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Perfectionist liberalism and living well: Character, politics and education.

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Character, Politics and Education

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Perfectionist Liberalism and Living Well:

Character, Politics and Education

This thesis aims to show that a liberal character-ethics lies at the heart of perfectionist liberal aspirations for individual flourishing. In the past, liberal conceptions of the good life were tied to metaphysical conceptions of the self. However, the diversity of contemporary liberal societies leads liberals to seek new conceptual resources to underpin their normative theories. This thesis decontests a perfectionist liberal doctrine which highlights liberal ethical ideals associated with a malleable conception of the self can be most attractively conceptualised by reviving the currently neglected concept of character.

For agents in liberal societies to live well they should possess a certain sort of character. The liberal concept of character defended here has two aspects: moral and individual. These two aspects together provide normative content and criteria for a liberal character-ethics which can be promoted by the liberal state (and throughout civil society). In particular, a liberal doctrine based on the dual concept of character can guide an education for significant autonomy that nurtures the ability of children to live well in later life. Such an education would pay especially close attention to encouraging virtues associated with responsible political engagement, as these are fundamental to significant autonomy in a liberal democracy. The philosophical presuppositions of promoting liberal virtues can then be edifyingly viewed at a meta-theoretical level in quasi-Foucauldian terms as the inculcation of 'technologies of the self'.

The final chapter uses the perfectionist liberal doctrine defended in Chapters Four and Five to assess the normative cogency of political education in English secondary schools, reflecting on the current politics and philosophy of education and citizenship in the UK. The thesis then concludes by highlighting that liberal aspirations for character, politics and education must be openly and confidently explicated if they are to shape the processes of 'governmentality' in liberal democracies.

Length: 84,000 words approx.

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated.

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Acknowledgements

If all experiences could be said to be have character-building value then I can fairly attest to the efficacy of the rigours of part-time doctoral study. That significant autonomy is an inherently social achievement has also become ever more apparent as my desire to share ideas has grown. Nevertheless, while friends, colleagues and students may have aided the development of the work presented here, I alone can take final responsibility for the deficiencies in the final text.

This project took shape in Swansea as my interest in liberalism and character deepened during the completion of my Master's degree. Time spent tutoring undergraduates in the UWS Department of Politics and International Relations gave me fresh insights into the ideological bases of political concepts, and debates with staff, students and fellow postgraduates have helped bring some of these to light here. Of those people who are to be mentioned by name, my supervisor, Mark Evans, has made the task of completing the thesis possible by criticising, commenting and advising on the many redrafts. My thanks are due to him for his help and encouragement during the past eight years.

My research was partly funded by the National Foundation for Educational Research, support for which I am very grateful. I must also thank them and my colleagues in the Centre for Local and Regional Government Research at Cardiff University for enabling me to dedicate sufficient time and energy to completing the thesis. Penelope Richardson proof read and commented on the final versions of the manuscript. And my thanks are due to her for her tolerance, interest and support during the writing-up period.

My family have helped keep my spirits up throughout my period of study and I would like to thank them all. In particular, I would like to dedicate the thesis to my mother whose care for the flourishing of those around her continues to give me inspiration.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Aims of the Thesis

Growing social diversity, scepticism about the good life and an emerging civic deficit in Western democracies has caused liberals to re-appraise their normative theories. Impartialist liberals have withdrawn as far as possible from making judgements on the moral worth of lives, while perfectionist liberals seek to promote those activities which should be valued within a liberal society. In response to this debate, this thesis explicates a perfectionist liberalism that is sensitive to pluralism and scepticism about the good life, developing and defending a liberal conception of the good life based on a liberal character-ethics. It proposes (a) that perfectionist liberals should first acknowledge that the self is malleable, and (b) that the importance of being able to live well autonomously in liberal societies necessitates the promotion of specific virtues amongst citizens to enable them to become significantly autonomous. The main argument of the thesis is that a perfectionist liberal concept of character can provide suitable criteria for guiding the development of the ability to be significantly autonomous. Such a liberal concept of character has two vital aspects: moral and individual. Moral character pertains to the ethical conduct of an agent, while individual character pertains to the distinctiveness of their participation in different social practices. The virtues inherent in both aspects of the liberal concept of character are intrinsic to living well autonomously. Virtues associated with moral character would centre on civility, conscience and responsible political engagement; virtues associated with individual character would centre on competence, integrity, commitment and imagination. The virtues of moral and individual character thus constitute a liberal character-ethics which can provide normative content for a liberal doctrine based on a right to be able to be significantly autonomous.

The (non-metaphysical) liberalism developed here is intended to provide an intellectually and emotionally appealing interpretation of liberal concepts adhering to significant autonomy. Its key claim is that the importance of being able to live well autonomously in a liberal society generates a duty on the part of the state to promote the development of character. The malleability of the self means that character is susceptible to a range of influences on the environment in which it develops. The thesis then highlights that, for political theorists, perfectionist promotion of a liberal character-ethics through a range of policy instruments, especially the state education system, can be understood at a meta-theoretical level in quasi-Foucauldian terms as the inculcation of technologies of the self which enable agents to constitute their character. The theoretical cogency of the liberal doctrine explicated here is therefore edifyingly illuminated by exploring Foucault's view of state-led efforts to aid character-development.

Social diversity and value-pluralism have transformed contemporary political discourse. In particular, an acceptance of the demands of diversity has profound implications for liberal political theorists. Many liberals believe that the various conceptions of the good held by agents in liberal societies should be excluded from politics and political philosophy. To conceptualise this, these liberals propose determinate principles that are impartial between ethical conceptions of the good life. However, the thought of such impartialist liberals does not do full justice to common liberal aspirations for the lives of agents in liberal societies. Commitment to the flourishing of diverse valuable activities, such as co-operative societies or the arts and sciences, has conventionally been a concern of liberal thinkers (especially, in the UK). The value attributed to tolerance by liberals also implies forbearance of what they perceive as less worthwhile ways of living, indicating that they have (latent) deeply held views on the good life.

Liberal theorising is an inherently normative activity which takes place in a distinctive liberal cultural setting and can be reflected in varying explications of liberal concepts, values and ideals. This means that liberal theorists need not seek grounds for excluding considerations pertaining to the good life in liberal societies. They can and should respond to scepticism by justifying the appeal of their ethical ideals to liberals and would-be liberals. The appeal of the perfectionist liberalism presented in this thesis therefore rests on the extent to which it provides a theoretically coherent, culturally relevant and comprehensible explication of the moral and political concepts associated with living well autonomously. Indeed, it proposes that explication of perfectionist liberal concepts of autonomy and character rebuts scepticism about the good life and can make contemporary liberal political theory more responsive to diversity by recognising it is an intrinsically liberal commitment.

Liberal political theory should seek to sustain a distinctive approach to politics and ethics, rather than attempt to maintain an impossible even-handedness between rival conceptions of the good life. A right to be able to be significantly autonomous is the cornerstone of a liberal conception of the good life because living autonomously is culturally characteristic of a liberal society. Significant autonomy implies that agents can 'adopt personal projects, develop relationships, and accept commitments to causes, through which their personal integrity and sense of dignity and self-respect are made concrete'.[1] The rights attached to significant autonomy are not negative rights of freedom from physical constraint alone. Agents in liberal societies should not only be free from physical interference, they should also be *able* to be significantly autonomous because it is central to their flourishing in a liberal society. They therefore have a fundamental moral interest in being able to live well by developing a certain sort of

liberal character. And the political implications of the right to be able to be significantly autonomous can be explored at a meta-theoretical level in quasi-Foucauldian terms.

Foucault's work provides a rich variety of concepts which can be used to explain the interaction between ethics, politics and government. For him, the malleability of the self meant agents could apply disciplinary techniques to their character and conduct. Such 'technologies of the self' permitted agents to 'effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves'.[2] These technologies could reflect different forms of political domination or specific types of constitutive self-mastery. In this thesis, the language of technologies of the self is used as a conceptual device to illustrate that the promotion of specific liberal virtues can assist agents to configure their character in diverse ways. This is not a strictly Foucauldian interpretation as he believed liberal technologies associated with autonomy circumscribed rather than facilitated the free development of different character-configurations. Indeed, contemporary Foucauldians have contended that agents in liberal societies are only recognised as autonomous when they displayed a fixed set of publicly approved moral attitudes associated with 'character'.[3]

By contrast, a quasi-Foucauldian interpretation of the liberal doctrine explicated here is presented throughout to highlight that the inculcation of technologies of the self is actually critical to the free development of different configurations of character. Hence, the inculcation of technologies of the self inherent in significant autonomy through various processes of 'governmentality' (such as state schooling) can be regarded as

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[1] J.Raz, *Morality of Freedom*, Oxford University Press, 1986, p.154.
[2] M.Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', in L.H.Martin *et al* eds., *Technologies of the Self: a Seminar with Michel Foucault*, London, Tavistock, 1988, p.18.
[3] M.White and A.Hunt, 'Citizenship: Care of the Self, Character and Personality', *Citizenship Studies*, vol.4, no.2, 2000, p.103.

intrinsically valuable where it is associated with promoting the flourishing of agents in a liberal culture and society. Foucault's work thus furnishes us with an attractive way to understand the philosophical presuppositions which underpin state promotion of virtues of character.

Acknowledging the malleability of the self focuses the attention of perfectionist liberals on the importance of character-formation. To live well and autonomously in a liberal society, agents should be able to develop worthwhile configurations of different liberal virtues when developing their character. The promotion of liberal virtues pertaining to moral and individual character through policy instruments, such as education, can enable agents to constitute themselves as agents of good character. Within the perfectionist liberal doctrine presented here, the virtues of good character are articulated within a liberal character-ethics.

A liberal character-ethics can reflect the dual aspect of the concept of character by synthesising a range of liberal virtues that agents can display when developing different configurations of character. It is contended here, that the liberal state can and should promote the virtues found in this character-ethics within a wide range of policies to give full value to a right to be able to be significantly autonomous. Foucault's work shows that liberal states do inculcate technologies of the self, while the work of liberal thinkers such as Mill and Green shows that liberals are often unashamed of this. Of the policy areas where the promotion of virtues has greatest interest and purchase, education is especially pertinent for perfectionist liberals, as it is an area in which they are willing to directly engage in 'soulcraft'.[4] It is therefore a highly appropriate focus for exploring the implications of a distinctive perfectionist liberal doctrine based on the malleable self, the right to be able to be significantly autonomous and a liberal character-ethics.

Consideration of (state) education illustrates the links between politics and ethics which are inherent in liberal political thought, because liberals acknowledge that it '*both reflects and produces* social circumstances and values'.[5] Education generally relies upon a whole range of philosophical presuppositions relating to the malleability of the self, character-formation, and the appropriate use of some overtly coercive measures. It is therefore the critical area for exploring the nature of perfectionist liberalism, because it is where state-led efforts to shape the conduct of agents are most commonly accepted. As we have noted, within the perfectionist liberal doctrine explicated here, the right to be able to be significantly autonomous establishes the legitimacy of state intervention to guide the character-development of agents within a liberal society. State schooling would play the vital role in sustaining significant autonomy within liberal societies, because it can be explicitly directed towards the development of character. Liberal state education can thus be understood in quasi-Foucauldian terms as focusing on inculcating technologies of the self inherent in significant autonomy. Such an education would also pay particular attention to political education, as politics and democratic decision-making are crucial arenas in which agents in liberal societies participate in the evolution and revision of decisions which impact on opportunities for being significantly autonomous. Indeed, declining electoral turnout and participation in democratic processes highlight the need for political education to redress a growing 'civic deficit'.

By reflecting on education it becomes strikingly apparent that it is an area in which liberals can and do promote a distinctive ethical doctrine. But how would responsiveness to contemporary philosophical and political concerns be most attractively conceptualised within a perfectionist liberalism?

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[4] P.Digeser, *Our Politics, Our Selves?: Liberalism, Identity and Harm*, Princeton University Press, 1995.
[5] R.Jonathan, *Illusory Freedoms: Liberalism, Education and the Market*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1997, p.4.

The explication of a perfectionist liberalism that is sensitive to diversity will be cognisant of current philosophical and political disputes regarding the limits of liberal politics. The sweeping social and demographic changes that occurred within liberal democratic societies during the latter part of the last century have generated important new philosophical debates about the role of the state. In particular, the diversity of conceptions of the good life within liberal societies has led impartialist liberals to stress the need to separate politics from ethical concerns by applying principles of liberal neutrality to political decision-making. But the explosion of diversity does not require that liberals so neglect the ethical ideals with which they actually so often identify; attempting impartiality simply gives up too much that many liberals hold dear. Plural conceptions of the good life, along with the growing 'civic deficit', demands renewed consideration of the need to sustain certain virtues amongst members of liberal societies. Efforts to resolve the tensions between sensitivity to diversity and the promotion of social solidarity should therefore focus on the aspirations associated with being a member of a liberal society or culture. And this interplay between philosophical and political issues in contemporary liberal discourse reflects the intense debate about the relationship between the state and citizens revived by impartialist liberals.

Arguments amongst contemporary liberal political theorists over diversity and scepticism have become a dispute between impartialist and perfectionist liberals. As we have seen, impartialist liberals seek to disengage ethics from politics by ensuring that the state is neutral between different conceptions of the good within liberal society. By contrast, perfectionist liberals are concerned with defending the link between liberal politics and ethics through the state promotion and active support of a liberal conception of the good life. The re-evaluation of liberalism that this dispute has engendered has

especially clear implications for the limits of state intervention in the moral lives of citizens.

Impartialist liberals have drawn the limits of the liberal state much narrower than many liberals such as John Stuart Mill or T.H.Green previously proposed. Typically, they argue that such state intervention is legitimate ultimately only to maintain the basic framework of civil rights and liberties that are said to constitute a liberal polity.[6] This makes the grounds for legitimate state intervention pertaining to the moral lives of citizens extremely parsimonious. Perfectionist liberals argue that this constriction of the legitimate scope of the state *threatens* individual flourishing and the existence of a liberal society, because it does not reflect liberal ethical commitments and ideals or that the state is actually a critically useful tool for their promotion (especially within schools). Principles of neutrality have not been applied in the past by liberal political theorists, politicians or governments when making sense of the limits of the state.[7] If we consider the interaction of common liberal aspirations relating to the character of liberal citizens with liberal politics and policy-making we can see that the impartialists' unwillingness to promote a liberal conception of the good life starts to look incoherent. This is especially evident when we reflect on education and schooling.

By its very nature, education embodies a normative commitment to the development and flourishing of members of society, as well as to their academic advancement. Indeed, the delivery of academic disciplines within state schools has conventionally been founded upon the establishment of morally appropriate conduct within the classroom and the corridor. It would seem clear that all liberals who accept the need for (some) state education are committed to promoting certain values and

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[6] R.Dworkin, 'Liberalism', in M.Sandel ed., *Liberalism and its Critics*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1984; J.Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, Columbia University Press, 1996.

[7] M.Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp.259-75.

activities and hence to some form of state intervention pertaining to the character-development of agents. Impartialist liberals wary of state involvement in the moral lives of citizens could claim that the normative aspects of education are (or could still be) impartial between particular conceptions of the good, for example, being (merely) instrumentally useful for the employment prospects of children. But (even) this nevertheless implies that they subscribe to some liberal conception of flourishing within liberal society, albeit one which may be solely based on the skills required for negotiating the rigours of the capitalist labour market. Perfectionist liberals can openly affirm that education can be the focal point for promoting an intrinsically, rather than instrumentally valuable conception of flourishing. The development of a perfectionist liberal doctrine which can ground and guide political action to promote liberal virtues should therefore pay particular attention to understanding how a liberal concept of education will express these normative commitments.

Pluralism and scepticism about the good life have important implications for how liberalism should be conceived and explicated. This thesis aims to demonstrate that the possibilities for character-formation associated with the malleable self can underpin a perfectionist liberalism which is responsive to diversity while retaining distinctive liberal ethical ideals. The doctrine explicated in the thesis contends that the importance of individual flourishing in liberal societies means liberal governments have a democratic duty to uphold a positive (or social) right to be able to be significantly autonomous. This doctrine comprises a liberal character-ethics that can guide significant autonomy, and the thesis highlights that liberal political theorists can understand and explain the meta-theoretical presuppositions associated with the promotion of a liberal character-ethics in quasi-Foucauldian terms. The thesis then explores the implications which the promotion of a liberal character-ethics has for an education for significant autonomy, concentrating

particular attention on the importance of political education. The following section describes the methodological approach used to develop a non-metaphysical perfectionist liberalism and the use of quasi-Foucauldian language as an edifying meta-theoretical device.

2.   Explicating a Non-Metaphysical Perfectionist Liberalism

Liberal political thought (like all social and political theorising) is constituted by the interplay of a range of variously conceptualised concepts. Some of these concepts (such as autonomy) we may regard as central to its structure, other concepts (such as the welfare state) we may regard as either peripheral or adjacent to the central concepts.[8] These concepts 'are typically contestable concepts, in the sense that each may be interpreted in a variety of incompatible ways'.[9] Different explications (or expositions) of liberalism reflect the development of different configurations of these concepts by theorists or students of political ideas. This does not take place in a hermetic environment. Political theorists are required to 'move with confidence and skill, between social conditions and political concepts', because their reflections have a unique 'practical, action-guiding character'.[10] The movement between normative concepts and political concerns is reflected in the explicatory method used in this thesis to defend a non-metaphysical perfectionist liberalism. The success with which this method can be applied is reflected in criteria relating to the coherence, relevance and comprehensibility of projects of conceptual explication. These criteria are internal to the discourse in which concepts are explicated, but can be assessed from without by students of political theory.

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[8] ibid., p.4.
[9] D.Miller and L.Siedentop, 'Introduction', in D.Miller and L.Siedentop eds., *The Nature of Political Theory*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1983, p.10.
[10] ibid., pp.1-2.

Michael Freeden has stressed that the formulation of political theories and ideologies should highlight the 'emotional as well as the intellectual attractiveness of arguments.'[11] Conceptual explication of a distinctive perfectionist liberal doctrine should thus display logical and cultural coherence to be both emotionally and intellectually compelling. It should also be relevant to ensure its appeal as a guide for current and future liberal thinking and political action. And these explications should be comprehensible within a recognisably liberal vocabulary. This highlights that liberal political theory and liberal political ideology can be viewed as similar enterprises which share common concepts and concerns. Indeed, where metaphysical presuppositions are been discarded, '[i]deologies may well be all we have'.[12] Projects of explication can therefore represent an especially attractive way for liberals to develop robust responses to pluralism and scepticism about the good life, because they are grounded in an appeal to the inevitable influence of liberal ethical, political and cultural ideals on liberal political concepts.

Many liberal political theorists have striven towards putatively objective accounts of liberalism by proposing metaphysical accounts of universal rational principles. For these theorists projects of explication propel political theory into 'a no-man's land of political controversy'.[13] Hence they argue social and political theorising should only be pursued within 'very narrow limits' to guarantee that there can be no 'implication that theorising about society is necessarily informed or corrupted by the theorist's values.'[14] But these metaphysical accounts of political theorising rest on explications of key moral and political concepts which are drawn from a particular type of culture. The distance

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[11] M.Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, p.37.

[12] M.Freeden, 'Practising Ideology and Ideological Practices', *Political Studies*, vol.48, 2000, p.307.

[13] J.Gray, 'Political Power, Social Theory, and Essential Contestability', in D.Miller and L.Siedentop eds., *The Nature of Political Theory*, p.101. For Gray, the 'generally accepted idiom of essential contestability constitutes an impediment to further advance in social theory.' ibid., p.77.

from political practice and cultural values which a metaphysical 'view from nowhere' specifies renders political theorising a philosophically implausible enterprise. The desire to withdraw from the inevitable contestable judgements that accompany the configuring of liberal political concepts is neither a coherent liberal strategy nor an accurate representation of liberal political theory. If we accept that political theory is an inherently normative activity related to ideological exposition then we can begin to regard the task of liberal political theory somewhat differently.

The normativity associated with political theory can enable its practitioners to decontest certain concepts by developing coherent, relevant and comprehensible interpretations of their theoretical configuration. This coherentist approach mixes ideological, cultural and emotional appeal with philosophical rigour by clarifying the theorists' intentions for their theory or doctrine, without excluding the possibility of revision or reconfiguration. Perfectionist liberals who adopt this approach to theorising can view their work as a continual process of reflexive explication of configurations of concepts that liberals can and should embrace *qua* liberalism. A non-metaphysical perfectionist liberalism may thus be characterised as the on-going 'exploration of the structure and postulates of a specific historic achievement'.[15]

Liberal political theorists who embrace the normativity of their reflections should focus their attention on developing appealing configurations of the concepts inherent in liberalism. Stressing the intellectual and emotional appeal of a non-metaphysical perfectionist liberalism rebuts scepticism about the good life. Furthermore, the method of explication is extremely appropriate for exploring the practical implications of liberal political thinking. Political theory cannot be disentangled from the ideological discourses

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[14] ibid., pp.78, 100.
[15] J.Gray, 'Introduction', in J.S.Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, 1991, xxix.

and political practices in which political concepts are generated. Explications (or expositions) of liberalism therefore use political concepts 'descriptively' while also using them to pass 'value-judgements'.[16] In this respect, a perfectionist liberal doctrine can reflect certain ethical ideals that inform liberal politics and ideology which impartialists overlook or take for granted. Explication can thus highlight the interplay between the theoretical and ideological usage of liberal concepts, enabling perfectionist liberals to develop robust philosophical responses to pluralism and scepticism. So, for example, they could highlight the conceptual continuum along which a liberal concept of character influences and is influenced by the 'character-ideals' that inform liberal politics, policy and ideology, especially within the field of education.

Although liberal political theory will be constrained by existing liberal understandings of political concepts, it can also reconfigure the ideological use and understanding of those concepts, rendering them in more or less attractive forms. Explication can thus invigorate the terms of liberal normative debates by openly avowing the ideological appeal of political concepts, eliciting the ethical content latent within liberal theorising. It can also provide an evaluative function highlighting gaps and continuities between liberal ideals and liberal politics. Indeed, the different expository configurations (or strategies) adopted by liberal theorists should demonstrate their coherence, relevance and comprehensibility in relation to cultural, philosophical and political context from which they are drawn.

The analysis and exposition of political concepts must inevitably start from somewhere. Such concepts are contestable and their configuration in different theories and ideologies is heavily influenced by their context, whether that is the historical context of their evolution, the political context of their interpretation, or the general ideological

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[16] D.Miller and L.Siedentop, 'Introduction', p.9.

or cultural context of their explication. By following an explicatory methodological approach, normative political theorists can openly affirm that the interpretation of political concepts and ideas is informed by ideological preoccupations. An acceptance of this heightened normativity can render political theory more emotionally appealing and relevant to the policy implications which its outcomes may entail. It can also enable political theorists to explore the relationship between normative concepts and ideals and their political manifestation. To understand this relationship at a meta-theoretical level, they can make use of Foucault's work on technologies of the self and liberal governmentality.

As we have noted, quasi-Foucauldian concepts are a highly pertinent device for understanding and assessing the meta-theoretical presuppositions of the state-promotion of liberal ethical ideals. The non-metaphysical perfectionist liberalism developed in the thesis presupposes a malleability of the self which Foucauldian concepts can render plain. In particular, the language of technologies of the self implies that agents can modify their own character, and can be encouraged to do so by the state in specific ways. However, the use of Foucault's concepts here is 'quasi-Foucauldian' because it borrows the idea of the constitutive view of power, but rejects Foucault's pessimism about the involvement of liberal governments in the character-formation of citizens. Quasi-Foucauldian terminology is therefore adopted to clarify and illuminate the conceptual structure and presuppositions of a doctrine which decontests state involvement in the moral lives of citizens; it is not used to critique such a doctrine. This indicates that the quasi-Foucauldianism in the thesis performs an edificatory role, functioning as a strategy for justifying perfectionist liberal faith in state promotion of character-ideals in policy areas such as education, and indeed in the practice of education itself.

The perfectionist liberal doctrine presented in this thesis decontests certain liberal concepts relating to the central value accorded by perfectionist liberals to significant autonomy within liberal societies. It is also intended to signify that commitment to a degree of state intervention to promote autonomy is intrinsically appealing to all liberals *qua* liberals. The relationship between liberal political theory, autonomy and state intervention is described next.

3.   Autonomy and State Intervention

Many contemporary impartialist liberalisms can be criticised for their inability to coherently address diversity in liberal societies. Their fundamental concepts are presented as impartial between different conceptions of the good life, but nevertheless express liberal values that contradict their principled stance on impartiality. Such contradictions could be overcome if these philosophically overdetermined liberalisms were openly liberal in intent as perfectionist liberals are. Liberal theorists can and should develop doctrines which both affirm a liberal conception of the good life and acknowledge that liberalism can promote diversity. For instance, J.S.Mill affirmed the importance of a variety of 'experiments in living' to the flourishing of agents in a liberal society. Diverse modes of individual flourishing are also integral to a perfectionist liberal doctrine based on the right to be able to be significantly autonomous. This doctrine is therefore particularly concerned with how explicitly a liberal conception of the good life should be expressed within the activities of the state that pertain to the varying autonomy of liberal citizens.

Debates surrounding the limits of the state are a central feature of contemporary liberal political theory. Impartialist and perfectionist liberals both appeal to contrasting conceptions of autonomy to ground their reflections on state intervention. Impartialists

typically consider autonomy to be an intrinsically human capacity for self-direction, focusing on the freedom from constraint necessary to delimit its exercise. For them, the value of this capacity for self-direction to agents is so great that the liberal state must scrupulously maintain impartiality between the different ways in which citizens choose to exercise autonomy (save where they threaten the capacity for self-direction of their fellows). This, however, is the critical point for perfectionist liberals. For them, autonomy in liberal societies is not simply freedom from the external interference of others. Autonomy can be more or less significant, even when external interference is substantially minimised. As Joseph Raz makes clear, significantly autonomous agents are not merely able to 'choose between options', but are 'part creators of their own moral world'.[17]

While significant autonomy implies both quantitative and qualitative variation, our concern here is with its qualitative aspect, as this gives greatest meaning to the flourishing of agents in liberal societies and to the flourishing of a liberal culture. Central to liberal debates about the limits of state intervention pertaining to autonomy are the notions of a conception of the good and state neutrality between conceptions of the good.

i)   Conceptions of the good

Although many liberals in the past (such as Locke and Mill) discussed the limits of tolerance and the role of state intervention into the moral lives of citizens, it is only recently that the diversity in liberal societies has come to be associated with a plurality of 'conceptions of the good'. As the study of Aristotle makes clear, the notion of the good life, or of the good for individuals or for society are not new notions. Nonetheless,

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[17] J.Raz, *Morality of Freedom*, p.154.

reflection on diverse conceptions of the good within society is a current liberal innovation. The foremost consideration of the idea of a conception of the good is found in John Rawls' *Political Liberalism*.

Rawls argued that a 'moral power' underpinned the conceptions of the good held by agents in liberal societies. This 'capacity to form, to revise, and rationally to pursue a conception of one's rational advantage or good' was not an entirely abstract moral power, because 'persons have at any given time a determinate conception of the good that they try to achieve.' And the determinate aspect of a conception of the good broadly comprised an understanding of 'what is valuable in human life'. Consequently, conceptions of the good themselves usually comprised:

> a more or less determinate scheme of final ends, that is, ends we want to realise for their own sake, as well as attachments to other persons and loyalties to various groups and associations'. These attachments and loyalties give rise to devotions and affections, and so the flourishing of the persons and associations who are the objects of these sentiments is also part of our conception of the good. We also connect with such a conception a view of our relation to the world − religious, philosophical, and moral − by reference to which the value and significance of our ends and attachments are understood. Finally, persons' conceptions of the good are not fixed but form and develop as they mature, and may change more or less radically over the course of life.[18]

Crucially, for Rawls, if a liberal citizen is unable to exercise the capacity for a conception of the good to a minimum degree, they 'cannot be a normal and fully co-operating member of society over a complete life.'[19]

Rawls contended that as 'free persons, citizens claim the right to view their persons as independent from and not identified with any particular such conception with its scheme of final ends.'[20] And, most impartialist liberals take something like the moral

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[18] J.Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, pp.19-20.
[19] ibid., p.74. Citizens also have a 'higher-order interest' in adopting principles of justice to regulate the basic structure of society that enable them to 'promote and advance some determinate (but unspecified) conceptions of the good over a complete life, allowing for possible changes of mind and conversions from one comprehensive conception to another.' idem.
[20] ibid., p.30.

power to have and revise a conception of the good to be the defining characteristic of an agent's autonomy. The right to exercise this is therefore the key condition of freedom for liberal citizens. The liberal state should not impose, prefer or discriminate against citizens' conceptions of the good, because this impedes their freedom autonomously to conceive and pursue their own conceptions of the good. Typically, impartialist liberals propose two types of state 'neutrality' between different conceptions of the good: procedural neutrality and attempted neutrality. These are discussed next before a perfectionist liberal critique of neutrality is outlined.

ii)   Procedural neutrality

Many impartialist liberals argue that liberal policy making should maintain a principle of absolute neutrality between different conceptions of the good. For a liberal state to accomplish this it must first subscribe to rigorous procedural neutrality. That is, the decision-making procedures of liberal democratic governments must be as independent of contestable moral or ethical claims as is practically and theoretically conceivable.[21] To achieve such 'epistemic abstinence', political decisions should only be made within a framework of entirely impartial rules and procedures.

For those impartialist liberals who support procedural neutrality alone, questions of acceptable conceptions of the good are irrelevant because there can never be neutral means for adjudicating between their claims. Liberal governments can only treat citizens with respect for their capacities as free persons when the state framework pays no heed to different accounts of their conceptions of the good. This means that each citizen's conception of the good would be formally held to be of equal worth - or as of equally no

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[21] R.Dworkin, 'Liberalism', p.64.

worth - within the procedures of political decision-making.[22] However, this formal principle of equal respect could never guarantee that neutral procedures did not have non-neutral values. Indeed, applying this model to actual political decision-making is an extremely demanding requirement. Not only does procedural neutrality gloss over the value-laden and interest-based nature of politics and political decision-making, it relies on an impartialist liberal conception of the good based on the value of autonomy with respect to the capacity for having a conception of the good. Consequently, most impartialist liberals have proposed more complex models of neutrality between conceptions of the good than procedural neutrality; in particular, they argue that the liberal state can respect the capacity for a conception of the good best where its policies and procedures are guided by attempted neutrality.

iii)   Attempted (or justificatory) neutrality

Attempted neutrality entails that a liberal government should aim to avoid privileging any one particular conception of the good in the outcomes of its decision-making. It does not proscribe non-neutral policies, but tries to ensure that as far as possible these can be justified in terms of their 'neutrality of aim'. Although non-neutral policies may even be needed to attempt 'neutrality of aim', where particular conceptions of the good are inadvertently privileged this should be done in such a way as is publicly acceptable to citizens. Attempted neutrality is therefore a type of justificatory neutrality because it implies that 'institutions and policies are neutral in the sense that they can be endorsed by citizens generally'.[23]

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[22] ibid., pp.62-6.
[23] For instance, Rawls claimed that political liberalism embodied a theory of the good. The principles of justice 'are substantive and express far more than procedural values.' *Political Liberalism*, p.192.

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For impartialist liberals, attempted neutrality involves seeking common ground amongst all citizens for justifying institutions and policies. Such common ground 'is not procedurally neutral ground' since 'respect for civil liberties will necessarily have nonneutral consequences'.[24] Attempting neutrality also entails that political decision-making is neutral when it avoids discriminating *against* particular conceptions of the good. It is therefore based on the recognition that certain conceptions of the good may be privileged within political decision-making procedures, provided the outcomes of those procedures does not undermine other conceptions of the good. The justificatory aspect of attempted neutrality thus enjoins that the aim to avoid bias towards particular conceptions of the good is made and can be seen to be made. This can even be pursued through certain non-neutral (but non-perfectionist) means, such as economic redistribution, because attempting neutrality places a responsibility on government to ensure that all conceptions of the good can prosper without undue discrimination. In this respect, neutrality does not apply to policies whose object is to support the value of the capacity for autonomy. Nonetheless, non-neutral policies to sustain competition between different conceptions of the good in the cultural marketplace are only regarded as legitimate if they attempt to sustain a wider neutrality throughout civil society. However, some impartialists also claim that non-neutral 'neutrality of aim' can have unintended benefits in a liberal society.

By attempting neutrality through limited non-neutral policies a number of desirable non-neutral outcomes can also be guaranteed. First, the evaluation of the worth of ways of life is kept separate from the coercive political apparatus of the state. Furthermore, attempted neutrality can ensure that within the 'free play' of the cultural marketplace 'satisfying and valuable ways of life will tend to drive out those which are

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[24] W.Kymlicka, 'Liberal Individualism and Liberal Neutrality', *Ethics*, 99, p.884.

worthless and unsatisfying.'[25] However, if it is recognised that there are indeed more valuable ways of life then we are inevitably drawn to ask whether (in theory) democratically accountable bodies might not be better placed than the market to determine which valuable conceptions of the good should survive or be deemed worthy of extra support.

Impartialists claim that a free cultural marketplace is a necessary and perhaps sufficient precondition for valuable ways of living to supplant those less worthy. Clearly, the fears which they express regarding the fallibility of governments in pursuing non-neutral policies are prescient. But a commodified cultural marketplace can privilege profitable and marketable ways of life, rather than those that might be inherently valuable or make a worthwhile contribution to the significant autonomy of agents. Although impartialist liberals adhere to a formal principle of respect for the capacity to hold a conception of the good, it is impossible to conceive of agents being so separate from their conceptions of the good. Indeed, their autonomy and their configurations of character are inevitably underpinned by conceptions of the good. The pursuit of impartiality between different conceptions of the good is thus misguided for three reasons. First, it assumes an inappropriately abstract account of the agency of liberal citizens. Second, politics makes no sense as an activity without reference to the conceptions of the good of its participants. And, third, impartialist liberalism is itself driven by a partisan conception of the good.[26] In particular, impartialists do not explore the implications associated with valuing autonomy in a liberal society.

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[25] In a liberal society with a neutral state,... people who cannot persuade others of the value of their way of life will lose out in the competition with other conceptions of the good being advanced in the cultural marketplace, but they will not face adverse state action.' ibid., p.900.

[26] Liberalism is a moral tradition which, as MacIntyre writes, has 'its own broad conception of the good, which it is engaged in imposing politically, legally, socially and culturally wherever it has the power to do so.' A.MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, London, Duckworth, 1988, p.336.

While an 'autonomy-based justification' may be the foundation for a principle of neutrality, to uphold significant autonomy impartialist liberals would have to concede the necessity of intervention based upon 'more than respect for autonomy.'[27] For significant autonomy to be valued it should not and need not be left to the vagaries of the cultural marketplace: a 'positive defence of liberalism cannot be that it is neutral amongst preferences; it must be a defence of the *kind* of preferences liberalism produces'.[28] Foucault's analysis of liberal governmentality shows us that liberal states can and do recognise and promote a conception of the good life that they believe gives value to autonomy. Openly justifying this 'soulcraft'[29] will mean abandoning the principle if not the animating spirit of liberal neutrality.[30] It will also require the reconfiguration of many key liberal concepts to ground the explication of a perfectionist liberalism that promotes significant autonomy.

iv)   Significant autonomy and living well

The liberal state should ensure that citizens are enabled to be significantly autonomous in a range of valuable ways, because the flourishing of agents in liberal societies depends on how well they diversely choose to live. Only the liberal democratic state has sufficient resources and the democratic legitimacy to fully support the ability to live well. It can do this by implementing policies which can encourage as well as facilitate the ability to be significantly autonomous. This has especial resonance within schools, where state

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[27] A.D.Mason, 'Autonomy, Liberalism and State Neutrality', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol.40, no.160, pp.433-52.

[28] P.Neal, *Liberalism and Its Discontents*, London, Macmillan, 1997, p.28.

[29] P.Digeser, *Our Politics, Our Selves?: Liberalism, Identity and Harm*.

[30] Though, governments may adopt laws to promote the good 'it does not follow that they may enforce these laws in arbitrary and oppressive ways.' A 'nonneutral state can retain most, if not all, of the classical liberal protections'. Provided 'governments enforce a suitable complement of rights, they can try to promote the good without raising the spectre of oppression.' G.Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp.6, 110.

involvement in the socialisation of children is taken for granted by most liberals. The perfectionist liberal doctrine presented in the thesis therefore rests on a liberal conception of significant autonomy that reflects its cultural status and interaction with other liberal ethical and political concepts, particularly those associated with education.

Significant autonomy is the central concept of a perfectionist liberal doctrine because it is the distinctive feature of living well in a liberal society. Acknowledgement that autonomy has this special value in a liberal society therefore entails accepting that the lives of liberal citizens go better if they are able to invest significant autonomy with suitable ethical content. Consequently, perfectionist liberals are concerned with the extent to which agents in liberal societies are indeed able to do so.

Perfectionist liberal concern with establishing the conditions for significant autonomy is manifested in two key ways. First, it presumes a commitment to the negative rights associated with freedom from constraints, as without these rights autonomy would be impossible. Second, a commitment to the ability of citizens to be significantly autonomous justifies establishing a positive right to the abilities, environment and opportunities for each to be able to do so. Indeed, perfectionist liberals argue that this latter right is possessed by all members of a liberal society simply by virtue of their membership. That is, that as liberal citizens, they have a right to be able to live well in a society in which significant autonomy is valued above all else. This right cannot be given due consideration solely by ensuring that agents' autonomous choices are free from external interference. It also assumes that agents are equipped to be significantly autonomous, thereby generating an obligation for public bodies and institutions to promote the ability to live well. State intervention to promote ethical content associated with significant autonomy in this way does not violate a commitment to freedom from constraint, because it complements the negative rights established to facilitate autonomy.

Nevertheless, many impartialist liberals still argue that scepticism about the good life prevents liberal commitment to autonomy from justifying state intervention to promote its practice. They also propose a 'repressive hypothesis' of power, which emphasises that any state interference in the moral lives of citizens represents a serious restraint on their capacity for autonomy. This stands in direct contrast to Foucault's constitutive theory of power, which claims that state intervention is integral to constituting the ability of citizens to be autonomous.

For impartialist liberals, uncertainty about the good life and the innately repressive nature of state power justifies only the maintenance of the basic institutional conditions for the exercise of the capacity for autonomy, such as the rule of law and democratic political processes. On this reading of liberalism, liberals *qua* liberals have no business prescribing how citizens in liberal democracies choose to be autonomous beyond the requirement to respect the negative rights of their fellows. Although this does not proscribe state provision of public services or redistributive economic policies,[31] it does severely limit the scope of liberal ethical ideals. By contrast, this thesis argues that an appealing perfectionist liberal doctrine will pay particular heed to liberal ethical commitments about which it is certain and their promotion, maintaining a liberal degree of respect for ways of life it judges to be less good. A quasi-Foucauldian approach indicates that the liberal state can promote the ability to be significantly autonomous by inculcating certain technologies of the self. This means liberals can reject the 'repressive hypothesis' proposed by impartialists in favour of a more optimistic view of the limits of state intervention in the moral lives of citizens. However, Foucault's work is genealogical rather than normative. Thus, the quasi-Foucualdianism adopted here merely

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[31] For instance, Rawls supported a principle of neutrality between conceptions of the good and an egalitarian difference principle to ensure that social and economic inequalities benefit the least-advantaged groups in liberal society. J.Rawls, *Political Liberalism.*

illuminates meta-theoretical presuppositions associated with promoting significant autonomy; that autonomy still requires ethical content and state intervention still requires careful delimitation and legitimisation.

Perfectionist liberal theories state that the intrinsic value attributable to certain activities in a liberal society generates a duty on the part of the liberal state to implement policies prescribing their promotion. But many perfectionist liberals fail to account adequately for the normative content associated with significant autonomy in liberal societies. For example, by focusing on policies to enhance only 'essential' human attributes, such as agents' rational capabilities, they promote an unnecessarily monistic (and metaphysical) account of the liberal good life.[32] Moreover, perfectionist liberals rarely give sufficient attention to the critical role that the concept of character plays within liberal ethical and political thought. And where they do recognise its role, they often view its development as instrumentally valuable, for example, by describing the liberal virtues as contributory to the purposes of the liberal state.[33] The weaknesses of conventional perfectionist accounts of liberalism provide instructive lessons for perfectionist liberals seeking to develop a robust non-metaphysical defence of the ethical content which drives state intervention to promote the ability to live well. And the strength of the approach developed here lies in its explication of coherent, relevant and comprehensible arguments that relate to liberal politics, culture and education. These may potentially have universal appeal, but they are not necessarily intended to generate such appeal, nor do they hinge on metaphysical claims. Quasi-Foucauldian interpretation of these perfectionist arguments focuses on the conceptual and practical realities of liberal theorising about the malleable self, in particular, it illuminates the policies which

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[32] G.Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics.*
[33] W.Galston, *Liberal Purposes*, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

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can enable members of liberal societies to develop good character (especially, within the state education system). Acceptance of the role of state intervention to promote the ability to live well can thus be rendered best by explicating the relationship between liberal concepts of autonomy, character, politics and education.

4. Character, Politics and Education

The concept of character has received scant attention from contemporary liberal political philosophers, often being associated with the kind of neo-conservative moral declamations impartialists view as autonomy-constricting.[34] Nevertheless, character is a liberal concept with a venerable history and has conventionally been an important feature of liberal educational philosophy. Juxtaposing a perfectionist liberal concept of character with the more general liberal commitment to education can thus provide strong justification for the state promotion of liberal ethical ideals.

The concept of character is a particularly appropriate focus for the normative reflections of liberals because it is a familiar object of ethical concern to members of liberal societies. Exposition of a liberal concept of character becomes even more appealing if we acknowledge that the democratic credentials of a perfectionist liberal doctrine will hinge, at least partly, on the extent to which it is coherent, relevant and comprehensible to liberal citizens themselves.[35] However, the concept of character has not featured prominently in recent liberal political theory. Despite this theoretical abstinence, it continues to play a critical role in the ethical considerations within many aspects of liberal society. In particular, character has long been regarded as an ideal which guides the aims of state education in liberal democracies. It is therefore a concept

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[34] T.Ball, 'The Formation of Character: Mill's "Ethology" Reconsidered', *Polity*, vol.33, no.1, 2000, pp.25-48.

that clearly pertains to how liberals can delineate a conception of he good life. Indeed, one theorist has recently described how character can be viewed 'as a solid psychological invariable from which to start the construction of a conception of the good, thicker than minimalist liberal theories but vague enough to allow room for a diverse pluralism'.[36] This attempt to reconcile the concept of character with diversity is in tune with perfectionist liberal concerns, but relies on a metaphysical moral psychology. By contrast, the perfectionist liberal concept of character explicated here adopts a non-metaphysical view of character by stressing the importance of autonomy and the malleability of the self.

Emphasising autonomy and the malleable self means that character can be understood as the product of certain modifiable dispositions and traits, rather than as a fundamentally human attribute, potentiality or 'psychological invariable'. This can render it flexible enough to accommodate substantial variation in its configuration without undermining attempts to give it an overall liberal orientation. Liberal theorising that focuses on the character-development of agents in liberal societies should therefore concentrate on delineating a range of different virtues that liberals would wish agents could display in different individual configurations when being autonomous. Such virtues have both a distinctive liberal moral aspect and a distinctive liberal individual aspect. These contrasting but complementary aspects of character can be synthesised in a liberal character-ethics that provides broad criteria for their development. This ethics would comprise a variety of virtues which the liberal democratic state can and should actively promote to enable its citizens to live well. From a quasi-Foucauldian perspective, promotion of these liberal virtues can be understood as the inculcation of liberal

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[35] C.Bertram, 'Political Justification, Theoretical Complexity, and Democratic Community', *Ethics*, 107, 1997, pp.563-83.

technologies of the self. This indicates that (in theory, at least) the use of state power to promote a liberal character-ethics is not necessarily repressive, but can be constitutive of the ability to live well autonomously.

Autonomy has a great many implications for the dual aspects of character. Indeed, significant autonomy is central to the development of character. Perfectionist liberals would not ascribe moral or individual character to someone who was not autonomous in any sense (nor would they attribute autonomy to an agent unable to display some degree of moral character). Philosophically speaking, autonomy is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition of achieving good character because it is pivotal to the ability of agents in liberal societies to develop their own configurations of moral and individual character. It is not a sufficient condition for achieving good character, because that hinges on the actual manifestation of some configuration of the liberal virtues. The liberal virtues appropriate to moral character centre on civility, conscience and restraint, while those appropriate to individual character centre on competence, integrity, commitment and imagination. So for instance, virtues such as politeness, forgiveness and public-spiritedness are associated with moral character, while virtues such as professionalism, sincerity, liberality and creativity are associated with individual character.

Agents in liberal societies should be able to develop their character by autonomously exhibiting different configurations of a range of liberal virtues. However, it is unlikely that they could accomplish this untutored. The central paradox at the heart of Rousseau's *Emile* highlights that an agent's significant autonomy requires careful

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[36] M.Mangini, 'Character and Well-being: Towards an Ethic of Character', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol.26, no.2, 2000, p.79.

cultivation.[37] In fact, it is clear that the 'Emile paradox' is not a paradox at all. The development of autonomy and character is necessarily linked to a range of disciplinary techniques, many of which are inculcated through the use of state power. The inculcation of liberal technologies of the self is not a random or speculative process. As Foucault made clear, a host of political technologies (such as the rule of law, education or medicine) can lead directly to the inculcation of certain technologies of the self.[38] Liberal states can utilise these different political technologies to establish specific types of constraint and opportunity which shape how citizens choose to develop their character. Although the assumed efficacy of political technologies raises the spectre of political repression, state inculcation of technologies of the self would be subject to liberal principles of policy-making which established democratic control and legitimisation. The perfectionist liberal doctrine presented here carefully conceptualises and justifies the use of political technologies in terms of their role in promoting the ability of citizens to live well. Policy-making principles would constrain the use of these technologies within a well-defined framework of liberal policy areas. For perfectionist liberals, not everything that they regard as ethically valuable needs to be politically relevant. In a liberal society, guidance on how agents can develop their character is drawn from (and may be promoted through) a wide range of sources throughout civil society. So, for instance, there may be little need for state intervention to promote some activities (such as, social clubs or newspaper publishing). Of those activities regarded as ethically valuable within liberal society which are politically relevant, the education of children is conventionally viewed as the most appropriate area for delimiting some overt coercive measures of 'soulcraft'.

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[37] This paradox is so named because it forms the centrepiece of the influential educational philosophy found in Rousseau's *Emile*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979.

Liberal technologies of the self may be inculcated within a number of different policy areas,[39] but perhaps the most important and ethically complex of these is education. Indeed, it is in this field that the nature of autonomy and the malleability of the self have conventionally received the greatest attention from liberal political philosophers. Moreover, one liberal philosopher of education has recently stressed that 'education as a practice requires an ethical interpretation of liberalism for its direction, if it is to foster autonomy'.[40] Perfectionist liberals are thus better placed than their impartialist counterparts to 'provide a framework within which the aims of public education can be explicated without internal contradiction'.[41]

Education has a highly distinctive relationship with perfectionist liberal concepts of autonomy and character. In particular, the melding of liberal ethical and educational ideals in the concept of character leads us to consider the type of liberal education for significant autonomy that can be promoted by the liberal state. Some educationalists fear that the inculcation of technologies of the self within state schools often takes place through illiberal means which are harmful to autonomy (such as, overtly disciplinary pedagogy).[42] The value attributable to significant autonomy may therefore proscribe certain types of pedagogy, but it is also suggested here that in liberal state schools and classrooms the inculcation of technologies of the self through the use of some structured methods can take place within a learning environment imbued with respect for the developing autonomy of children. Indeed, the importance of the virtues associated with

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[38] M.Foucault, 'The Political Technology of Individuals', in L.H.Martin *et al* eds., *Technologies of the Self: a Seminar with Michel Foucault.*

[39] As we will see later, a minimal social morality could be maintained through the legal proscription of certain offensive acts deemed to be a public nuisance, public advertisements can be used to promote good health and state support for the Arts can contribute to the tastes of liberal citizens.

[40] R.Jonathan, *Illusory Freedoms,* p.13.

[41] ibid., p.203.

[42] C.Winch and J.Gingell, *Key Concepts in the Philosophy of Education,* Routledge, London, 1999, pp.64-5.

significant autonomy to individual flourishing in a liberal society, focuses the minds of perfectionist liberals on the role that moral and (especially) political education play in promoting a conception of the good life based on a liberal character-ethics.

Amongst the virtues attached to good moral character, the political virtues of good citizenship are crucial for agents in liberal societies to be able to sustain their own configurations of character. Responsible political engagement is central to the democratic evolution of liberalism itself, providing an opportunity for citizens to develop their own character and to contribute to evolving interpretations of a liberal character-ethics within liberal society. A programme of liberal political education that promotes relevant liberal participative and deliberative political virtues within a suitable learning environment can therefore play a prominent role in enabling children to become good citizens in later life. This ethical ideal has great resonance at this time, given the apparent disaffection with liberal democratic politics which many young people display. Within education, a liberal character-ethics can therefore have both an advocacy and a critical function, highlighting the ideas and activities which should be valued as contributory to responsible political engagement and casting doubt on those which do not. In the UK, the recent introduction of a statutory programme of political education in England represents a compelling opportunity for perfectionist liberals to critique an important and historic example of state intervention in the moral lives of citizens.

Overall, education should promote a range of virtues inherent in both the moral and individual aspects of a liberal character-ethics. This will generate broad requirements for an education for significant autonomy in liberal state schools, and a particular type of political education. The liberal character-ethics at the centre of this liberal education can be used to evaluate actual state schooling, especially the recent introduction of

citizenship education in England. The explication of the perfectionist liberal doctrine and its application within education found in the following chapters is summarised next.

5.   Summary of Chapters

The structure of the thesis reflects the progression of the argument that an attractive perfectionist liberalism should be concerned with promoting a liberal character-ethics, especially within an education for significant autonomy. The second chapter begins by focusing on the vital relationship between moral character, autonomy and education, arguing that the right to be able to be significantly autonomous entails state intervention which (above all) promotes the development of a liberal ideal of moral character. Agency in a liberal society can have no meaning where agents did not possess sufficient moral character to be significantly autonomous. In turn, autonomy is a necessary condition of the development of moral character. Developing individual character is also a vital feature of living well autonomously in a liberal society. Individual character hinges on the giving of colour to the unfolding of an agent's life, through their enhancement and exercise of performative or appreciative virtues in diverse social practices, such as art, science, business or sport. This aspect of character is often strongly associated with specifically liberal ethical ideals, entailing that members of a liberal society should give particular care to deciding in which social practices they choose to participate. Indeed, agents should give great care to the development of both their moral and individual character.

For members of a liberal society to develop character they should be able to draw appropriate ethical guidance on its development from a variety of sources within that society. The liberal ethical ideals inherent in the two aspects of character can therefore structure a framework within which a range of liberal virtues may be outlined. This

'liberal character-ethics' can provide the resources to conceptualise normative prescriptions pertaining to state promotion of individual flourishing.

As we have seen, impartialist liberalism does not adequately account for the relationship between liberal politics and a liberal conception of the good life. By contrast, perfectionist liberals have developed strong justifications for the active promotion of certain liberal ideals by the state. However, the promotion of these is often tied to a metaphysical conception of the good.[43] And where perfectionist liberals propose less metaphysically strenuous accounts of the good life, there is either underdetermination of its ethical content or its commitments are tied too closely to instrumental purposes of the state.[44]

Accepting state intervention to promote a liberal character-ethics but rejecting some of the available perfectionist justifications for such intervention leaves the task of carefully conceptualising the state-sponsored enhancement of citizens' autonomy. The chapter concludes by indicating that the theoretical relationship between political intervention to promote a liberal character-ethics and significant autonomy has been clearly expressed in Michel Foucault's work on liberal governmentality. State promotion of a liberal character-ethics can thus be understood as the inculcation of certain liberal technologies of the self (or liberal virtues) amongst citizens to assist their efforts to become significantly autonomous. This 'edificatory' strategy is a quasi-Foucauldian approach because it highlights that state intervention in the moral lives of citizens is not necessarily repressive as impartialist liberals and some Foucauldians suggest, but constitutive of the possibility of the free development of character. Although the scope for such intervention requires careful justification and delimitation, it can promote

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[43] See G.Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics.*
[44] J.Raz, *Morality of Freedom*; and W.Galston, *Liberal Purposes.*

diverse ways of living well, as agents in liberal societies can apply technologies of the self in a multitude of individually distinct but valuable ways.

The legitimacy of a liberal doctrine that focuses on the promotion of a liberal character-ethics is substantiated in the third chapter. This chapter traces the genealogy of the concept of character within the British liberal tradition to vindicate its rehabilitation as a robust perfectionist liberal response to impartialism. The chapter begins by outlining how John Locke's thought reflected the sort of moral character needed to cope with life in a liberal-bourgeois society. A concern with the virtues required to flourish within a liberal society is also evident in the work of David Hume and Adam Smith. Hume stressed the malleability of the self, indicating that the moral virtues could be contrived by human artifice, especially though education and laws. Indeed, the importance of moral education was acknowledged by Hume and Smith, with the latter emphasising how the growth of imaginative sympathy and self-command could contribute to the development of moral character. Nevertheless, none of these early liberal moralists acknowledged the role which individual character could play in a liberal conception of individual flourishing.

Nineteenth century liberals began to focus their attention on the 'the cultivation of character' as 'an end in itself'.[45] In particular, John Stuart Mill highlighted that individuality and 'experiments in living' were major sources of individual and social progress within liberal societies. Moreover, allied to the moral virtues they were critical to the development of character. To encourage this character-development the state could become an 'educative democracy' by establishing public schooling, wider political participation and cooperative industrial principles. However, British Idealist critics of

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[45] S.Collini, 'The Idea of 'Character' in Victorian Political Thought', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society'*, 5th Series, (35), 1985, pp.42, 46.

Mill's indirect utilitarianism claimed his philosophy did not acknowledge the communal origins of those activities which were conducive to the development of character. For them, character-development could only occur where citizens contributed to the social good. Thus, T.H.Green claimed the state had a responsibility to remove the barriers preventing all citizens from making autonomous worthwhile contributions to the social good.

A genealogy of the liberal concept of character does not furnish perfectionist liberals with straightforward answers to the impartialist challenge. For instance, Green's Idealist concept of character is metaphysically grounded and hence is not regarded here as suitable to underpin a liberal conception of the good life which is sensitive to diversity. Nonetheless, the thought of those liberal thinkers surveyed indicates that character is very much a legitimate liberal concern and one which can provide an indication of the ethical content associated with a perfectionist liberalism.

Having established the liberal credentials of the concept of character in Chapter Three, the technologies of the self inherent in autonomy and the structure and content of a contemporary liberal character-ethics are conceptualised in Chapter Four. The promotion of the liberal character-ethics explicated here does not imply that character is developed by accepting all the given norms in liberal society. But neither is character an altogether slippery indefinable concept. Agents can develop different configurations of the liberal virtues associated with good character that can be made coherent, relevant and comprehensible within the overall framework of a liberal character-ethics. A liberal character-ethics thus grounds the possibility of new configurations of moral and individual character. The development of moral character presumes that when facing moral dilemmas, agents manifest different virtues according to their own interpretation of their circumstances and dispositions. By contrast, the development of individual

character presumes that agents manifest generic and specific virtues appropriate to the various types of social practice that structure their opportunities to flourish within liberal societies. Overall, an ethics of moral character is primarily constituted by liberal social, moral and political virtues; and an ethics of individual character is primarily constituted by liberal social, moral, cultural and intellectual virtues.

