



The Construction of Hierarchies of Value: A Comparative Work of Taylor and Nietzsche

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Abstract

Modern Western people relate to values in an atomistic fashion: values and hierarchies of values are and should be constructed without the interference of external influences. The individual decides what is good for him and does not judge others for their table of values. This modern understanding of value creation is heavily criticized in modern philosophical works.

This research investigates to what extent the modern subject can break free from the cultural background by comparing the works of Charles Taylor and Friedrich Nietzsche who have concerned themselves with the topic of value creation extensively. This comparative work draws on the radical differences between both authors as well as their unapparent overlap on the construction of hierarchies of values against the background of the modern understanding on constructing hierarchies of values.

Introduction

Contemporary subjects relate to values differently than before. Modern Western human beings have the belief to be able to construct their own values and decide what is important to them without any external influence. At the same time, contemporaries appeal to the notion of value relativism. Because every individual can determine what is good for himself. The public imperative dictates that one should not criticize the table of values from another person as that would compromise their autonomy.

Values motivate subjects to take a particular stance or to act in a certain manner which they link to their notion of the good life. For example, making a connection between open-mindedness and one's notion of the good life could motivate one to engage in conversation with people that have worldviews with which the subject disagrees or is unfamiliar with. In general, subjects from a similar environment grasp each other's values to a large extent, even though the subjects do not articulate the values in the same way, nor do they attribute the same amount of significance to each value. Values, therefore, appear in a structural form: a hierarchy of values. The modern understanding of hierarchies of value has been subject to heavy criticism by feminist, communitarian, and post-structuralist thinkers, such as Linda Barclay, Charles Taylor, and Michel Foucault. Their objections, as different as they are, overlap in one fundamental aspect: the modern subject wrongly has the idea that he solely construes his own hierarchy of values. Taylor adds to this critique that contemporary subjects experience a lack of depth in life because the modern subject has lost connection to a shared horizon of values – an understanding that he is part of a larger moral sphere exceeding his own life.¹

The controversial nineteenth-century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche warned the modern subject for a decline in meaning as well, but he attributes this loss of depth and meaning to grand moral structures that limit the individual to develop himself fully in all freedom. He points his arrows primarily at Christianity because this religion would attempt to make something similar out of every human being.

Despite the fundamental differences between the positions of Nietzsche and Taylor on how hierarchies of values are constructed, they actively argued against a felt decline in profoundness in the lives of the modern subjects.

In this thesis, I will investigate to what extent contemporary subjects are capable of constructing their own hierarchy of values and how a certain profoundness can be reached that makes provides life with substance. In other words, I will conduct a comparative research between the holistic position on the construction of hierarchies of values by Taylor and the individualistic approach by Nietzsche against the background of the modern understanding of the construction of values hierarchies. Modern subjects relate to their values in a conformist and yet superficial fashion, which neither leads to authenticity nor profoundness.

Before undertaking this project, I will look first at the broader discussion concerning values. More specifically, a brief discussion on definitions of value and what exactly is a hierarchy of values.

¹ Taylor, Charles, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 17-18.

Theories of Value

Philosophical value theory concerns itself with theoretical questions about values and goodness of all varieties. More specifically, traditional questions in value theory investigate what things are good, how they are good, and how forms of goodness relate to each other.² In the early twentieth century, G.E. Moore argued that questions like ‘which is more valuable: pleasure or knowledge?’ make little sense, unless the quantity of pleasure and knowledge are taken into the equation.³ This claim seems at odds with reality. In ‘Who am I Without A Story?’, Christien Brinkgreve, perhaps unintentionally so, shows that subjects do differentiate between values without necessarily quantifying them. She speaks of her mother’s view on modern society’s glorification of self-development and attributes more value to knowing one’s role within the family.⁴ In other words, Brinkgreve’s mother compares family values to the individualistic understanding of self-development and claims family values to be of greater value. Therefore, she considers family values to be of greater importance to her notion of the good life than the value of self-development.

In an attempt to add structure to the skein of values, Robert S. Hartman differentiates between two different types of value. The first category of values is signified by ‘what questions’ and refers to extrinsic values.⁵ For example, a knife is good when it meets two conditions: (1) the object is a knife and (2) the knife has all the attributes a knife is supposed to have. It needs to have a firm handle and should be able to cut things.

The knife example is rather unproblematic. However, if the same approach is applied to another case, issues arise. In the case of a car crash, the car crash would be good if (1) it is a car crash and (2) the car crash has all the attributes a car crash is supposed to have. Even though the car crash meets both conditions, one does not speak of a good car crash because human values are potentially at stake.⁶ Therefore, Hartman adds a second category, either called human values or intrinsic values.

Knives and cars are considered good when they fall into their class and when they have all the properties that belong to that specific class. The second category of value is signified by ‘as questions’ and does not require reference to any greater class. Intrinsic values belong to a class with only one member, “because the goodness inheres x itself and not in x’s membership in a class other than x”⁷. For a good person, this implies that subject x is good if x coincides with himself. In order to do this, the subject must first figure out what this entails exactly. Simply put, a person requires some sense of self-knowledge to be a good person.

² Schroeder, Mark, “Value Theory, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2016 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/value-theory/> (consulted February 19th 2020).

³ Moore, George Edward, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 56.

⁴ Brinkgreve, Christien, *De Ogen van de Ander: De Sociale Bronnen van Zelfkennis* (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, 2009), 75.

⁵ Hartman, Robert S, “A Logical Definition of Value,” in: *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 48, No. 4, 413-420 (New York: The Journal of Philosophy Inc., 1951), 413.

⁶ Hartman, Robert S, “The Logic of Value”, in: *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 389-432 (New York: Philosophy Education Society Inc., 1961), 427-428.

⁷ Hartman, A Logical Definition of Value, 415.

Hartman argues that intrinsic values “are infinitely more important than social or material values, and hence than all efforts, political or technological ‘to change the world’”⁸. One could quite convincingly argue that political efforts to change the world have ties with human values, but that is not of my concern here. What is of my interest, here, is that Hartman indicates a hierarchical structure of values. The goodness of the car incident does not solely relate to it falling within its category, as it did with the knife, but the goodness of the car accident refers to as little damage as possible to intrinsic values.

Moreover, Brinkgreve’s mother also gave a clear indication of a hierarchical structure of values. The critical difference with Hartman’s hierarchical structure is that both family values and self-development fall within Hartman’s category of intrinsic values. Even though both family values and self-development might often have a similar form, the goodness of these values are inherent and do not relate to a membership in a greater class. Put differently, Hartman’s claim that intrinsic values should take priority over extrinsic values can be extended to the claim that a more complex hierarchy of values exists. Hierarchy of values can be defined as an internal structure that ranks different values based on their contribution to their notion of the good life.

Positions on Hierarchies of Value

This work will investigate two different positions of how hierarchies of value are constructed against the background of the critique on the modern understanding of how value hierarchies are constructed. The first position will be the holistic position, as argued by Charles Taylor throughout the majority of his works, especially *The Language Animal* (2016). Taylor strongly emphasizes the influence of the social structure as a whole, the cultural background, which could lead to an almost deterministic understanding of how a subject or a society constructs a hierarchy of values. However, Taylor does clearly not argue for a deterministic approach, but rather that the subject finds itself in constant processes of deliberation with the cultural background to shape its values, hierarchy of values, and the ways those values find expression in society. Linda Barclay paraphrases this Taylorian position clearly: “[a]utonomous agency does not imply that one mysteriously escapes altogether from social influence but rather that one is able to fashion a certain response to it.”⁹

The second position is a more individualistic approach, as advocated by Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche argues a position in which a hierarchy of values should be constructed without the limitations put upon the individual by the cultural background. The subject should actively attempt to break loose from the cultural background to construct their own values. For Nietzsche, the good relates to the free spirit who constructs his own values. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he states:

“My opinion is *my* opinion: another person has not easily a right to it . . . One must renounce the bad taste of wishing to agree with many people. ‘Good’ is no longer good when one’s

⁸ Hartman, *The Logic of Value*, 423.

⁹ Barclay, Linda. “Autonomy and the Social Self” in: *Relational Autonomy*, ed. Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, 52-71 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 54.

neighbor takes it into his mouth. And how could there be a 'common good'! The expression contradicts itself; that which can be common is always of small value."¹⁰

To answer my research question to what extent the subject can break loose from the cultural background to construct his own hierarchy of value and to foresee life with deeper meaning, this thesis will have the following structure. The first chapter will explicate the position of Taylor on how hierarchies of value are constructed and to what extent the subject can break loose from the cultural background. In the second chapter, the same thing will be done for Nietzsche's view. In the third chapter, the two positions will engage in dialogue with each other based on their differences in the way they relate to the cultural background, the escapability of it, how fundamental aspect of resonance to values and their overlap in concern of depth based on strong evaluations – the concept of strong evaluations will be elaborated below. The final chapter will be on the conclusions that can be drawn from this research.

¹⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, transl. Helen Zimmern (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1997), 43.

Taylor on the Construction of Hierarchies of Value

Introduction

The first view on the construction of hierarchies of values comes from Charles Taylor. He is a communitarian from an ontological perspective, which means that Taylor believes society should be explained in communitarian terms.¹¹ Taylor attempts “to purge our key normative notions – freedom, justice, rights – of their atomist distortions” and to show how these normative notions are inseparably connected to the whole cultural background.¹² In order to construe Taylor’s view on the construction of hierarchies of values, a deeper understanding of his communitarian theory is required. Firstly, how do people differentiate in quality between values – through strong evaluations. The second passage addresses how values are constructed and reconsidered through language. Lastly, how do strong evaluations and language string together in the construction of hierarchies of value.

Strong and Weak Evaluations

In the first chapter of *The Importance of What We Care About*, Harry G. Frankfurt claims that the difference between a person and a non-person can be understood by the structure of a person’s will.¹³ He differentiates between first-order desires and second-order desires. First-order desires are simple desires: to want or not want something. Second-order desires have the form ‘person A wants to want to X’. Put differently, second-order desires reflect on the desirability of first-order desires. An example of a first-order desire would be ‘I crave a cigarette’, and the second-order desire could have the form of ‘I do not want to want a cigarette’. People that are not capable of having second-order desires Frankfurt considers non-persons.

Taylor builds on Frankfurt’s theory, as his theory lacks an account of qualitative evaluation of desires.¹⁴ Human beings seem to classify their desires and often do so in a more profound sense, which Frankfurt does not take into account. Therefore, Taylor adds the differentiation between weak and strong evaluations. In the case of weak evaluation, ‘good’ means to be desired, and these desires can be refuted based on other stronger first-order desires that are incompatible with each other.¹⁵ Strong evaluations are much more complex: Strong evaluation

“deploys a language of evaluative distinctions. [Therefore,] the rejected desire is not so rejected because of some mere contingent or circumstantial conflict with another goal. Being cowardly does not compete with other goods by taking up the time or energy I need to pursue them, and it may not alter my circumstances in such a way as to prevent my pursuing them.”¹⁶

¹¹ Abbey, Ruth and Taylor, Charles. “Communitarianism, Taylor-Made: An Interview with Charles Taylor,” in *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 1, 1-10 (Camperdown: Australian Institute of Policy and Science, 1996), 2.

