THE GOOD LIBERAL CITIZEN

Why Citizens can be both Free and Virtuous

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INTRODUCTION

"The true student of politics, too, is thought to have studied virtue above all things; for he wishes to make his fellow citizens good and obedient to the laws".[1] This is what Aristotle wrote in 350 BC and what is still read by thousands of people almost twenty-five hundred years later. Still, the appeal to virtues in everyday life seems to be considered old-fashioned, dull and somewhat dusty. People consider themselves experts on how to live their lives and believe themselves to be the only ones that decide what is decent or prudent to do. Interestingly enough, everyone also has ideas about how other people should behave, and these ideas overlap for a great deal among those from the same society. For example, people might expect each other to be trustworthy, honest and helpful. In liberal democracies, we expect ourselves and others to be free to do what we want and still to show, to a certain extent, decent behavior.

One of the reasons, I suspect, for the fading use of virtue in everyday language is the dominance of liberalism and its necessary connection to autonomy. Many modern liberals consider themselves (partly) followers of Kant, who defined autonomy (in a world where the power of the church and its Christian morality was declining) as being bound by no will other than one's own.[2] Autonomy was later defended by the influential J.S. Mill by employing the utilitarian argument that only the individual knows what is best for him, and that granting autonomy to every individual leads to the overall best result for society (i.e. the most utility).[3] These (and many other) arguments for autonomy have become dominant in western democracies and autonomy has become an essential right of the individual in these countries. The state is believed to have no say in the lives of individuals as long as those individuals do not invade the autonomy of others. The liberal individual is free to live his life as he sees fit and one's course of action has become a personal choice.

Although dominant, liberal theory has not been without challengers. Where liberalism characteristically focuses on the individual, a number of its critics have emphasized the fact that human beings naturally function in groups and communities

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[1] Aristotle (2009), *The Nicomachean Ethics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1102a7-9.

[2] Johnson, R. (2010), 'Kant's Moral Philosophy', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2010 Edition)*, E. N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2010/entries/kant-moral/>.

[3] Mill, J.S. (1991), On Liberty and Other Essays, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 16-17.

and that liberalism fails to grasp this essential point. According to both communitarian and republican writers, the dominance of liberalism in the western world has led to both a breaking down of the bonds of community[4] and an exaggerated emphasis on our rights *against* each other rather than our duties *towards* each other.[5] Under the influence of liberalism, they argue, people increasingly see themselves more as separate units in a world where no one owes anything to another human being. This is a worrying development according to those writers that value community, for it is a constituting element of being human that we are born as members of a family and of our national community.[6] In this line of thought, it is important to realize that society is held up by the human beings of which it consists and the effort they put in keeping society together. A society that values itself, should make its members aware of this and try to foster a sense of responsibility in its members. For this reason, both republican and communitarians plead that we should teach people to be good citizens, to cultivate *civic virtue* in society.

Both liberal and communitarian/republican scholars make appealing points here. Autonomy is what makes individuals free to discover what they find valuable in this life and to chase their goals in their own way, whereas civic virtue creates an active and responsible society that is a common project, a culmination of human cooperation. Unfortunately, a first glance seems to tell us that we have to choose, that there is something in these concepts which cannot be unified. If we, as a society, would actively encourage our citizens to be *virtuous* citizens, would tell them there is some good way in which one should lead his life as a citizen, would we not be meddling with their autonomous choice? And the other way around does not seem to be the solution either, for the society that leaves its citizens completely free to live their lives as they like seems to offer no basis for active support among its citizens. But, as we will see, this first glance is nothing more than that: a quick assumption.

Although civic virtue and autonomy seem to be conflicting concepts, I think there is and should be a way to unite these valuable ideas. The goal of this thesis will be to look into both concepts and to formulate an answer on the following question: 'What is the relationship between civic virtue and autonomy?' My hypothesis will be

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[4] Buchanan, A.E. (1989), 'Assessing the Communitarian Critique of Liberalism', *Ethics*, 99 (4), pp. 852-882, p. 852.

[5] Glendon, M.A. (1991), *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse*, (New York: Free Press).

[6] Sandel, M. (1984), ´The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self´, *Political Theory*, 12 (1), pp. 81 – 96, p. 90.

that, despite of the apparent contradiction, civic virtue and autonomy can not only exist together but can actually have a positive effect on each other. I will try to argue that a society can consist of citizens both free and responsible, with both qualities reinforcing the other.

In the first chapter I will provide an overview of the concept of virtue in general and civic virtue in particular. Civic virtue is, I will argue, a set of virtues that together dispose the citizen to further the public good. The next chapter defines autonomy and its range: to what extent can we speak of concepts like full or limited autonomy? I will argue that autonomy actually is a virtue, one which we can possess to a greater or to a lesser extent and which liberalism seeks to maximize in individuals. Having established both concepts, the third chapter is devoted to the relation between them. Since civic virtue is a set of virtues and autonomy a single virtue, the first step is to look into the relation of the virtues in general. Possessing a virtue, I will argue, requires all the knowledge that is required for the other virtues but not those virtues themselves. A person, then, can possess one virtue but not the others at the same time. The next step will be to assess the relation between civic virtue and autonomy. Civic virtue, I will argue, needs autonomy for the citizens to be aware of their private good and to provide a constructive contribution to society. Autonomy is strengthened on the individual level by civic virtue through enlarging the amount of information, and thus the options, open to the individual. On a societal level, autonomy needs the majority of citizens to possess some amount of civic virtue. Without civic virtue, the type of society that makes autonomy possible would not be able to function.

In this thesis, autonomy will be treated as the core concept of liberalism. There are many varieties of liberal political theory and it would exceed my ability to answer my research question if I were to take them all into account, so I will define liberalism as ‘that theory that tries to maximize autonomy in the individual’. The individual here will be seen as part of some sort of society, state or national community, so I will use the terms individual, person and citizen interchangeably. The *good* citizen, though, is the citizen (or individual, or person) possessing civic virtue.

I will not pretend to give an exhaustive overview of everything that has been written on autonomy and (civic) virtue. The history of both concepts indeed goes back for more than two thousand years and no single work will probably will be extensive enough to cover either of them. My hope in this thesis is to provide something like a bridge between two valuable but often competing ideas and to show that one does not

always need to choose between freedom and virtue. And that hope, I expect, will prove ambitious enough.

CIVIC VIRTUE

In this chapter, I will define the concept of civic virtue as it is employed in the chapters to come. An account of civic virtue, however, cannot do without explaining the nature of virtue itself.

Nature of virtue

The concept of virtue is derived from the classic Greek word for excellence, *arete*.[7] Any person who excels in a certain activity, or who performs exceptionally well in some occupation or craft, can be said to possess some form of excellence. Someone who runs a marathon in record time, for example, would be showing the 'excellence of his legs'. Or a capable mathematician might be said to exercise some form of excellence of the mind. The classic definition of *arete* is 'doing best what it is supposed to do', it is excellence of any kind. This original concept of excellence should not be confused with that of virtue which we use today.

Under the influence of translations of the work of Aristotle, the word *arete* and the word 'virtue' have often been used as synonyms. Virtue, however, is a more specific form of *arete*: not just any excellence but *moral* excellence. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle describes those forms of *arete* which are excellences of character or of intellect. These specific excellences are what we now call 'virtues'. Virtues are those qualities in a person's character and mind which are good to possess. Virtue is ethical correctness; it is shown in acts and thoughts that satisfy the demands of morality. An individual who shows virtue in his actions, is acting in a way that is considered 'good'.

As a quality of character, virtue is not found in a single action or thought. It is a constant influence of one's character on their thoughts and feelings. Virtue is a *disposition* of character or intellect to think, act and feel in a certain manner. The virtue is a 'blueprint' for an individual for what to do in given situations: the good action or thought is always the preferred option for the possessor of virtue. A courageous person, for instance, is inclined to act bravely in most situations that would make other men run in fear. Most situations, since a disposition does not mean that the courageous person will always show courage. Even the bravest man can

[7] Via the Latin word *virtus*. In Ancient Rome, *virtus* referred to those qualities which were supposed good for a man (*vir* = man) to possess.

eventually be overwhelmed by fear, just like the wisest man can sometimes be mistaken. But in the end, success matters for virtue: one cannot argue that the man who *wants* to share his possessions with others but almost always fails to do so is a generous man. Success in doing virtuous acts is a kind of 'measure' for virtue; we can only speak of a virtuous man when he has shown virtue in his life. The only way one shows virtue is by not only being disposed to, but also actually doing the virtuous act.

Possessing virtue means being motivated by our character to perform a certain action or to think in a certain way. How strongly we are motivated can say something about the amount of virtue we have. Rosalind Hursthouse provides an excellent overview of the differences and similarities between two sides of a discussion on this subject; the ideas of Aristotle and Kant.[8] According to Aristotle, the man who performs a virtuous action contrary to his desires does not show full virtue. The fully virtuous person is the one whose reason and desires are in harmony, who knows *and* desires to act virtuous. The usual reading of Kant leads us to a similar distinction with the contrary conclusion: the person who finds it easy to do the right thing, because it was what he wanted to do anyway, has less moral worth than the other person for whom it is difficult, but succeeds with effort.[9] Both Aristotle and Kant seem to present valid points from our common sense-morality: the charitable giver who gives happily to others presents more moral worth in the Aristotelian sense, and Kant's view seems to apply more to the courageous man "who wants to run away but does not".[10]

The answer to the motivation dilemma is in the origin of what makes it easy or difficult for a person to do virtuous acts. Philippa Foot argues that whether or not that origin lies in our character is key. When a person finds it difficult to do what virtue requires because there is something in his character that tells him otherwise (e.g. self interest), he is showing less than full virtue. But if a man is hindered by difficulties outside of his character and still manages to do what is virtuous, that man is tested and has succeeded, showing more virtue.[11] Someone who is clouded by troubles of his own, for example, and still manages to act charitably towards others, cannot be said to be showing any defect regarding the virtue of charity. What makes us possess a virtue to the fullest extent lies completely in our character. When we possess the

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[8] The chapter 'Aristotle and Kant' in Hursthouse, R. (1999), *On Virtue Ethics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

[9] Hursthouse (1999), pp. 93-94.