The achievement of good character builds on display of certain key liberal virtues (especially, those which relate to good citizenship, such as restraint), but is not subject to tight prescription. Achieving good character is a highly sophisticated and complex activity that takes into account a wide range of circumstances and virtues. Scope for diverse configurations of character also entails that interpretation of a liberal character-ethics must be handled with a great degree of sensitivity, and state promotion of a liberal character-ethics must be executed with care, especially given the repressive possibilities impartialists and conventional Foucauldians associate with liberal governmentality. To accomplish this effectively it should be guided by ethical principles relating to the range and purposes of liberal politics and policy-making. Perfectionist liberals can therefore codify appropriate liberal principles of policy-making to guide policies that aim to constitute the ability to live well. The principles of liberal policy-making introduced here are: a principle of equal respect; the priority of autonomy; a perfectionist principle of valuable activities; a perfectionist principle of legitimate intervention; and a commitment to moral and political education. These principles can guide a wide range of policies in liberal democracies, but have particularly great import within the education system.

Chapter Five explores an education for significant autonomy. Liberal education has conventionally been delivered in the shape of a character education that viewed physical education and direct moral instruction as the key to character-development. However, it is argued here that a conventional character education is inadequate for

inculcating the technologies of the self that are integral to developing the ability to be significantly autonomous. In particular, excessively disciplinary teaching styles are not necessarily conducive to the autonomous development of different configurations of character. One interesting radical alternative to a conventional character-education which has autonomy as its central aim is the progressive educational thought of the de-schooling movement. These educationalists argued that children should be given the opportunity to learn what they chose and with whom at their own leisure. However, the pedagogical prescriptions of many de-schoolers cannot support the content of an education for significant autonomy and are likely to be impracticable and anti-democratic. In particular, de-schoolers underestimate the force of the 'Emile paradox' - that learning presupposes the use of (at least some) disciplinary pedagogical techniques.

The development of different character-configurations in schools assumes that the promotion of liberal virtues takes place in a suitable learning environment. To promote the autonomous development of character, such a learning environment would maintain a careful balance between democracy and discipline. This implies that a liberal education requires careful explication and interpretation, and skilful delivery by teachers within classrooms. The philosophical presuppositions of an education for significant autonomy based on the promotion of a liberal character-ethics may be edifyingly understood from a quasi-Foucauldian perspective.

The aptness of the language of technologies of the self is extremely apparent when considering the nature of public schooling. Processes of education are where coercive measures of state intervention to promote significant autonomy can have the greatest direct impact on the malleable self of future citizens. Within an education for significant autonomy the careful use of some disciplinary methods will enable children to begin to constitute their character. The stress on autonomy and democracy illustrates

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that education has major implications for citizenship, also indicating that an appropriate political education would be an especially important means for promoting the ability to live well. Ideal liberal pedagogical principles for political education are described, with especial attention given to the promotion of the deliberative political virtues that can shape citizens' own explications of their autonomy in the public sphere. Indeed, it is argued that the relationship between moral character and democratic politics is a central liberal preoccupation.[46] The role of education in the development of individual character is then considered, before the final chapter reflects on issues surrounding the recent introduction of political education in the English education system.

The introduction of *Citizenship* in English schools was the result of a prolonged campaign for political education in schools accompanied by concern about a perceived 'civic deficit' in British society.[47] The curriculum orders for *Citizenship* comprise a comprehensive programme of learning outcomes and objectives relating to virtues of good citizenship. That this be given statutory status within the English National Curriculum is an important proviso because if it were not then (as has previously been the case) political education in English schools may be likely to dissipate into other areas, particularly voluntary or charity work.

The principles of the *Citizenship* orders in England are clearly related to the ideal liberal political education outlined in Chapter Five. Nevertheless, the focus in the *Citizenship* course material is on community involvement, rather than responsible political engagement. The thesis therefore draws to a close by discussing concepts and ideals of citizenship and education inherent in *Citizenship*, concluding that these are subject to great tension between the civic-republicanism and civic-individualism which

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[46] N.Rosenblum, 'Democratic Character and Community: The Logic of Congruence', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol.2, no.1, 1994, pp.67-97.

characterises 'Third Way' politics in the UK. Perfectionist theorising can thus throw significant light on the often strained relationship between politics, philosophy and education. For perfectionist liberals committed to the right to be able to be significantly autonomous, the interplay of these tensions provides a salutary reminder of the political contingencies associated with shaping and promoting a liberal conception of the good life.

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[47] I.Davies, 'What has Happened in the Teaching of Politics in Schools in England in the Last Three Decades, and Why?', *Oxford Review of Education*, vol.25, nos.1&2, 1999, pp.125-40.

Chapter 2: Character and Perfectionist Liberalism

There are two aspects of the concept of character at the heart of a perfectionist liberalism based on the right to be able to be significantly autonomous: moral character and individual character. These aspects of character are ethical ideals which comprise intrinsically valuable virtues. In liberal societies, moral and individual character can only be developed by significantly autonomous agents. For agents to be significantly autonomous, they should manifest those virtues associated with these different aspects of character. Perfectionist liberals could present these virtues within a liberal virtue-ethics, but this might imply a metaphysical conception of the self and a determinate set of virtues. A liberal character-ethics can acknowledge the existence of plural conceptions of the good in liberal societies, providing agents with appropriate guidance for the development of diverse configurations of character. The role of the liberal state in promoting such a liberal conception of the good life is then discussed here by examining some prominent perfectionist liberal justifications for such state intervention. The chapter then concludes by indicating that the Foucauldian language of 'technologies of the self' represents an edifying meta-theoretical perspective from which to justify the state promotion of a liberal character-ethics.

1.   The Concept of Moral Character

Character is generally distinguished from other related concepts (such as personality and the self) by its close relationship to ethics and morality. Indeed, the entry for character in the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* offers the simple suggestion that it should be viewed as 'a person's moral nature.'[48] Nevertheless, for perfectionist liberals, the concept

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[48] R.Crisp, 'Character', in T.Honderich ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 1995, pp.129-30.

would not be interpreted quite so straightforwardly. While agents possess an ability to display character in their moral conduct, they also possess individually recognisable sets of character-traits that give a distinctive shape to the course of their lives. This suggests that there are two different dimensions of character. One aspect of character implies the moral propriety of an agent's dispositions, while the other implies the particularity of their traits. These two aspects can be best viewed as concepts of *moral* character and *individual* character. This section discusses the origins of the concept of moral character and its relationship with autonomy, politics and education, concluding that moral character is inherent in the idea of significant autonomy. The subsequent section will then describe how this is also the case for individual character.

i)   The origins of the concept of character

The origins of the Western concept of character are found in the Homeric Epics.[49] These great works entertained audiences and transmitted social understandings of moral approbation, providing the moral foundations for Ancient Greek society and culture. Indeed, the heroes and scenes depicted by Homer have played a formative role in the development of the Western moral and aesthetic consciousness. And, the idea of character continues to fulfil a similar role within literature and debates in civil society about complex and commonplace issues of moral conduct. Nevertheless, there are vital differences between contemporary liberal conceptions of moral character and those found in Ancient Greece. An agent's character in Homer was constituted by the responsibilities of their social status within an aristocratic warrior society. Consequently, approbation of their character was based on how well they exercised the *arete*

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[49] Homer, *The Iliad*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1987; and *The Odyssey*, Oxford University Press, 1980.

('excellence') appropriate to their *ergon* (social role or 'characteristic activity').[50] Unlike liberal understandings of character, there was little autonomy attributed to human conduct. In Homer, '[e]valuative questions *are* questions of social fact', that is, to be good is to be noble.[51] Although the Homeric view of character does not accord with latter-day liberal conceptions, the evolution of subsequent Greek concepts of character nonetheless provides an interesting introduction to a perfectionist liberal understanding of character.

Humanism and the growth of moral responsibility

Following Homer, successive generations of Greek poets began to emphasise the idea that agents had moral obligations beyond those owed to the aristocratic class system, fate or the decrees of the Gods.[52] Individual qualities essential to the prosperity and stability of the developing Greek city-states were increasingly valued, leading poets such as Xenophanes to link *arete* with the political skills adhering to responsible rule.[53] Indeed, many poets identified the *agathos* (good man) with the *agathos polites* (good citizen). The increased involvement of the poorer classes in the armed forces and their participation in deliberations about civic matters cemented this link between good moral character and good citizenship, eventually spurring radical re-evaluation of the traditional Homeric view of character.

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[50] R.D McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates,* Indiana, Hackett, 1994; T.Irwin, *Classical Thought,* Oxford University Press, 1989.

[51] A.MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 2nd ed., London, Duckworth, 1985, p.123. Social certitude meant Homer's characters could side-step deliberation on the right choice of action and immerse themselves in uninhibited action. Although they were capable of recognising immoral decisions *post hoc*, their shame is always based on their having dishonoured the moral code of heroic society.

[52] In Euripides' *Electra*, Orestes proclaims that 'only by conduct and by character should you judge the quality of a human being'. Euripides, 'Electra' in *Ten Plays*, New York, New American Library, 1998, p.179.

[53] A.W.H.Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility*, Oxford, 1962, p.74.

Central to these changing ideas of good moral character was the contention that agents could act out of the character assigned by their social status.[54] This belief originated with the responsible political participation of the lower classes. Moral character and good citizenship was thus thought to be malleable or indeed 'learnable' from advice given by tutors and elders, or from within an agent's own conscience. By acting independently agents could also behave in a way that was more in keeping with their own moral dispositions, rather than those assigned by their social status. Moreover, character could be understood as a product of self-conscious choice, implying that humans could autonomously contribute to the development of their own self. Having accepted the malleability of the self, poets and philosophers then proposed that the *polis* (state) should discipline or educate citizens to act in morally approved ways. Moral character need not be determined by social class or individual vigour alone, it could be systematically inculcated via education and training. The first philosophical exploration of these vital developments is found in Plato's *Republic*.

Plato: Education for good character

Plato sought to establish that humans could discipline themselves in order to display *agathe psuche* (good qualities of the soul). Drawing an analogy between the ideal political constitution and the ideal human soul, he argued that the maintenance of the social system (like the human soul) required that different classes (or qualities) were trained to fulfil specific roles. Each of these classes/qualities embodied specific virtues necessary for the flourishing of the state/soul. While humans had certain natural aptitudes for specific roles, they required correct education to develop the characteristic virtues of

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[54] This is, of course, the implication of the central plot of Sophocles' *Antigone*, indicating that the tragic vision of the Greek poets exhibited sensitivity to a kind of moral pluralism. *Antigone*, London, Dover, 1993.

their class.[55] Above all, Plato stressed that self-discipline was central to the stability (justice or harmony) of the state. A notion which was especially true in relation to the good soul: 'Where each of the constituent parts of an individual does its own job, the individual will be moral and do *his* job.'[56] Such self-discipline in an individual (as for the state) could only be the product of appropriate education.

Educating the soul entailed bringing each of its parts into harmony with the other under the rule of the rational part. In this respect, the agent with the greatest *agathe psuche* would be the one who made 'the best blend of physical exercise and culture, and who applies them to the mind in the right proportions'.[57] Education was not only crucial to the development of good moral character it also had a wider significance because political systems were dependent on the 'characters of the community's inhabitants'.[58] Hence, a Platonic education for good moral character had the nature of the political system as its highest object. The link between politics and ethics was therefore bridged through education, with the political system being improved in proportion to the effectiveness of the educational system.[59]

For Plato, it was essential that children were involved in appropriate activities because where children 'play in the proper manner right from the start, and their cultural education introduces them to the orderliness of law... lawfulness accompanies them in everything they do, guides their growth, and corrects any aspect of the community which

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[55] Although Plato argued that only a ruling-class consisting of philosopher-kings should be fully educated, he acknowledged that all human dispositions were susceptible to training and that the *capacity* for reason and understanding transcended gender and class. Plato, *Republic*, Oxford University Press, 1994.

[56] ibid., p.140.

[57] ibid., p.114.

[58] In the *Republic*, Socrates asks, 'If one type of character outweighs the rest... then don't you think it draws all the other types with it?' ibid., p.279.

[59] An ideal educational system would produce 'people of good character; and then people of good character, if they in turn receive the benefits of an education of this kind, become even better than their predecessors in every respect, but especially... in that they produce better children.' ibid., p.128.

was formerly aberrant.'[60] In fact, the overall aim of an ideal education should be to substitute habitual good conduct for the injunctions of the law. In Plato's 'well-governed community a genuine legislator' would not need to 'occupy himself with laws and administration'. Education would ensure that some laws would be 'obvious and others will follow automatically from habits the citizens will already have acquired.'[61]

While he recognised the capacity for self-discipline, for Plato, the ideal education system would not aim towards producing agents able to live well in a liberal democracy. Plato rejected democracy because (among other reasons) it would reflect and reproduce 'democratic character' amongst citizens. Agents of democratic character gave themselves up to any passing desire.[62] Democracy was therefore characterised by an 'undiluted freedom' that resulted in lawlessness and social and political instability. It could neither generate harmonious individuals nor sustain a harmonious political community.[63] Despite Plato's hostility to democracy, his vision of the vital relationship between politics, ethics and education still influences normative political theory. Indeed, justifications for education in liberal democracies rest on similar grounds to those first established by Plato. A liberal society and its political system are heavily dependent on the dispositions of its members to contribute to their own flourishing and the flourishing

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[60] ibid., p.129. In abiding the law, children rediscover 'those apparently trivial rules which their predecessors had completely lost... For example, that one should be silent in the presence of people older than oneself. Younger people should also give up their seat to elders, stand up when they enter the room, and look after their parents. Then there are the rules about hairstyle, clothing, footwear, and in general the way one presents oneself, and so on...' idem.

[61] ibid., p.132.

[62] The man of democratic (or egalitarian) character 'indulges in every passing desire that each day brings. One day he gets drunk at a party, the next day he's sipping water and trying to lose weight; then again, he sometimes takes exercise, sometimes takes things easy without a care in the world, and sometimes he's apparently a student of philosophy. At frequent intervals, he gets involved in community affairs, and his public speaking and other duties keep him leaping around here, there, and everywhere. If military types arouse his admiration, he inclines towards the military life; if it's businessmen, he's all for business.' ibid., p.301.

[63] ibid., pp.302-5.

of a liberal culture. To help sustain individual flourishing in a liberal society, perfectionist liberals should pay close attention to the character-development of liberal citizens.

Impartialist liberals are uncomfortable with associating politics and policy so closely with ethics and morality. Nevertheless, if the moral interests of agents in liberal societies are tied to the development of a particular type of character, they can be served through the positive involvement of the state in the constitution of their self. Indeed, this is a presupposition of many policies implemented by liberal governments, especially those associated with education. State involvement in the development of moral character can also facilitate broad intelligible standards of conduct within a liberal society, providing ethical guidance for agents, in particular, an education for good moral character could enable agents in liberal societies contribute to their own flourishing and the flourishing of a liberal society. The link between liberal politics and ethics can therefore be most coherently explicated by examining the relationship between the concept of character, significant autonomy and education.

ii)   Liberal moral character

The concept of moral character can be used by perfectionist liberals to synthesise their aspirations for ideal moral conduct. It signifies that agents may refresh and reform liberal normative commitments, perhaps by directly challenging or by subtly refining conventional liberal understandings of ethics, politics and morality. We might say that character is therefore a concept which indicates how agents in liberal societies structure the moral worth of their lives. The concept of liberal moral character thus represents a powerful liberal ethical ideal. And, evaluations of moral character provide an indication of its position within the conceptual framework of a perfectionist liberal doctrine.

Evaluation of moral character is based on the assumption that the self is malleable. An agent's character can therefore be conceptualised as a theoretical construct relating to the interaction of a wide range of continually evolving dispositions, with constantly changing circumstances. Although agents may be born with certain psychological or biological tendencies, these are usually mediated through socially and individually constructed dispositions. However, this does not mean that moral character is constituted by dispositions that are commonly approved or disapproved. If moral character were simply a product of people's attitudes or their likes and dislikes, we would have difficulty making sound judgements about the intrinsic value of ethical conduct. For instance, we can say that we disapprove of an agent's offhand manner, but we can also acknowledge that they are of good moral character, because they meet their many obligations to family, friends and so on. So how are evaluations of moral character to be distinguished from our immediate reactions to an agent's conduct?

Moral character is constituted by something like a moral overview of the whole spread of a life. This cannot be understood by reference to socially agreeable dispositions or an additive index of prescribed virtues. An agent's moral character develops in relation to a far greater range of dispositions, virtues and circumstances than is apparent in immediate perceptions of the dispositions of agent *a* or *b*. It refers to the possession and display of a range of moral virtues over a period of time, many of which will be circumstance-dependent. No one agent is likely to possess or display all the virtues associated with good moral character. These can be combined in as many ways as there are individual lives. Evaluating these different combinations inevitably enjoins a substantial degree of understanding of an agent's situation and circumstances. Consequently, perceptions of agreeableness cannot ground moral approbation. We may

doubt the moral character of those agents who are disagreeable, but we cannot categorically state that they have a bad moral character without conducting a balanced assessment of the virtues evinced throughout the conduct of their life. But how should perfectionist liberals regard the development of moral character? And, how does this relate to agents themselves?

Both aspects of the dual concept of character may be viewed as ethical ideals as much as ideas. For instance, '[e]ach of us *is* a "character" in the colloquial sense that he or she is a unique configuration of neuroses', but '[e]ach of us also *has* character, something quite different.'[64] This implies that good moral character is worthy of esteem because of the display of some ideal configuration of virtues thought to be inherent in its development. Liberal moral character is developed when the moral conduct of agents evinces virtues which perfectionist liberals would (or could) associate with good moral character. Within a perfectionist liberal doctrine based on the right to be able to be significantly autonomous, moral character reflects virtues associated with living well.

If moral character is conceptualised as a perfectionist liberal ideal its link with significant autonomy becomes clearer, in particular, it can be interpreted as an ideal which guides the choices made by agents. This has two key implications for agents in liberal societies. First, it suggests that character is an achievement; it is not attainable without some difficulty or effort. It is therefore achieved autonomously, but not alone, because significant autonomy is premised on a range of relationships with other agents. In addition, the impact of character on an agent's life is cumulative in a somewhat circular manner: to have moral character, agents must have displayed it in fashioning their character. This again presumes that they will have developed character

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[64] R.J.McShea, 'Morality and Human Nature', in *Philosophy*, Temple University Press, 1990, p.232.

autonomously; indeed, autonomy is a necessary feature of a liberal concept of moral character.

Autonomy and Moral Character

The relationship between autonomy and moral character is central to the perfectionist liberal doctrine presented in this thesis. Although agents may be predisposed towards having a particular moral character, they are nonetheless: (a) responsible for that character and their actions and decisions pertaining to it; (b) liable and susceptible to moral approbation with regard to the quality of their character; and (c) able to choose good moral character over a bad character. The role of choice and responsibility here illustrates that autonomy is a necessary condition for the development of moral character. In turn, good moral character is inherent in the ability to live well autonomously. Given the malleability of the self, analysis of the relationship between autonomy and moral character should therefore focus on the contribution that appropriate autonomy-enhancing social conditions make to significant autonomy and the development of character. Aristotle's understanding of the relationship between character, choice and socialisation is a good starting-point for exploration of the ability to become significantly autonomous.

Aristotle viewed character as the product of choice and moral socialisation, stressing that the choice of the most excellent life possible and the means to achieve it was above all a question of 'what sort of character is needed if sound choices are to be made.'[65] Indeed, he argued that moral character itself is or must be chosen.[66] However, the disposition to choose to be of good moral character could only be induced through

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[65] J.O Urmson, *Aristotle's Ethics*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1985, p.22.

appropriate training and habituation.[67] This could take its cue from the actions of those thought to possess good moral character, but its full development required careful cultivation by the state.

Agents should continually choose what is good by acting as agents of good moral character acted. The example that agents of good moral character would set would also ensure that the activities and practices in which they chose to engage would be those that were most choiceworthy and appealing.[68] Autonomy was a necessary presupposition of the development of character, 'for our characters are determined by our choice of what is good or evil'. But autonomy was also constituted by 'a certain moral state'.[69] Agents of good moral character would by their very nature make manifest to others the fact that they were good judges. The development of good moral character accompanied the growth of significant autonomy and vice versa. To ensure that this could occur without undue internal conflict, agents should have been socialised into making moral rectitude effortless as children. Hence for Aristotle, the capacity for autonomous choice and judgement should be disciplined at an early age through trained habituation directed towards excellence of character.[70]

Education, habituation and socialisation were necessary to guide the development of autonomous choice and moral character. But they were constitutive rather than repressive of the possibility of living well. However, Aristotle's view of the relationship between autonomy, character and education was based on his metaphysical biology. The

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[66] Aristotle, *Ethics*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976, p.117. Sarah Broadie explores the cognitive issues and implications of Aristotle's ascription of character as voluntary in her excellent study *Ethics with Aristotle*, Oxford University Press, 1991.
[67] Aristotle, *Ethics*, pp.91-2.
[68] It then follows that 'the question 'how shall I live well' leads to the question 'how shall I become a good judge''. S.R.L.Clark, *Aristotle's Man*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1975, p.97.
[69] Aristotle, *Ethics*, pp.117, 205.
[70] ibid., pp.337-8.

self was not malleable, but an objectively knowable potentiality (or essence) which required elicitation.

Aristotle claimed that autonomous choice would ideally be exercised in strict accordance with dictates of reason so humans could realise their essential nature as beings with a rational soul.[71] Aristotelian legislators could therefore 'study the soul' to derive principles of education which were conducive to the progressive realisation of latent pre-existing potential for character. The non-metaphysical liberalism explicated here rejects such a metaphysical conception of the self, but Aristotle's conception of the relationship between autonomy and moral character remains a vital touchstone for configuring its ethical ideals.

Autonomy and liberalism

The concept of autonomy commonly holds a central place in liberal doctrines. In fact, it has been described as the most appropriate 'liberal foundation for a political morality', because it is an 'ultimate value' - a 'non-derivative value' - that is, the necessary reference-point for the justification of all other liberal values.[72] Nevertheless, there are many competing interpretations of how it should be conceptualised. It can be seen as a capacity for a particular type of (invariably rational) thought or as an ethical value of personal development. This thesis conceptualises autonomy as in terms of its significance in generating valuable 'projects, relationships and causes'[73] within a liberal society or culture.

Autonomy can go badly or it can go well for agents living within liberal societies. For them to flourish in a liberal society agents must be able to become significantly

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[71] ibid., p.76.
[72] J.Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, pp.2-3, 177, 200.
[73] ibid., p.154.

autonomous by having 'a commitment to projects, relationships and causes which affects the kind of life that it is worth living'.[74] The development of good moral character is an essential counterpart to this ability to live well autonomously. Moreover, significant autonomy in liberal societies in turn contributes to an agent's moral character by facilitating diverse instances of its configuration. It entails 'a normative creation, a creation of new values and reasons'[75] which reflects, and is reflected in, diverse character-configurations in a liberal society.

Given that significant autonomy presupposes that an agent's choices have this normative quality, there is strong reason for perfectionist liberals to promote the development of character amongst agents. In a liberal society, agents forge their lives as individual normative responses to the moral demands of their particular circumstances. Their moral character is then constituted by the choices they make everyday.[76] Agents should be able to create coherent, relevant and comprehensible combinations of the life options they autonomously choose. To do this they should be able to demonstrate the worth of their choices to their own lives and that of others (even if only to show that their choices do not adversely impact on those of others). The concept of character is the most appealing means to articulate criteria which agents should apply to the value of their autonomous choices. These criteria can also reflect diversity in liberal societies, by acknowledging that there are a wide range of ways of living well within the constraints of a dual concept of character. The intrinsically normative nature of significant autonomy in liberal societies entails that the moral dimension of character is especially critical to living well, preceding and in part constituting individual character, nevertheless, forging

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[74] idem.

[75] ibid., p.387. The significant autonomy presupposes fresh normative creations because each individual has particular talents and opportunities, and interprets them in distinctively different ways.

individual character when becoming significantly autonomous is an important ethical ideal in its own right.

2. The Concept of Individual Character

Individual character is a concept which refers to how the particularities of an agent's character-traits manifest themselves in the distinctive way in which they live. For perfectionist liberals, it is an ethical ideal pertaining to those virtues which can establish an agent's individuality within different valuable social practices, such as art, science or sport. It is a concept that illustrates the multidimensionality of perfectionist concerns, emphasising that they associate living well with more than being moral. A commitment to individual character therefore indicates that significant autonomy is associated with very particular types of individual flourishing, as well as a liberal conception of moral conduct. This section explores the conceptual status of individual character, before outlining its relationship with autonomy.

i) Liberal individual character

Liberals accord great value to individual liberty, in particular, they are often thought to have an especially fine sensitivity to diverse modes of individual flourishing. Thinkers such as John Stuart Mill have held that individuality and eccentricity should not only be tolerated, but celebrated and promoted. Liberal celebration of diversity can be most attractively explicated in a doctrine which views the development of individual character as inherent in becoming significantly autonomous. Individual character is thus an intrinsic feature of a perfectionist liberalism, because it is integral to both the concepts of

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[76] For instance, Raz contends that, a 'significantly autonomous' agent is someone 'who can shape their life and determine its course.' '[T]he more one's choices are dictated by personal needs the less autonomous one becomes.' ibid., pp.154-5.

character and autonomy, providing an especially potent way of highlighting the naturalness of a liberal commitment to diversity. Examination of the philosophical presuppositions of a liberal concept of individual character indicates why this is so.

Individuality, personality and idiosyncrasy

Before fleshing out the concept of individual character we must establish its distinction from other related concepts. In particular, it must be stressed that individual character is not another term for personality. Personality is entirely 'to do with how one is different from other people, or... how one establishes oneself as different from other people'.[77] It 'reflects the construction of a set of dispositions unique to each individual which has no necessary content'.[78] Although personality (like character) seems to involve 'distinct methods of self-development, self-mastery, and presentation of the self',[79] its dearth of ethical content means it can only be associated with the bare fact of human difference. It doesn't imply either a malleable self or the possibility of individuality. Personality is an arbitrary construct, and can not account for an agent's autonomous shaping of their self in response to the changing circumstances of their life. By contrast, individual character can illustrate that agents may be predisposed towards particular types of individuality but that they can also develop and modify these in a variety of valuable ways.

Although the notion of personality suggests that difference is natural, it also indicates that this difference is somehow inadvertent. Having a personality or being 'a character' is thus not the same as developing individual character. Being different in these former senses simply enables agents to be distinguished. While an agent's personality may develop over time, this is often experienced by them (and observers) as

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[77] J.J.Kupperman, *Character*, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp.5-6.
[78] White and Hunt, 'Citizenship: Care of the Self, Character and Personality', p.104.
[79] ibid., p.105.

an inexorable response to contingent circumstances. It is in a sense beyond their control. By contrast, individual character is susceptible to modification and development in a similar manner to moral character. However, there are certain key differences between individual and moral character which will be noted here.

Individual character-traits are more immediate than moral dispositions and can also seem to be more susceptible to adaptation. For instance, when we talk about agent a not being themselves we are usually referring to their individual character-traits, rather than their moral dispositions. Consequently, individual character-traits seem to exhibit a closer relationship with our everyday perceptions of an agent's conduct and the notion of personality. Nevertheless, it is important to stress again that individual character-traits are not simply 'arbitrary personal idiosyncrasies' such as those which constitute personality. The reasons for this are twofold. First, idiosyncrasies are external to our understanding of an agent's character and in no way can be said to constitute their individuality. Second, individual character-traits are assumed to be susceptible to modification in a way that idiosyncrasies, quirks and personality are not. Although we might concede that personal idiosyncrasies may be brought under control, they would not be genuine quirks if they were willed. So does this mean that individual character and individual character-traits are entirely willed?

Some philosophers argue that character-traits can only be understood as the external manifestation of some belief or principle.[80] However, this suggests that the self is not just malleable, but entirely plastic. Individual character-traits are in some sense 'natural' and determinate, but are nonetheless susceptible to modification and

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[80] L.H.Hunt, 'Character and Thought', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol.15, 1978, pp.179-86. Hunt recognises that a character-trait is not simply internal or external concluding that it 'includes an entrenchment of something internal in our outward behaviour', but believes that '*which* trait of character a given pattern of behaviour evinces apparently depends on which principle generates the pattern.' ibid., p.183.

development. An agent's traits are reflected in their individual character to some extent simply by virtue of their having been born with a distinct biological identity, nevertheless, the malleability of the self means that an agent's characteristic traits are receptive to education and 'improvement'. Hence, the malleability of the self can facilitate the development of moral and individual character in a manner conducive to an agent's dispositions and traits. In particular, individual character presupposes the display of moral character in fine-tuning or enhancing certain innate qualities in order to develop individuality. Understanding these aspects of the malleable self is thus critical to evaluating the nature and quality of individual character.

Evaluating individual character

In evaluating individual character we inevitably assess its quality. But does this mean we always consider its moral rectitude? Whether or not one accepts that character-traits are chosen, it seems that in describing an individual character-trait one is inescapably drawn into making some form of evaluative judgement about the malleable self, from which the moral aspect cannot be easily disentangled. Crucially, though, individual character-traits have an aesthetic dimension that leads to their being partially evaluated in terms of their agreeableness. As we saw earlier, this is not the case for moral dispositions. Moreover, an agent's moral dispositions may contradict their individual character-traits. An agent's individual character-traits may be vicious, lewd or unpleasant, but they may be morally disposed to rein in these tendencies. By contrast, an agent's individual character-traits may be gentle, refined and agreeable, but they may be morally disposed towards acts of depravity. These complexities indicate that moral dispositions and individual character-traits must each evince a sufficiently generaliseable shape for each agent to possess a recognisable ethical and individual regularity susceptible to evaluation.

To evaluate the development of individual character we are drawn towards examining the integrity of the activity and interaction of virtues, traits and circumstances with each other in the construction of individual character.[81] Basing the evaluation of individual character on the integrity with which it is developed can thus be distinguished from other related ideas liberals may adopt to evaluate individual character. For instance, Bernard Williams claims that life-plans are what give agents a 'distinctive character'. Life-plans or projects provide an ethical framework which can structure the development of individual character. These 'set of desires, concerns or... projects'[82] determine the meaning of a person's life through a 'nexus of plans.'[83] However, an emphasis upon the constitutive role of planning is unnecessarily rationalistic and too structured to facilitate diverse configurations of individual character. As Charles Larmore has recognised there is no necessary connection between planning one's life and living well. Agents' individual characters are equally constituted by their autonomous responses to unexpected and unplanned events and occurrences.[84] What is critical though is that agents are able to display integrity when developing their individual character, as it is essential that the style they give to their life is sufficiently coherent to be called their own.

Autonomy, integrity and the liberal self

The liberal concept of individual character can be more responsive to diversity and unforeseen circumstances when it is regarded as an ethical ideal associated with living well. Such an ideal would be manifested in the integrity of an agent's individual character. Concentrating attention on the role of choosing a life-plan within individual

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[81] O.Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality: Ethics and Psychological Realism*, Harvard University Press, 1991.
[82] B.Williams, 'Persons, Character and Morality', in B.Williams, *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp.5-6.
[83] O.Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality*, p.68.

character fails to fully account for the evolving interaction of individual character-traits and circumstances. Nevertheless, these traits unmodified do not determine an agent's individual character. Agents self-consciously discipline their innate character-traits, manifesting certain virtues when developing individual character in order to contour their significant autonomy in a distinctive fashion. The development of individual character therefore presumes that agents act upon self-knowledge when autonomously choosing to participate in diverse social practices. This self-understanding enables agents to decide how to develop their individual character at any given time. Good individual character thus hinges on a relationship of care towards the type of life one is living and creating. And, the nature of this relationship hinges on the integrity with which agents forge their individual character.

Integrity is the key generic quality inherent in the development of individual character. For it to be efficacious in contributing to individual character it presupposes that different virtues may be developed in diverse fields of social life. These 'social practices' can range from complex industrial organisations to small informal networks of agents sharing their personal interests. Critically, for perfectionist liberals, these practices should contribute to an environment in which agents are able to live well. In liberal societies, individual character is thus likely to be developed within (or in relation to) those social practices which are (or could be) valued by liberals. This implies that in developing their individual character, agents should participate within one or more of a range of social practices which can facilitate their distinctive modes of being significantly autonomous, such as a local choir or a sports club. To develop individual character, agents will have to exhibit integrity when displaying virtues which are inherently valuable to their participation within these social practices. However, a society in which

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[84] C.Larmore, 'The Idea of a Life plan', *Social Philosophy and Policy*, vol.16, no.1, 1999, pp.96-112.

significant autonomy is valued often generates conflicts of reasons for participating in different social practices. Where agents are able to choose from a large variety of 'valuable options', it is also likely that there will arise 'incommensurabilities' between the configurations of individual character which they may decide to develop. No one agent could maximally display *all* the virtues of individual character which may be associated with their individual character-traits.[85] The development of individual character will therefore often presuppose that agents neglect or underdevelop certain worthwhile traits in favour of others. Again, integrity is critical if agents are to accomplish this in a way which evinces self-respect and care for their own flourishing.

In forging a distinctive liberal self, agents will probably have to make a range of serious moral choices. These will relate to their individual character as well as their moral character. The thesis now explores how liberals can explicate the interplay of individual and moral character within a liberal character-ethics.

3.   The Concept of a Liberal Character-Ethics

The dual concept of character illuminates two interpolated aspects of a perfectionist liberal doctrine based on the right to be able to be significantly autonomous. But how can the ethical injunctions that commitment to virtues of moral character and individual character enjoin be explicated? The chapter has so far highlighted that moral and individual character are ethical ideals which agents pursue in order to live well. In this respect, they can be the focus for substantive codes of conduct which specify certain classes of virtue agents should display in some distinctive configuration to develop character. There are two particularly cogent ways in which perfectionist liberals can conceptualise the overall shape of this conception of the good life: through a liberal

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[85] J.Raz, *Morality of Freedom*, pp.318-20.

virtue-ethics or through a liberal character-ethics. This section establishes that a liberal character-ethics can give the fullest expression to perfectionist liberal commitment to the development of moral and individual character.

i) Liberal virtue-ethics

The retrieval of virtue-ethics has been a prominent movement in moral philosophy during the past few decades.[86] Virtue-ethics stresses that moral conduct is properly understood within the framework of a set of approved virtues that are associated with specific morally demanding situations. Such a framework is typically situated within a well-established community or way of life and can receive either a metaphysical or an instrumental grounding. Virtuous behaviour occurs when agents display those virtues associated by a community with an appropriate response to a given set of circumstances. But would perfectionist liberals be comfortable with this characterisation of morality? What exactly would the liberal virtues look like? And, how might they constitute a virtue-ethics? The nature of a possible liberal virtue-ethics is assessed below, beginning with a summary of its key aspects.

Liberal virtues

Aristotle claimed that virtues made an agent of good moral character able to perform their functions well. Such virtues were displayed when an agent's 'purposive disposition' to act appropriately within a given situation was made apparent in their actions. The context dependence of their display meant that the virtues were 'in a mean, that is relative to [each of] us', though 'in respect of what is right and best' each virtue 'is an

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[86] See D.Stanton ed., *Virtue Ethics: A Critical Reader*, Edinburgh University Press, 1997.

extreme' and certain dispositions were 'simply wrong'.[87] For Aristotle, manifesting the virtues in a manner 'appropriate to the demands of the environment' was thus a rational process of organic self-realisation. That is, the *telos* (moral purpose) of human beings was to rationally realise their moral character by achieving an 'organic mean' in their exhibition of the virtues within a community.[88] Alasdair MacIntyre has argued that contemporary liberalism has lost this moral foundation, because it does not recognise such a universal human *telos*. For him, it is only through the recovery of such a *telos* that humans can hope to make sense of how the virtues should be applied to today's moral and political dilemmas.[89] This contention lies at the heart of contemporary virtue-ethics

MacIntyre claims that the relationship between the virtues and their realisation within a community is determined by three different factors: their embodiment in different practices; their function in providing a rationally ordered narrative unity to human life; and their role within a particular tradition or way of life.[90] Evaluation of an agent's conduct is thus situated within a 'framework of agreed modes of argument' which enables a community to criticise and appraise the required content of a virtue-ethics.[91] Hence it is possible for a liberal virtue-ethics to be drawn from those relatively stable notions of virtue that form part of a distinctive liberal moral culture or tradition. A liberal conception of the good life based on a liberal virtue-ethics would be structured around virtues firmly anchored to traditional notions of moral conduct and the flourishing of the community in which agents are situated. But this type of ethics can not

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[87] Aristotle, *Ethics*, pp.101-2. Aristotle's mean dispositions include courage, temperance, liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, proper ambition, patience, truthfulness, wittiness, friendliness, modesty and righteous indignation. Each of these dispositions has two corresponding aberrations, one of which is an excess of the appropriate disposition the other of which is a deficiency. So, for instance, the disposition towards courage is accompanied by the vices of rashness and cowardice.
[88] S.R.L.Clark, *Aristotle's Man*, pp.85-9.
[89] A.MacIntyre, *After Virtue*.
[90] ibid., pp.201-3.
[91] S.Mulhall and A.Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992, p.85.

fully account for the importance of autonomy and individual flourishing in a liberal society. Indeed, some perfectionist liberal virtue-ethicists view virtues as instrumentally useful to the survival of a liberal society and culture, rather than inherent in living well. For instance, William Galston develops a perfectionist liberalism based on four categories of virtue which are instrumentally useful to the survival of liberal society: (i) General virtues, comprising qualities such as law-abidingness; (ii) Social virtues, such as self-restraint; (iii) Economic virtues, encompassing the work ethic; and (iv) Political virtues which are exercised in: citizenship; leadership; and through general political literacy.[92] However, such an instrumental understanding of the liberal virtues pays less heed to many of the social and moral virtues integral to the development of moral character, especially those associated with civility. Indeed, there are a whole series of further virtues that perfectionist liberals should recognise as intrinsically valuable which are missing from Galston's list. Intellectual and cultural virtues (such as creativity and originality) make a fundamental contribution to the development of individual character and the flourishing of diverse social practices in liberal societies. For it to constitute an attractive conception of the good life, a liberal virtue-ethics should therefore reflect the intrinsic value attributable to both aspects of the concept of character. It should also reflect the centrality of the ability to be significantly autonomous to individual flourishing.

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[92] W.Galston, *Liberal Purposes*, pp.221-7. The virtues of citizenship include the capacity to respect others rights and to discern the 'talent and character' of electoral candidates and their performance in office. The virtues of political leadership include patience and the ability to 'forge a common sense of purpose', especially, the capacity to close 'the gap between popular preference and wise action.' The general political virtues are, first, the disposition and ability to 'engage in public discourse', and, second, 'the disposition to narrow the gap (insofar as it is one's power) between principles and practices in liberal society.' ibid., pp.224-7.

Liberal virtues and the dual concept of character

As Alasdair MacIntyre has made clear, virtue-ethics aims towards some universal *telos* which encompasses the exercise of the virtues. The dual aspects of liberal character could perhaps be regarded as such a human *telos*. Prescriptions for the development of character could relate to how well agents manifest those specific virtues relevant to the situation and circumstances in which they found themselves. Good moral character would thus be conditional upon agents carefully harmonising the manifestation of virtues and context, in accordance with well-defined communal guidelines. The instances of this occurring could then be considered and calculated by the virtue-ethicist in order to make an evaluative judgement about the relative worth of an agent's character. But is this the most attractive way of conceptualising the ethical prescriptions that may be associated with a liberal concept of character?

Character is a *liberal* ethical ideal (rather than a universal human *telos*) to which agents in liberal societies should aspire when becoming significantly autonomous. Unlike a *telos* based on a virtue-ethics, it specifies no necessary or universal content. This is an (especially) attractive way for perfectionist liberals to understand individual flourishing, because it can make normative prescriptions sensitive to diversity and democratic deliberation. A liberal virtue-ethics would systematise a determinate range of virtues associated with character. The doctrine explicated here stresses that different configurations of character are inherent in living well. Virtue-ethics is closely tied to metaphysical essences, such as human nature[93] or a universal *telos*, or instrumental goals, such as the purposes of the state. Neither of these outcomes is desirable for liberals seeking to explicate a conception of the good life based on the intrinsic value of individual flourishing. The place of the liberal virtues within a perfectionist liberal

doctrine can therefore be more attractively conceived as contingent on the development of those diverse character-configurations that could be associated with living well autonomously in a liberal society. This gives full recognition to the malleability of the self and to the importance of individual flourishing.

The idea of a liberal character-ethics also offers a number of further advantages over a virtue-ethics for conceptualising the promotion of a liberal conception of the good life. As Martha Nussbaum notes, '[a]n emphasis upon character means that the focus of ethical education will be the entire person over a complete life.' Stressing a determinate set of virtues cannot account for how an agent's character may evolve through time. Crucially, concentration on a character-ethics rather than a virtue-ethics can make it easier to 'acknowledge the possibility of conflicting attachments and obligations, and serious moral dilemmas.'[94] Indeed, we have noted that the development of character involves a more sophisticated configuration of an agent's virtues and circumstances than can be derived by manifesting specific virtues in specific situations. Promotion of a liberal character-ethics is therefore more sensitive to diversity than simply promoting an additive index of virtues or linking these with a universal human *telos*. The conceptual structure of a liberal character-ethics is briefly outlined next.

ii)   A liberal character-ethics

The distinction between a virtue-ethics and a character-ethics is perhaps fine but nonetheless important. Perfectionist virtue-ethicists view the liberal virtues either in an instrumentally valuable fashion or as related to character-development through the manifestation of an additive index of virtues. This latter contention supposes that agents

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[93] R.Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, Oxford University Press, 2001.
[94] M.Nussbaum, 'Character', in L.C.Becker and C.B.Becker ed., *Encyclopaedia of Ethics* vol.1, London, Garland Publishing Inc., 1992, p.133.

are able to comprehensively fulfil this code of virtues. But agents would not be able to exhibit each of the imaginable liberal virtues nor would it be possible to accurately define, measure and calculate the manifestation of such a determinate set of virtues. The development of character presupposes many different configurations of the liberal virtues. A liberal character-ethics can thus synthesise a range of virtues which agents may exhibit in varying combinations to live well, but it will not directly specify the relationship between these combinations and their context. The explication of a liberal character-ethics and the evaluation of character-configurations are discussed below.

Explicating a liberal character-ethics

The development of a perfectionist doctrine based on the dual concept of character entails the explication of a range of generic liberal virtues within a liberal character-ethics. Explication of such a liberal conception of the good life would not be like that for a virtue-ethics, because it would not directly specify how character should be configured. It also differs from relativist justifications of liberalism because of its appeal to coherentist-type criteria associated with the decontestation of liberal concepts. A perfectionist liberalism that focuses on the attractiveness of a liberal character-ethics can develop a coherent, relevant and comprehensible defence of its concepts by referring to the ethical ideals inherent in a liberal democratic culture. It can draw attention to the need for a liberal society to promote individual flourishing through processes of moral socialisation, presenting a character-ethics as intrinsically valuable to this process. In doing so, a liberal character-ethics would provide the content for a doctrine to which liberals *qua* liberals should aspire.

Commitment to liberal concepts here precedes or undergirds justification rather than vice versa. As a result, liberals should focus their attention on explicating the most

intellectually and emotionally appealing doctrines.[95] While a perfectionist liberal project of explication may establish epistemological relativism, this does not indicate normative relativism. A liberal character-ethics can evince a deep evolving commitment to a family of contingent liberal virtues and values. It will thus be intrinsically related to living well autonomously insofar as it is coherent with, relevant to and comprehensible within a liberal vocabulary that pertains to the concept of significant autonomy. This makes moral and individual character legitimate objects of moral socialisation, because their development is understood to be critical to the significant autonomy of agents in a liberal society. Nevertheless, this will only commit perfectionist liberals to claiming that they are ethical ideals to which liberals should aspire because they will wish to remain sensitive to diversity; it does not commit them to tightly prescribing their shape. A liberal character-ethics would establish that certain key liberal virtues may be integral to the development of moral character, but it will highlight that different configurations of character inevitably result from the different lives which agents lead.

Evaluating character within a liberal character-ethics

As we have seen, the concepts of moral and individual character are ethical ideals which reflect perfectionist liberal commitment to individual flourishing. A focus on character means that a perfectionist liberal ethical doctrine can accommodate more sensitive evaluation of an agent's moral character than the study of a check-list of virtues. For instance, although agent x may never display virtues e or g (indeed, they may conflict

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[95] Moreover, closer inspection reveals that something like an explicatory position is held by even the most abstract or non-committal of impartialist liberals. M.Evans, 'Pragmatist Liberalism and the Evasion of Politics', in M.Evans ed., *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Liberalism*, Edinburgh University Press, 2001.

with virtues a, k and l), overall their character could still be regarded as good.[96] They may also display vices f and t, but their manifestation of virtues a, b and c means that we may still consider them to be of good moral character. To be an agent of good moral character one does not have to display all the virtues that pertain to moral character. Indeed, one may display certain moral failings and still be regarded as an agent of good moral character provided certain minimal conditions of virtuous conduct have been exceeded.

An agent's character should be evaluated on the basis of how well it reflects their commitment to virtues, dispositions and traits which are or could be associated with moral and individual character. It is not evaluated on the basis of meeting a set of predefined virtue-targets, but is subject to subtle interpretation of an agent's autonomy based on criteria of coherence, relevance and comprehensibility. It would therefore focus on assessing the diverse manifestation of autonomous configurations of liberal virtues. The scope within a liberal character-ethics for accommodating subtle nuances of moral judgement can facilitate a wide liberal sensitivity to moral diversity and individuality within liberal society. But to what extent should this inform and influence liberal politics and policy-making?

4.   Perfectionist liberalism and the Limits of the State

In recent times, the limits of state intervention into the moral lives of citizens have been a major concern of liberal political philosophers. As we saw in the introduction, many prominent liberal theorists argue that the state should maintain impartiality between

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[96] Stephen D.Hudson, recognises that although it is true that we can 'distinguish the principle that evaluations of the merit of an act can be grounded independently of an appraisal of the agent who performed the act', it is never the case that we ground such 'evaluations of the merit of an act.. independently of the moral evaluation of *any* agent.' S.D.Hudson, *Human Character and Morality: Reflections from the History of Ideas*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986, p.59.

different conceptions of the good. By contrast, others believe that this is neither possible nor desirable. Perfectionist liberals argue that liberalism is committed to distinctive liberal values and that this commitment means that the liberal state can and should actively promote a liberal conception of the good life. This section reflects on perfectionist liberalism, considering the suitability of two schools of perfectionist liberalism for conceptualising the promotion of a liberal character-ethics.

i)   Perfectionism and politics

Perfectionism in moral and political philosophy highlights the centrality of certain values and activities to human flourishing. It generates duties incumbent on agents to promote and enhance the development of these within their own and others' lives. The application of perfectionist principles in politics pertains to the institutional implications of the rights and obligations associated with these specific human 'excellences', in particular, it can establish that the value of certain activities is such that society and its political institutions should be structured so as to reflect their promotion. This relationship between perfectionism and politics is discussed further below, beginning with a summary of its recent revival within liberal political theory.

Perfectionism, pluralism and progress

Perfectionism has been a persistent concern of philosophers throughout the history of Western thought. Thinkers as diverse as Plato, Rousseau and Marx have argued for the moral imperatives behind active promotion of specific human excellences.[97] Inevitably,

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[97] Plato believed that human rationality was progressively perfected as it developed towards absolute knowledge. *Republic*. Rousseau stressed that democratic participation perfected the social sympathy of each citizen so they could identify with the general will. *The Social Contract and Discourses*, London, Dent, 1993. For Marx, free social relations would enable the perfecting of each individual agent's self-determined productive activity. *The Communist Manifesto*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1985.

these prescriptions for perfecting or improving the development of human beings have had major implications for political thought and practice. When applied to politics, perfectionist principles comprise two identifiable elements:

> One is an argument that some forms of human activity or experience have special value. The other is that a policy of furthering this special value should play a part in some aspects of our conduct toward others, including some social and political decisions.[98]

These elements can form the basis for a range of policies and institutions to promote human excellence, in particular, those associated with culture and education. The familiarity of many contemporary perfectionist prescriptions, such as state-support for the Arts or sport, highlight that in addition to being a doctrine in its own right, perfectionism can provide principles for adoption within a range of ideological doctrines. Although they can be criticised for tightly specifying the nature of human development, perfectionist principles have recently been rehabilitated by liberal critics of impartialism. Indeed, emphasis upon human improvability has often been a feature of liberal thought.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many liberal thinkers expressed faith in the ability of humans to control their environment and their fundamental dispositions and traits in ways which were valuable to individuals and society alike. At the time, this reflected a belief in a universal metaphysical conception of human nature, the rationality of liberal political principles and the liberating possibilities of technological control.[99] However, the moral optimism typical of nineteenth century liberals was superseded in the twentieth century by the anti-prescriptive tenor of post-war liberals. Isaiah Berlin, Hannah Arendt and many other emigrant European intellectuals were keenly aware of the dangers posed by philosophical monism and political certainty to

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[98] J.J.Kupperman, 'Perfectionism', in T.Honderich, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, p.653.
[99] I.Collins, *Liberalism in Nineteenth Century Europe*, Historical Association, London, 1957.

diverse ways of life.[100] The horrors of the Second World War (had also) seriously damaged the idea of uninterrupted human progress. Moreover, the experiments of psychologists such as Stanley Milgram on the nature of authoritarianism threw liberal notions of moral responsibility and state involvement in its promotion into serious doubt.[101] The capacity for ideological forces to sweep agents towards 'inhuman acts' in the name of freedom, their nation, class or leader caused many political thinkers and observers to become extremely sceptical of any programmatic philosophical or political doctrines.[102] Scepticism about human progress was supplemented by a growing sensitivity to social diversity which undermined established arguments for the perfectibility of a universal human nature. These two developments were linked insofar as the growing acknowledgement of diversity strengthened philosophical and empirical scepticism about the good life. Perfectionist principles were therefore rejected by sceptical liberal philosophers, because they believed there were no longer adequate grounds for policies which promoted any one set of moral values in the face of plural competing moral doctrines. Such policies would also be redolent of the moral certainty that accompanied totalitarianism. Indeed, many perfectionist philosophers (such as Plato and Rousseau) were identified as the progenitors of totalitarian doctrines.

Sceptical post-war liberals argued that human flourishing had no definite specifiable quality and hence characterised liberalism in terms of negative rights. Individual liberty and the value of autonomy would only be secured where the state retreated from contentious intervention within the moral lives of citizens by maintaining a

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[100] H.Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973; I.Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, Oxford University Press, 1981.
[101] S.Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*, London, Tavistock, 1974. See also T.W.Adorno, *The Authoritarian Personality*, Norton, New York, 1969.
[102] This was particularly so where philosophers criticised the notion of rational or positive freedom. See E.Kedourie, *Nationalism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1993.

basic framework of civil, legal and economic liberties.[103] Nevertheless, during this time the politics and policy-making of many Western democracies continued to uphold aspects of nineteenth century liberal optimism. In particular, within the realm of education, faith in the susceptibility of moral character to improvement remained largely unaltered.[104] Perfectionist principles were therefore never far from the political decision-making of liberal states, but were increasingly marginalised in the work of (liberal) political theorists. This neglect was decisively altered by the revival of normative political theory during the 1970s.

Perfectionist liberalism

Perfectionist liberal theories emerged as critical responses to the weaknesses of impartialist liberalism associated with John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*. Perfectionist liberals openly theorise and justify common liberal intuitions regarding state intervention into the moral life of citizens. Their discussions of the place of perfectionist liberal principles in politics have therefore revolved around what values or activities the liberal state ought to promote and what means should be used to promote those values. While 'promotion' does not entirely capture the idea that the state can facilitate a conception of the good life by withholding intervention, it is central to the work of perfectionist liberals because it can dilute fears of intrusive coercion associated with state intervention. Joseph Raz notes that much 'perfectionist action... could be encouraging and facilitating action of the desired kind, or discouraging undesired modes of behaviour'.[105] Hence liberals can envisage a whole range of ways in which perfectionism may impact on political

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[103] I.Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford University Press, 1969.
[104] Indeed, during the 1960s increased stress was laid on the inherent goodness and innocence of human nature. This prescriptive emphasis on improvability (or at least, malleability) is to some extent an inevitable feature of the philosophy of education.
[105] Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, p.161.

deliberations, for instance, in legal judgements, in the funding of education, in support for leisure or cultural pursuits, and a variety of other policy areas. Unlike impartialist principles, perfectionist principles can also supply ethical content for critiquing the conduct and quality of decision-making in a liberal society.

Contemporary perfectionist liberals have sought to develop principles which rebut liberal scepticism about the good. Such perfectionist principles are inherent in the content of a liberal conception of the good life and can also be used to evaluate how far a liberal society is successfully facilitating that liberal conception of the good life. Perfectionist liberals can here be divided into two schools of thought. The first school of strong or 'thick' perfectionist liberalism is distinguished by its reference to the metaphysical characteristics that constitute human nature whose perfection can and should be the aim of state policies. The second school of 'thin' perfectionist liberalism centres upon the more modest claim that within a liberal society 'some forms of human activity or experience have special value' which justifies their support or promotion.[106] These two schools are examined below.

ii)   Thick and thin perfectionist liberalism

The development of perfectionist liberal theories has reinvigorated many aspects of contemporary political theory. Although impartialist liberals argue that the liberal state should refrain from actively promoting a liberal conception of the good life, there is no self-evident justification for attributing '*no weight at all*' to perfectionist reasoning in 'deliberations about law and policy.'[107] Indeed, perfectionist liberals contend that such reasoning is a central aspect of good government and political decision-making. Liberals

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[106] J.J.Kupperman, 'Perfectionism', p.653. See J.Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Oxford University Press, 1973, pp.325-6 for a discussion of the philosophy of these two variants of perfectionism.
[107] G.Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, p.17.

who accept the role of perfectionism within politics and philosophy have developed thick and thin doctrines based on very different philosophical assumptions.

Thick perfectionist liberalism

Thick perfectionists argue that human beings have a duty to develop, exercise and perfect those characteristics which are 'the truest, simplest, and most predictively powerful explanations of humans' other properties'.[108] They also contend that if 'some traits, activities, and ways of relating to people really are superior to others' then the state has an obligation to intervene in the lives of citizens to promote these. Only a universal theory of the good can clarify how some *'activities, traits, and relationships are best'*. Such metaphysical (rather than cultural) foundations for the promotion of valuable attributes are grounded in a universal conception of human nature.[109] Amongst the universal attributes of human nature they wish to promote, thick perfectionists typically agree that rationality is the most appropriate foundation for a metaphysical liberal theory of the good. It is therefore desirable that the liberal state should seek above all to perfect the rational capabilities of liberal citizens.

The perfection of citizens' rational capacities entails the state support and promotion of a wide range of complex activities in which citizens can exercise and enhance their rational capabilities.[110] For thick perfectionists, this is justified because a liberal government which could promote superior activities would not be fulfilling its duty to uphold a right to be able to be significantly autonomous where it did *'not* try to

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[108] T.Hurka, *Perfectionism*, Oxford University Press, 1993, p.19.

[109] G.Sher *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, pp.177-8.