¹² Taylor, Charles. *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 9.

¹³ Frankfurt, Harry G. “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person” in *The Importance of What We Care About* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 11.

¹⁴ Taylor, *Philosophical Papers I*, 16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

Otherwise put, being a strong evaluator implies a more articulate reflection as one examines different possible life-options and considers which one is more closely related to their notion of the good life. So, strong evaluations articulate the kind of person one is, or at least, wants to become. Articulating fundamental values for the subject contributes to a more profound understanding of oneself, and can foresee life with a certain depth because one obtains a better understanding of the kind of person he is or wants to become.

An example should clarify the difference between weak and strong evaluations even further. One's sexual preferences with regards to hair color can be said to be insignificant in a way, while one's sexual orientation can come with essential decisions. A homosexual man in a staunchly conservative environment has to decide whether he wants his actions to conform to the values of his surroundings or if he wants to be able to express his sexuality freely.

Another feature of strong evaluation comes to light through this example: strong evaluations require an elaborate language that relates to the whole cultural background in which one is situated. The background, in this sense, is fundamental to the very existence of particular meanings. The specific type of meanings that I aim at, Taylor calls 'human meanings'. Human meanings are experienced and felt by the agent as he passionately relates to them; they have significance for him. However, these meanings do not exist objectively because human meanings cannot exist without a human grasp of what it is like to experience them. To link the concept of human meanings and the importance of the cultural background to the previous example: the homosexual in a conservative environment is only presented with the decision between conformation and self-expression because of the ideals present in his surroundings. In this traditional setting, the notion of the good life is bound to one's sexual orientation, while in a more progressive context, the value of tolerance towards one's sexual orientation is much more influential. In short, in a more liberal area, the homosexual would not be presented with this difficult decision between conformation and expressing his sexual orientation freely due to different background values, as the idea of the good life is not associated with one's sexual orientation in a narrow fashion. The content of the notion of the good life is articulated and enacted differently.

The hierarchy of values present in the background shows to be crucial for how people relate to each other, to themselves, and also for the very questions and difficulties that arise for society and individuals in that society.

A typically modern Western understanding of life is a strive for meaningfulness. The idea of a meaningful life can only exist because it can be contrasted to a life that is devoid of or lacks meaning. The modern subject has a sense of what life devoid of meaning would feel like. In *A Secular Age*, Taylor claims that everyone in modern Western society strives for this sense of fullness, but how this sense can be attained differs per community and even per person. For example, the believer aims to find his feeling of fullness in relation to God; where for unbelievers, this is not the case.¹⁷ A successful articulation of this sense of fullness does more than just accurately describe the situation at hand; it also shapes the life of the modern subject. Quite similarly, therapeutic sessions that bring an underlying mechanism to consciousness can

¹⁷ Taylor, Charles, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 8

result in the patient being able to overcome the reason why he went to therapy.¹⁸ The successful articulation of the mechanism does shape his life; it has provided him with tools to deal with his anxiety.

Articulations of this sort can change the way a subject perceives himself. It can improve the views on what is of significance for a person and, with that, the goals someone has. Strong evaluations are expressions of a sense of what is a worthy life – or as the modern subject would say: a meaningful life. Strong evaluations provide the subject with the means to articulate what is valuable for him in a more profound way. In the following subchapter, I will explain how these values are constructed and reshaped, according to Taylor.

What should be taken from this subchapter is that the questions concerning one's identity (the kind of person one is or wants to become) result from dialogues between the cultural background and one's personal notion of the good life. As I have tried to illustrate with the example of the homosexual in the conservative environment: the kind of person he becomes depends profoundly on the decision that he makes relating to the present values in society and his notion of the good life. Whichever he deems more important conformity or authenticity makes up a significant portion of his identity. Regardless of the option that he chooses, his strong evaluations fundamentally depend on the discourse between the cultural background and his notion of the good life, making the cultural background inescapable for any subject.

The Articulation of Values

Strong evaluations grasp life in terms of higher and lower, worthy and unworthy, meaningful and meaningless, profound and superficial.¹⁹ How one articulates the notion of the good life expresses the feelings and values that a person holds. These articulations cannot be seen independently; they relate to the background understanding, which underpins all our perceptual discriminations.²⁰ Language, then, is crucial for a person to articulate his relation to the world and how everything strings together. The holism of human language manifests itself in three ways: (1) singular words only have meaning within a whole vocabulary, (2) there always remains more to be articulated, and (3) particular words, or sentences, relate to the entire background in which it takes place.

The first manifestation of the holism of language portrays the necessary connection between individual words. The word 'red' does not make sense without the contrast with other colors such as purple or blue. Put differently, for the color red to make sense, one needs to be able to identify things as 'non-red'. In a deeper sense, one can only pursue a prideful life when it can be contrasted with an understanding of, for example, shame. Articulation, in this in-depth sense, provides a person with more profound insights on what person he would like to be or become and how that person would act. Language, then, strings together like a web, in which each word can only have meaning when it contrasts with other words in that web. A word, therefore, cannot exist or have meaning independently, as it necessarily relates to language as a whole.

¹⁸ Taylor, Charles, *The Language Animal: The Full Shape of The Human Linguistic Capacity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 191.

¹⁹ Taylor, *Philosophical Papers I*, 16.

²⁰ Taylor, *The Language Animal*, 15.

The second manifestation of holism concerns the boundaries of language. Lev Vygotsky speaks of the 'zone of proximal development', in which a subject grasps that some words, of which he only has a superficial understanding, have a deeper and broader use.²¹ The sense of further articulation does not merely concern words that already exist in that community's vocabulary. For example, the sexual vocabulary has largely expanded in the last decade. A newly coined concept is 'gender fluid', which refers to people that do not consistently identify with one the two biological genders, either male or female. The way these people identify themselves can vary per day. This alternate way of relating to the gender question opens up new ways in which people can identify themselves and raises more questions on how these newly articulated life options should be enacted.

Finally, the understanding of particular impressions carries with them potential information; they relate to the background of a complex whole of which these particular impressions are mere segments. Taylor provides an example: "the good life is defined in contrast to other less valuable . . . ways of living. And the ethical ideal is bound up with some notion of the motives which favor it and those which impede it."²² The good life, therefore, cannot exist as a phenomenon on its own. It relates to the moral convictions of society and contrasts with everything that appears as potentially non-good. Different life options have to be available that have a potential claim to being good.

In *Beyond Good and Evil* (and in other works), Friedrich Nietzsche shows that the understanding of 'good' in pre-Socratic Greece differed fundamentally from the modern understanding of 'good'. For the Greeks, good related to a noble and elevated soul. Moreover, "[t]he noble type of man regards himself as a determiner of values; he does not require to be approved of; he passes the judgment"²³ In the late nineteenth century, the good related to matters that preserved humanity. Central virtues associated with the ideal of preservation were compassion and obedience. In other words, the good for the pre-Socratic Greeks was determined by the nobles themselves, whereas the good in Nietzsche's time seemed to be dependent on a consensus of what sustained the majority. Nietzsche claims that the change has occurred through a revolution within morality, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

The social embeddedness of the good life, its relation to other values in society, gives away that its meaning has changed throughout time and may be open to future change as well. The expansion of articulacy reshapes experience in a certain way. A superficial new articulation arises when one learns to distinguish artichokes from cardoons, but more profoundly when one distinguishes between different sorts of life-options and the behavior associated with them, as new articulations changed the way modern subjects relate to the topic of gender identification.²⁴ Once the different life-options have been put to words, they are prone to change, and various forms can be added or cease to be options over time, due to a plethora of

²¹ Ibid., 60.

²² Ibid., 256.

²³ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 260.

²⁴ Ibid., 24.

reasons. Cultural change occurs through three steps ('rungs').

At first, a feeling arises that something of significance that, hitherto, has not been put to words adequately. This feeling might be vague to the extent that the person does not even realize what this new thing is about. Wilhelm von Humboldt describes this feeling as a "feeling that there is something which the language does not directly contain, but which the mind/soul, spurred on by language, must supply; and the drive, in turn, to couple everything felt by the soul with a sound."²⁵

The second rung builds on the first one. After a sense that something new can be said, and one grasps what that new phenomenon encloses, a verbal articulation emerges. The linguistic inventiveness is not limited to the utterance of new words, but also involves "new turns of phrase, new styles of expressing oneself, the inauguration of new extensions of old terms, the metaphorical leaps, and so on".²⁶

Lastly, if the neologism resonates in society, it articulates the feelings of more individuals in society and is taken up by members of society, it provides a fuller account of life. For example, when enough people agree that the elderly deserve respect and how this form of respect must be enacted, it reshapes the understanding of the word respect. At some point, the articulation could be expanded by differentiating between respect for the elderly and respect for one's boss. The relations are different, and an understanding of these differences is portrayed by people acting differently with their elders than with their boss, while in both scenarios behaving with the appropriate respect. Following this example, it becomes clear how a further articulation of values can shape both the content of the value as the social structure as a whole because people alter their behavior based on the new insight on respect.

Taylor wrote a passage contributing to the understanding of how these rungs work in practice: in the Greek polis of Athens, and to some extent the Roman republic, the idea of equality among citizens emerged and was put into practice. The Athenians resisted against despotism; they felt unrepresented as political beings and resisted against the current form of government. In other words, they felt like the existing political structure was at odds with their values and ideal form of government. The feeling arose that something new could be said about the position of citizens in the political system (rung 1).

The Athenians coined a neologism for this sensation, *isonomia* (ἰσονομία), which roughly translates to 'equality of right' (rung 2).

The Athenian citizens articulated not only a new word that gave expression to their feelings, but their articulation entailed new expectations and norms for society as a whole.²⁷ The term *isonomia* and the expectations and norms that were accompanied by it were taken up by the members of the Athenian polis and gave rise to an early form of democracy. The self-description as equals is essential for society to create an explicit common understanding of equality and how it ought to be enacted, both on an individual and political level (rung 3).²⁸

This example illustrates the importance of the language employed in society because language

²⁵ Ibid., 177.

²⁶ Taylor, *Philosophical Papers I*, 283.

²⁷ Taylor, *The Language Animal*, 281.