[10] Ibid., p. 95.

[11] Foot, P. (1978), Virtues and Vices, (Oxford: Blackwell), pp. 11-12.

virtue, we will desire to act in accordance with that virtue. When we encounter obstacles on our path towards virtuous action, we have only the possibility to show more virtue of character.

People can come to possess virtues in different ways. Every person is born with the potential to develop certain dispositions; some of them (hopefully) are potentially virtues.[12] Dispositions in a young child, however, still have to be fostered by the right instructions of his parents. But even those who are not born with a natural potential for the virtues can make them their own through rearing and education. Through the influence of our family, our friends and our teachers we can be taught the dispositions that lead to possessing virtue.

Not only children can acquire new virtues. Our characters can change throughout our lives, existing dispositions can whither away and new virtues can be acquired. The obtaining of virtues works in an interesting circular fashion: by doing what is good we gradually become virtuous, and when we are virtuous it is more natural for us to do what is good. Aristotle provides a clear example for the case of courage: "for by being habituated to despise things that are fearful and to stand our ground against them we become brave, and it is when we have become so that we shall be most able to stand our ground against them".[13]

Learning virtue, then, is a matter of performing virtuous acts. But, one may ask, why do we need virtue when we are already able to perform virtuous acts, are we not virtuous already? Aristotle's answer is in my opinion not entirely convincing: we may be able to do virtuous acts by chance or with the help of others, but possessing virtue requires the right character, knowledge and choice.[14] It is true that the individual who does a virtuous act is not necessarily a possessor of virtue, but this does not yet tell us why we should value virtue in stead of just the virtuous acts. In line with Aristotle's answer, however, we can see why even the valuing of only the virtuous acts leads us to valuing of virtue itself: the individual who does not possess virtue does virtuous acts only by chance or with help of others, while the possessor of virtue has a stable character which leads him to act virtuously in most situations. Doing virtuous acts, then, gradually makes us possessor of virtue, which makes it easier and more common for us to do virtuous acts.

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[12] What Aristotle calls 'natural virtue', the natural inclination to do good acts without deliberation, an undeveloped form of full virtue.

[13] Aristotle (2009), 1104b1-3.

[14] Ibid., 1104b22-23, 1104b28-33.

What is it about virtue that we find valuable? A Kantian approach would lead us to conclude that virtue is valuable for making us do the right thing *because it is right*, because it is our duty to do so. But what is in my opinion genuinely valuable about virtue is that *the right thing is done*. Virtue stimulates people to act in a good way, that they do so for the right reasons is part of the definition of virtue itself: the virtuous individual will want to do the virtuous act because it fits his idea of the good to do so. But if we look past the individual, what matters for the rest of the world is the effect of virtue. And that effect is the action, not the reason. The value of virtue in this sense is instrumental, not intrinsic. To put it another way, what makes virtue valuable is its benefit to the whole community.[15] A violinist might be motivated by either musical virtue or just by a desire for fame, but what is valuable is his contribution to the musical community and maybe even the wider community. This last characteristic is particularly relevant for a specific kind of virtue: the virtue of citizens, civic virtue.

Civic virtue

To summarize, the concept of virtue I employ is the following: virtue is a disposition of character or mind to think or act in the morally right way, towards the right things, at the right time, while feeling the right feelings. Having established the nature of virtue, what makes virtue *civic*? Civic virtue is that part of virtue that relates to the connection between citizen and state, or maybe less formal, between citizen and (national/local) community. As virtue, civic virtue is the way that good citizens should behave, the appropriate role for a citizen in society. According to Shelley Burtt, civic virtue is characterized by the "disposition to further public over private good in action and deliberation".[16] Civic virtue, thus, is that part of virtue that makes one forgo one's own and other people's interest on behalf of his community. The emphasis is on public interest, the value of civic virtue is in the fact that it benefits or intends to benefit the wider community.

Virtue is often attached to roles: the good soldier shows courage, the teacher is wise and hard work and loyalty are valuable for an employee. In the same fashion, civic virtue is attached to the role of citizen, and tells us how a good citizen should act

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[15] MacIntyre, A. (1981), *After Virtue*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press), p.178, and Dagger, R. (1997), *Civic Virtues: Rights, Citizenship, and Republican Liberalism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 14.

[16] Burtt, S. (1999), 'The Good Citizen's Psyche: On the Psychology of Civic Virtue', *Polity*, 23 (1): pp. 23-38, p. 24.

and think.[17] In the mind, civic virtue fosters a sense of attachment to and responsibility for the community of which the citizen is a part. In his actions, following the definition above, the good citizen is prone to giving priority to public rather than private good where they are conflicting. To illustrate, a society containing no person other than citizens possessing civic virtue would have a population that actively supports the national community, and a total lack of corruption and other public good-damaging activities other than those resulting from unintended effects.

Civic virtue has traditionally been a subject covered by republican authors. In the traditional republican conception of civic virtue there is an addition to the 'furthering public good'-element discussed above. For republicans, citizens are independent and under the rule of law. Being a citizen means to rule and to be ruled in turn.[18] An individual completely dependent upon another person is not capable of making genuine decisions and therefore not capable to rule. A society that aims for good citizens creates a set of laws that are binding for rulers and the ruled alike, to avoid personal dependence and to foster liberty in its citizens.

Although liberalism has often been treated as void of, or even hostile to, virtue, William Galston argues that liberalism is just as dependent as other theories upon virtues of character. In fact, "the viability of liberal society depends on its ability to engender a virtuous citizenry."[19] Apart from a set of general, societal, and economic virtues, he distinguishes a set of liberal political virtues for citizens and leaders. Every political community, Galston argues, needs courage, law-abidingness and loyalty in its citizens.[20] Liberal society, however, needs a number of other virtues to function properly: liberal citizens should (1) be capable to discern and to respect rights of others, (2) have the capacity to discern the talent and character of candidates vying for office and (3) be able to evaluate their performance, (4) pose moderate demands, and (5) be self-disciplined enough to accept painful but necessary measures.[21] This extensive set of virtues need not be present completely in every citizen, of course. The specific characteristics of liberal society ask for these virtues to be present in *most* citizens to keep the liberal democracy intact.

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[17] Dagger (1997), p. 13.

[18] Ibid., p. 15.

[19] Galston, W. A. (1988), 'Liberal Virtues', *American Political Science Review,* 82 (4): pp. 1277-1290, p. 1279.

[20] Ibid*.,* pp. 1281-1282.

[21] Ibid., p. 1283.

These liberal dispositions seem to be considerably less substantive than classical virtues like courage, wisdom and virtue. Although Galston has formulated the liberal virtues as capacities, they still have to be brought into practice to make liberal society work. When they are brought into practice, the citizen possessing these virtues is disposed to act in such a way a liberal society needs him to act: he respects his fellow citizens, he makes a well-thought choice at every election and he is realistic about what a government can and cannot do. All these virtues (respect, evaluation, self-discipline, etc.) can be acquired through doing what a good citizen is supposed to do, and gradually it becomes easier for the individual to act in these ways as he becomes a good citizen himself. The greatest difference with the classical virtues, though, is that these liberal virtues have a specific object: those acts and statements in the public sphere. Whether the citizen is self-disciplined or poses moderate demands at home makes no difference for these virtues, as long as he does so in the public domain. This difference is what makes this liberal set of virtues specifically *civic*.

Like the other virtues, civic virtue has to be taught or developed to be present in citizens. Since the state has a special interest in the presence of civic virtue in society, every young citizen is required to attend school, at which they receive (among others) civic education. By teaching children about the country's history, geography and political system and having them practice skills like writing and debating, the state tries to foster an active, responsible and independent citizenry. Not every citizen possesses civic virtue, however, and not every citizen is virtuous to the same degree. People can gain more virtue, as we have seen, by practicing the virtue. Citizens can learn to be good citizens through all sorts of organizations and communities. Apart from civic education, the amount of civic virtue citizens acquire is for a great deal a matter of their own interest and choice. There are, however, ways for a state to actively promote civic virtue in its citizens. By obligating people to vote or to perform jury duty, for example, they are required to do what a good citizen is supposed to do. When an individual does this kind of actions often enough, following Aristotle's logic, he will learn to be a good citizen and make virtuous action his own.

Like all virtues, civic virtue is not only concerned with the right state of mind but also with right action. It is the virtue that makes us actively further the common good. Activities that further the common good can be activities of any kind that sustain or improve the community: obeying the law, voting, doing volunteer work, organizing neighborhood activities, becoming active in public or civil organizations or becoming active in politics. As these examples demonstrate, not every citizen can

practice civic virtue to the fullest extent. Every citizen can obey the law, vote, and do some kind of volunteer work. But it is simply not possible, nor in the public interest, for every citizen to pursue a political life. This possibility, however, is already excluded by the definition of civic virtue: the good citizen is disposed to further public over private good, he will do what is in the common interest to do. The good citizen, then, will in general lead his own life, pursuing his private good, and will, at the moment it is required, act for the public good. At the time of elections, for example, he will head to the elections office to cast his vote. And when the good citizen sees there is a lack of local politicians and regards himself able to fill such a position, he will run for office because it is in the common good to do so. The citizen who runs for office when there is an abundance of capable politicians, though, is pursuing his private good and is not necessarily showing civic virtue. There is no reason, seen from the public good perspective, to try and fill a position here, while he might be of more 'use' to the community in another place.

