

Pettit, Non-domination and Agency: A Taylorian Assessment

by

Adam McLaughlin

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School of Political Studies

Faculty of Social Science

University of Ottawa

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Abstract

Philip Pettit claims his neorepublican theory of freedom as non-domination is preferable to the liberal ideal of non-interference, and he is right. But the reasons why he is right run deeper than is apparent if we attend solely to his arguments defending non-domination in negative terms. In fact, embedded in the three benefits that Pettit claims non-domination can offer (which non-interference cannot) lie significant resonances with a positive idea of freedom concerned with a person's sense of agency. We find such an idea in Charles Taylor, where freedom as self-realization is intricately linked with his "significance view" of human agency. By adopting this Taylorian lens and assessing Pettit's non-domination, I show that non-domination does have much to offer those of us who think of freedom primarily in positive terms and, more generally, to all those of us who believe that freedom and agency are inextricably linked and must be treated as such.

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Introduction

1. Context and problematization

With the principle of freedom as non-domination as one of its core values, the republican tradition has been given new life over the last twenty years and has provided us with an alternative account of individual liberty that is worthy of consideration. Thanks in part to scholars like Philip Pettit and Quentin Skinner, a revival of the “Italian-Atlantic tradition of republicanism” (often dubbed as neo-Roman republicanism) has taken place within Western political philosophy.¹ Both Pettit and Skinner have worked to provide a detailed analysis of the principle of non-domination, offering insightful discussions of why this principle is so highly valued within the republican tradition. Moreover, their work has generated many lively discussions across different disciplines, and as Cécile Laborde rightly observes: “The republican revival has been spectacular and multi-faceted. It has affected real-world political life as well as academic discussions, across the various fields of history, law, philosophy, criminology and political science”.² Few would contest the affirmation that the republican principle that has received the greatest amount of attention in this intellectual revival is the idea of freedom as non-domination. And it is precisely here that this thesis inserts itself: namely, in the debates surrounding this negative conception of liberty, understood as non-domination.

With a focus on ensuring that a person does not have to live under the goodwill of another, the republican ideal of non-domination attaches a great deal of importance to ensuring that individuals are not subjected to arbitrary power and can not be interfered with on an arbitrary basis. Arbitrary acts of interference are ones that are done at the whim of another’s will without any consideration for the effects that the interference might have on the person affected. When this occurs, we can think of a person as being unfree because he or she is dependent on the goodwill of another to not exercise his or her arbitrary power to interfere as he or she so chooses. Republican accounts of liberty seek to reflect on ways to avoid this kind of unfreedom, by cutting off the possibility for this kind of dependency to develop at its roots.

1 Philip Pettit, “Two Republican Traditions,” in *Republican Democracy*, ed. Andreas Neiderberger and Philipp Schink (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2013), 169.

2 Cécile Laborde, “Republicanism,” in *Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, ed. Michael Freeden, Lyman Tower Sargent and Marc Stears (Oxford, U.K: Oxford University Press Ltd, 2013), 513.

Promising a richer way to envision individual freedom, Philip Pettit offers his account of republican liberty as an alternative to the principle of non-interference that is central to most traditional liberal accounts of liberty. The major issue Pettit has with non-interference is that it leaves open the possibility for someone to retain arbitrary power over another because it only requires that one's "expectation" of being interfered with be minimized.³ What is more, even if a person is not directly interfered with, the principle of non-interference cannot ensure that another can interfere simply because he or she has the desire to so. By leaving people vulnerable to the will of another, non-interference cannot prevent a person's freedom from being dependent on the altruism of others. In contrast, the republican ideal of non-domination aims to cut off this kind of dependency and vulnerability at its roots by seeking different institutional and legal means to increase the certainty that no person can retain the sort of arbitrary power that can allow him or her to interfere at will. As a result, Philip Pettit claims that his account of freedom as non-domination is more adequate and richer than the ideal of non-interference, and thus a viable alternative to this approach to liberty (and here, Pettit specifically has in mind Isaiah Berlin's version of non-interference, most famously articulated in his essay "Two Concepts of Liberty").⁴

This thesis hopes to demonstrate that Pettit is indeed correct to claim that non-domination is a preferable account of liberty than non-interference. However, my aim is not simply to show readers why Pettit's account of freedom as non-domination is richer than freedom as non-interference. What I also hope to show—and what is much more counter-intuitive—is that his theory of freedom can in part be understood as a *positive* account of liberty, a view that Pettit himself rejects.

As Pettit explains, because the republican theory of freedom "focuses on people's *individual* power of choice", it shares a common thread with "negative liberty as non-interference", and thus should be considered a negative approach to liberty.⁵ If there are some vague similarities to a positive conception of liberty, these might be the result of non-domination's acknowledgment that liberty requires "something more than the absence of

3 Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997; reprint Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010): 84-85. Pettit specifies that non-domination guarantees "not exemption from intentional interference", but only the sort that is carried out arbitrarily (*Republicanism*, 84). In this manner he does concede that non-interference may be better suited for providing a larger 'quantity' of unobstructed choices, but it cannot promise that those choices will remain free from arbitrary rule or change.

4 Ibid., 21.

5 Ibid., 11 (emphasis added).

interference; it requires security against interference, in particular against interference on an arbitrary basis.”⁶ As much as Pettit is correct that positive liberty does require more than the absence of interference, it is not just the ‘security’ against these acts that matters. Rather, it is why the ‘security’ of not being interfered with is important: namely, because this ‘security’ can help secure a particular end state for the person involved.

Pettit also underscores the fact that the “primary focus” of the republican ideal of liberty is to avoid “the evils associated with interference” (and in particular the kind carried out arbitrarily). It is here that we can see a distinction between his theory and positive liberty accounts and their emphasis on democratic self-rule⁷ and its association to the ideal of self-mastery.⁸ In fact, Pettit argues that if positive liberty is to be understood in the “populist fashion of democratic participation”, he has little desire to be associated with such accounts of freedom.⁹ Indeed, he objects to an ideal of freedom that carries with it the very real possibility of forcing individuals to conform to a single will. In his view, “the prospect of each being subject to the will of all is scarcely attractive”.¹⁰

Adding to this, Pettit also explains that he objects to having his theory of freedom equated with (positive) doctrines of liberty that place the achievement of being self-mastered as their end goal. As explained in his *Republicanism*: “This conception [of liberty] is negative to the extent that it requires the absence of domination by others, not necessarily the presence of self-mastery”.¹¹ While Pettit does acknowledge that freedom understood as self-mastery is “attractive” and worthy of consideration, he insists that his main concern is to demonstrate that self-mastery can be both “facilitated” and “actively promoted” by non-domination.¹² Nevertheless, he does argue, in a somewhat blunt way: “It would not be a useful exercise to compare the attraction of these two freedoms.”¹³ In other words, Pettit is telling us that it is not a useful endeavor to compare his negative model of freedom with a positive rendition that prioritizes a desired end state.

6 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 51.

7 Ibid., 27.

8 Ibid., 51.

9 Ibid., 81.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., 51.

12 Ibid., 82.

13 Ibid., 81-82.

Now, it is precisely on this point that I disagree with Pettit, and in this thesis, I intend to demonstrate that it can indeed be a very useful exercise to compare non-domination (a negative model) with a positive rendition of liberty. In fact, I will go further and maintain that what makes Pettit's republican model of freedom as non-domination preferable to the liberal account of freedom as non-interference, is precisely the fact that it gives fairly serious consideration, even if at times implicitly, to a desired end state, or a person's sense of agency and self-realization.

Would it be too much of a stretch to suggest that Pettit's theory of freedom is not that far removed from a positive conception of freedom? I do not believe it would be. In order to demonstrate why that is, we will need to consider at length the following questions: does Pettit's negative model of freedom as non-domination have enough in common with a positive understanding of liberty to justify a comparison between them? Do we have sufficient resonances to think the comparison plausible? Does Pettit value some of the same principles that are important to positive liberty theorists? And, more importantly: does Pettit wish to achieve a certain end state that is similar to what is sought by positive liberty theorists such as Charles Taylor?

Through a detailed consideration of these questions, I hope to show that Pettit's model of non-domination is much closer to a positive account of liberty than what he is willing to concede. I believe that this can be substantiated provided we set aside the traditional recourse to Berlin's classic formulation of positive liberty (taken up by Pettit), and instead, turn to Charles Taylor's formulation of positive liberty as an 'exercise state'. Taylor's formulation of positive liberty is one that tightly connects a person's freedom with her sense of self-realization, where self-realization is understood as being able to follow through on the desires that she has determined to be significant to her as a person. Nevertheless, we will first take a brief moment to introduce Taylor's work by way of a short excursus into Berlin's famous essay.

2: Approaching Pettit by reconceptualizing positive liberty: From Isaiah Berlin to Charles Taylor

In its classic Berlinian formulation, positive liberty is described as a doctrine that stresses the importance of the question "[b]y whom am I ruled?", and is concerned with the locus of

control (the origin or source of who decides what I am free to do).¹⁴ As a result, positive liberty considers the principle of political participation as a great end goal, while also being attuned to the importance of self-mastery. In Berlin's opinion, placing political participation as an end goal would legitimize state intrusion into the private lives of individuals on behalf of society at large.¹⁵ The latter ideal of self-mastery could, on the other hand, force the individual to abandon his or her own inclinations and match his or her desires to a universal ideal of a right and rational life.¹⁶ These two goals, political participation and self-mastery, are thus intertwined insofar as a universal notion of a rational life becomes institutionalized (thanks in part to popular sovereignty).

Now, even if Berlin claims that positive liberty is chiefly about a desire to make responsible choices *en route* to the realization of a life plan,¹⁷ he still posits that positive liberty carries with it the possibility of severely hampering a person's free will. One of his wariest concern is that positive liberty brings with it a very particular idea of what kind of person an individual should be in order to live a 'free' in life. According to Skinner, it is not so much "the idea of being your own master," but the idea of "mastering your self" that truly bothers Berlin.¹⁸ What Skinner is referring to here, is the way Berlin worries that embedded in the notion of liberty in a positive sense, is an idealized version of what this 'self' ought to be and what will be demanded of the individual in order to live up to this standard. A concern that is at play all throughout Berlin's essay "Two Concepts of Liberty", but most forcefully expressed in section IV, 'Self Realization', wherein he frames positive liberty as the "positive doctrine of liberation by reason".¹⁹

The doctrine of 'liberation by reason' is one in which a person must work to stem her desires and match her will to that of society. Berlin thinks that positive liberty sets forth a particular notion of self-realization as the one true and proper way to live, and in turn forces people into adopting this particular way of life so that what they do conform to the will of all at

14 Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 77-78.

15 Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 208.

16 Ibid., 189-91.

17 Ibid., 178-9.

18 Skinner, "A Third Conception of Liberty," 239. Through this reformulation, Skinner wishes to demonstrate that Berlin is really talking about the dangers behind a doctrine of liberty that is concerned with self-realization and "above all with self-perfection" (Ibid.).

19 Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 189.

the detriment of their own individual will.²⁰ In this manner, positive liberty, understood here as self-realization through self-mastery, is achieved either through acts of conformity or some form of self-abnegation, and not by choosing from unobstructed choices (which is the focus of Berlin's negative liberty as non-interference). All of this is extremely problematic for Berlin, since he believes that the route to individual liberty is one that avoids having to do any of this.

A retreat to one's "Inner Citadel", or to teach the self to curb one's goals because they are deemed to be desires that a 'rational' person should not have, is not the path to individual freedom according to Berlin.²¹ And this is precisely the route that Berlin believes doctrines of positive liberty will demand of people to follow. With the hopes of avoiding this, Berlin holds out his account of negative liberty as non-interference as capable of limiting the external forces that place this demand for self-abnegation upon an agent.²² Ultimately, positive liberty is about learning to adopt and internalize the 'rational will' of society so that one's choices and direction in life conform to it. Therefore, and in order to ensure this, positive liberty places the collective control over society as an end goal.

Popular sovereignty, with its association to positive liberty, is believed to be what can legitimize the demand on the individual to comply with the 'rational will'. Berlin explains that once the 'positive doctrine of liberation by reason' was transposed onto the political realm through Rousseau, it opened the door to the control of society by all of its "fully qualified members".²³ This, in turn, facilitated setting people on the right and rational path towards the commonly held notion of the good life, because society would retain the authority to "interfere with every aspect of every citizen's life".²⁴ This, according to Berlin, is extremely problematic for those who adhere to a negative conception of liberty, since the "sovereignty of the people could easily destroy that of individuals".²⁵ In this way, popular sovereignty runs the risks of allowing the 'will of all' to subvert the will of individuals, which is of course one of the major concerns that was echoed by Pettit earlier, in regards to his own aversion to positive liberty.

Hence, positive liberty is presented by Berlin as being in complete opposition to his understanding of freedom explained in negative terms. Whereas Berlin's negative liberty as non-

20 Ibid., 189-91.

21 Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," see in particular Section III 'The retreat to the inner citadel', 181-187.

22 Ibid., 187.

23 Ibid., 208.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

interference prioritizes securing a wide range of options that are protected from the interference of others so that people can choose for themselves which route in life they will take, positive liberty is depicted as reducing this range set to the point where a person is left with virtually no choice but to conform to the will of all. Non-interference, as a negative approach, is valuable according to Berlin because it does not carry with it the possibility of forcing people to adopt a life that is imposed upon them.

According to Berlin, if an individual is cut off from certain actions, or forced to adopt a “life in which he exercises no choices of his goals”, where “every door but one” is shut before him, then we “sin against the truth that he is a man, a being with a life of his own to live”.²⁶ In his view, a negative approach to freedom is most effective at avoiding such a predicament. This is, in part, because Berlin’s characterization of positive liberty carries with it the possibility of reducing a person’s options to the point where she ‘exercises no choices’ over her goals because ‘every door but one’ will be shut before her, which in the end ‘sins’ against the fact that she is ‘a being with a life of her own to live’. If indeed this is the case, then it should be of no surprise why Berlin, and Pettit for that matter, would prefer a negative approach to liberty, because such an approach is said to leave open enough doors for people to experiment with alternatives and different options so as to independently discover the kind of life they want to live. Obviously, this is not the only way to think about positive liberty. In fact, Charles Taylor’s account of positive liberty offers a much more moderate account or interpretation, one that takes some distance from the dangerous and intrusive aspects identified by Berlin. It does so by grounding itself in the idea that self-realization is particular to each person and that it can be achieved by ‘exercising’ a certain level of control over the shape of one’s life.

Even if Charles Taylor agrees with Berlin that both the aforementioned principles of self-realization and political participation are valued within doctrines of positive liberty, he nevertheless insists that this Berlinian portrait of positive liberty is too reductionist for capturing the “whole family of positive liberty”.²⁷ In his view, such a portrait amounts to an “absurd caricature” of positive liberty,²⁸ since it neglects to show some of the important nuances and complexities of what is at stake here (either for the community or the individual).

26 Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” 174-75.

27 Charles Taylor. “What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty,” in *Philosophy and Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 211.

28 Ibid.

It is primarily in his seminal essay “What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty” that Taylor sought to reconceptualize positive liberty as an “exercise concept”, one in which an individual exercises control over his or her life by becoming both the *author* and *actor* of his or her life plan.²⁹ By adopting the terminology of an ‘exercise concept’, Taylor shows that the ideals of self-awareness, self-understanding, self-control, and self-mastery are “indispensable” to individual freedom,³⁰ because only then can a person become self-realized. For Taylor, a person’s level of freedom, understood as self-realization, is directly associated with her ability to shape her life according to her own design. In doing so, a person achieves a personal level of self-realization, because she retains and exercises a certain level of control over her life. Positive liberty, then, should be understood as offering an account of a desired end state that is made possible by the removal of constraints,³¹ and is, in brief, what lies behind Taylor’s notion of positive liberty understood as an exercise concept.

As a contemporary defender of positive liberty, John Christman explains that positive liberty is “more than the absence of obstacles”; it is about explaining the “final outcome of that absence in positive terms”.³² Quite often, positive liberty theorists understand this final outcome, or end state, as “one’s effectiveness as an agent”, and seek to offer an account of freedom that emphasizes an agent’s ability to act in a “meaningful way” upon a decision so that the choice is an expression of the person’s identity and a reflection of his personal agency.³³ What is more, and of great importance to this thesis, is that according to Christman, the focus of positive liberty is often centered on “the *quality of agency* and not merely the opportunity to act”.³⁴ In this way, it is the “quality of agency” that is prioritized from within a positive approach to liberty,³⁵ and I am proposing that we think about positive liberty in these terms. What I intend to show in this thesis is that this notion of ‘effective agency’ is anchored in the notion of self-realization. As we will see in the next chapter, achieving a personal sense of self-realization is for Taylor what it means to experience freedom in positive terms. Since self-realization is intimately linked to

29 Taylor. “What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty,” 213.

30 Ibid., 213-15.

31 See Eric Nelson. “Liberty: One Concept Too Many?,” *Political Theory* 33, no. 1 (2005): 60; and Christopher Megone, “One Concept of Liberty,” *Political Studies* XXXV (1987): 612 & 614.

32 John Christman, “Saving Positive Freedom,” *Political Theory*, 33, no. 1 (2005): 83, original emphasis.

33 Ibid., 80.

34 Ibid., 79 (original emphasis).

35 Ibid., 84.

Taylor's account of human agency,³⁶ the greater a person's sense of being self-realized, the greater the quality of her agency will be.

To discuss personal freedom is to discuss our sense of agency, since what we think makes us free is the ability to pursue what we believe to be our more important goals in life. Since agency for Taylor is a matter of being motivated to undertake some kind of action based on what is deemed to be significant by the person involved, agency is intimately linked to a person's sense of purpose. This sense of purpose is discovered through qualitative forms of evaluations of not only what is desired, but also, and more importantly, why something is desired. As a result, when a person is able to undertake an action that she deems to be significant, she moves closer to being self-realized. Hence, the greater a person's sense agency is, the greater her level of personal freedom will be. This is why I think that Pettit is wrong when he claims that the end state made possible by an absence of arbitrary power is not useful as a point of comparison for his theory of freedom. In fact, it is because non-domination can make a particular kind of end state a possibility that demonstrates the strength of Pettit's theory of freedom.

Now, Pettit is correct when he insists that the principle of non-domination is primarily concerned with 'people's individual power of choice', since it seeks to eliminate the kind of arbitrary power and arbitrary acts of interference that constrain a person's freedom of choice. However, I am not convinced that we can focus only on constraints without considering, even if implicitly, the end state these constraints might work against. This is a point that is forcefully argued by Christman when he notes: "what *counts* as a constraint is only specified by the presupposition of what final state such interference makes impossible" (and here Christman has in mind Taylor's insistence that constraints only make sense against an idea of what "effective agency amounts to").³⁷ Therefore, constraints only become intelligible providing they are shown to impede the realization of this end state. As we will see, one can find a similar kind of logic in Pettit, and more specifically, in these places where he thinks about the benefits that non-domination can offer a person that non-interference cannot.

36 This is most evident within the pages of Taylor's essay "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," see in particular 216 & 228-229.

37 Christman, "Saving Positive Freedom," 84 (original emphasis). See also, Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," 212, 217-19 & 228.

3: Research questions and thesis statement

If we accept that positive liberty is indeed chiefly concerned with an agent's quality of agency, I think that it is possible to demonstrate that Pettit's freedom as non-domination is not as far removed from this positive model, despite what he claims. I intend to show that what sets Pettit's negative liberty as non-domination above Berlin's negative liberty of non-interference is precisely the fact that Pettit does retain a serious concern for a person's sense and quality of agency. Indeed, embedded in the three benefits that Pettit claims non-domination can offer (which non-interference cannot) is an implicit appeal to a quality of agency argument. Once examined and placed into the context of Taylor's conception of agency, I believe that we will be able to see that these Pettitian benefits do indeed bring Pettit's account of neo-republican liberty quite close to Taylor's theory of positive liberty.

The central research questions guiding this thesis will be the following: Is there a positive conception of individual liberty (understood in the Taylorian sense of the term), to be found in Philip Pettit's republican theory of freedom? Do the benefits that Pettit maintains his model of non-domination has over non-interference indicate a fairly strong concern with a person's sense of agency? What is to be gained from a comparison of Pettit's non-domination model and a Taylorian model? To put it most simply then, this study will offer a Taylorian analysis of Philip Pettit's account of freedom and demonstrate that embedded in Pettit's theory of freedom is a serious consideration and valuation for a person's sense of agency. By building off Taylor's positive liberty as an exercise concept that treats freedom as a matter of being self-realized, and by looking at how it is closely related to his understanding of human agency, I will demonstrate that Pettit's model of non-domination can do more to ensure the 'effectiveness' of an agent's ability to act in a meaningful way. What I am proposing is that the strength of Pettit's theory of freedom lies, in part, on the fact that the conditions made possible by non-domination can help secure a person's sense of agency understood in Taylorian terms. This, in my view, suggests that there are concerns for a person's sense of agency at play in Pettit's theory.

Whereas negative liberty will be shown to be chiefly concerned with the conditions under which a person's freedom is secured, positive liberty will be shown to be concerned with *why* these conditions matter and what kind of experience they can make possible. Even if Pettit remains steadfast on prioritizing the conditions (arrived at negatively) that can secure personal freedom, his reasons for *why* we should embrace non-domination are ones that cannot help but

bleed over into the domain often occupied by positive liberty theorists. A central argument of the thesis then, is that even though Pettit's model focuses on the conditions required for personal liberty, it is *why these conditions are important and what they make possible for the person involved* that ultimately makes non-domination preferable than non-interference.

Now, this is certainly not to say that Pettit's model ought to be read as a full-fledged positive doctrine of liberty. I do agree with him that at its very core, his model is a negative one—one that focuses on ensuring the absence of constraints to personal freedom (namely, the absence of the arbitrary power to interfere). However, there are still important instances where he justifies the appeal of non-domination in ways that suggests a fairly thick concern for one's sense of agency. What I believe this thesis will help to show, is that we cannot think about freedom solely in negative terms because the strength and value of any theory of freedom also relies on what it can do for a person's sense of agency (something that is captured only within a positive approach to freedom).

4: *Situating the thesis in the broader context of political theory and analytical philosophy*

Undertaking a Taylorian analysis of Pettit's republican theory of freedom can go a long way in demonstrating that indeed non-domination is preferable to the liberal ideal of non-interference. In addition, such a study might prove quite useful for demonstrating that agency is an ideal that we should give serious consideration to when evaluating the worth of any theory of liberty. However, it is also necessary that we consider the ways in which this thesis speaks to political theory and analytical philosophy more generally. An additional reason why this thesis matters in my view is that Pettit's theory of freedom has acquired great scholarly attention worldwide; it might even be said to be the most studied and discussed theory of freedom right now (putting aside the work of John Rawls perhaps). In recent years, Pettit's model has generated much interest, analysis, and criticism by a wide range of scholars and on both sides of the Atlantic. Cécile Laborde and John Maynor have rightly noted that Pettit's work, and in particular his seminal book *Republicanism*, has had substantive effects on how the republican theory of freedom has been received and discussed within contemporary philosophy.³⁸ Moreover, Laborde and Maynor both insist that Pettit's book *Republicanism* is the one text “which *more*

38 Cécile Laborde, and John Maynor, “The Republican Contribution to Contemporary Political Theory,” in *Republicanism and Political Theory*, eds. Cécile Laborde and John Maynor (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 1.

than any other has inspired the current revival in republican political theory”.³⁹

Elsewhere, Maynor explicitly acknowledges that Pettit’s work on freedom has been of central importance to the development of his own work⁴⁰ and that he is convinced that Pettit has successfully managed “to bring republicanism out of the history of ideas to cast it instead in a manner that is relevant to contemporary discourse”.⁴¹ One such discourse—which will be of importance to the thesis - is that surrounding the need to maintain a conceptual difference between positive and negative liberty. In their exchange over whether or not there is still the need to retain this theoretical distinction, both Eric Nelson and John Christman (defenders of negative liberty and positive liberty, respectively), have argued that Pettit’s model of non-domination brings a new perspective to how we understand this larger debate.⁴² This debate is of particular interest to this thesis since Pettit remains wedded to the distinction and relies on it in order to make his case for his model of liberty.

Pettit’s *Republicanism* has also informed the debate surrounding secularism and freedom in France,⁴³ and has also, more recently, informed the work of some feminist theorists. In addition to authors like Cécile Laborde, Alice LeGoff and Marie Garrau, Victoria Costa has actively engaged with Pettit’s work. According to Costa, even though there is a need for some adjustments and correctives to Pettit’s theory of republican liberty, it is nonetheless useful overall for feminism and feminist politics.⁴⁴ Now, needless to say, even though Pettit’s work has generated enthusiastic responses, it has also generated a great deal of criticism. Sharon Krause is just one amongst many who have raised important questions about Pettit’s work. Krause argues that for all its well intended purpose of avoiding situations and conditions of domination, Pettit’s model requires modifications so that it can properly deal with certain kinds of “unconscious and unintentional” acts of discrimination, which she believes can have resounding effects on the relationship between personal agency and freedom.⁴⁵

In short, Pettit’s work, and in particular his theory of freedom as non-domination, has

39 Laborde & Maynor, “The Republican Contribution to Contemporary Political Theory,” 4 (emphasis added).

40 John W. Maynor, *Republicanism and the Modern World* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003), 6.

41 Maynor, *Republicanism and the Modern World*, 34.

42 See John Christman, “Saving Positive Freedom”; and Eric Nelson, “Liberty: One Concept Too Many?”.

43 See Cécile Laborde, Français, *Encore un effort pour être républicains!*

44 See Victoria Costa, “Is Neo-Republicanism Bad for Women?,” *Hypatia* 28, no. 4 (2013) & “Freedom as Non-Domination, Normativity, and Indeterminacy,” *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 41 (2007).

45 Sharon Krause, “Beyond non-domination: Agency, Inequality and the Meaning of Freedom,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 39, no. 2 (2013): 188.

generated a wide range of analysis, critiques, and applications in contemporary political theory, especially in Anglo-American circles. This thesis will seek to engage with some of this ever-expanding literature and add another voice to it. It seems to me that with non-domination proposed as a viable alternative to non-interference, fleshing out with more precision what Pettit's theory of freedom amounts to, is an important and timely task given this great interest in Pettit's republicanism.

