of financial success or material and physical benefits and misfortune; rather it is in the human worth discourse. Your position in society essentially determines your value.

On the other hand, the replacing system which is built on human dignity changes the equation and removes the idea that your worth is based on anything at all. Your worth is not a variable;

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13 Op. cit., p. 27
it is not earned or strived after. It is simply in your possession by birth into the human species. As mentioned earlier, this is a major aspect of human rights linguistics. It is not only what human rights are built on the premise of, but the reason for their existence. This is namely to ensure the equal dignity of all members of the human family and place value onto their lives as equals regardless of geographical, cultural, social, religious or economic difference.

The second change that calls for the importance of identity and recognition is namely the establishment of a focus on a singular human identity. The wording here is vital; this change did not bring about a human identity as an identity in each and every one has always been present; rather it brought about a certain focus and a need to reflect upon the fact that human are all different and are shaped by their uniqueness within. It is also about discovering who you really are and remaining true to that. Taylor uses lingo by Lionel Trilling and names this truthfulness to oneself the ideal of authenticity. This ideal is closely tied to morality and the evaluation of wrong and right within.

Surely individual identity and morality are not classified as new phenomenons. Now what we might classify as a change however was the source of the moral voice within. Per Taylor the change calls for connecting with a sense of morality deep within as opposed to a higher power or a divine being. This does not necessarily mean the evolvement, or rather the elimination, of a human relationship to a higher power. It means that the relationship is first understood within, and may be further understood through a divine relationship.

These two changes significantly brought about two different public politics as credited by Taylor. The change from honor to dignity has established a politics of universalism and of equal worth and formal equality between all humans in general based on the inherent dignity of human kind. The second change that developed the idea of the importance of individual identity is credited to creating what Taylor calls the politics of difference. These two political principles are major contributors to this topic of discussion and will be discussed in greater detail below.

The significance of identity and recognition is portrayed in a way that these values have not always been enshrined into us as human beings and were thereby developed as times changed. This idea challenges the universality and the claim that recognition is a human need. If we are to elaborate on this, a simple question to ask would be; assuming that recognition of the identity of a person is a human need, how was this need met before this phenomenon came about? A need is different from a want in a way that makes a desire vital for survival, in this case for emotional survival based on self-fulfillment. This thought creates a window into scrutinizing Taylor’s theory on the importance of the politics of recognition. Of course, he may argue by stating that these needs were met at the time, and that focus laid somewhere else, perhaps social roles and definitions of man. You were simply expected to play the role you were born into and that became your identity.

Taylor divides recognition into three categories per my understanding. Firstly, an individual can be *recognized* as a complete, whole and equally worthy part of society as anyone else, and be seen in the true light of his/her identity thereby allowing for the possibility to become oneself. In this option the way you are viewed strictly reflects your true identity and no harm is done. Second, there can be *misrecognition* where ones true identity is distorted even within oneself because you are recognized in society as a second class citizen or not of equal worth.

The third and final option of recognition is *nonrecognition*. This is not something Taylor completely defines clearly, so it is assumed that the term is self-explanatory and that it means that you are not recognized be it either in a good or bad fashion. The two latter forms of recognition can cause great harm and per Taylor they are ways of oppression. Taylor offers a very short and vague idea that if misrecognition or nonrecognition occurs, thereby wrecking one’s identity, it is important to get oneself out of that destructive pattern.  

However there is no further deliberation as to whom one may take on that task and restoring the way a person or group of people are recognized.

The feasible form of recognition is not only stressed as being important, it is laid forth as an imperative human need. With the discussion below on the importance of identity we will come to terms with why Taylor argues that recognition is a human need, as well as the importance of that need for recognition closely tied with one’s identity.

### 2.2. The Importance of Identity

Taylor never fails to stress the importance of identity and offers a definition of the term “…a person’s understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being.”  

One might ask, what is the source of that understanding of oneself, is it inherent in us as part of the human species or developed over time? The politics of recognition is shaped by the idea that multiculturality, in order to thrive, holds an unalienable demand for recognition. This recognition is again shaped by and linked closely to our identity, which he defines above. Taylor argues that our identity is strongly shaped by the way we are viewed and recognized by others and leads a discussion on the dialogical character of our identity.

As provided in the discussion above, the focus on individual identity came about as a change and calls a certain amount of recognition in the public sphere in order for a human to be completely fulfilled. Like mentioned earlier, one major aspect of this change included seeking a moral compass from within as opposed to only from a divine guideline.

Rousseau and Herder are being credited not for originating the thoughts on individual identity, but for bringing the thoughts into discussion. Whereas Rousseau’s focus lies on the

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inner voice and its disability to stay strong and central in a battle with others, Herder discusses the individuality and uniqueness in each of us. However the principle of originality must be mentioned here. This principle demands that we have certain uniqueness and inner way of existing that is like no other person.\textsuperscript{18} So far the principle is very clear and consistent with the thoughts of Taylor as he prescribes the uniqueness in individuals and groups. However, the following aspect where Taylor describes the context behind what he calls the ideal of authenticity is a bit harder to swallow.

\begin{quote}
\textit{“Not only should I not mold my life to the demands of external conformity; I can’t even find the model by which to live outside myself. I can only find it within. Being true to myself means being true to my own originality, which is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining myself. I am realizing a potentiality that is properly my own.”}\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

This historical discussion on how the ideal of authenticity came about and essentially eradicated social hierarchies goes against what Taylor describes as the relationship between recognition and identity. The section quoted above is slightly harder to comprehend in correlation with the importance of recognition. Taylor makes a major point in discussing the harm misrecognition or non-recognition can mean to an individual effectively placing explicit importance to how our identity is inevitably shaped by others. Perhaps molders is not the correct wording, however it is stressed that our identity and our way of being can be distorted and possibly ruined by the lack recognition in society. Taylor’s understanding of recognition can be understood in a way that it shapes our identity due to the effect misrecognition or nonrecognition can influence us.

Another perspective might be that Taylor possibly means that the way we are viewed by others does not define us, rather it can unravel us from the beings we are designed to ultimately be. By stating that this originality can only be found within it clashes with the importance of being recognized by others as molders of our identity in the public sphere. However this is where Taylor completes the puzzle and draws the very crucial distinction between his own theories and his historical discussion. He describes that your true self could at the time no longer be recognized solely by your status in society, at this point your identity and true self is created within. However, Taylor puts another spin on the issue and says that the idea that your identity is created simply within does not ring true in a world of co-dependence.\textsuperscript{20}

Taylor seems to be highly focused on this section of the human search for identity, and this lies within his research on Hegel. The Hegelian slave and master dialogue can be found in Taylor’s theories make for the supporting material for this specific argument on the dialogical nature of human identity. Furthermore, this is an aspect of the communitarian theoretic that

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Op. cit., p. 30.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Op. cit., pp. 30-31.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Op. cit., p. 32.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Taylor is which calls for a way of thinking that bulks human beings into natural groups, and speaking of the importance of that co-dependence that occurs as part of their mutual goal for the good life. This aspect will be interesting to uncover in terms of a diverse society. How will we all strive for a common goal and successfully live in groups as opposed to ultimate recognition as individuals solely when diversity grows?

However this still does not completely cover the thoughts on how misrecognition or nonrecognition can ruin individual identity. Perhaps the reference here is to another picture and it is far more difficult to understand without further research. The reference might be assuming that our identity (although connected with recognition as stated earlier) is somehow slightly separated from our recognition. Our identity is a relationship occurring both inwards and outwardly with others, one which we need to have acknowledged and seen. If it is not, it causes a system failure if you will, making for uncertainty within. Knowing that identity is so individualized, as it should be, it is a challenging aspect of the politics of difference that we will dive further into below.

Taylor further links this second change (the focus on individual identity) to the first change (the fall of the hierarchical system with dignity as a replacement). He does this by emphasizing that identity was also solely linked to your social status at a time when social standing in society defined you. The new focus on identity demanded this inwardly concentration as it no longer could be defined by the rest of society. This is the point where we reach Taylor’s criticism on modern philosophy. Modern philosophy is blamed for leading the discourse of the human condition from a skewed perspective that is too monological, when in fact the dialogical character of humans is the one that is more important.  

This is where we get to the heart of the discussion on the identity, and where the issue that seemingly is one from within, flourishes and becomes one of dialogical character. He argues that this change has made recognition more difficult. As identity is being internalized, it does not assume the same outwardly obvious position in society as social standards and hierarchies enjoy, rather it needs to be fought for. It is much harder to be correctly recognized as the internal being of a human is much more complex as their basic social status in society. Taylor argues below that recognition was just as much an issue before this second change, but that now it is more problematic to be correctly recognized.

“What has come about with the modern age is not the need for recognition but the condition in which the attempt to be recognized can fail.”

Taylor’s discussion on the dialogical character of identity and that very same dialogue with what he calls our ‘significant others’ is well-recognized and we would not be daring to assume that this discussion is based in his communitarian views like mentioned above. Although the second change called for the internalization of the question of identity, Taylor

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argues that this discourse is something that occurs with the ‘significant others’ in our lives. We learn who we are internally through constant conversation with others, and not as solitary beings.