²⁸ Taylor, *Philosophical Papers I*, 272-273.

represents the feelings, goals, social relations, and practices of those people; the language used reflects the values of their culture. The freedom that accompanied isonomia can only be grasped by someone sensitive to the broader moral horizon in which these values take place. A Persian foreigner, someone that grew up in a despotic culture, would not fully understand this Athenian concept of isonomia. In his society, a clear hierarchy is present. The whole idea of equality would not even arise in this context. Therefore, the values expressed by the Athenians would be utterly inconceivable for the Persian as his cultural background differed so much that he cannot even begin to understand the Athenian values.²⁹

The change in the political system of the Athenians occurred through strong evaluations. The citizens rejected the previously desired political system based on articulations that were of significance to them. Their strong evaluations reflected on the current situation, and it no longer overlapped to a satisfying extent with their understanding of the good life. Because their understanding of the good life became increasingly bound to a political system that recognized all inhabitants of the polis equally, the political system, and with that, the entire way of life in the polis changed. The hierarchy of values changed through a deliberative process between citizens and the overarching structures of society. Ultimately, as a collective, the Athenians decided that equal recognition was of greater importance to their understanding of the good life than the previous values that had set up the despotic political system.

From this point onwards, the idea of equal treatment for all citizens has developed over time and is still present in most parts of modern society. Even though the content of isonomia has drastically changed since isonomia had first been coined and put to practice. For the Greeks, political equality for all citizens only involved men over eighteen years old. In modern Western society, there is, to some degree, a continuous struggle to include more minority groups into this idea of equal treatment by society as a whole. For example, in 2020 a large movement has erected to alter the modern understanding of egalitarianism to a revised understanding which involves black people. This political movement resonates strongly in the Western world leading to peaceful marches to show solidarity with black people and to more violent actions against symbols that idolize historical figures that contributed to slavery.

The example of isonomia illustrates how the current behavior and values make sense, because of a grasp of the wider predicament: how human beings continuously relate to others and society as a whole.³⁰ Put differently, the example shows the necessary relation between feelings, cultural change, and enactment. The new articulation of the good life led to people taking up new practices, improvising or changing them accordingly, and create a different world to live in. The construction of values, then, cannot be done independently, as they always are either in line with the current values or a rejection and alteration of them. One can only transcend the existing hierarchy of values by leaning on it.

Where the example of the homosexual in a conservative environment merely shows the crucial relationship between the values in the cultural background and one's own notion of the good life, the above passage shows something even more profound. The dependency of one's strong

²⁹ Taylor, *The Language Animal*, 281.

³⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 174.

evaluations that construe part of one's identity does not just lean on the present hierarchy of values in that society but is underpinned by the language a community employs. The example of isonomia shows the power of language, as the articulation of shared feelings can reconstrue the entire political structure of a society. Similarly, on an individual level, new articulations can completely reshape one's understanding of their notion of the good life. For example, reading *After Virtue* by Alisdair MacIntyre can trigger new convictions in a person that hitherto had been at peace with capitalist society by substituting his old notion of a good life that incorporated capitalist values by a new notion of the good life which aspires to defend more traditional ways of life that are far removed from values in capitalist society. Even though the newly articulated values based on traditions oppose the dominant structure in modern Western society, it crucially builds on dialogue with the cultural background as the new position is further removed from those dominant values.³¹ In short, not only the values to which one relates show the inescapability of the cultural background but also the language which one employs to articulate their fundamental life stances which contribute significantly to the construction of one's identity. The articulation of the importance of those values shapes the complex structure of one's hierarchy of values.

However, the modern understanding of the construction of values differs from the explanation above. In the *Ethics of Authenticity*, Taylor states:

"We are expected to develop our own opinions, outlook, stances, to things, to a considerable degree through solitary reflection. But this is not how things work with important issues, such as the definition of our identity. We define this always in our dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities our significant others want to recognize in us."³²

Put differently, the modern understanding of the construction of hierarchies of value is understood in atomistic terms. The contemporary subject would be able to construct values all by himself. Taylor argues strongly against this atomistic understanding and even brings forward values that he claims to be in line with his notion of the good life.

Societal Critique and View

The atomistic view overlooks the importance of the cultural background. This view is based on ideas that emerged during the scientific revolution in the seventeenth century based on Cartesian philosophy. René Descartes' epistemology stresses "that our knowledge of the world was built from particulate 'ideas', or inner representations of outer reality. We combine them to produce a view of the world".³³ In other words, a clear and accurate view of the world requires splitting every phenomenon into as many parts as possible. Wrong views only arise when one combines these simple ideas incorrectly.³⁴ In *Sources of The Self*, Taylor describes this modern understanding:

³¹ MacIntyre, Alisdair, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), vi-xvii.

³² Taylor, Charles, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 11th pr. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 33.

³³ Taylor, *The Language Animal*, 104.

³⁴ Descartes, René, *On the Method*, transl. Ian Maclean (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7-8.

“[w]e think our thoughts, ideas, or feelings as being ‘within’ us. Or else we think of our capacities or potentialities as ‘inner’, awaiting the development which will manifest them or realize them in the public world. The unconscious is for us within, and we think of the depths of the unsaid, the unsayable, the powerful inchoate feelings and affinities and the fears which dispute with us the control of our lives, as inner.”³⁵

The atomistic understanding of the self caused the modern subject to lose sight of that being a self necessitates relating to a space of moral issues; moreover, the entire cultural background. It forms the way in which the modern subject attempts to shape his life. A central value in modern Western society is authenticity, and this value, too, has come to be understood in terms of the post-scientific revolution outlook. The Cambridge dictionary defines authenticity as ‘the quality to be real or true’. The meaning of authenticity as a human meaning (as an essential value to which one could shape their lives) is understood as its own good, and as something every subject can do through a process of introspection. One does not need anything or anyone else to develop their authentic self; the modern understanding of authenticity is based on an idea of self-truth and self-wholeness.³⁶ Authenticity expresses itself as something the modern subject should strive for; to define oneself to the greatest extent possible and to gain as much control as possible over the influences external factors have bestowed upon them, and to overcome such dependencies.³⁷ Authenticity enacted in this way leads to fragmentation: a society which is increasingly less capable of articulating common goals and carrying them out, and, therefore, increasingly less tied to the other members of society for projects of common purpose and other allegiances.³⁸ When one takes shared horizons out of the accessible options, the importance of shared values diminishes. Values that do not resonate within society, or are not recognized by other members of that society, make them void of meaning. Articulating values in this atomistic way does no longer contribute to one’s identity and makes it significantly harder to provide life with deeper meanings. In the dialogue between both views, I will elaborate on this point further.

Many authors have dedicated attention to the modern interpretation and enactment of the ideal of authenticity. Most liberals encourage the narcissistic culture, and specific kinds of Christians knock the value of authenticity in this way altogether. Their hierarchy of values differ from each other, and therefore they conflict with each other. The liberals connect the more shallow interpretation of self-expression to their notion of the good life, while the Christian notion of the good life can be expressed through communitarian values for which the expression of the self is less essential. Taylor claims that both parties are wrong in their approach. The Christians attempt to refute the notion of authenticity as it would lead to fragmentation. However, many subjects in modern society consider authenticity as a significant value. Therefore, a refutation of authenticity seems at odds with the public sentiment. What the Christians should instead strive for, is to revise the content of authenticity into less fragmenting terms and show how self-development and communitarian values can

³⁵ Taylor, Charles, *Sources of the Self*, 111.

³⁶ Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 64.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

co-exist.

Liberals, on the other hand, attempt to construe authenticity in atomistic terms: one should determine who one is based on their measurement. Taylor refutes the idea that subjects can construe their values in an atomistic way, as it has a tendency “to generate an understanding of the individual as metaphysically independent of society”.³⁹ In the following subchapter, I will provide a brief overview of Taylor’s theory thus far, by showing how the atomistic understanding, as described above, of value creation cannot exist within this theory because the creation of value cannot be done independently from the cultural background and how value hierarchies are constructed according to Taylor’s holistic account.

The Holistic Construction of Value Hierarchies

In order to construct new values, alter existing values, or create or reshape a hierarchy of values, two conditions must be met by the subject. The subject needs to be (1) a language animal and (2) be able to make strong evaluations. In fact, language forms the foundation for strong evaluations. Or as Taylor puts it: “[s]trong evaluations deploys a language of evaluative distinctions”.⁴⁰

Animals can express emotions that indicate that something of primary value is at stake for them. For example, an animal can become angry when one of its primary sources to live is taken from them. Even though the animal expresses feelings of anger, it cannot show a more sophisticated form of anger, such as indignation, because they do not understand feelings of injustice. More concretely, a wolf can become angry when a cub steals its prey, but it will not feel indignation when the same cub leaves plenty of food for the wolf but took the best part of the meat. Language animals, on the other hand, can express their preference for the sort of food they prefer and experience indignation when someone who is aware of their food preferences takes the last bit of their favorite food. In short, language animals have the ability to put to words what they consider to be more valuable. In a more profound way

“we are given a new way of describing or a new model for understanding, our human condition and alternatives it opens for us; and through this we come to see and perhaps embrace a new human possibility . . . In all cases, the impact can be described as a regestalting of our world and its possibilities, which opens up a new way of being.”⁴¹

These articulations of values string together because values only make sense in a larger skein of meanings in which other valuable things exist and can be contrasted to non-valuable things. The skein of values implies that a singular meaningful event cannot exist and that successful articulations of new values or reconsiderations of existing values can alter the way the subject shapes his life.⁴²

³⁹ Taylor, *Philosophical Papers I*, 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴¹ Taylor, *The Language Animal*, 46.

⁴² Taylor, Charles, *Philosophy and The Human Sciences Philosophical Papers II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 22.

For example, a typical Western way of grasping love is through the metaphor of love as a journey.⁴³ Once a successful articulation of love as a journey resonates in society, people take up this metaphor and start shaping their love life as a journey. In contrast, most Asian cultures do not understand love through this metaphor and, therefore, they shape their love lives differently. From this example, it should be taken that articulations of values have to resonate within society. If only a few people understand love as a journey in a given society, it will be challenging to find an understanding partner with corresponding views on how to shape the relationship.

Language animals are capable of expressing their values, and construct these values in dialogue with the cultural background as a whole. The second condition for the construction of value hierarchies is the ability of the language animal to be a strong evaluator: “[t]o be a strong evaluator is thus to be capable of reflection which is more articulate. But also in an important sense deeper”.⁴⁴ Otherwise put, a strong evaluator is an agent in society that relates actively to the state of affairs and actions within that society. To figure out one’s values, the subject has to actively reflect on matters against the background of his own notion of the good life. The notion of the good life gets shaped through continuous dialogue between the subject and the cultural background. Matters of crucial importance will already have an articulation within society, and specific modes of life are regarded to be of greater value than others. For the subject to construe his own values, he has to relate to the structure of values in society. In other words, “I can define my identity only against the background of things that matter ... Only if I exist in a world [in which an, MJ] order matters crucially, can I define an identity for myself that is not trivial.”⁴⁵

As I have tried to illustrate in the example in the introduction, Brinkgreve related to the value of self-realization differently than her mother. Based on strong evaluations, Brinkgreve articulated (and enacted) that self-realization was of greater value to her than a specific interpretation of family values. She related in an active fashion to the cultural background and decided that self-realization deserved a higher place in her hierarchy of values. This articulation resonates in society, and the ideal of self-realization has taken up a more central role than in generations before her. Moreover, because of the increased value that modern subjects attribute to self-realization, the shape of society has reformed as a whole to facilitate these values.