5: *The Approach*

With the hopes of understanding the respective positions of the authors under examination, I will undertake a close 'internal reading' of several important works penned by Pettit and Taylor. To phrase things slightly differently, I will employ a fairly standard (but non-Straussian) textualist approach in my work. More specifically, I engage with Pettit through a careful, exegetical reading of his now classic book *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, and will broaden my understanding of this text by placing it in conversation with several of his articles and book chapters. With regards to Taylor, I will primarily base my discussion on a reading of the essays found in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1*, where he provides us with a clear understanding of what he thinks human agency is.⁴⁶ I will obviously also draw from his seminal essay "What's Wrong With Negative Liberty" in order to show the link between his understanding of positive liberty and his account of agency.

With the use of this textualist approach, my goal, once again, is to assess whether Pettit's negative model of liberty can be seen as having elements in common with Taylor's positive liberty. It should be noted here that I also plan to avoid the more extreme versions of a textualist approach—pace Strauss—and will certainly not try to 'read between the lines' (a questionable endeavor anyway). Allowing the texts to speak for themselves and by trying to re-articulate what I see as the most interesting and important claims made by these authors, I believe that this is the method most appropriate to my goals.

6: *Moving forward: Layout of the thesis*

The first chapter will offer a detailed account of Charles Taylor's formulation of positive liberty in order to show more precisely how we can think about this conception of freedom

46 A detailed list of which essays have been examined is provided in the bibliography.

differently than the way it is depicted by Berlin. I indicate that Taylor's rendition of positive liberty loses the negative and dangerous aspects seen in it by Berlin and becomes an ideal of freedom that embraces the notion that self-realization is particular for each and every person on an independent basis. It is in this way that, as an 'exercise concept', Taylor's positive liberty links individual freedom with his particular take on what it means to be self-realized. Having completed this, I then move on to explain what Taylor thinks is at stake with human agency and show how this particular account of agency is intimately linked to his rendition of positive liberty. It will be at this point that I expose the connections to be found in Taylor's work between freedom as self-realization and a person's sense of agency. This will be done in order to show, with greater clarity, why we can think about positive liberty as being concerned with a desired end state.

The second chapter unpacks Pettit's account of freedom as non-domination and highlights the components that he regards as integral to a republican ideal of liberty. I wish here to tease out the ways Pettit thinks non-domination is better suited as a negative approach for securing a person's freedom than non-interference. I also consider the ways non-domination better secures some of the defining characteristics that Pettit believes gives negative liberty its worth. Yet, this is only half the picture, since it is also because Pettit's model of non-domination does have a concern for a person's sense of agency that it is preferable to non-interference. What I show is that nested within Pettit's discussion of the benefits non-domination can offer a person lies an implicit appeal to a particular end state. And, it is in these instances that Pettit begins his slide into the territory generally occupied by positive liberty theorists. I thus make the case that Pettit's non-domination is indeed a lot closer to a positive account of liberty than he is willing to concede.

The concluding chapter will situate our conversation within the larger frame of the need for retaining the distinction between positive and negative liberty. I hope to show that there are good reasons to think freedom *primarily* from the perspective of positive liberty, since it is only this perspective that considers the way freedom and agency interact in a substantive and convincing manner. I will then briefly consider how the republican ideal of non-domination can be useful for some debates in feminist theory. In particular, I will discuss Sharon Krause's critique of Pettit's model of non-domination and show that even though she is right to argue that there are some shortcomings with Pettit's model, there are some ways to save him from her critique.

Human Agency and Freedom as Self-Realization:

A case for the ‘quality of agency’ argument in Charles Taylor’s positive liberty

Introduction

There is one overreaching goal that this chapter sets out to accomplish: to demonstrate that a person can experience a greater sense of freedom when he or she experiences a greater quality of personal agency. I will do so by exploring various strands of Charles Taylor’s work that touch upon freedom, analyzing closely the connections between Taylor’s understanding of freedom as self-realization and his account of agency. On the one hand, Taylor’s idea of what it means to be free is captured in his formulation of positive liberty as an exercise concept, where freedom is a matter of self-realization. In Taylor’s opinion, being self-realized entails having effectively determined the shape of one’s own life and to undertake the acts that are believed to bring a person closer to the realization of her own sense of purpose. On the other hand, Taylor’s approach to agency treats the notion of significance as foundational; he maintains that we come to know what is significant to us as individuals by evaluating what motivates us to undertake one course of action over another. By adopting a hermeneutico-phenomenological understanding of how humans come to know and understand the world they live in, Taylor posits that it is our interpretations of our subjective lived experiences that enable us to know if our situation is significant (or not) and if it can contribute to achieving our sense of purpose.

The chapter is divided into six sections. In the first section, I will demonstrate and defend why we should abandon Berlin’s account of positive liberty and instead embrace Taylor’s formulation of positive liberty as an exercise concept. What will become apparent is that Taylor offers a much more nuanced and moderate account of positive liberty, one that loses the dangerous and intrusive features discussed in the introduction. Taylor largely does this by acknowledging that freedom as self-realization is particular to each person and is achieved by exercising a certain level of control over one’s life. Section two takes us through the various components involved Taylor’s account of human agency. What will become apparent is that agency is indeed a deeply subjective lived experience: one that involves interpreting our experiences in such a way that we come to terms with what is significant to us. We do this

through the use of language, and our articulation of how a situation makes us feel becomes integral to how we experience agency.

Section three shows how our evaluation of our situation allows us to come to terms with what is significant. More specifically, the goal is to demonstrate that it is our *motivations* we evaluate when considering why we desire the things we do in life and whether these desires fall in line with our sense of purpose. The fourth section of the chapter highlights the fact that our evaluations can take place on two different levels: on the level of weak and strong evaluations. Although strong evaluation is shown to be a deeper form of reflection, I argue that in both instances we experience the kind of agency celebrated by Taylor. Moreover, I explain that even when our evaluations are carried out in a weak sense, they are never fully removed from what is at stake with our strong evaluations. In section five, I provide an example that will help to tie together many of the concepts explored in our discussion about agency. I conclude the chapter by arguing that when we act based on strong evaluations, we are better situated to experience a greater quality of agency.

1.1: *Charles Taylor's positive liberty as an 'exercise concept': Freedom as self-realization*

We saw earlier that Taylor is not satisfied with Berlin's depiction of positive liberty. In his view, Berlin's version amounts to an "absurd caricature" of positive liberty.¹ One reason for this is that Berlin fails to recognize that positive liberty can offer an account of freedom that leaves open the possibility for a person to discover on her own what she wants out of life. This is why Taylor tells us we should think of positive liberty as "a view of freedom which involves essentially the exercising of control over one's life".² Adding to this, Taylor explains that a person is free "only to the extent that one has effectively determined oneself and the shape of one's life".³ As a result, Taylor wishes to reconceptualize positive liberty as an "exercise-concept," where we become both the *author* and *actor* of our life plan by exercising a level of control on two separate (yet interlinked) fronts.⁴ Let us look at these more closely.

First, provided I take an interest in the make up of my collectivity and can participate in the shape and direction it takes, I achieve a level of self-direction by exercising control over the

1 Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," 211.

2 Ibid., 213.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

conditions under which I am left to pursue my life goals within society. This can help me feel that I am the *author* of my life plan because I have a say in deciding what will be valued as ‘the good’ in society, and this perception of the good is what gives significance to my actions and goals.⁵ This brings with it not only feelings of being self-realized and self-directed, but also a sense of belonging to the community. Secondly, provided I overcome the internal constraints and motivational fetters that could prevent me from pursuing what I hold to be significant, I achieve a sense of self-mastery because I am aware that what motivates me to action is tied to my sense of purpose. With this comes a sense of self-realization: I can think of myself as being the actor of my life plan.⁶ What matters is that I am self-directed, self-mastered, and ultimately self-realized on both a collective and individual level. In achieving this, I become not only the *actor* of my life plan but also the *author* of it, because what I *do* is a result of what I have *willed* on both a communal and individual level.

As an ‘exercise-concept’ then, Taylor’s account is not all that far removed from Berlin’s view that positive liberty “derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master”,⁷ or that it offers an answer to the question “[w]hat, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?”⁸ However, and unlike Berlin’s description, this desire to be one’s ‘own master’ and to be the ‘source of control’ over one’s life does not amount to what is appropriately termed by Christman the “inner citadel” and “tyranny” arguments.⁹ We saw these arguments earlier in Berlin. Christman rightly indicates that the ‘inner citadel’ argument posits that an individual can be manipulated into giving up on desires that should not be perused by a so called rational actor,¹⁰ whereas the ‘tyranny argument’ assumes that people will be subjected to state sanctioned intrusions in order to bring their desires in line with the rational will of society.¹¹ Yet, once understood in the Taylorian sense of an exercise state, positive liberty loses its associations with the risks of conformity and

5 As we will see in later in the chapter, what is thought of as ‘the good’, or more appropriately ‘the good life’, is largely captured in Taylor’s notion of a ‘horizon of significance’. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of The Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 92-3.

6 Taylor, “What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty,” 214.

7 Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” 178.

8 Ibid., 169.

9 John Christman, “Liberalism and Individual Positive Freedom,” *Ethics* 101, no. 2 (1991): 351.

10 Ibid., 352.

11 Ibid., 354-55.

totalitarianism.¹² I will deal with each of these critiques in turn.

1.1-1: Freedom as Self-Realization: Defusing Berlin's 'Inner Citadel' Concerns

We know that Berlin is at odds with the idea of limiting a person's options to the point where only the choices that fall in line with the will of society are available to choose from, forcing a person to adopt a life that is not of his own design. But this is not what we find in Taylor's formulation of positive liberty. Weighing in on this issue, Megone points out that unlike Berlin's "strong form", Taylor's approach is a "moderate positive conception".¹³ It is indeed a conception of liberty that is grounded in the notion that there is "a true ideal of self-fulfillment and self-realization for each individual", one that is unique to each and every person.¹⁴

In an attempt to drive a wedge between Berlin's extreme version of positive liberty and Taylor's more moderate one,¹⁵ Megone tells us that Taylor embraces the pluralist's ethos that on a societal level all values are not commensurable, but that on an individual level they are.¹⁶ This is because Taylor maintains that our goals are motivated by moral reasons that are particular to each of us, which is why we cannot assume that all human goals rest on the same "footing".¹⁷ In fact, Taylor forcefully argues that if we accept that "human beings really differ in their self-realization", then this also involves accepting there can be "no official body" (here think of the rational will of society) that can set people on the right course towards self-realization.¹⁸ In other words, Taylor thinks freedom as self-realization involves deciding for ourselves which desires we will take on as our own in order to live the kind of life we want as individuals.¹⁹

Taylor advances the idea that "freedom is important to us because we are purposive beings", while adding that what we believe to be our more "significant purposes" in life are linked to our "desires about desires".²⁰ Having 'desires about desires' means that behind many of the things we seek lays a deeper, more significant, reason for the desire that is particular to each

12 That is in part because it embraces the "post-Romantic view", which maintains that "each person has his own original form of realization". See Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," 216.

13 Megone, "One Concept of Liberty," 617.

14 Ibid., 614.

15 Ibid., 619.

16 Ibid., 613.

17 Charles Taylor, *Sources of The Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 23.

18 Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," 216. Also expressed, though in slightly different terms, in Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 14.

19 Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," 212.

20 Ibid., 219-20.

one of us. Accordingly, Taylor explains that in order for a desire to be considered as “fundamental” to a person’s life, it must be experienced as such by the individual in question and cannot be decided and imposed upon him by an external force.²¹ This helps to explain why Taylor maintains at once that desires are commensurable on an individual basis and that desires are at the same time non-commensurable on a communal level (as it is the individual who decides which desires are, or are not, ‘fundamental’ to his life pattern). In this way Taylor’s rendition of positive liberty is indeed a more ‘moderate’ one than what we saw in Berlin.

Self-realization is, in many respects, equivalent to what Taylor thinks it means to be free: to have ‘effectively determined oneself and the shape of one’s life’. In order to do so, an individual must be able to exercise some control over deciding which desires and goals are significant and which ones relate to his sense of purpose in life. This is why Taylor tells us: “the question of freedom/unfreedom is bound up with the frustration/fulfillment of our purposes”.²² In short, freedom as self-realization is about deciding for the self what will come to be defined as the ‘purpose’ of one’s life, and which desires and goals will help achieve this purpose.

Knowing this, we can safely set aside Berlin’s ‘inner citadel’ critique as it is clear that a Taylorian approach to positive liberty is not grounded in the idea that there is a single ideal of the right and rational way to live. There is no demand placed on a person to engage in some form of self-abnegation and to adopt a single idea of which desires he ought to have, nor what his purpose in life ought to be. Rather, it is a matter of an individual exercising some control over his life by deciding, for the self, precisely what goals and desires will be deemed significant to his purpose in life. One way of doing this is by participating in the political process and deliberating about what will be binding on all members of society. This nicely takes us to our discussion of Berlin’s ‘tyranny’ critique.

1.1-II: Political Participation and its relationship to personal freedom

Berlin believed that with positive liberty’s emphasis on treating the act of political participation as an end goal, there was the possibility that a person’s freedom could be severely limited. This is because he was concerned that by prioritizing democratic self-rule, the ‘positive doctrine of liberation by reason’ could become institutionalized and, in turn, used to force people

²¹ Taylor, “What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty,” 223.

²² Ibid., 227.

into conforming to the so-called ‘rational will of society’—a concern also expressed by Pettit. However, we get a much different account of the value associated to political participation within doctrines of positive liberty in Taylor. Here is an account in which political acts can make it possible for people to feel they are a part of the collective decisions that guide the shape of society. This is a crucial feature of Taylor’s account of freedom since the act of participating in the collective self-rule of society is a reflection of people exercising some control over their lives. This is why political participation is valued as an *end in itself* by Taylor.²³

Within Taylor’s essay “Atomism”, a fundamental point expressed throughout is that the possibility for a person to exercise her autonomy and choose from an array of meaningful choices can only be done within a social context.²⁴ Because of this, Taylor is adamant that if a person wishes to achieve and retain the identity of a self-directed autonomous individual, she has to take an interest in the “shape” of her cultural and societal milieus.²⁵ However, having an interest is not enough: what is needed is that a person *participates* in shaping society. As Taylor explains: “In fact, men’s deliberating together about what will be binding on all of them is an essential part of the exercise of freedom”, and when we do so, “we exercise a *fuller* freedom”.²⁶ This is because in deliberating about ‘what will be binding’ on all members of society, a person has a say in deciding what choices will be available to her to choose from in order to live the kind life she wants. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, people also become aware of the issues that affect them as a society and are able to come to “grips” with their importance.²⁷ This makes it possible for a sense of community to be anchored in what binds people together and, at the same time, it is what differentiates them from each other. People can come to an understanding of what is important to them *as individuals*, while also recognizing that they are members of a political and social community who share similar and/or opposing concerns and aspirations. This is thought to lead to a negotiation of what will come to be valued as a shared vision and purpose for society, while also leaving enough room for people to do their own thing.

Based on this, Taylor insists that valuing political participation as an end goal in no way

23 Taylor, “What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty,” 212.

24 Charles Taylor, “Atomism,” in *Philosophy and The Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), most forcefully stated on 209.

25 Taylor, “Atomism,” 207.

26 Ibid., 208 (emphasis added).

27 Ibid.

automatically leads to the reductionist account of being “forced to be free”.²⁸ There is no need to cling to the position that political participation is desired by positive liberty theorists because it can legitimize the coercive hand of the state to enforce a universal notion of the good life. In fact, and as this thesis has demonstrated, the very idea that all goods, desires, values, or choices are commensurable on a communal level is at odds with Taylor’s philosophy.

Yet, since they are commensurable on an individual level, we can see why Taylor would place such an importance on people having a share in deciding which goods, desires, values, or choices will be made available to choose from. It is in this way that political participation becomes very important to the ideal of freedom as self-realization.

Since self-realization is understood as acting in accordance with one’s sense of purpose and ‘effectively determining the shape of one’s life’ based on what is significant on a personal basis, then deliberating about what ‘will be binding on us all’ is indeed a way for a person to ‘exercise a fuller freedom’. In doing so, she actively takes part in deciding the range of options that are available in order for her to live out her life according to her own design. When understood in this way, we can discount the ‘tyranny’ argument proposed by Berlin and in many ways reiterated by Pettit. Yet, Berlin does feel that there is ‘some’ usefulness to the ideal of political participation insofar as it serves an instrumental purpose—a point that also requires to be assessed.

Even if popular sovereignty is depicted as invasive, Berlin does acknowledge that political participation is indeed ‘worth something’. In his view, the “chief value” of wanting to retain the “positive right” of political participation and collective governance is to secure the required negative liberties needed for people to have meaningful choices.²⁹ In short, Berlin treats political participation as instrumental, as a *means* to securing and protecting the freedoms gained through the principle of non-interference. Pettit also adopts, in many important respects, Berlin’s position on this matter when he explains that the act of political participation is a means to “safeguard” individual liberties: namely (this time) to ensure that the principle of non-domination is secured.³⁰

But Taylor himself eschews any attempt to understand political participation in this instrumental way. This refusal is closely linked to his thoughts on the adverse effects associated

28 Taylor, “What’s Wrong with Negative liberty,” 212.

29 Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” 211.

30 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 30.

to using instrumental reasoning when we approach our social interactions. To be sure, Taylor defines instrumental reasoning as “the kind of rationality we draw on when we calculate the most economical application of means to a given end”.³¹ The reason why Taylor has a problem with this kind of thinking being used to determine the value of political participation is that it reduces the act to a self-serving enterprise, one that gives way to the “fragmentation” of society, in which the development of a “common purpose” for society becomes very difficult to achieve.³² This is because individuals will see themselves “more atomistically” than bound together by a shared sense of community, thus preventing them from seeing that there are commonalities in the purposes and goals they each have.³³ People become more focused on individual gain and seek to maximize their own outcomes with little regard for others or what might be good for the community.

In such a fragmented society, it becomes exceedingly difficult for people to identify with each other as part of a shared community, since both the political process and society at large are treated as “purely” instrumental.³⁴ When this happens, there is the possibility that people will lose their sense of duty and allegiance to their fellow citizens along with their sense of belonging to a shared political community, since both are now viewed as “marginal” to their every day lives.³⁵ Therefore, if we accept that the ‘positive right’ of political participation is of value because of its instrumental purpose, we would also be accepting that people and society are simply there to serve our self-serving ends. We end up prioritizing the idea of choice over the importance of *having a share in deciding* which choices are available and what will constitute a shared sense of purpose.

In many ways then, by treating political participation as instrumental Berlin actually opens the door even wider for people’s liberty to be limited. As people are cut off from an understanding of their role in charting the direction of society, they lose touch with an important factor that contributes to seeing freedom as self-realization. What is more, with such little importance placed on deciding what the shared values of society will be, it can be rather easy for the state to limit people’s choices to the point where they are conducive to the realization of some ‘rational will’ that people see no connection to in terms of having a share in creating. Not

31 Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 5.

32 Ibid., 112.

33 Ibid., 112-13.

34 Ibid., 117.

35 Ibid., 43.

only would people feel they are separate from the collective sense of purpose, but since they are offered only a select range of options, they may no longer question the source of this ‘rational will’. This, I believe, is another important implication that comes with treating political participation as instrumental.

Since Taylor’s positive liberty is about exercising some control over the self and about becoming *both* the *author* and *actor* of a life plan, we can see why Taylor objects to treating political participation instrumentally: such a move assigns priority to becoming more the *actor* of a life plan, at the expense of also being the *author* of one. Within a Taylorian approach to positive liberty, political participation is valued as a good *in itself*, one which is required for a personal sense of self-realization rather than because it legitimizes interfering with the wills of others. Political participation is not a means of enforcing conformity to a single idea of the good; rather, it is an act that can permit a collective sense of the good to be achieved by allowing a plurality of views to be expressed. In doing so, political participation helps bring about a fundamental concept that is integral to Taylor’s particular understanding of human agency: the concept of horizon of significance.

1.1-III: *Positive liberty, political participation and the horizon of significance*

Embedded in the claim that political participation is a good worth prioritizing is a more fundamental claim about the importance of ‘horizons of significance’. Simply put, a horizon of significance acts as a benchmark against which people consider and evaluate the appeal of various ways of living in their efforts to come to an understanding of what is significant and thus meaningful to them on an individual basis. This realization can help provide people with a sense of purpose, as what people believe to be significant to them will quite often inform which desires and goals they think are the most important to pursue in their lives. As Taylor explains: “Things take on importance against a background of intelligibility. Let us call this a horizon”, while also explaining this horizon provides a baseline upon which “things take on a significance for us”.³⁶

Coming to an understanding of what is significant to us on an individual basis can help us identify what our sense of purpose may or may not be, which in turn can bring us closer to feeling self-realized. In this way, the horizon of significance can provide us with a basis for charting out a sense of direction in life and steer us toward what we believe we should do in

³⁶ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 37.

order to achieve our life goals. This is why Taylor also explains that a horizon acts as a “background picture” of what is believed to be right and wrong,³⁷ since the kind of life a person thinks is worth living is defined by an appeal to, and in comparison against, the multitude of values and lifestyles that are reflected within the horizon of significance. When conceptualized in this way, a horizon of significance acts as a source of morality.

The link between a person’s moral disposition and the horizon of significance rests in part on how the former receives its contents from the latter. As Taylor explains, morality should be thought of as what gives value to our “notions of a full life”, and when faced with answering the question about how to live our life, we are moved towards entertaining the question of “what kind of life is worth living?”³⁸ Accordingly, a “moral idea” is one that offers a “picture of what a better or higher mode of life would be”, and the position taken on this issue is gauged based on a “standard of what we ought to desire”.³⁹ In this way, our sense of morality is closely associated with what we envision as being a life worth living, and we come to an understanding of this by drawing from the various standards that exist in society. Yet, these standards do not exist in a vacuum; they require some kind of framework in which certain ways of living are understood as being ‘higher’ and ‘better’. In other words, standards require a horizon of significance in order for them to be intelligible and understood as applicable to our particular situation.

Taylor is very clear that there is no escaping our place within a framework of meaning and our need for standards. Presented as his “strong thesis”, Taylor explains that “doing without frameworks is utterly impossible for us”, and this is because the “horizons within which we live our lives and which make sense of them” will always consist of standards and qualitative forms of distinction between different ways of living.⁴⁰ What is more, Taylor tells us that humans require certain “standards” as points of reference in order to achieve a “sense of self”.⁴¹ In this way, coming to grips with who we are, while also deciding what kind of actions we will undertake in order to live the kind of life we aspire to, cannot be done without recourse to the standards that are embedded in the horizon of significance.

Above, Taylor referred to a framework (or horizon) in the plural; arguably, this is

37 Taylor, *Sources of The Self*, 8-9.

38 Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 14.

39 Ibid., 16.

40 Taylor, *Sources of The Self*, 27.

41 Charles Taylor, “The Concept of a Person,” in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 105.

because there can exist more than one horizon at a given time within society. In fact, there is the possibility that we can read Taylor's appeal to the notion of horizon in the *plural* as indicating that there are two kinds of horizons: a collective one and an individual one.⁴² Although the individual horizons are indeed different in many ways, quite often they do overlap. These same horizons are in many ways apart from the collective one, but they are nonetheless in many other ways connected to it. This is because a person arrives at knowing and designing his own particular take on life by drawing from the various standards of the many different versions of 'a life worth living' that exists in what is the 'collective', or shared, horizon. In doing so, he creates his own 'individual' horizon, which informs what his personal sense of purpose in life is—a horizon that may overlap with others because it has common points of reference within the shared horizon.⁴³

Herein lies the crux of the argument: insofar as we require a collective horizon in order to come up with our own individual horizon so we can move closer to a sense of self-realization, so too do we require *a say in deciding* which values and standards will be available to choose from within the collective horizon. And this is why Taylor places such importance on participating in the political process: it is through this process that people can in fact become *authors* of their life plan. Moreover, the act of participating in the creation of a shared horizon of significance also makes it possible for people to 'come to grips' with what not only binds them together, but also what sets them apart. This can facilitate a sense of community and create some common threads upon which people work together to create a pluralistic society. All of this is what is at stake with understanding positive liberty as an exercise concept that values the act of political participation as an *end goal* and a good in *itself*.

Our discussion of Taylor's positive liberty as an exercise concept comes to an end here, and in light of all that has been touched upon I believe we have sufficient reason for moving beyond Berlin's overly simplistic characterization of positive liberty. I have stressed the fact that with Taylor, positive liberty loses the self-abnegating and tyrannical features seen in it by Berlin. Understood as freedom as self-realization, Taylor's positive liberty holds true to the idea that values and desires are non-commensurable on a communal level, but are so on an individual level; there is no demand of self-denial placed upon people. Rather, Taylor's positive freedom

⁴² It is obviously also written in the plural because there are many different cultural-linguistic horizons in the world.

⁴³ Taylor, "The Concept of a Person," 97; see also Taylor, *Source of the Self*.

recognizes that each person has his or her own notion of a life worth living based on what is significant to them as an individual. There is no state enforced ‘rational will’, and political participation is valued as an end because only then can a person have a say in deciding the shape of her society and feel a level of self-direction in her attempts to be self-realized, or free. What now needs to be done is to show how Taylor’s theory of freedom is associated with his account of agency, and this discovery begins in the next section.

1.2: *Human Agency: Consciousness and significance*

Uncovering Taylor’s position on human agency necessitates a point of departure, one where the basic criteria for what it means to be conscious as a person who experiences agency are firmly established. According to Taylor, there are two major competing accounts of human agency, and although in the end they hold substantially different positions, they nonetheless do share some common ground. Both positions accept that a person is “a being with a certain moral status, or a bearer of rights”, and both also accept that beneath this status lies “certain capacities” that make this a possibility to begin with.⁴⁴ Moreover, since both positions insist that a person “must be a being with his own point of view on things”, then it is the capacity to arrive at a point of view on things that becomes a “necessary” condition for being considered a person who has agency.⁴⁵ Yet, Taylor thinks that this alone is not “sufficient” to capture the essence of human agency,⁴⁶ since what is missing is *how* a person comes to have a point of view on things. Once we uncover the ways in which each position explains this, the line that separates them will become clearer.