Taylor does not go into great detail on what he means by ‘significant others’, however this can be interpreted as being any humans that can have any sort of effect in our lives. The expression ‘it takes a village’, referring to raising a child and outside influences, comes to mind here. We are not only affected by our parents in early life, but also by friends, teachers, and relatives and so on. This conversation with our ‘significant others’ that Taylor refers to does not cease to exist. Nor does it fade out naturally as we can never be free from the influence of others. Although Taylor does argue that this is mostly occurring in the beginning of our lives, his statement can easily be argued against by claiming the importance of future dialogues with our life partners and children, which arguably become the ones closest to us.\(^\text{23}\)

But what of those without significant others, do they not develop their own identity due to the monological character of their being? Taylor brings up as an argument against the need to want to free oneself from the chains of being dependent on others the case of the solitary artist and the hermit. The hermit is in dialogue with a higher power, whereas the artist too is in dialogue with his audience, thereby painting a picture of multiple means of how we are affected by others in any scenario.\(^\text{24}\) In this argument, the part of the ‘significant other’ does not necessarily take shape in the people closest to us that would naturally come to mind first or in standard conversation. What is understood here is that dialogue happens neither with speech nor with physical interactions necessarily, but can take shape as something different from person to person.

\section*{2.3. The Religious Aspect}

The religious aspects of a functioning diverse society demand to be discussed in order to get a full picture of Taylor’s standpoint. A large majority of his work is based on religious diversity and secularism as practiced by the Western world. As secularism is widespread in the modern democratic model of a state in the hopes that this system will accommodate for diversity, it is vital to include a brief discussion on the religious aspect of culture and diversity. Moreover, it must be reiterated that religious differences or secularized state models are not my main focus for this project; rather it is here recognized as an important factor to the issue at hand. In the chapter How to Define Secularism In Boundaries of Toleration Taylor provides us with two key definitions of secularism and what it means in a public state setting for its respective citizens.


\(^{24}\) Op. cit., p. 34.
“On one view (A), secularism is mainly concerned with controlling religion. Its task is to define the place of religion in public life and to keep it firmly in this location. This doesn’t need to involve strife or repression, provided various religious actors understand and respect these limits. But the various rules and measures that make up secularist (or laïque) regimes all have this basic purpose. On the other view (B), the main point of a secularist regime is to manage the religious and metaphysical-philosophical diversity of views (including non- and antireligious views) fairly and democratically…For B, religion is not the prime focus of secularism”

It comes as no surprise that Taylor favors the latter definition, namely option B. He primarily bases his liking for option B on the growing diversity of Western democracies as we know them today. It is difficult to disagree on the growing diversity of Europe today and the implications the growth brings with it. Hence, it is therefore difficult to also disagree in this case that option B is not more suitable than option A. It is a simple equation of numbers that requires some elaboration. Option A is in a growingly diverse democracy incompatible or unrealistic if you will due to the fact that it requires complete understanding and respect, as Taylor stated above, in order to avoid becoming a repressive society. All must agree that religion should be controlled, and the more diverse a society becomes the more unrealistic it becomes to demand complete unison in all opinions. This would demand a certain universally harmonic quality within all member of that society which would in turn repress their inner desire and differences to stand out and express themselves.

One might argue that option A calls for a much simpler system of equality; however equality in all its forms is not always the equivalent to justice which we will get in to further discussion about later on. On the other hand, option B seems to acknowledge the diversity of religious views and seeks to create a forum for them to exist together in a just manner.

Taylor agrees that in order to maintain or even strive for a peaceful sense of coexistence with equal opportunity for all in a diverse society there are complex measures that need to be in place. He categorized 3 of the most important efforts needed for a successful option B, which is the one he prescribes. These are liberty, equality and fraternity. The first one seems basic and self-explanatory, but here Taylor makes the distinction between two forms of liberty that may occur; namely the liberty to practice religion and the liberty from religion. The first form is often credited to the US system of law, whereas the second one is recognized in the French system.

In both these forms religion and the state are separate in practice and theory; however state action in regards to that separation is very different. The second effort, equality, included in

option B involves placing all religious (or nonreligious) views on an equal platform in the public sphere, in particular the people holding these beliefs. There should not be any form of advantage or disadvantage in practicing any form of belief system in the public eye, including implementing a state belief. This is arguably also an aspect or outcome of the separation of religion and the state. Fraternity deals with another aspect of equality which is mainly creating an equal platform for all beliefs in the diverse society to be heard and taken as seriously as their respective members of civilization.\textsuperscript{27}

Taylor goes on to include other aspects of option B and argues for this view to be the most compatible view of a secular state in a diverse system of cultures. Due to spacing this will not be deliberated in greater detail, however the above information will be included as an important factor of discussion in regards to ways to establish a more sustainable democratic society in the face of diversity.

\textbf{2.4. Politics of Universalism}

This is the part of Taylor’s theoretical framework that mostly makes him so unique to this thesis and ultimately the first draw towards analyzing Taylor. Whereas many would prescribe a policy of complete equality for all citizens, Taylor puts a different spin on the issue. Unlike many philosophers, Taylor does not necessarily view a politics of formal equality as a good in society, rather he discusses how this very phenomenon designed to not be discriminatory can indeed turn to a discriminating idea in the works. In order to not be misunderstood, this is not to say that he proposes a policy of discrimination or unequal dignity of man, but rather a policy of the different treatment towards all \textit{equally}. This is where Taylor’s communitarian background plays a major role in creating a contrast between his theories and those of classic liberalism. Taylor challenges what equality truly means in theory and we will in this part of the thesis investigate what Taylor is really saying about the two different theoretical political systems. This section and the one following will discuss the two forms of public equal recognition as debated by Taylor.

Taylor describes two levels where equal recognition is vital; (1) the intimate sphere, the one we share with ourselves and the people closest to us, and (2) the public sphere. Within the politics of equal recognition the focus lies on the latter kind of recognition. The politics of equal dignity or \textit{politics of universalism} which is the term used by Taylor is seemingly fairly simple to comprehend. The main goal is to avoid separation and segregation of citizens based on class or social standing, which is its historical basis. Furthermore this school of thought aims to balance and distribute equally all rights and freedoms within a society.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{27} Op. cit., p. 60
However this principle has not been without controversy. The discussion is mostly revolving the true meaning of the principle and the room for interpretation within. Being interpretable does not necessarily discredit a principle; however it does place it in a sphere of uncertainty and fluidity. For one thing, the main point of balancing the rights and freedoms in a society does not always include the same types of rights and freedoms, where examples include an influence on civil rights for some, and social rights for others and in some cases losing social rights in the fight for civil rights. So interpreted one way we would have an absolute implementation of the politics of universalism manifested in some sort of communism, where both civil and socio-economic rights and freedoms are divided as equally as possible. However, the model we see more often is the liberal democracy with proper equality as its flagship.

The politics of universalism can be best described as an equal basket of rights and liberties distributed equally among any and all individuals, regardless of their unique situation or background. This basket can be described as promoting the rights of the majority, which means that it does not take into account the identity of individuals and groups. To elaborate on this point, the politics of universalism seeks to uphold a strategy of rights and freedoms that may represent the majority of its audience, but does not strive to cater to the differences of any minority. In fact, it does not even seek to recognize and acknowledge those differences. The differences are vital, even within a majority, or minority if you will, as no group can claim to be identical. Although everyone is indeed met with equal rights, as in the equal amount of equal rights, and this very policy seeks to remove any sort of discrimination the very equalization of all rights can be discriminatory in itself and this is what Taylor is discussing.

Taylor discusses the fact that the politics of dignity (as he also calls it) has attempted in some ways to differentiate in order to create or restore balance and equality in society. Some of the examples brought up are in job scenarios and quotas in university student bodies. These temporary “benefits” if you will, are given to minorities to make it easier to reach a certain level in their communities because they have historically experienced discrimination or lesser opportunity. Taylor discusses this phenomenon and criticizes it for failing to meet the standards set by the politics of difference. Mainly for its goal in attempting to close the gap of difference by allowing some different treatment for those previously discriminated upon. The section below will talk more on how we rather than trying to become completely equal we should place esteem on difference.

This is an excellent example of communitarian theory as a contrast to classic liberalism. Critical to the system of honor and speaking of dignity, Taylor credits Rousseau for pushing forward the system of universal equality of man. Rousseau seems to be advocating the relinquishing of the importance of others opinions. Hegel, which Taylor bases a lot of his work on, is on the other side of the spectrum and talks about a master and slave relationship.

where both are equally as important and dependent on one another. For Rousseau, liberty seems to be dependent on the mutual goal of people and the equality of man.\textsuperscript{31} In this context, we are speaking of equality in form of lack of recognition of difference.

“...equality of esteem requires a tight unity of purpose that seems to be incompatible with any differentiation. The key to a free polity for Rousseau seems to be a rigorous exclusion of any differentiation of roles...In Rousseau, three things seem to be inseparable: freedom (nondomination), the absence of differentiated roles, and a very tight common purpose.”\textsuperscript{32}

Essentially Rousseau is being credited, or blamed if you will, for creating this faulty system of what Taylor refers to as “the formula for the most terrible forms of homogenizing tyranny”.\textsuperscript{33} This system is being criticized for the lack of acknowledging difference, and fundamentally attempt to even out the society into one equal form. Therefore, Taylor claims that Rousseau and his theory on especially the two first pillars (freedom and the absence of difference) in essence contradict multiculturalist theory and would not be a just strategy for a diverse society. This is essentially the opposite of the politics of recognition.

Liberalist theory, as Taylor says can in the minds of their own advocates, not consent to different treatment based on cultural difference or group rights and freedoms. Liberalism based on equality and equal rights must strive to be as universally distributed as possible and each recipient must receive the same amount of the exact same advantage per se. Taylor discusses whether or not liberalist theory is as simple as it sounds, and denounces the idea that there is no room for further understanding of the equal rights dilemma. This is where Taylor gets to the Quebec dialogue, which we will discuss further in the next section.\textsuperscript{34}

The contrast here is clear between liberalist theory and communitarian theory in terms of distributive rights, where liberalism divides society into individuals and focuses on how much of something each individual should be granted, and the answer is almost always; the same as everyone else. For communitarian theory the goal is to know what and how much of something each group or minority (mostly) should be granted based on their specific needs and regulations. Liberalism does not take into account the needs of each individual, but distributive rights as well as the basis of the theory is built on the idea that all receive the same and thereby everyone has the same opportunity. Communitarian theory thinks in a different way, and suggests that we do not have the same opportunities unless our different needs are met, and distinction becomes essential to having those needs met.