In general, the holistic approach suggests that individual values and societal values are inseparably connected. The structure of society determines for a large part the dialogues of the individuals, and the revised articulations of individuals can resonate in the skein of meanings which can ultimately reshape the cultural background as a whole. Due to the reciprocal affecting nature of values between the individual and society, evaluations are always open to further challenges. It follows that both the construction of values and the hierarchy of values are inescapably related to the cultural background as a whole – not only to the values present within that given society but even more fundamentally to the language one employs to express their notion of a good life. Even though the subject leans crucially on the old hierarchy of

⁴³ Taylor, *The Language Animal*, 159.

⁴⁴ Taylor, *Philosophical Papers I*, 25.

⁴⁵ Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 40-41.

values and employed language while shaping his identity through strong evaluations, the subject can escape the outdated cultural background by relating critically to it and articulating new and improved notions of the good life which entail new modes of being in the world. Moreover, through these strong evaluations, the subject provides life with depth because these articulations testify the authentic aspect of the subject while at the same time, these articulations relate to something more significant than the subject. Consequently, the new utterances may resonate with society altering the existing life-options. In the following chapter, a more individualistic approach to the construction of values as suggested by Friedrich Nietzsche will be discussed to contrast with the holistic view on the construction of hierarchies of value.

Nietzsche on the Construction of Hierarchies of Value

“One serves the individual, in so far as they are concerned with his happiness, by providing no instructions concerning the road for happiness: because individual happiness springs due to one’s own, to others unfamiliar, laws. This can only be prevented or slowed down by external instructions. – These instructions that one calls ‘moral’, are in reality aimed against the individual and in no way aim for happiness.”⁴⁶

Introduction

Throughout his works, Friedrich Nietzsche argued in favor of an anti-realist position concerning morality. An anti-realist position holds that there exist no objective moral facts. Therefore, what an individual or society believes to be good or bad will change over time. In his *Will to Power* Nietzsche states: “[t]he ideas of the herd should rule in the herd [the common people, MJ] – but not reach out beyond it”.⁴⁷ In other words, what the herd considers good should not be understood as an objective claim towards what is good or right and should not be considered good without further evaluation in different contexts. Moreover, Nietzsche considers these ‘herd values’ as actively damaging for those whom he believes to be good (those to whom he refers to as nobles or aristocrats). The notion of herd values as damaging will be elaborated in greater detail below.

Nietzsche’s anti-realist position entails a refutation of all common grounds on which moral actions can be evaluated. Hitherto, moral actions were argued to be either assessed based on their outcomes or their intentions. Nietzsche refutes both forms of evaluation because they prescribe some objective methods in which the value of phenomena can be determined and therefore, should be called either good or bad. In other words, these forms of evaluation do nothing more than attributing ‘good’ and ‘bad’ randomly to states of affair and actions.⁴⁸

In the following chapter, I will explicate what values are for Nietzsche and how these values find a place in a hierarchy of values or as Nietzsche refers to them: order of rank. Even though the order of rank is not mentioned often throughout the works of Nietzsche, they are of fundamental concern to him. In his personal notes, Nietzsche wrote that his “philosophy is directed at the order of rank”⁴⁹. He considered ‘The Order of Rank’ as a title for his magnum opus which was later published as *The Will to Power*.

Nietzsche on Values

His anti-realist position means that Nietzsche does not believe in the existence of objective value concerning morality. However, Nietzsche does argue that value exists in this world and that it is vital for human beings to consider things as valuable to them. His main problem lies within the claim towards the objectiveness of some values, or the objective claim methods appear to make to determine the value of phenomena. Value, then, does not have any objective

⁴⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Daybreak: Thoughts on Prejudices of Morality*, transl. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 108.

⁴⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Will to Power*, transl. R. Kevin Hill and Michael A. Scarpitti (London: Penguin Random House, 2017), 287.

⁴⁸ Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 3.

⁴⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, ed. Rüdiger Bittner, transl. Kate Surge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 280.

foundation, but can still be attributed to states of affair or actions by subjects. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche puts it as follows:

“We who think and feel at the same time are those who really continually fashion something that had not been there before: the whole eternally growing world of valuations, colors, accents, perspectives, scales, affirmations, and negations . . . Whatever has value in our world does not have value in itself, according to its nature – nature is always value-less, but has been given value at some time, as a present – and it was we who gave and bestowed it.”⁵⁰

What has value should be understood as something personal – something has value for me. And this claim of value does not necessarily extend to my neighbor or anyone else. Similarly, the attributions of good and bad or evil only concern their creator; those people that provide life with meaning and value for the future.⁵¹ In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche expresses that humanity could not survive without these attributions of value and that the attributions ensure that life has meaning:

“no people could live without valuating . . . ‘Man, that is: the evaluator. Evaluation is creation: hear it, you creative men! Valuating is itself the value and jewel of all valued things. Only through evaluation there is value: and without evaluation the nut of existence would be hollow.”⁵²

Nietzsche stresses the importance of the attribution of value without accepting the existence of objective values. His understanding of value creation appears to have much more in common with the understanding of value creation by the modern Western subject. Namely, that value creation is an individualistic undertaking primarily based on introspection and the way the individual relates to the external phenomena.

When Nietzsche revisited his older works, he wrote new prefaces to every theme that he had concerned himself with. In the renewed introduction of *Human, All Too Human*, he illustrates how he created value for himself as a means to cope with the hardships of life:

“in an effort to recover from myself, as it were to induce a temporary self-forgetting, I have sought shelter in this or that – in some piece of admiration or enmity or scientifically or frivolity or stupidity; and . . . where I could not find what I needed, I had artificially to enforce, falsify, and invent a suitable fiction for myself (-and what else have poets ever done? And to what end does art exist in the world at all?)”⁵³

This quotation reveals two essential aspects of values and the way they are constructed, according to Nietzsche. The first aspect is that value judgments are some interpretations of the individual, which express particular psychological or even physiological predisposition

⁵⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science*, transl. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Random House, 1974), 301.

⁵¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, transl. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1954), On Old and New Tables.

⁵² *Ibid.*, Of the Thousand and One Goals.

⁵³ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, transl. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), I: preface 1.

towards the phenomenon considered to be of value.⁵⁴ Secondly, values require some form of creative action similar to that of artists. In the quotation above, Nietzsche refers to poets, but he extends this example to other kinds of artists in other works. Humanity should learn from artists how to make the world more beautiful in a non-objective sense.⁵⁵ The decision that phenomena are of value for the subject is an individual act similar to judging the beauty of 'Composition VII' by Wassily Kandinsky. Even though one might attempt to grasp the beauty of the painting in objective terms, ultimately it comes down to a matter of personal taste.

Necessary Revaluation and The Will to Power

Humanity should create values to provide life with meaning. However, Nietzsche argues that the task to create new values can only be done by those which he calls nobles. A noble asserts his will and creates his values solely for himself, without being limited by the false and outmoded values of the masses. Otherwise put, creators have to overcome forms of resistance that attempt to impair their ability to create values. More specifically, the shackles that morality has placed upon them to create their own values. Nietzsche considers the overcoming of resistance as the main driving force in human nature, which he calls 'the will to power'. The will to power makes a direct link between power and the subject's ability to reshape his surroundings in accordance with his own ends – what is of value to him – and provides a notion of what is supposedly good for this person. At the beginning of *The Antichrist* Nietzsche links power and 'the good':

"What is good? Everything that heightens the feeling of power in man, the will to power, power itself in man. . . What is happiness? – The feeling that power increases – that a resistance is overcome. Not contentment, but more power; not peace at all, but war; not virtue but proficiency."⁵⁶

Prima facie, Nietzsche appears to contradict his anti-realist position. This passage from *The Antichrist* can be understood in terms that Nietzsche makes an exception to the will to power as being the only thing that has objective value. However, the will to power provides the subject with the means to not only reshape his environment but also to revalue the existing values. As I will attempt to show below, Nietzsche considers it to be one of his main tasks, if not his main task, to awaken those spirits that have been put to slumber by the objective claim from morality. The will to power ensures that old values can be overcome, rather than remain unquestioned for all eternity. Since no objective facts within morality exist, the values need to stay open for revaluation at all times. In *The Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche defines the will to power as "a desire to overcome, a desire to throw down, a desire to become a master, a thirst for enemies and resistances and triumphs".⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Reginster, Bernard, "The Will to Power and the Ethics of Creativity," in *Nietzsche and Morality*, ed. Brian Leiter and Neil Sinhababu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 33.

⁵⁵ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 299.

⁵⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Antichrist*, transl. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1954), 2.

⁵⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, transl. Maudemarie Clark and Alan Swenson (Indianapolis: Hackett Inc., 1998), I:13.

The will to power should be understood as a means to overcome resistance. Therefore, the will to power implies its own dissatisfaction as it requires some form of resistance to overcome. The moment the resistance has been overcome, the will to power will become unsatisfied again and strives for something even greater to be overcome.⁵⁸ Put differently, the desire for creative action, the revaluation of values, and the creation of new values forces the subject to move on and leave behind what he had already overcome.⁵⁹ Ultimately, this everlasting strive to overcome even greater matters will fail. At that moment, the subject encounters resistance to great to overcome. Or as Nietzsche puts it: "I love him who wants to create over and beyond himself and thus perishes."⁶⁰

Nietzsche differs from the position of the modern Western subject by claiming that not everyone is capable of constructing their own (hierarchy of) values. Modern society considers people to be of equal value. An aspect of humanity taken up in the American Declaration of Independence that 'all men have been created equal, and have been endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights.' As we shall see below, Nietzsche makes a hierarchical distinction between people, which most modern subjects, at least in spirit, seem to refuse.

Another way in which Nietzsche deviates from the modern relation to values is by claiming that all values should be open for challenges at any point in time. In modern Western society, some values or actions are still considered to be objectively wrong. For example, pedophilia. In academics, pedophilia is categorized as a paraphilic disorder, which means that the necessary stimuli required for the person to obtain a climax deviate from socially acceptable norms.⁶¹ It would be helpful for these members of society suffering from the paraphilic disorder to get access to rehabilitation.

However, the general public demands that these people should be punished for their crimes rather than rehabilitated.⁶² Rather than admitting these people have a disorder, the public's opinion, fed by the media, judges these crimes as objectively bad and refuses to understand the situation of the pedophile.