[110] Thomas Hurka argues 'the best life has a single organising end that demands many different challenging activities that are also valued for themselves, whereas the worst is an unconnected series of passive experiences. In the first case, there are extended, structured goals both for one's whole life and at particular times; in, the other, there are no such goals anywhere.' *Perfectionism*, p.128.

induce its citizens to live good lives.'[111] There are a number of means governments can use to induce citizens to live good valuable lives, including: i) 'threaten to punish them for not living as it thinks best'; ii) 'offer them incentives to live in the desired ways'; iii) 'nonrationally cause them to prefer to live in those ways'; iv) 'create the conditions under which they can live in those ways.'[112] Clearly, a liberal government which wanted to promote the rationality of citizens would focus attention on the fourth of these means, as the others imply a use of coercive measures that would be largely unacceptable to perfectionist liberals committed to encouraging significant autonomy. In this regard, democracy is thought to be inherently valuable because it can facilitate greater opportunities for the maximisation of many diverse states of perfection[113] – though, of course, Mill alerts us to how in a mass society the opposite might result.

Although, for thick perfectionists, the promotion of perfection amongst fellow-citizens is an additional condition of an agent's promotion of their own rational capabilities and a condition of maximising perfection more widely, the duty to maximise perfection throughout society ultimately remains incumbent on the democratic state.[114] Thick perfectionist liberalism is a maximising morality, because it contends that it must always be better that intrinsically valuable goods are had in ever-greater quantities.[115] Liberal governments should therefore provide at least basic levels of material security and education, because state intervention to promote a right to be able to be significantly

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[111] G.Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*, pp.97, 104.

[112] ibid., p.37.

[113] T.Hurka, *Perfectionism*, pp.130-1.

[114] ibid, pp.14, 18.

[115] ibid., p.56. Thomas Hurka states that 'perfectionism has a precise cardinal measure of each human's development of his nature at each time', which 'aggregates first across times and only then across persons.' This entails that a '*single-peak perfection*' principle (such as an agent's greatest work of art, sporting achievement, moment of kindness, etc.) cannot account for perfectionist value over a lifetime. Perfectionism therefore enjoins a commitment to egalitarianism to give 'equal weight to unit gains in all human lives.' *Perfectionism*, pp.69-81. The guidance found in the character-ethics explicated here would stipulate only that character-configurations should meet criteria of coherence, comprehensibility

autonomous should favour 'whatever distribution of resources most promotes aggregate perfection.'[116] Nevertheless, many liberal supporters of perfectionist principles are likely to be uncomfortable with the metaphysical arguments of thick perfectionism, especially given its association with philosophical monism. They may also be wary of utilitarian justifications for maximising or quantifying moral values, particularly as such an additive index of values may not be very sensitive to diversity or democratic revision. A strict maximising approach also over-prescribes the conditions for the achievement of good character. Agents can be of good character, without ever having perfected themselves (desirable though this may be). Acceptance of an agent's flaws and of the loss which accompanies the incommensurabilities of moral choice, are especially attractive features of a perfectionist liberalism based on a liberal character-ethics. Indeed, perfectionist liberals do not need to adopt a metaphysical conception of human nature or a strict maximising view of perfectionism to explain state intervention within the moral lives of citizens.

Thin perfectionism: Public virtues and political authority

Thin perfectionist liberals typically contend that state intervention in the moral lives of citizens is either necessary for the survival of liberal society or for the flourishing of individual agents. As a result, they claim that 'the path to defensible clarity in these matters leads *through*, not *around*, a direct consideration of the understanding of well-being on which liberalism rests.' For a thin perfectionist concerned about the survival of liberal society, their principles can provide 'a shared basis for public policy' by prescribing 'a range of normal, decent human functioning', that falls short of 'defining a

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and relevance. The evaluation of these criteria would then make reference to the circumstances, dispositions and practices pertinent to the development of each agent's character-configuration.
[116] ibid., p.164.

full way of life'. This prescription would require a 'special set of reasons for restricting the movement from the good to public coercion'.[117] Consequently, the liberal state should promote liberal values in accordance with 'a determinate but limited conception of liberal public purposes'.[118]

Liberal public purposes 'define what the members of a liberal community must have in common'. These shared public purposes are essential for a liberal state to maintain the 'conditions necessary to its own health and perpetuation.'[119] The liberal state, if it is to survive, must therefore ensure that its citizens publicly affirm 'specific excellences and character-traits: the liberal virtues'. In turn, this means that perfectionist liberals should be 'especially attentive to the processes, formal and informal, by which these virtues are strengthened and eroded'.[120] State-led education is an essential formative process because a liberal state, however, 'inclusive of diversity' cannot afford to ignore the character of its citizens'.[121] Although thin perfectionists accept these general principles of policy-making, not all of them pay such heed to the interests of the liberal state, preferring to focus their attention on the individual flourishing of liberal citizens.

Joseph Raz argues that the liberal state has a responsibility to 'promote and protect the interests of its subjects'.[122] It should therefore create conditions conducive to significant autonomy, because this is the central value within a liberal society. State intervention to promote autonomy is justified because 'it serves the public interest' and because its 'public authority is ultimately based on the moral duty which individuals owe

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[117] W.Galston, *Liberal Purposes*, pp.94-5, 177-80.
[118] ibid., p.154.
[119] ibid., pp.3-6.
[120] ibid., pp.18-9. Furthermore, Galston advocates a programme of civic education.
[121] ibid., p.216.

to their fellow humans.'[123] Both the state and agents therefore have a responsibility to establish and maintain an autonomy-supporting environment, as in a liberal society an agent's fundamental interest in having a significantly autonomous life is an interest in living in a society where 'many... options are available.'[124] Furthermore, the life-options between which agents choose must be of a quality which demands a higher degree of autonomy than merely dealing with the arbitrary necessities of human existence (significant though these are). Agents in liberal societies can only live well where their life consists of worthwhile opportunities for the exercise of their personal autonomy.[125] Liberal governments therefore have an obligation to 'create morally valuable opportunities, and to eliminate repugnant ones.'[126]

The role of thin perfectionist policy-making principles is 'extensive and important'. Nevertheless, perfectionist liberals should be concerned that some thin perfectionists are not forthcoming about the ethics which liberal states should promote in order to uphold a right to be able to be significantly autonomous. Nor do they have much to say about the concepts of moral and individual character, especially the latter. Indeed, of the thin perfectionists studied here, only Galston appears willing to prescribe the ethical content of a liberal conception of the good life. However, his perfectionist liberalism does not place individual flourishing at the heart of liberal politics or culture, giving little emphasis to the development of individual character. By contrast, the perfectionist liberal doctrine explicated in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis places

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[122] J.Raz, *Morality of Freedom*, p.6. Raz argues that because liberal rights advocated 'in the name of individual freedom' were done so 'against a background which secured collective goods without which those individual rights would not have served their avowed purpose.' ibid., p.251.

[123] ibid., p.72.

[124] ibid., p.206.

[125] So much so that, for Raz, '[A] person who has never had any significant choice, or was not aware of it, or never exercised choice in significant matters but simply drifted through life is not an autonomous person.' ibid., p.204.

individual flourishing at the heart of a right to be able to be significantly autonomous. It also stresses that perfectionist liberals are committed to promoting individuality, as well as the ability to be moral. Given that perfectionists typically retreat from exploring an ideal liberal character-ethics or its promotion, or fail to recognise the centrality of individual flourishing to a liberal doctrine, we must consider what alternative theoretical resources are available to justify and explain the state-promotion of a liberal character-ethics.

5.   Character-Ethics and 'Technologies of the Self'

Conventional perfectionist liberalisms do not provide suitable resources to conceptualise the promotion of a liberal character-ethics. For liberal supporters of perfectionist principles, a more illuminating way to understand the presuppositions associated with the right to be able to be significantly autonomous, is to explicate them within a theoretical framework that can reflect the interplay between liberal politics and society. This means that philosophical discussion about the promotion of autonomy and character should be conducted in a manner which pays close attention to their relationship with politics and the state. The work of Michel Foucault on liberal governmentality provides an especially pertinent and edifying means of conceptualising the relationship between autonomy, character, politics and education in this context. This section outlines the nature of a quasi-Foucauldian interpretation of the liberal concepts which the liberal doctrine explicated here decontests. It begins with a discussion of the idea that the virtues of character may be regarded as 'technologies of the self', before focusing on Foucault's

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[126] ibid., p.417. For Raz, the liberal state can 'use coercion both in order to stop people from actions which would diminish people's autonomy, and in order to force them to take actions which are required to improve people's options and opportunities.' ibid., p.416.

view of state intervention in the moral lives of citizens and distinguishing the liberal approach from it.

i)   Technologies of the self

Foucault's genealogical work on subjectivity and power culminated in a consideration of how humans are able to constitute their 'identity through some ethical techniques of the self which developed from antiquity down to now'.[127] These 'technologies of the self' enable 'individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.' Technologies of the self can help agents to develop their character and may be inculcated through 'certain modes of training and modification'.[128] They therefore provide a highly edifying meta-theoretical perspective from which perfectionist liberals can view the exhibition and promotion of liberal virtues.

Origins of technologies of the self

Foucault's early work concentrated on the structures and processes by which agents were controlled, labelled and, therefore, produced.[129] Later, he focused on the techniques that were available for agents to develop their own self and subjectivity. Foucault conducted genealogical investigations of these by examining the sexual interdictions of ancient philosophers and Christianity.[130] Specific techniques for achieving and demonstrating self-discipline were found in esoteric and ethical texts demonstrating how

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[127] M.Foucault, 'The Political Technology of Individuals', p.146

[128] M.Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', p.18.

[129] See, in particular, *Madness and Civilisation*, London, Routledge, 1989; and *Discipline and Punish*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1991.

[130] M.Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', p.17.

agents could understand and modify themselves. The 'technologies of the self' specified in these texts were regarded as virtues which when exercised 'free from disturbances of the body and mind' become constitutive of an agent's care for the development of their character.

By applying technologies of the self to themselves agents could constitute their own character. To accomplish a 'complete achievement of life' they should manage their selves very carefully, striving to apply appropriate rules of conduct to their character-development.[131] Where a range of related technologies were applied to the management of the self these would then constitute a particular form of living or style of existence.[132] In Antiquity the dominant styles of existence were constituted by an emphasis on self-mastery in sexual relations, which took the form 'of an intensification of the relationship to self by which one is formed as a subject of one's acts.[133] Critically, moral failings were not cause for harsh judgement and penance, but were to be corrected by applying appropriate technologies of the self. Agents would therefore examine, administer and regulate themselves by exercising appropriate virtues.[134]

This Stoic idea of 'taking stock' did not presume that there was an essential or authentic self to be 'deciphered', realised or created. Rather it prescribed effective self-management and character-development through the active ownership of technologies of the self that conduced to the proper care of the self. This process was not solipsistic. An agent's self and conduct was increasingly problematised by the prescriptions of technologies of the self, because they were obliged to consider how they should form themselves as 'an ethical subject in the entire sphere of social, political and civic

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[131] Thus, Seneca viewed the application of technologies of the self as akin to the activity of a 'stock-taking administrator' who constantly reflects on and attempts to discipline the actions of the management subject, in this case their life. 'Technologies of the self', pp.33-4.
[132] ibid., pp.18-9.
[133] M.Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 3: The Care of the Self*, p.41.

activities.'[135] Thus, as 'dominion over oneself' progressed, it was 'increasingly manifested in the practice of obligations with regard to others'.[136] Care for one's own character became objectified through relationships with others, with the application of technologies of the self preceding and constituting specific forms of decision-making. Self-management was not equivalent to planning one's life, because such forward thinking was predicated on the continually renewed application of technologies of the self.

Foucault's understanding of the constitution of an agent's character through the constant application of technologies of the self can provide perfectionist liberals with an excellent means for explicating what is actually going on in the application of the doctrine of character. But before discussing the attractiveness of a quasi-Foucauldian view of perfectionist liberalism further, we must first examine Foucault's consideration of the relationship between technologies of the self, power and government.

Discipline, truth and normalisation

Technologies of the self were associated with the precepts of the Stoics philosophy of care for oneself. 'To be concerned with oneself' was a vital ingredient of the good life, which manifested itself in an agent's social, political and personal conduct. Foucault argued that this principle of self-care preceded the well-known Delphic exhortation to 'know oneself', with the latter dependent on the development of self-care. However, this relationship was undermined and eventually reversed as Western societies became less concerned with an agent's care for themselves, than for ensuring that they behave in a

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[134] M.Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', p.34.

[135] To accomplish this successfully, agents should keep in mind 'which of these activities' are 'obligatory or optional, natural or conventional, permanent or provisional, unconditional or recommended only under certain conditions.' M.Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 3: The Care of the Self*, p.94.

manner expected of them. To live by 'taking pains with oneself' was thus supplanted by an exhortation to tell the truth about oneself.[137]

The impulse towards telling the truth about oneself was reflected in the transition from a Stoic understanding of moral conduct to that of Christianity. Study of Christian prohibitions regarding sexuality was particularly instructive in this regard, because they were 'constantly connected with the obligation to tell the truth about oneself.'[138] In Christianity, injunctions against inappropriate conduct become less a matter of self-mastery than of self-knowledge, with care of the self dependent on an agent's understanding of their inherently sinful nature. Demonstration of this self-understanding was then manifested through public displays of penance and through confession. Such public self-revelation was 'at the same time self-destruction', because it was 'modelled on the renunciation of one's own will and of one's own self' through 'an analytical and continual verbalisation of thoughts carried on in the relation of complete obedience to someone else'.[139] For Foucault, these confessional 'techniques of verbalisation' would later influence the development of the human sciences.

As Western culture grew more secular and the power of the Church waned, opportunities for agents to tell the truth about themselves proliferated, resulting in a paradoxical situation: techniques of self-verbalisation derived from medical and social science facilitated healthier modes of self-understanding, but were tied to the purposes of the modern state. Increased possibilities for individual freedom were thus gained 'at the

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[136] ibid., p.149.
[137] ibid., pp.40-3. For Foucault, this development was best exemplified in the introspective and confessional literature that emerged from the first and second centuries AD onwards, and which, he claimed created the modern Western understanding of self-consciousness.
[138] M.Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', p.16.
[139] ibid., pp.43-8.

cost of an intensified and more efficient hold of power on their bodies and actions, of an intensification of relations of domination at the level of their individual existence.'[140]

The art of government in modern Western societies began to involve the regulation of the interaction between citizens and their surrounding environment. This could only be effective if the activity of citizens was calculable and susceptible to control.[141] Human sciences, such as medicine and psychology, enabled states to calculate the behaviour of citizens within a variety of different institutions. These processes of normalisation would then become technical principles of government through the use of statistics and disciplinary technologies of domination (such as surveillance). Moreover, the rise of social science inaugurated new confessional technologies of the self through which citizens could learn to articulate the 'truth' about themselves, technologies which rendered them even more vulnerable to classification and control. As a result, Foucault argued that Western societies were characterised by the 'coexistence in political structures of large destructive mechanisms and institutions oriented toward the care of individual life'.[142] Conceptually speaking, this resulted in a condition of 'governmentality' where 'technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself and conversely... where techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion'.[143]

'Governmentality' aimed to reproduce obedient productive citizens by inculcating technologies of the self via state-led political technologies of domination (such as education and the rule of law). Foucault emphasised that governmentality established the

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[140] G.Burchell, 'Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self', *Economy and Society*, vol.22, no.3, 1993, p.279.

[141] Such a 'bio-politics' could also become a 'thanatopolitics', in that, the state may choose to slaughter rather than sustain its own population. M.Foucault, 'Political Technology of Individuals', p.160.

[142] ibid., p.147. Sometimes individuals are expected 'to live, to work, to produce, to consume; and sometimes... to die'. ibid., p.152.

'integration of the individuals in a community or in a totality' through 'a constant correlation between an increasing individualisation and the reinforcement of this totality'.[144] However, inculcation of certain technologies of the self could open up space for the free development of character. The technologies of self-verbalisation and representation inherent in the human sciences (and art) can permit agents to continually re-problematise their present in such a way as to indicate the possibility of radically different types of individual character. Such *problematisation*, if pursued with integrity, would have both a 'critical effect (making it more difficult for us to think and act in accustomed ways) and its positive effect (clearing a space for the possibility of thinking and being otherwise, for a consideration of the conditions for a real transformation of what we are).'[145] This 'permanent *agonism*' constituted a 'transgressive' personal ethic, through which agents could perfect their individuality.

Foucault argued that liberal governmentality could not facilitate genuinely individual modes of flourishing, because it focused on the inculcation of tightly specified liberal technologies of the self. But, it could be argued that the inculcation of technologies of the self is in fact integral to promoting the ability to be significantly autonomous in a diverse range of ways. At a meta-theoretical level, this 'quasi-Foucauldian' claim can therefore edifyingly illuminate the importance of perfectionist policies to promote significant autonomy by highlighting that individual flourishing can only occur within certain constraints. The nature of liberal technologies of the self and their relevance to the perfectionist liberal doctrine presented in the thesis is discussed next.

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[143] M.Foucault, 'Truth and subjectivity', *The Howison Lecture*, Berkeley, quoted in G.Burchell, 'Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self', p.267.

[144] M.Foucault, 'Political Technology of Individuals', pp.158-62.

[145] G.Burchell, 'Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self', p.278.

ii)   Liberal technologies of the self

The inculcation of technologies of the self is identified with political technologies by which the state can effect 'governmentality' over agents. For Foucault, governmentality was the 'conduct of conduct' through direct disciplinary means (such as the rule of law and punishment) and indirect disciplinary means (such as education and popular morality).[146] In a liberal state, the shape of citizen's relationships to themselves would be contoured by the inculcation of certain liberal technologies of the self. Foucault believed that this unduly circumscribed the freedom of agents, but it is argued here that it is constitutive of the ability to be significantly autonomous in diverse ways. This quasi-Foucauldian understanding of the implications of a perfectionist liberal doctrine can highlight the philosophical presuppositions associated with the state-promotion of a liberal character-ethics, especially within education.

Technologies of the self and liberal governmentality

The structure of a liberal character-ethics can be conceptualised in quasi-Foucauldian terms as that synthesis of the requisite technologies of the self (the liberal virtues) that can enable agents to care appropriately for their autonomy. These liberal technologies of the self enable agents to constitute themselves as agents or participants in a characteristically liberal 'stylistics of living'. Some Foucauldians contend that such a liberal 'stylistics of living' simply reflects the rationality of consumer capitalism. Liberal citizens are encouraged by the state to 'fashion themselves' as productive law-abiding capitalist consumers through 'saving and providentialism, the acquisition of ways of performing roles like father or mother, the development of habits of cleanliness, sobriety,

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[146] M.Foucault, 'On Governmentality', in G.Burchell, C.Gordon and P.Miller eds., *The Foucault Effect*, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

fidelity, self-improvement, responsibility and so on.'[147] However, it is argued here that Foucault's notions can be adapted by perfectionist liberal theorists to illustrate at a meta-theoretical level that state intervention is necessary to constitute the ability to live well by promoting moral and individual character.

State-promotion of a liberal character-ethics can (when guided by suitable liberal principles of policy-making) stimulate the development of different configurations of character and diverse modes of individual flourishing in liberal societies. A quasi-Foucauldian interpretation of the governmentality associated with the inculcation of liberal technologies of the self thus highlights that for perfectionist liberals the state can introduce policies which may have attractive implications for how agents exercise autonomy.

The promotion of a liberal character-ethics is not equivalent to a perfectionist maximisation of rational capabilities, the prescription of a determinate set of specifiable liberal virtues or the promotion of instrumental public purposes. Neither is it akin to Foucault's 'transgressive' perfectionism, which washes its hands of politics and morality. It represents a 'quasi' Foucauldian view because it is not ashamed to 'take sides', asserting that the inculcation of technologies of the self is inherent in developing agents' ability to give suitable ethical content to significant autonomy. Properly directed and constrained state intervention can enable agents to give individual ethical style to their autonomy by developing their own configurations of moral and individual character. The use of political technologies of liberal governmentality (such as education) when constrained by liberal principles of policy-making is not repressive of the free

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[147] This also makes intelligible 'the construction of that characteristically hybrid domain of the public and the private' and also the 'often privately conducted public campaigns aimed at the moralisation and normalisation of the population through practical systems at the interface of society and the state, private and public (medical, psychiatric, educational, philanthropic, social...).' G.Burchell, 'Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self', pp.271-2.

development of character, but may be regarded as facilitative and constitutive of this possibility. The flourishing of agents within a liberal society can only be assured by equipping them to develop different configurations of the liberal virtues inherent in a liberal character-ethics. Inculcation of liberal technologies of the self by the state and throughout civil society can thus enable citizens to develop their moral and individual character in ways that evince an appropriate care for their autonomy.

The quasi-Foucauldian approach to understanding the promotion of a liberal character-ethics can also illuminate the relationship between the concepts of character, autonomy and education.

Character, autonomy and education

At a meta-theoretical level, perfectionist liberal concepts of learning and education can be clarified and explained by adopting the language of technologies of the self. Indeed, for Foucault, the educational aspects of 'technologies of the self' were the defining feature of the early stages of their historical evolution. The pupils of Stoic philosophers learnt self-mastery by memorising the teaching of their teachers and converting what they heard into 'rules of conduct'.[148] Foucault himself did not advocate any particular ethical code beyond an inner impulsion to test one's self and one's boundaries when developing individual character. The liberal character-ethics explicated here is in effect a liberal 'stylistics of existence', which in turn presupposes a certain sort of liberal education.[149] To accomplish this, liberal state schools become institutions which aim to promote the development of character. In Antiquity, this was first and foremost a disciplinary activity, with 'masters' teaching disciples technologies of the self they should later autonomously

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[148] M.Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', p.35.
[149] M.Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 3: The Care of the Self,* p.71.

apply to the development of their character.[150] For perfectionist liberals, education should likewise focus on ensuring agents are able to autonomously discipline their character-development.

In liberal democracies, state schools are the most pertinent means by which an education for significant autonomy may be implemented. In fact, Foucault argued that the emergence of liberal governmentality was modelled on the 'organising routines, pedagogical practices, personal disciplines and interpersonal relationships' found in Christian schools. Christian pedagogy focused on developing 'the capacities required for individuals to comport themselves as self-reflective and self-governing persons' - a process later secularised as the 'discipline of conscience' to secure the appropriate 'civic comportment of the citizen'.[151] Evidently, these ideas have clear implications for understanding the processes of education, but what more might Foucault tell us about an education for significant autonomy?

Foucault's early work was guided by the view that the liberal state was concerned with little else but the scientific procedures required to create 'good citizens'. He later recognised that the interaction between technologies of domination and technologies of the self could open up the space for citizens to posit alternative styles of living. As a result, the technologies of the self inculcated through an appropriate education could be actively utilised by liberal citizens in ways that were not constitutive of political obligation alone. In particular, the inculcation of the technologies of the self could enable the 'truth-telling' of agents to become a potent site for *resistance* to repressive conceptions of subjectivity and character. Indeed, Foucault argued that citizens 'can and must question those who govern them, in the name of the knowledge,

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[150] M.Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', pp.32-7.
[151] I.Hunter, 'Assembling the School', in A.Barry *et al* eds., *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, neo-liberalism and rationalities of government*, UCL Press, 1996, pp.143-63.

the experience they have, by virtue of being citizens, of what those who govern do, of the meaning of their action, of the decisions they have taken.'[152] However, this would be a 'transgressive' 'stylistics of living' that gave individual character priority over moral character, especially by elevating virtues of difference over those of citizenship. Despite applauding Foucault's focus on individual character, perfectionist liberals would still question whether the technologies of the self he associated with difference could be consistent with many of those associated with liberal citizenship.[153] His perfectionist doctrine of transgression and resistance was thus based on a personal rather than a political ethic. This highlights that an ethical liberal education should contain a normative political dimension. Indeed, the ability to participate in democratic politics is especially important if agents in liberal societies are to develop moral character.

Perfectionist liberal policies to promote significant autonomy rest on the inculcation of those technologies of the self that can enable agents to develop their moral and individual character. Nevertheless, the liberal technologies of the self (or liberal virtues) inherent in each aspect of character imply different processes of promotion. In particular, an education for moral character will embody a more prescriptive range of liberal virtues than its individual counterpart because individual character implies a more open-ended view of the liberal virtues associated with its development. This promotion of the virtues of moral character and individual character is neither illiberal nor repressive; both aspects of character are recognisably liberal ethical ideals and neither need be regarded as stifling individual expression or undermining liberal values. Within a

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[152] Foucault describes this process as the application of the technology of *parrhesia* (free speech). M.Foucault, 'The Aesthetics of Existence', in L.D.Kritzman ed., *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy and Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*, London, Routledge, 1988, pp.51-2.
[153] Indeed, Foucault would not have sympathised with Richard Rorty's contention that liberal citizens should have 'a self-image in which their real or imagined citizenship in a democratic republic is central.' R.Rorty, 'Globalisation, the Politics of Identity and Social Hope', in R.Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1999, p.238.

liberal character-ethics, each aspect of character complements and completes the other. From a meta-theoretical perspective, viewing the promotion of liberal virtues as the inculcation of technologies of the self in an education for significant autonomy is an attractive way to understand how liberal states can enable agents to care for their own flourishing in diverse but valuable ways.

The promotion of a liberal character-ethics can enable agents to be significantly autonomous in liberal societies. Foucault's concepts of liberal governmentality and technologies of the self provide an edifying conceptual framework for reflecting on the relationship between liberal ethical ideals and their promotion by the state. But how can perfectionist liberals establish that a concern with character is a crucially important and legitimate liberal philosophical and political preoccupation? And, from what sources can virtues associated with a liberal concept of character be drawn? A genealogy of liberal concepts of character based on the work of some key British thinkers associated with the evolution of liberalism can furnish trenchant answers to these questions.

Chapter 3: British Liberalism and the Concept of Character

Throughout the history of its evolution, liberalism has been driven by an emphasis on the link between politics, ethics and society. British contributors to the development of liberalism created a distinctive legacy highlighting the relationship between politics and ethics in a liberal society, in particular, they paid a great deal of attention to the role of moral character. These philosophers shared a concern with the relationship between character, politics and education, emphasising that its promotion was an important liberal ethical ideal. Indeed, it can be seen as the center-pin of their aspirations for a liberal society. A genealogy of liberal concepts of character is presented in this chapter to illustrate how the idea of a liberal character-ethics has a venerable liberal pedigree in Britain. It will also highlight continuities and gaps in relation to a contemporary liberal view of character, before the character-ethics at the heart of a perfectionist response to impartialism is explicated in Chapter Four.

1.   The British Liberal Tradition

British liberalism emerged from commitment to the political institutions and moral principles which supported religious toleration and capitalism during the Reformation. This commitment was marked by many early liberal notions such as individual rights, consent, limited government, and popular sovereignty.[154] Later, industrialisation, imperialism and the influence of socialist political movements generated an acceptance of the role of state intervention in many areas of social and economic life, including the moral lives of citizens. For instance, the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act 1802 restricted the working hours of apprentices in textile mills, proscribed night work and required suitable accommodation and elementary education; and a whole series of

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factory acts in the nineteenth century established the commitment of the state to the well-being of citizens.[155] The origins of the British liberal tradition in the social and political concerns of its time therefore engendered a deep interest in notions of character and individual flourishing.

Historians often associate the ethical ideals of liberalism with a particular type of moral attitude to flourishing which accompanied the rise of capitalism. The foremost examination of this phenomenon was Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. For Weber, the growing success of capitalist enterprise (particularly in England, Holland and Scotland) was attributable to the rigours of a Puritan work ethic. The middle-class in Protestant countries laboured and accumulated capital, turning away from sensual pleasures in order to claim their reward in both this life and the next. A strong ethic of self-denial and restraint thus infused the practice of free trade, sustaining the determination of the middle-classes to establish themselves in society and to assert their right to practise religion how they chose.[156] Accumulation of wealth, entrepreneurialism and economic growth were associated with a moral attitude that placed hard work and deferral of gratification at the heart of personal success and reputation. This attitude mirrored the Protestant emphasis upon the individual conscience and came to be identified with economic individualism and a suspicion of government interference in private matters, generating disdain for the unearned privileges of the aristocracy and leading to demands to establish the right to property.

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[154] A.Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies* 2nd Ed., Oxford, Blackwell, 1995, p.25.

[155] J.Gardiner and N.Wenborn eds., *The History Today Companion to British History*, London, Collins and Brown, 1995, pp.372-3, 301.

[156] M.Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London, Routledge, 1991. Some critics of Weber (in particular R.H.Tawney) question his assertion that the economic force of capitalism could so comfortably rest upon the formation of a religious sensibility. R.H.Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1984. However, as Donald G. McRae writes, 'capitalism and the Reformation as major historical movements are too closely linked in time for any mere contingent play of events to be a probable account of what happened.' D.G.McRae, *Weber*, Fontana, London, 1974, p.79.

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In Britain these social, political and economic developments were mirrored in the emergence of liberal political ideology. The ethical foundations for capitalist expansion underpinned the early development of the political morality of British liberalism. Indeed, some commentators have argued that liberalism served only as an apologia for the acquisitive behaviour and self-interested character of those engaged in the relentless pursuit of wealth. In particular, C.B.MacPherson claimed that liberal political thought propagated a harmful ideology of 'possessive individualism' which rested on a distorted understanding of human nature. The perpetual selfishness of humans portrayed in British works on political theory such as Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* were merely abstractions from the daily machinations and exploitation typical of bourgeois capitalist society.[157] Such criticism of the individualism inherent in liberal ideology has been made by a wide range of socialists, conservatives and other opponents of free market practices and ideology. Nevertheless, as we shall see, these criticisms do not fully account for the range of ethical influences on British liberalism or how these have consistently been worked through, developed and revised by many liberal thinkers to answer anti-liberal critiques.

British liberals never advocated the superiority (or acceptability) of materialistic or possessive individualist conceptions of the good life, but preferred to focus on the intrinsic value of moral character and the virtues of good citizenship for individual (and social) flourishing. To view liberalism as either the 'philosophical counterpart to *laissez-faire* economics', or as a doctrine of impartiality, thus underestimates the moral force of its ethical ideals. As Richard Bellamy notes, liberal notions 'such as the belief in progress and reason and the emphasis upon individual character shaped as well as reflected the economic and social institutions of the middle-classes; informing their attitude towards

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[157] C.B.MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, Oxford University Press, 1962.

the role of the state and the management of the economy.' Hence 'a more accurate version of the liberal ideal would consist of a meritocratic society of self-reliant and responsible citizens, co-operating together in pursuit of individual, social, material, and moral improvement.'[158] The first political theorist to explore many of these liberal ideals was John Locke.

2.   John Locke: Property Rights and Self-Labour

The most important early exploration of liberal political ideas amongst British philosophers is found in John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*.[159] Locke's political philosophy was both practical and theological; his emphasis on practical understanding and experience reflected the conscientious prudence of the commercial middle-classes, and from the ideas of religious toleration and individual conscience at the heart of the Protestantism he developed a wider argument for property rights and the freedom and value of pursuing one's temporal good. Drawing on these sources of inspiration, Locke explicated a perfectionist ethic of labour and self-labour based on the notion that humans were the 'workmanship of God'. He also stressed that flourishing in a liberal society was dependent on developing a certain sort of character, a process which could be assisted by a proper education. This section outlines Locke's view of labour and character, and his understanding of the relationship between education and character.

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[158] R.Bellamy, 'Introduction', in R.Bellamy ed., *Victorian Liberalism*, London, Routledge, 1990. 'Liberalism incorporated a variety of heterogeneous political languages and evolved piecemeal over a long period of social change. Intellectual sources as diverse as natural rights doctrines, Whiggism, classical political economy, utilitarianism, evangelical Christianity, idealism, and evolutionary biology all played a part in liberal ideology, modifying its understanding of, and emphasis on, the market mechanism and property ownership.' p.2.

[159] J.Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, London, Dent, 1986.

i)   Character and property rights

Locke claimed that as beings subject to God's Law of Nature (reason) humans were entrusted with the right to dispose of themselves rationally. Because this natural right of propriety over himself and his possessions is granted man by God, humans had a duty to respect the well-being of themselves and others.[160] The moral duties of the Law of Nature that this entailed could be apprehended through a rational faculty possessed by all humans. Observance of the God-given Law of Nature implied a duty to respect the right to property, which also implied the rational apprehension of an agent's own status as God's property. Human agents therefore had an obligation to judge how best to use their property in themselves, with implied a responsibility for judging the best use of their own capacity for labour. In Locke, the Protestant work ethic was therefore revealed as a duty to rationally maximise (or perfect) our capacity for labour. But this did not mean humans should accumulate unlimited capital. Morally speaking, because man had a property in himself, his moral character was above all the most appropriate object for perfectionist self-labour. Agents would thus develop moral character by labouring to the best of their ability. Work and the accumulation of capital could contribute to the development of moral character, but only where it was guided by a particular type of ethic. As Locke put it, 'God, when He gave the world in common to all mankind, commanded man also to labour... to subdue the earth- *i.e.*, improve it for the benefit of life.'[161] The appropriate moral attitude towards labour would be realised where agents did 'what tends to the preservation of the life, the liberty, health, limb, or goods of another.'[162] Respect for property rights was an essential grounding for this moral development, suggesting that

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[160] ibid., p.119. God has a property in humans, consequently, humans also have a property in themselves. Man 'hath by a nature a power.. to preserve his property- that is, his life, liberty, and estate.' ibid, pp.157-9.
[161] ibid., p.132.
[162] ibid., p.120.

non-interference in the rights of others and even minimal obligations to aid those whose rights required support would contribute to the growth of moral character.[163]

Locke acknowledged that the rational capacity of humans could be turned to purely self-interested ends. Government was therefore necessary in order to ensure that the public interest would not be overridden by private interests. But despite recognising these concerns, Locke's Protestant convictions caused him to view humans as rational enough to recognise the importance of ethics and morality. Civil society could thus be constituted by 'a culture of shared religious good intentions.'[164] The development of such shared good intentions underpinned equitable distribution of property through the respect and support for the rights of others to accrue the fruits of their labour. And from this foundation of mutual moral obligation liberals could derive a framework of negative rights to facilitate capital accumulation within clear limits.[165]

Many thinkers have attacked this aspect of Lockean liberalism. For example, C.B.Macpherson argued 'Locke's natural man is bourgeois man: his rational man is man with a propensity to capital accumulation.'[166] These critics view Locke's concept of reason as essentially an abstraction of the capacity to contract for the pursuit of individual advantage. On their reading, the natural rights of productive man implied a reciprocal respect for the *right* to the unlimited accumulation of *wealth*. However, this rendering of Locke's thought does not do justice to his commitment to liberal ethical ideals.

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[163] John Chapman argues that Locke's position on this can be interpreted in a Rawlsian vein to permit economic inequality only where it promotes the good of the least-advantaged. 'Natural Rights and Justice in Liberalism', in D.D.Raphael ed., *Political Theory and the Rights of Man*, Indiana University Press, 1967, pp.27-42.
[164] John Dunn, *Locke*, Oxford University Press, 1984, p.20.
[165] J.Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, pp.158-9, 164.
[166] C.B Macpherson, Natural Rights in Hobbes and Locke, in D.D.Raphael ed., *Political Theory and the Rights of Man*, p.1.

The critique of Lockean character as a propensity to accumulate, rather than to perfect the self by contributing to a shared culture of good intentions, underestimates the place of a Christian ethic in Locke's thought. In *Two Treatises* Locke states that the 'same law of Nature that does by this means give us property, does also bound that property too.' The earth is the object of man's labour only insofar as work upon it is for 'the benefit of all.' God has given us 'all things richly', but only as 'much as any one can make use of to any advantage of life before it spoils, so much he may by his labour fix a property in. Whatever is beyond this is more than his share, and belongs to others.'[167] In the *Two Treatises of Government* Locke establishes the development of moral character on three grounds. First, under the guidance of the Law of Nature, individual conscience should rationally dictate the choices agents make. Second, the substance of how an agent chooses to use their labour constitutes their character. Third, human partiality grounds the need for government intervention to secure at least minimal conditions for the perfection of character. Hence, the establishment of government and a shared culture of good intentions within civil society would have an educative effect on the character of citizens, encouraging them to work for the good of themselves and others. While this stress on the negative rights and background culture necessary for the development of character is an important presupposition of a liberal conception of the good life, Locke's political theory does not furnish perfectionist liberals with sufficient grounds for introducing policies which actively promote a liberal character-ethics. However, Locke's educational philosophy highlights that he was concerned with cultivating the flourishing of agents in liberal society.

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[167] J.Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, p.131.

ii)   Character and education

Although in *Two Treatises of Government* Locke did not directly specify an ethics of character, it is clear that his emphasis on the virtues of work is an early precursor of subsequent liberal character-discourse. Indeed, a perfectionist liberal ethic of character may be plausibly imputed to him. As we have seen, this focused on the virtues of labour and the contribution made by agents to a shared culture of good intentions. In his work *Some Thoughts on Education* Locke discussed a range of substantive virtues of character suitable for equipping gentlemen in a liberal society to make such a contribution.[168] These reflections on education provide a further illustration of the evolution of liberal ethical ideals.

Locke's educational philosophy is based on a distinct view of the malleable self drawn from his empiricist masterpiece *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Here he established that the mind at birth is 'as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas', but may be furnished with the '*materials* of reason and knowledge' from experience. Coupled to 'the idea of a power in any agent to do or forebear any particular action, according to the determination or thought of the mind',[169] this implied that the character-development of agents was susceptible to deliberate processes of education and socialisation. And in *Some Thoughts on Education*, Locke stated that 'of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education.' Indeed, the 'little and almost insensible impressions on our tender infancies have very important and lasting consequences'. Because '[m]en's happiness or misery is most part of their own making', education was essential to

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[168] It is, of course, important to recall that for Locke women were conceived as the property of men. Indeed, Locke outlined an ethic of patriarchal authority in Chapter 6 of *Two Treatises*.

[169] J.Locke, 'An Essay Concerning Human Understanding', in S.M.Cahn ed., *Classics of Western Philosophy*, 3rd ed., Indianapolis, Hackett, 1991, pp.620-1, 640-1.

'produce virtuous, useful, and able men in their distinct callings.'[170] The precepts of Locke's educational theory illustrate his commitment to a distinctive liberal theory of virtue and character, if not to state-led promotion of these.

For Locke, 'the principle of all virtue and excellency lies in a power of denying ourselves the satisfaction of our own desires where reason does not authorize them. This power is to be got and improved by custom, made easy and familiar by an *early* practice'. Locke recognised that 'repeated cautions and rules, ever so often inculcated' were critical to character-formation, because as 'years increase, liberty must come with them, and in a great many things he [the child] must be trusted to his own conduct'.[171] The esteem and disgrace associated with maintaining their good reputation could also supply an important influence on children's character, as these were 'of all others, the most powerful incentives to the mind, when once it is brought to relish them.' Although Locke acknowledged that 'the child's natural genius and constitution... too must be considered in a right education',[172] education was to be primarily conducted with respect for the 'skill of living well and managing as a man should do his affairs in the world'. In this respect, it should play a vital role in promoting 'that virtue, ability, and learning which has hitherto made England considerable in the world'.[173]

Locke's educational thought illustrates that he shared the perfectionist liberal concern with a liberal conception of the good life, valuing moral character valued above the accumulation of wealth. For instance, he argued that any parent who 'procures his

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[170] J.Locke, 'Some Thoughts Concerning Education', in J.Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education and Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1996, pp.10, 8.
[171] ibid., pp.29, 15.
[172] ibid., pp.36, 41. 'God has stamped certain characters upon men's minds, which, like their shapes, may perhaps be a little mended but can hardly be altered and transformed into the contrary.' idem.
[173] ibid., pp.46, 49. Virtue 'is the solid and substantial good which tutors should not only read lectures and talk of, but the labour and art of education should furnish the mind with and fasten there, and never cease till the young man had a true relish of it and placed his strength, his glory, and his pleasure in it'. idem.

child a good mind, well principled, tempered to virtue and usefulness, and adorned with civility and good breeding, makes a better purchase for him than if he laid out the money for an addition of more earth to his former acres'. Education could produce a 'a good gentleman as he should be' by promoting 'a love and imitation of what is excellent and praiseworthy, and in the prosecution of it... vigour, activity, and industry'. Moreover, it would be essential to teach children to 'love and be *good-natured to others*', as this was the 'true foundation of an honest man'.[174] These proposals do not seek to inculcate technologies of the self associated with acquisition and accumulation rather they were designed to inculcate those which perfectionist liberals would associate with moral character, such as praiseworthiness, civility and honesty. However, these proposals were restricted to the schooling of middle-class children by personal tutors. They were not viewed by Locke as principles to be applied within a state-sponsored education.

As we have seen, Locke's liberalism should not be regarded as an apologia for capitalism or as a principled stance of impartiality, but as a doctrine which reflected the ethical ideals associated with a liberal culture of shared good intentions. Where Locke sought to justify the development of character via reference to a universal Christian moral foundation, most subsequent liberals have attempted to develop a more secular understanding of the dynamics of ethics, capitalist economics and a liberal society. Of these thinkers, Adam Smith remains the most salient. But before examining how secular liberal virtues and the capitalist economy were combined in Smith's work, we must consider the influential moral philosophy of David Hume.

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[174] ibid., pp.63, 65, 70, 105.

3.   David Hume and Adam Smith: Sympathy and the Middle-Class Virtues

Hume problematised Western moral philosophy by proposing that humans did not rationally apprehend moral truths, but were naturally disposed to feel moral approval and disapproval of certain acts. This radically secular vision of ethics was castigated by natural law theorists and Christian moralists, but reflected growing bourgeois preoccupation with a secular concept of moral character. Such concerns were also evident in the work of Adam Smith. In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* Smith argued that although short-term acquisitive rationality and behaviour was an observable psychological condition, it was a perversion of the true moral principles of human nature. In fact, the positive moral approbation that attached to good moral character indicated that humans were capable of the most admirable natural sentiments. It also reminds us that some prominent liberals, who promoted capitalism, did not necessarily approve of its moral effects. Hume and Smith's commitment to a liberal conception of the good life thus distinguishes them as an important touchstone for perfectionist liberals. The relationship between Hume's moral theory and the concept of character found in his popular essays is outlined next, before it is highlighted that Smith's moral theory raises a range of important questions about the structure of a perfectionist liberal doctrine in a capitalist society.

i)   Natural and Artificial Virtues

Hume's celebrated anti-rationalist dictum in the *Treatise of Human Nature* that '[r]eason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions' was part of a sceptical crusade against all interpretations of human experience that were not based upon appearances.[175] Despite rejecting reason as a foundation for morality, Hume remained conscious of the need to

explain what we mean when we talk about virtuous behaviour. His empiricism led him to ground ethics on what was observable, arguing that the source of morality was found in our common everyday sympathy for, and approval of, good moral conduct and character. In this, he claimed that humans possessed both natural and artificial sentiments which entailed corresponding natural and artificial virtues. These sentiments or virtues were not attributable to the work of God nor were they rational principles derived from Natural Law. Rather a natural virtue was a general disposition which humans naturally possessed and were naturally disposed to approve, while an artificial virtue was a general disposition contrived by humans to reproduce feelings of natural approval.

Hume argued that the natural virtues were founded upon a powerful disposition to feel sympathy inherent in human nature. Such sympathy could elicit profound sentiments relating to the approval of conduct, highlighting that 'morality is more properly felt than judged of'.[176] He thus claimed that '[T]o approve of one character to condemn another, are only so many different perceptions.'[177] It was, therefore, 'needless to push our resources so far as to ask why we have humanity or fellow-feeling with others. It is sufficient that this is experienced to be a principle in human nature'.[178] Inevitably, sympathy and approval were first experienced in our most immediate relationships and concerns, because, for Hume, it was a principle of human nature that we are 'naturally partial to ourselves and to our friends.'[179] Natural virtues, such as compassion, gratitude, fidelity, generosity, friendship and liberality,[180] develop spontaneously through the everyday interactions with our peers and neighbours. While sympathies between very different groups of agents within society were less likely to

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[175] D.Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969, p.462.

[176] ibid., p.522.

[177] ibid., p.508.

[178] D.Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1983, p.43.

[179] ibid., p.24.

arise spontaneously, Hume believed that humans were 'capable of learning the advantage resulting from a more equitable conduct' towards those not close to them. An innate malleability of the sentiments could therefore underpin the inculcation of artificial virtues, in particular, education 'may frequently increase or diminish, beyond their natural standard, the sentiments of approbation or dislike.'[181]

Hume claimed that the sentimental dispositions common to all humans could be shaped into wider artificial virtues (especially justice) through human artifice. Politicians, moralists and educators could therefore make it their business to help mould character in desirable ways by promoting those virtues necessary for agents to flourish in a liberal society. To do so effectively, artificial virtues should be promoted with reference to 'the constitution of government, the manners, the climate, the religion, the commerce, the situation of each society.'[182] In a liberal society, justice viewed as a proper concern both for one's own interest and especially for the public interest,[183] would be the cardinal artificial virtue promoted by institutions of government.

In addition to creating a public sense of justice, moralists and educators could also help promote the virtues of moral character by contributing to a particular type of popular moral and political discourse. The flourishing of moral discourse in eighteenth century Britain lent liberal-minded philosophers' reflections greater weight than was previously the case. Publications such as the *Spectator* offered the middle-class 'not only entertainment, but more importantly educative guidance in the areas of manners, morals, aesthetics, and general knowledge necessary for them to take their place as 'polite'

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[180] D.Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p.653.
[181] ibid., p.653.
[182] D.Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, pp.24-39.
[183] J.L.Mackie, *Hume's Moral Theory*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, p.84.

citizens in society.'[184] Hume's role in this secular transformation of liberal moral thought is most clearly demonstrated in his essay *Of the Middle Station of Life* which sets out his vision of the moral character appropriate for the middle-class that was the mainstay of such a 'liberal' society.

For Hume, the 'middle station of life' afforded its members the 'fullest *security* for virtue', while also offering them opportunity for the most ample *exercise* of it'.[185] This was so because the 'middle station of life' was more conducive to the virtue of friendship (or peer equality).[186] A whole range of further virtues of character such as wisdom and ability were also within closer reach of the middle-class. As Hume saw it, a man in the middle station of life, is 'certain that he can never rise to any distinction or eminence in the world, without his own industry':

> Those who are placed among the lower ranks of men, have little opportunity of exerting any other virtue besides those of patience, resignation, industry, and integrity. Those who are advanced into the higher stations, have full employment for their generosity, humanity, affability, and charity. When a man lies betwixt these two extremes, he can exert the former virtues towards his *superiors*, and the latter towards the *inferiors*.[187]

These opportunities for virtue were both contributory to the development of character and to the flourishing of a liberal society. Furthermore, Hume stressed that the 'Calvinist' virtues associated with wealth creation were critical to the development of a flourishing liberal society.[188]

Affluence was integral to a liberal society, because abstract principles of the public good were 'too disinterested, too difficult to support' through moral exhortation

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[184] Indeed, for Copley and Edgar 'the *Spectator* and the periodicals that followed it represented, reflected, and shaped' the values of a middle-class ideology. S.Copley and A.Edgar, 'Introduction', in D.Hume, *Selected Essays*, Oxford University Press, 1993, x.

[185] D.Hume, 'Of the Middle Station of Life', in D.Hume, *Selected Essays*, p.6.

[186] idem.

[187] ibid., pp.6-7.

[188] For Hume, affluence was a crucial 'foundation of prosperity, economic progress and refinement in society'. D.Hume, 'Of Commerce', in D.Hume, *Selected essays*, p.156.

alone. To 'govern men by other passions' it was necessary to 'animate them with a spirit of avarice and industry, art and luxury.'[189] These latter reflections indicate the rigorous secular basis of Hume's thought, based as it was upon sympathy and the passions. His recognition of the malleable self and the importance of socialisation also lend his writings great ethical weight and relevance for contemporary liberal notions of character. However, Hume's emphasis on the middle-class virtues comes at the expense of an appreciation of individual character and of the sometimes harmful effects of commerce on character. Nevertheless, his influential secular view of character and society was deepened by Adam Smith, whose understanding of sympathy and the virtues further expanded liberal notions of moral character.

ii)   Moral sensibility, character and class

Smith (like Hume) believed that the principal determinants of human actions were natural sentiments. Only a natural moral sense could explain the force with which humans invested their interpretations of each others' conduct. 'Natural sympathy' was therefore the central influence upon the approbation and development of moral character. However, although every human being possessed a moral sense of 'natural sympathy', very few conducted themselves in a manner beyond moral reproach. In particular, there were great tensions between self-interest and the development of character. The interaction of self-interest and sympathy were therefore key to understanding the processes of socialisation by which character was formed.

Smith argued that humans were strongly predisposed towards identifying with their own interests. However, despite the influence of self-interest in motivating humans, there were 'evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of

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[189] ibid., p.162.

others, and render their happiness necessary to them'.[190] While affluence was 'one of the best known methods for obtaining the attention and admiration of other men', the same desire for social recognition could lead men to pursue moral goodness and a reputable character - to be 'respectable and to be respected'.[191] This desire for social recognition elicited an 'imaginative sympathy' with the plight of fellow-citizens which underpinned an agent's ability to envisage themselves as an 'impartial spectator' adjudicating the actions of others and themselves. Consequently, while natural sympathy implied a shared coincidence of certain moral sentiments, such as benevolence, it was only through the operation of imaginative sympathy that agents could develop shared understandings about what constituted good moral character. The ability to be an 'impartial spectator' was the moral glue which enabled 'members of a society, who occupy different positions and have conflicting interests... to evolve agreed standards of conduct.'[192]

The approbations made by an 'impartial spectator' would inform and be informed by the changing moral sensibilities of society. The sympathies of such a spectator therefore underwent a continual process of modification as new 'environmental inputs lead to alterations in the normal attitudes of spectators and agents.'[193] In each agent, this organic self-regulation and modification was powered by the sentiment of conscience (or moral sensibility) that accompanied their imaginative sympathy.[194] While all humans were naturally inclined to do what is socially approved, only the 'man of sensibility' (or good moral character) was conscientiously drawn towards doing what was morally deserving of approval. Virtue was 'excellence, something uncommonly great and beautiful, which rises far above what is vulgar and ordinary... There is, in this respect, a considerable

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[190] A.Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, New York, Prometheus, 2000, p.3.
[191] ibid., pp.120-1.
[192] T.D.Campbell, *Adam Smith's Science of Morals*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1971, p.102-73.
[193] ibid, p.138.
[194] A.Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p.393.

difference between virtue and mere propriety; between those qualities and actions which deserve to be admired and celebrated and those which simply deserve to be approved of.'[195] This difference between virtue and propriety was not merely a conceptual one, but was indicative of a distinction between public and private virtues in a liberal society - a distinction which contemporary perfectionist liberals need to explore. It also drew attention to different class moralities.

Smith identified two systems of morality common to all civilised societies, 'one may be called the strict or austere; the other the liberal, or, if you will, the loose system. The former is generally admired and revered by the common people: the latter is commonly more esteemed and adopted by what are called people of fashion.'[196] The influence of these two systems of morality was in a constant state of flux in 'civilised societies'. In commercial or liberal societies this tension between the strict and liberal moralities was especially evident. Those who did not belong to the leisured classes were expected to embrace both the classic economic virtues and a set of stronger stoical virtues if they were to gain the respect of their superiors. They should take up 'humble modesty and equitable justice' and gain approval 'by industry, by patience, by self-denial'. To attain the highest distinction an agent 'must acquire superior knowledge in his profession, and superior industry in the exercise of it. He must be patient in labour, resolute in danger, and firm in distress... probity and prudence, generosity and frankness must characterise his behaviour.'[197] There are, however, tensions between the stoical virtues of hard work and fortitude, and the seemingly amoral behaviour often enjoined by commercial society. Vivienne Brown has argued that Smith relegated moral discourse to the exhortation of the working-class and the valorisation of middle-class aspiration, while

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[195] ibid., p.28.
[196] A.Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Oxford University Press, 1993, p.438.
[197] A.Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p.77.

simultaneously granting unrestricted freedom for those fortunate enough to be able to engage in commerce.[198] Nevertheless, viewing Smith's moral theory as a straightforward dichotomy between class moralities simplifies his argument in two important ways.

First, Smith's notion of class difference was applied to the leisured classes, aristocracy or 'people of fashion' and those who *worked* for a living, whether middle or working class. Second, Smith was not simply an apologist for bourgeois excess. The moral agent in Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* may not have been especially 'well endowed with a civic or political personality,'[199] but, for Smith, good moral character was clearly distinct from social approval and the pursuit of wealth. Indeed, 'the wise and virtuous man is at all times willing that his own private interest should be sacrificed to the public interest of his own particular order or society.' Moreover, 'he is certainly not a good citizen who does not wish to promote, by every means in his power, the welfare of the whole society of his fellow citizens.'[200] An agent's success and affluence may well be attributable to strength of character. But this did not mean that they were an agent of good moral character. Good moral character presupposed the display of the appropriate self-regarding and other-regarding virtues in one's private 'moral' life.[201] It was by no means out of the question that agents should wish to identify with those of good moral character or be admired for their fine and virtuous actions.[202] Nature had endowed humans 'not only with a desire of being approved of, but with a desire of being what ought to be approved of.'[203] Smith therefore stressed that agents could 'by discipline,

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[198] V.Brown, *Adam Smith's Discourse*, London, Routledge, 1994, pp.215-20.
[199] ibid., p.210.
[200] A.Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp.346, 339.
[201] For instance, tolerance of the contractual nature of the operation of the free market should not to be extended to one's personal relationships.
[202] Although, as Smith put it, wealth and power 'abstracted from merit and virtue' scarcely deserve our respect, '[w]e must acknowledge, however, that they almost certainly obtain it.' ibid., pp.85-6. As a result, in a commercial society the values of successful and wealthy men became (however mistakenly) imitated and erected as fundamental (at least as public virtues).
[203] ibid., p.170.

education and example' be 'so impressed with a regard to general rules, as to act upon almost every occasion with tolerable decency.'[204] Although Smith believed in the value of public education, he did not fully explore a liberal justification for this or the likely ethical content. Nevertheless, his distinction between those actions which secured social approval and those which were morally admirable provides perfectionist liberals with a conceptual framework for exploring the difference between social and moral virtues of moral character.

Smith universalised morality insofar as 'imaginative sympathy' and good moral character transcended class distinctions. But for him, the general rules and laws that established such an ethic would also be supplemented by the shared moral sentiments generated by commerce and trade, such as trust and esteem. Perfectionist liberals would hope that civil society did encourage these virtues, but would also be uncomfortable with Smith's impartialist attitude towards capitalism. By focusing on prosperity within a liberal society, principles of social utility are inevitably brought into conflict with an ethics of character. And the development of explicit utilitarian principles was to characterise the early years of the next phase of British liberalism.

4.   Victorian Liberalism

The stress on the practical utility of moral principles and laws in British liberal thought came to be associated in the nineteenth century with the moral doctrine of utilitarianism. Early 'classical' utilitarians regarded the moral worth of all individual, social and political actions as dependent upon their aggregated consequences for the happiness of relevant human beings. Although perfectionist liberals are deeply hostile to the instrumentalist ethics of classical utilitarians, in the hands of proponents such as James Mill and Jeremy

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[204] ibid., p.230.