2.5. Politics of Difference

An educated guess on what the *politics of difference* entails would be the opposite of the politics of equal dignity, which would be a fairly reasonable guess. However there is much more to this principle than simply the opposite of the one above. This principle aims to, as it describes in the name, to make difference and to cherish that which makes us different. What remains important here is to equally see and acknowledge all differences in society, whether it is in individuals or in groups. Meaning essentially that there is a certain universal lingo included in the politics of difference as well.

Taylor describes that these two principles can be confused as the politics of difference also has a universal trait to it. What is implied here is that the politics of difference does not aim to differentiate people per se; rather it focuses on seeing differences that already exists equally for all. Thereby its main goal becomes, on a universal basis, to create an atmosphere where differences may thrive and cultures can continue to live on, and an identity of the majority designed to fit all does not necessarily need to be present.\(^\text{35}\) Taylor describes below in which ways the politics of difference includes a strong sense of equality within and what about this is problematic.

“The politics of difference is full of denunciations of discrimination and refusals of second-class citizenship. This gives the principle of universal equality a point of entry within the politics of dignity. But once inside, as it were, its demands are hard to assimilate to that politics. For it asks that we give acknowledgment and status to something that is not universally shared. Or, otherwise put, we give due acknowledgment only to what is universally present – everyone has an identity – through recognizing what is peculiar to each. The universal demand powers an acknowledgement of specificity.”\(^\text{36}\)

The universal aspect of the politics of difference here is quite evident in a way that the principle in itself is highly inclusive as mentioned above. However the quote above also shows the difficulties one might face within this principle. This being the fact that one is expected to give equal acknowledgment and importance to something that might not have anything to do with your own views or moral identity. On the other hand, in a society that already acknowledges your own background and identity, there is no need to fight the battle of being seen and recognized, thereby one might feel fulfilled enough to appreciate the process of conceding to others differences.

This principle demands a “soft” audience, and the meaning of soft in this context is in reference to tolerant and lenient to others and holders of respect in a way that would allow for

some different treatment at times. This might be for example mean the toleration of rights given to a certain group in order to ensure not solely their survival but to create an atmosphere where this group may thrive and continue their respective practices, whether it is in form of culture, religion or language. These rights or freedoms would not be given to any other member of society outside of this selected group, and for this to function in practice; the excluded members must be willing to accept the exclusion.

Taylor stands behind this principle as well as sees how complex this can be as described above. The highly controversial case about Quebec makes for a passionate issue for Taylor, and in this context he uses the case as an example to bring forth the divided opinions of Canada as a whole. The Quebec case is one that has divided Canada to a certain degree per Taylor and revolves around the idea that Quebeckers need their own rights and freedoms that are distinct from Canadian law in order to ensure their survival. Here, we are talking about the survival of a group of people and a cultural encompassing language and more, but Taylor goes into even greater detail in terms of distinct rights. He supports distinct rights for groups, not solely to ensure their survival but also to ensure that they thrive and may do so for many generations. That the French language not only survives this generation, but rather to have a certain distinct politics of recognition of a group to the extent that it creates a more long term plan of how that specific culture can make it, as opposed to getting accustomed to the rest of the majority.37

2.6. Rights of Minorities and Rights of the Individual

This section will create the basis for and address research question number 2: How do we balance the rights of minorities (or group rights) and individual rights within multiculturalism? Taylor's views on multiculturalism will be explored here as well as how he views the balance of rights of minorities as opposed to individual rights. Which does he prescribe in a conflicting situation of the two options and why?

As the two sections above describe in regards to the importance of maintaining group and cultural rights, as well as Taylor's communitarian background it entails that he prescribes the rights of the group above individual rights. However we will see whether the focus on the individuals within the respective groups is a major priority or if the focus lies solely on the group as a whole.

Taylor discusses, in terms of the Quebec case that many Canadians fear that this distinctness given to Quebec will override individual rights, and rather advocate for group rights. This is a concern due to the language of the Canadian Charter, which similarly to the Bill of Rights in the United States, calls for strong individual rights and is individualistic overall. By allowing for group rights to a big degree, it is thought here that this will inevitably violate individual

rights that the Charter is supposed to protect.\textsuperscript{38} Taylor’s second point in this discussion calls out the supposed discriminatory aspect of allowing for group rights.

“But second, even if overriding individual rights were not possible, espousing collective goals on behalf of a national group can be thought to be inherently discriminatory. In the modern world it will always be the case that not all those living as citizens under a certain jurisdiction will belong to the national group thus favored.”\textsuperscript{39}

Taylor follows this up by claiming that those who will demand that individual rights trump group rights in any case, and also seek to always keep this prescribed in law are following a more frequently used form of governing in the Western world, namely the United States’ system of liberalism. The individual should in this case always be first, regardless of differences within groups, cultures or religions. Taylor rejects this theory of liberalism and labels it too strict. He claims that a liberal outlook with highly individual focus will not have the strong equality lingo as it claims to have.\textsuperscript{40}

For indeed, any theory cannot claim to hand out equal liberties and rights to all, if the very liberties and rights being handed out are completely identical. That would require that all humans are identical as well. This statement calls for elaboration. What is meant here is that if every member of society should be expected to thrive and live a fulfilled life with the rights they enjoy, then these rights cannot be completely equal to each other? Obviously there are certain unalienable rights such as the right to life, liberty or right to a free trial that work for the sole purpose of placing all members of society on an equal footing. However, the rights connected to our culture, heritage and our identity must be different for me than for someone that does not share my culture.

This is not to say that a system like this, similar to the system described by Taylor as the politics of universalism, does not work. It may work, and it most likely could be the opinion of the majority in place. However, it cannot claim to be a system based on equality. Like Taylor describes, it would be claiming that the opinions of the majority would be so strong, that if you had any other outlook you would have no choice but to follow the crowd per say. This definition is very far from what you would assume equality should look like.

\textsuperscript{38} Op. cit., pp. 54-55.
\textsuperscript{40} Op. cit., p. 57.
2.7 Concluding Thoughts on Taylor and the Politics of Recognition

For the sake of clarification, let us review what we have discovered in regards to how Taylor addresses our questions. First of all, what does the politics of recognition aim to achieve and what does it mean? The answer to this question is two-fold per Taylor. Firstly, one could look at the essay as a whole and interpret the question as asking what the literal title is in reference to. The answer to that is that the essay itself is a clear cut justification and defense of the importance of ensuring the survival and flourishing of cultural identity, especially in diverse societies. Secondly, one could interpret the question as asking for what the political systems are which are built on recognition. Taylor here would divide the answer into the politics of universalism and the politics of difference respectively. He would prescribe the latter form and call out for the importance of recognizing not just all equally, but recognizing the difference that exist equally as well.

How would Taylor balance the rights of groups up against the rights of individuals in a multiculturalist society? Firstly, we need to keep in mind Taylor’s crucial background as a communitarian philosopher and acknowledge that it entails placing group needs above individual needs at times, with the belief that individual needs will automatically be met in this case as we are all part of a community somehow. We are defined by those around us and if the group can thrive and continue to practice its respective traditions and historical heritage we see that the individuals within those groups are achieving satisfaction on a personal level as well.

This context from which Taylor is basing his arguments on makes this question complicated. Does he propose protecting group rights? Yes. Does he also propose that individual rights are deprioritized when faced with the choice of protecting group rights? Well, not necessarily. Let us elaborate on what I mean here. The politics of recognition itself revolves around recognizing individuals. These are individuals that all belong to their respective groups, whose rights also have to be protected. Therefore and despite Taylor’s communitarian background it does not clearly mean that individual rights should be deprioritized. However, the answer to this would be in his discourse on identity and recognition, and whether that discussion is on the rights of groups or individuals. With the help of Malik and Rorty we will discover Taylor’s perspective on this issue.

Finally we are at the basis of the question on whether or not the politics of recognition can somehow contribute to a more sustainable democratic society? This is especially referring to a diverse democratic society. However, this part is a lot harder to summarize without the analysis of Malik and Rorty which will add substance to the issue. Therefore this particular uncovering of Taylor will be best suited in chapter 4 after the upcoming interpretation of Kenan Malik and Amelie Rorty.
Chapter 3 – The Voice of Critics

3.1 Introducing Kenan Malik

Kenan Malik was born in India and raised in Great Britain, and finds many challenges dealing with multiculturalism in England. He claims that he is a great proponent for diversity and immigration, but not necessarily for multiculturalism. Malik will serve as a contrast to Taylor in this multiculturalist debate. We will dig into the issues that Malik finds troubling about the way diverse societies are handled today, and we will discover what he means what he claims to be an advocate for diversity but not for multiculturalism as a policy.

“The problem of multiculturalism is not one of too much immigration or diversity. It lies, rather, in the impact of the policies enacted to manage diversity. When we talk of “multiculturalism”, we often conflate the lived experience of diversity with public policies towards minority communities. The failure of those policies has led many to blame diversity itself as the problem.”

The quote above shows a simplified input of the theory that Malik holds and explains that diversity itself should be celebrated and immigration should be welcomed instead of feared. What we have seen in certain parts of Europe today is a fear of refugees and hostility against increased immigration. Malik would instead argue that it is the policies that are created for managing these diversities among us that are failing and diversity is the one that takes the fall and blame.