Nietzsche would reject the modern socio-political approach of pedophilia because it leaves no room for revaluation based on new scientific insights, such as the discovery that pedophilia is a paraphilic disorder. The static approach that appeals to a punitive approach of pedophiles leads to high rates of suicide of pedophiles in a prison environment.⁶³ Therefore, the public approach should be revisited to prevent pedophiles from committing suicide by offering rehabilitative care.

⁵⁸ Reginster, *The Will to Power and the Ethics of Creativity*, 40.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶⁰ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Prologue: 4.

⁶¹ Jürillo, Alo, *Treatment and Rehabilitation of Sexual Offenders* (Tallinn: Republic of Estonia, 2016), 6.

⁶² West, Donald. "Paedophilia: Plague or Panic?" in *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry Vol. 11 No. 3* (London: Taylor & Francis Ltd., 2000).

⁶³ Walter, Garry & Saxby, Pridmore, "Suicide and the Publicly Exposed Pedophile," in *The Malaysian Journal of Medical Sciences Vol. 19 No. 4*. (Pulau Pinang: Universiti Sains Malaysia Press, 2012).

Hitherto, I have explicated Nietzsche's position on values, the innate human desire for creation, and revaluation of those values. I have briefly mentioned how morality puts chains on humanity, preventing them from revaluing those values that cannot be objective moral facts. In the remainder of this chapter, I will attempt to illustrate how and why morality puts those shackles on humanity and explicate how new values can be created – and how morality can be overcome.

Rejecting Morality: Religion, State, and Educators

Nietzsche understands morality as a form of resistance that should be overcome. Moreover, he claims that some forms of morality impair the development of the nobles – those which Nietzsche considers as good. Both utilitarian and Christian morality serve as examples of forms of morality that limit the subject in his creative endeavors because they claim to have found absolute truths that do not require any further revaluation. Christianity has even made it a sin to question their absolute truths.⁶⁴ In societies where utilitarianism has become the dominant form of morality, people continuously measure states of affairs and actions while calling this 'good' and that 'evil', using the objective measurement tools which utilitarianism provided them with.⁶⁵ The claim that morality limits the subject reaches much further than Christianity and utilitarianism, as it can be extended to the entire educational environment:

"The educating environment wants to make each man unfree by always presenting him with the smallest number of possibilities. His educators treat the individual as if he were something new, to be sure, but as if he ought to become a repetition [. . .] What is good character in a child is the manifestation of its being bound by the preexisting."⁶⁶

The educating environment, here, should be understood in broad terms as it refers to everyone that affects the values of another person. In the following, three different facets will be treated that impose their values on developing subjects: religion, the state, and educators.

Religion

To understand the altered relation between humanity and God, Nietzsche compares the state of affairs of the nineteenth century to the ancient Greek societies. The Greeks understood their Gods as ideal versions of their kind, while the Christians understand their God to be as far removed from their kind as one could imagine. The Christian God knows little kinship with the nature of his adherents.⁶⁷ Those aspects of humanity that could be recognized in nature were labeled 'evil'; and when humanity found ways to fantasize itself out of nature, these aspects were labeled 'good'.⁶⁸ The good elements encourage the subject to suppress those matters that are linked to his biological being, stimulating an ascetic lifestyle. However, Nietzsche argues, rather passionately, that an ascetic lifestyle often does not relate to higher forms of life and independence, but nothing more than the obedience of the established order.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 2.

⁶⁵ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 2.

⁶⁶ Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, I:228.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, I:114.

⁶⁸ Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 17.

⁶⁹ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, III:8.

Christianity has managed the obedience of the masses by providing them with meaning for their suffering. The ascetic lifestyle seems perfectly fitting for the profoundly sinful nature, which is human nature.⁷⁰ Because Christianity makes sense of the masses' feelings and provides the masses with a cause to blame for their suffering, the masses do not feel any need to reconsider these values or to question their foundations. Moreover, the masses successfully attempted to impose this understanding of morality onto the nobles which made them believe that they, themselves, were the evil in this world and the cause for suffering, which according to this morality should be considered as objectively evil. This form of morality and paralyzation of the nobles continued far beyond 'the death of God'.

Nietzsche famously argued 'the death of God'.⁷¹ God had died because Christianity had lost its convincing foundation. The moral obligations encouraged by the Christian church are actively harmful to its adherents because they made life impossible to be perceived in a different light.⁷² Even after the death of God, humanity still prefers to live in its aftermath than to live life without 'objective' moral guidelines.

The State

Concerning the state, Nietzsche radically altered his view throughout time. In his early works, he regards democracy as a form of pluralism. Pluralism implies that there exist multiple options that can be chosen and can be subjected to reevaluation. In other words, democracy, as a political form, can be used as a means to revalue all values. The country should be run by geniuses, by a group of nobles, that would rule without exploiting their position of power.

After Nietzsche broke with Richard Wagner, he lost all confidence in the ability of geniuses to restrain themselves in such a way that they would remain fit to rule society.⁷³ In *Daybreak*, the growing distaste towards democracy could already be felt:

"[t]he more the feeling of unity with one's fellow humans gains the upper hand, the more human beings are made uniform, the more they will perceive all difference as immoral. In this way, the sand of humanity necessarily comes into being: all very similar, all very small, very round, very accommodating, very boring."⁷⁴

Otherwise put, the state does not encourage pluralism; it actively discourages it. A democratic society enforces the will of the majority upon those who value matters differently. All values that differ from these 'state values', which are nothing more than representations of the majority, are labeled as immoral.⁷⁵

In sum, Christianity and democracy successfully molded people into similar grains of sand that make the reevaluation of all values appear unnecessary. The reevaluation of all values is

⁷⁰ Wallace, R. Jay. "Ressentiment, Value, and Self-Vindication: Making Sense of Nietzsche's Salve Revolt," in: *Nietzsche and Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 130.

⁷¹ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 108.; See also: Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Prologue: 2.

⁷² Anderson, R. Lanier, "Friedrich Nietzsche," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/nietzsche/>.

⁷³ Siemens, Herman. "Nietzsche's Critique of Democracy," in: *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*. (Pennsylvania: Penn State University, 2009), 20-22.

⁷⁴ Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 174.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

necessary from an anti-realist position because no objective truths in morality can ever be achieved, necessitating the revaluation of old values and the creation of new values.

Educators

Nietzsche's view on educators is not as one-sided as with religion or the state, because he considers educators as necessary evils that at some point in time should be overcome. Nietzsche practices what he preaches. In a more public work that was later published among other works in *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche argues for Schopenhauer as a public educator and states that Schopenhauer was his philosophical master of whom he would read all publications.⁷⁶ Throughout his later writings, the critique on Schopenhauer increases, coming to a climax in *On The Genealogy of Morality*, as he writes: "Schopenhauerian ethics result from the most awful disease: humanity suffering from humanity".⁷⁷ Those subjects that suffer from humanity abnegate the secular and fall victim to matters of pity and self-sacrifice, denying the valuable for them as individuals.

Educators are not limited to teachers or masters: parents, priests, and rulers should be overcome in a similar fashion as they treat the younger subjects as if they should become something similar to them. On these educators, Nietzsche writes the following:

"Parents involuntarily make something like themselves out of their children – they call this 'education'; no mother doubts at the bottom of her heart that the child she has borne is thereby her property, no father hesitates about his right to his own ideas and notions of worth. . . . And like the father, so also do the teacher, the priest, and the prince still see in every new individual an unobjectionable opportunity for a new possession."⁷⁸

Nietzsche overlaps with the modern understanding that values are something that should be constructed without the limitations imposed by external features. However, the modern Western subject differs from Nietzsche by negating that there exists a hierarchical difference between people. Nietzsche completely denies the possibility of objective facts, while the notion of egalitarianism has resonated through the entire Western world.

Even though Nietzsche's view seemed to overlap more with the understanding of the modern subject, his theory appears too radical. There are general evaluations made that resonate through society and do not appear open for reconsideration.

In this chapter, I have shown how morality limits the subject to revalue all values according to Nietzsche. Ultimately, morality should be overcome altogether, and humanity should stop considering matters as 'good' simply because their neighbor does so. In the following passage, I will argue how the subject should overcome morality and create their own values based on the striking metaphor in 'On The Three Metamorphoses' in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

⁷⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Untimely Meditations*, transl. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), III: 3.

⁷⁷ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, II:16.

⁷⁸ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 194.

Creating Values: Three Metamorphoses

One of the prerequisites for value creation was struggle; something to be overcome by the will to power. To overcome and create something new in favor of the old, other aspects of life will need to be in place. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche claims that the subject must undergo three metamorphoses to create new values or to revalue old values. Firstly, the spirit must turn into a camel, then become a lion, and ultimately transform into a child.

Camels are known for carrying substantial amounts of weight upon their back in dreadful environments. Through these harsh circumstances, the camel manages to perform his task without heckling the conditions. The camel in 'On The Three Metamorphoses' actively searches for matters that are heavy to bear. The more weight the camel can take upon its back, the more it can rejoice in its own strength. Not only does the camel accept life the way it appears to him, but it also strives to bear more and recognizes that there exist greater things in life than oneself. The camel has learned to love hardships and its circumstances.

The stage of the camel is necessary for the subject for two reasons. Firstly, the subject learns that life brings along tough situations and that he must endure them. Secondly, one must learn to love their own fate by saying, wholeheartedly, 'yes' to life.⁷⁹

For the second transition, the camel must become a lion. The lion is a reliable and fearsome animal and is often used as a symbol that represents courage. Nietzsche explains the crucial aspects with which the transformation into a lion provides the subject with:

"My brothers, why is there a need in the spirit for the lion? . . . To create new values – that even the lion cannot do; but the creation of freedom for oneself for new creation – that is within the power of the lion . . . To assure the right to new values."⁸⁰

More specifically, the lion wants to acquire freedom and opposes every 'thou shalt' that morality attempts to impose on it, by replacing 'thou shalt' with an 'I will'. The opposition of the lion to any imperative creates a space in which new values can be created, and old values can be revalued.⁸¹ The stage of the camel provides a fruitful foundation for the lion, as the camel provides the lion with hardships and constraints to oppose and, ultimately, to overcome.⁸²

However, the power of the lion is limited to this opposition, and one should not restrict himself to destroy old hierarchies of values. So, even the mighty lion must be overcome by something that can create values.

Thirdly, the lion must become a child. Nietzsche admits that this must appear as an odd last transformation and he explains:

⁷⁹ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 276.

⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, On The Three Metamorphoses.

⁸¹ Campbell, Eric, "Nietzsche's Free Spirits and the Beauty of Illusion," in *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*. (Pennsylvania: Penn State University, 2009), 90-98.

⁸² Reginster, *The Will to Power and the Ethics of Creativity*, 45.

“[w]hy must the preying lion still become a child? The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred ‘yes’. For the game of creation, a sacred ‘Yes’ is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world.”⁸³

Consequently, the subject should not solely live in a state of revolt as the lion does. The child represents innocence, forgetfulness, and marks a new beginning.