Possessing civic virtue, it is important to note, does not mean completely giving up one's private good in order to pursue the public interest. Virtue is concerned with feeling the right feelings and doing the right action, in the right amount, towards the right persons and at the right time. A person giving away all his money to people who do not really need it, to such an extent that he and his family have trouble making ends meet, can hardly be said to possess the virtue of liberality. The same holds for civic virtue; the good citizen does what he can for the community, at the time and place where it is most needed. An individual who already volunteers at a food bank, helps out at the school of his kids and supports the campaign of someone running for mayor, can hardly be expected to organize the neighborhood barbecue. Like the other virtues, civic virtue is the mean between to extremes;[22] in this case doing too much or too little for the public good. Possessing civic virtue, then, means giving priority to public over private good to the proper extent, to act in the common interest without losing sight on what is good for oneself.

Civic virtue, to conclude, is a *set* of virtues aimed at a specific object: the common good. The common good, however, is an ambiguous term more often used in politics than in science. It can refer to the good of all the citizens of the political community, of the institutions in it or maybe even to the fulfillment of some predefined goal. Some might argue the common good is simply that what the majority

[22] Aristotle (2009), 1108b11-18.

of citizens wants it to be. In any case, I do not believe there is an objective good that applies to all individuals (I will cover this more extensively in chapter 3). If there is no such thing, the common good must be either the aggregate of all individual goods or something that is in the interest of everyone (or most citizens) in the community. The state and its institutions seem to be of this second kind: states are a common effort made by all citizens that offer protection, a structured economy and maybe even social security. Over the whole, citizens are united in states because it offers them more perspectives on a comfortable life. This might lead us to conclude that the common good is (among others) furthered through protecting the stability and health of the state and its institutions.

This argument, however, would lead us to conclusions we will find difficult to support: when it is in the common good to support the state, every dictatorship is in its right to promote civic virtue in its citizens and call upon them to reinforce the state and thus promote the common good. Whether from ideological difference or by some other reason, we tend to talk about dictatorships in terms of coercion, not of virtue. When we see images of cheering citizens in North Korea, for example, we think of people forced by the regime or at least afraid for some reason. Of course this image is somewhat exaggerated, but it serves to demonstrate the kind of society that could be upheld by our preliminary definition of the common good. This kind of dictatorship, however, is not in the interest of the majority of the community as stated above. A minority has the power and benefits from the state, while the greater part of the community would probably be better off if there was a different state or even no state at all. Following this logic, preserving the state can only be said to be in the common good when most citizens would be worse off if the state were non-existent. In a liberal democracy, for example, chosen politicians are expected to act in the common interest and held accountable if they fail to do so. And even if the state would lack any positive effects for one group, the liberal state still grants people a right to exit the country when they want. The common good, then, is that what promotes the good of most citizens. Supporting and furthering the good of the state and its institutions can be a part of the common good, but only if the state promotes the good of most citizens. I will exclude in advance a utilitarian conception that allows the promotion of the good of many, while completely neglecting or even harming those of a minority. Although this interpretation might fit the definition provided here, it is excluded by the concept introduced in next chapter: the concept of autonomy. I will return to civic virtue and the common good in the third chapter of this thesis.

AUTONOMY

At first glance, civic virtue and autonomy seem to turn our attention in different directions. The concept of civic virtue focuses on the community, while autonomy is concerned with the individual. This competition between these concepts has become clear in the debate between liberals and communitarians. Having introduced the concept of virtue in the last chapter, I will focus my attention here on the concept of autonomy. Liberals value autonomy as an important capacity that allows individuals to take control of their life and make decisions based on what is valuable to them. Communitarians, on the other hand, criticize the liberal conception as being based upon an erroneous view of human beings and as creating a language of distance between people. The concept of autonomy, communitarians argue, is based on an individualized view of people; it ignores the fact that every human being is connected in a great number of ways to his family, his community and his culture. At the same time, communitarians view the liberal influence and the corresponding influence of the concept of autonomy as creating an isolated image of the individual. It is said that by constantly appealing to autonomy and to rights people hold against each other, the liberal language leads to estrangement, it is said. In this chapter, I will argue that valuing autonomy does not lead to a view of the individual without bonds to his surroundings and that a realistic view of the individual leads to a necessarily restricted amount of options, but not of autonomy.

Personal autonomy is the realized capacity of an individual to decide independently on how to live his life. It is a realized capacity, for a person who is capable of making his own choices but fails to do so is not leading an autonomous life. When a person is autonomous, he is free to make choices as he sees fit, without any external influences on this decision caused by other individuals. The choices made and the opinions held by an autonomous individual might be structured along the lines of certain belief structures (like religions), or might even seem completely random: as long as the decisions were his own, we can consider him autonomous. To emphasize, autonomy not only lies in visible actions but maybe even more so in the opinions individuals hold. When an individual is free to act, but is constantly indoctrinated to think in a certain way, his autonomy is at least severely limited. Since our ideas precede our actions, we need to be able to form our own conception of the good in our mind to be autonomous.

A matter of difference between philosophers is the scale of autonomy they employ as the focus of attention. While some scholars judge separate decisions as being autonomous or not,[23] I will focus on the question of whether a person's life as a whole can be autonomous. In my opinion, autonomy is a capacity that can be possessed in a certain degree, it is not a question of 'being or not being autonomous', but of 'to what extent' someone is autonomous. A simple evaluation of whether or not someone made a decision solely based on his own uninfluenced opinion is irrelevant. What matters for the liberal is that the individual chooses a life he finds valuable, not that every single decision he made was completely autonomous. In the words of David Archard:

> "A life is autonomous if, taken as a whole and in the main, its pattern and direction can be attributed to deliberate and conscientious choices on the part of the individual."[24]

Autonomy requires choice, but it says nothing about what choices should be made. An individual might even choose not to make decisions about his life, following whatever comes on his path. This passive person might, without choosing so, go to a school of his parents' choice, marry the first partner that loves him enough, accept the first job offered to him and accept every (government) measure that affects him without any effort to change it. This individual's life is completely led by external influences. What matters is that the individual constantly has the capacity and the power to choose otherwise. An individual in liberal states always has the freedom to join or form groups with ideas that are to some extent illiberal (within the boundaries of the law), as long as he is just as free to leave this group.[25]

We do not come into this world as autonomous individuals. To become rational independent choosers, we need our family, our teachers and our society to teach us to evaluate our lives and make decisions about how we would like to live our lives. The 'independent choice' that an autonomous individual is capable of, then, is not the

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[23] See for example: O'Neill, O. (1992), 'Autonomy, coherence and independence', in: Milligan, D. and Watts Miller, W. *Liberalism, citizenship and autonomy*, (Aldershot: Avebury), pp. 203-222.

[24] Archard, D. (1992), 'Autonomy, character and situation', in: Milligan, D. and Watts Miller, W. *Liberalism, citizenship and autonomy*, (Aldershot: Avebury), pp. 157-170, p. 158.

[25] I will not go as far as Chandran Kukathas to suggest that the right to opt out is the *only* protection we need against illiberal communities, although he does make an interesting point. See: Kukathas, C. (2003), *The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

choice of an individual who is unattached from society and other individuals. Autonomy is a quality set in a social context, with the influences of society, culture, institutions and so on.[26] Independence in this context means that the choice is ultimately up to the individual, who can be open to influences but ultimately decides for himself on how to live his life. According to Alasdair MacIntyre, this last quality is what sets us apart from other intelligent animals. He argues that the difference in rationality between humans and other animals is on a scale or a spectrum. The difference between a dolphin or a chimpanzee and a human infant might not be very substantial, but at a certain point in the upbringing of the child, it grows dramatically. At that point, the human being becomes able to step back from his reasons for action, evaluate them and eventually change those reasons.[27] While other intelligent animals also have reasons for their actions (e.g. playing, caring for family, or even coordinated hunting), taking distance from our reasons, evaluating their quality, is makes us different. In other words, autonomy is what sets us apart from other intelligent animals, what makes the human kind unique.

Limited choice

No person can be completely autonomous, at least not in the sense that they can choose between unlimited options and without any external influence. As argued above, autonomy is a capacity which we can possess to a greater or a lesser degree. Everyone has certain involuntary obligations and influences in his life which are difficult or impossible to change. These are what David Archard calls "the facts of situation and character".[28] Each individual is situated in a way that is unique for that person. We are born to certain parents, receive certain biological endowments and grow up with certain people around us in our family, neighborhood and society. Our lives play out in different places in the world and in certain periods in history. These variables together create the situation of an individual, they influence to a significant amount the opinions we hold and the options that are open to us.

In addition to the external influences of situation, the amount of options that are open to us are also limited by our character. Every person has a character that is unique to them and that influences his opinions and actions. A character consists of

[26] Young, R. (1986), *Personal Autonomy: Beyond Negative and Positive Liberty*, (London: Croom Helm), p. 7.

[27] MacIntyre, A. (1999), *Dependent Rational Animals,* (Chicago, IL: Open Court), pp. 56-57.

[28] Archard (1992), p. 158.

values and principles, desires, beliefs and talents.[29] Like our situation, our character partly decides what possibilities we have and what paths we are likely to take. A person who values teamwork and deliberating and has a talent for leadership, for example, is less likely to become a laboratory researcher than a person who likes to work alone and has a getting-things-done mentality. Our character, however, can change over time. An individual might even try to actively alter his character,[30] although this is often a process that requires significant effort. As we have seen in previous chapter, for example, an individual can acquire a virtue by acting virtuous over and over again, by making an effort he can gradually gain a different disposition of character. But until we try to change them, our situation and character limit our choice in a significant way. The options that are open to us make up the subject of our autonomous choice.

The facts of situation and character as described here limit our choices like a 'framework' within which autonomy is exercised. But, one can ask, how much autonomy is left? To what extent does this framework leave us enough room to make genuine choices about our lives? Andrew Mason partly answers this question when discussing the connection between identification with a community and personal autonomy. He asks whether it is possible for an individual to identify fully with a community and still be autonomous.[31] A person who fully identifies with a community shares the goals of that community and might even attach the well-being of the community to his own well-being. That individual might not be able to stand back from the community's practices and make a genuine decision whether or not to participate in them. Mason thinks he can, although gradually. We cannot simply decide to question and alter all our beliefs in one moment, but we might be able to critically view each of our beliefs, one at a time.[32] The problem with this suggestion is that changing our beliefs one at a time is impossible for roughly the same reason that we cannot change them all at once; our beliefs are interconnected and partly define our self-image. We cannot change all our beliefs at once since it would not fit our idea of who we are. At the same time, we cannot change one belief without (partly) changing others: we cannot alter our ideas about what individuals owe to each other,

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[29] Archard (1992), pp. 158-159.