On the one hand, there is what Taylor calls the “representation conception” of a person.⁴⁷ This perspective maintains that human consciousness is understood as “the power to form representations of things”, and explains agency by an appeal to a “performance criterion”.⁴⁸ In exercising the capacity to form a representation of things, a person is able to engage in “strategic action”.⁴⁹ This propensity for strategic action is made possible by a person’s power to plan, and actions are evaluated and undertaken based on calculations that seek to determine the best

44 Taylor, “The Concept of a Person,” 97.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid., 106.

48 Ibid., 98.

49 Ibid., 100-101.

possible outcomes for the person involved.⁵⁰ Therefore, a person is a “being who acts”,⁵¹ and actions are taken based on the most appropriate form of strategic action that will lead to the desired outcome. In many ways then, the representation view grounds its ‘performance criterion’ in the capacity for instrumental reasoning, and agency is understood as the ability to undertake strategic actions based on the ability to form a representation of things.

On the other hand, there is Taylor’s own position defined as the “significance view”.⁵² This position maintains that if we wish to uncover the “nature of human agency”, then we need to accept that a “crucial” feature about humans is that they are beings for whom “things matter”.⁵³ In order to accept this, we need to treat human consciousness as the capacity to evaluate things based on *the significance* these things have in relation to our life. As Taylor explains: “Consciousness in the characteristically human form can be seen as what we attain when we come to formulate the significance of things for us”.⁵⁴ The implications this has for how we understand the ‘nature of agency’ is that agency is tied to our “power to evaluate”, since many of our goals are based on qualitative forms of discrimination and not solely on calculations that lead to strategic action.⁵⁵ What is characteristic of human consciousness then, is that it relates to a person’s capacity to make decisions based on *the meaning* these choices have for the individual involved and *the importance* they have in relation to his sense of purpose. Whereas the representation approach stops short of any such considerations, Taylor’s position is one that treats the notion of *significance* as a determining factor in how we experience agency.

Consciousness then, as understood from within the ‘significance view’, must certainly entail the capacity to form a representation of things (otherwise we would be unable to move to the level of formulating and attributing significance to them). This, I believe, Taylor would agree with: witness the way he appeals to this “basic condition” to describe what he calls a “respondent”, or an agent who has an original point of view.⁵⁶ However, humans are not simply “subjects of strategic actions”, otherwise the only thing that would really separate humans from animals is their capacity to plan their strategic actions over a larger span of time, or the ability to

50 Taylor, “The Concept of a Person,” 104.

51 Ibid., 103.

52 Ibid., 113.

53 Ibid., 98.

54 Ibid., 100.

55 Charles Taylor, “What is Human Agency?,” in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers I*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 15.

56 Taylor, “The Concept of a Person,” 99, and also expressed, though in different terms, on 103.

better comprehend the “complex cause-effect relationships” that inform their calculations.⁵⁷ Rather, Taylor argues we should understand that a person is a “subject of significance”, and the things that matter to him and to which he ascribes significance to are very much “peculiarly human, and have no analogue with animals”.⁵⁸ A quick example will help to show why this is.

Unlike a dog, who would eat just about whatever kind of meat that came its way, it matters to Quigley that the meat he eats be organically raised without the use of hormones and antibiotics. This is significant to Quigley because he feels that such farming practices are better for people’s health, the animals involved, and the environment; the choice is significant because it matters beyond the consummation of the desire and relates to a particular way of living ‘a life worth living’. Surely both agents, the dog and Quigley, are primarily concerned with eating and both will resort to some kind of strategic action to achieve their respective ends. However, it would be a stretch to think that it matters to the dog which specific methods are used to raise the animal that will be consumed. It does, however, matter to Quigley, and his choices and actions are guided by a desire to achieve the more significant end.

In this example, we can see why Taylor believes that without a consideration for significance in relation to what motivates people to undertake certain actions, we would be ill served by the representation approach to capture the nature of human agency. By grounding human agency in strategic action and on our propensity to act based on instrumental reasoning, the representation approach would be unable to account for why Quigley would choose the meat that was raised in a specific manner. Because we have a desire to know that what we do matters in a deeper sense and that it is tied to our sense of purpose, we need to be able to account for this kind of behaviour in humans. Even though we are agents of strategic actions, we are also creatures of significance, and we do, just as Quigley does, make many decisions based on what matters to us the most. This is why consciousness for Taylor must be understood as the capacity to ascribe significance to our actions, and it is also why agency is tied to our ability to evaluate our options and choose, based on what is important to us. And all this is made possible by the fact that we are self-interpreting animals, and it is our interpretations of our experiences that lead to deciding what is and what is not significant for us as individuals.

⁵⁷ Taylor, “The Concept of a Person,” 101-02.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 102.

1.2-1: Humans as self-interpreting beings

One of the key features that separate the significance view from the representation approach is that the former accepts that humans are self-interpreting beings whose actions and objects of desire become significant based on how a person experiences a particular situation—whereas the representation approach insists that actions and the objects of our desires can be defined in absolute terms and are independent of our experiences. Underlining the representation approach, then, is a desire for objectivity and a desire to “treat man, like everything else, as an object among objects”, and to cast aside the subjective lived experience as “epiphenomenon”, or as secondary to an objective reality understood in absolute terms.⁵⁹ For within this approach, an action is believed to be dependent on the cause that initiated it, and it is the cause that becomes the purpose for the action and ultimately stands to explain it.⁶⁰ This is the epistemological basis that permits human agency to be defined by a ‘performance criterion’ as the capacity for strategic action. The problem with relying on a cause and effect model for understanding agency is that it cannot, in my view, fully account for the ways in which some actions are chosen over others.

In returning to our previous example, the dog’s action of eating the meat can certainly be explained by the causal effect of it being hungry, and the purpose of the action can be identified by the cause: a desire for food because it is hungry. Yet, we could not fully understand Quigley’s behaviour in the same way. Though the initial cause for Quigley wanting to eat meat may be similar to that of the dog, trying to understand why he opts for the organic meat over other kinds of meat cannot be answered simply by an appeal to the cause that he is hungry. Rather, it needs to be understood in terms of what is significant to Quigley, and how the choice is related to a sense of purpose that Quigley is motivated by. This is what Taylor wants to underline when he explains that actions are “intrinsically directed”, or that they are “inhabited by the purposes which direct them”.⁶¹ The reason behind Quigley’s choice for organic meat is significant because it is associated to a purpose in a deeper sense, one that relates to how he wants to live his life. And it is this purpose that helps to explain his behaviour and not just the cause that initiated his desire to sate his appetite. Hence, as the representation approach prioritizes the cause behind

59 Charles Taylor, “Self-Interpreting Animals,” in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 47.

60 Charles Taylor, “Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind,” in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 78.

61 Ibid.

Quigley's action, it will fall short of being able to fully account for what motivated Quigley to take one course of action over another. We can, however, account for Quigley's behaviour in terms of significance providing we accept that people are self-interpreting beings.

The first step towards understanding why Taylor thinks humans are self-interpreting animals is to recognize that, on the one hand, he adopts a phenomenological approach to human behaviour. Under such an approach, what I know of myself and the world around me are not things I know *a priori*; rather this kind of knowledge is gained in activity.⁶² According to Taylor, it is in the act of doing that I become cognizant of what it is I am doing, and through this process I develop an awareness and understanding of who I am and the intentions of my actions.⁶³ This is why for Taylor, the purpose behind an action and the significance of a desire are never static, nor should they be assessed in absolute terms. Instead, they are reliant on how a situation is experienced by the agent involved. We could, therefore, claim that it is the experience that is constitutive of our consciousness, which is why Taylor believes we should prioritize a person's lived experience over an appeal to causation and absolute descriptions when trying to understand what motivates her to action. However, an experience can only shape a person's consciousness in the way Taylor explains providing we recognize that he also adopts a hermeneutical approach to how we understand our experiences.

Taylor is very clear that accepting the proposition that humans are self-interpreting animals necessitates that we also employ a hermeneutical approach to how we make sense of the world.⁶⁴ When Taylor explains that "our interpretations of ourselves and our experience is constitutive of what we are",⁶⁵ he is not only drawing the links between his phenomenological stance and his hermeneutical position; he is also indicating the importance that interpretations have for human agency. My sense of who I am cannot be disentangled from my interpretations of the world and my experiences. Much of what I do and what I think I can do, along with how I understand and explain my situation and what I hold to be significant, are dependent on the way I interpret my experience. Moreover, my interpretations can affect how I experience something, which is what Taylor means when he says that "our self-interpretations are partly constitutive of

62 Taylor, "Hegel's Philosophy of Mind," 85-6.

63 Ibid., 84. It is important to note that this 'coming to an awareness' of our intentions is not simply a matter of carrying out the action, but is also achieved in the mental process of formulating and articulating what it is we are doing and why. All of which is directly tied to processes involved with self-interpretations.

64 Taylor, "What is Human Agency?," 43.

65 Taylor, "Self-Interpreting Animals," 47.

our experience”.⁶⁶ In this way, phenomenology and hermeneutics meet, and we can better appreciate Taylor’s claim that our interpretations should not be treated as “merely a view on reality, separable from reality, nor as epiphenomenon, which can be by-passed in our understanding of reality.”⁶⁷ Rather, it is how experiences are interpreted that in the end makes up our sense of reality. This is the epistemological basis for Taylor’s significance view which combines phenomenology and hermeneutics, and which leads him to understand human agency as being able to evaluate our choices based on the significance they have in relation to our life; something that we only arrive at knowing by interpreting our lived experience. However, what remains to be seen is what we interpret when we are trying to make sense of our experiences and how we explain this.

1.2-II: *Interpreting our feelings and articulating our emotions through language*

To understand and explain a particular situation is to have interpreted in some way the experience that led to it, and the interpretation is one that involves a description of the situation in terms of how the experience affects us personally. More to the point, we interpret our experiences based on our feelings, and when we describe our situation we are at the same time defining the emotion that we associate with the experience. What is more, in doing so we are also making a claim about the significance that the situation has for us.⁶⁸ This is what Taylor means when he explains emotions as: “...essentially involving a sense of our situations. They are affective modes of awareness of a situation.”⁶⁹ Furthermore, Taylor explains “... describing properly what these emotions are like involves making explicit the sense of the situation they essentially incorporate, making explicit some judgment about the situation which gives the emotion character.”⁷⁰ This is why he adds that: “...experiencing a given emotion involves experiencing our situation as being of a certain kind or having a certain property.”⁷¹ In other words, what is thought to be significant is dependent in large part on how we interpret the feeling we experience in a given situation, since this is what helps us determine the importance a situation has for us.

66 Taylor, “What is Human Agency?,” 37.

67 Taylor, “Self-Interpreting Animals,” 47.

68 Ibid., 65.

69 Ibid., 48.

70 Ibid., 48.

71 Ibid.

Emotions then, play a crucial role in Taylor's hermeneutical position and in his stance on human agency. This is evident when he claims: "Human emotion is interpreted emotion...This is what is involved in seeing man as a self-interpreting animal."⁷² It is by interpreting our experienced feeling and understanding the emotion associated to it that moves us closer to understanding our situation. Or to say things a bit differently, we make sense of a situation and decide if it is significant to us by interpreting the experience and describing how it makes us *feel*. This is what Joel Anderson, in his reading of Taylor, refers to as our "affective-cognitive responses", or all the possible ways by which we can be moved by a particular situation.⁷³ It is these 'affective-cognitive responses' that serve as the basis for how we understand and feel about our predicaments. Therefore, when Taylor claims that "human life is never without interpreted feelings",⁷⁴ he is telling us that our feelings and our emotional responses to them assume a crucial role in understanding that humans are self-interpreting beings. Yet, it is imperative that these interpretations be articulated.

Now, when Taylor tells us that "articulations are in a sense interpretations", and that "the interpretation is constitutive of the feeling",⁷⁵ he is indicating that an articulation, as an interpretation of an experience, characterizes how we *feel* about a particular situation. Thus, by articulating our affective-cognitive response to an experience we are able to express how we feel about a situation, and knowing *how we feel* about a situation will go a long way in helping us understand if the situation is *significant* to us. This I believe is what Taylor is driving at when he states: "We find the sense of life though articulating it".⁷⁶ In fact, there is no escaping this process in Taylor's opinion, which is why he emphatically states: "only an articulated emotional life is properly human".⁷⁷ However, there can be no articulations of what is significant without the use of language.

It was stated earlier that the essence of human agency hinges on *how* a person comes to have a point of view on things; we now know that this begins with interpreting an experience and describing the situation in terms of *how it makes us feel*. This process must then be put into

72 Taylor, "Self-Interpreting Animals," 75.

73 Joel Anderson, "The Personal Lives of Strong Evaluators: Identity, Pluralism, and Ontology in Charles Taylor's Value Theory," *Constellations* 3, no.1 (1996): 22.

74 Taylor, "Self-Interpreting Animals," 63.

75 Ibid.

76 Taylor, *Sources of The Self*, 18

77 Taylor, "Self-Interpreting Animals," 75

words; in fact, our articulations of these instances are in effect an attempt to put our experiences into words.⁷⁸ This is why language is pivotal to this process, because only with language can the articulation of the interpretation give the experience life for the person involved, while also permitting the experience to be conveyed to others in a medium that is mutually understood. The need to convey to others how a situation makes us feel is of great importance to Taylor's phenomenology and his general approach to agency. This is one of the reasons why Daniel Weinstock claims that Taylor defends "an 'expressivist' theory of meaning", since Taylor believes that we rely on language to give meaning to our life, to afford significance to our actions, and to know ourselves as a selves.⁷⁹ Taylor writes: "What I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined by the way things have significance for me"; "the issue of my identity is worked out, only through a language of interpretations, which I have come to accept as a valid articulation of these issues".⁸⁰

Language, then, is crucial to Taylor's account of agency because it allows us to put into words our interpretations of our lived emotional experiences and offer an account of how these situations affect us. In fact, at times Taylor equates our capacity to use language as a key characteristic of what it means to be conscious as a person.⁸¹ At other times, Taylor is even more forceful about this point when he insists that language and the articulations it makes possible are indispensable to us as humans in our search for agency, and without them we would in many ways "cease to be human".⁸² All of this is consistent with Taylor's 'significance view' as a way to think about agency because language *is* what enables us to give meaning and significance to the things that matter most in our life. It would be a stretch to think that we could attribute significance to anything outside of the use of the expressive medium of language, and without this medium we would indeed lose contact with what is distinctive about us as humans; we would cease to be human.

Since articulations are attempts to explain how we feel about a situation by our use of language, then the meaning we express is one that is experienced subjectively. Moreover, since our experiences are constitutive of our sense of reality, then by articulating how these

78 Taylor, "What is Human Agency?," 35.

79 Daniel Weinstock, "The political theory of strong evaluation," in *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The philosophy of Charles Taylor in question*, ed. James Tully (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 171.

80 Taylor, *Sources of The Self*, 34

81 Taylor, "The Concept of a Person," 103.

82 Taylor, *Sources of The Self*, 95-6.

experiences make us feel we are at the same time making a claim about what is real to us as a subject. Therefore, it is our subjective lived experiences and how they make us feel that work towards defining our respective sense of reality. Or to say things a bit differently, what is thought to be real is what is felt and experienced. This is what lies behind an account of human agency that is informed by a hermeneutic-phenomenological understanding of the world.

When taken together, all the elements we have discussed indicate that human agency involves ascribing significance to our experiences and giving the situations they create meaning, so we can come to an understanding of whether these situations are important for realizing our life plan(s). Now, we know that Taylor's freedom as self-realization is about effectively determining for ourselves the shapes of our lives and exercising some kind of control over what will count as a life worth living, which desires and actions are significant and for what reasons. Freedom as self-realization, then, is about fulfilling our life plan. Therefore, achieving a Taylorian sense of self-realization is in many ways akin to experiencing Taylorian agency; after all, both concepts bring us back to the notion of significance. More specifically, being self-realized is a matter of experiencing the kind of agency spelled out by Taylor. Yet, this does not quite offer us the complete picture of Taylor's approach to agency. What remains to be seen is the process by which we arrive at bestowing significance on our goals, actions or desires. In the following section, what will become apparent is that ascribing significance is directly tied to our evaluations of what motivates us to undertake a particular course of action as opposed to another.

1.3: Agency and evaluations: Understanding our motivations

Thinking about human agency from within Taylor's significance view entails treating our propensity to evaluate our desires, goals or actions as pivotal. Evaluating such things is, indeed, "essential to human agency".⁸³ Taylor is quite forceful about this point when he explains that what is "distinctively human" about us is our "power to evaluate".⁸⁴ Clearly then, evaluations are intimately linked to how Taylor thinks about agency, and just as coming to know what is significant depends on articulating our interpretations, so too do evaluations. And that is what Taylor means when he says that evaluations are "articulations of our sense of what is worthy".⁸⁵

Now, Taylor is very clear about what it is that we evaluate in these instances: our sense of

⁸³ Taylor, "What is Human Agency?," 27.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 35.

motivation. Accepting the proposition (that agency involves evaluating what motivates us to act) necessitates a further acceptance of the more fundamental point that humans desire a life of meaning, one that is related to a sense of purpose.⁸⁶ Because knowing what is significant relies on evaluations, what we evaluate is also related to this desire for meaning and purpose. This is why Taylor tells us that our “craving” for meaning and a sense of purpose pushes us to examine the “source of our motivations”, since we want to be sure of is that what motivates us is on par with realizing our purpose.⁸⁷ Therefore, because being self-realized is a matter of following our purpose(s), then what motivates us to pursue certain actions cannot be disentangled from a desire for a particular end state.

Now this is not to say that all instances when we choose what we will do, or what we want, will be instances in which we make a coherent and deep link between our motivation and the kind of life we desire. Indeed, there are times when our choices are oriented towards an *immediate* desired outcome (a point we will return to below). Rather, the point is that *quite often* we do evaluate what motivates us towards certain actions, desires, or goals based on how they bring us closer to being self-realized. This is what Taylor means when he says that we should think of our motivations for certain desires as not only relating to the “attraction of the consummation, but also in virtue of the kind of life and the kind of subject that these desires properly belong to”.⁸⁸ Here we need only think back to Quigley, whose desire for organic meat is closely linked to his desire to be a certain ‘kind of subject’ who lives a particular ‘kind of life’. Quigley’s motivation for wanting to eat only this kind of meat is not solely outcome oriented in that it will sate his appetite, but rather it relates to a deeper desire to live a certain way, one that is representative of the kind of person he believes himself to be and wants to become.

Evaluating what motivates us to undertake a certain act and to pursue it in light of these evaluations is obviously integral to both Taylor’s significance view of human agency and his understanding of freedom as self-realization. This is the case for the latter because in evaluating our motivations, we are exercising some control over the shape of our lives by deciding for ourselves which choices will bring us closer to being self-realized. And as far as the significance view of agency is concerned, coming to know which choice is most significant necessitates that we discriminate between what motivates us to make this or that choice in the first place.

⁸⁶ Taylor, *Sources of The Self*, 45.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Taylor, “What is Human Agency?,” 25.

But once again, this is not the complete picture of what is at stake in Taylor's account of human agency, as he does believe that we tend to evaluate our motivations on two different levels. Once we see what these 'levels' are and why they are different, we will understand why some choices can be outcome oriented and why others can be directly related to our sense of purpose.

1.4: *Strong and weak evaluations*

The importance of considering motivations in Taylor's conception of agency cannot be overemphasized. In his opinion, being able to evaluate our desires is "a crucial part of the background for what we describe as the exercise of will".⁸⁹ What these evaluations allow us to do is to choose a specific course of action over another based on having considered the "attractiveness of both alternatives".⁹⁰ However, Taylor does explain that there are two ways by which a person can evaluate and come to determine the 'attractiveness' of her alternatives: through either 'weak evaluations' or 'strong evaluations'. Each form, or level, of evaluating our desires does permit us to experience a Taylorian notion of agency; they are nonetheless distinct. As Taylor states: "Intuitively, the difference might be put in this way. In the first case, which we may call weak evaluation, we are concerned with outcomes; in the second, strong evaluation, with the quality of our motivation. But just put this way, it is a little too quick. For what is important is that strong evaluation is concerned with the qualitative *worth* of different desires."⁹¹

I would like to first deal with each of these forms of evaluation separately, starting with the weak one. Subsequently, I will show that although we can think of the two as being distinctive because they differ in terms of what is given consideration during the evaluation process, they are never fully removed from each other. Also, I demonstrate that it would be a mistake to think that only in one instance do we experience the kind of agency spelled out by Taylor. Although the two forms of evaluation are very much interrelated, in the following and final section of the chapter I will argue that when we are able to act upon our strongly evaluated desires we can experience a greater sense of self-realization and thus a greater 'quality' of agency. But before all this, let us look more closely at what is at stake with strong and weak evaluations for Taylor.

⁸⁹ Taylor, "What is Human Agency?," 28.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 32.

⁹¹ Ibid., 16 (original emphasis).

We can think of weak evaluation as what a person does when she is concerned with the immediate desired outcome of her action or choice. As a “simple-weigher”, a weak evaluator will be more concerned with the “desirability of different consummations”,⁹² and will set aside desires because of their “incompatibility” with other alternatives.⁹³ In these instances, it is often a matter of contingency; opting for one alternative will be evaluated based on having to forego the availability of another option. Accordingly, in order for something to be judged good from a weak evaluation’s perspective, it is enough that it be simply desired;⁹⁴ there is no direct link to, or immediate consideration for, how this choice fits into the grand scheme of the evaluator’s life plan. Rather, a choice is taken based on how it will satisfy a person’s immediate desire for a particular kind of outcome.

Now this is not to say that there is no value placed on choice in weak evaluations, as the alternatives being weighed are in some way significant to the person choosing, but the significance of the alternatives is not necessarily evaluated based on how it relates to a sense of purpose; this would be the position of the strong evaluator. Taylor writes: “The alternatives have different desirability characterizations; in this sense they are qualitatively distinct. But what is missing in this case is a distinction between the desires as to worth, and that is why it is not a strong evaluation.”⁹⁵ Understanding why this is the case for Taylor requires that we see more precisely what this ‘worth’ is about for a strong-evaluator.

The easiest point of contrast between strong and weak evaluation is exemplified by the fact that the incompatibility of different alternatives for a strong evaluator is determined by the significance an alternative retains in conjunction to her life plan and not simply by the contingencies associated to various outcomes.⁹⁶ Strong evaluation involves questioning the integrity of the motivation and the worth of the consummation, not just the consummation itself.⁹⁷ Or to say things a bit differently, strong evaluation is about evaluating the desire itself, or the ‘desire behind the desire’, which involves “ranking motivations” and questioning if these motivations are worthy ones.⁹⁸ Although the worth of these motivations is determined

92 Taylor, “What is Human Agency?,” 25.

93 Ibid., 19.

94 Ibid., 18.

95 Ibid., 17.

96 Ibid., 19.

97 Taylor, “Self-Interpreting Beings,” 66.

98 Ibid., 65-6.

subjectively, they receive their currency based on the standards that are taken from the collective horizon of significance.⁹⁹ This point is confirmed by Weinstock, who notes that Taylor's approach to agency and his notion of strong evaluation cannot be removed from his perspective on the importance of a horizon of significance.¹⁰⁰ However, the point is that strong evaluation is about questioning the motivation for a desire in an even more significant way. Taylor explains: "Strong evaluation is not just a condition of articulacy about preferences, but also about *the quality of life*, the kind of beings we *are* or *want* to be. It is in this sense *deeper*."¹⁰¹ In fact, it is this idea of the evaluation being carried out in this '*deeper*' sense that gives a desire *worth* and distinguishes a strong evaluator from a weak evaluator.

The reason why we are engaged in a deeper form of evaluation and reflection upon our desires as strong evaluators is because we ask ourselves if a particular desire is representative of the kind of person we think we are. This entails examining the relationship between our desires and the "kind of being we are in having them or carrying them out".¹⁰² These reflections are not solely a matter of who we are but also a matter of the kind of person *we want to become*, which also involves a consideration for the kind of life we want to live.¹⁰³ This is why strong evaluations run deeper than simply being concerned with the immediate outcome of a decision. As Taylor explains: "the capacity for strong evaluation in particular is essential to our notion of the human subject; ... without it an agent would lack a kind of depth we consider essential to humanity."¹⁰⁴

Now, Daniel Weinstock is of the view that Taylor sets the bar too high here, by asking that one must be engaged in strong evaluation in order to be considered a person.¹⁰⁵ The problem with Weinstock's claim is that he is mistaken in thinking that Taylor believes *only* a strong evaluator can be considered a person with agency. Not only is a weak evaluator a person who has agency, but there is also no requirement on Taylor's behalf that her strong evaluations be a matter of deep reflection upon her evaluative framework to have agency. In fact, simply by always being within a horizon of significance, she never escapes the fact that her decisions are in

99 Taylor, *Sources of The Self*, 27; "What is Human Agency?," 18.

100 Weinstock, "The political theory of strong evaluation," 172.

101 Taylor, "What is Human Agency?," 26 (emphasis added).

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid., 34. See also Taylor, "Self-Interpreting Beings," 65.

104 Taylor, "What is Human Agency?," 28.

105 Weinstock, "The political theory of strong evaluation," 174/176.

some way connected to her framework, even if she is not consciously aware of it when her choices are made based on a weak evaluation.

On the first point about the requirements for being considered a person, we find in Taylor the following: “Now we can concur that a simple weigher is already *reflective in a minimal sense*, in that he evaluates courses of action...And this *is a necessary feature* of what we call a *self* or a *person*. He has reflection, evaluation and *will*.”¹⁰⁶ Clearly then, Taylor accepts that a weak evaluator is considered a person, more so since we know that he thinks that a “necessary” condition for being considered a person with agency is being able to formulate a point of view on things.¹⁰⁷ This coming to a ‘point of view on things’, is the very thing a weak evaluator does when he interprets an experience in order to understand his situation and make a decision about what he will do based on an evaluation of the alternatives available. This *is* what is at stake for a person to have agency. But his decisions are ‘reflective in a minimal sense’, because they are directed more towards satisfying his immediate desires than his long term vision of the kind of life he wants to live or the kind of person he wants to become. Yet, just because his decisions are not made in direct relation to how they may or may not lead him to the kind of life he thinks is worth living, does not mean he lacks a conception of this ideal or that he lacks agency. All this means is there are times when a person is a weak evaluator and there are other times the same person is also a strong evaluator, and in both instances he *is* a person and *has* agency.