Bentham it had a profound effect on political discourse in early Victorian Britain. Only later in the nineteenth century, would utilitarianism be supplanted by a revitalised character-discourse amongst liberal thinkers, which sought to give full rein to liberal ethical ideals. These developments in Victorian liberalism are briefly outlined below

i)   Benthamite Utilitarianism

Jeremy Bentham forged the principle of utility into a comprehensive doctrine by which the moral quality of all laws, institutions or moral actions, could be measured and evaluated. He defined utility as:

> that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words, to promote or to oppose that happiness. I say of every action whatsoever; and therefore not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government.[205]

Morality and legislation were reducible to one and the same science: the calculation of utility. Utility could be calculated by summing the pleasures and pains for each agent associated with a particular individual, social or political decision. Crucially, for Bentham, 'every pleasure *qua* pleasure is good.'[206] Thus, for classical utilitarians, no moral virtues or human excellences had an intrinsic value beyond their pleasure-maximising function for agents or society as a whole; a proposal which marks classical utilitarianism out as an extremely non-committal variant of impartialist liberal thinking.

Bentham claimed that humans were ultimately hedonists motivated only to make choices through considerations of their own pleasure and interest. Where Adam Smith still claimed the necessity for virtue and character to sustain a liberal society, Bentham

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[205] J.Bentham, 'Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation', in C.W.Everett, *Jeremy Bentham*, New York, Dell Publishing Co., 1966, p.113.
[206] C.W.Everett, 'The Education of Bentham', in ibid., p.38.

thought that it was 'vain to talk of the interest of the community'.[207] As Bentham saw it, self-interest was 'that principle of action... most to be depended upon whose influence is most powerful, most constant, most uniform, most lasting and most general among mankind.'[208]

Bentham argued that popular morality naturally upheld the principle of utility as it was a clear expression of the aggregation of personal pleasures and pains. As a result, he disclaimed the intrinsic value and appeal perfectionist liberals attach to ethical concepts and ideals such as character and individual flourishing. Moreover, his view of popular morality simplified the complex nature of mass society and the impact of liberal governmentality on character-formation – despite his recognition of the power of legislation. This ignorance of the philosophical and political importance of conceptions of the good life was not characteristic of later nineteenth century British liberalism. Indeed, reflections on the concept of character came to be a distinctive feature of politics and philosophy in Victorian Britain.

ii)   Character and politics in Victorian Britain

The Victorian era in British history is as well known for its vigorous moral debate as its scientific discoveries and empire-building. Moral discourse infused all areas of public and private life, especially, in politics where the idea of 'character' came to play a prominent part in the ever-wider scope of political decision-making. Indeed, 'character-discourse' was a distinctive feature of the late-Victorian political landscape which spanned the entire political spectrum, being shaped by, and reflecting the growth of, a more

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[207] The 'interest of the community' was 'the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it'. J.Bentham, 'Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation', p.114.

[208] J.Bentham, 'Outline of Pauper Management Improved', quoted in H.L.A.Hart, 'Bentham', in B.Parekh ed., *Jeremy Bentham: Critical Assessments*, London, Routledge, 1993, p.48.

interventionist liberal political ideology.[209] Co-operatives, friendly societies, elementary

schools and the like were promoted by moralists and politicians as the means by which

liberal virtues of good moral character, like prudence and self-reliance, could be more

widely promoted. Moreover, political participation and the expansion of democracy were

encouraged and justified as part of a 'gospel of self-help' promising 'the removal of all

barriers to the entry of every hard-working citizen into the lifestyle of the middle-

classes'.[210] Liberal moralists and political thinkers were convinced that the future

progress of the nation could not be guaranteed without the continual affirmation of

virtues of self-reliance and enterprise. Both the 'language of virtue and the language of

character' were thus used to propagate the 'moral vigour of the citizens', with the

development of character 'represented as an end itself.'[211]

Victorian character-discourse embraced a comprehensive vision of public *and*

private morality. And its prescriptions were crystallised in a moral ideal of citizenship

that made private virtues public – something which will be considered in more depth in

the section on T.H.Green. This blurring of the boundaries of the public and private,

meant that each agent was 'not primarily regarded as a member of a political community,

but as an already private... moral agent whose mastering of his circumstances is indirectly

a contribution to the vitality and prosperity of his society'.[212] Victorian character-

theorists claimed that citizens could only contribute to the social good if they were of

good moral character and vice versa. Optimal moral character would be evidenced in the

contributions made by an agent to the wider social good. Consequently, much Victorian

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[209] S.Collini, 'The Idea of 'Character' in Victorian Political Thought'.

[210] The language of character and its 'insistence on the related virtues of thrift, self-help, and individual effort were directed against the paternalistic ethos of the landed aristocracy,' but was also used to 'moralise the working classes.... through the spread of bourgeois habits.' As a result, liberal character-discourse had a dual political objective, 'to pre-empt the threat of revolt from below and gain an ally against aristocratic privilege.' R.Bellamy, 'Introduction', p.7.

[211] S.Collini, 'The Idea of 'Character' in Victorian Political Thought', p.42.

character-discourse left little room for the development of individual character or diverse interpretations of the good life. The infamous (public) rigours of Victorian morality were, therefore, criticised by some liberals for stifling rather than stimulating individual endeavour. The first liberal thinker to fully explore the role individuality could play within a liberal concept of character was John Stuart Mill.

5. John Stuart Mill: Character and Individuality

John Stuart Mill attempted to fuse many different ethical ideals (including the principle of utility) into a comprehensive liberal doctrine. Perhaps the most original feature of his liberalism was his stress on the importance of individuality and moral self-development. Where many Victorian thinkers thought moral character should be shaped by external sanctions, such as law and public opinion, Mill wished to reassert the freedom of agents to adopt moral principles of their own.[213] This emphasis on autonomy, character and individuality has obvious relevance for contemporary perfectionist liberalism. The following section describes how, for Mill, moral and cultural advancement (as well as prosperity) depended on moral *and* individual character.

i) A liberal concept of character

Mill's liberalism was based firmly upon a distinctive conception of malleable self. Following the Romantics, he recognised that inherent individual characteristics and potentialities could play a vital role in forming the character of agents. Agents possessed a kind of property in themselves which could be elicited under conditions conducive to

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[212] ibid., pp.42-3.

[213] Mill's criticised Bentham's utilitarianism revolved because 'Man is never recognised by him as a being capable of pursuing spiritual perfection as an end; of desiring for its own sake, the conformity of his own character to his standard of excellence, without hope of good or fear of evil from other source

the 'free development of individuality'. The expression of this individuality was 'one of the principal ingredients of human happiness' and 'the chief ingredient of individual and social progress'.[214]

Individuality and moral development

Mill's ethical thought was rooted in the notion that agents possess, and are responsible for, their capacity for exercising choice. Human beings were self-interpreting beings and as such culpable for the choices they make. When 'arrived at the maturity' of their faculties it was both the 'privilege and proper condition' of agents 'to use and interpret experience' in their own way. If an agent wished to develop their individuality, they should 'find out what part of recorded experience is properly applicable' to their own 'circumstances and character' and to then use all their faculties in choosing a mode of living.[215]

The importance Mill attributed to individuality led him to criticise the moral effects of mass society. Where Adam Smith had been content to note a disjuncture between actual social practice and moral conduct in commercial society, Mill offered a more radical critique of its enervating effects. For him, wealth made democratic citizens (particularly, in England) inert and self-satisfied. Conformity to the standards of conduct enjoined by a commercial society had occasioned 'much more of the amiable and

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than his own inward consciousness'. J.S.Mill, 'Bentham', in G.Himmelfarb ed. *Essays on Politics and Culture*, New York, Anchor, 1963, p.97.

[210] J.S.Mill, 'On Liberty', in J.S.Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p.13.

[215] Those who let others dictate their 'plan of life' needed no 'other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation'. ibid., pp.64-5.

humane' in society, but bred 'a moral effeminacy' and 'an inaptitude for every kind of struggle.'[216]

The chief moral ills of life in modern democracy were attributable to the power of public opinion which made agents unable to 'brave ridicule' and suppressed the expression of their individuality. This had serious moral implications. Only a 'person whose desires and impulses are his own - are the expression of his own nature, as it has been developed and modified by his own culture - is said to have character.'[217] In stark contrast to the homogenisation that accompanied mass commercial society, Mill asserted that where 'a person possesses any tolerable amount of common sense and experience, his own mode of laying out his existence is the best, not because it is the best in itself, but because it is his own mode.'[218] This defence of individuality led Mill to argue in *On Liberty* that the 'only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way'.[219]

Freedom to pursue individual conceptions of the good entailed freedom of thought and discussion, as these were 'the source of everything respectable in man either as an intellectual or as a moral being'.[220] Humans learned and matured through the experience of making mistakes. Consequently, it was only when social conditions were favourable to open discussion and diverse experiences that agents could develop character and humans could evolve as a progressive species.

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[216] J.S.Mill, 'Civilisation', in G.Himmelfarb ed., *Essays on Politics and Culture*, p.58. See J.G.A.Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p.114 for an interesting digression upon the gendered language often used by British moralists.

[217] 'On Liberty', p.67. For Mill, 'It really is of importance, not only what men do, but what manner of men they are that do it. Among the works of man which human life is rightly employed in perfecting and beautifying, the first in importance surely is man himself.' ibid., p.66.

[218] ibid., p.75.

[219] ibid., p.17.

[220] ibid., p.24.

Although Mill recognised that actions could never be as free as opinions, he emphasised that 'different experiments in living' were essential for the development of individuality. Free reign 'should be given to varieties of character', because it was overwhelmingly 'desirable' that 'individuality should assert itself.'[221] In proportion to the development of their individuality and character, 'each person becomes more valuable to himself, and is, therefore, capable of being more valuable to others'. Agents who choose not to develop their individual character, effectively relinquish the effort to improve 'man himself'.[222] In addition, Mill's emphasis on the significance of individuality did not lead him to neglect the virtues of moral character. Moral character (like individuality) was a peculiarly human quality which should be 'desired disinterestedly for itself' by all agents in liberal societies.[223] However, moral feelings could develop 'in almost any direction'.[224] Consequently, character-development could not be left to happenstance. Individuals, government and society should promote the 'cultivation of the love of virtue up to the greatest strength possible.'[225]

The development of character

The development of moral character and individuality was predicated on a power to choose to amend our habits and formulate new ones. The development of this power to choose was, for Mill, associated with a feeling of pleasure felt during its use. The intensity of the pleasure associated with self-mastery, would increase as our 'sense of dignity', contingent on its exercise became deepened. This utilitarian view of moral

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[221] ibid., p.63
[222] ibid., p.66.
[223] J.S.Mill, 'Utilitarianism', in J.S.Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p.169. Indeed, Mill held that 'the mind is not in a right state, not in a state conformable to Utility, not in the state most conducive to the general happiness, unless it does love virtue in this manner- as a thing desirable in itself.' idem
[224] ibid., p.163.
[225] ibid., p.172.

psychology makes dubious metaphysical claims about the nature of motivation and autonomy. Nevertheless, to finally evince a 'confirmed character', Mill claimed that agents should be able to will independently of feelings of pain or pleasure.[226] The 'conviction that we have real power over the formation of our own character',[227] arose as a product of an impulse to 'modify our own character' in the light of the 'experience of the painful consequences of the character we previously had... or by some strong feeling of admiration or aspiration'. Although social circumstances had an impact on an agent's character, each agent was nevertheless able to exert considerable influence upon its development. As Mill put it, 'character is formed by... circumstances... desire to mould it in a particular way, is one of those circumstances, and by no means one of the least influential.'[228] For good moral character to develop, the will to be virtuous 'ought to be cultivated' into a 'habitual independence' of character.[229] In contrast to individuality, the cultivation of moral character would therefore need to focus on promoting a relatively stable set of moral virtues. But how could the will to develop stable virtues of moral character be encouraged?

Mill believed that the human mind was governed by universal laws, but that the disparate nature of human experience allowed us only to make qualified generalisations about its operations. By drawing generalisations from sources as varied as literature, biology and human experience, we could deduce psychological laws, which, though lacking the precision of natural science, could provide the foundation for 'Ethology' - a

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[226] Thus, 'it is said with truth that none but a person of confirmed virtue is completely free.' J.S.Mill, 'A System of Logic', in J.S.Mill, *Collected Works* vol.VIII, University of Toronto Press, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1974, p.841.

[227] J.S.Mill, *Autobiography of John Stuart Mill*, Columbia University Press, 1960, p.119.

[228] J.S.Mill, 'A System of Logic', pp.840-1.

[229] J.S.Mill, 'Utilitarianism', pp.173-5. Mill asserted that 'the trustworthiness of human assertion' is 'the primary support of all present social well-being, ... the insufficiency of which does more than any one thing that can be named to keep back civilisation, virtue, everything on which human happiness on the largest scale depends.' ibid., pp.154-5.

'Science of the Formation of Character'.[230] The malleability of the self at the heart of the perfectionist liberalism explicated here was thus a critical feature of Mill's concept of character-development. While he recognised that different 'types of character' resulted from different circumstances, he also stressed we were able to alter those circumstances, through individual or cooperative endeavour or through various political processes.[231]

Mill claimed that 'the greatest portion of character' could be explained by reference to 'differences in education and in outward circumstances'. Humans were moulded by their surrounding environment, but were also able to refashion that environment in the light of self-understanding. General laws of the mind could be used to understand the kind of character produced 'by any set of circumstances, physical and moral'. The principles of Ethology thus corresponded to 'the art of education' and included the formation of 'national or collective character as well as individual.' Although one could never know the full range of surrounding circumstances impacting on character development, Mill believed that 'there may be great power of influencing phenomena, with a very imperfect knowledge.' The science of 'Ethology' could therefore enable us to 'know that certain means have a *tendency* to produce a given effect.'[232]

Application of the principles of ethology in policy-making would be akin to principles that guide the use of political technologies by liberal governments to inculcate

[230] A.J.Ayer, 'Introduction', in J.S.Mill, *The Logic of the Moral Sciences*, Duckworth, London, 1987, pp.9-11.
[231] J.S.Mill, 'A System of Logic', p.864. The influences which shape character are not 'solely the result of their present circumstances, but the joint results of those circumstances and of the characters of the individuals.' ibid., p.847.
[232] ibid., pp.869-71. As a 'science of society' Ethology was applicable to any European country where it could enable us to 'understand by what causes it had, in any and every particular been made what it was; whether it was tending to any, and to what, changes; what effects each nature of its existing state was likely to produce in the future; and by what means any of those effects might be prevented, modified, or accelerated, or a different class of effects superinduced.' ibid., p.878.

technologies of the self. Indeed, Mill believed that social and political institutions were the primary means for educating the people of a liberal society.

ii)   Character, politics and education

Mill's arguments for state coordination of education were perfectionist in inspiration, because he believed 'men and governments must act to the best of their ability'.[233] Indeed, the moral worth of a society could be measured by the extent and competency of the critical attention which its citizens were able to levy upon its 'public transactions'.[234] Despite Mill's insistence that there should be 'many competing experiments' in education, he indicated that the state should also provide education 'for the purpose of example and stimulus to keep the others up to a certain standard of excellence.'[235] By pursuing the improvement of its citizens, a liberal state would therefore become a kind of 'educative democracy'.[236]

Educative Democracy

Mill believed that liberal democracy functioned best with the 'active participation' of its citizens. Although the opportunities for such participation 'must be adjusted to the capacities and qualities of such men as are available', these capacities and qualities could

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[233] J.S.Mill, 'On Liberty', p.24.

[234] J.S.Mill, 'Inaugural Address Delivered to the University of St.Andrews', in J.S.Mill, *Collected Works* vol.XXI, University of Toronto Press, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1984, p.247. 'It depends on the habit of attending to and looking into public transactions, and on the degree of information and solid judgement respecting them that exists in the community, whether the conduct of the nation as a nation, both within itself and towards others, shall be selfish, corrupt, and tyrannical, or rational and enlightened, just and noble.' idem.

[235] J.S.Mill, 'On Liberty', p.118.

[236] F.W.Garforth, *Educative Democracy: John Stuart Mill on education in society*, Oxford University Press, 1980.

and should be fostered and developed.[237] Education and socialisation could therefore enable citizens to become of good moral character and be 'better disposed to do what is required of them both for the preservation of the institutions, and for bringing them into such action as enables them to produce their best results.'[238] Liberal political institutions and policies could make a real contribution to the exercise and development of character, especially in public life where citizens should be helped to 'operate with the greatest effect on public affairs'. This elicitation of 'superinduced' moral and intellectual capacities would make people increasingly fit for self-government.[239] Extending the duties of citizenship and encouraging more political participation would raise the intellectual and moral standards of the general populace, as each citizen became required to 'apply at every turn, principles and maxims which have for their reason of existence the common good.'[240]

Mill argued that increasing participation in government was critical because it was 'only by practising popular government on a limited scale, that the people will ever learn how to exercise it on larger.'[241] Liberal governments could also establish institutions to promote and facilitate liberal ethical ideals. Although individuals should (on the whole) be 'free to use their own means of pursuing any object of general interest', the government, 'not trusting the object solely to their care', should maintain, side by side with their arrangements, an agency of its own for a like purpose.' The overarching purpose of public agencies and institutions would be educative, embracing cooperative principles wherever possible, because 'association, not isolation, of interests'

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[237] J.S.Mill, 'Considerations On Representative Government', in J.S.Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, pp.207-8. The 'most important point of excellence which any form of government can possess is to promote the virtue and intelligence of the people themselves.' ibid., p.226.
[238] ibid., p.271.
[239] ibid., pp.229, 233-5.
[240] ibid., p.255.

was 'the school' in which 'public spirit, generous sentiments, or true justice and equality' could be nurtured.[242] Enabling citizens 'to work with or for one another in relations not involving dependence',[243] also had important implications for political equality.

States could facilitate the development of character 'on the one hand, by excluding fewest from the suffrage, on the other by opening to all classes of private citizens... the widest participation in the details of judicial and administration business... and above all by the utmost publicity and liberty of discussions.'[244] Habitual co-operation and attendance upon the common good would enable each agent to realise that it was partly dependent upon their participation.[245] As participation and co-operation flourished men should therefore become increasingly willing to accept and assist the claims of women to equal treatment (both in public and private life). Denying equal rights to women was not only harmful to their 'sense of dignity' but injurious to the interests of society as a whole.[246] Moreover, the importance of generating a 'feeling of unity with all the rest' justified civic identification and co-operation being 'taught as a religion, and the whole force of education, of institutions, and of opinion, directed... to make every person grow up from infancy surrounded on all sides both by the profession and by the practice of it.'[247] Such civic education should also be supplemented by wider processes of moral education.

[241] J.S.Mill, 'Tocqueville on Democracy in America (vol.II)', in G.Himmelfarb, *Essays on Politics and Culture*, p.186.
[242] J.S.Mill, *Principles of Political Economy: Books IV and V*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1970, pp.305, 128. For instance, 'combinations such as the associations of workpeople,.. , are the most powerful means of effecting the social emancipation of the labourers through their own moral qualities'. ibid., p.267.
[243] ibid., p.128.
[244] J.S.Mill, 'Considerations on Representative Government', p.286.
[245] ibid., pp.230-1.
[246] J.S.Mill, 'The Subjection of Women', in J.S.Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*. Mill argued that 'All the selfish propensities, the self-worship, the unjust self-preference, which exist among mankind, have their source and root in, and derive their principal nourishment from, the present constitution of the relations between men and women.' ibid., p.59.
[247] J.S.Mill, 'Utilitarianism', p.166.

Mill argued that in a liberal society moral education could be widely administered through the exhortation of others.

> Human beings owe to each other help to distinguish the better from the worse, and encouragement to choose the former and avoid the latter. They should be forever stimulating each other to increased exercise of their higher faculties and increased direction of their feelings and aims towards wise instead of foolish, elevating instead of degrading, objects and contemplations.[248]

Crucially, moral exhortation should facilitate rather than hamper the development of moral character and individuality. Although 'considerations to aid his judgement' could be offered to an agent, the agent remained 'the final judge' of their own character.[249] We each had a right to act upon 'our unfavourable opinion of anyone' as a consequence of our right to exercise our own individuality, but 'the inconveniences which are strictly inseparable from the unfavourable judgement of others are the only ones to which a person should ever be subjected for that portion of his conduct and character which concerns his own good.'[250] Agents who were of bad moral character 'must expect to be lowered in the opinions of others, and to have a less share of their favourable sentiments.' Such inconveniences might include a duty of others to avoid (and to caution others to avoid) the society of morally deficient agents.[251] But this would still be framed by the right to 'plan our life to suit our own character'.

Despite Mill's stress on respect for individuality, the awareness of a reciprocal obligation to respect and assist the development of individual character carried with it a strong prescriptive notion of moral character. Citizens in a free society had a duty to

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[248] J.S.Mill, 'On Liberty', p.84. Mill wrote that 'It would be a great misunderstanding of this doctrine to suppose that it is one of selfish indifference which pretends that human beings have no business with each other's conduct in life, and that they should not concern themselves about the well-doing or well-being of one another, unless their own interest is involved.' idem.

[249] ibid., p.84.

[250] ibid., p.86.

encourage the life-experiments of others and to undertake their own worthwhile 'experiments in living' to develop character. For Mill, utilitarian calculations of the worth of such experiments could be made because 'some *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others.'[252] Hence, he argued agents should pursue those pleasures and activities judged to be of a higher quality.[253] Mill's 'thick' perfectionism provides an instructive indication of how contemporary perfectionist liberals may justify the promotion of intrinsically valuable activities. But how were agents to know which pleasures would contribute to the development of their moral and individual character?

Mill believed that those 'who are equally acquainted with, and equally capable of appreciating and enjoying, both [the higher and lower pleasures], do give a most marked preference to the manner of existence which employs their higher faculties.'[254] He therefore claimed that these more enlightened and educated individuals in society had a duty to guide their fellow-citizens in both political and moral matters. Such individuals were 'competent judges' whose verdicts possessed an authority to which others should presently defer.[255] 'Mental cultivation' in the form of exposure to knowledge, culture and politics was a means by which all agents could develop their character, and a deeper more satisfying level of individual happiness.[256] If Mill's liberal democracy was indeed to be an 'educative democracy', then cultural education would contribute to the flourishing of moral and individual character. This implied that all citizens had a right to be able to participate in a liberal cultural environment, whether as 'competent judges', as agents

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[251] Although this may be offset, if 'despite his demerits towards himself' an agent possesses a 'special excellence in his social relations.' idem.

[252] J.S.Mill, 'Utilitarianism', p.138.

[253] idem.

[254] ibid., p.139.

[255] ibid., p.141.

[256] ibid., pp.144-5.

committed to projects of individuality or as public-spirited members of society more generally.

Despite the appeal of Mill's ethical doctrine, 'experiments in living' need not be viewed as a process of eliciting determinate individual potentials. Nor need individuality be regarded as ultimately justified on the grounds of its utility for society or the human race. Moreover, intrinsically valuable activities do not need to be characterised in terms of the pleasure they bring, significant though this might be. Mill's comprehensive picture of the liberal good life stressed the value of individuality more than most British liberals of the late Victorian period, but did so at the expense of a fuller realisation of its cultural and ideological basis. Both moral and individual character are dependent on their being conceptualised as liberal ethical ideals within a particular sort of ethics. The British Idealists sought to give a liberal conception of the good life much stronger social foundations. Paramount amongst these thinkers was Thomas Hill Green.

6.   T.H.Green: The Ethical Ideal of Citizenship

T.H.Green's community-orientated political philosophy sought to link rationality, character and citizenship. He believed that the development of good moral character was the revelation of the immanence of the divine within each agent. Consequently, his moral philosophy was 'based on the contrast between the possible self and the actual self.'[257] The possible self was a liberal self in that every agent possessed a capacity for autonomously realising Christian principles in their moral character, especially within their conduct as a public-spirited citizen. Citizenship as an ethical ideal thus became the cornerstone of Green's perfectionist liberalism.

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[257] A.Vincent and R.Plant, *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1984, p.1.

i) An Idealist conception of character

Green argued that humans were distinguished from animals by their grasp of a 'world of practice', which could only be a product of their God-given nature as rational self-conscious subjects. Human 'consciousness' yielded 'in its most elementary form, the conception of something that *should be* as distinct from that which *is*, of a world of practice as distinct from that world of experience.'[258] The capacity for conceiving of 'what should-be' provided the foundation for the development of moral character.

Green indicated that it was only possible to understand agency via reference to the strength of will determining choices.[259] The virtues of character were therefore a logical adjunct of their being grounded in the free will attributable to human beings. Furthermore, the capacity for reflecting upon the past and conceiving some future good, or improvement, could only be found in humans' sense of self. And the self was 'not something apart from, feelings, desires and thought, but that which unites them, or which they become as united, in the character of an agent who is an object to himself'.[260] Green (like Mill) recognised that circumstances influenced the development of character, also emphasising the role agents played in forming their own character.[261] Although an agent's circumstances might condition 'the kind of good which at any point in his life the person presents to himself as greatest', their capacity for reason enabled them to choose how to mould their character. The formation of character was therefore dependent on

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[258] T.H.Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, New York, Thomas Y.Cromwell, 1969, pp.91-2.
[259] ibid., pp.104-5.
[260] idem.
[261] Circumstances were 'not like forces converging on an inert body which does not itself modify the direction of the resulting motion.' ibid., p.101. Green identified four types of 'affective circumstances'; (i) Natural sensations and wants; (ii) State of health; (iii) The outward manner of life; (iv) Social expectations. idem.

'the growth of some habit of will', which was in turn reliant on the process of self-objectification underpinning the notion of a possible self.[262]

'[S]elf-objectifying consciousness' was the work of a God-given rational faculty which all humans possessed. Reason was therefore the 'foundation of morality' because it constituted 'the capability in man of seeking an absolute good and conceiving of this good as common to others with himself'. Indeed, this capability alone 'rendered him a possible author and a self-submitting subject of law.'[263] The capacity for reason underpinned an agent's ability to autonomously conceive of a possible self, and their ability to autonomously drive their dispositions towards realising that ideal self in the development of their moral character. And Green believed agents would develop their ideal self by striving to reveal Christian principles within society (particularly through active civic participation).

Green argued that moral character was dependent on freely acknowledging and acting upon the demands of social responsibility generated by Christian morality and rational thought, especially the duties of citizenship. This did not entail unthinking adherence to existing laws and prevailing social mores, but that an agent of good moral character would conscientiously apply Christian principles (or the dictates of practical reason) to social interaction and moral and political dilemmas. Agents could also help others to realise their moral character, because their capacity for reason enabled them to step outside existing social practices and be critical of the level of rationality (or moral rectitude) implicit within those practices. Green described this capacity as 'the consciousness of a possibility of perfection'.[264] The type of perfection he thought common to all agents was the potential for realising the rational (the moral and the

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[262] ibid., pp.104-5.
[263] ibid., p.214.
[264] T.H.Green, *The Principles Of Political Obligation*, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1921, p.20.

intellectual) within social relationships. Moral character would thus develop best where an agent's choices became more amenable to the social good as laid down by dictates of practical reason. This 'increasing concreteness in the idea of human perfection' had evolved in modern society to incorporate 'a complex organisation of life, with laws and institutions, with relationships, courtesies, and charities, with arts and graces through which the perfection is to be attained.'[265] And Green believed that this reflected 'both the idea of a possible perfection of man, the idea of which reason is the faculty, and the impulse after self-satisfaction which belongs to the will'.[266] Perfection of character would therefore ultimately be judged in terms of an agent's contribution to the social good. But it could not be taken for granted that agents would internalise rational moral conduct. Political institutions should therefore 'represent an idea of common good which each member of the society can make his own so far as he is rational.'[267]

ii) Public institutions and morality

Green argued that all public institutions should foster character-development by requiring that citizens act 'as a member of a social organisation in which each contributes to the better-being of all the rest'.[268] This was critical to the development of moral character, because 'no development of morality can be conceived, nor can any history of it be traced (for that would imply such a conception), which does not presuppose some idea of a common good, expressing itself in some elementary effort after a regulation of life.' To ensure that citizens would contribute to the common good public institutions should express a 'consciousness on the part of those subject to the institutions.' Not only were these institutions 'the form and body of reason, as practical in men', but Green suggested

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[265] idem.
[266] ibid., p.23.
[267] ibid., p.126.

that 'without them the rational or self-conscious moral man does not exist.'[269] The power of public institutions was constitutive of the self and identity of citizens. Such institutions ranged from overarching complexes such as the state to simple social conventions or codes. The relationship between state intervention and self-realisation therefore had major implications for the development of autonomy and character.

Green stated that the importance of moralising citizens established that even 'the most primitive institutions for the regulation of a society with reference to a common good are already a school for the character which shall be responsive to the moral ideal.'[270] Hence the rule of law played a fundamental role in contributing to the shape of the society within which citizens made moral choices. Indeed, citizens could only learn to autonomously choose objects contributory to the common good when first 'in the presence of a requirement... enforced against his inclinations'.[271] Political technologies of domination were necessary to promote good citizenship. Nevertheless, moralistic legislation which constrained spontaneous moral behaviour undermined the autonomous development of character.[272] State intervention in society should therefore be approved *only* for appropriate moral reasons. If the state 'does not interfere with morality, it is for the sake of morality that it refrains: if it does interfere with external acts, it is also for the sake of morality that it intervenes. It is a moral being, animated by a moral purpose.'[273] In particular, the state should not constrict 'the region within which the spontaneity and

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[268] ibid., pp.32-3.

[269] T.H.Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p.216.

[270] ibid., p.217.

[271] idem.

[272] Green gave three examples of how this can occur: (a) legal requirements of religious observation and profession of belief, which have tended to vitiate the religious source of morality; (b) by prohibitions and restraints unnecessary for maintaining the social conditions of the moral life, and which interfere with the growth of self-reliance, with the formation of a manly conscience and sense of moral dignity- in short, with the moral autonomy which is the condition of the highest goodness; (c) by legal institutions which take away the occasion for the exercise of certain moral virtues (e.g. the Poor-law which takes away the occasion for the exercise of parental forethought, filial reverence, and neighbourly kindness. T.H.Green, *The Principles of Political Obligation*, p.39.

disinterestedness of true morality can have play', but should maintain the 'conditions of life' in which the autonomous development of character (self-realisation) was made possible. Such conditions should enable each agent to display 'an effectual self-devotion to the work of developing the perfect character in himself and others'.[274] However, in Victorian Britain, capitalism had undermined the opportunities for all citizens to develop their character by making such contributions to the social good.

Unrestricted commerce had a debilitating effect on the efforts of many citizens to develop their moral character. Citizens arbitrarily suffering deprivation and poverty, experienced an injury to their moral well-being hampering the free development and realisation of their moral character. It was thus the business of the state to ensure that conditions for free development of character were secured because '[e]very injury to the health of the individual is, so far as it goes, a public injury'.[275] There was a 'real community of meaning between 'freedom' as the condition of citizenship in a civilised state, and 'freedom' as the condition of a man who is inwardly 'master' of himself.'[276] Freedom was therefore not simply freedom from external constraints, as this would not destroy 'the feeling of oppression which always goes along with the consciousness of unfulfilled possibilities.'[277] Freedom 'rightly understood' was:

> a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something
> worth doing or enjoying, and that, too, something that, we do or enjoy
> in common with others.[278]

The right to be able to be significantly autonomous was thus a critical feature of Green's political philosophy. Indeed, he stressed that it was not enough that agents should be free

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[273] ibid., p.6.

[274] ibid., pp.39-41.

[275] T.H.Green, Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract, in C.M.Sherover ed., *the Development of the Democratic Idea*, New York, Mentor, 1974, p.430.

[276] T.H.Green, *The Principles of Political Obligation*, pp.16-7.

[277] A feeling induced by severely limited opportunities or by severely limiting habits- most especially for Green the 'bondage to liquor'. ibid., p.18.

from arbitrary interference in making choices they must also demonstrate their moral character by making worthwhile *public* choices.[279] This reflects the quasi-Foucauldian interpretation of liberal governmentality. Political institutions should promote the realisation of moral character in public life because 'the realisation of freedom in the state can only mean the attainment of freedom by individuals through influences which the state... supplies.'[280] For Green, the state's responsibility for the character of its citizens would primarily be discharged in the system of rights which it supported.

Promoting character and good citizenship

The 'right to free life' in a liberal society was 'secured to an individual by the community on the supposition that its exercise contributes to the good of the community'.[281] In order to promote worthwhile public choices, the state would therefore have to remove obstacles to their realisation. The moral end of the state was 'the emancipation of the individual from all restriction upon the free moral life, and his provision with means for it.'[282] Citizens should be provided with opportunities and minimal means to be able to display the virtues of moral character. For instance, education could enable citizens to reflect upon their own potential to contribute to the social good. The right to be able to develop one's own character also necessitated constraints upon business practice, with the right to property only justified because it provided an 'education of the sense of

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[278] T.H.Green, 'Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract', p.427.

[279] In ascertaining the moral growth of a society we measure 'its growth in freedom, we measure it by the increasing development and exercise on the whole of those powers of contributing to the social good with which we believe the members of the society to be endowed; in short, by the greater power on the part of the citizens as a body to make the most and best of themselves.' 'Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract', p.428

[280] T.H.Green, *The Principles of Political Obligation*, p.8.

[281] ibid., p.207.

[282] ibid., p.219.

responsibility which depends on the possibility of permanent ownership.'[283] Indeed, each citizen should become able to reflect upon the idea of the common good and, in so doing, come 'to be more aware of what he has it in him to do and to become.'[284] Hence, if a society was to promote its own good it must encourage 'a settled disposition on each man's part to make the most or best of humanity in his own person and in the person of others'.[285] It was also important that citizens were moralised through direct political participation, though given the size and complexity of modern states this would begin with involvement in (at the very least) communal or municipal affairs.[286]

Politics and morality were dependent not upon agreement and consent but upon identification with, and contribution to, a common good. 'Morality and political subjection thus have a common source... the rational recognition by certain human beings... of a common well-being which is their well-being, and which they conceive of as their well-being.'[287] For Green, the urge to be a good citizen through contributing to the common good could be 'quickened by a feeling of which the 'patria' the fatherland, the seat of one's home, is the natural object.'[288] Indeed, national passion and public spiritedness was the unifying force underlying a flourishing liberal society. Political participation would encourage concern for the *moral* well-being of one's fellow citizens. Nevertheless, ethics and morality were ultimately a matter for principled commitment to certain ideals. So, for Green, judgements on the moral worth of character rested on the

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[283] Marriage was also a character-building experience in this respect as individuals (men) would subordinate their own interests to those of their family thereby deepening their sense of social responsibility. ibid., pp.230-41. Nevertheless, for Green, women did not have equal rights in this regard, they were *objects* of a man's interest who though possessed of a right to divorce remain confined to the private sphere - a notion which is clearly not compatible with a contemporary understanding of the right to be able to be significantly autonomous.
[284] T.H.Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p.259.
[285] ibid., p.262.
[286] T.H.Green, *The Principles of Political Obligation*, p.127.
[287] ibid., p.124.
[288] ibid., pp.128-30.

extent to which agents manifested a disinterested Christian love of humanity in their social interaction.

Green's ethical ideal of citizenship provides a thorough introduction to the importance of the political virtues in the evolution of a perfectionist liberal concept of character. However, the liberal character-ethics developed in this thesis does not so dissolve the boundaries between public and private choices. Agents have moral duties towards themselves that will affect their public lives and duties towards others that will affect their private lives, but the development of character need not have such an overwhelmingly strong public ethos. Green's Idealist metaphysics means that this monistic view of the good life is unable to accommodate diversity in the configuration of character. Moreover, the promotion of a liberal character-ethics through processes of liberal governmentality need not be so tightly circumscribed by the state. There are numerous organisations within civil society which can contribute to a flourishing liberal culture. Neither does Green fully appreciate the value of individual character within a liberal conception of the good life.

Our genealogy of character has shown that contemporary perfectionist liberals need to revise, adapt and enhance the concept in line with their concerns with diversity, individual character and non-metaphysical justification for promoting a liberal conception of the good life. Nonetheless, they can draw on a rich vein of ideas in order to develop the ethical content of a contemporary concept of character. Locke's view of self-labour, Hume and Smith's notions of sympathy and sensibility, Mill's celebration of individuality and Green's estimation of good citizenship, and their respective recognition of the importance of education, all chime with perfectionist liberal ethical ideals. The precise structure of the liberal character-ethics which provides the normative content for the perfectionist liberal doctrine explicated in this thesis is presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Autonomy and a Liberal Character-Ethics

A liberal character-ethics can provide the substantive content for a perfectionist liberal doctrine based on the right to be able to be significantly autonomous. As was indicated in Chapter Two, the character-ethics which perfectionist liberals should endorse is one based on a dual concept of character. It will therefore comprise an ethics of moral character and an ethics of individual character. These two aspects of a liberal character-ethics can provide prescriptions for policies to promote different virtues perfectionist liberals would wish to associate with living well. From a meta-theoretical perspective, the promotion of these virtues by the liberal state can be understood in quasi-Foucauldian terms as the inculcation of the technologies of the self inherent being significantly autonomous. This chapter reflects first on the conceptual relationship between individual flourishing and technologies of the self associated with significant autonomy, before describing and analysing an ethics of moral character and an ethics of individual character. It then discusses the achievement of good character and explores principles which can guide perfectionist liberal policy-making, relating them to some applications of a character-ethics within liberal society.

1.   The Priority of Autonomy

Significant autonomy is viewed here as the 'ultimate value' of liberalism. As we have seen, it is a concept which receives close attention within perfectionist liberal thought, informing debates surrounding pluralism and the limits of state intervention within the moral lives of citizens. This section examines the special value of autonomy highlighting the nature of the technologies of the self which the liberal state can inculcate to enable citizens to become significantly autonomous. It then assesses the place promoting

significant autonomy has within the doctrine explicated here, discussing the right to be able to be significantly autonomous and its implications.

i)   Significant autonomy

The most culturally coherent, relevant and comprehensible liberal conception of autonomy is one which acknowledges it to be a 'matter of degree'. In particular, perfectionist liberals would wish to stress that significant autonomy implies that agents as 'part creators of their own moral world have a commitment to projects, relationships and causes which affects the kind of life that is worth living'.[289] Defining autonomy in terms of its significance implies more than considering it to be simply a capacity as many liberal philosophers commonly do.[290] Nor is the meaning of significant autonomy captured by Kant's classic formulation of the concept of autonomy as the capacity for applying rule's to one's conduct to which other could rationally assent.[291] Significant autonomy is a distinctive mode of conduct which agents in liberal societies display by living well, that is, by creating moral and individual value(s) for themselves and for the wider good. Perfectionist liberals have striven to illustrate that significant autonomy presupposes a deep commitment to the promotion of individual flourishing.[292] It is argued here that agents in liberal societies become significantly autonomous by adhering to a liberal character-ethics. In quasi-Foucauldian terms, this means that agents in liberal societies apply particular types of technology of the self when developing their moral and individual character. These contentions are now explained in greater detail.

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[289] J.Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, p.154.

[290] e.g. J.Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*; R.Dworkin, *Liberalism*.

[291] I.Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Hackett, Indianopolis, 1992.

[292] J.Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*; R.Young, *Personal Autonomy: Beyond Negative and Positive Liberty*, London, Croom Helm, 1986.

Liberal commitment to individual flourishing can only be fully cashed out where significant autonomy is valued and protected. Although it is possible to understand individual flourishing in ways that are not consistent with a moral commitment to autonomy, in a liberal society each is presumed by the other.[293] Commitment to significant autonomy is implied by respect for individual freedom, whether, indirectly, by permitting freedom of belief or speech, or directly, by encouraging agents to become more self-reliant in economic, political or moral matters. As was noted in the introduction, many contemporary liberals interpret respect for an agents' capacity to form and revise their own conceptions of the good life as a commitment to autonomy. By contrast, perfectionist liberals believe that a commitment to individual flourishing entails the support and promotion of the ethical content associated with significant autonomy within a liberal society; 'simply being autarchic... is not enough for autonomy' or for individual flourishing.[294]

To live well, agents in liberal societies should be able to develop a certain type of character that enables them to become significantly autonomous. This means that they should evince a range of virtues associated with that ideal of character. The importance of character-development to individual flourishing also presupposes that a wide range of valuable practices and activities exist in which agents can pursue diverse conceptions of the good life. A perfectionist liberal commitment to individual flourishing therefore presumes (a) that agents should be able to display a range of virtues associated with significant autonomy and (b) that a range of social practices are supported to facilitate

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[293] A religious faith may claim that the flourishing of individual believers is dependent on the subordination of each individual to God's (or the priesthood's) will. Or, some types of utilitarian might argue that individual happiness and flourishing can be legitimately maximised by authoritarian autonomy-denying policies.

[294] P.Digeser, *Our Politics, Our Selves?: Liberalism, Identity and Harm*, p.175.

and contribute to the development of these virtues. Support for both these conditions could be prevalent throughout a liberal society, but would ultimately be guaranteed by the liberal state. Before reflecting further on how the state promotion of significant autonomy is decontested within the perfectionist liberal doctrine explicated here, it is important to first outline how virtues of character inherent in significant autonomy can be viewed from a meta-theoretical perspective.

Autonomy and technologies of the self

At a meta-theoretical level, the shape and substance given to significant autonomy in liberal societies is determined by the application of certain technologies of self which underpin the development of an agent's character. The principal theoretical presupposition associated with applying those technologies of the self that can enable agents to live well is self-discipline. An agent's decisions and choices cannot influence the significance of their autonomy if they are not self-disciplined. Self-discipline when becoming significantly autonomous has three features: (i) *disciplined thought* i.e. that an agent can apply sufficient self-discipline to their reasoning to call it their own; (ii) *disciplined action* i.e. that an agent can discipline their dispositions and traits to become significantly autonomous; and (iii) *disciplined living* i.e. that an agent can apply sufficient self-discipline to their character to be significantly autonomous, living well through a whole lifetime, revising and adapting their choices when necessary.

Evidently, different levels of self-discipline will be required to accomplish different goals and negotiate different conflicts within an agent's life. However, agents are unlikely to flourish if they cannot apply some degree of self-discipline to the development of their character. The degree of self-discipline required for the

development of character will presume a high degree of self-understanding. Indeed, self-understanding has a particularly important relationship with autonomy.

Disciplined thought, action and living all require self-awareness. For an agent to apply discipline to their thought, activity or living they need to know their own limitations and in which configurations their dispositions and traits may be combined. Autonomy without self-understanding would be incoherent, because agents would not be able to comprehend or make comprehensible why they choose to do one thing rather than another. Self-understanding therefore makes a vital contribution to the individual interpretation and evaluation of autonomy. It presupposes an ability to discipline one's expectations about oneself and in a liberal society this can be accomplished best by adopting the vocabulary of character.

The value which a perfectionist liberal doctrine should attach to individual flourishing therefore goes right the way down. Self-understanding underpins the development of character, because an agent of good character should be able to conceptualise the quality of their autonomy. In turn, the impact of self-understanding is underpinned by self-discipline. In a liberal society, the importance of being able to apply these technologies of the self in order to become significantly autonomous and thereby flourish then grounds a requirement for some responsible agent to promote that ability.

## ii)	Promoting significant autonomy

Agents will not flourish in a liberal society if they cannot become significantly autonomous relative to their own traits and dispositions. This is effectively a process of developing their character. They therefore have at least a minimal obligation to become significantly autonomous, because for them to neglect to do so would be a failing of character and an indication that they were not living well. Furthermore, the importance

of significant autonomy in a liberal society generates an imperfect obligation for agents to promote the autonomy of their fellow citizens and contribute to the maintenance of those practices and activities in which it can become increasingly significant. In liberal democracies, the state is the only institution which can secure the legitimacy necessary to give full value to this obligation. In this respect, liberal citizens can be said to have a right to be able to be significantly autonomous. The right to be able to be significantly autonomous and the duty to promote autonomy are explored below.

A right to be able to be significantly autonomous

Liberal rights can be conceptualised as either positive or negative rights. Negative rights are those associated with the concept of negative freedom, such as the rights to life, liberty and property. Positive rights are those associated with the concept of positive freedom, such as the rights to welfare and education. The individual right to be able to be significantly autonomous is related to both negative and positive liberal rights. Negative rights (such as the rights to freedom of person, movement, thought, speech and association) are a necessary component of a right to significant autonomy. These rights could be justified without reference to autonomy, insofar as a society of agents who respected each other rights but were not autonomous was conceivable. Nevertheless, we saw earlier that significant autonomy implied more than simply being left alone.[295] Although a framework of negative rights is necessary for autonomy to be respected, it is not sufficient to uphold a right to be able to be significantly autonomous. A liberal right to be able to be significantly autonomous can thus be viewed as a positive cultural right to a particular kind of flourishing within a liberal society.

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[295] Also see R.Dagger, *Civic Virtues: Rights, Citizenship and Republican Liberalism*, Oxford University Press, 1996, p.30.

Agents in liberal societies have a right to significant autonomy, because living well autonomously is so crucial to their flourishing in those societies as that is what a liberal society is deemed to be for. This entails both the negative right to freedom from interference and the positive right to be equipped with the opportunities and abilities which enable them to become significantly autonomous. The first aspect of the right to be able to be significantly autonomous entails that citizens have a perfect obligation to observe minimum requirements of good citizenship that pertain to being autonomous. These conditions oblige each citizen to refrain from interfering with others' and to avoid damaging their capacity to be able to be significantly autonomous, for example, by systematically excluding or alienating certain groups from participation in political decision-making. The second aspect of the right to significant autonomy generates imperfect obligations on the part of each agent to positively promote the ability to be significantly autonomous among their fellows. These obligations are imperfect because liberal citizens could not be individually held responsible for fulfilling the obligation to promote significant autonomy. For instance, they would not be able to individually deliver the education which the right to be able to be significantly autonomous demands. Nor would they be likely to guarantee the high degree of egalitarian redistribution that it may require. But agents in liberal societies are in a position to help promote the virtues inherent in significant autonomy by encouraging each other to display configurations of character that are coherent, relevant and comprehensible interpretations of perfectionist liberal ethical ideals. This would not imply a duty of active interference where an agent's character is called into question. Beyond the registering of approval and disapproval we must look to the wider institutions of civil society and to the liberal democratic state to establish the framework conditions and capacity-building inherent in significant autonomy.

The full practical import of an obligation to promote significant autonomy can only be adequately accomplished via appropriate institutional means on behalf of liberal citizens. No one citizen can hope to promote significant autonomy by good works. Individual citizens could never expect to develop each other's significant autonomy without some framework of socially or institutionally legitimised support. Indeed, an autonomy-supporting environment would flourish best with some form of institutional support and approval.[296]

In contemporary liberal democracies, the state and civil society generally shoulder the responsibility for the promotion of appropriate virtues amongst citizens. This is accomplished by the state through education and the rule of law and other specific practices and policies which pertain to the development of character (such as the regulation of professional standards of conduct). Civil society also has an important role to play in facilitating the obligation to promote the autonomy of one's fellows, albeit an imperfect one. Institutions, associations and organisations that are not subject to direct democratic control have a duty to uphold an environment which is conducive to significant autonomy. They should therefore be committed to facilitating the promotion of appropriate liberal virtues in their internal and external interactions and relationships, and in their overall strategic orientation. This is not a perfect obligation in each and every case because these associations are privately-owned concerns and to an extent analogous to private citizens with corresponding imperfect duties for the wider promotion of significant autonomy. But associations in civil society may rightly be criticised and pressurised where their actions meet only minimal criteria for the respect for significant

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[296] J.Raz, *The Morality of Freedom.*

autonomy or do not meet them at all, and they may even be legitimately coerced in those circumstances where they do not meet those criteria.

The chief public agency by which associations can legitimately be held accountable to citizens for their contribution to significant autonomy is, of course, the liberal democratic state; and the state is best placed to influence the development of significant autonomy and to enhance the ability of all citizens to live well for two reasons. First, it has a pragmatic obligation to promote significant autonomy because it is the only institution capable of doing so to an appropriate degree throughout and across a liberal society. Second, it has a perfect obligation to do this because for perfectionist liberals its legitimacy in a liberal society is ultimately dependent on it governing in such a way as to secure individual flourishing.[297] If democratic states are to fulfil this responsibility then perfectionist liberals must explore how best to promote the ethical content associated with significant autonomy. The doctrine presented here describes the promotion of the virtues inherent in significant autonomy by adopting the language of character.

Autonomy and a liberal character-ethics

Autonomy should be promoted within liberal democracies because agents have an overwhelming moral interest in becoming significantly autonomous. This implies that autonomy must be made meaningfully significant to each and every citizen by providing them with the opportunity to develop their ability to become significantly autonomous. In this respect, the state is the key institution which can legitimately guarantee and promote significant autonomy throughout liberal society. For it to do so in an appropriately appealing liberal manner, it should promote virtues which are associated with the

development of character. As we have seen, at a meta-theoretical level, the promotion of these virtues can be illuminatingly conceived in quasi-Foucauldian terms as the inculcation of the liberal technologies of the self inherent in living well. The explication of an appealing liberal ethical doctrine should therefore give careful consideration to delineating liberal technologies of the self (or liberal virtues) that reflect perfectionist liberal aspirations for significant autonomy.

A liberal character-ethics can best frame a perfectionist conception of state intervention in the moral lives of citizens because, as we saw in the last chapter, it has a strong liberal pedigree which is tied to the importance of individual flourishing. Such an ethics would play the central role in indicating the type of content inherent in living well. In particular, promotion of a liberal character-ethics can help steer significant autonomy towards specific liberal ethical ideals (such as moral and individual character).

Significant autonomy implies that agents can live well or less well. An agent is significantly autonomous when they develop different worthwhile character-configurations within different valuable activities (or within those which could come to be regarded as valuable). The promotion of the right to be able to be significantly autonomous should therefore reflect this qualitative aspect of autonomy in a liberal society. The following two sections detail the nature of a liberal character-ethics which can guide the promotion of significant autonomy.

2. The Ethics of Moral Character

A liberal character-ethics will reflect perfectionist liberal aspirations for the development of both moral and individual character. It will unite these two aspects in one doctrine, but highlight that they both generate specific ethical requirements. The nature of a liberal

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[297] idem.

ethics of moral character is considered first here as the development of moral character precedes that of individual character. Such an ethics of moral character will focus on the moral dispositions inherent in significant autonomy, embracing the need for agents in liberal societies to develop these to live well. This section considers the philosophical presuppositions and the content of a liberal ethics of moral character.

i)   Autonomy and the ethics of moral character

A liberal ethics of moral character has a reciprocal relationship with significant autonomy. An ethic of moral character partly constitutes significant autonomy, while the interpretation and application of an ethics of moral character implies significant autonomy. As we saw in Chapter Two, the virtues of a liberal ethics of moral character should be interpreted autonomously because autonomy is a necessary though not sufficient condition of having character. It indicates that our moral conduct should be our own. An agent could not be said to be of good moral character or be autonomous if their conduct and character has been governed by the will of another. The idea of moral responsibility is premised on the concept of autonomy. The liberal concept of moral character implies that an agent's moral character is constituted by their own input into their decisions and activities. But in what ways can agents become able to apply an ethics of moral character to their autonomous choices? And, how should they seek to apply the ethics?

Moral character and self-discipline

The promotion of liberal virtues can directly contribute to the development of agents' moral character. Nevertheless, this does not imply that liberal should compel, coerce or order agents to develop their moral character, because to do so would preclude the

possibility of autonomy. Rather the promotion of liberal virtues (through processes of liberal governmentality such as education) equips agents to become significantly autonomous. The constitutive nature of these virtues does not detract from the fact that they are liberal virtues which have to be autonomously adopted and applied by agents. They are virtues which agents manifest in their own specific ways when they live well. This process is central to the development of moral character, because character-development presupposes the autonomous disciplining of an agent's moral conduct. Agents with unruly lives could not develop moral character without displaying the sort of disciplined commitment to valuable dispositions which could throw their disorderly life into a different light. How, then, might we expect agents to discipline the development of moral character?

Disciplined thought is a feature of good moral character for a variety of reasons. First, we would find it hard to envisage an agent who did not regularly have cause to reflect on what they should do. The interpretation of situations of moral difficulty to themselves is necessary if agents are to decide on appropriate conduct. Second, disciplined thought also enables agents to reflect on how their conduct and choices will in turn shape their moral character and how moral aspects of their life can be maintained, directed or reformed.

Disciplined action is clearly inherent in the development of good moral character. To claim that an agent could avoid disciplining themselves to be of good moral character is not even conceivable where an agent was unconsciously disciplined in their moral conduct. For instance, a good parent may not constantly reflect that they must discipline themselves to be so. But for them to have become habituated in such a manner implies some willed fashioning of their conduct. If they are not distracted from this goal by other

competing desires or influences, then they are disciplining themselves by manifesting virtues pertaining to significant autonomy.

Overall, we might say that disciplined living is key to developing good moral character over the course of a lifetime. But this does not mean that the course of an agent's life must follow a set course, be conducted in accordance with specific rules, or that they must know their place. Rather disciplined living here implies that an agent's moral character is the most consistent feature and focus of their lives, action and thought, and that it should be cared for in a disciplined fashion if it is to enable them to be significantly autonomous throughout their lives. To accomplish this, agents must learn to care for their own moral character by applying the liberal ethics of moral character.

Applying the ethics of moral character

Application of the ethics of moral character is essential if agents are to be autonomous in a manner which is conducive to their own and others' flourishing. It is carried out by considering its relationship with the range of circumstances, opportunities, abilities and decisions of the agent concerned. Such practical application will usually entail a shared process of interpretation between the agent, those who are (or could be imagined to be) best placed to evaluate their conduct, the wider ideals of the ethics of moral character and the minimal conditions of good citizenship that underpin liberal democratic culture. Nevertheless, self-understanding will remain the primary foundation for applying the ethics of moral character. Although the approbation of an agent's conduct can be made on their behalf, it will always be in terms which refer to their intentions, interests and aspirations. Ultimately, application of the relevant aspects of the ethics of moral character can only be made by the agent themselves. And it is on these terms that moral character must be assessed.

The development of moral character will proceed via reference to a liberal character-ethics which can facilitate a complex of possible character-configurations. The development of a variety of configurations of moral character will be an inevitable feature of life within a liberal democracy, especially one that conscientiously promotes significant autonomy. The liberal democratic state will therefore be concerned with the opportunities available for citizens to develop diverse configurations of character and so will be anxious to promote the ability of agents to apply a liberal character-ethics in different ways. A liberal character-ethics comprises recognisably liberal ethical ideals and is sensitive to pluralism insofar as such configurations should be differentially coherent, relevant and comprehensible within a framework of virtues found in an ethics of moral character. This will mean that agents may choose to cast doubt on established configurations of moral character or that they may wish to affirm more established character-configurations. In either case, the application of the ethics of moral character will give agents the ability and opportunity to autonomously configure their character-development.

ii)   Developing moral character

A liberal ethics of moral character prescribes the manifestation of some configuration of the virtues of moral character, envisaging the flourishing of agents in relation to the development of their own moral character and in relation to the development of the moral character of their fellows within liberal society. Before considering the virtues inherent in such a liberal ethics of moral character, it is important to examine two presuppositions regarding the interpretation of moral character in a liberal society.