[30] Ibid., p. 159.

[31] Mason, A. (1992), 'Personal autonomy and identification with a community', in: Milligan, D. and Watts Miller, W. *Liberalism, citizenship and autonomy*, (Aldershot: Avebury), pp. 171-186.

[32] Ibid., p. 181.

for example, without changing the way we think about individuals or about society. Still, this need not be a problem. I think a person can gradually change his beliefs, be it not one at a time but groups of interconnected beliefs, step by step.

Although I partly agree with Mason on the capacity of individuals to step back from their community and change their beliefs, I do believe there is a certain point of identification with a community beyond which the individual loses the capacity to be autonomous. When the identification of an individual with a community is truly complete, and that person cannot see himself as anything other than part of that community, the amount of autonomy in that person will be close to none. True, the individual might have joined the community out of his free will and might even be constantly endorsing the community's ends. It might even be impossible for others to see the difference between those individuals autonomously supporting the community through and through, and those individuals that have been indoctrinated to such an extent that they have lost their autonomous choice. Although this is a difficult point in practice, it is important to note that not every individual stays fully autonomous when identifying with a community. For some, only the external influence of other individuals might grant them the ability to stand back from their beliefs and change their path of life. For most, however, Mason's argument will do just fine.

Like the identification with a community, situation and character limit and partly define our choices. Following Mason's argument, an individual cannot decide to change his whole character or situation at once. Some facts about our situation cannot even be changed at all; we cannot alter our biological endowments, for example. Relevant for autonomy is that the individual, in the end, is capable of choosing between a sufficient range of options.[33] This requires two things of our situation and character. First, their limitations should leave open enough options for the individual to make genuine choices about how to live their lives. The second requirement is that individuals are *capable* of choosing. Only if our situation and character allow us to form opinions and to act upon them can we be considered autonomous persons.

While Archard and Mason treat our surroundings as limitations or possible dangers to autonomy, Will Kymlicka argues that the culture provided by our community is actually the *source* of autonomy. Every time we face a choice, our

[33] Mason (1992), p. 182.

history, our traditions and our language provide us with options.[34] In deciding which course of action to take, Kymlicka argues, we use our culture to evaluate the options, to attach ideas and values to them. Only when culture reveals the 'true meaning' of the alternatives, we can make intelligent judgments about them. Without our culture, then, we could have all the options in the world open to us, but have no way of deciding which course of action to take.

In the line of argument presented in this thesis, Kymlicka's account of autonomy is useful in defining the nature of the relationship between those concepts prior to autonomy (culture, situation and character partly overlap) and autonomy itself. It is essential to recognize that we never have limitless possibilities in life, and that defining autonomy in this way would not be particularly useful. Instead, our culture and our situation and character define which *options* are open to our autonomous evaluation and choice. In this evaluation and choice, as we have seen, our autonomy is influenced by those concepts prior to it. This influence, however, should not be regarded as a limitation of our autonomy. What would there be left without these influences? Without our biological endowments, our culture, our rearing, our beliefs and our virtues, there would remain nothing left to make a genuine choice. All these factors contribute to our ability to make an autonomous choice, without them we would be merely calculating robots, in which one input would lead to the same result for every human being. Autonomy is open to a variety of influences, but all these influences together make our choices uniquely our own. In this sense, culture, situation and character are a condition rather than a limitation of autonomy.

But what now, exactly, *is* autonomy? Is it an emotion, a talent, a desire or maybe a principle? It is none of these, I will argue: it is a disposition of character. Autonomy has the same characteristics as the virtues and is a, or maybe even *the*, liberal virtue.

Autonomy as a liberal virtue

Let us recapitulate the characteristics of autonomy. No man is born with full-grown autonomy; it is a capacity which we can develop as we grow up. We need those around us to foster autonomy in our character, to teach us how to make our own choices about our beliefs and opinions. The capacity of making choices becomes autonomy when this capacity is realized, when the individual is making independent choices about how he wants to live his life. Finally, autonomy remains fairly constant

[34] Kymlicka, W. (1995), *Multicultural Citizenship*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 83.

throughout our lives. Once we have developed the capacity we do not suddenly stop being autonomous, although we might 'gain or lose' little bits of autonomy through time.

Since autonomy is the *realized* capacity to make choices about our lives, we can say that an individual is autonomous when he, in the main, is making his own decisions in his life. In other words, the autonomous individual's standard mode of operating is to make independent choices in mind and deed. Every situation an individual encounters in his life will call upon him to make judgments and to act in one way or another. An autonomous individual will in most situations look inward, evaluate the situation and decide on the course of action to take. The autonomous individual, then, has the disposition to make up his own mind and choose his own path of life.

In all liberal theories, even those theories that claim to be value-neutral (in the sense of making no judgments about the good life), great value is placed in the autonomy of individuals. Liberal theory has defended many forms of government and state, but in none of those can anyone other than the individual himself make decisions about his life. The right of the individual to form and live by his own beliefs is indispensable in liberal states. The state is more than just a passive bystander as its citizens lead autonomous lives: since autonomy is valuable for every individual in liberal theory, it is the duty of the state to help its citizens to become and to remain autonomous. The liberal state has the duty to provide public education which produces critical and independent individuals. These individuals become able to make independent choices about their lives and desire to do so independently, for they know of no reason to let others make choices for them. As autonomy is a disposition that is considered morally good in liberal states, and it shares the characteristics of the virtues, I will categorize autonomy as a liberal virtue.

As a virtue, autonomy resembles the Aristotelian virtue of practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Practical wisdom is "a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man".[35] Like autonomy, this virtue is concerned with deliberating by the individual about courses of action. The most obvious difference with autonomy, however, lies in the outcome of deliberation. Where the emphasis of autonomy lies on independent reasoning and decision making,

[35] Aristotle (2009), 1140b4-6.

practical wisdom is "concerned with things just and noble and good for man".[36] *Phronesis* thus is about making the right decision, about choosing that option which is (objectively) good for man. Liberal autonomy does not judge the outcome and might be seen as a 'less demanding' form of practical wisdom. The autonomous man does not necessarily possess the virtue of practical wisdom, but the man who has practical wisdom is autonomous.

Aristotle makes a clear distinction between moral virtues and intellectual virtues. Moral virtues are dispositions of character, the well-known virtues like courage, liberality and temperance. Practical wisdom, however, is an intellectual virtue, a disposition of the reasoning mind. This distinction Aristotle makes is a consequence of ancient Greek psychology, in which reason and character are strictly separate concepts. In modern thought, however, we see those elements of the human mind as interconnected. Both reason and character influence each other and every decision we make; our capacities for reasoning partly define who we are and how we perceive the world, our character sometimes makes us rationalize what reason alone would not have accepted. For example, religion has its basis in one's beliefs, but also employs reason to create opinions about the world. Reason alone might offer no reason for religious beliefs whatsoever, while the beliefs in our character might not all be capable with daily life in our society. A man who would strictly separate his beliefs and his reason would suffer serious internal conflict between both 'parts of his mind', one leading him towards emotionless calculating and the other (for example) towards religious fanaticism.

This interconnectedness between reason and character is also true for the virtue of autonomy. I have defined the virtue as a disposition of character, while it has a resemblance on the intellectual virtue of *phronesis*. In the first place, autonomy produces a character that is prone to independent evaluation and making the decisions that follow. At the same time, autonomy still requires a decent amount of reasoning to choose the option that is most likely to satisfy the individual's conception of the good life. In this sense, one might argue that autonomy is 'more demanding' than practical wisdom, for it places demands on character as well as on intellect.

Practical wisdom is only of use to those who possess virtue.[37] Since this virtue is concerned with being disposed to choose the right action, one must at least possess

[36] Aristotle (2009), 1143b22-23.

[37] Ibid., 1143b30.

some other virtue to be inclined to perform that right action. Even more so, without other virtue, not only acting but also understanding the right action is difficult or impossible. Rosalind Hursthouse explains this issue in *On Virtue Ethics*: while for the virtuous individual it might seem entirely acceptable to act contrary to one's own interest to help someone or to keep a promise, or to risk one's own life to save a great piece of art, "[t]o the vicious, the virtuous will seem reckless, foolishly self-denying, unrealistically obsessive".[38] To understand virtuous action and to consider it an option, means possessing at least a minimal amount of this virtue.

As I have argued in the previous chapter, virtue requires the individual to feel the right emotions towards the right objects. The temperate man, for example, does not feel the desire to eat more than he needs or to consume exaggerated luxurious products. And the generous man does not feel regret when he shares his possessions with those who need it, he is happy to give and gives for the sake of others alone. The correct emotion to feel when thinking and acting autonomous is less obvious, however. Autonomy involves an independent view of one's own life and making independent decisions about that life. An autonomous individual shapes his own ideas of the good and is not led by what other people say or think. This might lead us to think that the absence of shame is the correct 'emotion' to feel, for shame is that emotion that prevents us from choosing certain courses of action out of fear for what other people think. Isn't the shameless person free from these considerations? Can't we consider the shameless man as autonomous? No we cannot, for two reasons. First, it is completely possible for the autonomous individual to value others' opinions and still make autonomous decisions. The individual might feel shame in some cases because he values his reputation, for example, this might limit the options open to him, but they are limited by the individual's own ideas of the good. Second, shame is only felt in relation to a certain class of actions, namely those actions which in a society are considered bad or 'dishonorable' to do.[39] Shamelessness is thus only applicable on bad actions, not on the endless range of thoughts and actions autonomy covers. The absence of shame, then, is not the correct emotion to feel when doing virtuous acts.