When a child constructs a tower with its Duplo bricks, it does not feel the necessity of putting the blocks in the same order as the illustration on the box suggests. The child decides how he will build the tower. It does not do so to oppose the animation as depicted on the box purposely, but simply because it wants to create something for itself. Through play, the child creates exactly what its will wants, because it has not been introduced to any ‘thou shalt’.

Where the lion is only able to say ‘no’ to the claims morality makes on the subject, the child represents a new beginning and is able to say ‘yes’. The crucial difference with the camel is that the camel affirms life the way it is imposed upon him, but the child can say ‘yes’ to new matters.

Similar to the construction of the tower without duplicating the example of the box, the modern subject understands the construction of hierarchies of value as something that should be done without interference by overarching moral structures.

The last metamorphosis allows the subject to create new values because, now, it has acquired the ability to forget the normative thrust of morality altogether, permitting the subject to substitute those values, to renew the order of those values, or alter the content of existing values.

In sum, the camel takes on the burdens of life, the suffering which is necessary to overcome and to create. The lion opposes morality to be able to rule itself, creating a space in which the subject can create new values. The child forgets the claims of morality and in all its innocence, through play, builds something new – it creates new values and revalues all values.

Nietzsche on Hierarchy of Values

“Given that it is the problem of order of rank about which we may say that it is our problem, we free spirits: only now, in the midday of our life, do we understand what sorts of preparations, detours, tests, experimentations, disguises the problem needed before it was allowed to rise up before us.”⁸⁴

In the previous paragraphs, I have shown the shackles that morality puts upon the subject and deny the possibility to revalue all values or any values at all. Either these values have objective value that could be measured and did not necessitate revaluation, or the values were sanctified, which entailed that they should not be reconsidered. Nietzsche argues against this stagnated understanding of values and offers an account of metamorphoses through which the revaluation of all values could reemerge. Moreover, Nietzsche advocates in favor of some

⁸³ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, On The Three Metamorphoses.

⁸⁴ Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human*, I: Preface, 7.

form of hierarchy over what he views as an unreflective modern consensus on egalitarianism.⁸⁵ Nietzsche studied the history of language intensively, and he discovered that morality could be found everywhere. Morality is always accompanied by a taxonomy and order of human passions and actions, which reflect the needs of a society and what contributes to their survival. Because these conditions vary per community, the order of rank (which I will call hierarchy of values from now on) differs accordingly.⁸⁶ The morality of any given society instrumentalizes the individual to benefit the entire structure. Rather than following the values that morality attempts to impose on the subject, creating hierarchies of value should solely be done for the self.

However, not everyone can go through the three transformations – the ability to set their own standards of valuation is one of the most distinctive achievements of the higher type. Those who should lead the way in overcoming the illusions of moral judgments made on the subjects are philosophers.⁸⁷ Nietzsche considers even current philosophers not up to the task of creating hierarchies of value and, therefore, his writings aim at philosophers of the future. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he writes:

“ ‘My opinion is my opinion: another person has not easily a right to it’ – such a philosopher of the future will say, perhaps. One must renounce the bad taste of wishing to agree with many people. ‘Good’ is no longer good when one’s neighbor takes it into his mouth. And how could there be a ‘common good’! The expression contradicts itself; that which can be common is always of small value. In the end, things must be as they are and have always been – the great things remain for the great, the abysses for the profound, the delicacies and thrills for the refined, and, to sum up shortly, everything rare for the rare.”⁸⁸

The unreflective agreement on egalitarianism denies individuality. One should not accept, unreflectively, the morality of the majority, because then one denies his own passions and, more fundamentally, his self. In the preface of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche argues that individuals have lost track of who they are. Moreover, the subjects never even bothered to look for their authentic selves.⁸⁹ Nobody ever really searched for their own passions. These personal passions are the starting point for the construction of the hierarchy of values:

“Whichever group of sensations awaken the fastest . . . that decides as to the entire order of rank of its values, that ultimately determines its table of goods. The value-estimations of a person betray something of the *construction* of his soul, and wherein it sees its conditions of life, its very own need.”⁹⁰

In other words, the hierarchy of values varies per person based on differences in their passions. The philosopher of the future should embrace the hardships of life, oppose the moral

⁸⁵ Guay, Robert, “Order of Rank,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. John Richardson and Ken Gemes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 487.

⁸⁶ Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human*, I:107.

⁸⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Twilight of Idols*, transl. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Viking, 1954), ‘Improvers’ 1.

⁸⁸ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 43.

⁸⁹ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Preface 1

⁹⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 208.

constraints being imposed upon him, and create new values and revalue all existing values. Because these values have no objective value, the values should be revaluated based on the passions of the individual. One's hierarchy of values represents the individual's passions and considerations of values. Nietzsche concludes:

“Concerning all the moral boasting of one group over the other, it is time for disgust! Playing the moral judge, should go against our personal taste! . . . We, however, want to become who we are, - new, unique, unforgettable, we want to prescribe our own laws, create ourselves!”⁹¹

Even though the modern Western subject agrees with Nietzsche on the limited influence of external factors when deciding on what is valuable for him in life, the subject refuses to reconsider the resonating value of egalitarianism, a value strongly advocated by Christian morality or the objectively evil actions of the pedophile.

Taylor argues that the value of egalitarianism only becomes apparent because it resonates so broadly within modern Western society, while Nietzsche would argue that the unevaluated acceptance of egalitarianism limits the subject.

The modern subject understands itself as relatively free from the influences of the cultural background. However, not as free as Nietzsche would like. Some values go without questioning or revaluation but are still considered to be valuable to society.

⁹¹ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 335.

Dialogue Between the Holistic and the Individualistic Approach

Hitherto, I have explicated two different positions – the holistic approach by Charles Taylor and the individualistic approach by Friedrich Nietzsche - for the construction of hierarchies of values and to what extent they can escape the cultural background. This chapter will involve a dialogue between the two different positions in order to express criticism to both approaches and to show the overlap between the two theories.

Nietzsche's Denial of the Cultural Background

According to the holistic approach, the hierarchy of values represents the values of a given society, and these values are shaped through dialogue. Dialogue, here, should be understood in broad terms as it involves not only the dialogues between people but also the dialogues between individuals and their physical environment and existing values.

Contrary to the holistic approach, Nietzsche suggests that the subject should break loose from the structures that limit their process of valuation. The subject should go against the moralistic imperatives, overcome them, and create his own values. More specifically, all domains in life that impose values on the subject should ultimately be overcome – religion, the state, teachers, and even the values of one's parents. Nietzsche, therefore, has both a negative and positive understanding of power over. The negative understanding follows out of the critique that morality has the capacity to impair the subject by disciplining it in a way that causes the subject to lose the necessary tools to determine what is valuable for himself.

The positive aspects of power over follows from the direct link between power and a person's ability to reshape his surroundings by his own ends. Put differently, the possibility for an individual to change the environment in such a fashion that it will contribute to obtaining objectives that the individual had decided for himself that are worth pursuing. Nietzsche would phrase this power over to change one's environment a tool to escape the cultural background, which limits the valuation of the subject. The will to power allows the subject to overcome the normative cultural background, to construe one's own (hierarchy of) values.

For the holistic approach, morality does not purposely attempt to discipline the subject to lose its individuality. However, morality has been formed through processes of deliberation among subjects and represents a collective notion of what that society considers to be a good life. The cultural background, then, does not inherently limit the subject's individuality because the hierarchies of value can always be contested. The values in a holistic paradigm have to resonate within society. Values have to be articulated and taken up by members of that society, to find its place within the hierarchy. Taylor describes the individualistic fallacy as follows: "[t]he Nietzschean term 'value', suggested by our 'evaluation', carries this idea that our 'values' are our creations, that they ultimately repose on our espousing them."⁹²

Values that are created individually cannot exist for two reasons. Firstly, the creation or revaluation of values always builds on the previous hierarchy of values. Therefore, value creation cannot be done atomistically because the process of creation necessarily involves dialogue.

⁹² Taylor, *Philosophical Papers I*, 29.

Nevertheless, the hikikomori in Japan attempt a full withdrawal from society. This group concerns mostly teenage boys that do not partake in any social activities and lock themselves up in their room. Even limiting or refusing interaction with their family.⁹³ The assumed (but not scientifically proven) main cultural motivator for this kind of behavior is the Japanese morality that emphasizes conformity. Because these youngsters refuse to submit themselves to this form of morality, they decide to isolate themselves from society as a whole.

Even though the hikikomori attempt to withdraw from society, their stances result from a dialogue with society. The hikikomori reject a morality based on conformity and normality by ignoring the external world. Therefore, the attempt to fully escape the cultural background of their environment has not been fully achieved.

Secondly, taking up new values requires members of a society to embrace the new coinage of values – to consider them of value.

“Part of the heroism of the Nietzschean superman is that he can rise beyond the moral, beyond the concern with good, and manage in spite of suffering and disorder the absence of all justice to respond to something like the beauty of it all.”⁹⁴

For Nietzsche, morality is something that should be overcome; to rise beyond the moral. However, following the holistic approach, such a break cannot be realized. The subject cannot break loose from its own history and the values which are present in the cultural background. One can still overcome specific values within the cultural background by challenging their validity or refuting them based on new insights. However, this process of overcoming also involves resonance. The revaluation of existing values has to be felt similarly by other subjects within society and has to be taken up by, at least part of, society.

In the *Ethics of Authenticity*, Taylor raises a similar critique against the modern understanding of value creation: modern subjects understand the construction of hierarchies of value to the utmost extent as a process of solitary reflection.⁹⁵ Both the modern and Nietzschean understanding of the construction of hierarchies of value lost sight of the notion that being a self necessitates relating to a larger space of moral issues.⁹⁶ Put differently, matters of significance for subjects can only acquire meaning in relation to the meanings of other things. Meanings cannot exist in a vacuum, as revaluation of values or the coinage of new values can affect the entire hierarchy of values.⁹⁷ The values exist in a skein of meanings, and these meanings come to the subject via a community in which it grows up. At origin, every subject is inducted into a skein of meanings that has already been shaped by the society in which the subject is born. Shifts occur inevitably when the next generation takes over the culture of its forebears and revalue the skein of meanings based on new ethical insights.⁹⁸

⁹³ Teo, Alan. Modern-Day Hermits: The Story Hikikomori in Japan and Beyond. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70bv5gaN4LI> (Consulted: 27th June 2020).

⁹⁴ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 454.

⁹⁵ Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 33.

⁹⁶ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 111.

⁹⁷ Taylor, Charles, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 22.

⁹⁸ Taylor, *The Language Animal*, 254.