In Taylor’s reply to Weinstock’s claims we can see that there is no demand placed on an agent to be aware that she is engaged in strong evaluations about her framework. Taylor explains: “I think this [strong evaluation] is something like a human universal, present in all but what we would clearly judge as very damaged human beings. But this is because I don’t define it quite in the way that Weinstock suggests. I don’t consider it a condition of acting out of strong evaluation that one has articulated and critically reflected on one’s framework. Clearly this would be to set too narrow entry conditions. I mean simply that one is operating with a sense that some desires, goals, aspirations are qualitatively higher than others.”¹⁰⁸ What this passage makes quite clear is that there is no demand placed on a person to be in a deep state of reflection upon her framework(s) to be a strong evaluator who has agency. The point here is that simply by

106 Taylor, “What is Human Agency?,” 23 (emphasis added).

107 Taylor, “The Concept of Person,” 97. A point that was already discussed in the beginning of Section 1.2 where Taylor explained that this was an element his significance view shares with the representational view on agency.

108 Charles Taylor, “Charles Taylor replies,” in *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The philosophy of Charles Taylor in question*. Ed. James Tully, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1994), 249.

having an idea that some goals in life are more important than others, she can be considered a strong evaluator. There is no escaping the fact that a person is *always* operating from within a framework(s) where things are valued as being more significant than others, and when she will make decisions that directly relate to her notion of life worth living, she is engaged in strong evaluation.

Perhaps then, Weinstock's confusion stems from the ways Taylor thinks that when a person *is* actively engaged in reflections upon her framework(s) (as a strong evaluator), her evaluations are in a sense 'deeper'.¹⁰⁹ Her reflections go a little deeper in the sense that she is questioning the ideals and standards that make up her individual horizon, or what we might think of as a "radical re-evaluation" of her fundamental principles and values.¹¹⁰ In fact, and as Taylor explains: "This radical evaluation is a deep reflection, and a self-reflection in a special sense: it is a reflection about the self, its most fundamental issues, and a reflection which engages the self most wholly and deeply."¹¹¹ Thus, what Taylor is telling us is that reflecting upon her framework is a deeper form of strong evaluation, but not a necessary condition for it. And it is true that this is a depth of reflection that *only* comes as a result of strong evaluation and is something she *could* do. But it is certainly not the depth to which she *must* go in order to be a strong evaluator that has agency. In this way, we can set aside Weinstock's concern, as I have shown there is no need to think there is a particular depth of reflection that her strong evaluations *must* take beyond making a connection to her life plan and sense of purpose.

When Taylor explains that a "crucial feature of human agency" is the "evaluation of desires",¹¹² he is not prioritizing the need for this evaluation to be carried out in a 'strong' sense, as he is fully aware that it can take place on both a strong and weak level. It is possible then, that when Taylor says that "strong evaluation is an essential feature of a person", he does not mean it is a 'necessary' feature to be considered one.¹¹³ And to be sure, we know the criterion for personhood is to be able to come to a point of view on things, and this can be done through *either* a weak or strong form of evaluation. Since we know that a person has agency as a weak-evaluator, then to deny her of being able to feel self-realized in these instances would be to also deny her agency. This is because by acting upon the choices she decides as the right ones for her

109 Taylor, "What is Human Agency?," 42-43.

110 Ibid, 40.

111 Ibid, 42.

112 Ibid, 43.

113 Ibid.

to follow, she can think of herself as being both the *author* and *actor* of her actions. In order to have arrived at a point where she can think of herself in these ways, she must have in one way or another evaluated her alternatives and desires—a crucial feature of what it means to have agency. This is, of course, another way of saying she must have agency in order to think of herself as both the *author* and *actor* of her actions, or she must have agency in order to feel self-realized.

The key distinguishing features between strong and weak evaluations that need to be retained for our purpose then, are that, on the one hand, a weak-evaluator will decide between alternatives by evaluating the potential outcomes and the contingency factors involved in picking one alternative over another. This will lead her to take a course of action in order to feel self-realized. It will be a feeling of self-realization in a ‘minimal sense’ though, since it is in many ways a momentary feeling because her evaluations are centered upon what is most desired *in the immediate*. But regardless of the duration of this feeling, it is nonetheless an important feeling in my view. Also, it should be clear that it would be a mistake to think that a weak-evaluator operates in a sort of value-free context when making a decision.

On the other hand, a strong-evaluator goes deeper and examines the relationship between alternatives and her life plan, and how they are conducive to her becoming the kind of person she wants to be. We should allow for a strong-evaluator to be seen as a person whose choices extend beyond her immediate desires and take on a deeper sort of significance because they are, in one way or another, important to her life plan. We should also accept that the actions that follow from her evaluations are in many ways motivated by a desire to reach this end: to live out the life she has designed for herself. And because of this, we can say that her feeling of being self-realized in these moments will be greater than if she were operating at a weak evaluation level, because now this feeling is not only attached to the immediate but it is also associated to her plan in life.

At this point, I would like to offer an example to illustrate Taylor’s claim. What this example will show is that a person can be both a weak and strong evaluator and still have agency in the case of the former. It will also help us explain how it is that a person is never fully removed from her personal conception of the good—arrived at by strong evaluations—while engaged in weak evaluations. The example will also help us understand why we can accept that a person can feel self-realized even when she is a weak-evaluator. As much as this is done in order

to solidify the claims made thus far, the example will also help us set the stage for the final and concluding section. Let us then proceed and discover what is at stake for Brodie in her various forms of evaluations.

1.5: Brodie as a weak and strong evaluator: On route to the 'quality of agency' argument

Let's say that one sunny Saturday morning Brodie is contemplating whether she is going to do some yard work and cut the grass, or go to the park with her neighbour Quigley and play some tennis. What she is essentially faced with, is a decision about having to give up one option for another; play tennis or do yard work this morning.

On the one hand, she wants to cut the grass now and get it out of the way as it is cooler outside at this time of the day. On top of that it is also the only time of the day when the sun doesn't cover the whole yard. On the other hand, she would really like to play tennis now because the courts tend to be less busy and there is less pressure to hurry up and finish. Quigley is indifferent as to the time and lets Brodie know he is comfortable with whatever she decides.

What Brodie is faced with is a decision as to what she wants to do more at this time, or what she feels more like doing *now*. This is very much the position of a weak evaluator, where alternatives are compared based on a preference for what is immediately desired, and where the evaluation process considers the potential outcomes of each option (and how well an outcome will satisfy what is desired). This, of course, ought to lead to a decision on which course of action will be taken.

While reflecting on her situation, Brodie finds herself weighing the options based on her preference for comfort. Cutting the grass later means she will be in the full sun for most of the time she spends in the yard. Knowing it takes at least a couple of hours to cut the grass and do the necessary trimming, she is concerned that her lengthy exposure to the sun may cause her to burn and quite possibly leave her feeling a bit sun stroked in the end. Not really the best way to feel for going to a barbeque party around six in the evening. This party is the reason why waiting until closer to the evening when it will be cool again is not really an option for her as she is excited about being with friends. So doing the yard work in the morning seems like a better option since she would like to be comfortable while doing the things she enjoys.

With her thoughts now on the option of tennis, Brodie recalls that the courts are decently shaded in the afternoon and that none of them are in the direct sun for too long at any given

moment. With a time limit on how long any one group of players can use a court, even if she has to play on the court that happens to be in the sun, it would still be less time than if she was doing the yard work. Sure it may be just as hot out, but at least she won't also be in the sun while being physically active. Now, Brodie does realize that since the courts are less busy in the morning there is the chance that her and Quigley will get a longer go at it, something she wouldn't mind since Quigley has taken the last four games and she feels she is about due for a win. Brodie also knows that she will enjoy her time playing tennis at any time, so in many ways the choice is about *her preference for comfort* while doing the yard work. Thus, her desire for being comfortable and more relaxed while she cuts the grass is more important to her than the chance of having more time to play tennis.

Here, Brodie is a 'simple weigher' as Taylor put it, or carrying out her evaluation of the situation in a 'weak sense'. As a weak evaluator, her decision is based more on preference and contingencies, or what she wants to do more *now* and what does that mean she has to give up. Since tomorrow is already filled up with other things to do, if she wants to do get the yard work done and also play some tennis, it has to be today. And even if cutting the grass now means to forego the possibility of lucking out with more time on the court, it also means that Brodie will be able to enjoy doing the yard work more by doing it now as opposed to later. This moves her to pick one course of action over another. It is, if you will, really that 'simple' of a decision.

Notice that Brodie does have agency in the way we have been discussing. She is moved to act in one way as opposed to another based on what is more important to her because of some kind of reflection on what *she* desires. She evaluated her choices and came to an understanding of what motivates her to do one thing or the other and will take a course of action as a result. Her choice takes on significance because being comfortable while she does the things she likes to do is important to her. Her sense of agency lies in the fact that she makes a choice based on what is significant to her.

Now, since we know that coming to the point where she can feel a sense of self-realization necessitates that she has agency, then it is quite reasonable to think that Brodie could feel self-realized in whatever decision she makes. Even if we were to treat the level of self-realization and depth of agency she may have as being 'minimal' (which I believe Taylor would do), this does not disqualify her from being able to have them. Thus as a weak-evaluator, Brodie does have agency and can feel self-realized. Yet, in this moment Brodie is also working within a

framework of what is significant to her in a ‘deeper’ sense. Let me explain.

Tending to the yard is something Brodie does because she feels it demonstrates that she cares about her property and the things she has worked for. She has internalized this as an important part of what it means to be a responsible person and homeowner. This is very important to Brodie and it provides her with a feeling of pride. More so since it also demonstrates to her neighbours that she is committed to keeping her property well maintained which helps to keep up the appeal of the neighbourhood. Because Brodie wants to be the kind of person who not only respects her neighbours, but is also respected by them, she believes that caring for her yard is one way she can achieve this. In this way, her desire for tending to the yard is very much informed by a sort of reasoning arrived at more by strong evaluations than simply weak ones, because her motivation for wanting to do so stems from a deeper desire to be a particular kind of person.

As for her desire to play tennis, Brodie believes that the kind of life she wants to live is one in which she stays in shape and exercises on a fairly regular basis. In her opinion, doing this is indicative of caring for the self and can bring about a greater quality of life. Once more, we see that imbedded in her desire to play tennis this morning lays a deeper desire—one that is informed by strong evaluation because it pertains to the kind of life Brodie wants to live and the kind of agent she wants to become *in living it*. Although this connection, along with the one in relation to doing the yard work, is not necessarily front and center in Brodie’s mind while she deliberates upon what she will do right now, it is nonetheless present and does play a role in her weak evaluations. This is why in order for her to be a strong evaluator, she does not have to be actively engaged in teasing out the nuances and details of her deeply held convictions or moral beliefs. Even in moments where she is a weak evaluator, she is still ‘operating with a sense that some desires, goals, or aspirations are qualitatively higher than others’. In brief, these two forms of evaluations are not completely distinct.

Now for arguments sake, let us say Brodie has come to a decision. Having thought through her situation, she thinks ‘the hell with it, I am going to play tennis now’. Aware that this means she will have to do the yard later in the day and run the chance of being burnt out from the sun, she would still rather play tennis now. In fact, she is feeling quite alert and rather energetic this morning, and she can’t shake the feeling of wanting to beat Quigley and redeem herself after having lost the last four games. Plus, she figures if she did do the yard work now there is a good

chance her game won't be as strong later in the afternoon because she will have already expended a good portion of her energy.

What we see here is that Brodie has set her desire for comfort aside and is taken in by what we might think of as her pride, or her desire to redeem herself in the face of being on a losing streak. Yes, she does make this decision based in part on the possibility of more time to play, but this seems to have been displaced and is now treated as secondary to her desire to prove that her game is better than Quigley's. She knows she is a good player and in some ways wants to reassure herself of this as part of her takes pride in her prowess on the court. In this instance, Brodie is slowly moving closer to evaluating her choices on a stronger level, where her desires are now being connected to a deeper idea of who she thinks she is.

While in the garage getting her racquets and tennis balls, Brodie looks outside and notices that her other next door neighbour Mia is bustling around in what seems like a bit of a frantic rush. Brodie is suddenly reminded that Mia's son will be getting married this afternoon and that the ceremony will be taking place in Mia's backyard. She recalls Mia kindly asking her if some of her guests could use her driveway to park their cars and if she could make sure to turn off the sprinkler system that waters the front gardens that separate their properties as there are plans to take picture near them. Remembering this, Brodie is now forced to rethink her decision.

All the yard tools are in the garage and she will surely need access to them later in the day. This could be a bit tricky if some of Mia's guests are parked in her driveway. The sprinklers are not really an issue since she turns them off anyways when working in the yard, but the gardens are a bit of a mess and could use a once over, more so since she knows about the photo shoot. Thinking it through even more, Brodie realizes that the ceremony is scheduled for right about the same time she would be ready to cut the grass, and surely the last thing Mia would like is for her immediate neighbour to be running a lawnmower and a gas powered trimmer at the same time; more so since Mia has been talking about how excited she is for this day for some time now. All of a sudden, Brodie is faced with a deeper dilemma than simply picking comfort over more time on the court and increased chances of winning to redeem her pride.

Brodie now moves into a deeper form of reflection and evaluation upon her desires and choices by evaluating her predicament in a 'stronger' manner than before. Recalling that when operating from the point of view of a strong-evaluator, the agent in question will think through the implications that her decisions have in relation to her larger goals in life, which often

includes a consideration for what kind of person she wants to be in having these goals. And we know Brodie desires to be well respected by her neighbours and to also show respect in return. Surely then, ensuring the front gardens were cleaned up for the wedding would be one way of doing this. But more importantly, making sure she is not in the midst of running a loud gas engine while her neighbour's son is getting married right next door is even more indicative of showing them respect. Brodie can only imagine how upset Mia would be with her if she was running the lawnmower work while the ceremony was taking place. This is something Brodie would very much like to avoid because up to now she feels that her relationship with her neighbour is quite amicable and one of mutual respect.

In light of these new considerations, it would be foolish in her opinion to jeopardize this relationship simply because she wants to beat Quigley and redeem herself on the court. After all, she can't help but feel that it would be rather shallow of her to place her desire to stroke her tennis ego at the expense of her relationship with her neighbour and possibly ruin the wedding. No, this is certainly not the kind of person she thinks herself to be, nor is it the kind of person she wants to be seen as. She does not see herself as being so narcissistic that she will put what she thinks are lesser forms of desires—pride and ego—before the ones she feels are qualitatively higher and having a greater worth in her life—respect and friendship. The very idea of choosing the former desires at the expense of the latter ones does not bode well with her sense of morality, which is to say it does not have a place within her horizon of significance and in many ways runs against the grain of her life plan and the kind of person she wants to be.

With all this in mind, Brodie returns the racquets and balls to their place, tells Quigley tennis will have to wait, puts her work clothes on and gets to doing the yard work. She feels very good about her decision and thinks she is doing the right thing. As a strong-evaluator, Brodie's reflections and evaluations motivate her to take a different course of action than what she had originally decided while evaluating things in a weak sense. She feels this decision will bring her greater satisfaction in the end because the choice has taken on a new level of significance because of the ways in which she has related it to her deeper desires to be a particular kind of person. In this way, there is the possibility that Brodie might feel a greater sense of self-realization in her choice, since she realizes her decision at this time will not only allow her to be more comfortable while doing the yard work, but it also feeds into her desire to live her life in a way she thinks is right. Even if she might have felt some kind of self-realization had she stuck

with her initial decision to go play tennis, she stands the chance of feeling *an even deeper* level of self-realization now, perhaps even more so if she ends up beating Quigley in the afternoon. She could achieve all the goals she was hoping for in the first place without compromising her idea of what it means to act in a morally responsible way.

1.6: Conclusion: The ‘quality of agency’ argument

What this chapter has sought to indicate is that to be self-realized in a Taylorian sense *is* to experience human agency. Referred to as the ‘significance view’, Taylor’s account of agency rests on the premise that we humans are ‘purposive beings’ and that we are motivated to follow our more significant goals in life. We do this by interpreting the situations we experience and coming to understand them in terms of how they make us feel. We often, in turn, give these ‘affective-cognitive responses’ character through our use of language, and by articulating them through this medium, we figure out if a situation is truly important to us.

A person gets a sense of what is important to her by evaluating the worth of the various ways of being captured in the collective horizon of significance and the many different desires associated with these ways of living. This provides her with a set of standards which she draws from in order to come up with her own individual horizon of significance. This moral framework she uses to determine if her desires and actions are the right ones for her, and if they will bring her closer to realizing her life goals. This is how things take on significance for us as individuals and is very much what motivates us to make many of the choices we make in life. All of this is what is at play in Taylor’s significance view of human agency.

In this chapter, we have also indicated that for Taylor, in order for a person to feel self-realized, she needs to feel that she is both the *author* and *actor* of her life plan. In order for a person to arrive at the point where she can think of herself as both the *author* and *actor* of her life plan, she must in one way or another evaluate the alternatives before her and match them to her desires so she can determine which options will help her to reach this end state (a process we know is essential if she is to have agency).

In the example offered above, we saw how Brodie came to a decision on what to do based on an evaluative process. By reflecting on her motivations for undertaking one course of action over another, she arrived at a point where she chose the course of action she believed was most conducive to achieving her sense of purpose—which of course *is* her idea of what it means

to be self-realized. Therefore, and since being self-realized is tightly connected to what she holds to be significant, the process by which she arrives at knowing what is significant cannot be disentangled from the achievement of feeling self-realized. This is why I maintain that being self-realized in a Taylorian sense *is* to experience human agency.

I have also argued—contrary to what Weinstock claims—that Brodie experiences agency as both a weak and strong evaluator; I have shown that she can achieve a feeling of being self-realized in both instances and that this is consistent with Taylor. Nevertheless, when Brodie followed through on her strongly evaluated desires and decided to act in a way she felt would bring her closer to obtaining them, her sense of being self-realized was greater. This sense ran ‘deeper’ because it was more closely connected to the kind of person she wants to be. Quite significantly for our purposes in this thesis, since her level of self-realization can be said to be of greater quality, and so too can her sense of agency.

So, my position is that when we can act in accordance with our strong evaluations, we exercise a *greater* level of control over which choices will bring us closer to being the kind of persons we want to be and live the kind of lives we determine are worthy of living. You must have agency in order to be self-realized, and in feeling self-realized you become aware that you have agency. In the end, my argument is that when we pursue our more significant goals in life and realize our personal sense of purpose, we can feel a deeper form of self-realization and in turn experience a more profound sense of agency—a sense of agency which runs *deeper* than it does if only operating on weak evaluations. Said differently, in order to feel the kind of self-realization Taylor thinks represents freedom, we need to experience a Taylorian account of human agency, and our quality of agency is inextricably linked to how great our sense of self-realization is. This is what lies behind my claim that we should think of Taylor’s notion of freedom as self-realization as representing a ‘quality of agency’ argument, where ‘quality’ is understood as signifying a ‘deeper’ sense of agency because it is more closely associated with our sense of purpose. It is, in a sense, a feeling of agency that is more ‘significant’ to us.

It should be stressed here that I am not arguing that, when we operate from the position of a weak-evaluator, the agency we experience is of an almost insignificant form. Yes, as we move to the level of *strong* evaluations and are able to act in accordance to these evaluations, the level of agency we experience becomes *more meaningful*; our feeling of being self-realized is *more deeply related* to our sense of purpose. But deeper does not imply that the opposite situation (that

of the weak-evaluator) is completely insignificant. Our choices as a weak-evaluator are still significant to us, and to say that the agency experienced in these instances is not meaningful would be misguided and it would not offer us a convincing account of what being human means. As a strong or weak evaluator, Brodie still experiences agency. The difference in her sense of agency is based on how *deeply* it runs in relation to Brodie's thoughts on what it means to be self-realized.

Our discussion on agency and freedom as self-realization comes to a close here. Throughout I have tried to demonstrate that we ought to think of positive liberty from a Taylorian perspective as being chiefly concerned with the *quality* of a person's agency. It is this reading of Taylor that will inform my analysis of Philip Pettit's freedom as non-domination. What we will find is that the situations Pettit is concerned by are similar to those which concern Taylor. My hope is to demonstrate that there is a positive side to Pettit's negative approach to freedom. Indeed, there is a substantive concern in Pettit for the *quality* of a person's agency.

Philip Pettit's Republican Freedom as Non-Domination

Introduction

For nearly two decades now, Philip Pettit has made a concerted effort to revive the Italian-Atlantic republican tradition and the theory of freedom as non-domination associated with it. With a great amount of effort placed on clarity and precision, Pettit, more than any other neo-republican in my view, has worked at great length to tease out some of the details and nuances that are at the heart of the republican theory of liberty.¹ In fact, fellow neo-republican Quentin Skinner tells us that when it comes to the re-emergence of the republican tradition and its principle of non-domination he considers Pettit as one of its “*most powerful advocate*”.² Elsewhere, Skinner hails Pettit for providing a “terminology” that has permitted republicanism to become a “living force within contemporary political philosophy”.³ In his work, Pettit takes the position that non-domination is a more robust, and thus a more adequate, account of negative liberty than the classic liberal doctrine of non-interference. He also believes there are good reasons to abandon non-interference as representing the “be-all and end-all” of political goods for securing a person's negative liberties and to replace this with non-domination.⁴

Pettit's main issue with non-interference is that unlike non-domination, it cannot guard against someone having arbitrary power over someone else. Because of this, non-interference leaves the door wide open for a person to be subject to the arbitrary will of another. Without assurance that one will not find herself under the thumb of another, a person's life is marked by a sense of dependency on the goodwill of the powerful. This dependency leaves her vulnerable to the good grace of someone else, which can have severe implications for her power to plan her

1 Not only do I say this because of the comments offered by other neo-republicans such as Cécile Laborde and John Maynor in the introduction to the thesis, but it is also attested by Pettit's continued efforts to demonstrate the value of non-domination in many of his books that would follow his Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government. In particular, his books, *On The People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), and *Just Freedom: A Moral Compass for a Complex World*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Ltd., 2014).

2 Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 82 (emphasis added).

3 Quentin Skinner, “Freedom as the Absence of Arbitrary Power,” in *Republicanism and Political Theory*, ed. Cécile Laborde and John Maynor (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 83.

4 Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. Reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 132

life and move forward toward her goals. It is not because she might be actually interfered with that makes this difficult or problematic, but it is that she *can* be if the one who has arbitrary power to interfere decides to exert it. This kind of dependency on the goodwill of another is a non-starter within the republican take on freedom, and anyone who is unfortunately in this position remains unfree because her freedom is compromised. Because such *potential* interference or harm is possible within a standard non-interference model, Pettit insists that a model of non-domination is highly preferable.

In what follows, I provide an in-depth analysis of Pettit's republican account of freedom as non-domination, through a close reading of his *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (I will also complement this reading with an examination of some of his other important essays on liberty). Through an exegetical reading of these works, I seek to explain the central elements of Pettit's theory of freedom. What I do not do, is wade into any in-depth discussion regarding the implications his model has for the actual political organization of the state, or the sort of measures the state should adopt in order to promote and secure the principle of non-domination. I do, however, briefly place our conversation within the context of the relationship between the state and its citizenry in order to indicate what Pettit thinks differentiates arbitrary power from non-arbitrary power.

A central aim of the chapter, then, is to explain why exactly Pettit thinks his non-domination model provides us with a more robust and more adequate way to think about freedom in negative terms. What will quickly become apparent is that I agree with Pettit that his theory of freedom is indeed a preferable account of liberty than its counterpart, non-interference. When we take into consideration the criteria Pettit believes define negative liberty, we see that non-domination is more faithful to these standards than non-interference. And in many respects, this is precisely why non-domination is a more robust account of negative liberty.

Yet, it is not solely because non-domination 'lives up' to these standards better than non-interference that it is preferable. What I think truly sets non-domination apart from non-interference is the possibility for it to better secure the right set of conditions required for a person to experience a positive conception of liberty, and in particular freedom as self-realization—conditions that, in Taylorian terms, lead to a greater quality of agency. We have already noted in the introduction to this thesis that this claim seems highly counter-intuitive: Pettit not only argues that non-domination is truly a *negative* perspective on liberty, but he also

insists that a comparison with a positive doctrine of liberty would be of dubious utility.

Building on Taylor's significance view of agency and the links between his account of agency and freedom as self-realization, I argue that non-domination can offer us more assurance that a person may be able to experience substantive *quality* of agency. This, I believe, is what makes Pettit's non-domination a more attractive account of negative liberty than non-interference; more significantly, it is also why I think that Pettit's model does have important resonances with a positive account of freedom.

The chapter is organized as follows. The first section will show in detail why the existence of arbitrary power is such a great concern for Pettit. By exploring what he thinks is at stake with the ills of arbitrary power, we will also come to see what he means by non-arbitrary power and thus better understand the differences between the two types of power. Here I will underscore the great importance of having a contestatory citizenship. Section two will then take us through the conditions Pettit sees as characteristic of domination. In particular, we will see why Pettit thinks being intentionally interfered with on an arbitrary basis reduces a person's choices and prospects, which in the end worsens her situation. Throughout this section, I also tease out the ways that Pettit non-domination shares important parallels with central characteristics of a negative formulation of liberty, which will be helpful for what follows.

In the final section we consider the ways Pettit thinks that non-domination is a more adequate principle to rely on than non-interference. Here some of the core ideas regarding negative liberty and the parallels identified with non-domination in the previous section will be useful. I will suggest that the real force behind Pettit's model can be seen by unpacking the "additional benefits" that Pettit believes non-domination offers a person (which non-interference cannot). In visiting each one of these benefits in turn, we will show why Pettit is right about non-domination being preferable to non-interference and, more controversially, we will see how here can be found a serious concern for a person's *quality of agency*.