Autonomy is also not characterized by a feeling of distrust towards other people's intentions or capacities. The autonomous individual can be as social as one

[38] Hursthouse (1999), p. 130.

[39] Aristotle (2009), 1128b12.

can be, gathering all the advice and ideas from other people about how one could live his life. What matters for autonomy is that in the end, the individual is the one who makes up his mind and independently decides what he wants to do. To make this independent decision, however, the individual needs to be in a certain state of mind. An individual needs both a certain level of *self-reliance* and of *self-confidence* to be autonomous. The individual needs to be self-reliant to that extent that he trusts in his own capacity to make decisions. This level of self-reliance, to be sure, does not exclude the reliance on others for opinions or advice. A state of self-confidence is necessary for the individual because he needs to be able to at least trust in his own judgment to make up his mind and make decisions.

The autonomous individual should not be too much, nor too little self-reliant and self-confident. A lack of one of these concepts will damage his capacity to autonomous, an excess will lead to foolish decisions or the ignoring of useful advice. The individual with the mean of both states of mind is capable of forming his own beliefs and acting upon them, and the autonomous individual will do this because he desires it. The autonomous individual places value in independence, and being an independent chooser is what contributes to his happiness. Not a distance between him and other people, not the result of the choice he makes, but the simple fact that he makes an independent choice is what the autonomous individual desires and what makes him feel good.

In this chapter I have argued that the liberal conception of autonomy actually is a conception of a liberal virtue. Autonomy is a disposition of character which liberals value, which they seek to maximize in people and which people can possess to a greater or a lesser extent. As a consequence, liberals cannot be said to be completely value-neutral or be completely neutral towards ways of life. The coming chapters will look into the relationship between the virtues in general, and civic virtue and autonomy in particular. We will see whether these concepts are as distant as discussions between liberals and communitarians have made them seem to be, and whether the classification of autonomy as a virtue makes any difference for this relationship.

COHESION OF THE VIRTUES IN GENERAL

I have argued that both civic virtue and autonomy are types of virtue: the first is a single virtue pertaining to the individual; the second is a set of virtues concerning the relationship between the individual and the community. Whereas the purpose of this thesis is to assess the relationship between these concepts, the first concern now is too look into the connection of the virtues in general. If there are reasons to assume that virtues require each other (or exclude each other, for that matter), this might prove useful in defining the relationship between civic virtue and the virtue of autonomy.

We have seen in previous chapter that, according to Aristotle, virtue and practical wisdom cannot exist without each other. Although this thesis places emphasis on autonomy rather than practical wisdom to guide our choices, an assessment of the Aristotelian concept can provide a good insight in whether or not there is something like a 'unity of the virtues'. The answer for Aristotle starts with the necessary relation between virtue and practical wisdom. A person might have the natural disposition to be amiable, but without the guidance of practical wisdom the man could use this quality to commit crimes by swindling people. Practical wisdom is the intellectual virtue which makes our dispositions into virtues. At the same time, without virtue we cannot possess practical wisdom, because we need virtue to know what is virtuous and practical wisdom to know where, when and to whom to apply it. This leads Aristotle to deny the possibility that a man possesses one virtue but has not yet acquired another: "This is possible in respect of the natural virtues, but not in respect of which a man is called without qualification good; for with the presence of the one quality, practical wisdom, will be given all the virtues."[40]

However, the view that possession of practical wisdom necessarily means possession of all virtues leads to a problem. Practical wisdom is the moral knowledge the virtuous man has that leads him to do the good thing. Being virtuous, this man *desires* to do the good thing and feels no urge to act otherwise. But, Elizabeth Telfer asks, what is the difference between the man who practices self-restraint and the man who is virtuous?[41] The man who controls himself completely does indeed act in the same fashion as the virtuous man would, but the difference in Aristotle's view lies in

[40] Aristotle (2009), 1144b36-1145a1

[41] Telfer, E. (1990), 'The Unity of the Moral Virtues in Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics" ', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* New Series, 90, pp. 35-48, p. 38.

the motivation. The virtuous man does the right thing because he desires to do so, the self-controlled man has other - and maybe even vicious - desires that he represses to do what he ought to. But since the man who practices self-restraint knows what it is to do the right thing and is also capable of acting this way, there is no real difference between practical wisdom and self-control in an intellectual sense.[42]

Following this account, the possession of practical wisdom cannot be said to require possession of all the virtues, since it (or an intellectual equivalent of it) is compatible with certain vicious desires. A man who knows perfectly well what it is to do the right thing, for example, can secretly desire to steal money or to cheat on his wife. This man does everything like the virtuous man would, but does not possess full virtue. Since practical wisdom means that the individual is aware of the good life and those things that lead to it, it can at best be argued that possession of practical wisdom will *eventually* lead to the acquisition of all the virtues.[43] It is thus not impossible for an individual to possess some, but not all of the virtues at one point.

Although people might not necessarily possess multiple or all virtues at once, we generally believe this is the case. In daily life, Hursthouse argues, we expect the virtues to form a sort of unity.[44] When we hear of a courageous man who turns out to be a rapist, we are puzzled; when we discover that an agreeable and honest person is violent towards his family, we are astonished and confused. If we expected that a truly brave or a genuinely agreeable person could also be cruel in his character, there would be no reason for astonishment. Instead, Hursthouse argues, we believe in a 'weak unity of the virtues'.[45] When an individual possesses one virtue, he must have the other virtues at least in some degree. Possessing the virtues is not an all-or-nothing matter, but not one of single, completely distinct virtues either.

In contrast to the weak unity thesis as stated above, we can think of real or imagined characters that possess one or multiple virtues, but at the same time clearly portray a vice of some kind. We might expect all dispositions in someone to be either 'good' or 'bad', but a combination of both is very much possible. The tragic heroes of Shakespeare, for example, are for the greater part virtuous characters. At some point in their story, however, it becomes obvious that they possess one major flaw in their character which eventually leads to their downfall. We could also imagine a

[42] Telfer (1990), p. 40.

[43] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[44] Hursthouse (1999), p. 155.

[45] Ibid., p. 156.

compassionate, honest and witty man who is intemperate when it comes to women, or a courageous soldier who is intolerant or impatient.

How can it be that we, for one part, believe in a unity of the virtues, and still easily come up with examples which suggest that we can possess one, but not other virtues? The answer to this question is in the connection between virtue and knowledge. In the Aristotelian view, virtue requires knowledge: being generous is only possible when you are aware of when, to whom and in what quantities you give your money, otherwise you are just squandering it.[46] Real knowledge of the value of one item, however, requires knowledge about the value of everything else. Only by comparing the worth of one thing to the worth of other things do we discover the relative worth. Otherwise we would not be able to know whether it is worth risking our lives for something, or when it is acceptable to lie to protect someone.[47] From this does not follow, however, that everything is measurable on a single scale. Although they can be both morally valuable, risking your life for someone is something completely different than reading a book to your children. Susan Wolf makes this relationship perfectly clear:

> "The idea is rather that one's understanding of the place and importance of one basic ingredient of a good life must necessarily exist against a background of opinion about the place and importance of other ingredients, and that one's sense of the importance of one value is not fully, conceptually detachable from one's sense of the importance of the others".[48]

What is central to the weak unity thesis, following this account, is that possessing one virtue cannot do without the knowledge (in the sense of judging the worth of things) that is required for all the virtues. Knowledge, however, does not imply *possessing* the other virtues. The courageous man knows what it is to be wise and to be temperate, which does not mean that he will actually *be* wise and temperate.

Lastly, although it has been argued here that it is possible to possess one virtue but not the other, or even to possess vice at the same time, there are certain dispositions which cannot be combined (or the opposite, must necessarily be combined). Possessing a certain virtue can sometimes require the presence of one

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[46] Wolf, S. (2007), 'Moral psychology and the unity of the virtues', *Ratio,* 20 (2), pp. 145–167, p. 150.

[47] Ibid., p. 150.

[48] Ibid., p. 160.

specific other virtue. An honest man, for example, does sometimes need courage[49] to be able to tell the truth. The friendly man also needs to be good-tempered to some extent, for a hot-headed man will often fail to be friendly. At the same time, certain vices make it impossible for the individual to possess virtue of some kind. A greedy man cannot be completely honest, since honesty will at a certain point come in conflict with what his greed requires. And a coward cannot be fully generous or kind, for his fear will sometimes overcome his generous or kind dispositions.[50]

To conclude, it is possible to possess one virtue but not another, as long as we have enough knowledge to judge the worth of one action against the other. Some virtues, however, are necessarily connected to other virtues. To determine whether or not this is the case for civic virtue and autonomy, the next chapter will look into their relationship in more detail.

[49] Courage in the modern, wider sense than the strictly Aristotelian courage in battle.

[50] These last two examples are taken from: Ackrill, J.L. (1981), *Aristotle the Philosopher*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 137.

THE RELATION BETWEEN CIVIC VIRTUE AND AUTONOMY

In the introduction of this thesis, I have sketched the apparent conflict between the republican concept of civic virtue and the liberal concept of autonomy. I have tried to give a sufficient overview of both concepts to be able to discuss their relation here. Last chapter demonstrated that possessing one virtue does not require the possession of other virtues, although there are types of virtue that require or exclude each other. Whether or not the connection between autonomy and civic virtue is of this kind will become clear as we assess their relationship on conceptual, psychological and practical levels.

Why civic virtue requires autonomy

As the above has argued, possessing one virtue does not necessarily mean or require possessing (the) other virtues. In this section, the relation between two specific (groups) of virtue is central: the relationship between civic virtue and autonomy. As I have argued, civic virtue is a set of virtues aimed at a common object, the public good. For that reason I will treat the whole of the 'civic virtues' as a single concept. The hypothesis in this thesis is that there is a positive relation between civic virtue and autonomy; this chapter will prove whether this hypothesis holds in both directions of the relationship. To focus our view, I will first answer the following question: can autonomy and civic virtue exist without each other? If the answer is positive, then I will have to look further to find the connection between both concepts. If the answer is negative, the relation seems to be a necessary one, where the one cannot exist without the other and my hypothesis will be proven right.