This understanding of the construction of the hierarchy of values allows for pluralism and the revaluation of all values. It does not necessarily involve the limiting aspects for the individual Nietzsche attributes to morality shaped in dialogue with the cultural background. Pluriformity finds expression through how matters of significance vary per culture and even per individual. However, the values of the individual necessarily engage in dialogue as well. Taylor provides an example:

“where I am proud of my success as a bank robber, your being ashamed of me may begin to work on me, to the point that I come to see that there are other really important things in life which my career in crime undermines.”⁹⁹

This example illustrates how a bank robber alters his set of values based on another person’s expressed sensations. In this sense, morality can be understood as limiting the bank robber to provide a free expression of his values. However, it should not be understood this way, but rather: the hierarchy of values of the bank robber is being challenged by another person that is of significance to the bank robber. This dialogue provides the bank robber with new ethical insights relating to the notion of the good life. Rather than being limited by morality, the bank robber revalues his hierarchy of values based on new insights. Through dialogue, the bank robber realizes that his notion of the good life is obsolete and can cause him to lose other matters of significance to him, such as a good friend.

Based on the discussion above, the holistic approach would argue that Nietzsche overlooks the importance of the cultural background or at least the inescapability of it. Moreover, Nietzsche never managed to escape the language of the cultural framework concerned with matters of good, bad, and evil. The inescapability of the cultural background entails that Nietzsche’s theory on the construction of hierarchies of value cannot revolve around the destruction of morality or the cultural background, but rather a radical revision of the cultural background. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche states:

“Impersonators. – A: ‘Why? You do not want impersonators?’ B: ‘I do not wish that one impersonates me; I want everyone to set their own example: as I do’. A: ‘So?’”¹⁰⁰

In this paragraph, Nietzsche admits his paradoxical proposition that the overcoming of morality entails a new structure with new imperatives: one should not impersonate other people by following my example. Therefore, his suggested form for self-development and the individual approach for the construction of hierarchies of value can be understood in terms of revising the outdated cultural background which does not allow for revaluation of values.

Nietzsche argues that morality inherently limits the subject by imposing values upon the subject. Even though morality, in a sense, is inescapable, not every form of morality limits the subject in such a radical fashion. Some forms of morality purposely provide the subject with restricting life options which do impair its means for self-development.

The point that I am trying to make is as follows: even Nietzsche cannot entirely escape the cultural background because his notion of a good life builds on, is in dialogue with, the cultural

⁹⁹ Ibid., 195.

¹⁰⁰ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 255.

background of his time. What he notices is that subjects are limited by the influence of the church, democracy, and their educators – by morality. Rather than overcoming morality by breaking free from it, so that the individual can construct his own values, Nietzsche seems to plead for a radical revision of the cultural background that allows for a form of morality that does not allow space for stagnated values; all values should be open for reevaluation. The current shape of the cultural background has poisoned the means to revalue existing values and to construe new values.

In the following subchapter, I shall elaborate more on this last point of the revision of the cultural background rather than eradicating it and at the same time argue that Nietzsche cannot have overlooked the cultural background as one of his most famous theories, and even his methodology, is based on an analysis of the cultural background.

The Slave Revolt as Cultural Background

Nietzsche's anti-realistic view concerning values claims that nothing holds value in any given situation. Therefore, the world is neither inherently good nor bad either, and people cannot be judged based on an objective understanding of good and bad. In fact, Nietzsche argues that humanity should rid itself of these glorifying and condescending methods to apply labels to other humans.¹⁰¹ To illustrate his point, that morality and the notions of good and bad change over time, Nietzsche differentiates between the morality in pre-Socratic Greece and modern morality, which he refers to, respectively, as master- and slave morality. The claim made on behalf of the holistic approach that Nietzsche overlooked the importance of the cultural background cannot fully stand, because one of his key points, the slave revolution in morality, is crucially underpinned by an awareness of the importance of the cultural background.

Master morality differentiates between 'good' and 'bad'. Good refers to exalted and proud states of mind and refers to people rather than actions.¹⁰² A nobleman, someone who enacts the master morality, responds to his will to power and actively searches for forms of suffering which he then attempts to overcome. The greater resistance a subject can overcome, the greater of a person he is. The amount of resistance one faces should be understood in relative terms. For example, the resistance Beethoven had to overcome to compose music was more significant than most other composers because he had a hearing deficiency.¹⁰³ More generally, the amount of resistance depends on the context of the situation.

Bad refers to vulgar, plebeian, and low matters.¹⁰⁴ It follows that within the master morality, there is a hierarchy present that distinguishes nobles in society from common people. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche claims that in pre-Socratic Greece "the great things remain for the great, the abysses for the profound, the delicacies and thrills for the refined, and, to sum up shortly, everything rare for the rare."¹⁰⁵ This notion of a hierarchical difference between people has completely disappeared in the modern form of morality based on egalitarianism.

¹⁰¹ Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, I:28.

¹⁰² Lacey, Michael, *Nietzsche on Master and Slave Morality* (London: Routledge Francis & Taylor, 2010), 1.

¹⁰³ Reginster, *The Will to Power and the Ethics of Creativity*, 45-48.

¹⁰⁴ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, I:4.

¹⁰⁵ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 43.

Slave morality builds on master morality in the sense that it rejects the values of master morality. Otherwise put, slave morality results from dialogue with the dominant form of morality in the pre-Socratic era. The good refers to values promoting egalitarianism, such as pity, altruism, and disinterest in oneself.¹⁰⁶ More specifically, good, within slave morality, refers to the absence of the traits of the good for the noble person.

The word bad has been substituted in favor of the word 'evil', which refers directly to the traits of the noblemen and the notion of a hierarchy among people.¹⁰⁷ Nietzsche argues that slave morality has a negative attitude towards human nature itself, questioning the goodness of this life and glorifying the afterlife. People enacting slave morality attempt to shame those who exert their will to power successfully by calling them evil.¹⁰⁸ Rather than elevating to greater heights themselves, the people enacting slave morality attempt to find the bad in the nobility. Alternatively, Nietzsche puts it: "He who does not wish to see the height of a man, looks all the more sharply at what is low in him, and in the foreground – and thereby betrays himself."¹⁰⁹

In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche inquires how this change from master to slave morality could have occurred. He argues that what he refers to as the slave revolution in morality originated when Jewish prophets fused power, rich, godless, violent and bad, and labeled the result of this fusion 'evil'. Christian priests expanded the initial articulations of the Jewish prophets and carried forward the new valuations. The further articulations resulted in the refutation of all secular matters, referring to the powerful as weak, and the elevation of the weak to make every person equal. In other words, the elaborated articulations made a mediocre herd animal out of human beings.¹¹⁰

The main driving force behind the slave revolution in morality is what Nietzsche calls resentment: those who have suffered a great deal under the nobility developed hateful feelings towards them and looked for ways to undermine them. The slave revolt should be understood as an attempt by the slaves to undermine the nobility. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche claims that the Christian priests have suffered so much under the nobility, that they want to make others suffer as well. Moreover, whom the priests refer to as their savior has put chains on the priests, because they may no longer rejoice in secular matters. Therefore, priests are the most powerless people in society.¹¹¹ Nietzsche claims that the enactment of resentment indicates the starting point of the slave revolt:

"The beginning of the slaves' revolt in morality occurs when resentment itself turns creative and gives birth to values: the resentment of those beings who, denied the proper response of action, compensate for it only with imaginary revenge."¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Lacey, Nietzsche on Master and Slave Morality, 2.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 1.

¹⁰⁸ Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 189.

¹⁰⁹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 275.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 62.

¹¹¹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, On Priests.

¹¹² Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, I:10.

The new table of values appealed to many people in society because they had also suffered a great deal under the nobility and it provided them with a universally accepted notion that the ordinary people are equal to the powerful in society. These new values, those that result from feelings of resentment, “would speak to an unconscious need to which the powerless are subject, enabling them to make sense of their basic emotional orientation to the social world, as one that is appropriate to its immediate objects.”¹¹³ The newly suggested hierarchy of values made sense of the suffering of the majority and negated their subordinate position. The values that flowed out of the feelings of resentment became a cornerstone for Christian morality, and by sanctifying these revaluations, they were no longer open for reevaluation. Ultimately, the noblemen were seduced by compassion and convinced that their actions were evil. The original ‘good’ and powerful people in society were convinced to limit the expression of their power and to become part of the egalitarian herd.

Nietzsche’s criticism of Christian morality is not primarily aimed at its content, even though it is undeniable that he disagrees with many Christian values and how they find expression in society, but at its structure. From his anti-realist perspective, it is crucial for values to remain open for reevaluation and to question their validity in altered contexts. Even though, Nietzsche differentiates between master- and slave morality in a hierarchical fashion, this differentiation merely suggests that he, on an individual level, values the notion of the good for the nobleman to be superior to the notion of the good for the slave and that what is good for the slave does not necessarily apply to the nobleman and vice versa.

Based on the preceding passage on the slave revolution in morality, two arguments can be raised against the Taylorian case that states that Nietzsche overlooked the importance of the cultural background.

Firstly, Nietzsche understands slave morality as a response to master morality. In other words, slave morality results from a dialogue between those who suffered under the tyranny of the nobility and master morality. These Jewish prophets and Christian priests argue for a self-limiting attitude of the nobility motivated by feelings of egalitarianism and resentment. Their plead made sense of the psychological make-up of the common people as the Christian morality provided their suffering with meaning.¹¹⁴ The articulated new values resonated within a large portion of society and led to a radical revision of the hierarchy of values. The notions of good and bad were inverted.

This point cannot be raised often enough: Nietzsche does not argue against the slave reevaluation of values, but he argues against the way this new hierarchy of values was embedded. The new values were consolidated so thoroughly that it became impossible to revalue them or even to question their validity.

As I have argued in preceding sections, the value of egalitarianism or punitive stances towards pedophiles can still be found in modern society, and the moment one questions the notion that all people are equal or that pedophiles should be rehabilitated rather than punished, it is often met with indignation towards that position. Following Nietzsche, these are contemporary

¹¹³ Wallace, *Ressentiment, Value, and Self-Vindication*, 129.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 111.

examples of values that are not open for reevaluation, which is fundamentally at odds with his anti-realist position.

The second reason why the case made by the holistic approach cannot stand follows from the way Nietzsche underpins the slave revolution in morality. He intensively studied the best available historical works of his time. Drawing on these works, Nietzsche noticed a radical change of the notions of good and bad over time. Otherwise put, the slave revolution in morality is founded on historical and contemporary analyses of the cultural background. More specifically, on analyzing the changed perspectives on the notions of good, bad, and evil over time and how they acquired their current shape. He most notably tried to illustrate this radical change in *On the Genealogy of Morality*.