2.1: *Arbitrary and Non-Arbitrary Forms of Power*

The central aim of the republican theory of freedom is to prevent any one person from having arbitrary power over another individual. We know that Skinner defines arbitrary power as

the ability to interfere “in our activities without having to consider our interest”.⁵ This is a view also espoused by Pettit, as we can see when he explains that a person who has the arbitrary power to interfere can do so without having to be concerned with the “interests, or the opinions, of the one affected”.⁶ Moreover, Pettit insists that an act of interference is being carried out on an arbitrary basis “if it is subject just to the *arbitrium*, the decision or judgment of the agent; the agent was in a position to choose it or not choose it, at their pleasure.”⁷ This is how the existence of arbitrary power can place a person in a positing of being dependent of the will of another. The desire to avoid this kind of situation is, according to Pettit, firmly rooted in the “Roman republican way of thinking about freedom”, where being truly free entails not being dependent on the “goodwill of the powerful”.⁸ But we must consider an important qualification Pettit adds to his understanding of arbitrary power, one that helps to clarify what he thinks is at stake here.

When Pettit indicates that interference can be carried out arbitrarily in a “procedural sense” without it necessarily being “arbitrary in the substantive sense of actually going against the interests and judgments of the person affected”,⁹ he is telling us that what makes the interference a problem is not just the fact that it worsens a person’s situation, but that the interference is carried out “on an arbitrary, unchecked basis”.¹⁰ Indeed, it is simply the fact that someone *can* act according to her *arbitrium* that is the issue (and not whether interference actually makes *things worse* for the person). Interestingly enough, there is a similar logic informing the way Pettit believes negative liberty ought to treat individual freedom. Allow me to explain.

When Pettit explains that negative liberty treats freedom as something that is “interpersonally standardized”,¹¹ he is telling us that by treating freedom as a ‘standardized good’, we can avoid having to assess the violation of a person’s freedom based on the fluctuations of his or her “particular temperament”.¹² In other words, what counts as restricting a

5 Quentin Skinner, "A Third Concept of Liberty," *Proceedings of the British Academy*. UK: The British Academy, (2002), 247-48.

6 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 55. See also Philip Pettit, “Keeping Republican Freedom Simple: On a Difference with Quentin Skinner,” *Political Theory* 30, no. 3 (2002), 342.

7 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 55 (original emphasis).

8 Philip Pettit, "The Instability of Freedom as Noninterference: The Case of Isaiah Berlin," *Ethics* 121, no. 4 (2011), 708.

9 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 55.

10 Ibid.

11 Pettit, Philip, “A Definition of Negative Liberty,” *Ratio* (New Series) II (1989), 157.

12 Ibid., 158

person's liberty from within a negative approach cannot depend on whether or not that particular form of intrusion actually bothers him or her. This, for Pettit, would make liberty too open ended and reliant on factors that cannot be equally applied to all members of a given society. Therefore, without standardizing the conditions that indicate a person is subjected to the arbitrary power of another, being dependent on the goodwill of another would only be an issue if the one who is in this position *felt* it was a problem. Not only does this open the door for arbitrary power to be considered permissible at times, but and as we will see later, it also sits in tension with what Pettit has to say about what it means to be dominated.

It is true that Pettit explains that to be interfered with because you are dominated is indeed to “make things worse for you, not better”,¹³ but this is also because of *the effects he thinks are associated with knowing you are dependent on another's goodwill*. The point here is that interfering with someone is quite different from having the arbitrary power to do so in the first place. Surely there are instances where I might interfere with you and make things worse, but unless I can do so with impunity I do not have the kind of arbitrary power that Pettit is referring to. I only have this kind of arbitrary power when I can act arbitrarily and according to my will *irrespective of the consequences to you*.

Now this is certainly not to say that the consequences of being interfered with are unimportant to Pettit; but what matters most to him here is not the consequences of the interference, but *the conditions* which make the interference possible in the first place. As we will see, Pettit accepts that there are instances where non-arbitrary forms of interference are permissible and quite frankly desirable (as in the case of just laws), but what makes an act of interference non-arbitrary is that the interferer is “forced to track the interests and ideas of the person suffering the interference.”¹⁴ Therefore, if I interfere with you in such a way that at first I give consideration to your interests and ideas, and second I take the steps required for tracking these interests and the effects of my interference, then my actions are carried out in a non-arbitrary way. It is not always going to be a matter of making things worse for you (or even better for that matter), but again the point is not about the consequences but about the conditions under which I interfere. Another way to understand to see the difference between arbitrary and non-arbitrary power is to look at the ways Pettit sees this kind of power being played out in the

¹³ Pettit, *Republicanism*, 52.

¹⁴ Ibid., 55.

interactions between the state and its citizens.

2.1-I: *The Republic and its citizens: A non-arbitrary relationship*

Situating our conversation regarding arbitrary and non-arbitrary power within the context of the state and its relationship with the citizenry is quite warranted. According to Pettit, a crucial requirement for achieving the kind of freedom he embraces is the establishment of a “suitably republican polity: a free state”, which involves avoiding the state being able to act in an arbitrary manner.¹⁵ In order for the power exercised by the state to be considered non-arbitrary, the state must track “not the power-holder’s personal welfare or world-view, but rather the welfare and world-view of the public.”¹⁶ And when the state is called upon to intervene in order to stymie the use of arbitrary power, it is because the interference was “triggered by the shared interest of those affected”,¹⁷ which means there is a demand on behalf of the citizens for the state to intervene.

A very important aspect of the interests which ‘trigger’ the state to act, according to Pettit, is that they cannot be “sectional or factional in character” (something that can be achieved by ensuring that what is being asked of the state remains open to public deliberation). As Pettit explains: “Every action and every idea that guides the action of a state must be open to challenge from every corner of the society.”¹⁸ Therefore, what will count as an exercise of non-arbitrary power on behalf of the state is linked not only to the fact that it must track the interests of those affected; it is also linked to the republican core ideal of a contestatory citizenry.¹⁹ Indeed, Pettit is adamant about the importance of a contestatory citizenry because the state’s power can only be kept in check providing the citizenry retain the “permanent possibility of effectively contesting it”.²⁰ As Pettit explains, a “contestatory citizenry” ensures that citizens are able to “contest” the laws and policies enacted by the state to ensure that they are applied to all equally in a non-arbitrary manner.²¹

15 Pettit, "Keeping Republican Freedom Simple," 339-40.

16 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 56.

17 Ibid. See also 63.

18 Ibid., 56.

19 Phillip Pettit, "Two Republican Traditions," in *Republican Democracy: Liberty, Law and Politics*, eds. Andreas Niederberger and Philipp Schink (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 170-175; for a detailed account of how this link is made.

20 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 63.

21 Pettit, "Two Republican Traditions", 170. For Pettit, a contestatory citizenry acts as the “civic complement” that

Without the possibility to contest the state's use of power, citizens could very well be acted upon in any way the state felt it wanted without ever having to track the interests or opinions of those affected. For Pettit, state power is used in a non-arbitrary way when it is open to contestation and when the one who has power considers and tracks the interests of those who will be affected by its use; otherwise the use of power is carried out arbitrarily. This, I believe, is fundamental to Pettit's distinction between arbitrary and non-arbitrary power. And yet, there are two additional elements worth teasing out regarding contesting the state's use of its power.

The first point concerns the way in which a contestatory citizenry relates back to our account of agency. Recall that for Taylor, a great deal of importance must be placed on a person *having a say in deciding* which desires she will take as her own and which actions she will follow through with in order to become both the *author* and *actor* of her life plan. This was shown to be integral to her sense of self-realization and thus to her sense of agency. All of this is supported by Christman,²² who also stresses that for positive liberty champions, a person must also be able to reject the interpretation of her desires by others; under no circumstances can she be forced by others to adopt a way of life that has been "oppressively imposed".²³ Surely then, it would be a stretch to think that her desires can assume significance for her and be seen as truly hers based on her evaluations if the desires and choices are arbitrarily imposed. The point here is that having the ability to contest and reject arbitrarily imposed desires or a range set of options can certainly go a long way to ensuring she can experience a sense of agency as understood in Taylorian terms.

The second point I wish to stress is that there is also a possible link to be made between the Pettitian need for a contestatory citizenry to decide what constitutes an arbitrary use of power, and the emphasis placed on democratic participation by positive liberty. In his discussion about what will count as arbitrary power, Pettit justifies why he thinks it must be the people who decide on this issue, by indicating that it is "essentially a political matter; it is not something on which theorists can decide in the calmness of their study."²⁴ This is because it must be worked

helps to ensure that not only is the core ideal of freedom as non-domination applied to all equally, but also helps ensure that the state governs according to the third core value of republicanism: a mixed constitution.

22 John Christman, "Autonomy and Personal History," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21, no.1 (1991): 10.

23 John Christman, "Liberalism and Individual Positive Freedom," *Ethics* 101 (1991): 345-47.

24 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 56. In fact, Victoria Costa explains how Pettit has come under fire for not being more explicit about what will or will not constitute as an arbitrary act of power on behalf of the state. See Costa, "Freedom as Non-Domination, Normativity, and Indeterminacy," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 41 (2007): 291-92.

out on the ground by the people of the republic themselves,²⁵ because what counts as the non-arbitrary use of power relies on what the interests and ideas of the people are, and these ideas and interests can be discovered only by actual, open public deliberations.

For these reasons, Pettit insists that politics is the “only heuristic” by which a determination of what will count as the arbitrary use of power can be carried out.²⁶ Thus, if what is considered as the appropriate use of state power is contingent on the details being worked out by the citizenry, then it stands to reason that participating in the political process, which makes this a possibility, is important. Perhaps then, and because of this, we see a gentle slide taking place in Pettit’s thinking towards positive liberty insofar as the value placed on collective self-rule begins to move ever so slightly beyond an instrumental purpose and starts to take the shape of a ‘good’ in itself. Now it is true that Pettit maintains that for (most) republicans the act of political participation is treated as instrumental to liberty and not as foundational. Or, stated differently, he is convinced that political participation represents a “necessary pre-condition” to ensure that individual liberty is protected, but not liberty in itself.²⁷ Although this does seem to jar with the claim just made. One could say that what is really at stake in this disagreement is a ‘quibble’ over political participation as either a means or an end. But that, in itself, need not be seen as negating the importance of participation for individual freedom; as such, there could still be good ground for a parallel to be drawn between Pettit and Taylor.

But we ought to proceed carefully and with subtlety. Pettit himself cautions us against drawing such a parallel too hastily. I have here in mind, most specifically, a passage in Pettit’s essay “Two Republican Traditions”, where he warns us against confusing the “Italian-Atlantic tradition of republicanism” (which he and many other neo-republicans are working to revive) with the “Franco-German tradition of republicanism, developed from the time of Rousseau and Kant”.²⁸ Even if these two different traditions of republicanism share some common ground in his view, Pettit explains they do differ from each other in significant ways. In particular, they differ in their positions on what the role of the citizens of the republic ought to be. And this, naturally, is a difference that has important implications for how we think about freedom. Let us look at this a bit more closely then.

25 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 54.

26 Ibid., 56-7.

27 Pettit, “Keeping Republican Freedom Simple,” 340.

28 Pettit, “Two Republican Traditions,” 169-70.

Even if the Franco-German tradition sought to avoid being subjected to the will of another (the concern for Kant),²⁹ or to avoid “personal dependence” on another (Rousseau’s concern),³⁰ instead of promoting a mixed constitution and a contestatory citizenry (core ideals of the Italian-Atlantic tradition),³¹ Pettit is of the view that both Rousseau and Kant would instead opt for a “popular or representative sovereign” respectively.³² In doing so, the role of the citizenry was reduced to participating in “the creation and sustenance of that sovereign assembly”.³³ Therefore, when Pettit explains that for the Franco-German tradition “freedom consist in nothing more or less than the right to participate in such communal self-determination”,³⁴ he is telling us that for this ‘strand’ of republicanism people are considered self-determined and thus free by virtue of having consented to the establishment of a single sovereign authority, by having participated in its creation. In this way, the idea of non-domination as a way to avoid personal dependency or prevent being subjected to the will of another was dropped, since advocates of the Franco-German republican tradition believed that these concerns would be eliminated because people had consented to the establishment of a single sovereign authority which would govern them according to ‘the will all’. Thus, freedom came to be seen as participating in the creation of, and living in accordance to, this will. This, in turn, had the effect of making citizens the creators of laws but not “contesters” of them³⁵ (put differently, citizens are simply “law makers”, not “law testers”).³⁶ This for Pettit, put forth a “set of ideas that differ on every front from the defining ideas of the Italian-Atlantic tradition.”³⁷

Over time, it would be the Franco-German republican take on freedom and its relationship with popular sovereignty and a participatory citizenry that “self-described liberals”, such as Berlin, would seize upon in order to defend their respective position on freedom and its corresponding merits.³⁸ It would be this variant of republicanism that Berlin would associate with his rendition of positive liberty. As Pettit states: “This new communitarian ideology replaced freedom as non-domination with freedom as participation—the paradigm of Berlin’s positive

29 Pettit, "Two Republican Traditions," 178.

30 Ibid., 177.

31 Ibid., 170.

32 Ibid., 179.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., 200.

35 Ibid., 193.

36 Ibid., 194-95.

37 Ibid., 200.

38 Ibid., 169.

liberty”.³⁹ So it is certainly not surprising that Pettit, who relies on Berlin’s distinctions, would want to distance himself from this positive take on freedom, because he clearly feels that it is inimical to the central tenets of the Italian-Atlantic tradition he is working with.

Through this, we get a better appreciation for why Pettit has no interest in comparing his negative model of non-domination with this idea of positive liberty understood in the “populist fashion of democratic participation”, since this leaves the door open for the state to retain arbitrary power.⁴⁰ Yet, we do know that with Taylor there are good reasons as to why we can think of positive liberty as several steps already removed from the way it is being depicted here by Pettit (which of course runs out of Berlin). Even more so because we know that Taylor believes we can think about political participation in his positive rendition of liberty in quite different terms.

Now, this is not to say that we can fully set aside the concerns Pettit has—absolutely not. But it does encourage us to question Pettit’s remarks that it would ‘not be a fruitful exercise to compare non-domination with a positive take on liberty’. In fact, and as we have just seen, it is precisely in doing so that we might get a clearer idea of why the core ideal of a contestatory citizenry is of such great value to Pettit (given what it can do for keeping arbitrary power in check and what this means for a person’s freedom).

So much then for our discussion on arbitrary and non-arbitrary forms of power and a contestatory citizenry as a way to be sure that the power vested in the state is used in a non-arbitrary manner. Yet, being subjected to arbitrary power does not always require that an actual act of interference be committed: simply knowing I may be arbitrarily interfered with is enough to limit my liberty.⁴¹ In fact, Skinner tells us central to the republican tradition is the notion that “the mere presence of arbitrary power has the effect of undermining political liberty”.⁴² In order to see why republicans insist on avoiding the ‘mere presence’ of arbitrary power, we should look to the discourse surrounding the master/slave relationship.

39 Pettit, "Two Republican Traditions," 200.

40 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 81.

41 Skinner, "A Third Conception," 257. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 23; "The Instability of Freedom", 708.

42 Quentin Skinner, "Freedom as the Absence of Arbitrary Power," in *Republicanism and Political Theory*, ed. Cécile Laborde and John Maynor (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 85.

2.1-II: *The master/slave dichotomy*

Conceptualizing liberty within the frame of the master/slave dichotomy is something that has a rich and longstanding history within the republican tradition. Indeed, Pettit is certainly not the first to draw a contrast between a slave and a free person in order to indicate that liberty is a “condition” a free person enjoys because she is not subject to any sort of arbitrary power, which means that unlike the slave she can act without a concern of being interfered with by a master.⁴³ As Skinner explains, a slave is governed by the “arbitrary power of a *dominus* or master”, which allows the *dominus* to not only interfere with the life of the slave, but, and more importantly, to do so according to the master's will.⁴⁴ With similarities to how arbitrary power was just explained, we can see why the master/slave arrangement is also useful for clearly understanding what arbitrary power is. But even if being subjected to the arbitrary power of a master often means the slave will be interfered with, this does not always have to be the case.

The position of the slave for Skinner is “characterized by domination, not by actual interference”, because the slave is dependent on the goodwill of his master.⁴⁵ As Skinner also indicates, even if a slave can undertake a particular action without being “prevented or penalized”, as long as he is subjected to the arbitrary power of the master he “remain[s] wholly bereft of liberty”.⁴⁶ Agreeing with this, Pettit explains that although the master may be “purely benign or permissive”, so long as that master has the ability to act according to her *arbitrium*, the slave never escapes being dependent on the master's will.⁴⁷ Whether or not the master acts is besides the point; what counts is that she can do so with impunity. And because of this, the slave is unfree due to his dependency on his master's will. This is how a master retains her arbitrary power over her slaves without ever having to lift a finger.

Now, it is important to stress that the “improbability” that a master will not interfere with the activities of her slave is much different from “inaccessibility” to the kind of power needed to interfere as she sees fit.⁴⁸ As long as the master retains access to arbitrary power, the slave remains 'wholly bereft of liberty' and is completely unfree no matter how congenial the master is or how unlikely it is that she will interfere. It is not enough that the slave enjoys only the

43 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 31.

44 Skinner, “Freedom as the Absence,” 86 (original emphasis).

45 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 32-3.

46 Skinner, “Freedom as the Absence,” 89-90.

47 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 32.

48 Ibid., 64.

possibility he will not be interfered with on an arbitrary basis, what he requires is the *certainty* that no one has access to this kind of power to begin with.⁴⁹ Otherwise the slave is not free thanks to his dependency on the goodwill of his master. In order to see with greater clarity what is at stake in this kind of power relationship and see how it can be avoided, we must examine what Pettit means by non-domination and consider his concept of domination.

2.2: *Domination as a way to understand Non-Domination*

Pettit claims that non-interference falls short of guaranteeing the “absence of the power to interfere”,⁵⁰ which is to say that it cannot prevent the existence of a master/slave type of relationship from forming in society. Skinner comes to a similar conclusion, and agrees with Pettit that non-domination is a viable alternative to the negative approach of non-interference.⁵¹ This resonance in their thoughts revolves around the shared idea that by being protected by the principle of non-domination a person can be sure he cannot be arbitrarily acted upon; he knows he does not have to depend on the will of a *dominus*. Yet getting to the bottom of what it means to enjoy the protection of non-domination requires that we understand what it means to be dominated in the first place. Or to say things a bit differently, it is one thing to know what it means to have arbitrary power, but it is another thing to know how this translates into being able to dominate another. Our next section will try to shed a bit of light on this issue.

Coming to an understanding of what it means to be dominated because of the existence of arbitrary power will go a long way in building the case for why non-domination is more adequate than non-interference at securing a person’s negative freedoms. Throughout the section, I will highlight the ways in which there is cross-over between Pettit’s principle of non-domination and the definitional characteristics he believes any account of negative liberty must have. Later in the chapter, this will help us underscore the benefits that Pettit thinks non-domination has over non-interference, and there I also intend to stress that there are important implications for a person’s sense of personal agency embedded in the benefits identified. However, before proceeding, it is important that we take a note of something that is central to Pettit’s explanations of all three of

49 As the chapter progresses, we will see that this is a central reason why Pettit thinks that the principle of non-interference is incapable of avoiding situations of dependency and thus domination. It is very much within this kind of reasoning that Pettit offers his model of non-domination as a way to ensure that there can be no relationships akin to that of the master and slave.

50 Pettit, “Two Republican Traditions,” 174.

51 Skinner, “Freedom as the Absence,” 83. Pettit, *Republicanism*, 21.

the conditions we are about to consider: namely, the ‘common awareness’ factor.

Freedom for Pettit is an intersubjective enterprise, and both domination and non-domination are explained as social/relational phenomena that incorporate elements of social recognition and status.⁵² This is because, the republican idea of liberty relates to the kind of freedom we enjoy as a person embedded in a social context. Pettit is clear that from within the republican tradition, non-domination is to be understood as the “absence of domination in the presence of other people”, and one does not gain a republican conception of liberty by remaining in isolation.⁵³ The implications this has for our intersubjective relationships cuts deep for Pettit, because it means to enjoy the protection of non-domination is to be recognized and treated as an equal amongst equals in society.⁵⁴

The common awareness of someone having arbitrary power over another is an important component to the three conditions we will see below in relation to what it means to be dominated. As Pettit explains, “the three conditions are sufficient, as I see things, for domination to occur”. However, what adds to the ills these conditions place upon a person is that there is also the “common knowledge” there is a relationship of domination at play.⁵⁵ What is at stake here is the “common awareness”, or the shared “consciousness” of the parties involved that a relationship of domination is indeed present.⁵⁶ Not only will I know someone holds arbitrary power over me, but that person will also know he holds this kind of power over me. Or to put things a bit differently, the slave will be aware of the fact she *is* a slave while the *dominus* will be aware he *is* the master, and—very significantly—both will be conscious of the fact that the other *is* cognizant of their respective positions to each other.

In addition to this, the common awareness factor involved in being dominated extends beyond the powerful and the powerless, and touches on the fact that others in society will also be aware of the situation.⁵⁷ Not only will the slave know that she has a master but others in society will also know she does, and because of her unfortunate predicament, her social status among others will be compromised. Knowing a person is dependent on the good grace of another makes

52 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 56, 61.

53 *Ibid.*, 66.

54 *Ibid.*, 60, 67, 71, 87.

55 *Ibid.*, 58-59

56 *Ibid.*, 60.

57 *Ibid.*, 59.

it exceedingly easy to dismiss her by denying her status as an equal among equals.⁵⁸ More will be added to this in the following section when we see how Pettit thinks non-domination can avoid this from happening. For now, what must be underscored, as we move through this section, is that there must be a common awareness between (at least) two agents. And there are three specific conditions that Pettit indicate must be present for a common awareness of domination to exist. These are: a) the capacity to interfere, b) on an arbitrary basis, and c) within “certain choices” a person is in a position to choose from.⁵⁹ Let us examine each one of these conditions in turn, beginning with the capacity to interfere and uncover the connections to intentionality.

2.2-I: *Interference and Intentionality*

We know from our previous discussion that the concern with being subjected to arbitrary power is not qualified in terms of it either worsening or improving a person’s situation. Rather, it is simply being dependent on another, and thus vulnerable to the will of the power holder, that is the problem for republicans. No matter the circumstances, having a master worsens the condition of a person (otherwise, the slave whose master continuously interferes could be considered worse off than the slave whose master is benign and passive). Yet, in order for a person to be considered dominated because of the existence of arbitrary power, Pettit explains that the interference that ensues does indeed need to make things worse: “Interference cannot take the form of a bribe or a reward; when I interfere I make things worse for you, not better.”⁶⁰ One of the differences between the qualification of *making things worse* for you by interfering and its nonexistence with arbitrary power may be that there is no need for any kind of interference to take place in order for you to be considered under the thumb of another—which is to say that interfering with you is quite different from having the arbitrary power to do so in the first place. Nonetheless, in Pettit’s account of domination, when interferences take on the shape of either coercion, manipulation, or acts that seek to change the “expected payoffs” that are associated to a specific choice, your situation is indeed worsened.⁶¹

Any theory of negative liberty, in Pettit’s opinion, should accept that freedom can be limited in more ways than simply direct physical forms of interference, which is why he explains

⁵⁸ Pettit, *Republicanism*, 60.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 52.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 53.

that being interfered with must include acts of prevention or frustration.⁶² For negative liberty, a coercive act which limits a person's freedom can mean any credible threat that aims to prevent or frustrate a person from choosing a particular action—which may involve manipulating the expected payoffs of a given course of action.⁶³ What Pettit wants to stress is that it is reasonable to assume a person who chooses a certain course of action does so based on the “prospects” she associates with the choice, and any coercive threat which might “worsen those prospects” violates her freedom by removing that particular option from her “feasible choice-set”.⁶⁴

Let us turn now to an examination of a very important element that must be at play when it comes to limiting an agent's freedom: intentionality. The condition of intentionality is, according to Pettit, of “first importance” in any philosophical treatment of negative liberty, something that has a longstanding acceptance as a key feature to what counts as an interference that restricts a person's freedom by “almost all traditions”.⁶⁵ In his opinion, a person is negatively free provided that when she attempts to undertake a particular action, she is not obstructed by someone who is aware that his actions will indeed interfere with her choices and worsen her prospects of achieving her goal(s).⁶⁶ More specifically, negative liberty is for Pettit about preventing the kind of evils that come from the “hands of people who are in a position to know what they are likely to achieve”.⁶⁷ Accepting this condition, also involves accepting that non-intentional forms of interference are going to be ruled out as limiting a person's freedom.

Within his take on republican freedom, Pettit explains that “non-intentional forms of obstruction” are ruled out because the goal of republican liberty is to secure people from acts they carry out against each other.⁶⁸ Moreover, Pettit feels that if we were to include non-intentional interference, we would ultimately lose the important distinction between “securing people against the natural affects of chance and incapacity and scarcity and securing them against the things that they may try to do one another.”⁶⁹ Chance, misfortunes, or natural circumstances may indeed limit a person's options and interfere with his choices, but these are

62 Pettit, "A Definition of Negative Liberty," 166.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., 156.

65 Ibid. As a basic condition for interference to be considered as limiting a person's negative freedom, intentionality is deeply at play in Pettit's account of republican freedom while also being central for Berlin his and the liberal tradition. See Berlin "Two Concepts of Liberty," 168-9; and Pettit, *Republicanism*, 52-4.

66 Pettit, "A Definition of Negative Liberty," 155.

67 Ibid., 163.

68 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 53.

69 Ibid., 52-53.

circumstances that often lie beyond the control of humans and thus should not be treated on the same footing as the ills that we are likely to perpetuate on one another.

Another point worth noting is that the capacity to interfere must be “ready to be exercised”, and not one “yet to be developed”.⁷⁰ This makes sense since intentional acts of interference could not take place unless a person actually has the capacity to do so. Without knowing that she has the capacity to interfere at that moment, there is little chance she would be able to intentionally make things worse for you, let alone be aware that she could.