Let us begin with the question whether or not civic virtue can do without autonomy. Civic virtue is, in its core, the furthering of the public good, or common good, over the private good. The exact content of the common good might vary somewhat with the ideology of a state, but what is clear is that there is a good other than the good of the individual, that he is disposed to give priority over his own good. To be able to do this, the citizen needs to have knowledge of at least two things: he needs to know what the public good is and he needs to know what is good for him. We learn about the common good in the ways in which we learn civic virtue itself: civic education and activities in the public sphere teach us what society is, what it needs and what is 'expected' from citizens. The ways in which we are supposed to come to

possess civic virtue, however, do not seem to teach us anything about our own good. It seems as if we are already expected to know what is good for us.

Then how do we become aware of our own private good? The weak unity thesis tells us that the possession of one virtue means having the knowledge required for all virtues. An individual possessing some virtue, then, would have knowledge about his private good, because it is knowledge which civic virtue requires. But is also possible, we have seen, that an individual only possesses one, and not other virtues. This individual has to gain knowledge of his private good in some way, before he can become a good citizen. Let us consider two different options: (1) there is an objective human good which we can define without knowledge of the individual; or (2) a person's private good depends on his own conception of the good and can be something completely different for every person.

The classical Greek conceptions of the good were mostly concerned with defining the ultimate good, the objectively defined best possible life for every individual. For Platonic thinkers, there was one ideal 'Form' of the good which all goods resemble in some way, a view which Aristotle strongly opposed.[51] To Aristotle, there are many forms of good, each attached to its own activity. The good for a butcher might be totally different than the good for a lawyer. All goods, however, are (partly) sought for the obtaining of the ultimate human good: happiness (*eudaimonia*). Happiness is the only human good that is desirable completely in itself and not for the sake of something else.[52] What is good for every human being, thus, is to seek happiness in his life. Aristotle continues, however, by defining how happiness is reached. Happiness, he argues, is not a state, for if it would mean that even someone in a vegetative state or someone who suffers great misfortunes could be happy. Therefore happiness must be classed as activity, or to be more specific: that activity that is desirable completely in itself, or virtuous activity.[53] That life that according to Aristotle is the happiest, lastly, is life according to reason:

> "[for] that which is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for each thing; for man, therefore the life according to reason is best and pleasantest,

[51] Aristotle (2009), Ch. I.6.

[52] Ibid., 1097a.

[53] Ibid., 1176a33-b8.

> since reason more than anything else *is* man. This life therefore is also the happiest."[54]

The Aristotelian conception of the human good, then, seems to imply an objective human good: the good for all human beings is to be happy. For an individual to further his own good is to live a virtuous life, for it is a life filled with actions that bring happiness. When the individual truly seeks the greatest happiness, according to this conception, he would aspire to become a philosopher to live a life according to reason. The individual possessing civic virtue, then, would in certain situations choose to refrain from doing one virtuous action (his private good), in order to do another action that promotes the public good. This action, however, still brings the individual happiness because it is according to civic virtue, *virtuous* action.

Contrary to Aristotle, though, I do not think we can define the human good independent of the individual. As most scholars, I expect, I agree that happiness is the final good human beings look for in their life. Everything that motivates us is for at least a part inspired by the fact that it contributes to our happiness, and we do not do things that give us happiness for any higher reason than that. I do not agree with Aristotle, though, that only virtuous action is happiness. The main difference between Aristotle's view and my own is in the fact that he thinks of happiness as objectively definable, whereas happiness in my opinion is based on individual perception. This leads to a number of differences in the definition of happiness

In the first place, I see no reason why happiness should be defined as virtuous action rather than a state. A state refers to the condition a person is in with respect to certain attributes. Someone's state of health, for example, is the condition of is body in the sense of well-functioning and absence of diseases. One's health is always in some state (be it good or bad) and can change gradually or sometimes suddenly, e.g. when someone is in an accident or contracts a disease. The same holds for our state of happiness: a fairly happy[55] person might suddenly become miserable when someone in his family dies, for example. It is important to notice that in this view, a state is somewhat of a scale; a major event can tip the scale to the 'unhappy-side' or the 'unhealthy-side' of the scale. A minor misfortune will probably not make a happy person miserable, just like catching a cold does not put someone's health in a bad

[54] Aristotle (2009), 1178a5-8. Reason here should not be confused with practical wisdom. It is the reason of the philosopher, contemplating for no other goal than reason alone.

[55] To be sure, a 'happy' person is an individual in a state of happiness, not just 'being in a good mood'.

state. In my opinion, happiness as a state seems to make much more sense then happiness classed as activity. When happiness is virtuous activity, every thing that we do determines if we are happy at that moment or not. A virtuous action followed by a vicious action would turn a happy person unhappy in the blink of an eye. This just does not make sense. When someone asks us about a person who has recently died 'Was he a happy man?', we do not answer 'Yes, he was writing a philosophy paper when he died', but probably something like 'Yes, he had a loving family, lots of friends and he was working the job he liked'. We sum up those things we think contributed to his state of happiness.[56] Writing a philosophy paper might have contributed to that state, but did not fully determine it at the moment of his death.

I can agree with Aristotle, though, that a life filled with virtuous activity would lead to happiness; per definition, virtuous activity is living by our own ideas of the good, it is doing what we want to do. What we do not agree on, however, is that virtuous activity is the *only* way to happiness. Happiness, to summarize, is more than the short-term fulfillment of desire, it is a fairly stable condition that is connected to the individual's idea of the fulfillment of his conception of the good life. The individual who is able to live entirely according to his own ideas, then, is ultimately happy, no matter what those ideas are. Happiness is the most important goal for human beings in their life, but the way to reach that goal can be different for each person.

By defining happiness as a state we can no longer make the step towards happiness as virtuous activity. As we have seen, the state of happiness can be influenced by a variety of things: our perceptions, our actions, actions of others, our circumstances and even events based on chance. At every point in his life, the individual perceives himself, the world around him and everything he has experienced and this perception determines his state of happiness (or unhappiness, for that matter). We might guess what makes a certain individual happy, but there is no way of knowing what this is independently of the individual's conception of the good life. Returning to our two options mentioned above, we now see that the answer is a combination of both: (1) there is a objectively definable human good, namely happiness; but (2) what it is to be happy is dependent of the individual and cannot be determined without the individual.

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[56] In this example, it becomes clear that there are actually things that are, in our culture, generally thought to be good for every individual. I will come back to this in next section.

To recapitulate, the individual needs to know what it is to further his private good in order to give priority to the public good, i.e. exercising civic virtue. The individual's private good is that which makes him happy, although we cannot determine what this is without the individual himself. It is thus essential for civic virtue that the individual knows what contributes to his state of happiness. The individual, then, has to independently form ideas and opinions about the good life. Independently, because others cannot know what it is that makes the individual happy. In short, the individual needs to be autonomous to possess civic virtue. True, the individual might not need to be fully autonomous – this sense of civic virtue does not necessarily require that the individual is capable to *act* on his private ideas of the good life – but civic virtue cannot exist without the individual autonomously forming his opinions on what is good.

Civic virtue, autonomy and the expression of opinion

It has become clear now that civic virtue requires citizens that possess private conceptions of the good. But even if it were possible to be a good citizen without possessing autonomy, that civic virtue would be a lot less attractive than civic virtue complemented with autonomy. Let us suppose for a moment that civic virtue is possible without autonomy. Imagine a state in which civic virtue would be taught to all citizens, who lack autonomy and do not learn to be autonomous in school, from their family or in any other way. The citizens in this state will have no real idea of their own good other than what the state has taught them: the state is morally good and it is good to support the state in thought, opinion and action. These individuals will sincerely want to be active citizens and support the community in any way they can. Since the public good in this state equals the private good of all citizens, there would be at most minor disagreement over public decisions. In any case, this state will be stable and strong, with every citizen in the country actively doing what the state requires and no internal enemy to its ideas and institutions.

However, the one thing our imaginative state will miss is a *genuine* pursuit of the common good, the active and lively state that springs from millions of autonomous individuals. The population of virtuous citizens will provide stability, but will also prevent progress of the state itself. Since the citizens lack their own ideas of the good and consider the organization and ideas of the state good, there is no source of change and many sources of conservation. What a genuine pursuit of the common good requires is a search for the best decisions, a state which is capable of dealing

with changing times and circumstances. This kind of flexibility and creativity is not possible in a society without autonomy. That what is valuable about civic virtue is that individuals with a variety of beliefs, opinions and doctrines all support that same common good, some more and others less actively. In such a society, decisions are made after tapping into the ideas of many individuals through the form of public discussion, a discussion of individuals with different opinions and a single goal. Civic virtue without autonomy, to conclude, would be ill-equipped to further the common good to the greatest extent.

The valuable consequence of a society which combines both autonomy and civic virtue is the expression of opinion. Civic virtue alone provides a stable society with an active and responsible citizenry, but it lacks motivation for progress and the active search for the common good. Autonomy is the virtue that makes individuals form conceptions of the good and the opinions that follow. Connecting both types of virtue creates a society of active citizens with different opinions what meet each other in the public sphere. A combination of civic virtue and autonomy, in other words, produces public debate with the shared goal of furthering the common good. The expression of opinion is what provides the community with the flexibility and vitality to improve, to overcome problems and to survive.

As we have seen in the last pages, civic virtue needs autonomy to remain a concept we can think of as valuable, or maybe even as possible. Without autonomy, I have argued, there is no way of defining the individual's private good, and without private good there is no such thing as giving priority to the public good. But even if we could formulate the individual good without autonomy, there would be little reason to do so. The society with only civic virtue and no autonomy would be a stable but uninspired society. Autonomy is the virtue that forms a creative force that looks to further the common good. Civic virtue combined with autonomy leads to the public expression of opinion, to a varied citizenry with a shared purpose. The value civic virtue can have for a society can only exist in connection to an autonomous population. We will see in the next section whether civic virtue is just as essential to autonomy, or if autonomy can exist completely without good citizens.