The entire idea of the slave revolution in morality and the way it is underpinned testifies of Nietzsche's awareness of the cultural background and how an analysis of this background can lead to a greater understanding of the current shape of current cultural phenomena, such as modern notions on good, bad and evil. Relatively early on in his works, Nietzsche already expresses this awareness: "there are no eternal facts: as there are no absolute truths. – Therefore, historical philosophizing is required from now on . . ." ¹¹⁵

Hitherto the dialogue between the holistic and individualistic approach has merely been concerned with the differences between the two theories. The holistic approach suggests that certain aspects of the cultural background are inescapable, while the individualistic approach encourages the subject to break loose from the constraining cultural background in order to create values for oneself.

The remaining part of the discussion will focus on the common ground between both theories: the emphasis on what has been called 'strong evaluations'. Both Taylor and Nietzsche, appeal to forms of depth relating to the background of one's notion of the good life. Even though both authors emphasize the importance of strong evaluations, in one aspect, they differ fundamentally from each other. For Taylor values only show that they are valuable through resonance in society, while for Nietzsche resonance indicates a loss of value and the attempt to make something similar out of every person – to take away their individuality.

Strong Evaluators

In the section on Taylor, I have explicated that being a strong evaluator entails an articulate reflection on examining different ways to live one's life against the background of the notion of the good life. Therefore, strong evaluations express the kind of person one is or wants to become. Taylor concludes that "[t]o be a strong evaluator is thus to be capable of a reflection which is more articulate. But it is also in an important sense deeper." ¹¹⁶ Nietzsche and Taylor both appeal to a sense of depth.

When someone tweets his support for the Black Lives Matter movement to express their values of solidarity and inclusiveness, it says something about how this person wants to present himself. By tweeting his support, this person attempts to express his values in a rather insignificant and similar fashion to millions of other people around the world. Differently put,

¹¹⁵ Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human*, I:2.

¹¹⁶ Taylor, *Philosophical Papers I*, 25.

by tweeting his support these values are expressed trivially, as the content of the tweet does not express these values to the extent partaking in a rally would do. The tweet merely suggests that this person has solidary and inclusive stances towards black people. Intuitively, the sensation arises that there is a lack of depth in the way this person attempts to express his values.¹¹⁷

Being a strong evaluator implies a more articulate reflection as one examines different possible life-options and considers which one is more closely related to their notion of the good life. So, strong evaluations articulate the kind of person one is, or at least, wants to become. Similarly, Nietzsche states that a good person “has a taste only what is good for him; his pleasure, his delight cease where the measure of what is good for him is transgressed.”¹¹⁸ Put differently, a subject decides what is good for him in the light of the greater goals the subject wants to achieve – what kind of person he is or wants to become.

In sum, both Taylor and Nietzsche stress the importance of strong evaluations because they believe in qualitative distinctions of values. Values differ in worth based on their significance for a subject based on the greater goals this person has and what kind of person he wants to be or become.

Values contributing to one’s personality or life goals is a crucial aspect for strong evaluations, but not the whole story. For Taylor, resonance is the second crucial aspect for values to be understood as valuable. Nietzsche opposes this view, and I will illustrate his rejection of resonance by using a passage from *Daybreak*:

“Certain baths, for example, are prescribed to have at certain times: one does not bathe to become clean but because it is prescribed. One does not learn the real consequences of preventing impurity, but the alleged dissatisfaction of the gods by missing a bath. Under the impressions of superstitious angst, one gets the suspicion that with this process of washing away these impurities something much larger is at stake, and one applies secondary and tertiary meanings to it. One perpetrates the lust for himself in the real and ultimately understands it only in symbolic terms as valuable.”¹¹⁹

In this case, the values of baths at specific times have resonated within society, but the reason why people take baths has little to do with preventing impurity. Instead, this society has attributed value to baths in terms of preventing to upset the gods and other symbolic meanings. The resonance of these values applied to take these baths has led to that the importance of these baths has little to do with the secular world. It has caused this society to lose sight of the primary reason to take baths. Moreover, morality prescribes specific actions which the subject simply needs to follow, taking away the possibility for the subject to shape his own life based on his own strong evaluations. For example, I take a bath not because I do not wish to upset the gods, but because I do not want to smell unpleasantly during my date

¹¹⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 483.

¹¹⁸ Nietzsche Friedrich, *Ecce Homo*, transl. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967), I:2.

¹¹⁹ Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 33.

tonight. For Nietzsche, what is good or bad cannot be prescribed and can only be known by the creator of values, and therefore do not necessarily have to resonate within society.¹²⁰

For Taylor values do need to resonate within society: “[w]hich issues are significant, I do not determine. If I did, no issue would be significant.”¹²¹ If values do not resonate within society, they become trivial at base. The critique is directly aimed at Nietzsche’s understanding of the construction of hierarchies of value:

“Following Nietzsche, I am indeed a truly great philosopher if I remake the table of values. But this means redefining values concerning important questions, not redesigning the menu at McDonald’s, or next year’s casual fashion. The agent seeking significance in life, trying to define him- or herself meaningfully, has to exist in a horizon of important questions.”¹²²

The difference concerning resonances ultimately boils down to the difference in which both authors relate to the extent the individual is bound to the cultural background. For Taylor, the cultural background defines to a large extent what is important to us and can be changed by newly articulated notions of the good life.

For Nietzsche, the cultural background disciplines the subject and attempts to make a herd animal out of even the most exceptional individuals in society. However, Nietzsche argues not against the cultural background, he too recognizes the importance of the cultural background, but against the impossibility for reevaluation of the hierarchy of values in his time and the restraining implications of that cultural background on the individual:

“It goes without saying that I do not deny – unless I am a fool – that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged – but I think the one should be encouraged and the other avoided for reasons other than hitherto.”¹²³

Concerning depth, a similar clash can be noticed. Taylor states that depth has to resonate within society: a significant portion of society has to, at least, understand why this phenomenon can be considered deep. Additionally, Taylor claims that an intuitive feeling arises when one differentiates between profound and superficial matters. The deeper matters for the holistic approach all seem to be connected to how it gives substance to one’s identity. The identity shaped by dialogue with the cultural background and critical reflection on this background based on strong evaluations.

Nietzsche makes a hierarchical difference between noblemen and herd people (or common people). Depth can only be acquired by those that he considers nobles because the herd is unwilling to overcome or go against morality. Morality impoverishes the individuality of a person, and only those who are willing to take up the task of revaluing all values can provide life with substance of significance.

¹²⁰ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, On Old and New Tables.

¹²¹ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 39.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 40.

¹²³ Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 40.

Conclusion

This research has concerned itself with the extent to which the subject can break loose from the cultural background in creating their own hierarchy of values against the background of the critique on the modern understanding of the construction on hierarchies of value.

To answer this research question, I have investigated two different approaches on how hierarchies of value can be constructed: the holistic approach as suggested by Charles Taylor and the individual approach as advocated by Friedrich Nietzsche.

Taylor attributes a special status to language because verbal articulations can lead to a new manner of disclosing existing matters or create new human possibilities.¹²⁴ Hierarchies of values are constructed in dialogue with the cultural background: the subject can take over, change, attribute more or less value to, or reject specific values based on his notion of the good life. It follows that the value of something is a combination of an intuitive sense that something can be of significance, the expression of that significance, the way it is enacted or taken up by society, and the extent to which it resonates within the cultural background. In short, whether values are taken over, altered, or refuted; the cultural background plays an essential and inescapable part in the construction of the hierarchy of values. Nevertheless, these values in the cultural background can always be reconsidered.

Nietzsche understands the normative thrust of the cultural background in a radically different way. Morality is something that limits the subject to develop his authentic self, and therefore morality should be overcome by the subject and his will to power. He claims that the idea of a common good is at odds with itself because something universally shared has little worth.¹²⁵ It follows that resonance does not play an essential role in Nietzsche's philosophy. In fact, the more a value resonates, the less valuable Nietzsche considers that value. In *The Will to Power*, he states: "[a] great man [. . .] finds it tasteless to be familiar."¹²⁶

Even though Nietzsche argued passionately that morality is something that should be overcome and with that the normative thrust of the cultural background, he argued against a specific shape of morality. As an anti-realist, Nietzsche did not believe in objective value or something that has value in any context. Therefore, values should always be open for reevaluation. In his time, however, he noticed that the shape of the cultural background no longer allowed revaluations, as if society had found absolute values. In this work, I have argued that Nietzsche does not argue against the entire cultural background because he, too, realized that the cultural background plays an essential and inescapable role in shaping (hierarchy of) values. What he argued against was the constricting shape of the cultural background that does not leave room for reevaluation.

By analyzing both positions rather extensively, it follows that the cultural background has inescapable aspects. For example, the language which one employs and the resonating values in society that were already present when the subject was borne into that society.

My attempt here is not to squeeze Nietzsche in a holistic framework because despite the

¹²⁴ Taylor, *The Language Animal*, 40.

¹²⁵ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 43.

¹²⁶ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 962.

inescapability of the cultural background, both authors relate fundamentally differently to the resonance of values. Taylor states that value cannot be determined by the individual and requires to be understandable for a significant portion of society that it has value. Nietzsche, on the other hand, argues that resonance is the very thing that takes away value because frequent matters do not testify of their significance.

A similar difference can be found when discussing depth; those matters that provide life with profoundness. Taylor claims that language animals have an intuitive sense that some matters are more profound than others. Based on the examples he uses, deeper values are those values that are constitutive for one's identity. The intuitive sense arises because subjects that have grown up in a similar context have a grasp of what can be valuable for other subjects. Therefore, these deeper values require resonance to be considered valuable.

Nietzsche claims that depth is only accessible for specific types of people, which goes against the notion of resonance. The more a value resonates within society, the more likely that value goes without reconsideration. Nietzsche's view is even more radical than that of the modern Western subject because, for the contemporary subject, some values are not open for reconsideration either. Egalitarianism resonates to a great extent in modern Western society and expressing the need for reevaluation is often paired with negative feedback.

What both authors have in common is that what gives substance to one's life is fundamentally linked to strong evaluations: assessing specific actions or state of affairs to the individual's notion of the good life. The key difference, once again, can be found in resonance. The notion of the good life, according to Taylor, is constructed through dialogue, while Nietzsche states that the nobleman can decide for himself what a good life holds.

The critique against the modern understanding of the construction of hierarchies of value is completely justified. The idea that the cultural background can be escaped has been, based on these two authors, refuted. One's values and the order of those values build necessarily on the values that were already present in that society before the subject was born. Even the Hikikomori that actively attempt to break loose from the constraining morality in their environment do so in dialogue with the background. Their values result from a rejection of the morality present in their cultural background.

However, what provides life with depth cannot be brought back to a unifying understanding because Taylor claims that the significance of one's life depends on feelings of connectedness to one's environment, while Nietzsche attempts to awaken the passions of the noblemen that will go against this will to be familiar. Nietzsche would encourage the modern subject to go against the familiar and the stagnated values in society, as he cites the exemplary Goethe:

"the best is a deep silence, in which I live and grow against the world, and win what they cannot take away with fire nor sword."¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human*, I:626.

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