3.1.1 Multiculturalism and Its Discontents

The newest work of Malik, Multiculturalism and Its Discontents, dives into not only the theoretical aspect of multiculturalism but also discusses the practical challenges we face. Malik claims that there is a growing belief among Europeans that multiculturalism will be the downfall of a legitimate European civilization. Not only is this manifested in beliefs among some individuals, but among politicians, theoretic figures and also in extreme cases through the showing of violence. The short book opens up about the story of Anders Behring Breivik and his terrorist actions in 2011 in Norway against a multiculturalist Islamic Europe. Breivik claimed at the time, and still does, to have been fighting a legitimate fight for a legitimate cause seeing a strong threat to Norwegian tradition from increased immigration and

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multiculturalism. Malik also sees the change that multiculturalism has endured in Europe, where it was firstly seen as the solution to our pluralist societies, to increasingly being viewed as the purpose of our troubles.\(^\text{42}\)

Malik writes “This book is a critique of multiculturalism. It is also a critique of its critics.”\(^\text{43}\) However, to fully understand the purpose of the critique we need to define multiculturalism the way Malik defines it himself. What does he put into the word and how does he wish to investigate the phenomenon and its critics?

Firstly, he divides multiculturalism into two different spheres. The first is the way multiculturalism can unfold within an open minded society, where diversity and the increase of a global state is celebrated, as opposed to feared and misunderstood. This is what he refers to as the lived experience of multiculturalism. We are open to others as they are to us, and our differences do not define us, but they are seen and accepted by others, thereby we are recognized in society as full members regardless of our background and history. The other way Malik views and defines multiculturalism is more in the form of public policy. This means the increased labeling of individuals and groups based on where they come from, what religion they practice and so on. This political form of multiculturalism is one that seeks to create boundaries between cultures and manage the co-existence of diverse societies as opposed to letting nature run its course if you will.\(^\text{44}\)

As Malik claims to be promoting diversity while at the same time challenging the policies of multiculturalism it is clear that he holds that the lived experience of multiculturalism is more preferable than the politicized one we know today. Furthermore, he wishes to also challenge the critics of multiculturalism. This can be interpreted in a way that says that Malik challenges the very opinions that introduced this section. Namely those who hold the ideas that increased immigration and diverse societies are to blame for ills in the social order. Most often, those who criticize multiculturalism blame diversity for the need of these failed policies that Malik discusses, and his input on the subject seems to be that it is the policies themselves that are flawed, not the differences of the people they were designed to manage.

In fact, he claims that these policies are not only constraining and place groups in boxes that are deemed to fit, but also that they do not function in their purpose of catering to groups of people. Rather, these are policies that seek to find an individual or possibly a handful of individuals that shine the brightest, i.e., that are to some degree public figures and base the entirety of the group from which they belong to their individuality. These policies arising from multiculturalism, rather than managing peacefully, they are creating so-called plastic communities that I would like to call them. What is meant here is that an idea of how someone should be is imposed on an entire ethnic group or a religious group and everyone within this community is expected to follow and fit into the frame that is fashioned for them.

This is the point where Malik turns the table and discusses identity and multiculturalism is blamed for creating false identities through these very same policies. These identities are forced on that part of the group that does not fall under the stereotypical frame, or the one identity that is the most visible in society.

He brings up examples from the Birmingham County where groups are symbolized through their respective forums and a board is put up to speak for their community. An excellent question posed here by Malik is to imagine if a board was set up to represent the desires and needs of all white people? This sounds absurd when asked to anyone because white is not a box one could place an entire identity belonging to an individual into, especially not the identity of an entire people. This is what multiculturalism is being blamed for doing; it is expecting this scenario to be true for people of color or people of different religious beliefs and cultures than the one of the majority.

What makes the example above absurd is because your skin tone as white does not determine your religious belief. Just like your religious belief does not determine your interests in art, and your geographical background does not determine your ability to reason. Thereby groups cannot be expected to be formed based on something that is as specific and individual as your identity. It would merely result in the misrepresentation of said group based on a few individuals’ identities and the distortion would occur as we assume that the identity of the few should fit the entire group. Malik’s argument can be interpreted to mean that cultural identity or group identity is simply too abstract to define.

3.2 Amelie Oksenberg Rorty

Dr. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty is an American philosopher, born in Belgium. She has taught at some of the most well-known universities in the world, among them Harvard University. Her teaching stretches from psychology to cultural identification, however her academic background and interest is within culturally diverse societies which we will see in the essay used here for interpretation.

3.2.1 The Hidden Politics of Cultural Identification

Rorty opens up this essay with a critique to not only Taylor, but others in the school of protecting cultural survival, claiming that often times what they tend to defend is skewed. The identity of these cultures, assuming that their protection constitutes the inevitable

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Masters of Human Rights
Uppsala University, Master's Thesis
Jane Saman

protection of the individuals that call their respective cultures their own identities, tends to be misinterpreted. Rorty says that by claiming that cultures themselves are identity-based phenomenons and placing these in boxes that we deem fitting “is itself a politically and ideologically charged issue”.47

As she continues she interprets Taylor’s basic argument of the politics of recognition in a very elegant way. It can be agreed upon that Taylor places the rights of cultural groups in prioritized scope, however Taylor does this not by disproving the importance of individual rights, but rather through claiming that individual rights extend beyond civil issues. They are fulfilled completely when our history and heritage (culture) are recognized as of equal importance as any other in society. Essentially when group rights are fulfilled, individual rights will be met as our cultural background is connected to our identity.

By recognizing cultural groups and identities and allowing for their survival, and creating a state where they can also thrive we essentially are protecting individual rights. As Taylor makes very relevant in his essay, no man is a lone man. We are all influenced by our surrounding and our audience, and thereby we can claim that our cultures are what influences us the most and should be protected and recognized as such. This is where Rorty challenges Taylor to think outside the cultural box so to speak. She takes into account his studies of Hegel and the “master and slave” narrative, as well as his regard for the religious aspect of human existence, but challenges the idea that for humans to be fulfilled and the way to a good life is based so strongly in their cultural identities.

“We might well question Taylor's strong emphasis on the cultural construction of identity. An individual's cultural identity is by no means the sole or even the dominant influence on his or her conception of a good life. Many other groups and associations also shape the habits-the frames of interpretation and categorization, the primary practices, interests, and motivational preoccupations-that express, actualize, and define an individual's identity. Many of these are as committed to perpetuating their values and practices as are cultures.”48

Rorty’s point is quite clear and shows that there are many other aspects of human life that may influence their identity, on the same level as their culture might. One thing worth noting here as well is that the things in human life that may define us, culture, religion, family and other surroundings need not be static. So the importance of one phenomenon can be major at one point of our lives, and fall short for another issue at a later point. For example, we will grow out of the relationship with our parents that shape us in the beginning of our lives and evolve into eventually having our own families. One could convert from one religion to another.

It must be stated however, that of those things mentioned above, one of which can be regarded as the least dynamic and least likely to change is our culture. This is not to say that it could not. For example, by moving and becoming integrated to another majority society I choose to adopt another culture. This is not to say that my heritage and history does not have a place to thrive in the new society making it lethal for diversity, but this can also be an active choice to create distance from the old and embrace the new. Most, if not all states have some sort of majority, even if they are highly diverse, and at times there will be those who will choose to identify themselves with the majority by pure choice and will.

The point here is that Taylor claims that culture is a big part of our identity; Rorty claims that there is a bigger picture to what defines us than our cultural background, however by free will and the ability for man to transform and define him- or herself we must take into account the utter dynamic schema of human life. Although Rorty says on this issue that there is more to man than their cultural identity, and that Taylor makes culture bigger than it is, she also agrees that some aspects are interchangeable.

Where Taylor claims that culture can be a set idea or include a set aspect, such as language, we see that Rorty disagrees with that thought and includes a discussion on the socioeconomic situation of any given culture as a factor determining its identity. One of Rorty’s biggest points is that to be aware of the image that cultural identity may show outwardly. She argues that one cannot always claim to know what the identity of that culture is, or if it even has one homorganic identity. The danger becomes a nature of picking the few individuals that “scream the loudest” per say to represent or misrepresent an entire ethnic group or religion. She writes on this subject:

> “Although they disagree among themselves about their primary directions, many Jewish American and African American communities press their members to define themselves primarily Jews or blacks rather than philosophers, women or Red Sox fans.”

Rorty makes a fine point of showing the dangers of cultural identification above. The risk would be that we forget the complexity of human beings. Just because you belong to one group you should not be pressed to go against another group that you also identify as. Rorty’s point seems to be that we rather focus on being individuals able to belong to many groups, and can identify and support the voices of those groups instead of attempting to push all that we are into one cultural identity.

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Chapter 4 – Multiculturalism and Its Implications Deliberated

This section will aim to analytically bring together the works discussed above. The focus remains on Taylor and the politics of recognition; however our critics will be used to question Taylor and some of the aspects of his theory in order to achieve clarification on the following research questions. We will go through each question separately and respectively so that the analytical process becomes clearer.

4.1. The politics of recognition; what is the theory’s implication and purpose?

The politics of recognition places a lot of its basis on discourse of human identity and recognition. Taylor discusses recognition as an imperative human need like mentioned in chapter 2. Recognition seems to be deeply rooted and based on identity, whether it is individual identity or cultural. For Taylor and his communitarian root it is mostly a discussion on cultural identity and the recognition of each individual’s cultural heritage and identity. Taylor seems to place a big focus on the idea that your cultural background weighs heavily on your individual identity. Rorty challenges this idea by claiming that we are much more than what our culture holds.