There is a final point that I believe needs to be explained here, for it raises many important concerns. Pettit tells us that interference is understood here in “entirely unmoralized” terms, meaning that for an act to count as interfering and as making things worse, it does not have to be seen as a “wrongful act”.⁷¹ In fact, it is still interference, even where it may seem morally acceptable for you to intervene: “coercion remains coercion, even if it is morally impeccable”.⁷² Now, there is no specificity placed on the kind of act of interference. Regardless of what kind of act you are trying to prevent me from doing, as long as you do so with the intention of changing the 'expected outcomes', you interfere with me and make my situation worse (no matter how morally right or wrong either of us might be).

Now this is not to say that treating interference in this way will permit someone to retain the liberty to interfere with others, but it is to say that it is not up to you alone to decide if I am in the right or wrong when I interfere. In fact, Pettit tells us that this is “decidable just in light of the facts, albeit the facts as they are seen through the local cultural lens”.⁷³ Now, here it should be obvious that there is a clear link back to Pettit’s position regarding what counts as the arbitrary use of state power (which must be worked out on the ground by the citizens of the republic); and this is where the importance of a contestatory citizenry comes into play. This helps explain why he insists that it is not for him (or any other theorist) to make this decision from the ‘calmness’ of an arm chair. Let us note, moreover, that this idea of treating interference in an ‘unmoralized manner’ is something that could equally be seen as a criterion of the ‘first importance’ of negative liberty.

One of the most basic features about negative liberty is that it offers a *descriptive* account

⁷⁰ Pettit, *Republicanism*, 54.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.,

of the appropriate conditions required for a person to be considered negatively free without having to make an appeal to morality. As Pettit puts it, it can offer an account of freedom that is “morally motivated without [it] being moralized”.⁷⁴ This is because Pettit believes that although we may have moral or political commitments that inform our preferences for a particular account of freedom, we can nonetheless devise a descriptive account of freedom that does not rely on them (point in case is his negative liberty as non-domination).

In taking this stance, Pettit adopts what he calls a “restrictivist” position, one which renounces the idea that an account of liberty *must* be informed by our moral or political dispositions, and that restrictions to a person's freedom *must* be justified in light of some kind of moral evaluative framework.⁷⁵ None of this is required for negative liberty in Pettit's opinion: “Thus, in order to tell whether he is free to $\emptyset$, we only have to establish the descriptive matter of whether or not someone is subject to certain restrictions; we do not have to make the political judgment as to whether the restrictions are justified or not.”⁷⁶ It seems clear that Pettit takes this position because he wishes to remain true to the ideals that inform his account of republican liberty. But when one is attentive to the reasons he offers for why an interference worsens a person's situation, one can notice various nuances in his theory—ones that need to be teased out.

But before doing so, however, it is important that I make a few things clear. I do not dispute Pettit's claim that his model of non-domination is *primarily* a negative formulation of individual freedom; it does have certain parallels with some of the foundational characteristics of negative liberty. I also do not dispute his claim that the way he treats interference is done in an 'entirely unmoralized' way, more so since we saw the ways in which he rejects so-called 'morally impeccable' acts of interference. There is, however, the requirement that it cannot worsen a person's situation by altering the expected payoff of what might otherwise have materialized. Here is a tricky issue: insofar as Pettit does retain this position he must also have a particular idea of why it is important to not interfere with the 'expected outcomes' (which may have something to do with his concern for why arbitrary power can prevent a person from planning out her life). And here, I think there are resonances with the conviction shared by both Taylor and Christman that for positive liberty constraints only make sense against an idea of a desired end state.

74 Pettit, "A Definition of Negative Liberty," 154.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

Pettit may indeed be able to maintain a 'morally neutral' position in terms of how he treats interference, but as we will see later, this position is not as tenable when he explains the perils that come from such forms of intentional interference. This is to say that the reasons why Pettit dislikes the kind of interference he is explaining, is because he *does* think it makes a desired end state all the more difficult to achieve (which I believe is very similar to what is at stake in Taylor's account of agency and freedom as self-realization). This is why I think Pettit is a lot closer to positive liberty than he willing to concede. It is also why I think comparing his model of freedom with that of Taylor can be useful, since it reveals an additional strength that non-domination has over non-interference. Specifically, non-domination offers more guarantees that a person may be able to experience a greater quality of agency than non-interference. To put it most simply, Pettit does treat the quality of a person's agency as an important factor which needs to be considered when we discuss individual liberty. Yet before being able to sustain that claim, we still need to clarify what Pettit thinks it means to enjoy non-domination. We will do so by looking more closely at what it means to be dominated, which brings us to his second clause: 'on an arbitrary basis'.

2.2-II: *On an Arbitrary Basis*

Deeply committed to the republican idea that a person's freedom cannot be dependent on the will of another, Pettit explains that arbitrary interference is what “dominate[s] the other party fully”.⁷⁷ If a person is interfered with in such a way that her interests and/or opinions are not considered and her situation is made worse because of it, then she is dominated. And because of this, her situation is marked by a sense of vulnerability because she is dependent on his goodwill to not interfere. All of this is made possible because he can act 'on an arbitrary basis'. This is, for the most part, what is at stake with how 'on an arbitrary basis' is implicated in what it means to be dominated. But there are some nuances that should be added—nuances that not only open up a finer perspective on the importance of 'on arbitrary basis', but also add to Pettit's claim about non-domination is preferable to non-interference.

The first point is that Pettit acknowledges that the kind of arbitrary power he is concerned with will certainly vary in terms of “intensity” or in terms of “extent” between two agents (but this still does not make it any less, or more for that matter, of an infringement on a person's

⁷⁷ Pettit, *Republicanism*, 55.

liberty).⁷⁸ Neither the amount of times the arbitrary power is used nor the level of severity it was deployed in is any less of a problem for Pettit's position. Recall the ways arbitrary power plays out in the master/slave example: I may have a master who is very congenial and quite lax on what he permits me to do, while your master may be of another stamp and she makes a concentrated effort to interfere, sometimes in aggressive ways, in as many aspects of your life as feasibly possible. In this situation, could we say that because of the tendency of my master to interfere with me less I enjoy more freedom than you do? Perhaps we could, but only if we used actual acts of interference in order to gauge our levels of freedom. Yet, we know this is not the way Pettit would treat this situation. We are both equally unfree to the same extent simply by being subjected to our respective master's *arbitrium*. The intensity or extent to which we are subjected to arbitrary power only makes one of our situations more pleasant than the other (if being a slave could ever be pleasant!).

It is possible to imagine that because I am lucky enough to enjoy being less interfered with than you, that I enjoy a greater level of freedom. But this is absurd, since it is no different than saying that I am more free than you because there is less probability that I will be interfered with by someone who has the power to do so. Yet, we know that non-domination is not about *probabilities*; this is for Pettit the ground of non-interference. Rather, non-domination is about *certainties*, ones that can reassure both of us we cannot be arbitrarily interfered with. And if either of us are to be considered negatively free, it is because we do not have to rely on any "special collaboration of circumstances or colleagues" to undertake an action.⁷⁹ Luck, chance, or the desires of others cannot be what determines if we are free within negative liberty, which is equally the case with non-domination; arbitrary power violates freedom no matter its intensity or extent.

The second point of interest is a bit more layered than the first, and reveals quite a bit of what non-domination is about. Just as understanding what non-domination means to Pettit can be achieved by knowing what he thinks it means to be dominated, so too can we gain a better perspective about being interfered with on an arbitrary basis by looking at more closely what it means to be interfered with *on a non-arbitrary basis*. To begin, the slave remains dominated even if the master does not interfere with her. In these instances, we can think of the slave's

⁷⁸ Pettit, *Republicanism*, 57-58.

⁷⁹ Pettit, "A Definition of Negative Liberty," 155.

condition as “*Domination without interference*”. Accepting that a person can be dominated even where there is no interference also entails accepting that she can remain free of domination even when she is interfered with. Moving beyond the master/slave example, it is helpful to place this in the context of the relationship between the state and its citizens and to treat situations where the interference is carried out in a non-arbitrary way as “*Interference without domination*”.⁸⁰ What makes this a possibility in Pettit's view, is that the republican tradition has always maintained that “coercion [is] implicit in the imposition of a non-arbitrary rule of law”, which for republicans means that “those who make the law are forced to track the avowable common interests—and only the avowable common interests—of those who will live under the law”.⁸¹ Thus, even in situations where the actions of the state do interfere with the lives of its citizenry, because the state is bound to tracking its citizens' interests, the interference is carried out non-arbitrarily and the citizens are thus not dominated.⁸²

Acknowledging that 'interference without domination' does indeed restrict a person's choices because it “does not impose the will of another”, Pettit tell us that the difference between this idea and 'domination without interference' makes for a “powerful contrast between the two modes of choice reduction”.⁸³ With 'domination without interference', the reduction in choices is taken at the whim of the will of the powerful and cannot be contested, while with 'interference without domination' not only can the reductions be challenged, but they cannot be arbitrarily imposed. Indeed, this makes for a 'powerful contrast' between the ways a person's choices can be limited, while also showing with more precision why certain forms of interference are going to be permissible for republicans.

Provided the interference that is carried out on behalf of the state is done within the confines of non-arbitrary laws, even if the interference is coercive and does worsen a person's situation, there is no infringement on his liberty; there is only a restriction to it. And here there is a major point of diversion between the republican idea of freedom and that of liberals. As Pettit explains, republicans balk at the liberal notion of freedom as a matter of being free from all forms of coercion and maintain that freedom is a matter of not being dependent on the will of

80 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 65 (original emphasis).

81 Pettit, "Keeping Republican Freedom Simple," 344-45. Also see Philip Pettit, "Democracy, Electoral and Contestatory," *Nomos* 42 (2000): 105-44.

82 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 65.

83 Pettit, "Keeping Republican Freedom Simple," 350.

another.⁸⁴ This is why the sort of coercion that ensues from the enforcement of a non-arbitrary law, or interference without domination, is considered permissible. In fact, it is safe to say that such interference is desirable for Pettit, more so as it may be what is required to ensure that the principle of non-domination is secured and applied to all in an equal manner.

Another way to see how 'interference without domination' is not only substantially different from 'domination without interference', but also preferable for Pettit, is to think about the ways by which the former only 'compromises' a person's liberty, while the latter 'conditions' it.⁸⁵ To best appreciate the juxtaposition at play here, it is helpful to employ Pettit's terminology of 'nonfree' and 'unfree'. According to Pettit, if I am obstructed from choosing some course of action because I am subjected to the arbitrary power of another to interfere, I am thought to be "*unfree*" and my personal liberty is "*compromised*".⁸⁶ In contrast, if I am "restricted but not dominated", as I may be by the presence of "unintended obstacle or a nonarbitrary law", then I am considered "*nonfree*" and my liberty is only "*conditioned*".⁸⁷

Thus, my liberty is *compromised* when I am interfered with in such a way that my interests and opinions are not considered or tracked. Conversely, when these are given consideration, my liberty is simply *conditioned* within the limits of a just law that corresponds to my interests and opinions. Therefore, I am 'nonfree' when acted upon in a non-arbitrary manner, but I am 'unfree' if I am restricted in an arbitrary manner. Provided a law is "fair" and applies to all in a non-arbitrary manner, then the interference that ensues is but a "secondary offence" that *only* conditions my freedom but *does not* compromise it.⁸⁸ Indeed, this adds an additional layer to why 'interference without domination' is preferable then 'domination without interference. The

84 Ibid., 341.

85 It should be noted that this position is one that follows from Pettit's analysis of how he and Skinner departed paths in terms of what each thought should be accounted for under the neo-Roman take on freedom. While Pettit believed that republican liberty should be conceptualized primarily as "non-domination, period", Skinner believed it should also include protection against acts of interference ("Keeping Republican Freedom Simple," 342). Pettit demonstrates that if we consider what will condition and what will compromise a person's freedom, while coupling this with an allowance for interference based on non-arbitrary law, we see that for republicans the primary issue is with being dominated and not interfered with. In more recent years, Skinner has indicated that he believed that what had been advocated for within the republican tradition was that a person's liberty could be "equally" compromised by either acts of arbitrary interference or by "conditions of domination or dependence", and he accepts Pettit's point that he overlooked at that point that the only way one could actually be interfered with in this way was if the "possession" of arbitrary power already existed; as such it is the "underlying presence of such power" that truly compromises liberty. In light of this, Skinner is "happy to accept this correction" to his earlier position (see Skinner, "Freedom as the Absence of Arbitrary Power," 84).

86 Pettit, "Keeping Republican Freedom Simple," 342 (original emphasis).

87 Ibid., (original emphasis).

88 Ibid., 374.

former ideal only conditions my liberty, while the latter situation compromises my liberty. All of this help us better appreciate why 'on an arbitrary basis' is an absolutely integral condition for Pettit when it comes to being dominated because of an act of interference. Moreover, thinking about the ways in which interference can be considered in terms of either 'conditioning' or 'compromising' liberty will be very important in our discussion concerning the faults Pettit sees in Berlin's principle of non-interference. However, before that, we still need to consider the final condition which informs Pettit's idea of what it means to be dominated: namely, "in certain choices".

2.2-III: *In Certain Choices*

Pettit's treatment of his third and final condition of 'in certain choices' is both quite simple and too brief. He insists that "not all choices", but only "certain choices", are to be considered when determining if interference leads to domination. Pettit offers only two paragraphs in his book *Republicanism* to discuss this condition, not giving us sufficiently clear indications as to what he precisely means by 'certain choices'.⁸⁹

Pettit takes the position that for himself or any other theorist who sets out to offer an unmoralized descriptive account of negative liberty, venturing into which specific restrictions are justified or which choices must be secured is a non-starter. This is because, as a descriptive account of freedom, negative liberty delineates the appropriate conditions needed in order for a person to undertake certain actions without being obstructed by others, without an appeal to any moral or political commitments (which is clearly the case with Pettit).⁹⁰ In fact, just as with what constitutes arbitrary use of power on behalf of the state, these specifics *must* be left up to the citizens of the republic to decide. Moreover, unless the people have the ability to publicly deliberate and also contest which interests and ideas are being considered or neglected, if Pettit were to decide these specifics, this would in fact do violence to his principle of non-domination and to the ideal of the contestatory citizenry that help to sustain it. Perhaps then, in his attempt to remain true to both a republican and negative account of liberty, Pettit must take the position that 'not all choices', but only 'certain choices', matter when determining if the interference leads to being dominated.

⁸⁹ Pettit, *Republicanism*, 58.

⁹⁰ Pettit, "A Definition of Negative Liberty," 154.

There is, however, an important clause Pettit adds to this condition, one that opens up the possibility of seeing some affinities in his thinking with that of Taylor. While reminding his reader that he thinks the 'intensity' or 'extent' by which a person is subject to the arbitrary power of another should not lead us to think that being dominated is any more permissible in some cases than others, Pettit does feel that a "variation in extent" is nonetheless something that we might want to consider because he feels it may be "better to be dominated in less central activities, for example, rather than in more central ones".⁹¹ Now, this raises the question of what Pettit means here (and it would seem highly unlikely that he would change his position with a single stroke of the pen). Surely Pettit cannot mean that being dominated in less central activities is any less of a violation of a person's freedom than being dominated in more central ones. This would undercut all that he has worked towards establishing. Perhaps the answer lies in Pettit's reference to Taylor's essay "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty". What we know is that in this essay, Taylor demonstrates why we can think of positive liberty as an exercise concept that grounds freedom in a personal sense of self-realization. We also know that Taylor's position in that essay is highly informed by his take on human agency, and as the last chapter argued, there are good reasons to accept that in order to experience agency, we need to feel a sense of self-realization in Taylorian terms.

Also explained in the essay Pettit points to are the ways Taylor thinks it may be less damaging to a person to be interfered with in *certain* areas than others because he understands that what matters to a person's sense of self-realization is her ability to pursue the goals that are deemed to be more significant to her because of their importance for her life plan.⁹² However, this is also because Taylor accepts that freedom is a subjective lived experience which cannot be accounted for in terms of absolute descriptions. Perhaps then, what Pettit is alluding to is that a person's sense of feeling self-realized is worth considering when thinking about the 'extent' to which she is dominated.

It is true that for negative liberty there is no desire to allow for a person's 'temperament' or "the state of his beliefs" to determine if his freedom is being obstructed, which is what Pettit means when he tells us that negative liberty treats freedom as a "distinctively non-subjective

⁹¹ Pettit, *Republicanism*, 58.

⁹² See Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," in *Philosophy and Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 218-224.

ideal".⁹³ And, just because a person does not believe his freedom is being infringed upon does not mean there is no restriction to freedom taking place, more so when we add the idea of 'domination without interference' into the mix. Pettit best summarizes this position when he explains: "the conditions of being free and feeling free are mutually independent",⁹⁴ and because of this there are good reasons to think that the 'extent' or 'intensity' to which a person feels he is being dominated does not translate into a person being any more, or any less, free. Be it 'more central' or 'less important' activities, arbitrary power compromises a person's freedom no matter what his goals in life are. This is the force behind Pettit's point about the centrality of 'on an arbitrary basis' for how a person is dominated.

Even though Pettit is correct to say that 'being free' and 'feeling free' *can* be treated as independent from one another, I am not convinced that this is how freedom actually works, how it gets played out or how it is experienced. I think that freedom is more complicated and that being free and feeling free should not be treated as independent from each other. This is obviously a position that is informed, in part,⁹⁵ by Taylor's work, where feeling free and being free are not treated separately but rather, are understood as both being necessary to the ways we think about freedom.⁹⁶ And what we have seen thus far with Pettit does reveal that there might also be, in his model, a concern for the way a person *feels* free. In fact, what I think will become apparent below, is that Pettit blurs the line between this 'being free and feeling free' opposition when he explains the benefits he thinks non-domination has over non-interference, as he envisions them being played out in the 'real' world. This is a line that separates negative liberty and positive liberty according to Taylor, one that is based on a disagreement between 'being free from external restraints' and 'feeling free because of being self-realized'. It is because of the blurring of this line that I think there are important resonances between the benefits Pettit explains a person acquires because of being protected by the principle of non-domination and a positive account of freedom as self-realization. These resonances reveal that there is a concern for a person's quality of agency in Pettit, and that non-domination can ensure that the right kind

93 Pettit, "A Definition of Negative Liberty," 161.

94 Pettit, "A Definition of Negative Liberty," 162.

95 This qualification of my position as being based 'in part' on Taylor's work, is because there are other factors that are at play here that bring me to the conclusion that feeling free and being free are both necessary to think about when we discuss individual liberty from either a negative or positive approach.

96 See Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," in particular 218-24. What might equally be the case, is that this same sentiment can be seen to be at play in the ways Taylor also thinks about human agency.

of conditions exist for a person to experience a greater sense of agency.

2.2-IV: *Where we are and where we go from here*

At this point the reader should have a clear idea of what Pettit is hoping to avoid with his principle of non-domination. Driven by a deep aversion towards the existence of arbitrary power and the ability it gives a person to interfere at will with the activities of another, Pettit offers his account of non-domination as a guiding principle that can guarantee a person that she cannot be interfered with in certain choices on an arbitrary basis. Since the kind of intentional interference that can follow from being open to someone's *arbitrium* worsens a person's chance of achieving the expected (or hoped for) outcomes associated to a particular course of action, she is fully dominated by the power holder. Her chances of being able to pursue and achieve the goals she sets forth in life are now dependent on the good grace of a *dominus*, which leaves her vulnerable to be interfered with at the 'drop of the dime'. In these situations, her freedom is beyond being conditioned, it is now compromised, leaving her unfree (according to a republican understanding of liberty). This is what it means to be dominated according to Pettit, and anyone who is unfortunately in this kind of situation cannot be considered a 'free person' in his books. It is this sort of unfreedom that Pettit seeks to prevent with his principle of non-domination.

'Under the protection' of non-domination means that there can be no *dominus*; there can be no instances where a person will find himself subject to anyone's *arbitrium*. There is no possibility to be intentionally interfered with on arbitrary basis because non-domination offers a guarantee against this kind of power from materializing. The only time intentional interference is permissible with non-domination is when it is carried out on a non-arbitrary basis. The sort of interference where the one interfering must track the interests and opinions of the one affected. Or, the kind of interference and coercion that comes from the imposition of a just law that was decided upon by the people of the republic and is left to be contested from 'all corners of society'. This may indeed have the effect of conditioning a person's freedom, but it never has the effect of compromising it. This is why non-domination is not about securing the widest possible range set of options. Rather, non-domination aims to ensure that whatever range set of options is available, the one decided upon by the people of the republic remains free from being arbitrarily reduced. In these ways, Pettit's account of non-domination insists on the need to provide the *guarantee*, and not just the *probability*, that a person can pursue his life goals without being arbitrarily interfered

with in certain choices.

I would now like to return, a bit more forcefully, to the main question of this thesis, namely, whether there are substantive resonances between Pettit's model of non-domination and a Taylorian positive conception of liberty. I have already noted that the ways in which Pettit thinks about the ills that come from being subjected to the arbitrary power of another do indeed share some resemblances with what Taylor thinks is important to a person's sense of freedom as self-realization: being the *author* of one's life plan. With Pettit, being dependent on the will of another in order to undertake some kind of action compromises her freedom, which could also be read as compromising her chances of being the *author* of her life plan. When we consider this along with the deleterious effects that Pettit thinks are associated to being intentionally interfered with because a person is dominated, we see there is a desire to prevent anyone from being able to manipulate or alter the expected outcomes a person thinks could result from her actions. As it was stated in our exploration of Pettit's thoughts on arbitrary power, it does seem to be a stretch to think she could be considered the *author* of her life plan if she were vulnerable to the will of another who could block her ability to carry through with her life goals. And here, it is also worth mentioning that in Taylor's account of freedom as self-realization, an important aspect is that a person needs some sort of reassurance that what she seeks out in life will remain a possibility for her to achieve.⁹⁷ Hence, there does indeed seem that there is a need for a negative approach to freedom if a person is to achieve the kind of freedom theorized by Taylor.

We could push this point a little further if we wished, and think about how Pettit is concerned with the reduction of a person's 'feasible choice sets' and how a person's range set of options are drastically reduced when he is open to another's arbitrary power to interfere. Here again, it would be rather difficult for a person to feel he is the *author* of his options, while also possibly cutting into his thoughts on if he is truly the *actor* of his life plan. Here we can see a link to the kind of reductions in options that come from being 'dominated without interference' in comparison to 'interference without domination', insofar that in the former situation your options never escape the possibility of being imposed on you without a say in the matter.

A person may indeed think that he has the final say in what choice he will undertake and feel he can act as he wishes, but the reality of the situation is that there is always someone who can act as the 'judge' and force him to take an alternate direction or adopt a different choice. Here

97 See Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," 220-24, and also 228-29.

we see the importance of a contestatory citizenry in preventing this kind of situation. And this raises important questions regarding the significance of political deliberation and participation. And here one might find a point of contact between Pettit's non-domination and Taylor's positive liberty.

We know that for Taylor, having a say in what values and choices will become a part of the collective horizon of significance is an integral part of being free and self-realized. Christman, who for the most part builds on Taylor's conception of positive liberty, stresses that it is of the outmost importance for positive liberty that a person can reject the formulation of her desires and that in no way whatsoever can her desires be 'oppressively imposed' upon her. We can see a similar idea in Pettit according to me, and more specially, in how a contestatory citizenry serves as a safeguard against the state from either arbitrarily deciding what will be available in this horizon (and to ensure that the voices and opinions of the citizens from 'all corners of society' are considered and not neglected). Though there is a difference between Pettit and Taylor in terms of whether participation is treated as instrumental (Pettit) or as a good in itself (Taylor), we should nevertheless stress that both authors place a great amount of value on participating in the creation of a society's horizon of significance.

Thus, there does seem to be some resonance between Pettit (and how he explains the details of his model of non-domination as of way securing a republican account of individual liberty), and the way that freedom is conceptualized from within a Taylorian approach to positive liberty. Pettit himself compares his reading of the Italian-Atlantic republican tradition against the Franco-German stamp of Kant and Rousseau (the paradigm of Berlin's positive liberty and the one Pettit seems to be utilizing) in order to show not only the importance of a contestatory citizenry, but also to show why the principle of non-domination is required for securing a republican account of liberty. As much as Pettit may be correct in saying that there would not be much to gain in a comparison with this particular take on positive liberty, we know that with Taylor we are offered a different way of thinking about a positive approach to freedom.

In using Taylor's positive liberty, which is not the same one Pettit draws out of Berlin's account, I do think a comparison between their work unveils the ways in which there is a desire in Pettit to achieve a similar end state as found in Taylor: a sense of being self-realized on a personal level (an end state that Pettit thinks his model of non-domination can help to secure). And in this, there is a desire on Pettit's behalf to ensure a person can experience a better quality

of agency than if she were only protected by the principle of non-interference. However, in order to show why this is, we need to consider the kinds of situations Pettit believes non-domination can prevent a person from experiencing and understand why he thinks they need to be avoided. All of this comes through in how Pettit explains the ‘benefits’ he thinks non-domination can provide a person that non-interference cannot. Within the reasons Pettit offers for why a person must not feel that she is subject to arbitrary is that it is important for her to feel that she does not have to alter her life plans to suite the desires of another; she should be free to chart a life of her own design. In other words, this would increase her chances of moving closer to what she thinks will make her self-realized and experience the kind of agency described by Taylor. Let us look a bit more closely at the benefits associated with non-domination.

2.3: Non-domination is preferred over non-interference: The Quality of Agency Argument

In the following section, we will discuss the benefits that Pettit thinks non-domination can provide which non-interference cannot. My hope is to be able to tease out the more salient points which demonstrate that the kinds of situations and subjective experiences Pettit believes non-domination can help prevent are the kinds of situations that can thwart a person’s chances of feeling self-realized. In other words, I want to show that non-domination is most helpful for securing the appropriate conditions needed to ensure that a person can experience a greater *quality of agency*. I build my case primarily on the first two benefits Pettit identifies, since in my opinion these are more directly related to the kind of subjective experiences I think need to be guarded against in order to experience a greater quality of agency on an individual basis. The third benefit is certainly linked to this understanding of agency, but it opens up complex questions that are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Pettit's insistence that non-domination is preferable to non-interference is most evident in his essay “The Instability of Freedom as Noninterference: The Case of Isaiah Berlin”, where Pettit is particularly detailed in his analysis of non-interference. But Pettit also builds his case for why non-domination is preferable in his essay “Keeping Republican Freedom Simple: On a Difference with Quentin Skinner”, where he explains why republican liberty is a matter of ensuring that a person is not dependent on the will of another (more than it is a matter of doing

away with intentional forms of interference).⁹⁸ The benefits Pettit identifies as being particular to non-domination are laid out in his book *Republicanism*, and thus a substantial part of Pettit's position on this matter will be taken from there. Let us, then, begin by looking at the first of these benefits: namely, that non-domination can prevent a feeling of anxiety from taking hold in a person.