Why autonomy requires civic virtue

Now the positive influence of autonomy on civic virtue is clear, it is time to see if this also works the other way around. Can autonomy exist without civic virtue? In its nature, autonomy is a concept which pertains to the individual, while civic virtue

relates to the relation between the individual and the civic community. Unlike the relation we have seen in the previous section, autonomy does not seem to require civic virtue on a psychological level. The forming of and acting upon one's own conception of the good life does not require one to be an active and responsible citizen who furthers the public good. It is perfectly possible to be an autonomous individual without being a good citizen. If there is no relationship of this kind, is there another type of influence civic virtue has on autonomy?

To be sure, let us first see if maybe civic virtue and autonomy conflict in one way or another. Both autonomy and civic virtue are virtues of character. As such, both concepts influence how we think and how we act. Autonomy makes us form and act upon our ideas of the good, civic virtue inclines us to forgo our own good in order to further the public good. This does not imply, however, that civic virtue counteracts autonomy in the sense of 'pulling at the other end of the rope'. Acting according to civic virtue does not mean giving up one's autonomy for the common good. As we have seen, an individual who possesses virtue desires to act accordingly, he chooses to do what virtue requires *autonomously*. Other virtues influence autonomy to the extent that we come to value those virtues and the actions that they prescribe. When an individual possesses civic virtue, he values the public good and wants to do what is good for the civic community. Virtues in general, and civic virtue in particular, do not conflict with autonomy. As a part of our character, it is one of the influences on our autonomous process of deciding what we find valuable in our lives.

In the sense described here, not only civic virtue but all virtues seem to require autonomy to some extent. As I have argued, the individual might be disposed to do what is virtuous, but success is required for the individual to be considered to possess virtue. The actual performing of the virtuous task is made possible by the autonomy of the individual. Consider this example: when a group of soldiers runs away in fear and the brave man decides for himself to stand his ground, he has no other basis for decision than his own ideas of the good. If the man would not be able to make up his own mind, he might have been disposed to stand his ground; faced with all of his fellow soldiers running away, he would join them in flight. If we look at virtuous acts the other way around, the need for autonomy is just as clear: when one does a virtuous act but not out of his own choice, he does not possess virtue. The man, for example, who gives to the poor out of some form of peer pressure while feeling regret, is not a generous man. He wishes he still had his possessions and had not given it away. The individual who possesses virtue, instead, decides for himself that he values

the virtuous course of action and acts virtuous while desiring to do so. That individual is autonomous, for he forms his own ideas of the good and makes his own decision based upon them. In this sense, all virtues need the individual to possess the virtue of autonomy. I will return, however, to the connection between *civic* virtue and autonomy.

Since autonomy is concerned with making independent choices, information is of essential importance to the autonomous individual. Only when the individual has multiple alternatives is he capable of making a choice between them. One of the reasons states have for compulsory education is to create individuals who have certain basic levels of reasoning and knowledge required for autonomous choice. The individual without these qualities has little choice but to take for granted what other people tell him, since he has nothing to base an independent opinion on. Not only is a minimum of information necessary for making autonomous choices, but also choices in general become better when more information is available. Someone buying a new television, for example, will probably make a better deal when he has visited every electronics store in town than when he walks into the first shop he sees and buys a nice-looking television. Or consider a doctor, in many cases he will be much better equipped to provide a treatment to a person when he is aware of that person's medical history. In the same sense, the autonomous individual makes a better choice when he is well-informed: he is capable of weighing al information and options to make the decision that fits best his own conception of the good. An individual can, making an autonomous choice, decide to ignore all information coming to him from external sources like media and other individuals. He will, however, make decisions in his life that are different from what he would have done if he was fully, or better, informed.

Can we conclude from the above that an individual becomes more autonomous the more informed he is? As long as we have a minimum level of knowledge and rational capacity, we are capable of being autonomous. At the same time, though, the less-informed individual can sometimes make decisions contrary to his own principles, because he does not possess full information. A vegetarian who lacks knowledge about food, for example, might eat candy containing gelatin made from animal bones. Or a kind man could accidentally insult a Muslim by offering his left hand, when he is unaware of the cultural difference between them. In this sense, the more knowledge a person has, the more capable he is to act according to his own conception of the good. Having more knowledge can also change our beliefs: judging a

certain idea might change drastically when we see downsides that we first were not aware of. Autonomy is the realized capacity to form and act upon ideas, which is supported in two ways by knowledge: having knowledge gives us (in part) the capacity to form our own conceptions of the good; and knowledge enables us (in part) to act according to those conceptions. In both cases, having more knowledge allows us to be more autonomous: full knowledge would allow us to formulate our most genuine beliefs and to make no mistake in acting upon them.

The reason why our discussion of knowledge above is relevant, is the influence of civic virtue. We have seen that knowledge has a positive influence on autonomy and we can say that that which promotes our knowledge indirectly promotes our autonomy. Civic virtue has this effect in different ways. In the first place, it requires the individual to know what the public good is. To be able to further the public good, the citizen must be aware of the current state of society. The good citizen, feeling concerned and responsible for his country, keeps himself informed via media or through contact with other citizens or organizations, constantly expanding his knowledge about the world. A second way through which civic virtue creates informed individuals, is through the public arena. The good citizen is prone to further the common good and many times, as argued earlier, the common good requires some type of active involvement in the public arena. In the public sphere, citizens with all kinds of different opinions gather and come to discuss what the 'public good' in practice holds. The individual can use the arguments put forward in this discussion to alter or to reinforce his own beliefs. The autonomous individual who is also a good citizen then, is both actively and passively involved in what happens in society. By constantly opening up to streams of information and opinions, the good citizen's level of knowledge about the world is ever growing. The good citizen becomes better equipped to form solid opinions and to chase his own beliefs day by day.

Liberals are not alone in valuing independent decision making by individuals. Those who value civic virtue need people that are capable to lead, and leading means making choices. We have seen that civic virtue makes citizens play an active part in society. Some citizens will play an invisible role, like those helping the community and voting in elections; others take the initiative, lead groups or organizations or maybe even enter politics. In the republican ideal, all citizens are even expected to 'rule and be ruled in turn'. Since a society that values civic virtue expects an effort from its citizens, it is in its own interest to help those citizens to be able to make that effort. When every citizen is a (potential) leader, then, efforts should be made to

produce citizens who are well-equipped to lead society. Being well-equipped to lead means, among others, to be independent. For a person who is dependent upon others is less capable of making good decisions, and a person who is incapable of making decisions is not equipped to lead. The society that values civic virtue will thus put effort in creating self-governed citizens.[57] In this sense, autonomy is fostered by those who want to create good citizens.

Earlier, I stated that autonomy and civic virtue do not conflict, on a psychological level that is, because civic virtue made us value and choose out of our own will to do the common good. But what if these virtues conflict in practice? What if the state decides to employ policies that thoroughly conflict with our own autonomously formed ideas of the good? It seems that either civic virtue or autonomy must give way here. Civic virtue requires the individual to be a loyal citizen and to make an effort for society, while autonomy at the same time requires the individual to act according to his own conception of the good. Both types of virtue seem incompatible in this hypothetical situation of conflict. To provide a definitive answer, we must first look into that which is the basis of state policies: the shared conception of the good.

A society that values autonomy is likely to find a wide variety of beliefs and opinions in its citizens. Allowing each citizen to form and express their own ideas about what is good in life is not likely to lead to a complete convergence of opinions. For a society to function properly, however, there must be some common ground as a basis for public discussion and public action. A political community of millions of individuals cannot be ruled by millions of opinions (unless every decision would be made by majority vote by all citizens). How, then, do we establish this 'common ground' while allowing every citizen to form his own opinions? John Rawls has provided an answer to this question by introducing his idea of an 'overlapping consensus', while accommodating communitarian critique on his *Theory of Justice*.[58] This critique held, among other things, that Rawls did not take into account that individuals are inclined to seek and form communities, with ideas sometimes significantly differing from his *principles of justice*.[59]

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[57] Dagger (1997), p. 18.

[58] Rawls, J. (1971), *A Theory of Justice*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

[59] For examples of the communitarian critique, see: Buchanan, A.E. (1989), 'Assessing the Communitarian Critique of Liberalism', *Ethics*, 99 (4), pp. 852-882, or Sandel, M. (1984), ´The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self´, *Political Theory*, 12 (1), pp. 81 – 96.

In Rawls' view, a democratic society (Rawls states that his theory is applicable to liberal democracies in the Western world) with a multitude of world views will at a certain point agree on a number of liberal principles of justice as a mere *modus vivendi*, as "the only workable alternative to endless and destructive civil strife."[60] These world views, or 'comprehensive doctrines', agree to the liberal principles because no single doctrine is powerful enough to set the rules of the game in this democracy. Once the liberal principles have been established, they govern the public arena where people with different comprehensive doctrines meet. In the public arena, people with different ideas have to debate, convince each other and form majorities to reach their preferred policies. They have little choice but to appeal to the only ideas they share: the liberal principles of justice. As all comprehensive doctrines in society keep appealing to these principles, they gradually become embedded in the doctrines of all citizens.[61] This is what Rawls has called the overlapping consensus.

The theory of the overlapping consensus provides an account of why and how a shared theory of the good might be established in a liberal society. Valuing autonomy, liberalism seeks to allow people to define their own way of life. Still, there has to be some basis for public action. At the same time, there are certain views which we cannot allow as a basis for public policy: views that dismiss the value of human life, views that state that what happens on earth is not important because the afterlife is what matters, or views that impose one way of life on all human beings. William Galston provides in his *Liberal Purposes* an account of the shared liberal good that rules out these types of world views and provides a basis for public action.[62] As liberals we: (1) believe that life is good; (2) regard it good to be born with normal basic capacities (as opposite to be born handicapped); (3) believe it is good (with certain preconditions) to fulfill interests and purposes; (4) believe freedom is indispensable; (5) regard rationality as important for every human being in his life and in making public decisions; (6) view social relations as important for people; (7) attach value to the subjective satisfaction people get from their lives.[63] The exact content of this liberal theory of the good can be debated, but Galston demonstrates an important

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[60] Rawls, J. (2005) [1993], *Political Liberalism* (expanded edition), (New York, Columbia University Press), p. 159.