In a multicultural context, the politics of recognition says that for multiculturalism to flourish in any diverse society there needs to be recognition of all respective members, be it women, African Americans, Muslims or Buddhists. What needs to be recognized in society is their identity and worth as being equal to any other member of society. The diversity in a society becomes crucial here because Taylor’s discussion on identity revolves around the dialogue with others around us. We are in constant dialogue with people or deities closest to us, and this dialogue ultimately opens up the packaging of our identity. Taylor challenges the idea that in multiculturalism where co-dependence is vital we cannot claim that the question of identity is one of monological character. He further challenges the ideal of authenticity like mentioned in chapter 2 and focuses rather on our dialogical atmosphere and nature.

Although Taylor claims there have been changes from social hierarchies defining our identity and who we are in society to human dignity and personal identity he sees the difficulty in the nature of this new identity. The challenge is, with the presumption that the character of our identity is created on a dialogical level with other as opposed to solely within, we find that misrecognition can occur much easier. In a time where a person’s definition and identity is based upon or social and economic standing it was much simpler to know and recognize people as they were, simply based on social hierarchies and the role they were born into. However, as identity becomes more and more individualized and more complex, the process of correctly recognizing that human being or group also becomes more complicated. ⁵¹ This section of Taylor’s discourse on identity can be easily interpreted as individual identity. Social hierarchies were not always based on groups; it was rather an individual matter.

Likewise, the complexity that comes with the change to dignity is naturally also a matter of individual dignity, this especially according to the human rights discourse led today. However, is much easier to imagine the identity of a human being than the complex identity of a group. This is unless one holds the opinion that cultural minority groups have certain features that define their existence. Which we will discover that the discussion in the third question asked in this chapter shows us that collective identity is complicated, if not impossible, to define correctly.

Kenan Malik brings up this discussion as well and like mentioned before he divides multiculturalism into the lived experience and multiculturalism as policies. The lived experience of multicultural and diverse societies is celebrated by Malik. This form of multiculturalism allows for the recognition of individuals as they are and their standing in society is equal regardless of their background or heritage. Multiculturalism in its political form is a phenomenon Malik criticizes and claims that it is flawed in many aspects. This is where he becomes a critic to Taylor’s view, as Taylor believes that policies, such as the politics of difference, can in practice be created to celebrate differences. Whereas Taylor thinks that individual rights should at times yield for collective rights in order to ensure cultural survival, Malik challenges Taylor’s entire theory by questioning the entire validity of cultural survival. The discussion as led by Malik on the decay and survival of cultures will be led further below.

Malik believes that these policies created to manage diversity peacefully do the very opposite. In fact, they are essentially oppressing practices that seek to place individuals in boxes that attempt to reflect their identity. In practice these attempts fail as they cannot reflect the identity of every single individual. Like discussed earlier, Malik tries to push forward the idea that we cannot bulk people into the same box simply based on their “community”, whether it is religious, cultural or so on. Malik also makes a very strong point by criticizing the critics of multiculturalism that say diversity is the problem, and instead claims that the policies created to manage diversity are at fault.

Taylor can easily be interpreted in a very normative manner; however his thoughts can also create a very specific groundwork for real life policies. This is especially true when looking at his recollection of the Quebec case, as well as his thoughts on the politics of difference that underlines the idea that policies should be created for the very purpose of catering to people and minority difference. Whereas Taylor is a proponent for policies created to recognize respective groups and communities as well as their identity Malik blames these very policies for being discriminatory. Although Taylor sees the difficulty in implementing these policies correctly, as discussed in the politics of difference section, nevertheless it is reasonable to think he believes that it is the correct way to interpret multiculturalism as policy. Malik on the other hand, criticizes this very idea and claims that no division or politics of difference can be designed to recognize the very specific phenomenon that is one’s identity.

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we learn that Malik, although critical to Taylor’s thinking when it comes to diverse societies and rights appointed to their respective groups, he is a strong advocate for diverse societies in their nature.

Malik even takes the discussion to the next step and challenges the idea of an individual’s identity being closely tied to their culture, or possibly even challenging the idea that people are statically assigned to one specific culture. He sees a problem in multiculturalism in regards to confusion on “humans as culture-bearing creatures and the idea that humans have to bear a particular culture” Malik claims that if we are to buy into the idea that people are dialogical characters and capable of social interaction with others of different backgrounds, then it is only reasonable that humans are also dynamic creatures capable to change. In this discussion he challenges the very understanding of culture and identity as Taylor would describe it. Malik claims that identity as closely tied to our cultural heritage would mean it was really a discussion on something as stagnant as ethnicity and race, as opposed to culture.

Malik’s discussion on the faults of multiculturalism as policy can be understood during his discussion on the decay of cultures. Although many multiculturalists, among them Taylor, are worried about the weakening of some cultures as well as the fabric of their identity and the need to protect them for many generations so they may thrive Malik sees a problem with this thinking. Malik brings us back to the discussion on the dynamic nature of cultures, and culture-bearing people, and suggests that many multiculturalists would agree with this statement on the nature of cultures. They change, like people change over generations. However, if cultures can be said to be so dynamic, how do we define their end? How can we possibly claim that a certain culture is at threat for extinction when we might as well be looking at that culture’s development? He claims the following:

“For, if Jewish culture is simply that which Jewish people do or French culture is simply that which French people do, then cultures could never decay or perish – they would always exist in the activities of people.”

What Malik has to say on the theory that is the politics of recognition as Taylor brings forth is essentially that there is a catch 22 phenomenon happening. We are in denial and we are buying into the myth that multiculturalism was placed as policies as a response for the demand that grew for recognition from minority groups, the idea that they lacked a platform in society and this needed to be regulated by policy. Rather, as Malik believes, there has been a development of the need to protect one’s minority group rights as a result of the application of these very policies.

As for Rorty, she tends to claim that Taylor simplifies the idea of identity. By closely linking identity to culture we are basically removing the complexity of mankind. One of Rorty’s strongest arguments is that we cannot blindly place people into cultural definitions, meaning that we are essentially misrecognizing the individual by giving their respective culture too much say in their identity. By claiming that through being recognized for our culture and identity (where the latter is connected to our cultural background, per Taylor) we are supposed to be fully recognized as we are, we practically dismiss other important aspects that mold our identity. Rorty further agrees with Malik that we are much more than our culture, and that we must accept humans and their dynamic nature. What may have defined us at one point in our life may not always do so.  

Rorty goes on to challenge Taylor’s very definition of the word culture. If the politics of recognition is in regards to identity, and identity is in regards to culture then culture needs to be more defined than it is in the essay. Taylor seems to be unconfident in his wording of what culture really is.

> “Because he focuses on cultures as the immediate and proper objects of "the politics of recognition," he needs criteria for distinguishing them that are narrower than the demarcation of natural languages and more precise than the differentiation of "ways of life." If cultures differ from other identity-defining groups by virtue of their solidarity and historical continuity, we need criteria for cohesive identity and continuity.”

In the quote above Rorty is namely referring to Taylor’s discussion on Quebec as the main example for the essay the politics of recognition, more specifically their right to a distinct language. She is criticizing the fact that Taylor leaves a very important aspect of his argument up to the imagination; specifically what defines culture and a discussion on cultural distinction. By doing so Rorty claims so eloquently, that Taylor is making his argument very easy on himself and can thereby readily bring forth how a liberal state can live by his account of the politics of difference. However, as Rorty continues her argument – by simplifying the issue of culture down to language there should be no difficulty for liberalism in allowing for that linguistic distinction as long as basic individual rights are in place. A state can protect their minorities and ensure their survival, while at the same time ensuring the rights of the majority, if one is to simplify the issue of culture down to language. For all intents and purposes, Taylor is not only being criticized for boiling down ones identity to be so closely tied with culture, but also by defining culture too loosely. By doing this, we are seeing a flaw in the web that is the politics of recognition. Namely his critique of liberalism falls short in terms of linguistic rights allotted to a distinct group within a state, in which Rorty sees no problem with.

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In my opinion this is a very complex issue and Taylor portrays the challenges of multiculturalism and how to respond to them in a very small space. I can agree with the aspect of recognition as a human need and having one's identity recognized in society as a vital part of becoming an equal on the public platform. However, as the issue becomes more complex I must hold true to the voices of Malik and Rorty and say that culture is not defined in a satisfactory way. In terms of Malik, the appeal to his argument lies in the discussion of the decay of cultures. He explains the flaw in Taylor's argument of the preservation of cultures for many generations, and brings forth the point that cultures are as dynamic as the people that carry them. In this sense, Taylor's argument becomes moot, as the cultures thriving as they are for many generations is not a very realistic thought given the natural changes that occur to human nature.

Furthermore, in the same sense as Malik talks about the difficulty in truly conserving cultures due to their changing nature, it becomes equally as difficult to define their decay. Although I can agree with Rorty in the point that Taylor is guilty of too loosely defining culture, I do not see that as an essential flaw in the politics of recognition as culture in itself as a phenomenon is a subjective matter and can differ from one instance to the other and from one individual to the other. On the point that both critics seem to agree upon, namely that identity cannot be understood to be linked that closely to one's cultural heritage as much as Taylor claims, I believe that Rorty and Malik seem to be mistaken.

To be clear, I agree with Rorty and Malik on the point that identity cannot be that affected solely by culture to the sense that there is so much more to being human that defines us beyond our cultural background. However, I do not agree with the point they both make that Taylor is adamant on his argument on how much culture affects our identity. Firstly, the politics of recognition in itself deals with multiculturalism and diverse societies, so the fact that Taylor links identity to culture is believable. Secondly, Taylor is not as inflexible on the idea that culture alone defines us, but rather holds an entire discussion on the dialogical nature of man where they are many aspect of our day to day life that affect our identity, as opposed to culture alone. It is rather an example of how culture too can play a big role in one’s identity, not as a sole influencer of who we are.