The successful configuration of the moral virtues found within a liberal character-ethics hinges on directing disciplined thought towards an understanding of one's own moral dispositions. This is crucial if agents are to be able to develop and exercise moral judgement. Sound moral judgement presumes the self-aware display of the liberal virtues of moral character when making autonomous choices. Indeed, all the liberal virtues of character presume a high degree of self-knowledge and self-understanding. An agent could not successfully manifest virtues inherent in the development of their moral character if they were unaware of the constraints inherent in their own dispositions. The demands placed on agents in liberal societies require that they are capable of making strenuous moral decisions on the basis of their own judgement. It is therefore of no small importance that they are equipped to do so to the best of their own abilities as they find them. In this respect, the liberal state has a duty to promote opportunities which are conducive to the free development of self-understanding. But what sort of opportunities can enable agents in liberal societies to develop their self-understanding to ground significant autonomy in coherent, relevant and comprehensible moral judgements?

In a liberal society, an agent's self-understanding can be developed through learning how to interpret a liberal character-ethics. This implies an education for significant autonomy which includes political education and direct participation in political and moral discourse. For agents to become significantly autonomous they should be able to participate in the interpretation of its ethical content. In particular, they should be afforded discursive opportunities to actively participate in the evolution of an ethics of moral character. Participation in the evolution of a liberal character-ethics can be both active and vicarious. It is active when agents engage in the problematisation of the ethics of moral character by criticising, supporting, reforming or entrenching possible

interpretations of its normative prescriptions. Participation that is vicarious will entail private intellectual engagement with the ethics of moral character, where agents reflect on the adequacy of its possible interpretations in relation to their own and others' character-development.

Opportunities for participation in discourse pertaining to the ethics of moral character without the support of the state can arise within the family and civil society. However, for the disposition and ability to actively and vicariously participate in this discourse to be widely and fairly promoted it is necessary for its encouragement to be sustained by a legitimate authority to which all citizens could consent. The liberal state should therefore create and promote opportunities associated with the interpretation of the ethics of moral character. This will also help agents to develop the diverse configurations of the virtues of moral character which are a feature of significant autonomy in a liberal society. These virtues are described and analysed next.

iii) Virtues of good moral character

Liberal virtues constitute the substantive content of a liberal character-ethics. The virtues pertaining to a liberal ethics of moral character fall into three broad categories: social, moral and political. While these different categories of virtue are not perfectly distinct, as each implies the other in a variety of ways, agents should be able to manifest some configuration of a number of these virtues in order to develop moral character. The content of the different classes of liberal virtues of moral character is explored further below.

The social or civil virtues are the so-called 'little virtues' of moral character. They comprise those dispositions towards others which make social interaction agreeable, such as being polite, friendly and helpful. Strictly speaking, within an ethics of moral character these other-regarding social virtues do not include all the qualities that make agents agreeable to others. For instance, although we might prefer our fellow citizens to be entertaining or witty, we are unlikely to regard the continual display of these latter virtues as inherent in moral character. The social virtues also include self-regarding personal dispositions which make an agent's conduct agreeable, such as modesty. Both these other-regarding and self-regarding social virtues are a feature of an ethics of moral character insofar as perfectionist liberals would not wish to ignore the role that these virtues play in the character-development of agents.[298]

Social virtues fulfil an important role within the ethics of moral character, because they fill in the mundane detail of how people should behave in ordinary day-to-day social interactions. An ethics of moral character would thus not be restricted to those virtues inherent in negotiating morally demanding situations. It would reflect the civility agents in liberal societies are commonly expected to manifest in their everyday interactions. These interactions may or may not require the resolution of morally complex decisions, but they will require conduct that takes into account the interests of others as this is a characteristic commitment of a significantly autonomous agent.

If agent x is openly rude to agent y in the street then there may on the face of it be very little serious moral loss. However, the significance of their autonomy at that time (in terms of the value it contributes to the kind of social life worth living) could have

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[298] Indeed, other-regarding moral virtues spring from the same disposition of sensitivity towards others as their social counterparts. And self-regarding moral virtues spring from the same disposition of self-respect as their social counterparts.

been improved had they conducted themselves in accordance with virtues of civility. This does not imply that to be significantly autonomous agents have an obligation to maximise each other's significant autonomy, but they should meet minimum standards of civility which are necessary for its facilitation. Uncivil behaviour reflects very poorly on the character of the uncivil agent, in particular, indicating that they care very little for the quality of their own autonomy or that of others. This would not be conducive to a liberal society in which individual flourishing was paramount. Indeed, it would not take a very great leap of imagination to envisage the negative impact on the character of agents in liberal societies if they routinely disregarded each others' civil sensibilities. Hence, other-regarding social virtues should be promoted as the vital bedrock of conduct within a civil society. But what role do self-regarding social virtues play in our ethics of moral character?

Social virtues of moral character can be other-regarding for a very clear reason. They are conducive to civility in social relations and the development of significant autonomy in society. However, it is often less obvious how social virtues of moral character may be self-regarding. Ultimately, the self-regarding social virtues of moral character fill out an agent's self-respect when they enter social relations. For instance, social (or civil) relations can exist between an agent of great modesty and another who is without shame. However, we are likely to question whether the two agents were committed to the same sort of civility, because their contrasting display of virtues reveals very different levels of care for their moral character. Dire socio-economic circumstances, a commitment to challenging society's norms or individual preference may lead an agent to have what appears to be an idiosyncratic interpretation of the self-regarding social virtues of moral character. Nevertheless, this interpretation is not consistent with significant autonomy for two reasons: first, the shameless agent does not

appear to have a sufficient regard for their own character; second, they do not appear concerned about the offence or concern which their lack of self-respect may give to others. Agents who neglect the self-regarding social virtues of moral character do not (as a rule) care sufficiently for their own autonomous choices nor set an example to their fellows which is conducive to significant autonomy. Furthermore, the 'social capital' and trust upon which a flourishing civil society depends[299] can only be developed where agents share a willingness and ability to exercise other-regarding and self-regarding social virtues of moral character.

Promoting an ethics of moral character which comprises other-regarding and self-regarding social virtues is an essential task if liberal governments are to encourage civil interaction. To ensure that citizens are fully disposed to develop their moral character these little social virtues must be supplemented by broader moral virtues.

Moral virtues

The moral virtues within a liberal ethics of moral character are also other-regarding and self-regarding. They are grounded in dispositions of sensitivity to others and self-respect. These dispositions presuppose an agent's care for the development of their character. This notion of 'care' is integral to the moral virtues of moral character in a deeper manner than for the social virtues. Civility and sociability imply a relationship of care towards others or oneself, but moral praiseworthiness requires that this type of care-orientated conduct is more painstaking and conscientious in its application. Moral sensitivity to others entails manifesting moral virtues of moral character in ways that reveal an agent's moral conscience. Civility implies only that agents display the other-

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[299] R.Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton University Press, 1993.

regarding social virtues of moral character in respect of agreeable social relations. It does not entail a further obligation to show especial concern for their flourishing. Neither does it imply a moral disposition towards one's own character which extends much beyond not giving offence.

The other-regarding liberal moral virtues which evince sensitivity to the flourishing of others are those which classically pertain to taking pains to address the concerns of relevant others or even to putting their needs before one's own. These virtues will include such qualities as selflessness, beneficence and generosity. Such virtues are more than simply social virtues because they imply more than merely civil conduct towards others. They entail particular types of disposition towards others and the manifestation of very specific types of moral act. While they are not as ubiquitous as the social virtues, these other-regarding moral virtues are the moral glue that sustains families, associations, societies and polities. Civility may ensure that social life is generally agreeable or at least not unbearable. Acts of generosity, understanding and beneficence ensure that the fragility of individual flourishing is not overcome by the force of adverse circumstances. The survival and flourishing of agents, associations and institutions within civil society depends on how able and willing agents are to participate in the improvement of the well-being of their fellow family members, associates, citizens and so on. Moral virtues of moral character are therefore crucial for the development of the moral conduct which sustains the shared ethical ideals of a society, culture or practice. A collection of self-interested amoral agents who co-operated solely to achieve their own aims could not generate sufficient moral capital to sustain ethical ideals pertaining to the welfare of its members or for the practices in which they could flourish. A liberal society presupposes shared ideals that inform how that society is organised and

how agents within that society should display some degree of moral conscience in their treatment of each other.

Care for the flourishing of others is the foundation for the right to be able to be significantly autonomous. But an ethics of moral character would also require that agents demonstrate commitment to their own flourishing by displaying a variety of self-regarding virtues of moral character pertaining to significant autonomy. These self-regarding virtues would again hinge on self-respect. Self-respect is the fundamental disposition which drives agents to make their autonomous choices a valuable contribution to their own moral well-being and flourishing. It hinges on the ability to care for the development of one's moral character. The moral virtues which are implied by this attitude of self-respect (such as prudence and sensibility) are those which reflect how an agent seeks to develop their moral character. These self-regarding virtues are emphatically not the same as self-regard. They are linked to the other-regarding moral virtues of moral character because their exercise often entails displaying a fine sensitivity to the needs of others. Indeed, as Jane Austen's novels show, the acute sensibility of some agents can be revealed in how they treat others. More generally, if agents do not respect themselves then they may be less able or inclined to promote the flourishing of their fellow agents. This suggests that the self-regarding moral virtues of moral character are prior to the other-regarding moral virtues and the social virtues. For an agent to display moral character when interacting with others it is assumed that they stand in some sort of appropriate relation to the development of their own moral character. Self-respect therefore grounds ethical conduct towards oneself and towards others, implying awareness that appropriate care for one's self will also evince sensitivity to the flourishing of others.

Overall, other-regarding and self-regarding moral virtues of moral character reflect an agent's moral conscience. Differing configurations of these virtues are not manifested simply because they are the right thing, but because they are the sort of things that might be done by a certain sort of agent – a significantly autonomous agent of good moral character. This does not entail a rigid moral code to which agents must adhere. A liberal character-ethics enables the moral character of agents to be autonomously configured through many different combinations of the liberal virtues of moral character. These combinations of social and moral virtues of moral character will also be supplemented by liberal political virtues. Indeed, significant autonomy is severely diminished and may be threatened where agents in liberal societies are neither disposed nor able to display at least some of these.

Political virtues

Significant autonomy within the political sphere is a crucial concern for agents in liberal democracies. Individual flourishing and liberal polities themselves, are seriously weakened where citizens were unable, or unwilling, to participate in or deliberate on the public application and interpretation of a liberal character-ethics. The liberal political virtues inherent in good citizenship are therefore an integral feature of a liberal ethics of moral character. A liberal ethics of moral character will embrace a range of virtues which are closely associated with the responsibilities of citizenship within a liberal democracy, such as tolerance, political participation and deliberation. These virtues will build on minimal requirements of good citizenship. Indeed, the basic demand of the ethics of moral character would be based on the political virtue of restraint, indicating that a good citizen must at least be someone who respects the right of other agents to be able to be significantly autonomous. However, an agent who simply exhibited restraint without

expressing any interest in politics and political discourse would not be living well. The development of good moral character requires that agents are committed to maintaining an environment conducive to its growth and exercise. Good citizenship is therefore constituted by different types of responsible political engagement. This can only be fully accomplished where a substantial proportion of citizens are inclined to participate in and deliberate on the public discourse which pertains to liberal society, politics and culture.

The liberal political virtues pertaining to responsible political engagement in a liberal society are participative and deliberative, and may be either active or vicarious. Participative political virtues are actively exercised in campaigning on behalf of a political party, for a political issue, by writing to an MP, publicly demonstrating against policies, institutions or organisations, attending local council meetings and so on. These political virtues are also often supplemented by active moral virtues, such as giving money and time to charities, helping others in the locality, and physically aiding the vulnerable. These latter moral virtues of moral character form an important counterpoint to the participative political virtues, but on the whole, perfectionist liberal participative political virtues centre on the importance of responsible political engagement.

Responsible political engagement in a liberal democracy involves acting on and developing sound political judgements when making autonomous choices in the political sphere. The active participatory virtues are composite virtues that combine the moral virtues of moral character such as courage, beneficence and fairness in ways which demonstrate commitment to the outcomes of political deliberation. Responsible political participation is thus political engagement for a purpose - to influence political decision-making whether on a small-scale by lobbying for local road safety improvements or on a large-scale by protesting about war or taxation. It evinces sensitivity to the demands of effecting political change in a morally appropriate manner in a liberal democracy. For

instance, civil disobedience may be justified in certain cases but will require careful explication and management to evince a proper respect for liberal ideals, such as democratic decision-making or representative government. Direct political participation is of course active, but vicarious participation occurs when a voter or a union member takes part only vicariously in the actual conduct of parliamentary debates or wage negotiations. Political participation is here vicarious in the strict sense that it has been conducted on behalf of an agent by an authorised representative - citizens do not participate directly in parliamentary sessions, but elected representatives do so in their place.

Deliberative political virtues comprise the ability to make political decisions, the skills necessary to formulate and propose solutions to political issues, the skill to express political opinions in a relevant manner, and the capacity for engaging responsibly in (and perhaps leading) political debates. They are exercised actively in the voting booth, in public assemblies and committees and within government. These virtues can be exercised actively in a wide range of situations where agents resolve conflicts and distribute resources and tasks, including the family, the workplace and associations in civil society. They can also be exercised via the written word or other media in newspapers, books or on the internet, where the vicarious aspect of certain political deliberations may become especially apparent. The deliberative political virtues are here manifested vicariously in the loose sense that they are directed towards the discussion rather than the resolution of political issues. Vicarious deliberative political virtues are therefore evident most frequently in University seminars, school classrooms, the family, social life and in the privacy of an agent's conscience. The vicarious deliberative political virtues need not be orientated towards actual political change, but can occur for the purposes of

entertainment, edification, or education. As a consequence, they can be exercised in a greater diversity of ways than their participative counterparts.

Overall, a liberal ethics of moral character will propose that the participative and deliberative political virtues should be promoted because responsible political engagement is an integral feature of good moral character. The vital importance of the political virtues to the flourishing of agents in future years would mean that liberal states should focus very careful attention on a political education which can promote responsible political engagement.[300] Nevertheless, there are other valuable virtues which supplement those associated with good moral character that contribute to the maintenance of wider aspects of an autonomy-supporting liberal culture. Indeed, the importance of these virtues and the opportunity to exercise them in specific social practices can only be fully explicated in a liberal ethics of individual character. Such an ethic is described next.

3. The Ethics of Individual Character

A liberal ethics of individual character enhances the ethics of moral character by stressing the virtues associated with developing a distinctive self and giving colour to one's way of life. We have seen how an ethics of moral character is the basic foundation for agents to become significantly autonomous. An ethics of individual character is also required to promote significant autonomy because in a liberal society individual flourishing involves more than moral conduct or political engagement. A liberal ethics of individual character is the most appropriate conceptual device for giving substance to the notion that significant autonomy is also tied to individuality and freedom of expression. This section

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[300] This argument is given greater substance in Chapter Five, while Chapter Six of the thesis examines the prescriptions and normative cogency of the programme of citizenship education recently introduced in English schools.

considers the philosophical presuppositions and content of such a liberal ethics of individual character.

i) Autonomy and the ethics of individual character

Individual character seems to be intuitively more closely related to the liberal concept of autonomy than moral character. Indeed, the idea that autonomy is 'doing one's own thing' implies that it is a matter of expressing individual preferences. However, individual character is partly constituted by the idea of moral character. For instance, agents would be expected to display some of the virtues of moral character in developing their individual character. In turn, an agent's character would be incomplete if its individual aspect had not been in some way developed. So individual (like moral) character is a normative concept and as such implies certain types of ethical attributes. But in what ways can agents become able to apply an ethics of individual character to their autonomous choices? And, how should that ethics be applied?

Individual character and self-discipline

To become significantly autonomous, agents in liberal societies should be able to discipline their thought, actions and lives. The promotion of virtues contributes directly to the ability of agents to be able to do this. An ethics of individual character implies that agents can give a particular shape to the development of their individual traits. Although the bedrock of an agent's flourishing is dependent on the development of their moral character, for an agent's life in a liberal society to be completely fulfilling entails an ability to discipline their individual character-traits to develop a distinctive individual aspect of their character. If agents are to develop their individual character-traits they

will probably have to display some level of disciplined commitment to virtues inherent in the social practices in which they participate.

Disciplined thought will be integral to the development of individual character. Understanding their potentialities and limitations is essential if agents hope to understand how they may participate in social practices that are conducive to their individual flourishing. Disciplined thought will also enable agents to reflect on how their autonomous choices constitute their individual character and how it can be sustained or directed. Disciplined action is necessary for the development of individual character because its achievement presupposes a degree of active commitment to specific traits. Moreover, as Mill famously noted in *On Liberty*, we could not ascribe any sort of regularity to the individuality of agents whose actions were never disciplined in any particular direction. To claim that agents could develop individuality in a liberal society without disciplining their actions would render their individual character entirely arbitrary, much like personality. Hence, the development of individual character is necessarily the product of some degree of autonomous self-mastery.

An agent of confirmed individual character becomes significantly autonomous through commitment to the social practices in which they participate. Once more, we might therefore say that disciplined living is the key to developing individual character over the course of a lifetime. An agent's individual character is that feature of their lives that is inherent in how they have chosen to give it their own value; which identifies them as an agent with a distinctive mode of flourishing. Consequently, it should be nurtured carefully if it is to be directed well. To accomplish this, agents in a liberal society should be able to apply the liberal ethics of individual character.

Application of the ethics of individual character differs from that of the ethic of moral character. It is largely based on how well agents participate within specific types of social setting. The application of the ethics of individual character (like that for the ethics of moral character) is based on reflection on the range of circumstances, opportunities and abilities of the agent concerned. However, in the case of individual character there is greater scope for diverse configurations of the virtues of individual character. Although individual character is developed in pursuit of goals within social practices that may have well-established criteria for success, the diversity of practices in which agents participate indicates that the differences between individual character-configurations are likely to be greater. By contrast, the development of moral character is likely to comprise certain core social, moral and political virtues, such as politeness, forgiveness and restraint. The development of individual character is as at least diverse as the types of social practices in which agents choose to participate.

Liberal virtues can be configured in a variety of ways to develop an agent's individual character. Indeed, they are likely to be manifested in a continually evolving autonomous response to changing circumstances and interests. The virtues inherent in an ethics of individual character are central to enable agents to conduct themselves in ways which are conducive to the achievement of specific individual goals and the evolution of a distinctive character. They therefore give a particular shape to an agent's individual interests and accomplishments. Although application of the ethics of individual character within different social practices may be tightly prescribed, the overall application of an ethics of individual character implies a vast diversity of configurations.

An ethics of individual character comprises certain generic criteria that can feed into its application in specific practices by agents. The application of these generic

prescriptions for individual character will proceed in a similar way to those for an ethics of moral character,[301] and, for perfectionist liberals, it would be especially important to promote these generic virtues of individual character. Nonetheless, it is also vital that conditions are conducive to the flourishing of the specific virtues inherent in different social practices, some of which a liberal state may choose to actively promote through education, subsidised training or public broadcasting. This can be best accomplished by facilitating and promoting a diverse range of opportunities for the development of individual character, as these are the cornerstone of each agent's distinctive character. Hence, the scope for celebrating diversity in a liberal society could be given greatest weight within an ethics of individual character.

A liberal ethics of individual character will relate to significant autonomy in a more open-ended way than the ethics of moral character, because the opportunities to develop individual character-configurations are likely to be extremely diverse within a liberal society. Perfectionist liberal commitment to individual character would thus be a commitment to diversity and to the type of society and social practices in which diversity may flourish. How this contributes to the development of individual character is considered next.

ii)   Developing individual character

The development of individual character presupposes the fashioning of individuality within selected valuable social practices. Promotion of a liberal ethics of individual character will recommend that agents can display a range of generic virtues inherent in significant autonomy across different social practices and specific virtues within those

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[301] Indeed, it is a commonplace feature of life within a liberal democracy. For example, within ordinary social discourse agents frequently discuss themselves and each other in generic terms relating to their individually distinctive lives.

practices. The former process is one in which the liberal state promotes generic virtues associated with the development of individual character. The latter process is primarily one in which associations in civil society will promote very specific virtues. However, before examining the virtues of individual character it is important to conceptualise how they contribute to the development of individual character.

Self-realisation, self-creation and authenticity

Perfectionist liberals can conceive the development of individual character in a number of interesting ways. For instance, it may be seen as a process of self-realisation, self-creation or as the display of authenticity. Self-realisation implies 'the development and expression of characteristic attributes and potentials in a fashion which comprehensively discloses their subject's real nature'.[302] This indicates that given the right environment agents will progressively make manifest their essential traits and potentials. These traits are unlikely to be entirely peculiar for each agent. For instance, the idea of self-realisation suggests that 'there are certain features common to everyone's self-realisation: similar kinds of potential'. But self-realisation also implies that each individual has a real (but as yet) undisclosed nature. Self-realisation therefore entails the elicitation of certain innate individual character-traits. However, this realisation of innate potentials may be tied to goals other than the autonomous development of individual character.[303] We would also be especially concerned that such an metaphysical teleological concept of self-development undermines the malleability of the self which is the first presupposition of the perfectionist liberal concepts of autonomy and character proposed here.

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[302] M.Evans, 'Self-Realization', in E.Craig ed., *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* vol.8, London, Routledge, 1998, p.633.
[303] ibid., pp.633-4. Furthermore, there is nothing to suggest that the realising of innate potentials is unambiguously desirable. Promoting the development of the inherent potentials of a successful violent

A non-metaphysical perfectionist liberalism challenges the idea that agents possess traits with fixed predetermined natural content that is waiting to be realised. Such a notion of self-realisation implies a metaphysical concept of the self which was earlier rejected as incompatible with significant autonomy. But can the development of individual character be conceptualised without recourse to metaphysical notions? Another interesting way of conceptualising the development of individual character is as a process of self-creation or a display of authenticity. This idea has its roots in existential philosophy. For an agent to be an 'authentic' individual, they must understand that it is existentially imperative to create their own individual character.[304] If an agent does not fashion their own existence and allows everything in their life to be determined by convention, they have become 'absorbed into the world of objects as just another object.'[305]

The concept of authenticity 'points us towards a more self-responsible form of life',[306] because it makes us wholly culpable for the extent to which we successfully develop our individuality. Authentic agents thus establish a truly unique individual character through unsolicited acts of self-creation. However, the notion that uniqueness is 'a goal to be aimed at, the person one should strive to become'[307] privileges a kind of individuality that may not require much social interaction to achieve fulfilment.[308] As Charles Taylor notes, 'authenticity can't, shouldn't go all the way with self-determining

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thug (for example) is not likely to feature in a liberal ethic of individual character. This again illustrates that for liberals the ethics of individual character will inevitably be premised on that for moral character.
[304] T.R.Baldwin, 'Authenticity', in T.Honderich ed., *Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, p.68.
[305] J.Macquarrie, *Existentialism*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972, p.74. In this sense to be increasingly other-directed is to become increasingly unfree and inauthentic - to act in 'bad faith', by denying one's status as a free subject.
[306] C.Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Harvard University Press, 1991, p.74.
[307] D.E.Cooper, *Authenticity and Learning: Nietzsche's Educational Philosophy*, Aldershot, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1991, pp.7-14.
[308] See for instance, F.Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969.

freedom. It undercuts itself'.[309] The relationships and commitments at the heart of significant autonomy could not be developed if agents chose to abjure society or social practices. Furthermore, for self-creation to be a comprehensible goal for agents within societies, it must be pursued within the framework of an ethics of self-creation. It is therefore highly unlikely to be able to slip social or moral interpretation and approbation. Indeed, if it could slip these culturally grounded moorings it could generate a dangerous moral indifference.[310] An alternative approach has been to view authenticity as 'the possibility and the point of looking beyond the self', as a process of somehow overcoming existential anxiety by giving oneself up to a well-defined or conventional role.[311] While this 'ability to accept the way things go' may play some role in a liberal conception of the good life, it would not generate any substantive criteria for encouraging agents to become ever more significantly autonomous. Nor could it capture the notion that to flourish in a liberal society is (in part) to flourish in an individually distinctive way.

The concepts of self-creation and authenticity do not facilitate perfectionist liberal aspirations for individual character, because they either preclude specification of ethical content or marginalise the place of autonomy in a liberal conception of the good life. The existentialist notion of the malleable self is generally too flexible to acknowledge that the development of individual character takes place in a cultural context. Individual character develops as agents become able to become significantly autonomous in different social practices. It is therefore a theoretical construct which implies that interaction between the normative commitments of individuals, culture and society shapes the development of

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[309] C.Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, p.68.

[310] As Macquarrie notes 'if every individual claimed the right to set aside his ordinary moral obligations for the sake of the ultimate demands of his own authentic selfhood, surely we would soon find ourselves in moral chaos'. J.Macquarrie, *Existentialism*, p.213.

individuality. The social conditions for the development of individual character in a liberal society are described below.

Participation and achievement

In a liberal society, individual character can be developed through participation in a wide range of valuable social practices. Participation in these practices is intrinsically valuable for the development of individual character, because such practices enable agents to develop coherent, relevant and comprehensible configurations of generic and specific virtues of individual character. This presumes that the existence of many social practices should encourage diverse outlets for different modes of individual flourishing.

A liberal ethics of individual character will underpin different forms of flourishing by informing the criteria for opportunities and achievement within specific social practices. Agents should be able to participate in the negotiation of these criteria guiding the appraisal and achievement of individual character within different practices. Again, as was the case for moral character, participation in the evolution of the ethics of individual character may be active or vicarious. It is active when agents posit original or powerful configurations of the virtues of individual character inherent in the practice in which they are participating. By contrast, vicarious participation here entails that agents reflect on the excellence of possible configurations of virtues which could be inherent in the ethics of individual character. This can occur prior to, during, following or when observing active participation in a range of different social practices. And, it is this discussion and reflection on the achievements of individual practitioners within a social practice that

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[311] P.Standish, *Beyond the Self: Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the Limits of Language*, Aldershot, Avebury, 1992, pp.218, 209.

constitutes the shared criteria, interest and virtues which are vital to its survival and health.[312]

Opportunities for participation in discourse pertaining to a liberal ethics of individual character may arise within any sphere of a liberal democratic society. In this case, the disposition to do so is sustained obliquely through the virtues of moral character and through the impact of the virtues of individual character within different social practices. To sustain the flourishing of this discourse on individual character the liberal state can promote virtues associated with the interpretation and development of individual character. These virtues will consolidate the efforts of agents to develop different configurations of individual character. The following section discusses the range of virtues inherent in a liberal ethics of individual character.

iii)   The virtues of individual character

The virtues pertaining to an ethics of individual character fall into four broad categories: social, moral, cultural and intellectual. Each of these different categories of virtue overlaps and interacts in ways that ground and guide their configuration by agents. They also provide clarity for the derivation of prescriptive criteria which can inform character-promoting policies of liberal governments. The content of the different classes of liberal virtues of individual character is described and analysed next.

Social virtues

The social virtues of individual character are related to those of moral character, but are usually manifested within specific social or cultural settings. They comprise those traits

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[312] This mirrors some of what Alistair MacIntyre says of the virtues inherent in different practices. However, it must be remembered that for perfectionist liberals these virtues are primarily valuable for the flourishing of individuals rather than the community.

which make an agent's pursuit of their own personal goals and individual character agreeable to their fellows who participate in (or observe) the same social practices. But the social virtues here have a different shape to those found in the ethics of moral character. They centre on the virtues which pertain to competence or professionalism within their chosen field of activity. So while it is possible to recognise individual achievement where competency is disregarded it is neither desirable nor likely that it should be discarded regularly. For a practice to sustain itself we must assume that the social capital that this requires will occasion the competency of its practitioners. Although the social virtues of moral character may develop social capital by filling in the details of how people ought to behave in their social interactions, the social virtues of individual character will not play the same role in specific social practices. Within distinct social practices the requirement for the exhibition of social virtues of moral character (however desirable) may be less stringent than for the social virtues of individual character. If agent x is rude to agent y in the office, studio, kitchen or on the building site we are less likely to regard it as a failing where the virtues associated with competence are in evidence. Neglect of the social virtues of moral character within a social practice therefore has no necessary impact on appraisals of individual character.[313]

In an ethics of individual character, the other-regarding and self-regarding social virtues may be described as virtues of competence, because they are directed by, and towards, standards of proficiency within a social practice. These virtues fill out the expectations that practitioners have about each other's agreeableness when they engage in their social practice(s). Consequently, agents' significant autonomy is lessened when their commitment to competence can be called into question. To ensure that agents are

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[313] Indeed, it may be the case that specific types of disagreeable behaviour are inherent in success or achievement within certain social practices. For instance, Sergeants in the Marines are usually expected to display certain unpalatable types of conduct towards their charges.

disposed towards virtues of competence, an ethics of individual character will then promote broader moral virtues than those associated with competence and proficiency.

Moral virtues

The moral virtues encompassed within an ethics of individual character are primarily constituted by integrity. Agents should develop their individual character in a way that displays an appropriate level of care for the distinctiveness of their significant autonomy. This entails a set of moral virtues which may bear little relation to those found in an ethics of moral character. Selflessness, beneficence and generosity are in not necessarily inherent in the development of individual character. While other-regarding moral virtues of moral character may be the moral glue that sustains social practices, they have less of a bearing on the actual individual character of participants in those practices. The display of moral virtues of individual character by participants within a social practice implies that agents exhibit a particular kind of moral attitude towards their participation in a social practice. In a liberal society this means that agents develop individual character by demonstrating integrity.

The virtues associated with integrity drive agents to ensure that their autonomous choices within specific social practices are valuable and distinctive contributions to their own flourishing. Ideally, an agent's respect for their individual character will reveal itself as care for their achievements within a social practice. In an ethics of individual character the moral virtue of integrity therefore co-ordinates the social virtues associated with competency and the cultural and intellectual virtues associated with achievement. An agent's integrity in the pursuit of goals within a social practice grounds ethical conduct towards themselves and also towards others, implying a constancy of purpose in giving distinctive shape to their autonomy. Integrity is therefore a moral virtue that has no

determinate specifiable content. In an ethics of individual character it is simply the generic requirement for displaying a moral commitment to one's autonomous choices and how they fit into one's overall flourishing. This does not mean that agents have to maintain one steady course throughout their lives. Integrity is inherent in the development of diverse and changing configurations of the virtues of individual character provided that they can be coherent, relevant and comprehensible in terms of an agent's evolving character. Agents will therefore need to manifest certain moral virtues adhering to integrity when participating within their chosen social practices. In addition, they will exhibit certain cultural and intellectual virtues when they develop their individual character within those practices.

Cultural and intellectual virtues

Cultural and intellectual virtues are initially apparent in a general commitment to the flourishing of social practices within a liberal society. These virtues are inherently valuable to liberal society itself because it is in the moral interest of agents in a liberal society to be committed to distinct intellectual and cultural virtues. The flourishing of commerce, science, the Arts and local communities is dependent on the commitment and ability of agents involved and of those disposed to appreciate their contribution to a liberal society. The cultural and intellectual virtues inherent in a liberal ethics of individual character are generic and specific, enabling agents to secure certain levels of individual achievement within their chosen social practices. These virtues are essentially interpretive and performative and are displayed as agents seek to attain different levels of accomplishment within specific social practices.

Cultural and intellectual virtues of individual character comprise generic virtues of interpretation and performance. For example, understanding the general nature of

individual achievement might include the virtues of discernment and taste. While those inherent in commitment to achievement could include virtues associated with learning and creativity. Virtues of individual character also entail very specific virtues of interpretation and attainment within different cultural milieus. For example, those associated with being an appreciative art critic or an accomplished artist will differ from those associated with being a perceptive management consultant or a capable manager. Specific social and cultural practices determine the criteria for how well specific virtues are manifested by participants, but a liberal ethics of individual character can specify generic cultural and intellectual virtues inherent in most of those social and cultural practices.

Cultural and intellectual virtues give a highly distinctive contour to the achievements in an agent's life. In this respect, they continually constitute and re-define an agent's individual character throughout their life. These virtues are self-regarding insofar as they pertain directly to the shape of an agent's individual character. For instance, an agent's decision to paint abstract rather than naturalist art entails the manifestation of specific cultural and intellectual virtues which re-shape their life as an artist. In addition, the cultural and intellectual virtues are also other-regarding in that they are inherently valuable to the social practices in which agents participate. Indeed, the future health of diverse modes of individual flourishing in a liberal society is dependent on the skills and achievements of participants in different social practices.

By participating in practices which enable them to fulfil themselves in liberal societies, agents also make vital contributions to the growth and development of such practices within those societies. They encourage fellow participants to continue their engagement with the practice, and promote and market its viability as an option for the

development of individual character.[314] Moreover, the quality of opportunities for significant autonomy can shape the differential development of cultural and intellectual virtues. These opportunities imply that agents should reflect and act on their contributions to the practices in which they engage. Such reflections may concern their own performance and achievement, or the performance of other participants, or it may concern the general presuppositions, criteria for achievement and underlying philosophy of the relevant practice.

A liberal ethics of individual character can synthesise a wide range of virtues which are integral to the flourishing of agents within liberal societies. The role of the state in promoting these will be discussed later. Having detailed the liberal ethics of moral and individual character we must now explore how agents may be expected to autonomously fulfil criteria pertaining to their development. The following section examines what constitutes good character in a liberal society and how it can be achieved.

4. Achieving Good Character

A liberal character-ethics synthesises a range of virtues which adhere to moral and individual character. A certain level of excellence in some configuration of those virtues should be achieved for agents to be considered of good character. But what are the basic requirements for an agent to avoid disapprobation? And, how can perfectionist liberals evaluate good character given the very different configurations and combinations of virtues that agents may display? This section explores how the achievement of good character can be understood.

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[314] In this respect, the cultural virtues of individual character can be allied to political virtues of moral character, such as negotiation, persuasion, debate, and so on.

i)   Evaluating the achievement of good character

An agent's achievement of good character depends on their displaying some configuration of the virtues inherent in a liberal character-ethics. Configurations of the liberal virtues of moral and individual character can be evaluated from a number of perspectives and in a number of spheres - in families, within the workplace, the associations of civil society, and in political participation. Agents in liberal societies are likely to participate to some degree in social, moral and political discourses which reflect and influence the nature of a liberal character-ethics. Evaluation of the achievement of good character will therefore be informed by the outcomes of these discourses. Nevertheless, certain minimal levels of excellence can be derived for the achievement of good character. These minimal requirements are detailed next, before the priority of good moral character for the overall achievement of good character is discussed.

Minimal requirements of good character

The minimal requirements for achieving good character hinge on the barest exhibition of those virtues which mean an agent cannot be subject to disapprobation. They are therefore framed by the political virtue of restraint. A right to be able to be significantly autonomous entails that agents in liberal societies are free to become significantly autonomous and have the opportunities and ability to do so. This right implies that every citizen must fulfil a basic duty to respect the right to significant autonomy of each of their fellow citizens if they are to avoid moral disapprobation. This does not mean that a liberal democracy would wish to support a society of agents whose virtues were simply those of avoiding giving offence. The vitality of a liberal society, individual flourishing, and a liberal character-ethics will depend on some agents challenging or offending the presuppositions of their fellows. As Mill made clear, 'experiments in living' can be a

dynamic force for positive change in society. Nevertheless, building on the barest minimal requirements of good character is an essential foundation for the promotion of a liberal character-ethics. But would perfectionist liberals ascribe good moral character to someone who exhibited only the minimal requirements?

Citizens who are not significantly autonomous at all are not necessarily morally reprehensible. For instance, they may not have directly harmed the autonomy of any of their fellows. However, if they are not actively committed to their own flourishing it could be argued that they undermine the flourishing of their fellows in two important senses. First, to neglect one's own flourishing is to set a poor example which could have deleterious effects on the autonomy of others (such as one's peers, one's children, or, indeed, newcomers to liberal society and its many social practices). The types of inactivity that may cause this (such as spending all day every day watching soap operas or sports programmes on television) may not render an agent fit for moral disapprobation, but they will not lead to their approval. Second, although the minimal requirements for avoiding moral disapprobation of one's character are minimal, the minimal requirements for achieving the positive approbation of good moral character are not at all negligible. Possessing no character worth speaking of is no great moral crime, but neither would any approval be given to an agent so constituted.

A liberal character-ethics specifies a wide range of virtues for the agent of good character. Although there may be a multitude of configurations of these virtues worthy of positive moral approval, those which are (or could be) inherent in moral character will provide the core focus for understanding the achievement of good character.

The notion of 'good' character is evidently linked to positive moral approbation. Hence, it is important to consider in what ways moral character is the chief determinant of good character and what impact individual character has on the evaluation of good character. Good moral character is central to significant autonomy, because each is a necessary condition of the other. The ethics of moral character provides crucial guidelines for agents, civil society and the state to sustain significant autonomy and for the character-development of agents to be accomplished autonomously. Virtues of moral character therefore underpin liberal evaluations of good character because they are inherent in the most important of liberal ethical ideals. For instance, we would not attribute good character or autonomy to an agent whose moral character was either seriously deficient in virtues or simply absent. The same stringency would not apply for an agent whose individual character was underdeveloped or neglected.

Although the ethics of moral character is the fundamental guide to evaluating the achievement of good character, the ethics of individual character would nonetheless contribute to the evaluation of good character in a number of ways. In particular, the ethics of individual character provides a conceptual framework for assessing whether agents are flourishing autonomously and how their participation in various social practices reflects their development of a distinctive mode of living well. Perfectionist liberals would consider an agent of good character to be one whose conception of the good life was their own. And, these conceptions of the good life would be increasingly impoverished if they were not infused with an autonomous commitment to the development of individual character.

The place of an agent's individual character in the evaluation of their achievement of good character will focus on how it reflects and is reflected in their moral character.

For instance, agents' individual accomplishments should ideally contribute to the flourishing of others as well as their own. This does not mean that they are expected to be selfless or other-directed. Rather it signifies that the autonomous development of individual character takes place within different social practices and would therefore be expected to make some contribution to the life of those practices. The ethics of individual character therefore supports the evaluation of good character in a subsidiary sense. Perfectionist liberal aspirations for individual character are a further aspect of their aspirations for the development of moral character.[315] Nevertheless, an underdeveloped individual character is partly subject to an aesthetic disapprobation which may be distinguished from moral disapprobation. While the ethics of moral character is where liberal interpretation and configuration of good character is begun, it can only be completed through the interpretation and configuration of the virtues of individual character. The nature of this interpretation and the shape of configurations in a liberal society are discussed next.

ii)   Interpreting the achievement of character

Interpreting how and when good character has been (or could be) achieved is a crucial issue for perfectionist liberals committed to promoting a liberal character-ethics. The reasons for this are threefold: first, interpretation is important to ensure that the vocabulary associated with a liberal character-ethics can be understood; second, interpretation can underpin how that vocabulary would evolve and be susceptible to reinterpretation; and, third, interpretation can provide political theorists with a means for evaluating the character-configurations of agents within a liberal society. Assessing the

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[315] Indeed, moral character can sometimes be a defining feature of an agent's individual character, where for example they are committed to certain types of personal relationships, altruistic gestures or 'good works'.

sources of interpretation and how we may understand different configurations of character is thus critical for understanding the achievement of character.

Sources of interpretation

Within liberal democracies, interpretations of the achievement of character are derived from four key sources: Self-interpretation; interpretation within specific social, cultural or moral practices; wider interpretation throughout civil society; and ideological interpretations within political discourse. Influential interpretations from each of these sources interpenetrate and may conflict or cohere with each other. In either case, their interaction with each other will require negotiation if agents are able to reflect accurately and equitably on the nature of good character. The level of influence of each sphere on the interpretation of good character may vary according to which aspect of character we are focusing on, but need not do so. For instance, if we are reflecting on an agent's self-regarding moral virtues, their self-interpretation is essential to interpreting the moral quality of their actions. But it would not necessarily be the final arbiter of the quality of their character. We may still wish to compare their interpretation against that embodied in other agents' configurations of the self-regarding moral virtues to assess the coherence, relevance and comprehensibility of these different configurations.

Interpretations of character will be carried out by agents and by imaginary and/or actual observers of their conduct. Of course, this would not mean that in a liberal society a moral inspectorate will evaluate the character of each and every citizen. It would simply entail that interpretations undertaken within the framework of a liberal character-ethics can provide a synthesis or repository of guidelines for our everyday interpretation of our own and each other's character-configurations. This would pay particular

attention to how different virtues of moral character and individual character are together configured.

Understanding configurations of character

One way to explore the interplay of the virtues of moral and individual character in character-configurations is to focus on the divide between the public and private spheres. Richard Rorty argues that in the private sphere agents should be free to play with individuality, but in the public sphere they should adopt the posture of a citizen concerned to uphold community solidarity.[316] However, while achievement in developing one's individual character would not necessarily entail any special qualification for holding a political or social function, this does not mean that the development of individual character should be so restricted to the private sphere. As Nancy Fraser has stressed, individuality and political activity do not 'divide neatly into public and private sectors', nor do actions 'neatly divide into private or public.'[317] Moreover, we might expect some agents to be especially qualified for positions of responsibility and authority if they have achieved high levels of individual excellence within their chosen social practices. Within politics itself, we are likely to hope that those in authority achieve individual character by successfully displaying relevant liberal virtues, that is, that politicians should be exemplars of liberal aspirations for public figures. Liberal culture can not be entirely depoliticised nor is politics a purely technical activity 'restricted to liberal problem-solving'.[318] Virtues of moral and individual character therefore have both

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[316] R.Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge University Press, 1989.

[317] N.Fraser, 'Solidarity or Singularity? Richard Rorty between Romanticism and Technocracy' in A.Malachowski ed., *Reading Rorty: Critical Responses to Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (and Beyond)*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1990, pp.307-9, 313.

[318] Jo Burrows describes this attitude towards politics as 'I just do what works, *they* get into ideology/politics'. But often 'political issues cannot even be *identified* pragmatically, that is non-

public and private aspects which underpin the nature of different character-configurations. The virtues of moral character may take priority in understanding the achievement of good character, but understanding those of individual character is essential for comprehensive assessment of an agent's private and public autonomy. Evaluations of character-configurations must therefore carefully consider how the multiplicity of configurations of the relevant virtues is cashed out in terms of both aspects of a liberal character-ethics.

The configuration of their character by agents is an on-going application of the liberal character-ethics carried out privately and publicly by agents. Interpretation of these configurations is based on a continual assessment of an agent's private and public intentions, interests and circumstances and their virtues of moral and individual character. Although the criteria relevant to configuring good character are in the final instance public, the configuration of moral and individual character also takes place (whether vicariously or actively) in private. Nevertheless, even these character-configurations would relate to certain publicly accessible, refinable and revisable explications of the public and private manifestation of virtues of moral and individual character. A basic schemata of some key liberal virtues for configuring good character is shown in the table below. The table indicates that a liberal character-ethics coheres around certain key virtues, and that there would be a range of virtues associated with these. So, for instance, social virtues of moral character, such as politeness and discretion, are attached to the generic virtue of civility. Likewise, public-spiritedness and humanitarianism are attached the generic political virtue of responsible engagement. This table does not exhaust the liberal virtues nor provide direct instruction in how agents

ideologically'. J.Burrows, 'Conversational Politics: Rorty's Pragmatist Apology for Liberalism', in ibid., pp.327-8.

should configure their own character. But it does show that a liberal character-ethics can furnish perfectionist liberals with the substantive content for an attractive conception of the good life and provide agents with an indication of how they might live well autonomously.

Table of liberal virtues of moral and individual character

	Moral Character	Individual Character
Social Virtues	*Civility*	*Competence*
	Modesty	Utility
	Sociability (friendly, witty, etc.)	Professionalism
	Politeness	Industry
	Discretion	Healthiness
	Moderation	Cleanliness
Moral Virtues	*Conscience*	*Integrity*
	Benevolence	Determination
	Beneficence	Reputation
	Courage	Exemplariness
	Forgiveness	Sincerity
	Fairness	Enterprise
Political Virtues	*Responsible engagement*	
	Respect/Restraint	
	Deliberation	
	Participation	
	Public-spiritedness	
	Humanitarianism	
Cultural and Intellectual Virtues		*Commitment*
		Passion
		Learning
		Liberality
		Discernment
		Imagination
		Interpretation
		Empathy
		Irony
		Creativity

Configurations of the liberal virtues are as diverse as there are agents developing such configurations. The right to be able to be significantly autonomous presupposes the promotion of a liberal character-ethics to encourage the ability to display some

configuration of liberal virtues. How the promotion of such a character-ethics can influence the policy-making of liberal governments is examined next.

5.   Liberal character-ethics and policy-making

Promotion of a liberal character-ethics by the state and throughout civil society is vital for the flourishing of agents in liberal societies. For perfectionist liberals, the policies which the state may introduce to achieve this aim should be guided by principles inherent in the normative commitments associated with character and significant autonomy. The following section will examine how the right to be able to be significantly autonomous and a liberal character-ethics can inform policy-making.

i)   Principles of liberal policy-making

State intervention in the moral lives of citizens to promote significant autonomy would need to reflect perfectionist liberal aspirations for the development of character. Liberal principles of policy-making would codify certain aspects of a liberal character-ethics to guide its promotion by the state, constraining the use of power to constitute the character of citizens. These normative principles would have substantive import for politics and policy-making in liberal democracies, ensuring that the 'repressive hypothesis' posed by impartialist liberals is negated. This section identifies five key principles which should guide the promotion of liberal virtues by liberal governments.

1.   A principle of equal respect

The fundamental political and moral principle inherent in a liberal character-ethics is a commitment to equal respect for the right to be able to be significantly autonomous. Indeed, this is the principle which justifies state involvement in promoting the

appropriate virtues to enable agents to flourish in a liberal society. The right to have the opportunities and abilities required for significant autonomy entails that each liberal citizen has an equal right to be the beneficiary of policies designed to equip them with the virtues associate with living well. Perfectionist policies to promote the virtues inherent in moral and individual character must therefore be implemented with reference to this principle before any other. The principle of equal respect thus implies and is implied in the second principle of liberal policy-making.

2. *The principle of the priority of autonomy*

The priority of autonomy is a critical principle of liberal policy-making guided by a liberal character-ethics. Significant autonomy is characteristic of living well in a liberal society. Consequently, agents within a liberal society must be able to become significantly autonomous if they are to flourish, and the flourishing of a liberal society is in turn dependent on the autonomy of agents. Although a cultural interpretation of autonomy can render a character-ethics vulnerable to the charge of conservatism or conventionalism, its relationship with significant autonomy renders it susceptible to diverse configuration. Indeed, the priority of autonomy can encourage new ways of generating diverse conceptions of the good life within liberal societies. The priority of autonomy can therefore provide both a space and guidelines for state intervention in the moral lives of citizens. This principle is then the ethical ideal which informs the principle of equal respect within policy-making. A further ethical ideal that will guide policies to promote character is a commitment to specific moral and political perfectionist principles.

3. A perfectionist principle of valuable activities

A central presupposition of the promotion of a liberal character-ethics is that some activities and practices are more valuable than others. A perfectionist principle of valuable activities is therefore intrinsic to policies which seek to promote liberal virtues associated with living well. The achievement of good moral and individual character here presumes that there *are* more worthwhile ways of conducting oneself and that agents *can* generate more or less valuable configurations of the virtues of good character. A perfectionist principle of valuable activities will therefore complement the first two principles of a liberal policy-making because perfectionist liberal policies should only promote virtues integral to the development of moral and individual character. This also implies a supplementary principle legitimising such policies.

4. A perfectionist principle of legitimate intervention

The perfectionist principle of valuable activities presupposes a further perfectionist principle legitimising state intervention within the moral lives of citizens. The liberal democratic state is uniquely positioned as the democratically legitimated guarantor of the rights of its citizens to significant autonomy. The limits of perfectionist intervention will be established by the priority of autonomy, distinguishing between policies which are recognised to be autonomy-enhancing and those which impede the right to be able to be significantly autonomous. These limits can be subject to interpretation, revision and debate within liberal social, moral and political discourse. For agents in liberal societies the importance of being able to contribute to these debates thus generates a final principle of commitment to moral and political education.

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5.   *A principled commitment to moral and political education*

A commitment to moral and political education is inherent in liberal policies to promote a liberal character-ethics. It also implies that children can be given explicit education in the liberal virtues in state schools, especially in those pertaining to responsible political engagement. A principled commitment to moral and political education based on the ability to become significantly autonomous is thus a logical implication of the principles of equal respect, the priority of autonomy and perfectionist liberal principles. A number of policy applications for which these five principles are relevant are explored next.

ii)   Applications

Besides education some areas which have especial relevance to attempts to promote a liberal character-ethics include law and order, healthcare, housing and planning, and leisure and culture. This section assesses the role of policy-making principles in guiding the development of significant autonomy by focusing on the role a liberal character-ethics can play within these policy areas. The following chapter will explore these themes in greater depth by developing a liberal education for significant autonomy.

Establishing a minimal social morality

The idea of a liberal character-ethics has great resonance within the sphere of law and order, most particularly with regard to how far the law should be used to enforce morality. The concept of moral character inevitably has a bearing on the decisions of juries to convict criminals. Indeed, judgements passed on habitual criminals are often dependent on the perception of their moral character and their future intention to repair their character and its reputation. This reflects their moral virtues of moral character. For instance, a recidivist criminal may be perfectly charming but have no discernible

conscience. The idea of good character is also a central object of slander and libel cases. These generally cast doubt on the moral virtues of moral and individual character. For example, tabloid sensationalism of a sportsperson's life raises questions about their integrity and personal reputation generally and as a representative of their particular social practice. However, the positive injunctions of a liberal character-ethics may add to these types of crime against the person, property or reputation of others, in particular, they may require that agents manifest social or civil virtues of moral character within social and public life.

Persistent or blatant non-display of certain social virtues of moral character may be regarded as a public nuisance or offence against decency, or (if in the workplace) serious breach of professional conduct.[319] Perfectionist liberals must therefore consider in what circumstances and to what extent legal or coercive means could be used to ensure an acceptable level of excellence in the social virtues. To accomplish this they can refer to the liberal character-ethics and principles of policy-making presented in this chapter.

H.L.A.Hart argued that liberals are 'committed to the general critical principle that the legal coercion by any society calls for justification as something *prima facie* objectionable to be tolerated only for the sake of some countervailing good.'[320] Such a 'countervailing good' in a liberal society is the moral weight attached to the right to and opportunity for significant autonomy. The priority of autonomy always frames legal coercion, but this can be supplemented by a perfectionist principle of valuable activities to establish grounds for intervention. So how would this apply to uncivil behaviour?

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[319] It has been suggested that the function of the law is to 'preserve public order and decency, to protect the citizen from what is offensive or injurious and to provide sufficient safeguard against exploitation or corruption of others.' Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution (CMD 247), 1947, HMSO.

[320] H.L.A.Hart, *Law, Liberty and Morality*, Oxford University Press, 1963, p.20

The limits to legal enforcement of moral conduct have often been conceptualised by using John Stuart Mill's famous 'harm' principle, which stipulated that 'the only purpose for which power can rightly be exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.'[321] The harm principle suggests that an agent's actions can be impeded by legal sanctions where their actions threaten to harm the 'interests' of others 'which either by express legal provision or by tacit understanding, ought to be considered as rights'.[322] But how could perfectionist liberals understand the notion of offence here? Mill's reflections on the idea of public offence are notoriously opaque. In an early passage of *On Liberty* he noted that the 'liberty of the individual must be so far limited; he must not make himself a nuisance to other people.'[323] Acts of public nuisance are later described as those 'acts which, being directly injurious only to the agents themselves ought not to be legally interdicted, but which, if done publicly are a violation of good manners, and, which coming thus within the category of offences against others, may rightly be prohibited.'[324] These remarks indicate that uncivil conduct may be susceptible to coercive measures, but do not entirely clarify what counts as a 'violation of good manners'. Nor do they reveal the circumstances in which prohibition may rightly be considered.

Hart illustrated the nature of public offence by highlighting the case of the bigamist who 'is punished neither as irreligious nor as immoral but as a nuisance' because the law is 'concerned with the offensiveness of his public conduct.'[325] Offence could thus be said to be constituted by a particular sort of blatancy, whereby an agent's character-configuration not so much challenges as entirely disregards commonly held

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[321] J.S.Mill, 'On Liberty', p.14.
[322] ibid., p.83.
[323] ibid., p.62.
[324] ibid., pp.108-9.
[325] H.L.A.Hart, *Law, Liberty and Morality*, p.41

liberal aspirations for the achievement of character. However, certain types of ethical conduct may not be particularly laudable insofar as few reasons can be advanced by liberals on their behalf, but they may often be tolerated. So it would only be when an agent's conduct flouts all consideration for being coherent, relevant and comprehensible within a liberal character-ethics that they come under sufficiently serious moral scrutiny to require the possible imposition of legal sanctions.

Legal punishment of blatantly offensive uncivil behaviour relating to character could be based on a harm principle. However, the harm principle is susceptible to very wide interpretation.[326] A more general notion of public nuisance based on the publicly revisable prescriptions of a liberal character-ethics can delimit some degree of coercive legal intervention to promote certain virtues of civility. The harm principle may then function as a subsidiary principle for the interpretation of nuisance, which informs the limits that perfectionist liberals may wish to place on individual (not significant) autonomy.

Significant autonomy within a liberal society underpins individual flourishing, but can only do so for agents where they (a) are not impeded by other agents and (b) develop their moral and individual character autonomously. The giving of offence clearly impedes the right and opportunity of others to be significantly autonomous, but agents who behave offensively also exhibit a kind of moral negligence. By failing to adhere to the general prescriptions of a liberal character-ethics they reveal that they do not care for their own character or for their right to be able to be significantly autonomous. An agent who is ejected for making a 'nuisance' of themselves by shouting obscenities at the actors during the public performance of a play is not living well. In this instance, their

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[326] Joseph Raz notes that there are many ways in which a person's actions can cause 'harm' to others which may not necessarily involve physical frustration of their freedom of action. *Morality of Freedom*, pp.413-9.

right to significant autonomy has been curtailed because they have conducted themselves in a way which reflects especially poorly on their character. This example can also illuminate one further interesting aspect of the idea of public offence. That is, the right of certain officeholders to enforce ejection or other quasi-legal sanctions based on the general presumption that there are certain social virtues which agents can legally be expected to display in public places.

Perfectionist liberals can refer to the social virtues of moral character to conceptualise how public nuisance and a minimum social morality might be interpreted. They can also indicate how these can be alternatively interpreted within different specifiable social settings. Overall, there are four spheres of social and public life in which a citizen's social virtues could be subject to legal constraints guided by liberal principles of policy-making: familial interactions; social interaction within associations in civil society; trade and the workplace; and public debate and discourse. The notion of public nuisance will enjoin that the perfectionist principle of valuable activities comes into play to ensure that the regulation of a social (or civil) minimum is tailored to these different spheres. The role of legal sanctions in establishing the conditions for significant autonomy will therefore shift for different cases of offence within different spheres, entailing at least (but no more than) minimal display of the virtues of civility across these spheres.[327] The following section considers an interesting example of how self-regarding social virtues of individual character are also a central concern of liberal policy-making.

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[327] For instance, in the workplace the notion of offence may not be as rigorously applied as in public debates or the theatre.

Good health and hygiene are self-regarding social virtues of individual character central to an agent's ability to develop a distinctive character. The liberal democratic state can promote these virtues through water sanitation, sewage treatment and disposal, health and safety legislation, emergency and accident services, and a general health care system. But are basic framework conditions for public health all that perfectionist liberals would countenance?

For agents to develop significant autonomy, policies could be implemented which enable them (wherever possible) to look after themselves physically and financially.[328] An agent of good character should be able to manifest appropriate self-regarding social virtues of individual character. They need to be healthy in order to be able to develop a distinctive character. This will entail maintaining good hygiene and cleanliness, reasonable physical fitness, good diet, and some degree of moderation. We have seen that a minimum social morality can require legal sanctions to secure the display of certain social virtues of moral character, but can the same sorts of sanctions be used to ensure the display of the social virtues of good health and hygiene?