2.3-I: *The fear of unpredictable interference and personal anxiety*

The first point revolves around person's thoughts and feelings about the certainty of being able to pursue what is most important to her. We know that 'interference without domination' is preferable over 'domination without interference' because the former situation will only 'condition' a person's freedom making her 'non-free', while the latter situation will 'compromise' her freedom and leave her 'unfree'. It is not just the interference that is a problem for Pettit, but rather it is having the arbitrary power to do so whenever one chooses to. This of course is why Pettit believes that certain forms of coercive interference are permissible provided they are carried out under the rule of non-arbitrary laws. In Pettit's opinion, "devotees of freedom as non-interference" insist that all forms of state action (even if "well bounded and controlled") are an affront to a person's liberty.⁹⁹ But we know that for Pettit, non-domination is concerned with only the interferences carried out *arbitrarily*; this is so because certain forms of interferences can, at times, be desirable (and in particular, those needed to ensure the equal enjoyment of non-domination).

When Pettit points out that for Berlin, a person is only considered subjected to the will of another provided she is "deliberately" interfered with, he is right to insist that this can still leave her dependent on the goodwill of the other. He writes: "When I grant you the favor of choosing as you wish, it remains the case that should my will change, then I will interfere with one or the other options. You depend on my will remaining the favorable way it is...".¹⁰⁰ Therefore, since Berlin's non-interference only concentrates on deliberate forms of interference, it does very little to ensure the existence of this kind of dependency. And for Pettit, any account of liberty that does not distinguish between arbitrary and non-arbitrary interference, but counts all forms of deliberate interference as equally bad, will leave a person with feelings of uncertainty about her

⁹⁸ Pettit, "Keeping Republican Freedom Simple," 342, 344-45.

⁹⁹ Pettit, *Republicanism*, 84-5.

¹⁰⁰ Pettit, "The Instability of Freedom as Noninterference", 706.

prospects in life and her chances for the future she sees for herself. After all, being dependent on the goodwill of another can leave a person in a state of endless worry, and the awareness of her vulnerability makes it exceedingly difficult to plan her life with any sort of certainty and confidence.

The first benefit that non-domination has over non-interference then, is that non-domination can do away with the uncertainties, and thus the anxiety, that come with the fear of being open to another's arbitrary power to interfere. As Pettit explains, the feeling of "uncertainty" can produce "anxiety" in a person because of the "fear of unpredictable interference".¹⁰¹ This fear contributes to a sense of hesitation on the part of a person, who is now left unsure if the goals he aims to achieve and the choices he makes to do so will be obstructed without any concern for the effects it has on him. He can never be sure if his situation will be made worse simply because someone had the desire to do so. For Pettit, freedom as non-interference can do little to protect a person against such a predicament by only requiring that his "expectation" of being deliberately interfered with be minimized, while freedom as non-domination moves beyond mere *expectations* by putting in place a level of *certainty* against such acts, ones that can help to eliminate this kind of distress in a person¹⁰² (a kind of distress and uneasiness in life that reduces a person's sense of control over his power to plan his life within the bounds of what is accepted in society).¹⁰³ We can gain a better understanding of this point if we look at the 'open door' metaphor that Pettit takes from Berlin while building his case against non-interference.

The 'open door' metaphor is rooted in the ways Berlin departs from Thomas Hobbes's non-frustration approach. According to Pettit, in Hobbes freedom is restricted only when a person is frustrated from choosing an option that she actually desires, and since it is a matter of her preferences, if the option that is obstructed is one that she does not desire, she is still free.¹⁰⁴ What Pettit tells us is that Berlin was not satisfied with this position, because for Berlin freedom is not simply a matter of what a person actually *wants* to do, but rather it entails what a person *might want* to do. As Pettit explains, Berlin's position is that "you must be positioned to do

101 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 86.

102 Ibid., 84-85.

103 Ibid., 89.

104 Pettit, "The Instability of Freedom as Noninterference," 697.

whatever you might happen to want or try to do among the relevant alternatives”.¹⁰⁵ It is at this point that Berlin resorts to the ‘open door’ metaphor, where what matters for freedom is how many doors there are, and to what extent they are left opened; it is “not just on whether the door you push on is open”.¹⁰⁶ From this, Pettit takes Berlin to be saying that non-interference moves beyond Hobbes’s preference-satisfaction and opens up freedom to be a matter of different doors remaining open (not just the one that a person ‘pushes on’).¹⁰⁷

Pettit uses this metaphor to show that if someone wanted to block a door whenever he saw fit, he could do so because non-interference only seeks to ensure that “interference should remain improbable”.¹⁰⁸ There is nothing there to ensure that if there is a doorkeeper, that he cannot act arbitrarily and deny a person access to any one door whenever he wants. There are no checks on the doorkeeper's power to do as he pleases within the discourse of non-interference. And for Pettit this is simply not enough: “What freedom ideally requires in the republican book is not just that the doors be open but that there be no doorkeeper who can close a door—or jam it, or conceal it—more or less without cost”.¹⁰⁹

Unlike non-interference, the principle of non-domination does have mechanisms in place that help to ensure that the doorkeeper is kept within his or her bounds. On the one hand, the doorkeeper may only prevent access to a door providing he or she is upholding a ‘fair and just’ law that is arrived at by non-arbitrary means. On the other hand, citizens retain the ability to contest the doorkeeper's action if they believe that it is taken arbitrarily and has the effect of worsening their particular situation. Some doors may be blocked, others may be restricted, but the ones that remain open cannot be jammed, blocked, or concealed based on the will of the doorkeeper.¹¹⁰ Nor can the doorkeeper freely manipulate, coerce, or threaten a person from choosing a door that is meant to remain as an available alternative—a door that a person *might* want to use. There is, in fact, no assurance that the doors Berlin hopes to keep open will actually remain open if a person ever wanted to push one of them.

105 Ibid., 698. See also Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” in *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 186.

106 Pettit, “The Instability of Freedom as Noninterference,” 698. See also Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty”, 174.

107 Ibid., 702.

108 Ibid., 710.

109 Pettit, “The Instability of Freedom as Noninterference,” 709.

110 Pettit specifies that non-domination guarantees “not exemption from intentional interference”, but only the sort that is carried out arbitrarily (*Republicanism*, 84). In this manner he does concede that noninterference may be better suited in providing a larger quantity of unobstructed choices, but it cannot promise that those choices will remain free from arbitrary rule or changes

Clearly then, non-interference cannot prevent a person from having to worry that her choices may be limited without any notice, or without any say in the matter. This drastically reduces a person's ability to plan her life with some assurance, "since the arbitrary basis on which the interference occurs means that there is no predicting when it will strike."¹¹¹ This unpredictability brings with it anxiety and a feeling of vulnerability because she, and her life aspirations, are dependent on the goodwill of the doorkeeper. In other words, non-interference leaves her freedom susceptible to being compromised at any point in time without any warning, making her rather apprehensive about her future. Non-domination on the other hand, seeks to guarantee that her freedom cannot be compromised, thus removing the kind of apprehensions she might otherwise have under non-interference. This is why Pettit believes that non-domination can do more to secure a person's freedom than non-interference.

In terms of being a more robust account of negative liberty, non-domination fares better than non-interference in adhering to the first conditional requirement for a person to be considered negatively free: that freedom cannot depend on the 'special collaboration of circumstances or colleagues'. A person's freedom to enter any of the doors available to all cannot depend on the doorkeeper allowing her access; there can be no special collaboration of colleagues. Freedom is not secured by luck either, it cannot be that she gains access to a door because the doorkeeper may have 'fallen asleep at the wheel'; there is no room for special collaboration of circumstances. No, for negative liberty there can be no reliance on chance or fortune to be considered a free person. Rather, there needs to be some kind of certainty that what choices are available remain available, and it is clear that only Pettit's non-domination can provide this *certainty*, not just the *probability*. This is why the first benefit Pettit identifies with non-domination adds to my claim that his model is indeed preferable to non-interference. However, what I think makes this even more the case, is that by doing away with these feelings of stress and anxiety, non-domination can do so much for a person's sense of agency (understood in its Taylorian sense).

Recall that for Taylor, human agency is about being able to formulate our desires based on what is significant to us and to choose the options we think are more important and most directly related to achieving our sense of purpose in life. In doing this, we move to undertake the course of action that we think will bring us to the realization of our goals. All this is what is

¹¹¹ Pettit, *Republicanism*, 84

involved in becoming the *author* and *actor* of a life plan. Surely then, this will be extremely difficult to do if he is in a state of anxiety because he is unsure which choices will actually remain open to him. Because he is unable to make these decisions with any certainty he is cut off from his ability to be the *author* of his life plan. Added to this, he is now one step removed from being able to think of himself as also the *actor* of his life plan. By not exercising any sort of control over which alternatives are left open he can never be sure if his actions will take him where he wants to go; he is unsure if he will be able to act out his life.

It will do him little good to come to a decision based on his strong evaluations, since there is no certainty that what he chooses will still be available to him once he decides what he wants to do. Without this certainty, he has no assurance his more significant choices in life (the ones that are important to his sense of purpose) will not be cut off, pushed out of sight, altered or obstructed by someone simply because they have the power to. With his chances of feeling self-realized in certain situations *dependent on the will of another*, his sense of agency in these situations is in the hands of this other. I think it is safe to say in both Taylor and Pettit's books, a person's freedom suffers greatly in such situations.

Pettit's issues with the kind of uncertainties and feelings of anxiety a person will feel in these situations no doubt are linked to the existence of arbitrary power, but this is the cause, or perhaps the root, of the problem. The feelings of anxiety and endless worry are consequences of the existence of this power. Surely then, if Pettit is worried about these consequences (because of the presence of arbitrary power), it must be because he has an idea of what these effects will obstruct a person from achieving. This, of course, is to say that a constraint only makes sense in light of the end state it prevents. Hence, Pettit's desire to avoid this state of anxiety only makes sense when we consider what it can prevent in a person; the possibility for him to plan a life according to his own will and to be certain he cannot be arbitrarily interfered with.

Non-domination can ensure that the more significant options identified by a person as being the ones most conducive to the realization of his life remain firmly secured from the will of a doorkeeper. Certain that his alternatives will remain open, he does not have to worry about unpredictable interference and he can move forward with more assurance towards what he thinks will bring him closer to being self-realized; allowing him to experience a greater quality of agency because he enjoys a greater level of freedom. Thus, his positive freedom as self-realization is intimately linked with his negative freedom as non-domination. This is how the

first benefit identified by Pettit demonstrates that non-domination does approach a positive take on freedom, while also demonstrating there is indeed, even if implicitly, a concern for a person's sense of agency at play in the ways Pettit thinks non-domination can do better than non-interference in securing a person's negative freedoms.

So much, then, for the first benefit that non-domination has over non-interference. We now move onto the second benefit that not only builds off the first, but also requires the use of the 'open door' metaphor in order to fully appreciate it. One thing that will become apparent as we move through the next benefit is that it has even more profound implications for a person's agency than the first. Let us see how and why that is.

2.3-II: Avoiding strategic life planning and the anti-ingratiating argument

The second benefit is one that is linked to the first insofar as it also considers the ways that non-interference cannot prevent freedom from being compromised. In fact, the advantage that Pettit believes non-domination has over non-interference, is one that can avoid what a person might have to resort to in order to reduce her level of anxiety and uncertainty vis-à-vis keeping her choices open. More specifically, what is added by this second benefit is that unlike non-interference, non-domination can avoid strategic life planning and the need to ingratiate oneself to the powerful. In fact, with non-domination a person will not have to engage in any form of self-abnegation, preference adaptation, or calculated and tactical moves in life in order to gain access to the choices she believes are most conducive to her sense of purpose.

Pettit's position on avoiding having to curry favor with a doorkeeper is quite clear: "the anti-ingratiation assumption argues that there must be no dependence on the good grace of the doorkeeper."¹¹² Freedom, as we know, cannot be secured or gained by luck, nor can it rely on placating the powerful. As Pettit emphatically argues, ingratiating yourself to the one who holds power over you cannot make you free: "That sort of deference—that sort of toadying, fawning, or kowtowing, to use some established terms of derogation—testifies to the unfreedom of your situation; it is not a strategy whereby you might overcome it."¹¹³ Therefore, the ills associated with being open to the arbitrary power of a doorkeeper move beyond feelings of anxiety and a state of constant worry. They entail possibly having to debase yourself in order to gain your

¹¹² Pettit, "The Instability of Freedom as Noninterference," 709.

¹¹³ Ibid., 705. See also Pettit, "Keeping Republican Freedom Simple," 348, where the same point is made using similar language

freedom. You may think the only way to rid yourself of the anxiety you feel because of a looming power is to adopt a strategy of appeasement to increase your chances of entering a door. Even more problematic, is that involved in the process of toadying to the powerful to relieve yourself of these worries, may arise the need to resort to various forms of self-abnegation and strategic life planning. It is worth quoting Pettit at length on this:

To suffer the reality or expectation of arbitrary interference is not only to have to endure a high level of uncertainty. It is also to have to keep a weather eye on the powerful, anticipating what they will expect of you and trying to please them, or anticipating where they will be and trying to stay out of their way; it is to have strategic deference and anticipation forced upon you at every point. You can never sail on, unconcerned, in the pursuit of your own affairs; you have to navigate an area that is mined on all sides with dangers.¹¹⁴

In telling us this, Pettit is pointing out the sorts of situations he thinks must be prevented from happening, ones he feels non-domination can help reduce the likelihood of them having to.

Pettit tells us that with the protection of non-domination there is no need for strategic life planning and there is no need to pay favour to the doorkeeper, a person does not have to “curtail” her desires to avoid the possibility of being interfered with.¹¹⁵ We have already seen the ways in which non-domination can guarantee that a person cannot be intentionally interfered with on an arbitrary basis within certain choices. Now we see that part of why this is important to Pettit is so that a person can avoid ‘troubled waters’ and ‘navigate’ her way safely through life, assured that she can only be intentionally interfered with on a non-arbitrary basis; she has a say in which waterways can or cannot be ‘mined’. And just as with the last benefit, non-interference is not as effective as is non-domination in being the ‘coast guard’ (if we may stretch his analogy).

We have already seen the ways in which Pettit is sure that non-interference is incapable of assuring a person that her freedom cannot be compromised at will by a doorkeeper, and now (and because of this) we can also see why it does little to prevent her from adopting a strategy of self-denial or to “ingratiate” herself to the ‘doorkeeper’ in order to gain access to what ought to be a free choice to begin with. Recall that Berlin resorted to the ‘open door’ metaphor in order to demonstrate that Hobbes’s non-frustration did nothing to prevent preference adaptation as a means to gain a negative ideal of freedom.¹¹⁶ We know Berlin was unsatisfied with this, and Pettit explains that because of this, Berlin would take the position that adapting your preference

¹¹⁴ Pettit, *Republicanism*, 87.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Pettit, “The Instability of Freedom as Noninterference,” 700.

“in the face of obstruction to one or another option cannot give you freedom in that choice”.¹¹⁷ Thus for Berlin, preference-adaptation was illegitimate as a way of securing a person’s negative liberty. However, Pettit shows that even Berlin, with his prioritization of non-interference, also left open the possibility for preference adaptation or the need to ingratiate one’s self in order to ensure that her ‘area of non-interference’ remained as wide as possible. Pettit’s claim seems quite reasonable, considering the issue at hand now is just another consequence of the fact that non-interference cannot thwart the use of arbitrary power.

Through a six-step line of argumentation, Pettit offers a rather convincing justification for why he believes that under Berlin’s notion of non-interference a person could very well have to adopt a strategy of self-abnegation and toadying. First, Pettit says “suppose that for Berlin” freedom is a matter of choosing between options that are left open and not solely the one desired, and, second, there is no freedom of choice if someone has the capacity to interfere because he is “ill willed” and “disposed to interfere with one or the other option.”¹¹⁸ Yet, and as his third point, a person will still be considered free if the one who could interfere decides, “notwithstanding” his power to do so, to not interfere in either option.¹¹⁹ Fourth, and as the crux of the argument, if the person knows and understands this to be the situation, then what seems to be at play is that she can make herself free simply by “ingratiating” herself to the power holder in order to be left alone or alter her choices.¹²⁰ “But this is absurd. You cannot make yourself free just by accommodating yourself to my power of interference”, says Pettit in his fifth point, and finally: “Thus, the original supposition that non-interference is enough for freedom must be false.”¹²¹ It is false because Berlin’s approach “entails that ingratiation is a possible means of liberation”, which of course adds to Pettit’s claim that non-interference is in no way adequate enough as a negative approach to individual freedom: “any theory that entails that it [ingratiation] can serve a liberating role has to be inadequate.”¹²²

I do not feel this point needs to be belabored any more than it already has. It should be

117 Ibid.

118 Pettit, "The Instability of Freedom as Noninterference," 704.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.

121 Ibid.

122 Ibid., 705. Here it is also worth mentioning that in the way Pettit demonstrates there is the possibility for a person to have to engage in some kind of self-denial of her desires in order to gain her freedom with Berlin, shows that Berlin’s accusation that positive liberty brings with it a ‘doctrine of liberation by reason’ —or that it will force a person into self-abnegation in order to secure her freedom— is just as likely to happen with non-interference. Or to say things differently, Pettit shows that the ‘shoe’ is now on the ‘other’ foot with Berlin on this matter.

clear in the same way that non-interference needed to rely on the ‘special collaboration of circumstances or colleagues’ in order to avoid feelings of anxiety and distress, it must also rely on the same criterion in order to avoid strategic life planning and ingratiating the powerful. This is something Pettit is convinced does very little to improve your freedom; all it can do is make your unfortunate situation seem more comfortable.¹²³ And in this case, as with the first benefit, there is still a lot of room for a person to be intentionally interfered with and her situation worsened. Yet, bringing up this point of ‘intentionality’ raises an interesting question about non-domination, one that reveals once more to what extent Pettit’s thoughts on how non-domination is preferable to non-interference and brings his theory of freedom quite close to positive liberty.

Pettit is quite aware that by resorting to the fact that non-interference cannot prevent feelings of anxiety and that a strategy of ingratiation or self-censorship as reasons for why non-domination is a more adequate form of negative liberty, he is at the same time appealing to factors that fall outside of the important condition of intentional interference.¹²⁴ As Pettit explains: “Such enforced self-denial, of course, does not represent a form of interference, even of arbitrary interference, for interference has to be intentionally perpetrated by another...”¹²⁵ Yet, we know that this ‘enforced self-denial’ is a result of having to strategically avoid someone’s use of their arbitrary power to interfere, which of course is the problem. This is why Pettit states: “But nonetheless it is clearly *bad* that people should have to resort to *denying* themselves various choices in order to achieve non-interference.”¹²⁶ So in many ways then, Pettit is telling us that because of the ‘objective’ fact that there is arbitrary power present, it cuts into a person’s ‘subjective’ experience of feeling free and thus places her in a situation where she might need to adopt a strategy of self-denial. And here, we see that the slide towards positive liberty continues, because Pettit is further blurring the line between ‘being free’ and ‘feeling free’.

We can find in Skinner some additional points which show why there is a concern for how republican liberty can be seen as involving a person’s ‘subjective’ experience of freedom. While discussing the ills that come with being subject to arbitrary power, Skinner points out that the “awareness” of being in such a position brings about “further and more specific constraints” to freedom—namely, that of having to “shape and adapt” one’s behaviour to avoid being

123 Pettit, “The Instability of Freedom as Noninterference,” 709-10

124 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 87.

125 Ibid.

126 Ibid., (emphasis added).

interfered with by another.¹²⁷ As a result, the “further loss of liberty” is due to the fact that this “predicament” places a person in a position of having to censor herself in relation to what she chooses.¹²⁸ It is true that what is at hand is a restriction to a person’s freedom due to her “reflections” on her situation, but these reflections are triggered not by any act of interference but because of the presence of arbitrary power.¹²⁹ Although Skinner may have a different idea of what counts as a ‘constraint’ to individual liberty than Pettit in this instance, he does show there is still a subjective element at play in how arbitrary power affects a person’s freedom.

With Taylor, freedom as self-realization is understood as a subjective experience of freedom, one which is intimately linked to a person’s sense of agency. Involved in this positive account of individual freedom is the need for a person to become both the *author* and *actor* of his life by exercising a level of control over what choices and goals he will seek out. I do not think it is too hard to see how a strategy of self-denial or kowtowing can make this quite difficult, on a subjective level, for a person to achieve. Now it is true that even when toadying to the powerful, or in abandoning certain choices, a person can still be considered the *author* and *actor* of his life, since the decision to engage in either of the debased forms of securing his freedom is indeed a strategy he consciously makes. But it would certainly be a stretch to think of him as the ‘director’ (if you will) of how he will ‘act’ out the life he has ‘authored’. Put differently, the existence of arbitrary power forces him to clear his ‘script’ with an ‘executive director’ before being able to ‘act’ out his life. And because non-domination can help him avoid all of this, as the *author* and *actor* he does not need prior approval to carry on with his story.

When we take into consideration how non-domination can stymie the need for strategic life planning, we see a parallel between this and a person’s strong evaluations. Recall that a person’s sense of agency, and thus her sense of self-realization, are linked to the being able to pursue her more significant goals in life (the ones arrived at by strong evaluation and a ‘deeper’ state of reflection on her situation). It should be easy to see why it would be even more possible for her to act upon these kinds of evaluations when protected by non-domination. It is indeed ‘beneficial’ to her sense of freedom when she can feel assured that the choices she decides will bring her closer to the kind of life she wants to live and the sort of person she wants to be and, at the same time, allow her to remain free from arbitrary forms of interference. I do not think it

127 Skinner, “Freedom as the Absence,” 90.

128 Skinner, “Freedom as the Absence,” 90-91.

129 Ibid., 90-91.

would be an exaggeration to suggest that the kind of psychological pains the exposure to arbitrary power can inflict upon a person are certainly not indicative of the kind of life Pettit thinks is one of a 'free person'. Nor do I think we would be exaggerating if we were to say the same about Taylor. There is, in my mind, a link between non-domination and a person's quality of agency, but perhaps we need a little more convincing.

Without the protection of non-domination, there is, according to Pettit, a greater chance that a person's strong-evaluations will be for nothing. With no certainty about what the future may bring because there is a *dominus*, a person may become more focused on what she can do to eke out whatever she can week by week, day by day, hour by hour—never certain of when a 'mine' may explode and sink her ship or force her to chart a new course. Her reflections and evaluations on what she can and will *do* are more centered upon immediate and strategic outcome oriented goals, leaving her to continually evaluate her goals and choices in a weak sense. It is not because she is incapable of strong-evaluations, but her strongly evaluated goals seem out of reach to her because she cannot be sure if the choices she desires are ones she will actually be able to do with the power of a *dominus* hanging over her head. She feels her life, her actions, her choices are more and more removed from what is significant to her. Her strong evaluations, the ones she feels 'deeply' about, seem like a fantasy with no real chances of becoming her reality. But with non-domination there is less of a likelihood this being the case. Her sense of vulnerability is reduced and her hopes of being self-realized are no longer dependent on the goodwill of another.

Rid of a need to curry favour with a doorkeeper in the hopes of winning his good grace, or the need for strategic life planning to avoid his attention, a person can indeed feel that her significant goals in life are more within her ability to achieve. She has greater confidence that the choices she deems important because they are associated to her sense of purpose will be available to her when she decides to act upon them. Her strategy in life is no longer to avoid the doorkeeper or to pay favour to a *dominus*, rather her strategy is to move ahead with her plans to achieve the goals she feels are significant to her. To choose as she sees fit from the options she had a hand in ensuring remain free to choose from. Aware of this, she can follow through on her strong-evaluations, to allow them to help bring her closer to her sense of purpose, to move her towards a feeling of self-realization and hold out the possibility of a 'deeper' sense of agency. It is deeper because we've established in a previous chapter that the kind of agency experienced as

a weak-evaluator is not as ‘deeply’ connected to our sense of purpose. As a strong evaluator her sense of agency is qualitatively better, deeper, than the kind of agency she would be foredoomed to experience if she were dependent on the goodwill of another. With non-domination her sense of agency is closer to her feelings of being self-realized: her ‘positive’ freedom.

The kind of situations non-domination can help prevent a person from experiencing may in turn help to ensure that the right kind of situations required for the same person to experience a greater quality of agency are made available. In this way, there are similar ideas of what it means to experience freedom for Taylor in a positive sense and what it means to to be free for Pettit in a negative sense. In other words, the parallels show that Pettit’s freedom as non-domination is an important component needed to experience Taylor’s positive account of freedom as self-realization. This is certainly not to relegate Pettit and his theory of freedom as a ‘means’ to an end (namely Taylor’s idea of freedom). Rather it is to say that just as the absence of external constraints only make sense in light of what desired end state they obstruct, a desired end state is only going to be possible providing there is the absence of external impediments to its realization.

Pettit’s principle of non-domination can, in my opinion, offer the appropriate conditions required to achieve a Taylorian idea of freedom as self-realization. And it seems there is such a desire (a want for a person to feel self-realized and experience a greater sense of agency, even if implicit) in his thoughts about the strengths of non-domination. This desire seems to come through, in my opinion, in the ways Pettit cannot help but allow the line between the idea of ‘being free’ and ‘feeling free’ to be flexible enough so he can justify his reasoning for why non-domination is a more adequate form of negative liberty than non-interference.