A big aspect of the politics of recognition also includes the dialogue of the politics of universalism vs the politics of difference, however this discussion will be led in the section that follows and we will not include this here as to avoid repetition.
4.2. How do we balance the rights of minorities and individual rights within multiculturalism?

This section of this thesis has proven to be highly relevant, and this is due to the discourse on identity as well as it will introduce and elaborate on distributive rights. When speaking of identity in the sense that it is a definition of what makes us who we are, mainstream thought often goes to the identity of an individual, and that identity is so individualized that no two people share the same full identity. However, in discourse on multiculturalism, and more specifically in the communitarian theory that Taylor relies on, we find that identity can also refer to cultural heritage and cultural minorities. We have already seen some criticism from both Malik and Rorty on the claim that identity is tied to culture. In this section we will discuss further where Taylor, as well as Malik and Rorty place themselves on the balance of minority rights versus individual rights, more specifically in multiculturalist discourse.

As argued earlier communitarian theory holds the belief that individuals are naturally a part of a larger group, and not solitary creatures. What we need to come to the bottom of here is where Taylor places himself more specifically in the politics of recognition as well as in general and whether or not Malik and Rorty support his opinions. Furthermore we will aim to come to a conclusion on whether or not groups can be said to have identities of their own, if so can they claim to be homogeneous in each group? This conversation will be lead much further in the next section but will play a relevant role in this discussion as well.

Taylor discusses in terms of Quebec, that the form of liberalism most known to us in the Western world is one following the United States model of individualism. Our rights are designed to be based on each and every individual, and per this model Quebec becoming a distinct area with own jurisdiction to protect their cultural heritage (group) would be a violation of individual rights and said system of individualism. This individualistic model is prescribed by some of the most well-known philosophers and it demands neutral governance. In other words, a state that actively makes a goal to preserve a certain group or culture by permitting them distinct goals tailored to their wellbeing immediately becomes active in the process and non-neutral.

However, this is the part where Taylor dismisses the idea that allowing for group rights would mean the downfall of individual rights and also the idea that handing out group rights would be discriminating individuals. He does this by dismissing this entire individualistic model of liberalism and demands that there is a better way. Taylor criticizes this theory by arguably and stealthily going back to the idea of identity. He does this by bringing up the argument that a diverse society cannot realistically hold the same opinion of what constitutes a good life and a life of virtue. Therefore there would always be some that are left out of this

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discourse, meaning that liberalism cannot realistically claim to be based on equality as it is
catered to the opinion of the majority. 63

The reason why it would be unrealistic to implement liberalism based on individual rights in
a diverse society is namely the very fact that it is diverse. Meaning that the identities in any
multicultural scenario would be different, in the sense that they would require different
regulations and rights tailored to them. One could somewhat construe this train of thought in
terms of the idea that group rights become simpler to deal with as the interests of society
become less. If we are to distribute rights based on cultural minorities we would have less
actors to consider, thereby ensuring the equal treatment of groups. However defining group
interest although seemingly easier than defining individual rights by means of quantity, it
might not prove to be. How would we go about determining the identity of said group and
who would be their spokesperson per say confirming their interest? One could also ask;
where does that leave individual interests? Obviously there would still be fundamental
inflexible individual rights in place such as the right to life, the right to vote and so on which
Taylor even prescribes. Nevertheless, individual rights would have to at times cower down
for the sake of group rights.

The danger of dividing rights in form of groups when in conflict with individual rights is a
form of cultural segregation. Cross-cultural influences would not be as easily obtained or
even cease to exist in a liberal democracy designed to make it “comfortable” to thrive only in
one’s own environment. This is similar to what Malik says about the flawed policies that
multiculturalism has. If we are not pushed outside our comfort zone to a place where we
would have to learn about other cultures different than ours we would become stagnant.
Albeit, Taylor does speak of the importance of measuring the success of others only by
knowing their own standards, it does not explain how we are to obtain that information. 64

If we are not immersed in a culture we would not understand its fabric, and immersion is
difficult if rights are issued to respective groups. It would seem logical that as long as we are
comfortable within our own collective and safety net we would not strive to neither
acknowledge the achievements of others nor step outside that comfort zone to obtain
knowledge needed to recognize their worth. This may seem like a rash argument, and it very
well might be, however the point is cultural segregation could be the possible outcome of
collective distributive rights. Taylor sees the most widespread form of liberalism as it is
today, and as cemented by the United States as flawed and unjust. Moreover, possibly more
important he sees this model as unjust in a diverse society and claims the following:

“Indisputably, though, more and more societies today are turning
out to be multicultural, in the sense of including more than one
cultural community that wants to survive. The rigidities of

procedural liberalism may rapidly become impractical in tomorrow’s world.”

This is one major point that needs to be included in this discussion, namely because the question calls for the balance of group and individual rights within multiculturalism, be it in policy or in the actual experience of a multicultural state like Malik would divide the phenomenon. Taylor says that a liberalist theory based on individual rights and the striving for a majority goal cannot work in a diverse society. Furthermore, he also calls out the increased diversity among us which works side by side with our initial reason for this research, namely the growing diversity of Europe as followed by increased immigration.

The bottom line of what we can pull out of Taylor’s discussion on collective rights held up against individual rights is a broad deliberation on liberalism. Moreover, following the discussion on identity we see that as Taylor ties identity to culture it becomes apparent that his argument can be interpreted to mean that a just liberal policy would be to cater to the differences of groups first and foremost. However, this is all the while maintaining fundamental individual rights in place as well. Subsequent to this point we learn that Taylor’s theories on the politics of universalism and the politics of difference become very vital to this discussion on the distribution of rights. For indeed, the two forms of policies as described by Taylor truly create the basis for the contrast between communitarian theory and classic liberalism.

The perspective that Taylor chooses to take on the politics of universalism makes for the apparent similarities to liberalism and the individualistic approach to equal recognition. That is to say that the politics of universalism aims to divide the equal amount and form of rights and freedoms to all individuals. It advocates for formal equality and the equal dignity of man, much like liberalism and it does this by placing everyone on an equal footing. However, this is where the system is supposedly flawed and fails to see the critical differences that define us, which are our identities.

One way to interpret Taylor’s discourse on the politics of universalism is that it is a system based on well intentions that stumbles along the way in a multiculturalist discourse. It does so as it does not take into account the diversity of that very society it aims to treat equally. One point that seems inconsistent with Taylor’s criticism to the politics of universalism particularly is its attempt to differentiate. It receives some undue criticism from Taylor when he claims that the politics of universalism has a way to obtain, or rather restore, equality when discriminatory behavior has occurred in the past, for example by implementing quotas in order to benefit a certain group or minority. I find his criticism undue because of the very fact that this system is being portrayed as unjust due to its difference-blindness, and just when it attempts to see difference it is reproached for not reaching the standards of the politics of difference.

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The main problem with Taylors approach to his criticism against quotas or this system of restoring equality is that he immediately jumps to the conclusion that this is an attempt to nullify difference. He claims that when the politics of universalism sees that there has been discriminatory behavior towards a group in the past it acknowledges that difference. When seeing the difference the system implements quotas and certain benefits to disadvantaged groups in order to lift them to the same sphere of difference-blindness. There is no real valid reason to believe that these benefits given are a way to eliminate the differences talked about in a diverse society, and it must be discussed and acknowledged that this “gap” talked about is not one of difference, but one of equality. This is to say that the possibility that a system based on proper equality might implement these measures in order to restore equality should be considered as opposed to its attempt to eliminate all differences within individuals.

It would be incorrect to claim that Taylor’s position on the rights of individual always comes second to group or minority rights. It is in fact not a matter of one or the other. Taylor can be interpreted as one to advocate for individual rights through the protection of group rights. Meaning that per his theories it is in the best interest of the individual to have his or her collective and cultural rights protected. Essentially by preserving group rights we are simultaneously protecting individual rights as all individuals belong to some sort of community which is partially a section of their identity. Therefore, it can be determined that Taylor’s approach to the balance of individual and group rights can be understood as unorthodox while at the same time remaining true to his communitarian background.

This is also true in regards to his communitarian-influenced politics of difference in which Thompson believes deals with two specific issues. Firstly, it deals with the equal worth of cultures and their recognition as well as judgment on the public stage. Secondly it is concerned with the public policies designed to safeguard the persistence and continued existence of cultures. Whether these policies are just and are realistic can live up to their purpose is another matter. Thompson provide a logical account of Taylor’s idea with the politics of difference, however Malik sees difficulties with implementing policies created to manage collectives.

Following on with Malik’s discussion mentioned earlier on the decay of cultures and the changing nature of man; we find another interesting aspect of his viewpoint on the matter. Malik suggests, and it is difficult to disagree with him, that by ensuring individual rights solely through the protection of cultural rights we do a great injustice to the individual. This would unfairly lay a strain on one’s identity outside of the cultural aspect of it, and the individual would find himself always forcefully identifying mostly with his cultural heritage. Like discussed earlier as well, it would make for the possibility of learning more about and adapting to other cultures outside one’s own much more difficult. Malik says that many multiculturalists claim that it is vital to be “fully integrated” into a culture, which is quite possibly just a statement on how the world looks today. There is certainly nothing wrong

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with belonging to a culture, but where does one draw the line and go from being an individual to only a part of a specific group?

I believe that there is a definite line that can be drawn as to how much focus should lay on group rights. This very method of addressing individual rights by going through their assumed cultural belonging is one that creates limits and builds walls rather than tearing down the barrier between groups. Malik brings up the following on the idea that humans have to bear a specific culture:

“It suggests that every human being is so shaped by a particular culture that to change or undermine that culture would be to undermine the very dignity of that individual. It suggests that the biological fact of, say, Jewish or Bangladeshi ancestry somehow makes a human being incapable of living well except as a participant of Jewish or Bangladeshi culture.”