Perfectionist liberals would not punish citizens who did not maintain good health nor would they advocate the coercion of unhygienic citizens into cleanliness. However, guided by the perfectionist principle of valuable activities, liberal states could implement policies which promoted healthy and hygienic behaviour and living. They could accomplish this either by introducing strong disincentives against unhealthy living styles, for instance, by taxing cigarettes heavily. Or by promoting healthy living and introducing initiatives to encourage citizens to become healthier, for instance, by providing free

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[328] For instance, social services generally endeavour to enable citizens with disabilities or elderly citizens to live in their homes, rather than be cared for in institutions.

dietary advice or contraceptives. Furthermore, the state may in certain instances directly intervene to help citizens. It could remove children from parents unable to adequately care for their health or provide assistance for citizens diagnosed with mental health problems. In these cases intervention is justified to help citizens (and children) live well over the course of a lifetime. This notion that the condition of citizens' lives is an object of care for the state could also inform housing and planning within liberal democracies.

Perfectionist liberals could endeavour to make sure that decisions relating to housing, transport, waste collection and disposal, and parks and open spaces are conducive to virtues associated with significant autonomy. To do so they would need to take account of many peripheral issues which bear on the lives of agents in liberal societies, such as crime, sustainability, pollution and fuel consumption. Policy-making in these areas could embrace the idea that significant autonomy flourishes within certain kinds of built and natural environment. And, the principle of equal respect implies that the state has a wide role in ensuring that the built and natural environments are conducive to significant autonomy in *all* localities. The cultural environment of a liberal society also makes a substantial contribution to the opportunities which all citizens have for living well.

A liberal cultural environment

Liberal principles of policy-making can apply to state involvement in maintaining a liberal cultural environment. Such an environment is characterised by very diverse social practices within which citizens can develop individual character. Many citizens who participate in these cultural activities will do so as active participants at the highest levels. However, many will do so as observers or participants at a lower level, or as a pastime or leisure pursuit. Moreover, all citizens are either potential participants or

observers of cultural and leisure activities. The value attributable to leisure and culture in a liberal society is thus ultimately premised on individual flourishing.

A liberal character-ethics can apply to leisure and culture in a number of ways. First, the ethic of individual character enjoins that citizens should be physically and mentally healthy enough to develop a distinctive character. Sporting activities can give citizens valuable opportunities in this regard, and this may entail the state-provision of incentives for citizens to visit leisure centres or the direct sponsorship of certain sports. Second, the perfectionist liberal principle of intrinsically valuable activities implies that certain types of activity can make a particularly worthwhile contribution to significant autonomy. Third, the idea of significant autonomy implies standards of excellence within various social practices. This may mean that the liberal state should invest in national coaching for athletes or provide sponsorship of artistic or cultural activities (such as higher education and research). As a result, we might suggest that the liberal state can play a wide role in sustaining a vibrant liberal cultural environment.[329] And the principle of equal respect presupposes that significant autonomy requires state support and involvement in the maintenance of that culture. Furthermore, the climate for a free press and media are a central feature of an autonomy-enhancing culture.

Diverse modes of flourishing raise questions about censorship and moral responsibility. We have already seen how individual citizens are expected to adhere to a minimum social morality. But how do the moral injunctions of a liberal character-ethics apply to cultural products such as the media, art, drama and film? Social practices that broadcast or represent character-configurations should maintain a respect for the equal right to be able to be significantly autonomous. So, for instance, plays and novels that

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[329] This may mean that the state invests in opera houses, music schools, writing grants, science museums and displays and research institutions and grants.

portrayed homophobic, racist or sexist characters sympathetically could be proscribed by being deemed detrimental to the equal opportunity to living well in a liberal culture. A role for censorship could therefore be established on the basis that the development of character has some distinct liberal constraints, justifying restrictions on freedom of speech or expression subject to the principles of liberal policy-making and democratic deliberation. Indeed, perfectionist liberals may also be concerned that citizens will require guidance on how certain materials may impact on their character-development. They may thus choose to ban certain materials if they believe them to have an extremely pernicious influence on the character-configurations promoted within civil society.[330]

Overall, the role of a liberal character-ethics within liberal policy-making areas is an educational one, and it is to education we now turn in the following chapter, discussing at length the philosophical, political and policy issues relevant to an education for significant autonomy.

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[330] For instance, it is illegal to purchase or view certain types of pornography.

Chapter 5: An Education for Significant Autonomy

Education is the critical field of policy in which the liberal state can seek to directly discipline the character of citizens. Schools are recognised to be key institutional means through which a range of virtues can be promoted, and the demands of a liberal character-ethics would be especially apparent in a certain type of liberal educational philosophy. Indeed, a liberal character-ethics can have its fullest expression within the sphere of education as it is one area in which liberals are commonly comfortable with using (quasi) coercive measures for encouraging specific sorts of desirable behaviour. In this chapter, the implications of a liberal character-ethics for education policy are conceptualised within a liberal education for significant autonomy, illustrating how this might be expressed in state schools. The chapter begins with a discussion of the conventional approach to character education. A radical alternative to state-led education is then examined, before the requirements of a state-led education for significant autonomy are described and analysed, with particular attention being given to the role of political education.

1.   Conventional Character Education

The promotion of character in education has a long and venerable history. Its development has traditionally provided an underpinning ethos linking individual academic subjects to wider educational objectives. Within state schools, conventional character education has rested on the assumption that classrooms are an appropriate disciplinary setting in which certain virtues can be promoted. This section explores the roots of character education and assesses its development in the UK, reflecting on the conventional approach to its application in schools and its relationship with an education for   significant   autonomy.

i)   Character education in the United Kingdom

The concept of character has been a prominent feature of education policy and discourse in the UK during the past two centuries. As we have seen, a concern for the moral character of citizens accompanied the growth of capitalism, the industrial class system and the modern British state. In this context, education and schooling came to play a crucial role in mobilising and moralising mass society.[331] The place of character development within the educational philosophy of the time reflected these social and political developments and the rise of liberalism. In particular, nineteenth-century liberals adapted their educational prescriptions from those found in classical antiquity.

Roots of character-education

Theories of character-education are initially drawn from the philosophical discussions of the Ancient Greeks. For Plato, education was needed to shape the character of children. Poets and other teachers should promote appropriate roles by seeking to 'speak in the style of a good man' and adhering to 'moral principles in their stories'.[332] Indeed, 'a very great deal of importance should be placed upon ensuring that the first stories... [children] hear are best adapted for their moral improvement.'[333] Furthermore, every social artefact and institution which children came into contact with could influence the development of their moral character. The sweep of Platonic education was therefore vast, comprising an enormous variety of influences that could shape the moral dispositions of the human

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[331] E.Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1987, pp.149-50.
[332] Plato, *Republic*, pp.91-5.
[333] ibid., p.73. Citizens in the ideal polity are unlikely to wish that children 'listen to any old stories, made up by just anyone, and to take into their minds views which, on the whole, contradict those we'll want them to have as adults'. ibid., pp.71-2.

psyche.[334] The importance of character-formation and an appropriate education was also recognised by subsequent Greek philosophers.

Aristotle contended that humans had 'a character to work on that has some affinity to virtue', but that 'a right training for goodness from an early age' was essential.[335] Within such training an education for civic virtue would be indispensable. This presupposed a wide variety of educational experiences in which children (and adults) could be socialised into being of good moral character by following laws, participating in politics and discussing and contemplating the nature of the good life. They could also learn what means were most effective in promulgating good moral character by assuming 'the role of legislator'. In turn, acquiring knowledge of 'the art of legislation' could deepen each citizen's capacity to contribute towards the character of their fellows (especially, that of their own children).[336]

Eventually, the educational precepts and debates of Plato, Aristotle and subsequent Greek philosophers came to be formulated within an orthodox 'Hellenistic education'. This supplemented moral and civic education with a 'general education' in grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music and gymnastics. Such a general education was justified as 'a means of moulding human character in accordance with an ideal,' and would later influence Roman schemes of education.[337] For Greek and Roman thinkers and statesmen alike, the development of character was thus inherent in virtuous conduct and good citizenship, with the health of the state often seen to be dependent on its successful inculcation. Later, as we have seen, early liberals such

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[334] Poets, artisans and craftsmen had a responsibility to ensure that 'the young people of our community can live in a salubrious region where everything is beneficial and where their eyes and ears meet no influences except those of fine works of art, whose effect is like a breeze which brings health from favourable regions, and which imperceptibly guides them, from childhood onwards'. ibid., p.100
[335] Aristotle, *Ethics*, p.337.
[336] ibid., pp.338-9.
[337] E.B.Castle, *Ancient Education and Today*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1961, pp.102, 133-8.

as John Locke restated the belief that the development of moral character was the first principle of a child's education.[338] Indeed, a stress on character has been a consistent feature of the development of educational thought and practice in the UK.

Character-education in British schools

The historical evolution of character-education in British schools can be directly traced to two interrelated sources. First, the rise of industrial capitalism lead to a need for a disciplined, literate and numerate workforce whose attitudes and actions would contribute to the common good without undermining the stability of the liberal order and capitalist economy. Second, the nineteenth-century Public School stress on character-training became the accepted model for state schooling.[339] The 1904 Board of Education code of practice emphasised that the 'purpose of the Public Elementary School is to form and strengthen the character and to develop the intelligence of the children entrusted to it.'[340] Although character-education was strongly tied to the duties of patriotic citizenship, it also had a broader meaning implying moral socialisation within the classroom. Thus, the educational reformer William Temple argued that the 'main ground [for schooling] is the necessity of providing a social life or community in which the individual may feel that he has a real share and for which he may feel some genuine responsibility.'[341]

Character-education within schools was an essential means for preparing children for the moral demands placed on them by society. Given that the idea of character education was drawn largely from the 'liberal' education to induct young men from the upper-classes in Ancient Greece and Rome into traditional values and practices it is

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[338] J.Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*.
[339] W.O.Lester Smith, *Education: An Introductory Survey*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1957, p.24.
[340] *Education 1900-50*, Cmd.8244, HMSO, 1951, p.36 quoted in ibid., p.25

perhaps no surprise that its aspirations were often interpreted very conservatively.[342]

Traditional academic disciplines such as grammar, music, poetry, maths and rhetoric were applied with great enthusiasm in most of the developing Western European education systems, underpinning the types of curriculum found in secondary schools. In British schools, the influence of this classical model of education resonated with the growth of the Empire and the promotion of patriotic character. It also embraced a number of key pedagogical approaches conventionally associated with character-development. This approach to character education is outlined next.

ii)   Character education: the conventional approach

The conventional approach to character education in the UK emerged during the nineteenth century and has continued to influence different aspects of education in state schools. There are four key pedagogical dimensions of the conventional approach to character-education: physical education, direct instruction, teaching by example and the school ethos. Evaluation of the philosophy behind each of these dimensions and how they have influenced the school curriculum is important for perfectionist liberals seeking to assess the relationship between a conventional character education and a liberal education for significant autonomy.

Physical Education

The importance placed by the Ancient Greeks on gymnastics and sport for the development of character is well-known. Many liberal philosophers of education have also regarded the training of the body and its physical health as the primary requirement

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[341] *William Temple and his Message*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1946, p.228 quoted in ibid., p.26.

for moral development. For instance, John Locke stated that good health was necessary to 'our business and happiness', because we must be able to endure the 'hardships and fatigue' inherent in human life. Physical training, frugal living and a good diet could enable agents to cope with the stresses of life. Due care for the body was essential 'so that it may be able to obey and execute the orders of the mind.' [343] Proponents of conventional character education believe that if a child does not learn to care for their physical health then there is little hope that they will be able to care for their moral well-being.

The stress placed on health education as an important preliminary for character-education is frequently allied to the facility of physical education and sporting activities. While not all educationalists view the competitive aspects of sport and games positively,[344] the conventional approach to character education places a great deal of emphasis on the values which they are said to foster. In particular, physical education is a feature of a conventional character education because it is thought to promote a healthy attitude to the vicissitudes of life. Playing sport provides an ideal opportunity for children to learn about success and failure, teamwork, industry, determination, fair play, rule-following and so on.

Physical education in British schools originated in the patriotic character education followed in Victorian schools, where sporting virtues were held to be crucial to the building of the empire. Leadership on the playing field was here assumed to translate to leadership in 'industry, business, government and the military.' And, faith in the character-building nature of these sports was so great that they were often

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[342] For instance, Matthew Arnold preached the virtues of promoting 'the best that has been thought and said'. M.Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism', in M.Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.50.

[343] J.Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, pp.10-25.

'organised, managed and officiated by the pupils.'[345] However, there is no reason to suggest that the rules, rule-following or fair play in sport promote intrinsically valuable dispositions. For instance, professional sportspeople often seek to test the boundaries of the rules and the spirit of games in order to win. Certain features of sport (such as competition, nerve, skill and so on) which are inherent in the development of 'strong' character may be reflected in successful participation in competitive activities as morally vacuous as Russian roulette.

Sport does not necessarily presuppose care for or consideration of the moral well-being of one's opponent. In fact, it often highlights the need for ruthlessness towards one's competitors if one is to achieve victory or excellence. This could be problematic for a liberal education for significant autonomy. On the sporting field, the virtues central to victory may also be appropriated legitimately for the humiliation of an opponent. This may occasionally be mirrored in other social practices where competition or ruthlessness is required, but there is no liberal ethical grounding for teaching virtues of success above virtues of beneficence and benevolence.

In an education for significant autonomy, physical educators would therefore be faced with a great responsibility to ensure that participation in sporting activities does not undermine the development of the virtues of moral character by carefully monitoring the attitudes and actions of participants. In particular, pupils should display sportsmanship and respect for their fellow competitors, building a sense of shared responsibility which is inclusive of all their fellows. Physical education would perhaps be a more appropriate device for promoting virtues of individual character by stressing that sport and games are valuable features of living well. Indeed, such games have intrinsic

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[344] D.Eder and S.Parker, 'The Cultural Production and Reproduction of Gender: the Effect of Extracurricular Activities on Peer-Group Culture', *Sociology of Education*, vol.60, July, 200-13.

value as enjoyable or entertaining activities which can contribute to an agent's distinctive character. The values of play and enjoyment in sport and games are hence susceptible to development as much as values associated with sportsmanship. Although a liberal education for significant autonomy would not seek to coerce children to participate in sport, direct instruction has traditionally been an important aspect of promoting values through physical education. In fact, it is a central pedagogical dimension of teaching and learning within a conventional character education.

Direct Instruction

The importance of direct instruction in the moral virtues has been recognised by many educational thinkers.[346] In British schools, direct teaching of moral virtues has played a major role within a conventional character education. Such instruction within conventional character education has often been authoritarian, class-based and Christian in orientation. As we saw in Chapter Two, Foucault highlighted that Christian schools were the progenitors of modern character education because they inaugurated the idea of the classroom as a 'space of ethical formation'.[347] And for proponents of conventional character education, the authority of the teacher in the classroom is absolute. Although liberals – *contra* their critics – tend not to want undermine authority, they would be concerned that direct instruction could hamper the development of autonomy.

[345] R.Bailey, 'The Value and Values of Physical Education and Sport', in R.Bailey ed., *Teaching Values and Citizenship Across the Curriculum*, London, Kogan Page, 2000, p.106.
[346] W.Kilpatrick, *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong: Moral Illiteracy and the Case for Character Education*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1992; T.Lickona, 'Eleven Principles of Character Education', *Journal of Moral Education*, vol.25, no.1, pp.93-100.
[347] I.Hunter, 'Assembling the School', pp.159-61.

On the whole, programmes of direct moral instruction in a conventional character education have adhered to an 'objectivist' account of moral values.[348] That is, they hold that certain virtues of character can and should be taught because it can be objectively known that they constitute good moral behaviour. However, the existence of such metaphysical attributes has been disputed here. As a result, an education for significant autonomy would not be as rigidly prescriptive as a conventional character education. This would not mean that direct moral instruction would be totally proscribed within a liberal education rather it would require careful delimitation for it to be conducive to the ability to be significantly autonomous. Perfectionist liberals would, therefore, sanction direct instruction only in those virtues which are fundamental to the minimal requirements of character (such as restraint) on the grounds that they are basic to the ways in which agents can constitute themselves as significantly autonomous.

In a liberal education for significant autonomy, the liberal moral virtues which might require direct instruction would be those associated with the minimal requirements of good moral character and good citizenship. These are necessary framework conditions for the possibility of developing significant autonomy. Promotion of other liberal virtues, such as courage, beneficence and so on, is clearly inherent in an education for significant autonomy. Nevertheless, direct moral instruction in these would not proceed further than advice, exhortation or elicitation within the classroom or on the playing field. By contrast, in a conventional character-education direct instruction in these sorts of moral virtue is regarded as essential. This is also supplemented by very great stress on the example set by teachers.

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[348] M.Bottery, 'Values Education', in R.Bailey ed., *Teaching Values and Citizenship Across the Curriculum*, p.4.

Teaching by example

A conventional character education is based firmly on the continual strict disciplining of pupil's. The impact of the example set by teachers in classrooms in promoting appropriate values and attitudes relates to two key aspects of this rigorous process of character-development. First, that behaviour can be learned from role models, and second, that role-modelling is an effective and appropriate means for transmitting virtues of character. Supporters of role-modelling, claim that it initially influences behaviour at an unconscious level with neither teachers nor pupils fully aware of any modification of their conduct.[349] The growth of this 'expressive morality' can then encompass the whole range of communication between teachers and pupils, comprising the care, attention and integrity with which the relationships between pupils and teachers are conducted. This is especially important because children are thought to imbibe key moral virtues through the process of establishing supportive relationships with others. In this the role of the teacher and other adult mentors (or indeed peer mentors) is clearly central.

Teachers (and other role models) must be fit to carry out the responsibility for establishing supportive relationships with children during lesson-time and throughout school life.[350] Indeed, research into the psychology of learning has indicated that children respond best to and enjoy learning with teachers whose *moral* qualities they admire or respect.[351] Teachers, of course, undergo training designed to assist them in embodying appropriate moral conduct within their professional lives. Such training also forms a useful springboard for promoting a shared commitment to the development of character

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[349] P.W.Jackson, R.E.Boostrom and D.T.Hansen, *The Moral Life of Schools*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1993, pp.29-42.

[350] As Jackson notes, not only do pupils have to observe rules of good conduct in classrooms, but teachers are also expected to be 'on their good behaviour'. P.W.Jackson, 'The Enactment of the Moral in What Teachers Do', *Curriculum Inquiry*, vol.22, no.4, 1992, p.404.

[351] D.Hayes, 'The Good, the Bad, the Ugly and the Memorable: A Retrospective of Pupil-Teacher Relationships', *Education 3-13*, vol.21, no.1, pp.53-9.

in schools. So a conventional character education presumes some degree of moral reinforcement via the transmission of appropriate values, which also implies a mutual readjustment to the moral sympathies of all the participants in school life. Such a mutual morality develops through the example set by teachers and pupils, with teachers, of course, expected to take the lead role. It may also emerge as part of a deliberate development of shared understandings between teachers and pupils in class lessons and throughout the school.[352]

An education for significant autonomy could draw on these proposals as it seeks to understand the subtle processes by which the liberal virtues may be promoted. In particular, the importance of encouraging mutual sympathy could provide pupils with a practical schooling in many of the virtues of moral character. However, perfectionist liberals would be careful to ensure that the example set by teachers elicited the development of autonomy rather than a dull conformity. This means that pupils will have greater responsibility for promoting each other's character-development in a liberal education for significant autonomy. The stress on the growth of a mutual morality also leads us to a further pedagogical dimension of conventional character education.

The School ethos

In a conventional character-education, the school ethos underpins the values and virtues transmitted in and outside the classrooms. Although every school has its own peculiar 'moral climate', a conventional character education rests on a particular view of the appropriate school ethos.[353] This view and its implementation are often referred to as the

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[352] D.T.Hansen, 'From Role to Person: the Moral Layeredness of Classroom Teaching', in *American Educational Research Journal*, vol.30, no.4, 1992, pp.651-67.
[353] Halstead and Taylor note that 'the moral climate' of the school can ensure that 'character development is integrated into every aspect of the daily life and relationships of the school.'

'hidden curriculum'. The 'hidden curriculum' comprises extra-curricular conscious and semi-conscious processes associated with socialisation in schools which can be regarded as 'symbolic aspects of the school environment'. These 'symbolic aspects' include rules, rituals and routines such as: assemblies, inter and intra scholastic competition, the school motto and colours, recognition for outstanding conduct or achievement, and policies regarding homework, discipline and safety. They will also include documents such as: yearbooks, newspapers and newsletters, school handbooks, mission statements, and reports on school community projects.[354] The form of the hidden curriculum is likely to be relatively similar for a conventional character education and an education for significant autonomy. However, there will be major differences in the content of the respective curricula, with an education for significant autonomy focusing on the autonomous development of character.

While the impact of the school ethos on character, like that of role models, is to some extent unconscious, it is also susceptible to leadership in a variety of areas. Leadership strategies acceptable within an education for significant autonomy might include: proactive community relations, internal pupil involvement in decision-making, agreed whole-school discipline and conflict resolution procedures, and flexible management styles. All these measures are sensitive to ideological pressures. And, for this reason, attention has consistently been paid to the various modes of management used in schools. Strong top-down leadership is generally presumed within conventional character education, but in an education for significant autonomy the school ethos should reflect a more democratic approach which accords greater respect for the implications of the equal right to significant autonomy.

J.M.Halstead and M.J.Taylor, *The Development of Values, Attitudes and personal Qualities: A Review of Recent Research*, Slough, National Foundation for Educational Research, 2000, p.3.

As we have seen, the conventional approach to character education embraces a comprehensive view of the role of education in promoting a conception of the good life. Nevertheless, it may or may not seek to advance a liberal conception of the good life or be influenced by the right to be able to be significantly autonomous. Recognising that significant autonomy is characteristic of a liberal society therefore generates specific pedagogical and institutional concerns for liberals. Broadly speaking, these focus on concerns for the self-development presupposed by the priority of autonomy. The overly authoritarian nature of learning within a conventional character education, its faith in the constitutive power of physical education and a conservative hidden curriculum, would make it an unsuitable basis for promoting significant autonomy. One possible solution to the dilemma posed by these tensions between autonomy and authority could be to radically restructure education to facilitate self-chosen learning pathways.

2.   A Radical Alternative to Character Education

During the 1960s, the growth of egalitarian social policies and the perceived affluence of Western democracies spurred re-evaluation of the purposes and methods of state schooling. Progressive educationalists argued that conventional character-oriented pedagogy was excessively authoritarian, undemocratic and did not elicit the individual potential of children. In particular, de-schoolers believed that the release of a child's individual abilities could only be achieved in an education system devoid of conventional authority, control, discipline and 'book-learning'. This radical alternative to conventional character education in schools has especial relevance for liberals committed to the right to be able to be significantly autonomous, because its principles were guided by an

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[354] D.J.Wren, 'School Culture: Exploring the Hidden Curriculum', *Adolescence*, vol.34, no.135, 1999, pp.595-6.

emphasis on individual freedom. The following section describes the general nature of progressive education, before outlining de-schooling as an educational philosophy. The adequacy of de-schooling as an alternative approach to an education for significant autonomy is then discussed.

## i)	Progressive education

The central aspect of progressive philosophy of education is the notion that pupils should be given the opportunity to learn through play and personal exploration. In this respect, education could encourage 'discovery learning' through 'child-centred' methods, rather than direct moral instruction or the structured delivery of a set of curriculum-centred competencies. While enthusiasm for such a progressive view of education has never superseded reliance upon conventional pedagogical methods in Western democracies, its philosophy has profoundly affected educational debate, giving rise to a number of experimental schools in the UK dedicated to its proposals.[355] It was also reflected in the radical prescriptions of the de-schooling educationalists. The origins and influence of progressive education and its general tenets provide an indication of the appeal of de-schooling as an educational philosophy.

Origins and influence

The starting-point for progressive educational doctrines is generally recognised to be Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*. In this work he declared the importance of a child-centred pedagogy to the process of learning. Rousseau argued that children should be encouraged by tutors or guides to discover things for themselves rather then be directly

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[355] For instance, Sands School in Devon, St.Christopher's School in Hertfordshire and Summerhill School in Suffolk.

instructed in blocks of knowledge. Hitherto schools had simply replicated the hierarchies and injustices of existing social systems. Tutors adhering to Rousseauian principles could enable pupils to overcome these and finally achieve genuine freedom by becoming healthy, independent, morally autonomous adults. To treat a child as a moral being with the potential for autonomy, educators should therefore '[l]ove childhood; promote its games, its pleasure, its amiable instinct'.[356] *Emile* thus focused on the value of learning through discovery, in particular, on how children are capable of learning for themselves the physical and moral boundaries which inevitably constrain freedom.[357] Nevertheless, at the centre of Rousseau's educational philosophy is the 'Emile paradox'. While it was only through discovery that Emile learnt his physical and moral boundaries, he required very careful supervision and even manipulation of his processes of discovery. In other words, children have to learn how to be autonomous under the guidance of suitable educators. How else could it be guaranteed that moral corruption would be circumvented? An education for freedom therefore required subtle structuring to achieve its aims.

Twentieth-century progressive educationalists have drawn inspiration from Rousseau but largely rejected the idea that the 'Emile paradox' is not a paradox at all and that autonomy must be taught – something which our quasi-Foucauldian approach makes plain. For progressive educationalists, the 'Emile paradox' signifies that children can never be taught genuine autonomy where there is the involvement of educators. The flourishing of each child could therefore only be assured through the most minimal pedagogical practices. Such radical views took root in Western democracies during the 1960s in social circumstances which reflected a growth in demands for individual freedom and fulfilment. In the UK, improved social and economic conditions coupled with expansions

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[356] J.J.Rousseau, *Emile*, pp.78-9.
[357] Indeed, Rousseau argued that this principle of freedom 'need only be applied to childhood for all the rules of education to flow from it'. ibid., p.84.

in the rights of citizenship led to the introduction of comprehensive schooling to promote equality of opportunity. As a result, education policy-makers explored many new ideas, eventually developing serious proposals based on selected progressive educational principles. These were most succinctly expressed in the Plowden Report in 1967.[358]

The Plowden report examined the provision of Primary education in England, making a variety of radical recommendations based on the proposition that the 'best preparation for being a happy or useful man or woman is to live fully as a child'.[359] The primary school should therefore enable:

> children to be themselves and to develop in the way and at the pace appropriate to them. It tries to equalise opportunities and to compensate for handicaps. It lays special stress on individual discovery, on first hand experience and on opportunities for creative work. It insists that knowledge does not fall into neatly separate compartments and that work and play are not opposite but complementary.[360]

Although the report was critical of the fashionable nature of much child-centred philosophy, it sought to applaud primary schools and teachers who were adopting innovative methods in classrooms, especially those promoting discovery learning.[361] The types of principles noted in the Plowden report were later applied by supportive practitioners of progressive pedagogy and given rigorous exposition and development by progressive educationalists, especially the de-schoolers.

General principles of progressive education

Progressive education is generally associated with child-centredness and discovery learning. This 'liberality' towards children echoes aspects of the liberal preoccupation

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[358] Central Advisory Council for Education (CACE), *Children and their Primary Schools (The Plowden Report)*, London, Dept. of Education and Science, 1967.
[359] ibid., p.188.
[360] ibid., p.187.
[361] In this, the report stressed that educational theory should emerge from teachers' 'astringent intellectual scrutiny' of their own practice. ibid., p.201.

with autonomy. Indeed, there are two key aspects within progressive education which reflect aspirations many liberals associate with autonomy: (i) the libertarian aspect which stresses *individual freedom* - that children should be free to learn as they please; and (ii) the democratic aspect which stresses *social co-operation* - that every child would develop best when the conditions for self-education are established co-operatively for all potential learners. For progressive educationalists, both aspects are united in the notion that children have an entitlement to be encouraged to discover truth for themselves, whether individually or in groups.

The stress on freedom and self-education has led progressive educationalists to be affected by many aspects of thought not always associated with liberalism (such as romanticism and phenomenology). In particular, existential notions of individual authenticity heavily influenced the libertarian strand of progressive education, suggesting that the personal growth and individuality of children should be a process of self-creation. These notions of self-creation and authenticity also impacted on the development of the cooperative aspect of progressive education. This aspect has a very strong affinity with the democratic educational philosophy of John Dewey, which stands in tension with education for self-creation, especially his notion of learning through shared experience. For Dewey, this implied that children should learn in a cooperative fashion, viewing it as a means to arrive at their own solutions - a proposal which may have a role in a liberal education for significant autonomy.[362] However, some progressive educationalists extended cooperative principles to include ownership of learning and development itself. The key pedagogical principles of progressive education therefore unite libertarian and democratic prescriptions for the development of individuality.

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[362] J.Dewey, *Experience and Education*, London, Collier Books, 1963.

Generic principles of progressive pedagogy would include:

    (a) Child-centredness (i.e. an individualised curriculum);
    (b) Relevance (e.g. to working class and ethnic minority children);
    (c) The teacher as a guide rather than an instructor;
    (d) Discovery learning;
    (e) No competitive testing;
    (f) An emphasis on co-operation and group work;
    (g) An overall aim of individual flourishing.[363]

These broad principles highlight that the key aim inherent in the thought of progressive educationalists centres on the freedom of the child within their cooperative relations with their fellows. This is an aim which was often extended to the educational choices of children and Dewey's concern with the democratisation of schools and classrooms.

Although the liberal credentials of progressive education reside in its primary interest in the fulfilment of individual potential, we can observe that progressive education has most in common with social democratic and anarchistic traditions of cooperative education. Application of its principles to state education systems would inevitably have many profound implications for liberal democracy and liberal society. Those implications were wholeheartedly endorsed by those progressive educationalists who wished to totally de-institutionalise education.

ii)   De-institutionalising education

The Plowden report highlighted the crucial importance of progressive pedagogies at the primary level. Nevertheless, many radical educationalists also suggested that the principles of progressive education should be rigorously applied at the secondary level and beyond. The most radical reflections on the introduction of progressive principles within the education system can be found in the work of the 'de-schooling' educational

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[363] Adapted from D.Hill, *New Labour and Education: Policy, Ideology and the Third Way*, London, Tufnell Press, 1999, p.16.

thinkers, such as Paul Goodman, Ivan Illich, and Everett Reimer.[364] These progressive educationalists drew up a manifesto for the institutional change necessary to promote alternative educational principles, including the 'de-schooling' of society. Such proposals were based on the view that state schools simply could not accommodate free learning and self-education and so should be disbanded.

Free learning and self-education

Progressive educationalists define education as a process of individual or co-operative self-learning. As we have seen, this is derived from the fundamental value they attribute to individual freedom. Educationally speaking, 'doing one's own thing' is thus a means for children to come to their own understanding of how their capabilities can best be adapted to reflect their personality. Conventional character education obviated the possibility of personal growth, because it did not accommodate free or discovery learning. Learning in state schools took place only in very structured circumstances within primary and secondary schools. By focusing on instruction as the most appropriate means for stimulating personal growth and learning, conventional character education also undermined the flourishing of individual potential. In particular, self-education was impossible in state schools because 'reliance on institutional treatment' in schools rendered 'independent accomplishment suspect'. Indeed, de-schoolers argued that 'every step in learning' was made to fit 'previously approved measures of social control'.[365] Only through discovery learning could children begin the process of self-education upon which their freedom would depend.

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[364] Here I refer to the work of Illich as representative of the de-schooling theorists.
[365] I.Illich, *Deschooling Society*, London, Calder and Boyars, 1971, pp.10, 19.

Ivan Illich stated that self-education was accomplished through the 'open-ended, exploratory use of acquired skills'.[366] This exploratory process had three aspects. First, it was integral to the efforts of each child to develop an understanding of their own nature, potential and interests. Second, it was inherent in the growth of their knowledge and understanding about the natural and social worlds. Third, it was the vital precursor to grasping the nature of the inequalities that exist within a liberal capitalist society. Ultimately, discovery learning and self-education were envisaged as radical devices for empowering less-advantaged children.

Progressive pedagogical methods could subvert the inequities of the existing social system because they would attribute equal weight to the learning choices and development of each individual child. Furthermore, if resources were directed towards enabling any child to pursue their interests how, when and where they chose, the curriculum would be democratised by rendering attainment individual or co-operative rather than comparative and competitive. Establishing opportunities for free learning and self-education could thereby secure commitment to deeper forms and levels of personal achievement and fulfilment, particularly amongst pupils from less-advantaged backgrounds. Commitment to the equal development of every child was a direct challenge to the replication of the class structure by schools. And, de-schooling educationalists believed that this could be best effected by totally de-institutionalising education in Western societies.

De-schooling democracies

De-schooling educationalists argued that 'school systems' in liberal democracies were based on a myth that they promoted meritocracy and equal opportunity. In reality, they

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[366] ibid., p.24.

equipped 'man for disciplined consumption' and wage labour in a capitalist economy.[367]

State schooling thus actually marginalised those disadvantaged groups who were supposed to gain the most from mass education. By increasing the reliance of the underprivileged on 'institutional care' the state-provision of education had added 'a new dimension' to their 'helplessness'.[368] The pace and style of learning in schools also alienated many pupils from less advantaged backgrounds who lacked the educational opportunities at home that were 'casually available to the middle-class child.'[369] As a result, state schools had seriously damaged the egalitarian values and outcomes to which they nominally aspired. To establish equal opportunities for free learning and self-education, de-schooling educationalists (such as Illich) argued that Western democracies should be 'de-schooled'.

Schools were not only hierarchical and authoritarian; they also appropriated all the educational resources within society to an extent that 'discourages other institutions from assuming educational tasks.' 'Work, leisure, politics, city living and even family life depend on schools for the habits and knowledge they presuppose, instead of becoming themselves the means of education.'[370] For de-schoolers, self-education through discovery learning could only be made meaningful and effective where schooling was thoroughly unstructured and 'dissociated from obligatory attendance.'[371]

De-schoolers believed that self-education was dependent on freely chosen learning relationships between educational guides and learners. To establish such relationships, educators (and educational networks) should help match 'partners to meet

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[367] ibid., pp.50-1.
[368] The possibilities for self-education were also damaged by rendering the disadvantaged 'increasingly incapable of organising their own lives around their own experiences and resources within their own communities.' ibid., p.12. In fact, the 'mere existence of schools discourages and disables the poor from taking control of their own learning.' ibid., p.15.
[369] ibid., p.14.
[370] ibid., pp.15-6.

so that learning can take place.' Schools, universities and other structured learning environments were not appropriate places for 'matching people' because they were tied to courses that prevented groups of peers from freely enquiring about the intellectual issues which interested them. The curricula for courses were either determined by governments, state education departments or university lecturers. This gridlock resulted in resources being earmarked to 'purchase the time and motivation of a limited number of people to take up predetermined problems in a ritually defined setting.'[372] By contrast, the de-schoolers wished to establish the availability of a more fluid learning environment, where facilitators and participants could choose to generate shared areas of interest. The most 'radical alternative to school would be a network or service which gave each man the same opportunity to share his current concern with others motivated by the same concern.' Opportunities for the 'exploratory and creative use of skills' should therefore be thrown open to the market and made freely available by 'customer-led' facilitators. The guiding principle of free and equal educational opportunity within a de-schooled society was therefore that 'education for all means education by all.'[373]

The radical nature of de-schooling proposals requires that perfectionist liberals committed to an education for significant autonomy pay close attention to how they match their normative commitments. Indeed, there are a great many concerns about the theoretical cogency and practical applicability of the principles and recommendations of de-schooling.

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[371] ibid., p.24.

[372] ibid., pp.24-6.

[373] ibid., pp.21-9.

iii)   Conceptual and practical issues for de-schooling

De-schooling is a radical social libertarian philosophy of education. Ideas such as discovery learning, no competition or examinations and non-compulsory attendance in schools have serious implications for other aspects of society and government policy. At both the primary and secondary levels of education, rigorous application of de-schooling principles would require more than tinkering with current pedagogy. There are therefore a range of considerable theoretical and practical complexities associated with the adoption of the de-schoolers ideas in liberal democracies.

Autonomy and social support

Progressive education is a highly principled approach to revolutionising the education of children in Western democracies, drawing inspiration from many of the values inherent in liberal societies, especially the value of individual freedom. However, we have seen that significant autonomy in liberal societies is not simply coterminous with freedom from constraints. Autonomy can only contribute to individual flourishing in liberal societies where it is significant. The malleability of the self makes it possible for legitimate intervention by democratically accountable bodies to help agents autonomously develop their character. This requires the careful promotion of the virtues inherent in the ability to become significantly autonomous within an appropriate learning environment.

Although children usually have a degree of freedom when they play, significant autonomy is not a necessary feature of their development. Significant autonomy implies the disciplining of character rather than its impromptu blossoming as progressive educationalists have suggested. It is structured by a wide range of liberal virtues within diverse social activities and practices. The play of children in unconstrained environments is less likely to contribute to their ability to discipline their character and so would not be

an appropriate grounding for significant autonomy - though it may be viewed as an intrinsically valuable feature of a liberal concept of childhood. The supposition that freedom, discovery and play could deliver agents capable of being autonomous in a manner conducive to individual flourishing in a liberal society is perhaps the most questionable aspect of progressive education. Moreover, it implies a metaphysical notion of the inevitable autonomous realisation of innate potentials. As we have noted, the 'Emile paradox' is not really a paradox at all. It highlights that children can only learn to become significantly autonomous through the tutelage of dedicated teachers. In quasi-Foucauldian terms, there is no paradox in this because the inculcation of technologies of the self is necessary for agents to become significantly autonomous. Progressive strategies may be appropriate for certain aspects of early education or the provision of community education, but they are unlikely to promote the equal opportunity to develop moral and individual character. Liberals would also doubt that de-schooling could receive legitimacy and social support from parents or children themselves. Even if the de-schoolers educational principles were the ideal philosophical representation of an education for significant autonomy, it may not be practicable to implement such a demanding pedagogy in every school.

The practical recommendations of de-schoolers raise a whole host of questions to which perfectionist liberals require coherent answers. In a liberal democracy, justifications for the introduction of such a progressive educational manifesto would rest on democratic foundations, but what democratic procedures exist to legitimise a mandate for wholesale change to progressive pedagogy or de-schooling? And, who would retain the mandate on which such change would be based? Should children be consulted on the educational arrangements of society? Would all voters have an equal right to vote on the issue or should only parents or prospective parents be accorded this right? Or teachers?

Moreover, could voters later renege on their decision and reintroduce state-sponsored schooling? These questions illustrate both that it is unlikely that a liberal state would be able to de-school society without an overwhelming democratic mandate, and, that even with such a mandate it would be unlikely to de-institutionalise education. Indeed, it is clear that if de-schooling failed, 're-schooling' would prove an extremely costly and damaging exercise. Nonetheless, if perfectionist liberals were serious about certain progressive educational ideals (such as self-education and discovery learning), they could be adapted to fit with certain normative commitments associated with a liberal education for significant autonomy, such as promoting individual character. Experimenting with partial de-schooling could also be a means for responding to social diversity.[374]

In certain respects many neo-liberal ideas about educational choice are akin to the de-schoolers notion that 'one size' does not fit all in education. For instance, recent proposals in the UK for education vouchers mirror proposals for education credits made by the de-schoolers. But even if society were to be partially de-schooled there are further barriers to the adoption of such progressive educational methods which must be considered, and which illustrate that state schooling is necessary to give full value to the right to be able to be significantly autonomous.

Accountability and Regulation

Education in a liberal society should possess legitimacy in its efforts to prepare children for significant autonomy.[375] The de-schooling of society or the establishment of independent schools dedicated to progressive education would inevitably be subject to strictures of public accountability. This could cause serious problems for the survival of

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[374] Indeed, John Stuart Mill proposed that state education should 'only exist, if it exist at all, as one among many competing experiments, carried on for the purpose of example and stimulus to keep the others up to a certain standard of excellence'. J.S.Mill, 'On Liberty', p.118.

de-schooling aspirations. Illich argued that the greatest evil posed by state schooling was that children became 'victims of an effective process of total instruction and manipulation.'[376] In a liberal democracy, de-schooled educational networks would have to be held accountable for their success in developing pupils' awareness of when and where this manipulation was being circumvented or overturned. The state (or citizens' educational associations) would thus need to consider deriving criteria for a 'free' education. Yet it is unclear how the spread of a free market of educational guides or providers would eradicate 'total instruction', manipulation or programmes of education designed to propagate consumerist ideology (or other ideologies). With regard to the former, one need only look at the proliferation of those professing to be guides to enlightenment to see how those who claim educational expertise may not be committed to progressive, liberal or indeed any principles of education.

De-schoolers also seek to exclude notions of authority from the processes of learning. However, 'educational guides' must inevitably lay claim to being authoritative in the learning paths they recommend or in the 'matching' that they facilitate. If such guides received state-support they would require recognised accreditation demonstrating moral fitness for the role and that their educational programmes met certain centrally regulated ethical requirements. The return of regulation would surely lead back towards some variant of education with the structures of authority, schooling and curricula that thoroughgoing de-schoolers deplore. Indeed, fee-paying private educational institutions already provide an excellent example of how a free market for education can deliver exactly the kind of education that one particularly powerful consumer group (wealthy or willing parents) desire. Would de-schoolers therefore recommend outlawing all

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[375] A.Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, 2nd ed., Princeton University Press, 1999.
[376] I.Illich, *De-Schooling Society*, p.30.

educational institutions which adhered to the sorts of curricula, instruction and measurement that they abhor? Again the state (or some democratically accountable inspectorate) would be required to regulate the relative 'progressiveness' of all educational guides against some set of predetermined criteria, but these criteria would begin to look suspiciously like the sort of 'hidden curriculum' they criticise. So can de-schoolers offer any indication of how the difficulties indicated above may be overcome in theory or in practice?

In *After Deschooling What?* Illich hinted that institutional arrangements could be set up to 'protect the autonomy of the learner' which involve learners 'at every stage' of the educational process.[377] De-schooling could be established through legal codification of 'institutional arrangements that are the inverse of school', such as non-compulsory attendance and individual control of tax funds. Moreover, learning and teaching could be restructured to prevent the re-emergence of hierarchical structures.[378] Despite these provisos, it seems difficult to imagine how state support for widespread de-schooling could occur without a commitment to a 'progressive' teaching profession and some commonly acknowledged pedagogical devices aimed at encouraging 'uniqueness.' Pedagogical practices inevitably embody a degree of orthodoxy, whether in a conventional character education, a progressive education or an education for significant autonomy. Moreover, many observers have argued that 'socially powerful knowledge' has never been offered in alternative progressive schools, 'instead, pottery, electric guitar, coffee bars and discotheques are provided.'[379] The de-schooling model may be

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[377] I.Illich, *After De-schooling What?*, London, Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative, 1976. The ultimate goal of this is to safeguard the 'free determination by each learner of his own reason for living and learning - the part that his knowledge is to play in his life.' ibid., p.44. Illich describes this autonomy on the part of the learner as the 'private initiative to decide what he will learn and his inalienable right to learn what he likes rather than what is useful to somebody else'. ibid., p.32.
[378] ibid., pp.47-9.
[379] I.Lister, 'Introductory Essay', in I.Illich, *After De-schooling What?*, p.13.

appropriate for the provision of community education which contributes to the significant autonomy of adults, but is unlikely to deliver on the entitlement of each future citizen to be significantly autonomous. Our critique of de-schooling, thus leads us to re-examine the case for a state-led education for significant autonomy.

3.   Principles and Presuppositions of an Education for Significant Autonomy

De-schooling proposals for the cultivation of individual flourishing do not adequately account for the 'Emile paradox' and rely on a metaphysical account of the self based on the realisation of determinate innate potentials. The malleability of the self and the promotion of certain virtues are vital presuppositions of enabling agents to become significantly autonomous. A state-led education therefore clearly has a central role to play in helping children develop significant autonomy. An education for significant autonomy which promoted a liberal character-ethics would be the most appropriate means for the liberal state to fulfil its obligations to its citizens. This section establishes the credentials of such an education, discussing the need for authority, the nature of an appropriate learning environment and the role of a liberal character-ethics.

i)   For state schooling

Examination of proposals for institutionally arranged de-schooling and the wider promotion of discovery learning is important for perfectionist liberals committed to the right to be able to be significantly autonomous, not least because institutional reform in the 1970s actually looked like a possibility.[380] However, since the 1980s the resurgence of traditional views of schooling and of its role as the provider of skilled labour and

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[380] As Lister notes, both the 1973 Brown Report in the USA and the 1972 Report of the Post-Secondary Education Commission in Canada indicated a willingness on the part of liberal democratic governments to embrace the idea (if not the substance) of radical educational change. idem.

disciplined consumers has waxed rather than waned.[381] The egalitarian values which had influenced education were supplanted by a pedagogy whose values embodied the classic dichotomy between individual enterprise and moral authoritarianism of 'New Right' ideology.[382] Nevertheless, for liberal educationalists, the return of state schooling need not be entirely a matter for despair. Disciplinary practices in schools do not have to be tied to direct instruction specifying the skills inherent in the capitalist labour market or the virtues inherent in a hierarchical class system. Indeed, the promotion of appropriate liberal virtues can enable children to learn to flourish in a diverse range of intrinsically valuable ways. The prescriptions of a liberal education for significant autonomy will therefore reflect certain aspects of the conventional approach to character-education, in particular, the need for some structures of authority and strategic coordination, but aim to reconfigure these in line with perfectionist aspirations for significant autonomy.

The need for authority

We have highlighted that there are substantial conceptual and practical barriers to the widespread implementation of de-schooling in liberal democracies. In particular, de-schooling cannot ground techniques for properly equipping and disciplining children for the demands associated with significant autonomy in a liberal society. One important feature of this criticism is the argument that teachers need to exercise authority in the learning situation. Some liberal philosophers of education have rejected the idea of education through free exploration, discovery learning and play. For them, progressive

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[381] J.Halliday, *Markets, Managers and Theory in Education*, Falmer, Basingstoke, 1990.
[382] A development described by Stephen Ball as 'cultural restorationism'. S.Ball, 'Education, Majorism and the Curriculum of the Dead', *Curriculum Studies*, vol.1, no.2, 1993, pp.195-214 . For an examination of New Right ideology see Andrew Gamble's *The Free Economy and the Strong State*, London, Macmillan, 1989.

educationalists misapprehend the disciplinary nature of learning.[383] As the 'Emile paradox' demonstrates, often 'the most effective way' for teachers to induce 'interest in what they are doing may be to instruct, to adopt 'authoritarian' methods.'[384] In a liberal education for significant autonomy these methods are primarily used to encourage virtues of tolerance and restraint. Hence, teachers should generally choose to use a range of less strict disciplinary methods to promote significant autonomy, but maintain their authority to encourage pupils to display certain virtues of moral and individual character.

The promotion of character by teachers is implied by the principle of educational authority. For children to develop character in a liberal education for significant autonomy, they should have the opportunity to be taught in a learning environment where they feel that their contribution is valued and respected. It is therefore essential that educators have the authority to enable them to do so. The role of the teacher in authoritatively promoting and encouraging the exhibition of virtues in a broadly democratic learning environment is therefore an important feature of an education for significant autonomy. As Dewey stressed, this can be accomplished by eliciting a 'sympathetic understanding of individuals as individuals' to gain 'an idea of what is actually going on in the minds of those who are learning.'[385] Teachers would then seek to cultivate and direct the ability of each student to manifest liberal virtues when developing their own character. This is not anti-democratic or anti-liberal, because it is based on the understanding that children require authoritative guidance to enable them to constitute themselves in the most suitable way. And, the malleability of the self means that legitimate use of education authority to accomplish this has real bite. Hence, the tensions between freedom and authority, individual ability and participatory equality would be

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[383] R.S.Peters, 'Education as Initiation', in R.D.Archambault ed., *Philosophical Analysis and Education*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965, pp.94-5.
[384] J.Gribble, *Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, Boston, Allyn&Bacon, 1971, p.7.

resolved in each classroom by teachers and pupils. A state-sponsored education for significant autonomy also presupposes a degree of strategic coordination and organisation of its overarching purposes.

Co-ordinating education

The need to co-ordinate and regulate education across society is a major concern for the liberal state. The notion that schools or teachers can retain *complete* autonomy over the curriculum and pedagogical methods is unlikely to be supported by perfectionist liberals committed to ensuring that all children receive their entitlement to an equal opportunity to develop significant autonomy. Nor would it persuade perfectionist liberals that the education system is likely to promote wider national priorities, such as a flourishing liberal culture. If school choice was established as a principle, a loose-knit state education system would be responsive only to powerful consumers of education. For less advantaged citizens and areas, the system would become increasingly fragile and precarious. Greater parental choice could lead many to exit those local schools seen to provide an inferior education to their neighbours, contributing to a decline in standards and opportunities, particularly in deprived areas. This could lead to further decline in the numbers and quality of the pupils attending unpopular schools. The liberal state should therefore coordinate and regulate schooling for two interconnected egalitarian reasons: first, to establish equality of opportunity by ensuring that appropriate standards in the provision of preparation for significant autonomy are being met in all schools; second, to convince parents that their commitment to local schools is matched by the government. This need not entail that a national curriculum is necessary for a liberal state education,

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[385] J.Dewey, *Experience and Education*, p.39.

but it does imply that some regulation of education is appropriate for propagating certain key liberal virtues.

Strategic co-ordination of education is necessary to ensure that state schools give full value to the right to be able to be significantly autonomous. De-schooling would be unlikely to promote virtues necessary to discipline character-development and a conventional character-education would excessively constrain the development of diverse configurations of character. The principles of liberal policy-making established earlier indicate that the state can implement policies to promote valuable activities provided they exhibit equal respect for all children. The principle of moral and political education in policy-making also implies that government should have some control over the overall strategic direction of schools and their curriculum. An extremely pertinent contemporary issue relating to this strategic concern for moral and political education is the rise of the 'civic deficit' in liberal societies.

Addressing the civic deficit

Political sociologists and observers have identified a 'civic deficit' caused by the disengagement of many citizens from liberal democratic political processes in many Western democracies. Declining electoral turnouts, low levels of political participation and interest coupled with anti-social behaviour, youth disaffection and drug taking have suggested that support for civic culture and democratic political institutions is deteriorating. As Robert Putnam has made clear, 'stocks of social capital, such as trust, norms, and networks, tend to be self-reinforcing and cumulative.' By contrast, 'distrust, shirking, exploitation, isolation, disorder, and stagnation intensify one another in a

suffocating miasma of vicious circles'.[386] However, the retrieval and growth of social

capital has been shown to be susceptible to political influence.[387] As a result,

governments have become interested in promoting support for political institutions,

especially amongst young people.

Recent European and international studies have highlighted serious concerns

about young people's perceptions of politics. In particular, young people are 'unlikely to

think that conventional political participation is particularly important.'[388] Although they

remain 'open to forms of civic and political engagement unrelated to electoral political or

parties', increasing numbers are uninterested in conventional democratic participation or

the democratic political system.[389] While liberal citizens may become more interested in

policy and politics as they come into contact with work, mortgages, taxes and so on,

disparities in political engagement and influence between those from affluent and those

from deprived areas are likely to be exacerbated by deficiencies in civic competence and

political knowledge. However, research has suggested that the quality of democratic

participation can be improved where children become involved in conventional types of

political participation.[390] The liberal state could therefore play a critical role in co-

ordinating policies to sustain the vitality of liberal democratic politics. For instance, it

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[386] R.Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, p.177.

[387] See for example, S.Knack, 'Social Capital and the Quality of Government: Evidence from the States', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol.46, no.4, 2002, pp.772-85; T.W.Rice, 'Social Capital and Government Performance in Iowa Communities', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, vol.23, nos.3-4, 2001, pp.375-89.

[388] For instance, eighty per cent of the fourteen year olds sampled in this study indicated that presently they did not 'intend to participate in the conventional political activities generally associated with adult political involvement: joining a party, writing letters to newspapers about social and political concerns, and being a candidate for a local or city office.' J.Torney-Porta, R.Lehmann, H.Oswald and W.Schulz, *Citizenship and Education in Twenty-eight Countries: Civic Knowledge and Engagement at Age Fourteen*, Executive Summary, International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 2001, p.10.

[389] idem.

[390] The more young people know about the democratic process, the more they *expect* to participate in that process as adults. D.Kerr, A.Lines, S.Blenkinsop and I.Schagen, *Citizenship and Education at Age 14: a Summary of the International Findings and Preliminary Results for England*, Slough, National Foundation for Educational Research, 2001, p.4.

may introduce policies which make it easier for citizens to vote, such as postal or on-line voting, or it may seek to directly promote engagement with democratic politics through participation strategies or political education in schools. For an education for significant autonomy, the latter of these is of particular interest.

Political education is effectively an investment in the agents in whose hands the future right to significant autonomy rests; and research has shown that schools that model democratic practices in the classroom and throughout the school score highest in tests evaluating civic knowledge and participation.[391] Consequently, a liberal education for significant autonomy would benefit from promoting a liberal character-ethics within a very particular type of learning environment.

ii)   Education for significant autonomy

A state-led liberal education should concern itself with delivering appropriate preparation for significant autonomy. This education would presume that children were equipped to develop configurations of moral and individual character which are conducive to their own flourishing. Such an education for significant autonomy has two key dimensions. First, and foremost, its learning environment should be designed to inculcate the capacity for self-discipline from an early age. This is essential, because significant autonomy implies that agents are able to discipline their dispositions, traits, choices, and so on, to achieve both good moral and good individual character. In addition, a whole raft of academic disciplines and leisure activities should be structured into school timetables to ensure that pupils can autonomously develop diverse configurations of the liberal character virtues. The importance of the learning environment and a liberal character-

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[391] J.Torney-Porta et al, *Citizenship and Education in Twenty-eight Countries: Civic Knowledge and Engagement at Age Fourteen*, p.8.

ethics are discussed below before the structure and subject matter of a liberal education

for significant autonomy is outlined in the remainder of the chapter.

The learning environment

In an education for significant autonomy a carefully structured learning environment can

pay greatest heed to the truth of the 'Emile paradox' that children require guidance to

develop significant autonomy. This would build on many of the dimensions of a

conventional character-education, in particular, the notion that the different members of

a school community should each be able to contribute to the moral welfare and

development of that community. This is a familiar theme amongst education thinkers

who have theorised the nature of a suitable democratic learning environment. For

instance, John Dewey argued education should be a co-operative enterprise amongst

pupils within the classroom which could modify their habits and affect the 'quality of

subsequent experiences.'[392] In this, educators were charged with ensuring that the

learning environment 'will interact with the existing capacities and needs of those taught

to create a worthwhile experience.'[393] The learning environment for an education for

significant autonomy should therefore be in a constant state of organic growth, evolving

in ways cultivated by teachers. The aim in creating the right learning environment would

thus be to prepare pupils for liberal democratic life.[394] This means pupils should be given

the opportunity to develop both their moral and individual character.

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[392] J.Dewey, *Experience and Education*, p.35.
[393] ibid., p.45.
[394] ibid., p.44. For Dewey, knowledge or 'objective intellectual organisation' was never to be viewed as 'an end in itself', it was a means 'by which social relations,.. ,may be understood and more intelligently ordered.' ibid., p.83. Dewey wrote that 'there is no such thing as educational value in the abstract.' The 'formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned.' ibid., pp.46, 48.