[61] Ibid., p. 165.

[62] Galston, W. (1991), *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 177-178.

[63] Ibid., pp. 174-176.

point here. Although liberalism allows individuals great liberty in making choices about their lives and in forming and expressing their opinions, there is a liberal theory of the right which we all share or at least presume to share.

Because the liberal public arena is a place where people with a variety of different views and one (presumed) shared view meet, most of the discussion in the public arena is centered on elements of that single shared theory of the good. A Christian politician defending Sunday rest, for example, will not argue that 'the Lord has commanded it so'. He will rather make his argument with regard to the endangering of the freedom of the Christian shop owner or employee, who 'will have little choice but to work on Sunday, contrary to his beliefs'. The liberal theory of the right is the 'shared language' of the public arena, understood and shared by all citizens.

It is time to return to our hypothetical conflict between civic virtue and autonomy. In the case that a state begins to employ policies that conflict with an individual's deepest convictions, is he still expected to be a good citizen by staying loyal to the state? As we have seen above, states that value autonomy go through their own processes of forming a shared theory of the good. In this process, the way civic virtue is taught in schools is shaped in the same fashion. Public education teaches children those shared principles which they need to understand and employ as a good citizen. The common good which good citizens in a society that values autonomy seek to advance is a common good based on shared principles, in the sense of: 'The state is good because it promotes freedom, health, welfare and so on. As a citizen, I want to help the state to fulfill these goals.' The shared conception of the good is, to be clear, not conflicting with the citizen's autonomous beliefs because the shared good is part of civic virtue. When the state would suddenly start employing policies that conflict with, or fall outside the scope of, the shared conception of the good, there is no reason for the good citizen to follow the state, other than his usual inclination to trust and support the state. When those policies also conflict with the citizen's autonomous beliefs, he will have every reason not to be a loyal subject to the state as concerning these specific policies.[64] These policies are not a part of the common good the good citizen has learnt to support.

[64] It goes too far here to formulate a full theory of civil disobedience, the relevant issue to show here is that this situation does not lead to a conflict of civic virtue and autonomy.

In the past pages, I have approached autonomy as if it is something the individual possesses and which can either be strengthened or weakened by civic virtue. But it is important not to forget that autonomy is something that both has to be taught and fostered in a society. Not every society is structured in a way that allows its citizens to be autonomous, and not every type of citizen allows his fellow man to be autonomous. In the following section I will argue what is required from the society that seeks to create autonomous citizens.

The Liberal Society

As with the virtues in general, we are born with merely the *potential* to be autonomous, we do not become independent choosers without outside help. A society valuing autonomy has to aim its policies in a way that fosters autonomy in its citizens. By organizing an extensive system of public education, the state can try to maximize autonomy in every individual according to his potential. The contents of this education should be, apart from those subjects that prepare for professional education, aimed at creating independent citizens: a decent level of language and mathematics to get around; social skills to communicate with other citizens; and a sufficient level of knowledge about the state's public arena, democracy and institutions. To be autonomous in a modern, complicated state requires an extensive set of skills and knowledge. Only an informed individual can make genuine choices about their life.

A second requirement for autonomy is that society allows people to be genuinely autonomous, both in a formal and informal sense. The formal requirement is obvious from a liberal point of view: the state should not discriminate between different beliefs; should give its citizens the freedom to express their opinions and unite with like-minded individuals; and more generally should allow people to act freely within the limits of the law. In other words, to formally allow individuals to be autonomous is to grant all citizens of a state equal and extensive liberty. Apart from being allowed by the law to be autonomous, it is essential that people are allowed to practice autonomy in a more informal sense. Autonomy, even when fostered by education and allowed by the law, is useless when citizens do not allow each other to be and to act autonomous. Citizens must possess, apart from autonomy, a respect for the rights of others which transcends the mere limits of the law. A liberal society must have autonomy embedded in its culture, so that individuals see each other as independent choosers, worthy and capable of forming their own opinions.

Autonomy requires some form of democracy. Being autonomous implies having control over one's own life, making the choices that steer one's life in a certain direction. However, the most important decisions influence many lives at once and are made in government and politics. Choices about social security issues, education budgets or even on war and peace can cause substantial changes in people's lives. If there would be no way for a citizen to influence these decisions, there would be a serious gap in the capacity of the individual to exercise control over his life. A society that values autonomy and seeks to maximize autonomy in its citizens will provide them with the means to influence public policy. Of course, we should not overstate the influence people have in a democracy. We cannot argue that citizens have 'autonomous control' over public policy. What matters, though, is that every citizen, as an autonomous person, has an opinion that is just as valuable as the next citizen. Valuing autonomy means giving every citizen the right to express his opinion to influence public decisions and to present himself as a candidate for positions in government or politics.

Finally, autonomy requires a public arena open to all opinions, with a genuine and tolerant debate. Liberal citizens (should) see each other as partners in discussion rather than objects of their will who are to be silenced. The more tolerant the public arena, the fewer obstacles there are for people with deviant opinions to say and to act as they wish. All citizens might see each other as entitled to their own opinion and free to act as they wish, but a society of narrow-minded individuals which collectively disapproves of even slightly deviant lifestyles would make it difficult (if not impossible) for a great number of individuals to live the way they want.

As becomes clear from the above, autonomy requires certain things from society and its citizens. The society that values autonomy needs to educate people in order to become autonomous, it needs laws and citizens that respect rights in general and autonomy in particular, it requires some form of democracy, and the public arena and citizens must be tolerant. In turn, this society places demands on its citizens to make it function in a way that autonomy requires. What emerges is an image of the individual not unlike the liberal citizen of William Galston[65] I presented earlier: the citizen as law-abiding, tolerant, respecting the autonomy of others, and capable of evaluating the performance of democratic politicians. Concluding, the society that values autonomy and aims to maximize it in its citizens requires its own specific form

[65] Galston (1988), pp. 1281-1283, p. 11 in this thesis.

of civic virtue. To be sure, this requirement is one on the societal, not on the individual, level. For society to function as autonomy-maximizing, it needs the majority of the citizens to possess civic virtue.

Although the dependence of autonomy on civic virtue is less clear than the other way around, we can speak of an unmistakable necessity. On the individual level, being a good citizen brings a great deal of knowledge, which in turn brings options that he would have otherwise missed. But the key point of this relationship is the fact that autonomy needs civic virtue on a *societal* level. Autonomy requires a society that demands much from its citizens, and without good citizens this society cannot exist.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis has been to assess the relationship between the liberal concept of autonomy and the communitarian/republican concept of civic virtue. As core concepts in the discussion between the emphasis on individual rights and the emphasis on (national) community, autonomy and civic virtue seemed thoroughly incompatible. Since it is difficult not to see the value of each of the two concepts, though, I have tried to find evidence of the possibility to unite them without giving priority to either concept.

Having established my definitions of civic virtue as a set of virtues and autonomy as a single virtue, I looked into the relation between both concepts. Civic virtue and autonomy are in different ways dependent on each other. Civic virtue needs autonomy in the sense that it needs citizens who make genuine choices between their own good and that what is in the common good. People who blindly follow the public interest without being aware of their own good cannot be said to possess civic virtue, for they know no moderation in their acts. That what is crucial for the common good, however, is that society contains a variety of opinions that are expressed in the public debate. This expression of opinion is a consequence of the combination of civic virtue and autonomy. A society without autonomous citizens, I have argued, is less capable of advancing the common good in the best way.

The case for autonomy is different. On an individual level, autonomy can function perfectly without any amount of civic virtue. The individual needs no attachment to some common good to be able to form his own beliefs and to make independent choices about his life. He does benefit from civic virtue in the sense that it makes one enter the public arena and come into contact with new people, ideas and beliefs that enrich the knowledge that is available to the individual. The more knowledge an individual possesses, the better he is able to choose, and to act upon, what is valuable to him. But what is central to this relationship is that civic virtue enables the type of society required by autonomy. More than any other society, the society of autonomous individuals requires a great deal from its citizens: they need to be tolerant, respecting towards rights and laws and to a certain extent interested in government and politics. Without enough good citizens, liberal society would not be able to function properly.

This relationship, of course, is for a part dependent on what definition one employs. When I would have argued that human beings are naturally disposed to

form their own opinions, and that the emphasis of autonomy is on the state *allowing* their citizens to be autonomous, the importance of autonomy to civic virtue would disappear. Even more so, I have not provided a strictly defined set of virtues which together form civic virtue. The kind of civic virtue that is required for the autonomy-maximizing society is specifically a set of virtues for the *liberal* citizen. Another conception of civic virtue would not be conflicting with autonomy, since it remains an individual's choice to do a virtuous act, but would not provide such a strong support to it either.

There still remains some work to be done before civic virtue and autonomy can be united in a single theory. First of all, a deeper investigation into the liberal form of civic virtue: which virtues are and are not a part of the set? And what exactly are the differences between those virtues and the ones espoused by communitarian and republican authors? Also, we have seen that civic virtue is connected to the public good, to a shared idea of the good rather than to the state itself. What is that shared idea of the good for the society that maximizes autonomy and to what extent can this theory change through time? These are only a few examples of what remains to be answered.

For now, though, the questions of this thesis have been answered. Although the ambition of providing a 'bridge' between two rivaling theories might be somewhat too much, I believe too have demonstrated that a combination is possible. Liberalism is not about the isolated individual, just as civic virtue is not an idea of loyal citizens without a will of their own. In conclusion, it is perfectly possible for citizens to be both free and virtuous, with both qualities reinforcing the other.

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