Malik is portraying in this example how limiting it can be to be labeled a part of a community one might not always belong to, or solely belong to. Just because I was born in Syria, it should not mean that I naturally should be labeled as a Syrian for the remainder of my life. If a family of refugees come to Sweden today with two small children, it does not necessarily give society the right to place them in the box they came with per say. The adults of that family might always identify as, let us say Iraqi, but the two small children that look just as Iraqi as their parents will most likely, and possibly by choice, adapt more to the Scandinavian culture and grow to call that their own. The threat of dividing rights onto groups first and foremost is the limits it places on individuals to pick a group and stay with it so to speak.

4.3. In what ways does Taylor’s politics of recognition contribute to a more sustainable diverse democratic society?

We have landed at the final question of this thesis, and perhaps also the question that ties it all together. For Taylor a state consisting of diverse culture might mean the state has a responsibility to create an atmosphere for respective cultures to survive as well as thrive. For the sake of clarification this thesis will define a sustainable diverse democratic society as a democratic nation that houses many different cultures and places bearably the best interest and freedom of its citizens at the top of the agenda. Has Taylor taught us anything that is of good use in facing the growing diversity of Europe? If so, what can we pull out of the politics of recognition?

Looking at the emphasis of Charles Taylor’s scholarly work one can see that he places a lot of emphasis on religion and secularism, which is the reason for the section in this thesis.

labeled “the Religious Aspect”. In order to sufficiently go deep into the theories of Taylor and pull out exactly in what ways the politics of recognition could add to a diverse democratic society a short discussion on religion was deemed important. The reason for this is simply that religion and secularism is a major aspect of what culture is, and whether we are culture-bearing humans or theological humans we find that our identity is to some degree shaped by both. Furthermore, the model in which Taylor lays out for managing secularism and religion in a democratic state proves vital for the discussion on a diverse democratic state.

As discussed earlier Taylor lays forth a model, referred to in the essay How to Define Secularism as view B. This mode of co-existence within diverse societies aims not to control religion and secularism but rather to provide any and all aspects of theological or secular components in society with an equal footing. Whether this viewpoint can be paralleled to Taylor’s politics of difference is an interesting point of discussion. On the one hand, view B aims not to differentiate religion within a secular state to ensure their respective survival and well-being, rather it intends to “manage the religious and metaphysical-philosophical diversity of views (including non- and antireligious views) fairly and democratically”.

This viewpoint allows almost for the parallel to be drawn from view B to the politics of universalism, mainly for the language Taylor chooses to insert as fairly and democratically. Although fairly can easily mean with focus on equality, and Taylor sees the politics of difference as the system mostly based on equality it cannot be denied that the politics of universalism seeks to achieve equality by treating each individual with the same respect and rights. On the other hand, we see that view B can be similar to the politics of difference in a way that it seeks to manage diversity. It opens up the floor for the right to be different in the public sphere, and in that fashion we see why Taylor favors this view as opposed to view A as discussed in the section called The Religious Aspect. One could also argue that the ultimate parallel is indeed easier drawn to the politics of difference. View B seeks to create a platform for co-existence regardless of difference and the politics of difference includes an aspect of universalism where it seeks to treasure differences in culture. At least, it seems that Taylor’s discussion leads to this conclusion. Many diverse European states are per today considered secular and the view on managing diversity as prescribed by Taylor can be implemented to this discussion.

Nevertheless, overlooking the religious/secular aspect of this discussion as it is not the main focus of this thesis we can dive right into the cultural characteristic of a diverse democratic state. Taylor discusses what can be interpreted as a possible middle ground between the politics of universalism and the politics of difference which leads to a viable model for managing diversity.

“They [other models of liberal society] are willing to weigh the importance of certain forms of uniform treatment against the

importance of cultural survival, and opt sometimes in the favor of the latter. They are thus in the end not procedural models of liberalism, but are grounded very much on judgments about what makes a good life – judgments in which the integrity of cultures has an important place.”

What Taylor refers to as procedural liberalism is labeled too unyielding to manage diversity. Procedural liberalism is defined by Thompson as “resolving disagreements by means of procedures which are fair to all individual citizens.”

It becomes too firm in its viewpoint on cultural rights being balanced up against individual rights, thereby Taylor comes to the conclusion that this system is unreceptive when faced with multicultural societies. He rather favors a system where certain individual rights are independent on cultural differences, while at the same time allowing for some collective rights. By leading this discussion Taylor comes to the conclusion that the politics of universalism, if interpreted and implemented in a non-procedural manner can be welcoming to diversity to some extent. This section of Taylor’s theory tells us that Taylor cannot be said to be completely anti-liberalism, but rather welcomes liberal views on the assumption that they are not too rigid in terms of collective rights.

Nevertheless, and I must agree with Taylor on this point, liberalism cannot claim complete neutrality whether it claims it in the field of culture or politics. He refutes the opinion that liberalism is a natural outcome of the mankind evolving beyond religious perception to the separation of church and state. He argues rather that liberalism, as well as the Western opinion of what is known as the separation of church and state is a strictly credited to the very Western perspective of culture, and cannot be said to history- or culture-blind. Indeed this is of great importance to mention as Taylor blames the Western perceived thought of superiority as one of the main ills of the lack of recognition and worth for other cultures.

On the other hand, I cannot agree with the viability of Taylor’s solution to the politics of recognition and for managing a diverse democratic society. The answer per Taylor is namely to provide equal recognition for all cultures within one society, be it through education, public events, holidays and so forth. The reason for my rebuttal of his outcome is due to its unrealistic manner in regards to how the world looks today. Allow me to elaborate by using a practical example; in any society there is an assumed majority, taking Sweden as an example for my argument we see that the Swedish culture is prevalent here. If one is to show equal recognition to all cultures in Sweden we would for example see many more school holidays in respect of the multitude of religious and cultural commemorations that enrich the country due to many years of multicultural diversity.

74 S. Thompson, The Political Theory of Recognition, p. 46.
Equal recognition would mean that if we allow for our kids to be home to celebrate Christmas, they should also be home celebrating Eid. Equal recognition would also mean that as soon as holders of a foreign culture enter as citizens of Sweden, their respective customs should be taught on the same level as Swedish customs to ensure understanding. This would be to ensure judgment on their cultural background to be based on knowledge of their own accomplishments and the definition of a good life as Taylor sees vital for equal recognition. This is most definitely a system based on equal respect and equal recognition; however the extent of its realistic nature implemented in a diverse society can be questioned. As long as there is a prevalent majority within a society with diverse minorities we can see that the system of equal recognition can be difficult to materialize in our democratic institutions. In fact, the politics of universalism that seeks to hand out the same rights and freedoms would be much easier to implement and follow. However this would also mean a sort of “survival of the fittest” in regards to cultures, meaning that you do what you can with what you get on the presumption that equal rights to all is built on equality and not difference-blindness.

Another problem as seen by Malik in regards to ensuring collective rights is their representation. What are referred to in this instance specifically are namely multicultural policies in democratic societies that aim to manage diversity but essentially fail at doing so. Instead they unintentionally promote segregation, group division and misrepresentation of said groups. The misrepresentation occurs as individuals that take the stage so to say in the public order on behalf of their groups and speak of their interests as they would be the cultural interest as a whole. By doing this we enforce an identity on an entire group or collective and simply distribute rights upon that culture with no regard to the conflict that arises internally based on that misrepresentation.

This is another aspect of Malik’s theory that pokes a hole in Taylor’s adamant outlook on collective rights. In order to distribute in a fair manner these collective rights there needs to be a just representation of that group or culture. I would dare to claim that a sole definition of any group in the world per today is non existing or not realistic. What I mean with this statement is merely that by allowing for the possibility that all individuals belong to some community, which I do allow for, we have to also acknowledge that all communities or cultures consist naturally of multiple individuals. Whether it is 10 individuals or whether the number is in the millions, we cannot overlook the fact that these individuals that make up their respective cultures do not always share the same interests. The mere fact that cultures consists of individuals is an adequate basis for the argument that no culture, community or collective is homogeneous.

As for Rorty, she agrees that cultural identity is too complex to define. We cannot place an abstract definition on what it means to be Latino. The Latino culture, along with many other cultures consists of people that make up that identity and their respective interests are almost never homogeneous. She discusses in terms of the political and economic aspect of a diverse

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society and claims that within one civilization the diversity of social practices might be true but the political and economic interests will at some point immerge and motivations for the good life become similar. Rorty’s argument can be thought to mean that although we might start off pursuing different goals in terms of economy and politics we eventually end up influencing each other in a shared society.

This can again be tied back to Malik’s discussion on the lived experience of multiculturalism. Bear with me as I attempt to elaborate on the parallel between the discourse led by Malik and the one led by Rorty. As for Malik, he holds the idea that the lived experience of multiculturalism works much more efficiently than multiculturalism regulated by policies. Policies created to manage diversity only work in practice to create more segregation and less understanding of the other. The lived experience can be interpreted to mean diversity in its natural form, where cultural groups live within one civilization and manage in their own way their differences and their similarities. The policies implemented are rather focused on the idea that one’s culture does not define you, a complex human can lean on many policies designed to cater to our economic, social and political needs. This can mean that an African-American woman can with no judgment or oddities focus more on women’s issues than those of her cultural heritage. It can mean that a francophone from Quebec has the freedom to engage more in policies concerning labor laws than those regulating his cultural heritage, simply because that might be where his interests lay.