The development of significant autonomy underpins the promotion of the liberal virtues in schools. The authority of teachers to rigorously promote these virtues should be exercised within culturally valued curricula settings and would be directed towards the inculcation of self-discipline. Significant autonomy requires the habitual application of self-discipline, because the virtues of moral and individual character which give it substance imply the direction or modification of an agent's dispositions and traits. Within an education for significant autonomy, pupils should learn to be self-disciplined to develop their character, rather than to achieve specific competences or perform certain skills. Autonomy is significant only when guided by the application of a liberal character-ethics.

Self-discipline is the first goal of an education for significant autonomy. However, as we have seen self-discipline requires cultivation and guidance. Pedagogical devices for facilitating the growth of self-discipline are crucial, particularly as self-discipline is also inherent in the possibility of learning and participating in lessons. The progressive development of each pupil's self-discipline is also akin to their progress towards maturity. Agents in liberal societies are only meaningfully regarded as significantly autonomous (or mature) where their configuration of character has been developed by giving suitable ethical content to the disciplining of their thoughts, actions and life: that content should be drawn from a liberal character-ethics.

The role of a liberal character-ethics

The educational philosophy specified here focuses on promoting significant autonomy by facilitating wide scope for diverse configurations of moral and individual character within education. It thus supplies the grounding for the inclusion of different academic subjects, artistic pursuits, and sporting and leisure activities within liberal state schools.

Preparation for significant autonomy could not be ensured where reliance on traditional methods (and traditional justifications) underpins the notion of character-development. Nor would a conventional character education account for the interpretive and interactive nature of a liberal character-ethics or furnish liberals with conceptual resources to ground an education for significant autonomy. Certain progressive methods for the free development of character do not pay sufficient attention to the need for some discipline and authority in education. Programmes of learning for children also require continuity and structure to ensure that education is linked to the equal right of all citizens to significant autonomy.

A liberal character-ethics can supply the content and interpretive background and discourse through which children begin to develop diverse configurations of moral and individual character. Disciplinary teaching methods structure the initial development of these character-configurations where pupils must learn tolerance and restraint. They are also appropriate where they require guidance relating to aspects of the development of individual character, such as learning historical dates or mathematical rules. Authority is necessary for teachers to be able to adequately fulfil these duties of guiding pupils towards the liberal virtues of character. As Dewey indicated, this was essential where democratic or participatory methods of learning are being used to develop the virtues of moral character. Such methods, and their alignment with children's development, are central to the development of significant autonomy. In particular, a liberal political education should prepare pupils for participation and deliberation in a liberal democracy. How these methods, principles and aims can be realised in a state-led education for significant autonomy is discussed in the following three sections.

4. Education for Moral Character

Moral and political education is the foundation of an education for moral character. The moral and political virtues found in the ethics of moral character are especially critical to being significantly autonomous in a liberal society, providing the bedrock for agents to autonomously develop and defend diverse modes of flourishing. This section begins by exploring the role of liberal moral education in an education for significant autonomy. It then examines political education, especially the teaching of participative and deliberative political virtues, concluding with reflections on the politics associated with an ideal liberal political education.

i) Liberal moral education

The primary goal of liberal moral education is to build *good* as opposed to *strong* character. While good character presupposes a degree of strong character, it is nevertheless the case that an agent can come to develop character in ways that would not secure moral approval. For instance, hardened criminals may possess many admirable qualities such as courage or resourcefulness, yet are clearly not regarded as being of 'good character'.[395] Strong character is a character-trait which may be instrumentally useful to the achievement of good character, but has no intrinsic value. By contrast, good character is constituted by the manifestation of the disposition to display some configuration of intrinsically valuable virtues. In a liberal education for significant autonomy, moral education would promote only the liberal virtues associated with good moral character. To display sufficient regard for the development of significant

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[395] Moreover, prison itself may be 'character-building' in this less acceptable respect for convicts, serving as a means by which criminals learn new trade skills for use in crime and become hardened in their attitudes, in effect, becoming habitual criminals or institutionally criminalised.

indoctrination.

Moral certainty and educational discretion

Earlier in the chapter, that direct instruction in 'moral knowledge' is an appropriate ideal for a liberal education for significant autonomy was disputed. Significant autonomy implies that agents can configure their moral and individual character in a host of diverse valuable ways. A liberal moral education should therefore seek to reflect and celebrate the validity of diverse conceptions of the good life. This can be most effectively pursued in a carefully cultivated democratic learning environment using a variety of different methods, activities and pedagogies. Such a moral education also has a number of important practical implications that must be addressed when establishing an appropriate learning environment.

Teachers are often reluctant to be moral educators beyond establishing appropriate classroom behaviour (significant though this is). Although some of the stakeholders in education often see schools as a means of instruction in a *single* conception of the good, teachers (and other educationalists) frequently feel that schools should be extremely careful to avoid accusations of moral indoctrination. Despite these fears, perfectionist liberals can be confident that concerns about indoctrination can be resolved in a variety of ways when moral education is grounded in the development of significant autonomy. Indeed, many liberal philosophers of education and moral psychologists have justified moral education by focusing on the role of autonomy within a liberal education.[396] A variety of conceptions of the good life and character-

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[396] For instance, Meira Levinson, *The Demands of Liberal Education*, Oxford University Press, 1999. Also, see Richard Peters, *Ethics and Education*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1966 and Lawrence Kohlberg, *Essays on Moral Development vol.1: The Philosophy of Moral Development: moral stages*

configurations can be explored within moral education (though prescriptions associated with these would be framed within a liberal character-ethics). An education for significant autonomy therefore implies that pupils should learn to habitually manifest some configuration of liberal social, moral and political virtues to develop good moral character. Significant autonomy not only presupposes character-development, but that this development will flourish best where agents display a constant commitment to ethical conduct. Pupils can accomplish this by learning to configure their character in a manner that is coherent, relevant and comprehensible within a liberal character-ethics.

No value would be attributed to character-configurations that could not be regarded as coherent, relevant and comprehensible ethical interpretations of a liberal character-ethics. For instance, a criminal lifestyle does not exhibit the virtues inherent in ethically appropriate care for individual flourishing in a liberal society, compounding the moral failings in a way that liberals may overlook. By adhering to a non-metaphysical perfectionism, we are not called on to question the rational capacities of those of bad character, but to consider whether the configurations of their character are coherent, relevant and comprehensible in terms of the ethical ideals associated with liberalism. To promote virtues of moral character in programmes of moral education is, then, to enable pupils to develop the ability to create valuable liberal character-configurations which contribute to their flourishing and that of a liberal culture. An education for significant autonomy will therefore focus first on encouraging the social and moral virtues of moral character because these are critical to the development of character-configurations more generally.

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and the idea of justice, London, Harper and Row, 1981. Such a focus on the significance of autonomy also informs much of the recent philosophical literature about citizenship education. See espec. E.Callan, *Creating Citizens: Political Education and Liberal Democracy*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997.

The social and moral virtues of character can be promoted from an early age in a variety of educational environments, such as the family, nurseries and primary schools. Indeed, encouraging civility and praiseworthiness is self-evidently a central preoccupation of most parents and teachers. It is also a legitimate concern of the liberal state because it is charged with the duty of ensuring that its citizens are equipped to exercise their right and opportunity to be able to be significantly autonomous. The promotion of virtues required for this to be a possibility would begin at an early age. Children are envisaged as agents with the potential for self-disciplined autonomy in adult life. In this respect, they are not yet able to fully display the social and moral virtues that will enable them to be significantly autonomous, but can be encouraged to do so, learning (as adults do) to value their autonomy more or less through the course of their development.[397]

Children are generally exhorted by those concerned for their welfare to be able to display appropriate social behaviour. In socialising, playing and learning they are expected to progressively demonstrate their ability to think more about how their actions affect others and how they can show consideration for the interests of others. At a very early age this may include the direct teaching of 'good manners' and civility. It can also involve helping them develop their own moral conscience, by encouraging their ability to reflect on their actions and those of others. Children also learn in their interactions with the peers that they are unlikely to get their own way at all times, gradually becoming aware that there are others who have interests not necessarily coterminous with their own. In this respect, child development can be viewed as contributing to a process of self-discipline or character-formation. Nevertheless, moral education is critical to

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[397] R.Jonathan, *Illusory Freedoms*, p.162.

encourage the growth of worthwhile character-configurations while this process takes place.

The learning environment within an education for significant autonomy will be concerned with creating diverse opportunities to manifest virtues associated with civility and moral conscience. Classroom interactions between pupils usually take place within the framework of a certain set of rules, practices and expectations, such as waiting one's turn, not shouting out answers and so on. Moreover, teachers will seek to ensure that these virtues are displayed whenever other relevant circumstances apply. For instance, social virtues of moral character are manifested on greeting visitors to schools, while moral virtues of moral character are stressed when someone is ill or injured. At the secondary stage of their education pupils will generally be expected to embrace the social and moral virtues and be able to reflect upon and develop worthwhile character-configurations. They should also be stimulating each others' manifestation of the virtues, by questioning the actions of their peers and by displaying commitment to moral sensitivity. While adolescents are not necessarily capable of routinely manifesting social and moral virtues of moral character, it would be taken for granted that their ability and disposition to do so becomes ever more in evidence as they progress towards life beyond school. Furthermore, it can be anticipated that they will begin to form a political view of their personal experiences within school and the classroom, as they begin to understand the relationship with structures of authority.[398]

The social and moral virtues of moral character described in Chapter Four, such as sociability, forgiveness and courage, are likely to be encouraged in schools in unison with more specific virtues such as understanding, care and empathy. A liberal character-

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[398] C.Cullingford, *Children and Society: Children's Attitudes to Politics and Power*, London, Cassell, 1992.

ethics would thus form the major part of the general liberal moral vocabulary that teachers and pupils could use to describe how they can and should relate to each other. As pupils become more 'morally literate' in the use of this language, we would expect that they become increasingly able to live well autonomously as members of liberal societies, leading naturally to a concern with education pertaining to politics and good citizenship.

ii)   Liberal political education

John Rawls proposed that 'children's education includes such things as knowledge of their constitutional and civic rights.'[399] However, living well in a liberal society implies more than knowing your rights. An education for significant autonomy would therefore include a political education which focused on promoting the ability to manifest some configuration of the participative and deliberative political virtues of moral character. The type of political education that this will require should reflect a perfectionist liberal ideal of good citizenship. The nature of this ideal and its relationship with a liberal political education is described and discussed next.

Promoting political participation

The reciprocal nature of education and citizenship was rendered plain by T.H.Marshall who stated that, 'the education of children has a direct bearing on citizenship and when the state guarantees that all children should be educated, it has the requirements and the nature of citizenship in mind.' For Marshall, the importance of this preparation for citizenship was reflected in a wider 'duty to improve and civilise oneself'.[400] As we saw

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[399] J.Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.199.
[400] T.H.Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class*, London, Pluto Press, 1992, pp.16-7.

in the previous chapter, the achievement of good moral character is based first on the minimal duties of citizenship. And these minimal duties would guide the basic aims of a liberal political education. But to promote significant autonomy state schools should also produce citizens who are willing and able to participate in and deliberate on liberal politics and democratic processes. A liberal political education would therefore focus on creating a strong commitment to the participative and deliberative political virtues. The nature of this commitment to political participation is fully captured in the notion of 'active citizenship'.

The ideal of active citizenship implies that membership within a liberal political community entails acting upon social and political obligations as well as rights and entitlements. Marshall noted that active citizenship would not require an agent 'to sacrifice his individual liberty or to submit without question to every demand made by government', but to 'be inspired by a lively sense of responsibility towards the welfare of the community.'[401] Nevertheless, the sense of responsibility at the heart of the ideal of active citizenship has been interpreted in different ways, most pertinently by civic-individualists and civic-republicans. The debate about these different interpretations of active citizenship is summarised here in order to illuminate the perfectionist promotion of political participation within a liberal education for significant autonomy.

Civic-individualists associate active citizenship with voluntary work, the exercise of consumer rights and social entrepreneurship.[402] Efforts to promote this type of citizenship in education therefore focus on encouraging self-reliance by decreasing dependence on state welfare and inculcating the skills citizens need to become informed consumers of public services. This view of active citizenship was epitomised in the UK

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[401] ibid., p.41.
[402] R.Bellah *et al* eds., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, University of California Press, 1996.

'Citizen's Charter' of 1991 which associated it with the exercise of consumer rights.[403]

And the civic-individualist view of active citizenship has also been associated with the promotion of volunteering to pick up the pieces of failing public services. However, active citizenship has been interpreted by civic-republicans to mean direct involvement in the politics and decision-making of a distinctive liberal culture.[404] Consequently, many left-of-centre thinkers have underlined the radical possibilities inherent in the idea of active citizenship.

The promotion of this civic-republicanism in schools would equip citizens to participate in local and national democratic political processes. It would also focus on the need to encourage the participation of diverse, disaffected or disengaged social groups in democratic politics. Within the terms of our liberal character-ethics the stress on responsible political engagement would lead us to say that the promotion of active citizenship in schools should adopt this civic-republican approach. Responsible political engagement so conceived would underpin a citizenship-ideal which could guide the promotion of the liberal political virtues in schools, comprising two vital distinct but interlocking aspects: the notions of responsible individual and responsible collective political engagement.

The idea of responsible individual political engagement is inherent in the autonomous development of active citizenship. In schools, responsible individual political engagement need not imply that each pupil should be continually involved in political activism; indeed, it can accommodate the view that not participating in politics may be tolerated on the grounds that it can be a form of political engagement. Nevertheless, learning duties associated with responsible individual engagement implies that pupils

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[403] *The Citizen's Charter: Raising the Standard*, London, HMSO, 1991.
[404] See for instance, R.Dagger, *Civic Virtues Rights, Citizenship and Republican Liberalism*, Oxford University Press, 1996.

should become able to develop the coherence, relevance and comprehensibility of their configuration or interpretation of the participative political virtues. By contrast, responsible collective political engagement implies that children learn to be collectively capable of engaging in worthwhile political activity. In these instances, such engagement is primarily based on the notion that a shared display of certain key virtues of good citizenship can ground responsible judgement on 'what should be done'. As a result of this focus on political engagement, we can stress that active participatory activities such as community work and volunteering, though morally admirable, are not central to political education. The development of virtues associated with active citizenship therefore rests upon the efficacy with which the learning environment in schools and classrooms promotes the liberal participative political virtues. The promotion of virtues of responsible political engagement would also concern itself with engagement with cultures outside liberal democracies through the notion of 'world citizenship'.

Although it is difficult to specify precisely what rights and duties adhere to membership of the global community, responsible political engagement presupposes the legitimacy of developing a sense of obligation towards agents in other states and societies other than our own. For children to learn to live well, the virtues of good citizenship may therefore be extended to include certain virtues associated with world citizenship. World citizenship implies that agents are able to regard themselves 'as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern.'[405] The virtues of world citizenship would therefore include 'a sympathetic understanding of

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[405] M.Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, Harvard University Press, 1997, p.10.

distant cultures' and 'a willingness to doubt the goodness of one's own way and to enter into the give-and-take of critical argument about ethical and political concerns'.[406]

The moral requirements of world citizenship will enjoin that the interests of other human agents across the globe play a part in political deliberation and action. The promotion of responsible political engagement would mean that agents should (at least) reflect on which virtues of world citizenship they might associate with living well. This may mean a good citizen is merely aware of human rights abuses in other countries or that they demonstrate or campaign against unjust regimes. The extent of the coherence, comprehensibility and relevance of an agent's responsible political engagement will be reflected in their ability to manifest liberal participative political virtues. It will also presuppose that they can exhibit liberal deliberative political virtues.

Promoting political deliberation

Bernard Crick once stated any 'worthwhile education must include some explanation and, if necessary, justification of the naturalness of politics: that men both do and should want different things that are only obtainable by means or by leave of the public power, and that they can both study and control, in varying degrees, the means by which they reconcile or manage conflicts of interests and ideals.'[407] An ideal liberal political education which reflects this aspiration can be developed from the right to be able to be significantly autonomous in liberal societies. In particular, the importance of democratic politics within a liberal society means that the promotion of political deliberation is a vital

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[406] ibid., pp.69, 62. Indeed, some philosophers claim that the demands of world citizenship (or global justice) ultimately trump those of domestic citizenship or justice. For example, P.Singer, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization*, Yale University Press, 2002

[407] B.Crick, 'Introducing of Politics in Schools', in B.Crick, *Political Theory and Practice*, London, Allen Lane, 1971, p.184.

feature of the liberal democratic state's duty to promote the ability of agents to become significantly autonomous.

In a liberal education for significant autonomy, the political education of children in liberal democracies would involve the promotion of a range of deliberative political virtues. To do this effectively it is essential that pupils learn something about politics, and 'moral choice' within politics. The recognition of hard cases in political decision-making thus presupposes a particular approach towards their importance. Promotion of political deliberation in a liberal political education would therefore focus on the inculcation of a 'moral attitude' towards politics to ensure pupils can fully appreciate and be committed to deliberative political virtues. Michael Walzer states that the study of politics should help 'ordinary citizens reflect upon the most important matters of state. It should prepare leaders, would-be leaders, and vicarious leaders - which is to say, it should prepare all of us - for the democratic business of taking stands and shaping policies.'[408] A liberal political education would need to be more than simply preparation for actual political decision-making. It should aim at creating 'a shared sense of moral concern', becoming both a barometer and steward of the political climate. Although citizens 'in their real and vicarious decision-making' may not always make the 'right decisions', it is fair to expect that they at least 'worry about the right things'.[409]

Practising and reflecting on political decision-making in the classroom is a vital precursor to the decision-making and reflection that accompanies responsible political

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[408] M.Walzer, 'Political Decision-making and Political Education', in M.Richter ed., *Political Theory and Political Education*: Princeton University Press, 1990, pp.160-1.

[409] ibid., p.172. Walzer argues an 'ongoing process of (vicarious) decision-making' in schools would mean that 'leaders and citizens would look to the school in a new way - not always as training grounds for talented men and women, but as centres of oral argument and sources of guidance in political decision-making.' 'Political and military leaders should be made aware that moral choices are being anticipated and second-guessed in a systematic fashion. For then, inevitably, they will be drawn into the process, forced to reason according to certain standards, forced to justify their actions in certain ways. In a democracy, to educate citizens is to coerce leaders. That is the real point of teaching politics.' ibid., pp.171-4.

engagement.[410] The demands of an education for significant autonomy enjoin that children must learn how to think for themselves. This does not mean that they must develop original thoughts or be incessantly creative in their reflections; displaying virtues which require disciplined thought is a more nuanced activity. In studying and debating politics they should develop and exercise techniques of discernment to judge matters for themselves, particularly when considering the trustworthiness and legitimacy of the claims of different social and moral authorities. The promotion of the deliberative political virtues within a liberal political education is therefore a moral enterprise based on three assumptions: first, that democratic decision-making is the most appropriate form of political decision-making within liberal societies; second, that pupils ought to autonomously ascribe to this when studying politics; third, that the values inherent in democratic political processes in liberal democracies are ones to which liberal societies should ideally subscribe and approximate. This will mean that political debate within classrooms will have to be carefully modelled to encourage the deliberative political virtues to flourish.

Modelling political debate

One interesting way in which political debate in the classroom can be modelled is through the Rawlsian notion of public reason. For Rawls, public reason is 'characteristic of a democratic people: it is the reason of citizens, of those sharing the status of equal citizenship.' It has 'the good of the public' as its *general* object, rather than abstract right or justice and is an 'ideal conception of citizenship for a constitutional democratic regime'.[411] As an ideal of citizenship, public reason implies a moral duty that citizens

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[410] For instance, Walzer insists that the active goal of moral and political 'orientation' in schools is to promote the activity of '*making up one's mind*'. ibid., p.161.
[411] J.Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p.213.

should be able to 'explain to one another on those fundamental questions how the principles and policies they advocate and vote for can be supported by the political values of public reason.' These principles and policies should be such that 'each could reasonably expect that others might endorse as consistent with their freedom and equality'. To do this in a democracy is to have a 'willingness to listen to others and a fair-mindedness in deciding when accommodations to their views should reasonably be made.'[412] This has obvious relevance for political debate in the classrooms in liberal state schools.

Rawls argued that agents should conduct public debate by appealing 'only to presently accepted general beliefs, and the methods and conclusions of science when these are not controversial.' This would ensure that citizens' public reasons are both reasonable and intelligible from within the established values and practices of liberal democracy. These constraints on public reason are designed to establish that the 'structure of government be changed only as experience shows it to be required by political justice or the general good, and not as prompted by the political advantage of one party or group that may at the moment have the upper hand.'[413] The ideal of public reason can thus be best realised in democratic debate when citizens 'think of themselves *as if* they were legislators and ask themselves what statutes, supported by what reasons satisfying the criterion of reciprocity, they would think it most reasonable to enact.'[414] In education, public reason can therefore be viewed both as an ideal type of political discourse for pupils to aspire to, and as a baseline for rules of political debate. In

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[412] ibid., pp.217-8.
[413] ibid., pp.224-8. Rawls claimed that the institutionalisation of the ideal of public reason could form part of 'the wide, or educative, role of public reason'. ibid., p.236.
[414] J.Rawls, *The Law of Peoples with the Idea of Public Reason Revisited*, Harvard University Press, 2001, p.135. Rawls stressed that one of the 'essential elements' of deliberative democracies is 'the knowledge and desire on the part of citizens generally to follow public reason and to realise its ideal in their political conduct.' ibid., p.139.

classrooms, students of a liberal political education could then regard themselves as 'ideal legislators' when participating in political debate. Nevertheless, there are other features inherent in politics which perfectionist liberals would wish to see reflected in classroom debates.

Legislators in liberal democracies need not actually (or ideally) enact laws based on terms that would be agreed to be *reasonable* by all citizens. In fact, it is not clear that perfectionist liberals would accept (as Rawls seems to) Kant's dictum that 'every claim upon right must have this [or any other] public quality.'[415] Presentation of only public reasons may suppress the natural expression of where citizens privately stand on issues. Public reason may be accepted as an edifying aspect of political debate in schools, where it could be understood to mean that advocacy of principles or laws can be *'followed or adopted* by others', rather than accepted as reasonable by others.[416] This seems to more accurately reflect the actual conduct of political debate. Participants in politics generally offer public justifications for their actions, policies and decisions in terms that are expected to be followable by others without their necessarily being accepted as reasonable. Hence, we might conclude that in a liberal political education public reason could be one (important) aspect of a process through which pupils should be able to explicate rather than justify their political positions or principles in terms that are coherent, relevant and comprehensible within a liberal character-ethics. This deliberative model of political debate in classrooms will therefore be one infused with normative commitments. But could such a model of political debate in the classroom reflect the diversity of ideological positions characteristic of a liberal democracy?

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[415] I.Kant, 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch', I.Kant, *Political Writings*, 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.125. Public justification is perhaps no better placed to serve as a precondition for legitimate political action than many other liberal political values. M.Evans, 'Is public justification central to liberalism?', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol.4, no.1, 1999, pp.117-36.

Many supporters of political education have argued that it should reflect a conventional character education by using traditional teaching methods. In particular, conservatives fear that a democratic learning environment could 'encourage endless and superficial debate among students which is likely to undermine necessary and proven forms of belief, practice and value.'[417] This argument for a 'degeneration effect' reflects the concerns of Michael Oakeshott's work on political education. Oakeshott rejected programmatic liberal, socialist or democratic political education, because he claimed it was dangerous to view politics as the 'activity of amending the arrangements of a society so as to make them agree with the provisions of an ideology.' Rather political education should be conducted by 'exploring the intimations of a political tradition'.[418] Oakeshott suggested that to accomplish this in schools, pupils could learn 'how to participate in... [political] conversation' through 'the observation and imitation of the behaviour of our elders'. Consequently, the fruits of an Oakeshottian political education would only 'appear in the manner which we think and speak about politics and perhaps in the manner in which we conduct our political activity'.[419]

Although the ideological status of Oakeshott's work may be disputed, many of his reflections on political education mirror those of conservative supporters of political education. For conservative proponents of political education, it should be conducted with the greatest sensitivity towards existing political traditions to minimise its radical transformatory possibilities. It would stress that pupils should be instructed in traditional

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[416] O.O'Neill, 'Political Liberalism and Public Reason: A Critical Notice of John Rawls' *Political Liberalism*', *The Philosophical Review*, vol.106, no.3, 1997, pp.411-28.
[417] T.H.McLaughlin, 'Citizenship Education in England: The Crick Report and Beyond', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, vol.34, no.4, 2000, p.553.
[418] M.Oakeshott, 'Political Education', in *Rationalism in Politics and other essays*, Indianapolis, Liberty Fund Inc., 1991, p.58.
[419] ibid, pp.62, 66.

political virtues, such as respect for authority. But would this notion be compatible with the prescriptions of a liberal political education?

While teachers are given the authority to deliver a liberal political education, perfectionist liberals would expect that they avoid delivering a set of their own authoritative prescriptions or overly structure the terms of debates. In a liberal education for significant autonomy, pupils should be encouraged to learn how to pursue their own answers and 'intimations'. This of course would not be done without limitation, as pupils would still be expected to work within the normative prescriptions of a liberal character-ethics. But it would not entail directly instructing pupils in a determinate set of traditional virtues, because inducting pupils into liberal democratic discourse is very different from instruction in the terms of a political tradition. A liberal political education that recognises the 'Emile paradox' would encourage teachers to use their authority to establish a democratic model of learning that can accommodate a range of political opinions and political positions. It could thus accommodate certain conservative and socialist concerns about the purposes of political education.

Socialists have traditionally viewed education as potentially either liberating or enslaving. These mixed feelings are based on acknowledgement that agents can be constituted and reconstituted through different processes of education and socialisation. Political education can facilitate radical socialist aims, especially through the notion that young people should make the world 'a better place'. But socialists also suspect liberal political education would simply domesticate children by inducting them into the values of the liberal capitalist economy. By contrast, socialist political education would focus on enabling pupils to understand the inequities of their society, helping them to conceive of ways in which they may be able to effect systemic change.

Bowles and Gintis stressed that to accomplish their aims socialist educationalists need not adopt revolutionary pedagogies or support the total de-schooling of society.[420] Nevertheless, we might say that it is essential that socialist educationalists encourage their students to modify their society where it oppresses them, recognising that pupils are able to theorise and construct meaning themselves.[421] Paulo Freire has described these socialist educational processes as 'conscientisation', the growth of which is cashed out in a commitment to make the world 'a better place'.[422] These sort of sweeping requirements stand in direct contrast to the conservative vision of political education. But can 'conscientisation' be accommodated within a liberal political education?

The raising of political awareness will inevitably be a key feature of a liberal political education. Manifestation of the participative and deliberative political virtues is based on the notion that agents should be able to explicate why they are exercising them in one way rather than another. Moreover, although the ethics of moral character is a liberal character-ethics, many of the political virtues at its heart can be accepted by socialists. For instance, the stress laid on respect for diversity and the duties associated with responsible political engagement. A liberal political education can therefore do more than accommodate 'conscientisation'; it can positively encourage and foster its development as an integral feature of its own aspirations. Nevertheless, perfectionist liberals would not stress activism over awareness as this may detract from the deliberative virtues which are at the heart of political decision-making in a liberal

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[420] S.Bowles and H.Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976, p.255. By contrast, Marxists believe that socialist education should result in 'an actual overthrow of social relations through praxis'. 'Disputes about reform' are not important as they may 'become a substitute for revolutionary action'. M.Sarap, *Marxism and Education*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, pp.4, 162.

[421] As Gramsci noted, 'all men are intellectuals... but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals'. A.Gramsci, 'Prison Notebooks', in R.S.Gottlieb ed., *An Anthology of Western Marxism*, Oxford University Press, 1989, pp.115-6.

democracy. If the principle of 'conscientisation' is to play a role in a liberal political education it would not entail a call to arms, but would focus on participation in a wide range of issues and conflicts and cognisance of the difficulties which accompany their resolution.

The commitment of pupils to a liberal polity and its democratic decision-making processes are essential educational consideration. Indeed, pupils should be encouraged to be committed to responsible political engagement within their local community and the wider liberal society. This engagement with wider society is also a feature of their efforts to develop individual character. The manner in which an education for significant autonomy addresses education for individual character is examined in the following section.

5.   Education for Individual Character

Agents in liberal societies should be able to develop diverse configurations of individual character which reflect virtues appropriate to their own traits and circumstances. An education for significant autonomy should therefore provide children with a sense of responsibility towards their individual character, facilitating activities which promote a wide range of generic and specific virtues of individual character. The provision of academic disciplines and leisure opportunities in schools can give pupils the necessary impetus for developing their individual character in this manner, but a liberal education for individual character would also play a vital role in guiding their relationship with the demands of life in a capitalist society. This section examines educational prescriptions

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[422] P.Freire, *The Politics of Education*, London, Macmillan, 1985, p.106. For Freire, 'political illiteracy' was a state of having 'an ingenuous perception of humanity in its relationship with the world.' ibid., p.103.

which can underpin the development of individual character, before outlining the intrinsically valuable activities associated with an education for individual character.

i) Facilitating the development of individual character

The development of individual character in a liberal society occurs within diverse social practices, but becoming significantly autonomous in this manner also presupposes that agents are able to maintain a basic level of independence. This is particularly so in liberal capitalist societies, where individual flourishing is inevitably constrained by the need to cope with the demands of a very specific type of economy. A liberal education for individual character needs to accommodate some of the life-management skills inherent in survival in a capitalist society. However, it must ensure that the development of these competence-based skills is not prioritised over virtues of individual (or moral) character or that education is reduced to training for the labour market.[423] These reflections are explored further below.

Life-management skills

A liberal education for significant autonomy should pay some heed to enabling citizens to manage life in a capitalist economic system. Life-management in such an economic system requires very specific skills many of which are not simply related to securing employment but which contribute to the ability to sustain a distinctive character. Financial management, utilising technology and accepting non-fulfilment of wants are all

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[423] Something to which a recent Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report *Education Policy Analysis* alludes, 'It is more important to aim at educational objectives of a general character than to learn things that are too specific. In the world of work, there exists a set of basic competencies - relationship qualities, linguistic aptitudes, creativity, the capacity to work in a team and to solve problems, a good understanding of new technologies - which have today become essential to possess to be able to obtain a job and to adapt rapidly to the evolving demands of working life. OECD,

integral aspects of coping with day to day existence in a capitalist society. These skills can help agents to be significantly autonomous throughout the course of their lives and can be taught in schools to encourage children to later establish conditions of living conducive to the development of their individual character. Financial hardship and incompetence may not prevent an agent achieving individual character, but they most certainly make it very difficult for them to participate in many social practices. The development of individual character in liberal societies hangs on the ability to maintain a basic level of independence. Parenting, career management and community cohesion also presume that citizens have at least a minimal ability to sustain their distinctive character through time. Public services can fill many of the gaps left by the inability (or unwillingness) of some citizens to manage their lives, especially in relation to healthcare, personal pensions and unemployment insurance. However, a liberal state would not directly specify or control the organisation of most personal issues (such as, planning for children or financial debt),[424] because such a course of action would constitute a serious breach of the right to be able to be significantly autonomous. Nonetheless, the state could legitimately seek to influence the personal and financial decisions of citizens through education. An education for significant autonomy should therefore seek to promote some skills associated with long-term life-management in a liberal society.

A liberal society with a capitalist free market presupposes that agents can be minimally self-dependent or self-reliant over a large part of their lifetime. Skills of life-management, such as timekeeping, financial prudence and coping with loss or failure are akin to self-regarding social virtues associated with the development of individual character. Moreover, significant autonomy could not be sustained in the long term if

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Education Policy Analysis, 1998, quoted by R.Hatcher and N.Hirtt, 'The Business Agenda Behind Labour's Education Policy', in M.Allen *et al*, *New Labour's Education Policy*, p.15.
[424] It may seek to provide tax benefits or other incentives for citizens to accomplish these successfully.

agents were not committed to the conditions necessary for its exercise throughout their lifetime. This does not mean that liberal citizens should exist in an atomistic isolation from each other nor that they should routinely require assistance from their fellow citizens. For the liberal state to render its citizens helpless by making them entirely dependent on state support or the support of other citizens would undermine the development of their moral and individual character. For individual flourishing to be sustained, a liberal education should ensure that citizens can individually (and collectively) manage their relationship with capitalism, money and the labour market with sufficient competence for them to be able to live well. Furthermore, life-management skills also adhere to wider social and political goods in a liberal society.

An education for individual character should reflect how children can make the most appropriate contribution to the development of their community and the wider social good. These are best promoted by ensuring that children are provided with the opportunity to participate in decision-making and to fulfil and be committed to roles appropriate (as far as is possible) to the development of their individual character. For perfectionist liberals, this means that children in state schools should be assisted in making appropriate choices about how they can best contribute to the social good. Careers education in schools can provide positive guidance about the nature and values inherent in the different jobs and professions to which pupils may be suited or attracted.

Careers education

The promotion of a liberal character-ethics indicates that economic priorities should be made subordinate to a concern for significant autonomy via the liberal principles of policy-making. Careers education is a particularly interesting example of this principle in action, providing a link between the exigencies of the labour market and the opportunity

for agents to develop their individual character. Although a capitalist economy may valorise flexibility above other values within the labour market, an education for significant autonomy would not do so. Careers education can enable children to find an appropriate balance between their individual character, the demands of the capitalist economy and the wider social good. Inevitably, careers education in a liberal society is likely to be cognisant of the labour market. However, commitment to promoting significant autonomy within a liberal education should enable children to negotiate the free market in a way that can enable them to develop their individual character. Although there is no reason to suppose that the demands of capitalism are inevitable or immutable, it seems fair to suggest that a liberal education should steer children towards the most appropriate employment opportunities.

To help children become significantly autonomous, schools can direct them towards choosing a career which can enable them to develop their individual character. This highlights that the right to be able to be significantly autonomous exists in tension with *and* alongside many of the demands of the capitalist economic system. Although in a market economy the right to an education for significant autonomy would not necessarily establish absolute economic equality, the equal opportunity to develop significant autonomy implies recognising a need to promote the ability to engage (critically) with market society. This, in essence, is the purpose of careers guidance (and training in life-management skills) within a liberal education. An education for significant autonomy can stress that the choosing of a career is not *necessarily* dictated by the workings of the free market (though it may be informed by these). Careers education is thus an entitlement to be given the best possible chance of being significantly autonomous within what is often an unfair economic system. Radical socialists or liberals might question why pupils should be prepared for such an unequal society. But being

fitted in some way for opportunities in the workplace may be viewed as a primary expectation of pupils and parents as citizens in a liberal society.[425]

An education for significant autonomy presumes that each pupil's learning should be moulded (as much as possible) to their own requirements for flourishing. Nevertheless, the demands of the labour market will also influence the development of these requirements to some degree. An education for significant autonomy would ensure that occupational demand does not wholly determine the moral requirements of education in a liberal society. Promotion of a liberal character-ethics in schools can thus contain some of the contradictory impulses of the free market and avoid the charge of being socialisation into the world of work.

Facilitation of career choices within education implies a strong commitment to individual character. Indeed, the resolution of the tensions between the educational requirements of significant autonomy and the free market are ultimately found in the ethics of individual character. Nevertheless, the requirements of the labour market would not be regarded as intrinsically valuable by perfectionist liberals. How intrinsically valuable educational activities can promote the virtues of individual character is outlined next.

ii)   Intrinsically valuable activities

Training in life-management skills and careers education provide very clear examples of how a liberal state can facilitate the development of individual character. They enable children to develop their individual character within their working lives, becoming significantly autonomous there in a way that is consistent with their own individual traits.

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[425] Marshall wrote that, 'one, at least, of the values the pupil expects to get from it [education] is a qualification for employment at an appropriate level.' ibid., p.37.

However, for perfectionist liberals, children should above all have the opportunity to develop individual character-traits which are of value extrinsic to the labour market because the development of individual character is itself intrinsically valuable. By contrast, anti-perfectionists and impartialists are unable to adequately account for the value and purpose of academic disciplines, such as mathematics or history as they are unwilling (in principle) to commit to a liberal conception of the good life. An education for significant autonomy will presume that opportunities exist within education to develop specific cultural and intellectual virtues of individual character, such as artistic or intellectual ability. It will also include opportunities to pursue sporting and other leisure pursuits and hobbies. Educational presuppositions associated with promoting the virtues of individual character and their role in the curriculum are explored below.

Promoting virtues of individual character

Foucault argued that human beings constitute their individual character through a variety of processes of 'self-work'.[426] Academic disciplines can therefore play a vital role in promoting virtues of individual character that are the outward manifestation of 'self-work'. Indeed, in the context of a mass society only an established education system is likely to provide agents with the cultural resources from (or against) which they can draw, to discipline and develop their individual character. This will be achieved by exhibiting generic social and moral virtues of individual character, and the generic and specific cultural and intellectual virtues of individual character.

The social and moral virtues of individual character are primarily those which enable a distinctive individual character to be developed within appropriate settings. This will entail learning and acting upon acceptable interpretations of achievement and

appreciation within different academic disciplines. The generic social and moral virtues of individual character are those associated with competence and integrity. These virtues occur within the workplace as professionalism; in social and charitable activities as efficacy or utility; in cultural, leisure pursuits and hobbies as proficiency or appreciation; and in personal relationships as surety. In a liberal education, these generic social and moral virtues of individual character can be promoted throughout the curricular programme and within a wide range of academic disciplines. Academic opportunities would also provide a suitable environment for developing cultural and intellectual virtues of individual character. These virtues of individual character relate to how successfully agents shape the distinctiveness of their character and how this makes a contribution to their flourishing. And, as we have seen, cultural and intellectual virtues are both generic and specific. To promote significant autonomy, children should be given a broad range of opportunities to learn certain key generic and specific cultural and intellectual virtues across different practices and within those practices.

Generic cultural and intellectual virtues are those qualities which pertain to individual achievement (such as, creativity, mastery and refinement) and appreciation of individual achievement (such as, discernment and taste). These virtues of good character can creatively sustain and develop an agent's distinctive character and may be best learnt by being actively exercised. A suitable learning environment would thus provide an excellent framework for the autonomous development of certain generic cultural and intellectual virtues to be stimulated. Nevertheless, within different disciplines it would be necessary to pursue more highly structured promotion of specific cultural and intellectual virtues because instruction is central to their initial development. An education for

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[426] M.Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 3: The Care of the Self.*

significant autonomy thus has a vital role to play in nurturing the potential of children for making very distinctive contributions to different social practices.

To learn both generic and specific virtues of individual character, children can receive grounding in the most valued activities and practices in liberal society. A liberal curriculum including the Arts, humanities and sciences can therefore promote their ability to live well autonomously.

Arts, humanities and sciences

The perfectionist liberal policy-making principles enjoin that it is legitimate to promote intrinsically valuable activities within liberal societies. As a consequence of its duty to secure the right to be able to be significantly autonomous, the state is therefore justified in promoting those activities which can be deemed most valuable to agents in liberal societies. An education for significant autonomy, fully informed by an ethics of individual character, could establish that academic disciplines and recreation activities can provide agents with opportunities to manifest generic and specific virtues that will enable them to give distinctive valuable shape to their individual character across a lifetime.

The Arts and humanities can stimulate pupils' imagination, providing a creative outlet for them to develop very particular virtues of individual character. Music, art, literature, history and other relevant subjects can develop the aesthetic sensitivity and sensibilities of pupils, deepening their emotional susceptibilities and their range of experiences. And they offer opportunities for children to find personal fulfilment by participating or excelling in activities which they appreciate or enjoy. In this regard, they are precursors to those practices outwith the labour market in which agents will have the opportunity to manifest generic and specific virtues of individual character. Indeed,

autonomy would be much diminished if these opportunities did not exist or if children were not given an equal opportunity to display the virtues inherent in their pursuit.

A wide range of academic disciplines can stimulate the imagination of pupils and facilitate generic and specific virtues through which they can develop their individual character. The Arts can develop pupils' aesthetic capabilities by teaching them to express themselves creatively and to appreciate the creative expressions of others. Schools can also play an important role in encouraging art and music by having concerts, competitions, art displays, assemblies and so on. Such activities also improve pupils' access to different modes of communication, whether through performance or through reflection and criticism.[427] Arts syllabi would seek to promote a wide range of diverse valuable experiences. Hence, the relevance of the Arts springs from the promotion of certain liberal virtues and from the diverse subject matter that is communicated or appreciated. This latter consideration is also a key feature of teaching humanities in schools, especially in the teaching of literature.

The study of literature is often regarded as an outstanding opportunity to systematically consider different moral and aesthetic dimensions of leading a good or fulfilling life. In particular, it can play a central role in shaping the moral vocabulary available to students. A liberal education for significant autonomy would thus place great value on the development of 'narrative imagination' to promote virtues associated with empathic understanding, responsible judgement and imaginative interpretation and development of meanings.[428] These virtues are central to the development of both moral and individual character. Only where a liberal education seeks to influence the imagination, can democratic citizenship cultivate 'a sympathetic responsiveness to

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[427] F.Smith, 'The Contribution of the Arts to Values Education and Citizenship', in R.Bailey ed., *Teaching Values and Citizenship Across the Curriculum*, p.34.

another's needs' that 'understands the way circumstances shape those needs, while respecting separateness and privacy.'[429] The humanities are therefore a highly edifying means to promote liberal values because they are based on the freedom to re-describe what is humiliating or cruel to human beings.[430] Studying literature shapes the imagination of pupils, enabling them to develop respect for the individual character of their fellows, as well as enabling them to develop their own individual character.

The Arts and humanities can stimulate both the imagination and the distinctive sympathies and tastes of individual agents. The latter of these effects is central to the notion that an education for significant autonomy comprises more than simply passing examinations or becoming employable, and is indicative of the inability of anti-perfectionists to provide a cogent defence of the intrinsic value of education. Perfectionist liberals openly acknowledge the idea that some activities and practices have more intrinsic value than others do in a liberal society, and evince awareness that there are also many different practices which are, or which could become, valued in a liberal society. Hence, learning specific cultural and intellectual virtues should have the effect of encouraging agents to be committed to diverse ways of configuring their individual character. Nevertheless, the Arts and humanities do not capture the entire range of academic disciplines which can play a role in promoting diverse configurations of individual character.

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[428] M.Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity*. L.Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*, London, Mercury Books, 1966.

[429] ibid., p.90. However, Nancy Fraser asks 'is it really the case that societies which produce the best literature are also the most egalitarian?'. N.Fraser, 'Solidarity or Singularity? Richard Rorty between Romanticism and Technocracy', in A.R.Malachowski ed., *Reading Rorty: Critical Responses to Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (and Beyond)*, p.308.

[430] Nonetheless, as Michael Fischer notes, 'though not scientists, literary critics speak a more stable vocabulary and heed firmer rules than Rorty supposes'. M.Fischer, 'Redefining Philosophy as Literature: Richard Rorty's 'Defence' of Literary Culture', in ibid., p.237.

Mathematics and science are generally held to be of critical social and academic value in a liberal education. Basic numeracy and mathematical skills are regarded as essential for children to be able to function effectively in later life. Moreover, the technological and scientific practices in a liberal society presume a range of different types of technical literacy. Perhaps surprisingly, mathematics can also be seen as both an essential preparation for the background conditions of being able to live well and a means for disciplining the imagination. The spirit of enquiry and the intellectual virtues (such as thoroughness and experimentation) which are inherent in mathematics and science can also guide the development of individual character. Disciplined mathematical and scientific thinking can be a useful model for decoding certain types of information (especially statistics), but are also central to the general business of interpreting life and one's own circumstances. Indeed, mathematical and scientific skills abstractly reflect much of the general nature of problem solving. Managers, strategists, technicians, craftspeople and writers all require the capacity to be able to create and adapt systems or products which have some degree of coherence and which can be susceptible to adjustment, repair or improvement.

An education for significant autonomy would stress the facility of mathematics and science in providing children with an effective means of orientating themselves within the natural and social worlds. Mathematical and scientific skills can also contribute to life-management. For instance, by providing the knowledge required to understand the consequences of certain types of phenomena or actions, such as boiling water, driving a motor car or surfing the internet. However, this does not mean that mathematical skills or scientific understanding are simply instrumental requirements for flourishing in a liberal society. The strength of science, in particular, in stimulating the imagination of pupils and enabling them to develop virtues of individual character lies in the generic

skills inherent in its method, particularly, the intellectual virtues of judgement and creativity.[431] In addition, study of pure mathematics can convey the idea that valuable knowledge is not necessarily tied to the labour market. The school curriculum can also provide opportunities for individual character to flourish in ways that are not associated with academic subject matter.

The hidden curriculum revisited

As we saw earlier, sport and physical education can give pupils opportunities to participate in activities which may contribute to the development of their character. These are activities that they may later engage in as members of a liberal society. Schools should therefore be equipped to provide some level of training, education and guidance for all children to have an opportunity to participate in sports which they may later choose to pursue. This does not mean that all sports could receive equal attention within schools. Liberal governments will coordinate broad strategic decisions about the sporting priorities within schools. This would not rule out alternative sports or entail encouraging only those which are financially lucrative. Democratic curriculum decisions could take place in schools, local communities and councils about the ethical value of each sport.

The place of sporting activities in schools is also mirrored by the scope which schools have for co-ordinating a wide range of other leisure activities, such as camping, kite-making, horse-riding and so on. These activities would constitute a varied 'hidden curriculum' within an education for significant autonomy, by enabling pupils to posit distinct configurations of individual character. In fact, there is no reason why these activities need be regarded as a 'hidden' purpose of schooling. While leisure pursuits

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[431] G.Nicholls, 'Citizenship: The Case of Science', in R.Bailey ed., *Teaching Values and Citizenship Across the Curriculum*, pp.128-9.

would play a subsidiary role in comparison with academic disciplines and sport, they can provide a valuable means for filling in the finer details of the development of individual character. They may also be less tied to the competitive striving for achievement that is often inherent in other aspects of the curriculum, offering wider opportunities for pupils to develop their own interests.

Perfectionist liberals are unlikely to suggest that play and hobbies constitute activities which are analogous in intrinsic value to arts, humanities, mathematics and science. Nor do they necessarily embody the same sort of spirit of seriousness inherent in playing sport. Developing a distinctive character is a rigorous and determined activity.[432] Nevertheless, perfectionist liberals committed to significant autonomy would not draw an impermeable distinction between the contribution made to the development of character by the 'forms of knowledge' and that of other potentially valuable activities.[433] The school curriculum can therefore co-ordinate a wide variety of liberal normative commitments, not least the notion that 'play' itself can be an important feature of developing individual character.

The priority of moral and political education

The role of schools in promoting the development of individual character is clearly critical, but will nevertheless remain secondary to their role in promoting the development of moral character. Moral character is prior to individual character in a liberal character-ethics, consequently it is the key preoccupation of an education for significant autonomy. In particular, a liberal education should concentrate great attention on promoting the liberal political virtues because participation in politics and democratic

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[432] See D.Cooper, *Authenticity and Learning: Nietzsche's Educational Philosophy.*
[433] P.H.Hirst and R.S.Peters, *The Logic of Education*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970.

decision-making form such a crucial part of significant autonomy in a liberal society. Individual flourishing is ultimately dependent on the disposition of agents to be responsibly engaged with decision-making which has implications for living well. The recent introduction of a scheme of political education in English state schools provides an especially interesting case study for perfectionist liberals committed to the critical relationship between character, politics and education. This scheme and the current politics and philosophy of education and citizenship in the UK are described and evaluated in the final chapter of the thesis.

Chapter 6: Political Education in England

A programme of political education has now been introduced as a statutory foundation subject on the National Curriculum for secondary school pupils in England. Pupils aged 11-16 follow a *Citizenship* curriculum with statutory requirements prescribing study of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. This initiative has tremendous significance for the development of state education in the UK and major implications for political study and discourse. Not only are pupils expected to learn a range of political virtues, but political parties, scientists and theorists in the UK will be able to closely map the relationship between education, politics and democracy. The importance of political education for the development of moral character leads perfectionist liberals to ask two pivotal questions about *Citizenship* in English schools. First, can *Citizenship* promote the liberal political virtues found within a liberal character-ethics? Second, will the learning environment in which it is delivered effectively model responsible political engagement? The chapter will begin by discussing the historical context and development of political education in England. The curriculum orders will then be described before some relevant issues surrounding the delivery of *Citizenship* are outlined. The liberal character-ethics explicated in this thesis is then used to interrogate the principles and teaching of *Citizenship*.

1.   The Evolution of Political Education in England

The introduction of the statutory *Citizenship* orders for English secondary schools is the result of three decades of campaigning by educationalists, political theorists and politicians.[434] Its ascent up the political agenda reflected a number of factors inherent in

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[434] I.Davies, 'What has Happened in the Teaching of Politics in Schools in England in the Last Three Decades, and Why?'.

the UK's political culture and education system. The decline of Empire, the rise of political radicalism and the need to respond to the growing civic deficit hastened agreement about the need for a programme of political education. Despite the complex politics of political education in schools, the establishment of the National Curriculum enabled the Labour government to push through statutory provision of *Citizenship*. This section explains and assesses the nature of the crucial influences on the evolution of political education in England, with a view to later assessing its potential impact on character-development.

i) The politics of post-war education

The imperialist character education delivered in British schools before the Second World War was revised and rethought following its cessation as Britain fell from global political and economic pre-eminence. Social upheavals and political change hastened this impulse during the 1960s and 1970s, generating a new kind of debate about the role of politics in education. Many political observers and parties began to view schools as the most appropriate focus for coordinating and implementing national responses to economic and social change such as the globalised economy and increasing ethnic diversity. As a result, the politics of post-war education has inevitably influenced the emphasis given to political education within British state schools.

Patriotism and national character

Secondary schools were introduced in Britain in 1902 to further the process of socialisation begun with the establishment of primary schools in 1871.[435] At the time, schools were the main vehicles for transmitting the literacy and numeracy upon which

national economic and military mobilisation depended, becoming a focal point for states to forge the character of their citizens in particular ways. Indeed, Victorian politics was coloured by a concern with the formation of character.[436] In Britain, an education suitable for forging imperial character and preparing elite leaders of the Empire had been developed in privately-owned Public schools, with the same model of imperial character education later adopted in state schools. Although the close of the British Empire caused policy-makers to distance themselves from some aspects of this imperialist education, the belief that patriotic character was the central aim of education remained intact.[437]

Imperial character education was reflected in curricular pronouncements made in the 1944 Education Act which stressed 'the role of the classics' and dismissed 'such subjects as international relations, economic and political structures, local and central government, and the history and economic resources of other countries'.[438] Following the war, politics, citizenship and government did not feature on the educational agenda for different reasons. The war had been won and the Labour government had begun implementing a wide-range of radical social reforms which circumvented political disquiet in British society. In particular, the 1944 Education Act had established that secondary schooling should be provided according to 'age, ability and aptitude' rather than means.[439] Nevertheless, post-war education maintained the pre-war focus on the virtues of British national character. Indeed, these virtues were viewed by many educational policy-makers as providing the backbone of victory in 1945. The continued

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[435] E.Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, pp.149-50, 178.
[436] S.Collini, 'The Idea of 'Character' in Victorian Political Thought'.
[437] Before the Second World War some observers had noted the role that teaching the virtues of democratic citizenship could play in a state education, but the conventional imperial character education was not substantially problematised until the war ended. For example, W.E.Forster, *The Citizen Reader*, London, Cassell and Co. ltd, 1926 emphasised that 'boys and girls in our Elementary Schools' should learn 'their rights, duties and privileges as British Citizens'. pp.12-37.
[438] C.Barnett, *The Verdict of Peace*, p.452.
[439] W.O.Lester-Smith, *Education: An Introductory Survey*, pp.102-4.

influence of patriotism on post-war British education therefore led schools to stress economic and communal virtues associated with a flourishing nation state (especially those associated with industrial and commercial occupations) rather than the political virtues inherent in a liberal democracy.[440]

'Politics' was regarded as a dangerous ideological minefield for policy-makers in post-war Britain, especially within schools, where 'prescribing the curriculum was something that fascists did and democrats did not.'[441] Politicians across the political spectrum felt that quiet maintenance of the social status quo combined with radical post-war welfare reforms would safeguard the political culture and parliamentary democracy of the UK. One prominent British academic of the time noted that the best regulated democracies were those in which the majority of citizens were apathetic about politics, leaving government to a small class of professionals.[442] And, by remaining 'prisoners of Britain's recent past as a great imperial and industrial power', Britain's politicians and bureaucrats exacerbated this disdain for politics and democracy.[443]

The profound self-satisfaction of the political elite was also evident in Britain's reluctance to retire gracefully from the world stage. Tensions between the need to invest in rebuilding Britain and the cost of gradually relinquishing global dominance impacted heavily on the development of new educational initiatives.[444] This was particularly so for academic subjects which might contain controversial material. Political education may have been delivered to 'elite students' in private schools, but the 'civics' tutorials given in state secondary schools provided only a basic grounding in patriotism.[445] State-led

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[440] ibid., pp.215-8.

[441] M.Barber ed., *The National Curriculum: A Study in Policy*, Keele University Press, 1996, p.16.

[442] W.H.Morris-Jones, 'In Defence of Apathy', *Political Studies*, 1954.

[443] C.Barnett, *The Verdict of Peace*, xvi.

[444] ibid., p.460.

[445] I.Davies, 'What has Happened in the Teaching of Politics in Schools in England in the Last Three Decades, and Why?', p.126.

programmes of training for citizenship were thought fit only for mature students within 'the wider sphere of adult education'.[446] What political education there was in British state schools was therefore treated 'in a diffuse and uncoordinated way in various forms of curriculum structure, pedagogic strategy and school organisation'.[447] However, marginalisation of political subject matter within British schools was transformed by the social change sweeping through Western democracies during the 1960s.

The rise of 'issues-politics'

The expansion of secondary education and the growth of a politically active younger generation during the 1960s made politics and ideology more appealing and accessible to teachers, university students and school pupils. This generated a groundswell of greater political awareness and debate that evolved throughout the 1970s, giving rise to New Social Movements and student radicalism in Universities. In turn, these developments were paralleled by the efforts of many educationalists and political theorists to encourage explicit teaching of political issues within secondary schools.[448] A movement which was bolstered when the voting age was lowered to 18 in 1970, prompting calls for sixth-formers to receive an education that enabled them to register a properly considered vote.[449]

The Department of Education and Skills 1980 publication *A Framework for the School Curriculum* reflected the influence of growing support for political education during the 1970s, stating that Personal and Social Education in schools should include a

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[446] *Educational Reconstruction*, Cmd.6458, HMSO, 1943, quoted in W.O.Lester-Smith, *Education: An Introductory Survey*, p.20.

[447] T.H.McLaughlin, 'Citizenship Education in England: The Crick Report and Beyond', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, vol.34, no.4, 2000, p.544.

[448] Bernard Crick recent Chair of the Citizenship Advisory Group was instrumental in driving these developments from the early 1970s, in particular, through the Political Studies Association.

political dimension that was 'issue focused'. This should promote skills of participation as well as appropriate values and attitudes.[450] Although this publication did little to create a groundswell for a statutory political element within the curriculum, teachers' pressure groups began to develop subjects centring on such politically charged issues as 'Peace Studies', 'Women's Studies' and 'Environmental Awareness'. These 'adjectival' subjects did not 'constitute a coherent and unified programme, other than in their commitment to social justice' and were often hostile to the development of a more general political education. Despite support from many teachers and a degree of coordinated curriculum development the radicalism of 'adjectival educations' was also their weakness, with their various protagonists unable to reach agreement on an overarching purpose. Policymakers also shied away from embracing a political education which could alienate pupils by focusing on 'trendy' social and political issues.[451] Such fears were fuelled by the portrayal of many 'loony-left' councils in the popular media of the time. Nevertheless, as the 1980s progressed many observers came to recognise that political education could be an effective policy instrument for governments seeking to deliver solutions to social problems.