It is in his description of the ways non-domination can prevent certain kinds of subjectively experienced situations from possibly unfolding that I think Pettit shows great appreciation for some of the same principles that are important to positive liberty; he does wish to achieve a certain end state, one which is quite similar to what is sought by positive liberty theorist Charles Taylor. In addition, I do feel that based on what I have demonstrated, there is a positive conception of individual liberty to be found in Pettit’s republican theory of freedom, because embedded in the benefits of non-domination, there is a fairly strong concern for a person’s sense of agency and self-realization. All of this is why I proposed at the onset of the thesis that the strength of Pettit’s theory of freedom lies, in part, in the fact that the conditions

made possible by non-domination can help secure a person's sense of agency as understood in Taylorian terms.

The force of my argument comes to an end here, and I do think we have strong reasons to accept the proposition that what sets Pettit's theory of freedom as non-domination above non-interference is that it approaches a Taylorian conception of positive liberty. Yet, I would not be faithful to Pettit's justifications for why he prefers non-domination over non-interference if I did not discuss, briefly at least, his third and final benefit. In doing so we may surely uncover even more ways which Pettit's theory of freedom approaches a positive take on liberty. Let us, then, look at the ways Pettit thinks that with the protection of non-domination a person's status is improved and see, then, how this affects a person's intersubjective relations.

2.3-III: *Improving a person's status and intersubjective relations*

The third associated benefit that non-domination brings to the table, is what it does for a person's social status and intersubjective relations. For Pettit, the principle of non-domination has important consequences for both of these things, and in particular because we know that situations of domination and relationships marked by a powerful and powerless will always be a matter of shared awareness between the parties and a matter of common knowledge among others. But with non-domination, there is a common awareness that there can be no situations in which a person thinks he or she can arbitrarily play the role of a doorkeeper. This can permit people to engage in social activities and interpersonal relations with the assurance that no other person can arbitrarily act upon them, since it will be a socially recognized fact that each and every citizen of the republic is free to undertake their pursuits not because of the good grace of another, but rather as the result of a "publicly recognized right".¹³⁰

There is a deep concern in Pettit with the ways a person's social status is affected when subject to the arbitrary will of another. Drawing from a rich tradition of republican texts, Pettit claims that republican liberty is "defined by a status", one a person retains because he enjoys the protection from being arbitrarily interfered with.¹³¹ Since domination is a matter of common knowledge, in a person's state of vulnerability it is clear to others that he is "subordinate" to another, and as a result, his reduced social status will negatively affect his interpersonal

¹³⁰ Pettit, *Republicanism*, 71

¹³¹ Ibid., 30.

relations.¹³² We should think of his predicament as one that is marked by an “asymmetry in status”¹³³ (after all, his position of being subordinate and dependent on the will of another is known to him, to the one who can interfere arbitrarily and, more importantly, to others in society). All of this will have resounding negative effects on the kind of respect he may be afforded by others. It is worth quoting Pettit at length here:

A relationship of domination leaves the dominated person in a position where it is likely to be a matter of common knowledge that he or she is exposed to the possibility of arbitrary interference and cannot, therefore, speak his or her mind without risk of falling out of favor and cannot be ascribed a voice that claims the attention and respect of others.¹³⁴

Thus, by being in a position where it is a matter of common knowledge that a person is dominated by another, he is seen and treated as someone who can be dismissed or outright ignored. Not only is his freedom compromised by his *dominus*, but it can also be compromised by others. In being dependent on one person for his freedom, he becomes open to the possibility of also having to depend on others for his freedom as well. There is little possibility for an agent to enjoy equal freedom and be considered a ‘free person’ when in this position.

We know the ways non-domination can protect a person’s freedom from being dependent on the goodwill of another, and we also know that because of this a person does not have to plan strategically, resort to self-denial, nor feel the anxiety that comes with all this when she sets out to make her choices in her life. Knowing this, while *also knowing others know this*, she does not have to seek the approval to undertake the choices they all had/have a say in deciding would be made available. According to Pettit, non-domination permits a person to see herself as “non-vulnerable”, and helps to solidify a “comparable” level of social status for her among others.¹³⁵ Having this ‘comparable’ level of status, she can “look the other in the eye” without having to “bow and scrape” in order to avoid being arbitrarily acted upon¹³⁶ (either by ‘the other’ or anyone else). This is because to enjoy non-domination means to retain a level of certainty of being recognized and treated socially as a “somebody” and not as a “nobody”.¹³⁷

To be protected by non-domination then, is to have a voice that commands the respect

132 Ibid., 88.

133 Pettit, “Keeping Republican Freedom Simple,” 350.

134 Ibid.

135 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 87.

136 Ibid.

137 Ibid.

and attention of others in such a way that a person's ideas, opinions, and interests cannot be dismissed as unimportant. It is to be able to 'sail on' and not have to curry favor with others in order to be free to pursue a personal desire. Non-domination gives a person the kind of personal power needed to be an equal amongst equal, something we already know non-interference falls short of doing since it cannot guard against the use of arbitrary power. In fact, for Pettit, most liberals and adherents of non-interference do not feel the need to account for "asymmetries in interpersonal power",¹³⁸ and yet he is sure that the ideas of interpersonal relations, social status, and recognition of this status are very important factors that *must* to be considered in a discussion of personal liberty. From this, can see to what extent Pettit and liberals depart on this matter by considering what Berlin has to say on the topic, and in doing so, we see the line between negative and positive liberty in Pettit's thoughts is once more being blurred.

Berlin is confident that any account of individual liberty that takes into consideration elements of recognition and social status as important to freedom is actually a "hybrid form of freedom", one in which liberty becomes equated with a quest for solidarity, equality, fraternity, and a desire to avoid being treated by others as "incapable of autonomous, original, 'authentic' behaviour".¹³⁹ Moreover, Berlin believes we should not confuse a desire for freedom with the "hankering after status and recognition", because what is really at hand is a desire to avoid being dismissed or ridiculed, or more accurately, to not be "treated as an individual";¹⁴⁰ yet his insistence on this point does not end there. Berlin is clear that at the "heart of the great cry for recognition", rests a desire to be recognized as an autonomous individual capable of discerning for herself the shape her life will take, and that without it there is the possibility that she will "doubt" her claim to being a "fully independent" agent within the social body (here we should be reminded of the uncertainties associated to being open to arbitrary power).¹⁴¹ With this comes the temptation to associate not being recognized as a "self-governing" actor with a feeling of being "unfree", but this is precisely what Berlin wishes to avoid.¹⁴²

Even though Berlin does agree that a "craving for status" is closely associated with the desire to be an "independent agent", he still wants to avoid counting an improvement to one's social status as an "increase" in freedom because it runs the chance of rendering liberty too

138 Pettit, "Two Republican Traditions," 175.

139 Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 206.

140 Ibid., 201.

141 Ibid., 203.

142 Ibid.

“vague” and too dependent on the will of others;¹⁴³ it makes liberty dependent on the ‘special collaboration of circumstances and colleagues’. Rather, for Berlin, it is simply better to rely on the maxim: “The wider the area of non-interference, the wider my freedom.”¹⁴⁴ Clearly then, Pettit is correct to indicate that asymmetries in interpersonal power will not be accounted for by non-interference as representing a reduction to a person’s freedom. But in accepting that status and social recognition are important to freedom, Pettit does put pressure on his own insistence of avoiding a reliance on the ‘special collaboration’ of others for a person to be considered negatively free; there is always the possibility a person will refuse to recognize another as having the status of an equal, which Pettit thinks non-domination allows. Nonetheless, in placing status and recognition as central to a person’s freedom, Pettit continues his slide towards positive liberty.

Berlin’s remarks on avoiding the ‘hankering after status and recognition’, or ‘the great cry for recognition’, are ones he makes in his case against positive liberty and what he believes such doctrines of freedom wish to achieve in a pursuit for individual freedom.¹⁴⁵ Now, if we recall, this is the Franco-German variation of republicanism that Pettit identified as making up the ‘paradigm’ of Berlin’s positive liberty,¹⁴⁶ the very one Pettit felt was not a doctrine of republican freedom he wished to be compared with, let alone associated to. Yet, Pettit seems to have taken some of these so called ‘positive’ characteristics of liberty and incorporated them into his own thoughts on the benefits that non-domination offers a person in her quest to be a free.

By hailing the improvement to a person’s status as being a point of “the greatest importance”, Pettit underscores the fact that non-domination is intricately associated to a person’s “subjective self-image and intersubjective status”.¹⁴⁷ In doing so, he places a person’s thoughts and feelings on *who they are* in relation to others squarely in the midst of what ‘being free’ entails. In Taylor’s opinion, our thoughts on *who we are as persons* and our sense of personal identity are intimately linked to our feelings of being *recognized by others*.¹⁴⁸ In addition, these same thoughts of who we are as a persons are never fully separated from the

143 Ibid., 205.

144 Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” 170.

145 See Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” in particular section VI: *The Search for Status* and section VIII: *The One and the Many*.

146 Referred to here in section 2.1-I. Also, see Pettit, “Two Republican Traditions,” 200,

147 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 71.

148 See Charles Taylor “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 225-56; and Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, in particular chapters II and V.

‘affective-cognitive responses’ that we use to make sense of the situations we experience (responses that do indeed require some kind of validation from others).¹⁴⁹ Both of these points are intimately linked to Taylor’s thoughts on freedom and human agency. And what I think this shows is that, just as it is with Taylor, so too it is with Pettit: that our subjective self-image and our status among others contributes heavily to our feelings of being free. Therefore, Pettit is making a case for non-domination based on an appeal to what it can do for a person’s *sense of agency*.

2.4: Conclusion

There does not seem to be much to be added in order to stand by my claim that there are many ways in which we can see a slide towards a Taylorian account of positive liberty as self-realization in Pettit. We have covered a fair amount of ground since the onset of this chapter and along the way I have showed that there is an appeal to the *quality of a person’s agency* in Pettit’s explanations of why non-domination is preferable to non-interference.

Since he insists on the importance of eliminating the arbitrary power to interfere in the choices a person has and on the desirability of reducing the feelings of anxiety and the need for kowtowing and self-denial, Pettit proposes a view of freedom that resonates with Taylor’s. Significant also are the ways that Pettit feels non-domination can improve a person’s social status and interpersonal relations: “To have full standing of a person among persons, it is essential that you be able to command their attention and respect; if you like, their authorization of you as a voice worth hearing and an ear worth addressing.”¹⁵⁰ This is the great ambition of the Italian-Atlantic republican notion of freedom as non-domination: to be treated as a person among persons; to have your voice count and to have your opinion matter; to choose a direction in life and to move towards it with a high level of certainty and assurance that the course you plot will be free from the arbitrary power of another. This is, in my opinion, what nourishes Pettit’s thoughts on why non-domination “is itself a form of power” — the kind of power that “represents a control that a person enjoys in relation to their own destiny”.¹⁵¹ This kind of personal power can provide a person with a greater sense of certainty of being able to undertake the kind of actions she believes will bring her closer to being self-realized, based on what is

149 See Taylor, “Self-Interpreting Animals,” 53-55, 65-67; Taylor, *Sources of The Self*, Part I sections 3 & 4.

150 Pettit, “Keeping Republican Freedom Simple,” 350.

151 Pettit, *Republicanism*, 69.

significant to her as an individual. With a person's freedom safe from being comprised by another, she can be more assured she can exercise a certain level of control over her destiny and move closer to being both the *author* and *actor* of her life. Framed in this manner, I find that Pettit's account of non-domination does have great resources to offer those of us interested in improving a person's *quality* of agency.

Conclusion

This thesis has tried to show that Pettit *is* concerned with the quality of a person's agency and that there are good reasons to think that Pettit's thoughts on non-domination as a negative theory of liberty bring him quite close to a positive conception of liberty. Moreover, throughout the thesis, I have taken the position that agency *does* matter for our discussions about individual freedom, which obviously situates me, quite comfortably, in the camp of positive liberty champions like Charles Taylor and John Christman. Moreover, like Christman, I am convinced that we should retain the distinction between positive and negative liberty. In this conclusion, I wish to briefly discuss why some have challenged the utility of this distinction and why some believe the distinction should be retained. I will also indicate how my analysis of Pettit's theory of freedom can add some modest reflections to this debate.

After having commented on this debate, I will then offer some brief comments on Sharon Krause's critique of Pettit's theory of freedom (this partially to indicate how Pettit's work could indeed inform feminist theory in the future). What I will suggest is that although part of Krause's critique is warranted, it might nevertheless be possible to 'save' Pettit from some of the accusation. I will indicate that what Krause's discussion of Pettit helps us to see is that—as I have sought to demonstrate throughout my thesis—without due consideration of the insights of positive liberty, we cannot discuss freedom in a convincing or complete manner. Let us begin, then, with our discussion on negative and positive liberty.

1: *Retaining the analytical distinction between positive and negative liberty*

In recent years, some scholars have suggested that keeping alive the distinction between positive and negative liberty is not desirable and that using the term 'positive liberty' is more or less redundant because it is not any different from negative liberty. In particular, I am here referring to Eric Nelson, who claims that the main difference between positive and negative liberty is *not* that they offer different accounts of freedom, but simply that they represent different takes on *what should count as constraints* on a person's liberty.¹ Indeed, Nelson believes that there is no need to retain these analytical categories since at the end of the day, "all

¹ Eric Nelson. "Liberty: One Concept Too Many?," *Political Theory* 33, no. 1 (2005), 59.

claims about freedom” (whether negative or positive) are merely claims that revolve around the “absence of some constraints”.²

On the other side of the debate, John Christman argues for the importance of thinking about freedom in positive terms and for the importance of keeping the distinction.³ His essay “Saving Positive Freedom” is in fact a direct response to Nelson’s claims. Here Christman claims that there *is* a need to retain the distinction because positive liberty is “more than the absence of obstacles”; in his view, it is about explaining the “final outcome of that absence in positive terms”.⁴ Christman insists that those of us who theorize freedom in ‘positive terms’ place “the focus of our concern for liberty on *the quality of agency* and not merely the opportunity to act”.⁵ In other words, positive liberty is quite distinct from negative liberty because it moves beyond a concern with only the obstacles to a person’s freedom and seeks to define the ‘end state’ that is desired for freedom to have meaning. As Christman explains (building here in part on Taylor and Skinner), he too believes that positive liberty understands freedom as the “ability of citizens to act as authentic, self-governing agents (that is, be self-realized)”.⁶ In Christman’s opinion, there is a world of difference between this ideal and a focus on the removal of constraints, which is why he profoundly disagrees with Nelson.

A common understanding among positive liberty theorists, in Christman’s opinion, is that “what counts as a constraint is only specified by a presupposition of what final state such interference makes impossible”, a final state that is to be understood (as I have argued throughout this thesis), as the quality of a person’s agency.⁷ Therefore, the distinction between positive and negative liberty rests on the idea that negative liberty will provide an account of *what will count as a constraint*, while positive liberty will offer an account of *why* the identified barriers matter. In fact, what I have attempted to show is that the richness of Pettit’s account of non-domination lies in part in its analysis of the kind end state it can help to avoid.

2 Nelson, “Liberty,” 73.

3 See John Christman, “Liberalism and Individual Positive Freedom,” *Ethics* 101 (1991): 343-359; “Autonomy and Personal History,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 1, 1992: 1-24; “Saving Positive Freedom,” *Political Theory*, 33, no. 1 (2005): 79-88.

4 Christman, “Saving Positive Liberty,” 83 (original emphasis).

5 *Ibid.*, 79 (original emphasis).

6 *Ibid.*, 85.

7 *Ibid.*, 84.

Arguing that “all claims about freedom seem to be claims about the absence of some constraints”,⁸ Nelson believes positive liberty attempts to distinguish itself from a negative conception by prioritizing internal constraints over external ones as what bars a person from being free.⁹ Therefore, no matter the sort of constraint discussed, Nelson is convinced that we are “still firmly in the realm of negative liberty”.¹⁰ What I find problematic about Nelson’s position is that he attempts to create a false separation between our ‘internal’ and ‘external’ worlds or constraints. Put differently, Nelson wants us to think we can focus on one without considering the other. What I think is a better approach is to treat external and internal constraints as *interconnected*; they are never fully separable from one another. This idea of an interconnectedness between internal and external barriers to freedom is there, according to me, in Pettit’s model of non-domination, insofar as he believes certain external constraints (the power for arbitrary interference) will inevitably lead to a person feeling some kind of internal barrier to action (anxiety and/or self-denial). This in my view indicates a slide towards positive liberty in Pettit; and it is a slide that can only make sense in light of the analytical distinction between positive and negative liberty.

Nelson is indeed correct to say that positive liberty does add internal constraints to the conversation, but it is not because this is its focus. Rather, it is because there is an acceptance that these sorts of constraints can also limit a person’s freedom.¹¹ What Nelson is overlooking according to Christman, is that positive liberty “*goes beyond*” the goal of removing constraints (either internal or external) because “there is no conception of freedom as simply the absence of constraints that does not rest on the more robust (positive) conception of freedom as the quality of agency”.¹² Nelson acknowledges that Taylor does indeed place the idea of self-realization at the center of his ‘exercise concept’.¹³ Nonetheless, Nelson believes that no matter the kind of language used to show what is “good” about self-realization and how it relates to freedom, “recourse must be had to the standard negative idiom”.¹⁴ Nelson explains: “We want to know what it is about self-realization that connects it, for some theorists, to the value of freedom.”¹⁵

8 Nelson, “Liberty,” 73.

9 Ibid., 62.

10 Ibid., 60

11 See Taylor, “What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty,” in particular 228.

12 Christman, “Saving Positive Freedom,” 84 (original emphasis).

13 Nelson, “Liberty,” 63.

14 Nelson, “Liberty,” 66.

15 Ibid., 64.

But, as we have seen throughout this thesis, this connection has certainly been made by Taylor and, I believe, by Pettit (albeit more implicitly).

Now, as Christman rightly notes, Nelson is actually employing a normative claim in order to justify a conceptual one. Christman believes that offering an account of freedom that has a clear desired end state is not certainly an easy task, and, more importantly for our purposes here, this cannot be “politically or morally neutral”.¹⁶ While one might certainly refuse taking a strong position on end states because it may be “dangerous” or may lead to “various difficulties of politics and policies”, this is more of a “normative position” and not an argument concerning why positive liberty is not “*conceptually* distinct” from its negative counterpart.¹⁷ Christman correctly notes: “it is not that there is no separable *concept* of freedom (as self-realization), rather it is that there is not (according to Nelson) an acceptable *value* (self-realization) that we should pursue in the way we pursue or protect freedom.”¹⁸ Christman thinks that Nelson “mistakenly construes a moral and political dispute as a conceptual one”,¹⁹ which is why Christman is quite certain that using the concept of positive liberty is “far from using ‘too many’ concepts”;²⁰ this is obviously a position that I agree with.

To reduce positive liberty to a difference based on constraints would, in Christman’s opinion, “seriously misunderstand efforts to include idealized models of agency in our broadest understandings of social freedom”.²¹ In other words, if we wish to place agency squarely in our discussions of freedom, we need recourse to the concept of positive liberty. Without it, I feel it would be too easy to reduce freedom to something that is defined in solely absolute objective terms, and we would not have a conceptual frame in which freedom is treated as what it most certainly is in my view: a deeply (inter)subjective, lived experience.

We should not, then, assume that there is no real difference between a negative and positive approach to freedom, since they do offer theorists distinct ways to think about freedom. I am surprised that Nelson recognizes that positive liberty does work to offer a desired end state (while negative liberty does not), while also insisting that there is no meaningful distinction between them. Just because positive liberty requires the removal of constraints and the existence

16 Christman, “Saving Positive Liberty,” 79.

17 Ibid., 80 (original emphasis).

18 Ibid., 85 (original emphasis).

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., 87.

21 Ibid., 86-87.

of a negative model, this does not automatically lead to it being the same as negative liberty (or at least not in my opinion or in Christman's either).

Now, as much as I agree with Christman regarding Nelson, there is an issue upon which I disagree. When Christman states that "Seeing freedom as a quality of agency is different, conceptually, from seeing it as the absence of something, *no matter how robust* one's conception of that 'something' turns out to be",²² he implicitly invites us to think that we can focus on a desired end state without taking into consideration the *effectiveness* of the negative model for achieving a desired end state. This, I believe, is not the case. I do think that if we are committed to treating freedom as a matter of quality of agency, then we must also be open to which sorts of negative model will best facilitate the achievement of a particular final outcome in positive terms. Although I cannot argue this point any further here, I think that employing the concepts of positive and negative liberty in our discussions of personal freedom allows us to identify the different components that *must* be accounted for if we want to offer a complete account of freedom. I also think that what is required is to acknowledge that instead of each 'camp' talking *past* one another, we should in fact find a way to have them genuinely *engage with* each other. And I believe that by having placed Pettit's negative liberty in conversation with Taylor's positive liberty, I was able to contribute in a modest way to such an engagement.

It is only by thinking about freedom from both perspectives *together* that we appreciate why Pettit's freedom of non-domination is preferable to non-interference. And this conversation might also be useful for those scholars who are concerned with *preventing* situations from arising that could have severe deleterious effects for a person's quality of agency. Sharon Krause is one of these theorists, and yet she is not convinced that Pettit's non-domination is actually capable of protecting a person's agency. Let us see why that is and if we can answer her objection.

2: Agency and freedom: Saving Pettit's non-domination

Sharon Krause proposes a powerful and well situated critique of Pettit and his model of non-domination. Her critique stems largely from her belief that personal agency is always going to be embedded in the meaning of freedom, and because of this, she feels we must consider the "ways that agency and inequality interact" in such a way that they do indeed "undercut" a

²² Christman, "Saving Positive Liberty," 80 (emphasis added).

person's freedom.²³ Krause's main issue with Pettit's non-domination is that she believes it is unable to account for the ways in which a person's freedom can be limited by "non-intentional", or "indirect", forms of interference.²⁴ In particular, Krause is very concerned with the ways in which a person's freedom and sense of agency can be adversely affected by the unintentional consequences that are born out of the "social stigmas" surrounding sexism and racism (the sort of consequences that are the result of certain patterns of thoughts in society and not because of actual acts of interference or the power to carry them out).²⁵

Krause does acknowledge that Pettit's non-domination is a "real advance" over the principle of non-interference. This is in part because such a conception of liberty goes beyond being concerned only with *actual* acts of interference and seeks to eliminate *the power* that makes intentional acts of interference a possibility in the first place.²⁶ However, because it focuses solely on reducing the ills we intentionally perpetuate against each other, it is not possible for Pettit to see the violation of a person's freedom as stemming from the unintentional forms of discrimination that go hand and hand with sexist and racist stigmas. (These, according to Krause can obviously have an impact on a person's expression of his agency but also "constrain the exercise of agency" of others.²⁷)

But such critique rests on a fairly specific understanding of agency. According to Krause, agency relates directly to a person's subjective lived experience in the world: "By 'agency' I mean the affirmation of one's subjective existence through concrete action in the world... To be an agent is to act, or, more precisely, to affect the world: there is no agency where there are no effects."²⁸ Moreover, Krause insists that a "crucial" feature of agency is the idea of "efficacy" (the ability to produce a desired or intended result through one's actions).²⁹ Krause does not want us to be locked in a mindset that treats agency and intentionality on the same footing, since there will be times when the effects our actions have do not always reflect our intentions.³⁰ Krause observes that: "...the unwilled quality of some of our effects is compatible with their manifesting our

23 Sharon Krause, "Beyond non-domination: Agency, inequality and the meaning of freedom," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 39, no. 2 (2013), 191. 187.

24 Krause, "Beyond non-domination," 191.

25 Ibid., 193.

26 Ibid., 189.

27 Ibid., 190.

28 Ibid., 196.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

subjective existence, and therefore capable of agency”.³¹ For Krause, agency (understood as ‘efficacy’) entails an agent being able to “recognize” her or his hand behind a given action; and the ability to have some kind of effect on the world does in many ways relate to a person ‘exercising’ some kind of control over which actions are taken.³² There could very well be instances where I do not intend to stifle another’s expression of his or her agency, but the ‘unwilled’ consequences of my actions might end up doing so, thereby limiting his or her freedom. The point here is, even in situations where my actions have the unintended effect of reducing a person’s freedom, as long as the action bears the mark of being “directed” by my “hand”, the action is never fully removed from the expression of my agency. This, for Krause, is why we must accept that even the unintentional, or indirect, results of certain ‘concrete actions in the world’ may very well bring to the surface certain racist or sexist stigmas and are never fully removed from the expression of agent’s agency. This is also why Krause feels that such actions need to be accounted for in our attempts to secure people’s freedom.

In my view, Krause would like Pettit’s account of non-domination to be able to address the concerns that are usually taken up by positive liberty theorists. What Krause is asking of Pettit then, is to propose a positive account of freedom. And as I have suggested earlier, without the distinction between positive and negative liberty, we would be unable to appreciate the important nuances Krause calls for as being crucial for how we think about freedom. Without the analytical distinction, Krause’s concerns could be dismissed by some, by reducing them to a worry about internal constraints and thus foreclosing any further discussion of a desired end state (much in the same way that Nelson does when he tries to prevent freedom from being understood as self-realization). The only recourse theorists seem to have if they wish to include agency in their discussions of personal freedom seems to rest, then, with the deployment of a concept of positive liberty.

I have argued that there are good reasons to think that non-domination might help us secure the conditions needed for a Taylorian conception of agency. I now wish to suggest that we might be able to do the same for Krause. Perhaps then, since my reading of Pettit’s non-domination indicates that it can share some common ground with positive liberty, there may be room for non-domination to do for Krause what she thinks it cannot (provided some similarity is

31 Ibid.

32 Krause, “Beyond non-domination,” 196.

found between her idea of an end state understood in ‘positive terms’ and Pettit’s conditions presented in ‘negative terms’). If Pettit wishes to answer Krause’s concerns, he has to be open to the idea of seeing his account of non-domination as (partially) akin to a positive liberty account. In short, I think that with the parallels already identified in this thesis between Pettit and Taylor, we might also be able to find some common ground between Pettit and Krause. What part of this suggests, then, is that Philip Pettit’s neorepublican conception of liberty as non-domination does have much to offer to all those of us who think of freedom primarily in positive terms and, more generally, to all those of us who believe that freedom and agency are inextricably linked and must be treated as such.

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