I will now attempt to show in what way Rorty continues, although not chronologically, the Malikean discourse in her dialogue on the economic and political nature that binds individuals together. The scenario that Rorty describes that allow for the melting down of diverse interest seems oddly close to the lived experience lingo provided by Malik. This is to say that if we would pursue the lived experience of multiculturalism as opposed to strictly attempting to engage in policies created to manage diversity we might land at the place that Rorty describes. We might very well see that the different interests may eventually come together to pursue a common goal and have an overall similar definition of the good life. The United States might well be a good example of a melting pot where diversity from all over the world has created one civilization living side by side, pursuing the same common ultimate goal for the good life while at the same time holding true to their cultural diversity. For example, there would be almost no way to describe a United States identity.

This is where one might argue that this specific theory can be the very end that Taylor seeks to avoid, namely that diversity perishes and we rid ourselves of our original identity. I would contest that argument by saying that this would not mean the end of diversity; it would rather mean the freedom to and from diversity. It would entail governance based on a human rights perspective, namely the belief that we all share the same purpose and same goal when it comes to the search for the good life and the search for human dignity. Albeit, this does not necessarily mean the same goal and interests in terms of the cultural heritage that makes mankind diverse but it would entail basic human rights and the respect for others differences.

and similarities. Furthermore it would reinforce the belief that the more individuals come
together and learn of their differences the more the lived experience of multiculturalism can
be strengthened.
Chapter 5 – Conclusion

This chapter will seek to summarize this thesis and come up with what the implications of multiculturalism really are as told by Charles Taylor and criticized by Amelie Rorty and Kenan Malik. The main points led in the previous chapter will be put a light on before we place our findings in the section labeled “Results”.

5.1. Summary of Analysis

Charles Taylor has broken ground with his essay The Politics of Recognition in the field of multiculturalist theory. In this thesis we have aimed at getting to the bottom of his model of multiculturalism in order to obtain more knowledge on diverse societies in response to the growing diversity of Europe. One of the main focuses of this thesis and discussion has been the question on identity. Whether cultural identity can be defined and concentrated on an equal platform as individual identity. We have investigated the relationship between identity and recognition as provided by Taylor. We have dug deep into the issue of distributive rights as well as finally discussed which components, if any, of our discussion pertaining to Taylor may contribute to a diverse society.

During the process we have discovered that the politics of recognition is a theory focusing its narrative on the protection of endangered cultures. This is to say that Taylor directs his work and thinking process on the importance of ensuring the recognition and worth of those minority cultures that may be in danger of disappearing. That narrative seems to be quickly negated by Kenan Malik and his account on the difficulty of defining the decay of cultures as they grow with the people that hold them. To this argument Malik would rather, instead of multicultural policies, see the so-called lived experience of multiculturalism. Rorty claims that we cannot tie our identity so closely to our cultural heritage; we are complex beings capable of being defined as so much more. Although we can agree that the politics of recognition is a normative theory we cannot completely discard the thought that there might be aspects of policy ideas involved as well. I would interpret not only the case on Quebec and Taylor’s defense on distinct rights to groups as possible practical policy but also certain ideas brought forth in the discussion on the politics of universalism and the politics of difference.

As Taylor goes on to discuss identity as being created on a dialogical level, and refutes the idea of humans being solitary creatures we get into the division between the politics of universalism and the politics of difference. Taylor advocates for the latter form and places importance on the necessity to value each other’s differences. To not only acknowledge them but also to make room in the public sphere for them to thrive, as opposed to the universal system of distributing the same rights and freedoms regardless of differences. Perhaps one of the most important pieces of critique is provided by Rorty when she claims that Taylor simplifies his hypothesis by the mere idea that cultures can be boiled down to language.
Thereby, in the case of Quebec Taylor can claim that what he calls procedural liberalism is too rigid for a diverse society. However this argument does not make sense as Rorty further claims that liberalism would most definitely be able to accommodate for linguistic differences, and says that Taylor needs to open up the floor for more complex issues that make up culture in order to criticize liberalism with validity.

Agreeing with Rorty on the previous mentioned argument we see that Taylor critique of liberalism falls short. Furthermore, his claim that distributing rights to groups does not necessarily mean the downfall of individual rights, and that fundamental individual rights would remain in place can also seem problematic. The issue becomes the very definition of group rights and determining the respective diverse groups’ interests. This is where Malik brings forth his ideas on the miscued perception of what group interests may be as we tend to listen to the voice that is heard in public which may not represent the group as a whole. This argument is logical as no group can claim to have the exact same issues on all levels. There might well be citizens of Quebec that do not want to speak the French language at all, but identify with the culture.

Taylor remains true to his communitarian theory when it comes to distributive rights and advocates for the importance of collective rights, however this is not necessarily on the expense of individual rights. Taylor holds the belief that individual rights would not have to cower down to a big degree as we would meet these rights through group rights. This is the point where I disagree with Taylor. There is simply nothing to back up the claim that individual rights are met to some extent through collective rights. Yes, we are all parts of collectives, but I do not believe that we are simply part of one. We have complex interests placing our loyalty within different group settings, and with a large focus on collective rights we would have to choose whether to pursue women’s rights or African American rights if one belongs to both which is not a viable solution. In this case the focus should not be to preserve diversity, but to preserve our individuality within diversity.

5.1.1. Results

The question remains; what can we draw out of the politics of recognition and Taylor’s analysis on the preservation of cultures? The main issue is to achieve a sustainable diverse democratic society and whether or not preservation of minority cultures is the key to doing so is a complex issue to examine. For Taylor this remains the case. As for Malik and Rorty, they both see difficulty in defining cultural identity as well as pinpointing the interests of said groups. After our discussion, I must hold to the opinion that equal recognition and equal worth remain vital pillars in the definition of a democratic society. These two principles are what make up the fabric of human rights, and we must hold on to the belief that equal recognition and worth are what make for peaceful-coexistence between diverse cultures.
As for the politics of recognition, which is like aforementioned namely a defense on protecting the rights of minorities. The basis of the essay is just; however there is reason to believe that although it may be able to defend a case like that of Quebec with one distinct culture, it can face challenges in defending collective rights in a much more diverse society. In a fully diverse society the lived experience that Malik describes is much more feasible and sustainable. Taylor can, to some extent, be interpreted in the politics of difference as promoting public policies that aim to uphold and cater to collective differences. The lived experience of multiculturalism as promoted by Malik does not seek to abolish difference, and it does not place individuals in the locked position of having to be defined by those differences. A just society is one that seeks to equally treat its citizens regardless of their difference while simultaneously allowing for the freedom to enjoy individual identity. Meaning that the individual language that Taylor believes should at times cower down to collective rights should instead be celebrated so as to promote the freedom to pursue individual definitions of the good life.

As for the discussion on cultural identity I must agree with Rorty and Malik. This topic is too broad to define. We cannot define identity as “what makes us who we are” and in the same breath claim that living beings within groups can share the same identity. This negates the idea that individuals are holder of identity as the two become mutually exclusive. If we believe that the identity of an individual is deep and complex with many layers then we are not giving groups the same respect if we claim they too hold their own identities. If we are to pursue collective rights we are opening up for the possibility of the very same lethal misrecognition that Taylor discusses. This could lead to the misrepresentation of groups, thereby resulting in a society that only recognizes very few individuals within each respective culture or minority.

Furthermore, Taylor’s discussion in terms of quotas within liberalism created to even out the playing field and its aim to erase diversity is difficult to agree to. This in fact could very well be the most just system of managing diversity. I do not believe that it aims to erase diversity; rather it attempts to make up for wrongs and to hold true to its promise of equality. Although his discussion on the politics of difference is highly logical on the mere fact that we are all different it holds some serious challenges such as the definition of the interests of collectives and their differences. The need for policies designed to manage diversity and differences has also been negated as the main point for Taylor is that cultures may thrive for many generations. This is unrealistic because of the very fact that cultural decay is almost impossible to foresee or define as cultures change with the people that carry them.

The answer to managing a diverse society justly per Taylor is namely to provide equal recognition for all cultures and collectives publically. In itself it seems like a fair and logical thought, which it is. However, when realistically looking at how societies would provide this equal recognition for collectives specifically we come to a halt. Elaborating on my negation for his solution; it would not be realistic due to for instance the many institutions a democracy hold, as discussed earlier it would be absurd to allow for school holidays for every single sacred day of every culture shared within one nation. Although this might seem harsh
it is simply the reality of today that equal recognition does not work to its utmost degree in public promoting group identity. Rather, it should hold true to the equal worth of all humans. It should promote equal recognition to all individuals and allow for the freedom of belonging to multiple groups in order to completely fulfill their identity and continue the dialogue with others that make up who we are.

From a human rights perspective Taylor’s theory in regards to the politics of recognition is a just theory. It promotes worth, and it promotes dignity. Upholding and recognizing the differences that we all have is a virtuous means to an end and this theory works well within the human rights discourse. However, there are challenges that remain with collective identity and Taylor’s emphasis on group rights within a diverse society. Further research on this subject could be a narrowed-down investigation on group identities and whether or not they can be substantially defined. My lesson is that they cannot and that there is a lot to learn from the politics of recognition if one is willing to draw only certain aspects of the theory and not apply it with a strict communitarian perspective. On the presumption that we are promoting equality as opposed to difference-blindness we should remain true to the identity of the individual in the face of a diverse society in order to promote freedom to evolve our identities. As for the refugee crisis and the many cultures that will color the European fabric; they should be recognized within the individual that holds them, not the group as a whole. All humans should enjoy the same worth and recognition in society with the knowledge that cultures need no outside preservation as they will live on and evolve naturally with the people that carry them.
5.1.2. Printed References


5.2.2. Online References