Education for active citizenship

The impact of political radicalism on the development of political education in England was overshadowed in the 1980s by emerging concerns about a 'civic deficit' in Western societies. As we have seen, declining electoral turnout and the growth of social disaffection suggested that support for civic culture and democratic political institutions were deteriorating. The sense of crisis that the civic deficit has spurred generated support

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[449] I.Davies, 'What has Happened in the Teaching of Politics in Schools in England in the Last Three Decades, and Why?', pp.126-7.
[450] ibid., p.128.

for some form of citizenship-orientated education in schools across the political spectrum. Nevertheless, the proposals for citizenship education that emerged from this period were cashed out in very different philosophical terms. Some proponents viewed it as a panacea to failing public services and respect for authority, while some viewed it as an integral feature of the good life in liberal democracies, with others regarding it as necessary to generate congruence between increasingly diverse social groups.[452] These disparate proposals developed rival interpretations of the active citizenship deemed necessary to overcome the 'civic deficit'. As we have noted, these interpretations have been mainly influenced by two rival schools of thought: civic-individualism and civic-republicanism, but they have also been affected by supporters of civic-pluralism. Debate between these different groups is explored in further depth here to philosophy of political education in England.

Civic-individualist notions about active citizenship have been influenced by a range of managerialist assumptions relating to consumerism in the public sector. These assumptions and ideals have drawn on the work of many post-war political theorists, economists and sociologists who argued that government was safest in the hands of efficient administrators, with citizenship properly exercised only in the election of competing political parties or the affirmation of certain policy objectives.[453] In British politics, civic-individualism became especially evident in the authoritarian and neo-liberal prescriptions of the New Right, particularly the Citizen's Charter in 1991. In effect, the Charter codified a civic-individualist ideal of citizenship by indicating that citizens were primarily constituted by their status as taxpaying customers of government services.

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[451] ibid., pp.128-30.
[452] N.Rosenblum, 'Democratic Character and Community: The Logic of Congruence'.
[453] A.Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, New York, Harper&Row, 1957; J.Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, New York, Harper&Row, 1962.

Civic individualists believe that active citizens should be self-reliant, respectful agents able to manifest skills associated with informed consumption of public services and civic volunteering. They promote a kind of citizenship, 'in which, for example, a citizen is defined as the kind of person who secures a pension for him or herself'.[454] Political education should therefore focus on ensuring that pupils have the skills to become self-disciplined informed consumers respectful of the need for public authority. Moreover, civic-individualists promote volunteering and charity work as a substitute for state-provision of certain welfare services. Hence, a civic-individualist approach to education for active citizenship in English schools could elicit 'the potential for young people's idealism to be exploited in a non-academic, undifferentiated altruism.' Indeed, this negative association of education for active citizenship with the 'societal *status quo*' has been a common criticism of political education in English schools in the past.[455] Nevertheless, civic-individualist attitudes towards citizenship and education have been challenged by the revival of civic-republican ideas.

Contemporary civic-republican theorists argue (as did classical republicans) that participation in political deliberations is a critical presupposition of the freedom from domination which underpins liberty in a civilised state.[456] To encourage such active citizenship in modern societies civic-republicans argue that citizens must be given the opportunities and capacity to participate in democratic decision-making. The promotion of active citizenship therefore has wider ethical, social and political purposes than the organisational performance of public institutions or civic volunteering. In particular, it can have a profound effect on the moral character of citizens by enabling them to be

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[454] I.Davies, 'What has Happened in the Teaching of Politics in Schools in England in the Last Three Decades, and Why?', p.131.

[455] ibid., pp.134, 131. Guidance on citizenship education provided by the government during the 1980s was generally 'narrowly and negatively associated with the recommendation for more voluntary action by young people'. idem.

significantly autonomous in the political sphere. To that end, civic-republicans seek to develop policies to promote the development of political virtues at the heart of political engagement, including certain types of community participation strategy, such as Citizens' Juries, and programmes of civic or political education.

As we saw in Chapter Five, civic-republicanism is consistent with an ideal liberal political education. And civic-republicans agree with perfectionist liberals that equal opportunity for participation in democratic decision-making is necessary to promote responsible political engagement and to address the civic deficit. They view the civic-individualist interpretation of active citizenship as likely to increase social disaffection and polarisation, particularly given the association of consumerism with decreased local accountability.[457] Participation in local and national democratic political processes presupposes that school pupils have the opportunity to learn both the deliberative and participative political virtues. However, some observers have argued that the promotion of a civic-republican ideal of citizenship could reinforce the marginalisation of certain underrepresented, excluded or disaffected social groups because it conceptualises the public interest and the common good as a single homogenous whole. These 'civic-pluralists' argue that recognition of the diversity within contemporary Western societies means that there is a multitude of publics relevant to political decision-making processes[458] and that this should be fully acknowledged in government policy-making. In particular, 'a policy of active cultural pluralism' in schools is believed to be 'essential if minority groups are not to feel alienated from society'.[459]

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[456] P.Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, Oxford University Press, 1999.
[457] S.Ranson, 'Towards a Political Theory of Public Accountability in Education', *Local Government Studies*, vol.12, no.3, 1986.
[458] M.Barnes *et al*, 'Constituting 'The Public' in Public Participation', *Public Administration*, vol.81, no.2, 2003, pp.379-99.
[459] A.Baumeister, 'Cultural Diversity and Education: the Dilemma of Political Stability', *Political Studies*, vol.46, 1998, p.925.

Drawing on theories of the 'politics of difference',[460] civic-pluralists believe political education should focus on encouraging the virtues necessary to promote congruence between the plurality of groups within society. Active citizenship is therefore viewed by civic-pluralists as a process of actively demonstrating sensitivity to difference. This can occur where citizens participate on an equal footing in the political processes and can thus be strengthened through the implementation of a wide range of positive discrimination policies. A civic pluralist ideal of active citizenship therefore builds on the participatory virtues inherent in civic-republicanism. Consequently, many civic-republicans question what civic-pluralism can add to their reflections on politics and citizenship, highlighting that 'the politics of difference relies on an implicit appeal to autonomy and solidarity', but 'subverts itself by stressing difference and particularity rather than the sense of common ground... that fosters solidarity'.[461]

White and Hunt have contended that a pluralist ideal of citizenship can confuse the public realm with 'other people' as agents are drawn towards 'the regressive minimalism of identity politics of race, ethnicity and gender.'[462] These 'reductionist forms of identification' paradoxically restrict public freedom of political choice, while enhancing public freedom of expression, as we are forced to choose ever more restrictive and narrow political identities. Collective responsible political engagement may therefore become increasingly dispersed as the 'multiplicity of differentiated relations between self and others, individuals and institutions' necessitates greater resources and capacities 'for constructing meaningful and effective linkages between diverse projects'.[463]

Focusing on difference inevitably deepens the fragmentation and categorisation of available political identities. The rise of cultural diversity and the subsequent

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[460] In particular, I.M.Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton University Press, 1990.
[461] R.Dagger, *Civic Virtues*, p.180.
[462] M.White and A.Hunt, 'Citizenship: Care of the Self, Character and Personality', p.106.

'proliferation of lifestyles' has thus left many observers concerned that identity politics simply promotes 'the self-seeking individual portrayed in neo-liberal economic theory'.[464] Richard Rorty highlights that 'the moral identity' of citizens in a liberal society is 'constituted in large part, though obviously not exclusively, by his or her sense of participation in a democratic society.' Hence 'identity' and 'difference' are emphatically *not* 'concepts which can be made relevant to political deliberation.' Liberal moral and political theory should encourage 'people to have a self-image in which their real or imagined citizenship in a democratic republic is central.'[465] This sense of the public good could become ever more marginalised 'in a society that contains large numbers of people who feel no sense of empathy with their fellow citizens and do not have any identification with their lot'.[466] Thus perfectionist liberals would affirm that civic-republican aspirations for public-spiritedness are more likely to provide suitable content for an attractive programme of political education.

Each of the notions of active citizenship outlined above, appeals to liberal aspirations for significant autonomy. The liberal political education explicated in the previous chapter represents a civic-republican approach to political education because of its emphasis on responsible individual and collective *political* engagement. Civic-individualism sits uneasily with the right to be able to be significantly autonomous in the political sphere. Furthermore, its conception of the skills associated with active citizenship excludes political virtues associated with responsible political engagement. Civic-pluralism recognizes the different political interests of different social groups, but fails to acknowledge the importance of the public good much beyond this. Although it is

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[463] ibid., p.108.

[464] A.Giddens, *The Third Way*, p.35.

[465] R.Rorty, 'Globalisation, the Politics of Identity and Social Hope', in R.Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1999, pp.234, 237-9.

[466] B.Barry, *Culture and Equality*, Cambridge, Polity, 2001, p.79.

a worthy ideal in contemporary liberal democracies, it is one whose realisation is dependent on virtues of public-spiritedness within a civic-republican framework. These alternative approaches to active citizenship thus have had varying implications for how political education in England has been conceptualised and implemented. The impact of these different conceptions of citizenship on the current programme of political education in England will be examined in more depth later in the chapter.

Different theoretical views of citizenship have consistently been reflected in varying proposals for political education. These have also been greatly influenced by the politics of post-war education in the UK and the politics of political education in England itself, which has played a formative role in guiding the implementation of *Citizenship*.

ii)   The politics of political education

The responses of government to social and political change have impacted on the development of political education in England. Throughout its evolutionary period there have been two substantial political issues associated with the introduction of political education in the secondary school curriculum. The first of these issues is the 'anti-political' culture of the UK. The second is the professional culture and power of teachers. Assessing the influence of these issues within the English politics of political education can provide an indication of the types of practical concerns which surround programmes of political education.

The British 'anti-political' culture

British society is thought by many observers to be especially hostile towards political ideas and ideologies. Elizabeth Frazer has highlighted four key aspects of the anti-political culture in Britain that have undermined the growth of wide support for political

education in schools: (i) citizenship is a 'foreign concept' to many UK citizens who have understood themselves to be subjects of the crown; (ii) it is also a concept associated with a deferential class identity; (iii) there are no historical narratives or supporting texts for citizenship in the UK (unlike, for instance, the Declaration of Independence in the USA or the Declaration of the Rights of Man in France); (iv) there is general antipathy to 'politics' and politicians amongst British citizens, particularly with the abrasive adversarial political system and its polarisation around 'party-politics'.[467] Moreover, much influential (conservative) British political thought has treated politics with great suspicion. As a recent publication made clear, there is a widespread perception in England that political ideas are the preserve of Europeans, while the 'English' focus on practical solutions to political problems.[468] This 'anti-political' attitude has influenced debates about the desirability and need for political education. But does this mean that it can not and should not be introduced in the UK?

Suspicion of political ideas and their practitioners in Britain may be seen as both a symptom and a further contributor to the civic deficit. Indeed, mistrust of democratic politics and politicians may have deepened under the 'spin culture' of Tony Blair's Labour administration.[469] Nevertheless, none of the adverse cultural attributes associated with an often anti-political citizenry provides a justification for *not* teaching politics and citizenship in secondary schools. In fact, as Frazer argues, these factors and the conflictual nature of public institutions and decisions in the UK make an understanding of politics and the democratic process essential for British citizens.[470] Moreover, the

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[467] E.Frazer, 'Citizenship Education: Anti-Political Culture and Political Education in Britain', *Political Studies*, Vol.48, 2000, p.96. This raises the further possibility that the civic deficit is simply a natural feature of British political culture, rather than a new phenomenon.

[468] J.Paxman, *The English: A Portrait of a People*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1999.

[469] N.Jones, *The Control Freaks: How New Labour Gets its Own Way*, London, Politico's, 2001.

[470] E.Frazer, 'Citizenship Education: Anti-Political Culture and Political Education in Britain', pp.96-100.

political history of modern Britain is replete with examples of political activism on the part of citizens, and with a flourishing public discourse on political issues. Learning about wider aspects of the British political culture, such as the media demonisation of politics and politicians, should not be proscribed simply because it might involve a commitment to certain political virtues. The duties associated with responsible political engagement imply that however hostile to politics each citizen bears some responsibility for the development of their political culture and society. This enjoins an education which is committed to creating a culture conducive to the development and exercise of the liberal deliberative and participative political virtues. The nurturing of this culture within English schools may require a significant shift in existing political attitudes. To accomplish this, a programme of political education can only be implemented with the support of the teaching profession.

Teachers' autonomy

The professional autonomy of teachers in the UK has traditionally been regarded by policy-makers as an obstacle to the introduction of new curricular initiatives. Prior to the Second World War the statutory requirements placed on British state schools were unstructured and broad in their intent. Basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills were taught in elementary schools, while in secondary schools, teachers and schools were largely free to determine the content of the curriculum. Indeed, national examinations and qualifications for secondary pupils were developed only during the post-war period.[471] Hence, teachers had a considerable degree of autonomy in their professional lives.

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[471] M.Barber ed., *The National Curriculum: A study in policy*, p.15.

The professional autonomy of teachers had been guaranteed in the 1920s to ensure that they would not become involved in the increasingly strident Labour movement. Teachers on the front-line were therefore directly 'incorporated to some extent as partners in the policy process', with 'control over the curriculum' largely their responsibility.[472] Although the influence over their own working practice was central to teachers' professional identity, it was then persistently questioned by national governments seeking to re-establish greater control over education. The first serious threat to teachers' professional autonomy emerged at the end of the Second World War when the 1944 Education Act gave central government extensive powers to direct and control local authorities.[473] Despite this extension of central control, the 'influence and respectability' that had detached teachers from the labour movement sustained the professional status quo. As a result, the shape of the secondary school curriculum in England remained largely in the hands of headmasters and individual teachers. This meant that the curriculum sometimes developed in a haphazard nature, with new recommendations debated only at professional conferences. However, this local autonomy was undermined again when the Schools Council (a partnership between teachers, local and central government) was inaugurated during the 1960s to coordinate curriculum innovations. Central government proposals for a national curriculum were invariably rejected by the Council,[474] but its establishment represented the first step in a process towards standardising the curriculum. Perfectionist liberals would not claim that a rigidly standardised curriculum was integral to an education for significant autonomy, recognising that without suitable liberal provisos it could embody an illiberal conception of the good life. They would also be concerned about excessively constricting the

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[472] ibid, p.16.
[473] W.O.Lester-Smith, *Education: An Introductory Survey*, pp.136-7.
[474] M.Barber ed., *The National Curriculum: A Study in Policy*, p.18

autonomy of teachers to develop their own approaches to promoting liberal virtues within classrooms. However, the right to be able to be significantly autonomous is one which generates an entitlement for every child to be provided with a political education. And, the advent of the national curriculum enabled supporters of political education to gain a strong foothold in educational policy debates.

iii) Establishing an agenda

During the 1980s and 1990s the prospects for political education in British schools changed dramatically. Rising concern about the civic deficit and the campaigning of political education enthusiasts caused policy-makers in government to re-think the need for some form of political education in the school curriculum.[475] Two key institutional developments finally led to the statutory provision of political education in England: the establishment of the National Curriculum in 1990 and the establishment of the Citizenship Advisory group in 1997.

The National Curriculum

Teachers in English schools continued to have considerable discretion over the curriculum even after the establishment of the Schools Council. However, the assault on their professional autonomy continued as the economic crises of the 1970s led politicians to scrutinise the funding and delivery of education more carefully. In particular, the disparate nature of curriculum requirements in different schools was seriously questioned - most famously in James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech. Closer examination of the inputs and outcomes within education led to sustained reappraisal of the need for

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[475] I. Davies, 'What has Happened in the Teaching of Politics in Schools in England in the Last Three Decades, and Why?'; T.H.McLaughlin, 'Citizenship Education in England: The Crick Report and Beyond'.

national curricular prescriptions. This had very important implications for supporters of political education: as the drive to circumscribe local autonomy and standardise the curriculum became more marked, so the possibility of the place of a national programme of political education within it became more attainable. A possibility made emphatically more likely by the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1990.

The National Curriculum emerged from policy recommendations for the standardisation of curricular requirements across the England and Wales. Many educationalists argued that it sanctioned an outdated authoritarian view of schooling which marked a return to conventional character education.[476] And, although they were consulted throughout its development, teachers remained concerned about the further threat its imposition posed to their professional autonomy.[477] But in spite of this initial unpopularity amongst teachers, it is nevertheless clear that some form of standardisation can make schools more responsive to (liberal or illiberal) national priorities. The National Curriculum therefore provided a broad framework within which educationalists could debate and propose reforms to schooling, making a national programme of political education manageable in a way not previously thought possible.

The National Curriculum Council set up a Commission for Citizenship in 1990 to assess the prospects for a statutory programme of political education. The resulting policy recommendations stressed that without statutory requirements political education would continue to lack the status of other core and foundation subjects.[478] Nevertheless, the Council chose only to promote introduce politics in schools as a non-statutory cross-curricular theme, rendering it largely impotent within secondary schools. This situation

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[476] S.Ball, 'Education, Majorism and the Curriculum of the Dead', pp.195-214. AND
[477] Throughout the early stages of its implementation the National Curriculum was subject to tremendous pressures, culminating in the test boycott in 1993 and the Dearing Review in the same year.

was decisively altered when the Labour government established the Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools in 1997.

The Citizenship Advisory Group

The Citizenship Advisory Group was set up by the Labour Government to evaluate the most effective means for delivering political education within the school curriculum. Teachers and educationalists drew up specific proposals for primary and secondary schools which the Advisory Group (chaired by Professor Sir Bernard Crick) then debated, before publishing their recommendations in 1998. Broadly speaking the Crick Report (as it became known) contained five key claims about the implementation of what became described as 'citizenship education' in English schools:

(i) Citizenship education should be a separate statutory curriculum requirement;

(ii) Citizenship education involves learning to be an active citizen;

(iii) Teachers require well-designed guidelines to teach controversial issues;

(iv) Learning objectives should be set to facilitate inspection.

(v) A Standing Commission on citizenship education should monitor its progress.[479]

The final report affirmed that the aim of the Group's proposals was to effect 'no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally.'[480] Educational practitioners and theorists alike received the Crick Report as an important contribution to the debate on political education in schools. Most lauded its stress on a civic-republican notion of the virtues of active citizenship, but some supportive political

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[478] The Commission's report stated that 'the study and experience of citizenship should be a part of every young person's education' from early years through to higher education 'whether in state or private schools'. Commission on Citizenship, *Encouraging Citizenship*, London, HMSO, 1990, xvii.
[479] Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools*, Final Report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship, London, QCA, 1998.

and educational theorists were concerned that actually increasing electoral turnout and political involvement might yet prove too ambitious and demanding an aim.[481]

Despite these concerns, the recommendations of the group were sufficiently cogent and popular for the government to decide that *Citizenship* for secondary school pupils in England should be implemented in August 2002. And the 2000 curriculum orders specifying the structure of *Citizenship* for secondary school pupils give an indication of the type of activities which should be promoted.

2.   The 2000 *Citizenship* Orders

The National Curriculum specified for English secondary schools in 2000 stated that from August 2002 onwards *Citizenship* would be a foundation subject for pupils at Key Stage 3 (11-14 year olds) and Key Stage 4 (14-16 year olds).[482] *Citizenship* is intended to build on what teachers are 'already doing in a flexible and innovative way.'[483] Nevertheless, provision for political education in most English schools was decidedly patchy prior to 2002. As a result, curriculum orders comprise a wide-ranging introduction to politics and citizenship.

i)   *Citizenship* at Key Stage Three

Key Stage Three pupils in English schools study a broad range of subjects until they select those which they wish study for examination at Key Stage Four. Like all National

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[480] Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools*, 1.5.

[481] T.H.McLaughlin, 'Citizenship Education in England: The Crick Report and Beyond', pp.546-54.

[482] In Wales, Citizenship is currently a feature of the guidance for Personal and Social Education. See my article 'Community, Culture and the Curriculum Cymreig: Citizenship Education in Wales', *Journal of Welsh Education*, vol.10, no.1, 2001, pp.21-31. In Scotland, it is a non-statutory feature of their modern studies and community education provision. In Northern Ireland, it is a non-statutory part of their education for mutual understanding.

[483] *Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4: A Guide for Senior Managers and Governors*, London, QCA, 2000.

Curriculum subjects, the curriculum requirements for *Citizenship* at KS3 are given detailed substance in programmes of study developed by the central government department responsible for education. These specify units of study with teaching activities, learning objectives and outcomes, and teaching methods.

Units of study

At Key Stage 3, there are fifteen units specific to discrete provision of *Citizenship* and six designed for cross-curricular use. The specific *Citizenship* units include: Citizenship - what's it all about; Human Rights; Government, elections and voting; The significance of the media in society; and, Developing skills of democratic participation. Cross-curricular units include: Debating a global issue (with geography); Why did women and some men have to struggle for the vote in Britain? (with history); How do we deal with conflict? (with Religious Education); and, What's in the public interest? (with science).[484]

Learning Objectives

The key learning objectives for the discrete *Citizenship* units of study are based around three key skills: 'Knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens'; 'Developing skills of enquiry and communication'; and 'Developing skills of participation'.[485] Specific objectives include: establishing ground rules for discussion; understanding rights and responsibilities; learning how issues are debated in parliament; understanding voting and elections; understanding how government spends public money; learning to influence change; and interpreting news stories and the media. The key learning objectives for the linked units include: understanding global issues

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[484] 'Citizenship', *Key Stage 3 Schemes of Work*, London, QCA, 2001.
[485] How *Citizenship* can enhance English literacy and the use of language is also described in the programmes of study.

(*geography*); learning from political history (*history*); understanding conflict resolution (*religious education*); taking responsible action (*science*).[486] These key learning objectives are then broken down into learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes

The learning outcomes pertaining to *Citizenship* are specific targets which teachers should help pupils aim to achieve. So, for instance, when pursuing the objective of 'establishing ground rules for discussion', pupils should learn to 'know what helps or hinders discussion and what rules are needed to enable all members of the group to contribute to the discussion.'[487] To successfully accomplish the learning outcomes pupils should 'think creatively and critically about hypothetical situations and relate hypothetical conclusions to real-life situations'.[488] Further examples of learning outcomes for *Citizenship* at KS3 include, being able to discuss 'crime statistics in relation to causal factors', recognising that 'rights can compete and/or conflict', understanding 'what it means to be a global citizen', appreciating 'some of the possible consequences of low turnout' and being able to 'identify and evaluate a range of ways in which decisions are made'.[489]

Teaching methods

The guiding pedagogical philosophy behind the schemes of study for *Citizenship* at KS3 is that 'pupils are more likely to become active citizens if their learning experiences have enabled them to take responsibility for their learning.' This means that, for pupils, the '*way* in which learning experiences are provided in citizenship is, therefore, fundamental

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[486] 'Citizenship', *Key Stage 3 Schemes of Work*, London, QCA, 2001.
[487] ibid, pp.4-5.
[488] idem.

to the development of effective practice.' The learning environment for *Citizenship* should support pupils in 'discussing views which may be contrary to their own' by 'promoting appreciation, courtesy, concern, respect, responsibility and understanding.' Moreover, pupils themselves are expected to learn to 'establish ground rules that will enable them to work effectively together.'[490] The methods adopted for delivering *Citizenship* will also depend on the type of teaching activity, with teachers expected to 'use a range of teaching styles to accommodate the different learning styles of individuals'.[491] For example, pupils may work in pairs or talk in groups to discuss ground rules for discussion and why they are needed or present and vote on the pros and cons of micro-decisions which affect them (such as the seating arrangements).[492] The objectives, outcomes and methods for *Citizenship* for KS3 pupils thus form the foundation for its continuation at KS4.

ii)   *Citizenship* at Key Stage Four

Key Stage Four pupils in English schools currently study up to eleven academic subjects for examination. Examination in *Citizenship* is currently optional, but a statutory requirement to deliver it remains. Again, the programmes of study for *Citizenship* specify units of study with teaching activities, learning objectives and outcomes, and teaching methods.

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[489] idem. The status of many of the principles of *Citizenship* is discussed in Section three of this chapter.
[490] ibid., p.35. Pupils' ground rules include: 'Make sure everyone has a chance to speak'; 'Don't use put downs or make fun of what others say or do'; 'Be helpful or constructive when challenging another's viewpoint'; 'You have a right to 'pass' if you do not want to speak on an issue'; 'Show appreciation when someone explains or does something well, or is helpful in some way to you.' idem.
[491] ibid., p.11.
[492] Other activities include: conducting mock trials; reflecting on personal experiences; creating a charter of rights; analysing literature; mock elections; research surveys; watching televised debates; writing reports; mock committee meetings; workshops, visiting speakers; and events days. idem.

Units of study

At KS4 each of the units in the programmes of study are citizenship - specific. They include: Young people and car crime; Challenging racism and discrimination; How and why are laws made?; How the economy functions; Planning a community event; Producing the news; and Rights and responsibilities in the workplace.[493]

Learning Objectives

The key learning objectives for KS4 Political Literacy focus on political issues and generic political concepts. They include understanding: human rights; racism; making and changing laws; having a say; taxation; the economy; improving performance/self-evaluation; making editorial decisions; fair trade; and sustainable development.[494] Again, these learning objectives are broken down into learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes

The learning outcomes for KS4 *Citizenship* reflect the increased standard of debate that is expected at this stage of pupils' development, in particular, they centre on the relationship between political opinions and positions and the institutional means by which political solutions are implemented. So for example, when learning about human rights pupils are expected to be able to 'discuss difficult issues' and 'know who to go to for help and advice if they feel their rights have been breached.' The emphasis at KS4 is therefore on the practical application of political literacy. Indeed, '[a]ctive participation is the key to citizenship at this important stage.'[495]

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[493] 'Citizenship', *Key Stage 4 Schemes of Work*, London, QCA, 2000.
[494] idem.
[495] 'Teacher's Guide', *Citizenship: A Scheme of Work for Key Stage 4*, London, QCA, 2001, pp.3, 10.

The methods for encouraging active participation are described in detail in the publication *Staying involved: extending opportunities for pupil participation.*[496] Community work and volunteering is encouraged, but there is also stress laid on opportunities for pupils to participate in simulated political decision-making procedures (such as mock trials and council debates). *Staying Involved* stresses that KS4 'pupils should be used to taking part in the day-to-day organisation and running of the school' through involvement in school decision-making, awareness-raising days, environmental projects and a wide range of community activities.[497]

The *Citizenship* orders reflect the use of political education as a policy instrument. Nevertheless, for perfectionist liberals, its delivery and principles should also reflect its importance as a normative ideal based on the right to be able to be significantly autonomous. But before critically examining *Citizenship* we will first consider some important philosophical and educational issues associated with its delivery and assessment.

3.   Delivering *Citizenship*

This chapter has so far described the development and content of the statutory orders for *Citizenship* in England. But is such a structured approach appropriate for promoting the development of character and significant autonomy? Should a political education be

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[496] 'Citizenship at Key Stage 4', *Staying Involved: Extending Opportunities for Pupil Participation*, London, QCA, 2000.

[497] ibid., p.1. *Staying Involved* also envisages pupils contributing to consultations on 'the achievement of local targets as part of national government priorities, for example through Health or Education Action Zones, Best Value, crime and disorder strategies, health improvement programmes or drug prevention priorities.' ibid., p.5. Indeed, local authorities are now expected to alert 'young people to the working of social and public life... and the means at their disposal for influencing local policies' as part of their wider duty to promote 'effective community engagement'. DTLR, *Strong Local Leadership - Quality Public Services*, White Paper Presented to parliament December 2001, p.20.

delivered and assessed within a separate statutory framework? And if so, how can *Citizenship* best accomplish its aims? This section reviews the justification for the provision and assessment of *Citizenship* and examines some conditions associated with its effective delivery.

i) Justifying statutory requirements

The provision of any subject in liberal state schools presumes some degree of commonality in the approaches adopted by those schools. And the involvement of government in codifying and auditing statutory orders implies that certain learning objectives or outcomes will probably be set for schools to adopt. The National Curriculum in England provides an excellent example of how foundation subjects for state-led secondary education may be given extremely rigorous specification by national agencies. But is such rigour really necessary to ensure that children within England receive preparation in the liberal political virtues? And, is substantial dedicated curriculum time required to convince pupils of the worth of civic behaviour and political participation?

Establishing a place in the curriculum

The *Citizenship* orders in England were introduced on the understanding that statutory requirements were necessary to ensure all schools gave it substantial standing within the curriculum. Michael Barber has highlighted that for most developed countries the control of one or two major aspects of a curriculum subject (such as their learning objectives or teaching methods) is usually sufficient to ensure an acceptable degree of compliance

amongst teachers.[498] The National Curriculum prescribes orders for three aspects of each curriculum subject: objectives; outcomes; and methods. This suggests that there may be some scope for making the delivery of the orders in the classroom more flexible.

Although the National Curriculum has made a national programme of political education possible, many supporters of political education have argued that 'a tightly prescribed curriculum' could undermine teachers' commitment to deliver it and may ultimately alienate many pupils from civic and political involvement. By contrast, a more flexible structure could make room 'for teachers and students to engage with some degree of rigour in a wider range of practices that connect with students' prior and concurrent interests.'[499] These educationalists believe that rigid application of a schema of learning objectives and outcomes in classrooms will not promote diverse configurations of the liberal virtues of good citizenship. But would perfectionist liberals accept that the political virtues would flourish in an unstructured learning environment? We saw earlier that the use of some disciplinary pedagogical methods plays a crucial role in promoting virtues that can enable children to develop good moral character. Indeed, the 'Emile paradox' indicates that the careful inculcation of technologies of the self is a vital precondition for pupils to become significantly autonomous. However, the importance of trying to develop a democratic learning environment within classrooms illustrates that direct instruction tied to very specific outcomes would be carefully circumscribed. Perfectionist liberals are therefore able to accommodate a certain degree of educational prescription for *Citizenship*, provided it can be revised and adapted by teachers, pupils and schools. But would this then presuppose considerable dedicated curriculum time for *Citizenship*?

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[498] M.Barber ed., *The National Curriculum: A Study in Policy*, p.38.
[499] J.Halliday, 'Political Liberalism and Citizenship Education: Towards Curriculum Reform', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, vol.47, no.1, 1999, p.45.

Dedicated curriculum time in secondary schools was a central aim of the Citizenship Advisory Group, but it was also acknowledged that 'aspects of citizenship education already existed in many schools and therefore the time required was a mixture of existing and additional provision.'[500] As a result, '[r]eal curriculum time for citizenship' would be 'counterbalanced by the importance of recognising that it cannot be delivered through the formal curriculum alone.'[501] However, a recent inspection report has highlighted that perceived lack of clarity in the statutory proposals has meant that initial provision of *Citizenship* was 'low-key' and unsatisfactory in many schools.[502] Subsequent inspections have revealed that while provision has improved, pupils' experience and understanding of citizenship remained 'patchy'.[503] A major factor influencing the decision to introduce a programme of political education in schools was the desire to ensure that it was delivered with consistency and coherence to all pupils in the English education system. In the past, cross-curricular guidance led to variable results, with most schools providing very little in the way of political education. Real curriculum time was a critical aim of the Citizenship Advisory Group, because space for distinct provision was regarded as essential for all pupils to have the opportunity to learn political virtues in a dedicated learning environment. Without such an environment, *Citizenship* can be steered away from the promotion of responsible political engagement towards volunteering or work-related education. Perfectionist liberals would thus acknowledge (as school inspectors have) that *Citizenship* requires substantial curricular

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[500] D.Kerr, *The Making of Citizenship in the National Curriculum (England): Issues and Challenges*, www.Leeds.ac.uk, Education-line, p.9.

[501] J.Newton, 'Citizenship Education in the Curriculum: The Practical Side', *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol.55, no.3, July 2002, p.527.

[502] Office for Standards in Education, *National Curriculum Citizenship: planning and implementation 2002/03*, London, Ofsted, 2003.

[503] Office for Standards in Education, *Ofsted Subject Reports 2002/03: Citizenship in Secondary Schools*, London, Ofsted, 2004; Office for Standards in Education, *Ofsted Subject Reports 2003/04: Citizenship in Secondary Schools*, London, Ofsted, 2005.

commitment within schools. But how would they justify cementing the place of statutory requirements for *Citizenship* in the English secondary school curriculum?

The right to be able to be significantly autonomous provides a strong justification for establishing a dedicated *Citizenship* learning environment. In a liberal society, the liberal political virtues are inherent in the development of good moral character. The liberal political virtues are also central to the democratic evolution of liberalism itself. In the doctrine explicated here, the promotion of these virtues is therefore held to be so important for the flourishing of agents in liberal societies that the liberal state should implement policies to facilitate their development. Moreover, the possibility that the voting age could be lowered to 16 in the UK means that a programme of liberal political education should be given high priority and strong curricular support within secondary schools.

If we accept that political education has uniquely important liberal autonomy-enhancing attributes then its place in the curriculum can be cemented by either (a) supplementing the existing secondary school curriculum or (b) directly replacing another curriculum subject.[504] This autonomy-based justification for dedicated curriculum time is also reflected in the principles of the liberal policy-making described in Chapter Four which established that the liberal state was justified in promoting certain intrinsically valuable activities. There are also good educational reasons for substantial dedicated *Citizenship* provision.

Perfectionist liberals can view political virtues as especially important for agents to demonstrate good moral character. The development of good moral character and good citizenship involves manifesting these virtues within a set of highly complex public

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[504] Indeed, one critic of *Citizenship* in England asks 'which parts of the existing curriculum structure are to be jettisoned to make way for the implementation of the proposals?', J.Halliday, 'Political Liberalism and Citizenship Education: Towards Curriculum Reform', p.43.

and private settings. As we have seen, this in turn entails that agents should be able to provide coherent, relevant and comprehensible interpretations of their own configurations of the virtues of moral character. The high degree of complexity that this interaction with a liberal character-ethics and democracy presumes, means that a political education can synthesise greater opportunities for character-development and intellectual growth than many other foundation subjects. Indeed, political education may also introduce pupils to many different subject areas, encouraging them to acquire 'those many forms of reasoning that enable participation in a democratic form of life.'[505]

If *Citizenship* can considerably enhance both the character and cognitive development of pupils because of its overlap with such a wide range of other practices, there is therefore a compelling educational argument for ensuring it is given substantial curriculum time. This also implies that it could be subject to some form of assessment. The political and educational issues surrounding the assessment of *Citizenship* are examined next.

Assessment of Citizenship

The assessment of *Citizenship* opens up a number of avenues of political and philosophical interest. Political and educational philosophers can view it as a focal point for studying the teaching and learning of normative ideas. Political scientists can garner its outputs to evaluate the long-term impact of political education on civic attitudes and political participation. For policy-makers, the acceptability and efficacy of its assessment is likely to play a major part in its future status within the curriculum.

Although there are no hard and fast guidelines for its assessment, the programmes of study for *Citizenship* are detailed enough to support a fairly rigorous

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[505] ibid., pp.53-4.

examination and inspection regime. At KS3, teachers are expected to utilise a range of 'active assessment strategies' to develop targets, including: 'observing pupils', asking 'open-ended questions'; 'asking pupils to communicate their ideas and thoughts'; and 'discussing words and how they are being used.'[506] Attainment is then negotiated via self-assessment, peer assessment and the assessment of teachers and other relevant adults, such as community leaders. At KS4 pupils' attainment and progress is assessed through broadly similar means to KS3, with assessments evaluating the extent to which pupils 'have a comprehensive knowledge of the topical events they study'. They will also consider pupils' ability to 'form and express an opinion', to 'evaluate the effectiveness of different ways of bringing about change at different levels of society'' and to 'take part effectively in school and community-based activities, showing a willingness to evaluate such activities critically.' Overall, pupils should 'demonstrate personal and group responsibility in their attitudes to themselves and others.'[507]

As yet the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) (short course) in Citizenship Studies is not a compulsory requirement for the assessment of *Citizenship*. The possibility of making *Citizenship* a compulsory GCSE leads to a whole range of issues surrounding the examination and assessment of programmes of political education. For perfectionist liberals, a liberal political education can be subject to some structured assessment. However, not all educationalists are convinced that assessment is helpful for delivering appropriate educational outcomes in political education. Some regard the assessment of *Citizenship* as a dangerous threat to civil liberties in liberal democracies, in particular, they believe that the possibility of failing pupils in *Citizenship* would have two seriously illiberal consequences: (i) it would call into question the rights of failing pupils

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[506] 'Teachers Guide', *Citizenship: A Scheme of Work for Key Stage 3*, pp.13-6.

to participate fully in democratic political processes; (ii) if failed pupils are in fact later permitted to participate in elections and other democratic processes, then important processes of decision-making are undermined because the competence of participants may be called into question.

Political literacy tests may be useful for evaluating political knowledge and understanding, but they would clearly be a crude way of assessing active participatory virtues. Indeed, as the *Citizenship* orders recognise '[a]ssessment in citizenship should not imply that pupils are failing as citizens. It should not be a judgement on the worth, personality or value of an individual pupil or their family'.[508] While the participative political virtues may be a developmental aspiration, the deliberative political virtues remain susceptible to some form of structured assessment as it may be possible to devise tests that can accurately and equitably reflect pupils' understanding of politics and citizenship.[509] Nevertheless, some observers have criticised the prescription of learning outcomes within a subject that is concerned with the promotion of liberal-democratic values. For these commentators, the 'move from tightly prescribed outcomes to tightly prescribed activities designed to achieve those outcomes is all too easy to make in a [political] climate that favours immediate and obvious measures of accountability.' They also contend that the 'formulation of 'outcomes'' could result in 'a behavioural manifestation of those values in the supposed interests of standards and objectivity.'[510] These illiberal consequences can be best avoided by ensuring that teachers have sufficient

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[507] 'Teacher's Guide', *Citizenship: A Scheme of Work for Key Stage 4*, p.18-9. *Staying Involved* also contains a variety of further suggestions for promoting pupil participation that can be recorded by pupils in a 'citizenship portfolio', providing a link with their careers and lifelong learning.

[508] *Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4: A Guide for Senior Managers and Governors*, p.2.

[509] For instance, the IEA Citizenship Survey was based on a multiple-choice test utilising a variety of factual and value-based questions based on internationally agreed 'fundamental democratic principles and processes' and commonly held 'concepts of citizenship, attitudes, and civic-related activities.' J.Torney-Purta *et al*, *Citizenship and Education in Twenty-Eight Countries: Civic Knowledge and Engagement at Age Fourteen*, pp.3-4.

[510] J.Halliday, 'Political Liberalism and Citizenship Education: Towards Curriculum Reform', pp.49-52.

freedom to use their common sense in the classroom – a requirement which is discussed later in the chapter. Here we may note that, although assessment may not be able to fully reflect different worthwhile modes of political participation, perfectionist liberals would nonetheless wish to assess political deliberation because of their susceptibility to formalised processes of equitable assessment. Moreover, the importance of the deliberative political virtues within liberal democracies provides further reason for developing effective assessment procedures. They would also be concerned that *Citizenship* could encourage the actual manifestation of the political virtues.

ii)   Making *Citizenship* work

The effectiveness of any new curriculum requirement for schools is subject to great scrutiny and evaluation. *Citizenship* will continue to be given especially close consideration because its subject matter is characterised by many contested normative aims and objectives. Perfectionist liberals (and many other supporters of political education) will be particularly concerned that it can (potentially) achieve the goal of promoting the political virtues associated with responsible political engagement. To promote these virtues teachers of *Citizenship* will probably have to reduce the disaffection of many pupils towards politics and political education. In doing so they would need to apply suitable teaching strategies relevant to their own circumstances.

Overcoming superficiality and disaffection

Critics of political education have identified a whole range of barriers to successfully delivering *Citizenship* in secondary schools. These barriers must be addressed if children are to be given the best opportunity to become significantly autonomous. Supporters and detractors of political education both argue that it places greater pressure on teachers to

engage and enthuse pupils than other curriculum subjects. An especially important barrier associated with the 'difficult' nature of political education is the danger that it can become a superficial learning experience as teachers strive to simplify issues and debates. The simplification of politics by *Citizenship* teachers could potentially make pupils disinterested in the very issues which the curriculum orders envisage firing their imagination and enthusiasm. It could also confirm Oakeshott's fear that teaching politics can give pupils a misguided overestimation of its possibilities. In England, the unfamiliarity of political education in schools may exacerbate these difficulties. The success of teachers attempting to negotiate the general thrust of the *Citizenship* orders could hinge on the standing it is given in the secondary school curriculum by School Management Teams. Indeed, compulsory assessment and examination may be a preferred means for overcoming accusations of superficiality. In addition to the problem of simplification, there are also specific barriers relating to the civic deficit that attach to the delivery of political education in secondary schools.

As we have seen, politics and political participation are unattractive to large segments of the British population. Introducing *Citizenship* in schools could therefore increase disaffection with politics and political issues amongst those that it desperately needs to re-engage with democratic processes. The disinterest in democratic politics and participation currently displayed by many young people could be hardened if teachers endeavour to involve them in sustained political discussion. There are two things perfectionist liberals can note in response to these concerns.

First, as was argued earlier, claiming that political education may fail to engage many pupils is not a telling argument against its introduction. Not all students of English at secondary school will become devoted to reading poetry nor students of science build bridges, but a liberal education for significant autonomy assumes that children should be

given the greatest opportunity to develop their character in such diverse valuable ways. In particular, political education is an essential feature of a liberal education for significant autonomy because the liberal political virtues are critical to living well in a liberal democracy. Second, it is perhaps unfair to suggest that young people care very little for politics. Although they may have little faith or interest in politicians, 'party politics' and the democratic political system, the political activism of young people illustrates that they engage with and are committed to political issues. Indeed, many commentators see the emergence of young people's social and political activism as evidence for a heightened awareness of the wider possibilities of political engagement.[511]

In addition to these concerns about the precise nature of the civic deficit, critics of *Citizenship* have claimed that political education is superfluous in an advanced democracy such as the UK. They argue that there is 'a gamut of local, national and international activities through which citizenship education might be more profitably conveyed', such as 'newspapers, magazines, television and radio and internet input.'[512] However, a major feature of '*ad hoc* and the 'untidy'' learning opportunities is the 'variability of student access to, and engagement with them.' In fact 'even significant engagement will not necessarily satisfy demands of breadth, balance, coherence and the like.'[513] To allow that pupils have the opportunity to learn what they choose about politics from a variety of sources says nothing of their facility for exploring the reliability or ideological bias of those sources.[514] Political awareness and interpretation are

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[511] Research conducted by the Trust for the Study of Adolescence in 1997 quoted in the Crick Report highlighted that the majority of young people in their sample had been involved in 'some form of political or community action the previous year.' Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools*, p.1.

[512] J.Tooley, 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Conceptual and Practical Problems with Labour's Citizenship Education', *Education-line*, 2000, pp.2-3.

[513] T.H.McLaughlin, 'Citizenship Education in England: The Crick Report and Beyond', p.548.

[514] The IEA study highlighted that in England 'students show only a moderate grasp of skills of interpreting political materials, such as cartoons and election leaflets.' J.Torney-Purta *et al*, *Citizenship and Education in Twenty-Eight Countries: Civic Knowledge and Engagement at Age Fourteen*, p.4.

increasingly important in a society in which the 'images and stories through which we understand the world are effectively controlled' by a small number of media groupings.[515] Nor can mere assimilation of 'basic information and political facts' be likened to the education for significant autonomy essential to the development of the political virtues. A Social and Community Research survey from 1996 suggested that young people generally do have a grasp of 'some basic but important political facts', but that this information 'does not get ingested whatever the source.'[516] Evidently, that many young people are involved in political or community action may tell us very little about their understanding of participation in the political process in liberal-democracies.

Perfectionist liberals will remain aware of the potential pitfalls of teaching politics to young people, but be convinced that political education can provide an excellent opportunity for young people's enthusiasm for political issues to be encouraged within an appropriate learning environment. Naturally, this implies that teachers would play the critical role in making *Citizenship* work.

Effective delivery of Citizenship: Pedagogic Phronesis

The success of *Citizenship* (as for other subjects) will ultimately depend on the efforts of teachers to create the most appropriate learning environment for enthusing and stimulating the interest of their pupils. Teachers of *Citizenship* will therefore have to be extremely aware of the barriers to learning which can be associated with humanities subjects, such as political education. To ensure their practice is not perfunctory or patronising they will thus have to deliver the subject matter in sufficient depth and from a variety of different perspectives, avoiding reducing it to soundbites or to their own

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[515] P.Harrington, *The Third Way: An Answer to Blair*, Third Way Publications, London, 1998, p.11.
[516] Quoted in *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools.*

preferences. They will also have to take great care to ensure that all pupils have an opportunity to manifest the liberal political virtues.

A political education should encourage the ability and inclination of their pupils to exhibit virtues associated with good citizenship. To minimise disaffection teachers will have to present politics and political issues in such a light that their pupils come to care about the different ideological approaches towards them and the democratic processes through which they are resolved in a liberal society. Crucially, teachers of political education 'cannot always take the neutral chair but must often enter the situation and... show how arguments are used to persuade people to act in certain ways'.[517] It is therefore important that *Citizenship* can facilitate a broad range of coherent, relevant and comprehensible liberal democratic interpretations of politics by teachers.

The Teacher's Guide for *Citizenship* recognises that experienced teachers will handle sensitive and controversial issues without setting themselves up as 'the sole authority not only on matters of 'fact' but also on matters of opinion.'[518] Teachers would therefore configure their lessons according to the circumstances of the subject matter and their pupils – a sensitivity to context which is captured in the notion of 'pedagogic phronesis' (or 'teaching common sense').[519] Pedagogic phronesis (when guided by a liberal character-ethics) should enable teachers to promote liberal political virtues amongst pupils from a range of (acceptable) political perspectives. By cultivating pupils' awareness of all aspects of politics, their opportunity to be able to configure the political virtues in diverse ways can be given due respect. To accomplish this, *Citizenship*

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[517] R.Brownhill and P.Smart, *Political Education*, London, Routledge, 1989, pp.127-8.
[518] 'Teacher's Guide', *Citizenship: A Scheme of Work for Key Stage 3*, p.14. Indeed, it is only as 'a tool used by teachers' that 'the difficulties and dangers of the framework which have been noted may be ameliorated or avoided.' T.H.McLaughlin, 'Citizenship Education in England: The Crick Report and Beyond', p.557.
[519] T.H.McLaughlin, 'Beyond the Reflective Teacher', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, vol.31, no.1, pp.9-25.

teachers should use their common sense to accommodate, discuss and elicit a range of alternative opinions, stances and positions. A variety of practical suggestions for promoting the development of the deliberative and participative political virtues (such as, discussion groups and mock parliaments) are also outlined in the *Citizenship* orders and programmes of study. Nonetheless, these activities (like the standardised orders) would ideally be regarded as indicative suggestions, and not be viewed by schools, inspectors or policy-makers as more important than the good teaching practice on which the political education of pupils depends.

The principles at the heart of the recommendations for *Citizenship* teaching seem to reflect much that is at the heart of a liberal character-ethics. How well *Citizenship* is likely to realise such a perfectionist liberal ethical ideal is discussed next.

4. Liberal Character-Ethics and Political Education in England

Debates about the principles and purposes of political education in England are likely to persist in academic and policy-making circles. For perfectionist liberals committed to the right to be able to be significantly autonomous, the cogency of its principles and aspirations are of great interest. Their assessments of political education will ultimately rest on the extent to which it is consistent with an education for significant autonomy guided by a liberal character-ethics. This section concludes the thesis by critically evaluating political education in England, before reflecting further on the nature of citizenship-ideals and an ideal liberal political education.

i) *Citizenship* and responsible political engagement

As we have seen, an ideal liberal political education would concentrate on promoting the political virtues that can best enable agents to develop their character when participating

in democratic politics. *Citizenship* represents a particularly interesting case study of a state that is actively seeking to promote political virtues associated with significant autonomy and character. Examination of the relationship between *Citizenship*, the liberal political virtues and significant autonomy can therefore provide perfectionist liberals with an indication of the prospects for the future of their ethical ideals in England.

Whether *Citizenship* can facilitate the development of the liberal political virtues found within our liberal character-ethics is evidently an issue of pressing concern for liberal supporters of political education in schools. As we have seen, a programme of liberal political education should play a critical role in ensuring that an education for autonomy is indeed one which enables citizens to become significantly autonomous. In the past, programmes of citizenship education in English state schools have encouraged only charitable behaviour, patriotic feeling or respect for authority. If *Citizenship* cannot facilitate opportunities to display the liberal political virtues, then its coherence as a programme of political education can be called into question.

The *Citizenship* orders, programmes of study and the available teaching material focus on specific aspects within which different approaches to promoting the liberal political virtues may be applied. There are three main aspects of *Citizenship* for English schools: *Social and Moral Responsibility*, *Community Involvement* and *Political Literacy*. The *Social and Moral Responsibility* and *Community Involvement* strands mirror much of the guidance for personal and social education, but include further guidance on volunteering and community participation. The *Political Literacy* aspect of *Citizenship* most clearly distinguishes it as a programme of political education.[520]

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[520] Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, *Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4: Initial Guidance for Schools*, London, QCA, 2000, p.4.

The orders state that there are three broad features of political literacy: (i) *Becoming an informed citizen* - learning about rights and responsibilities, government, democratic processes, the media, global interdependence and so on; (ii) *Expressing and understanding opinions* - thinking about topical issues, contributing to discussion and justifying opinions; (iii) *Responsible involvement* - participating responsibly and reflectively.[521]

The different features of political literacy clearly focus on areas pertinent to the development of the liberal political virtues described in Chapter Four. *Becoming an informed citizen* and *Expressing and understanding opinions* essentially comprise different perspectives from which the deliberative liberal political virtues can be viewed. First, becoming an informed citizen is central to the virtues of deliberation and to achieving any degree of political understanding. Second, the ability to express and understand opinions is an essential requirement for the virtues associated with political deliberation. Although this suggests there will be great scope for promoting the deliberative liberal political virtues within *Citizenship*, perfectionist liberals will nevertheless be concerned that this will be done in accordance with the civic-republican ideal of active citizenship earlier associated with living well. The *Responsible Involvement* aspect of *Citizenship* is here the focus for aspirations for active citizenship. And *Citizenship* could fulfil those aspirations by promoting virtues associated with responsible political engagement. Nevertheless, perfectionist liberals would be especially concerned that schools do not dilute this aspect of political education by focusing on voluntary work or other less politically orientated aspects of good moral character. They would also be interested in the pedagogical principles which underpin *Citizenship*.

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[521] *Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4: A Guide for Senior Managers and Governors*, p.4.

The *Citizenship* orders specify three overlapping pedagogic approaches for the delivery of the political literacy component. A *concepts approach* that examines 'the key concepts identified by the Advisory Group';[522] a *skills approach* based on 'the skills of enquiry and communication' and 'the skills of participation and responsible action'; and, an *enquiry approach* that applies the fruits of the first two approaches to specific political and social issues.[523] The first of these approaches would require pupils to discipline their thought as they attempted both to comprehend and express an understanding of political concepts. The liberal deliberative political virtues could clearly be enhanced through such pedagogy. The second of the pedagogic approaches can link both disciplined thought and disciplined action, in particular, by stressing the notion of responsible judgement which underpins the participative and the deliberative political virtues. Finally, the third approach returns us to the importance of disciplined thought in giving clarity to the deliberation and interpretation of political issues. The extent to which these approaches may successfully inculcate disciplined living can be assessed by examining the teaching material for *Citizenship*.

The teaching material available for *Citizenship* at Key Stages 3 and 4 has only recently been developed to provide activities for bespoke courses that schools can choose to implement to meet the statutory curriculum orders. Although these courses are framed by the political literacy guidance, their structure and content does not always mirror the civic-republican approach found within the *Citizenship* programmes of study, in particular, the emphasis on the political virtues inherent in good citizenship receives highly variable treatment.

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[522] These are: democracy and autocracy; co-operation and conflict; equality and diversity; fairness, justice, the rule of law; rules, the law and human rights; freedom and order; individual and community; power and authority; and rights and responsibilities.

[523] Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, *Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4: Initial Guidance for Schools*, pp.20-2.

One course primarily focuses on an education for community cohesion, stressing the importance of the legal system, community work and rights and responsibilities within the workplace.[524] Although there is a good deal of material that focuses on the delivery of public services and solutions to social problems, the material does not reflect the depth of the responsible political engagement associated with active citizenship. For instance, when focusing on the learning objective of 'understanding the need for laws' there is no indication that people challenging the law may be living well. Neither is there any acknowledgement that laws change when citizens protest and demonstrate in the streets.[525] The material therefore gives the impression that engagement with law making is a process of registering an opinion akin to marking a ballot paper. Likewise political participation is predominantly portrayed as a single-issue transitory activity that aims at improving policy decisions, rather than an intrinsic feature of good citizenship. The liberal political virtues are here viewed in abstraction from the on-going democratic process and evolution of liberalism, thereby rendering politics and citizenship unnecessarily remote from the promotion of virtues associated with living well.

The perfectionist liberal aspirations for good citizenship presented in Chapters Four and Five receive greater attention from another course which begins by stressing the role of debate in *Citizenship*. However, this course again adheres to a very conservative civic-individualist notion of the virtues inherent in good citizenship. For instance, amongst the twenty-one characteristics of a good citizen it identifies, there are only four that refer to political activities other than voting. The characteristics identified are predominantly associated with the virtues of civic behaviour rather then political participation. For example, a good citizen 'works for a local charity', 'does not write

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[524] C.Culshaw, J.Wales, P.Clarke and N.Reaich, *Citizenship Today*, London, Harper Collins, 2002, pp.17-54. See espec. pp.44-5.
[525] idem.

graffiti on the walls', or 'helps elderly neighbours'.[526] While these worthwhile activities may be correlated with increased political engagement,[527] they are not equivalent to political participation or deliberation.

The alternative interpretations of *Citizenship* within different courses illustrate the importance of pedagogic phronesis for teachers seeking to deliver a political education based on the civic-republican citizenship ideal found in the orders. The philosophical issues which different courses raise are also evident in the proposed assessment requirements. Fifty per cent of assessment in one *Citizenship* course is for participation in a 'citizenship activity'. However, the suggested citizenship activities are predominantly community-orientated rather than political. For instance, pupils might like to consider whether there 'are some elderly people who would enjoy a visit', or 'an open space that could be turned into a garden', or if they would like to 'help some younger people with their reading', or 'work with other young people to discuss community issues like graffiti'.[528] These worthy activities are clearly positive ways to encourage pupils to display virtues inherent in civic behaviour, but again are not equivalent to the political participation held central to the ideal of responsible political engagement or to the civic-republican ideal of active citizenship which guided the development of the curriculum orders.

ii) Citizenship education and capitalism

The expansion of global capitalism has led many liberals and social democrats to openly accommodate free market principles when putting 'theoretical flesh on the skeleton of

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[526] T.Fiehn, *This is Citizenship 1*, London, John Murray, 2002, pp.58-9.
[527] C.Pattie, P.Seyd and P.Whiteley, 'Citizenship and Civic Engagement: Attitudes and Behaviour in Britain', *Political Studies*, vol.51, 2003, pp.443-68.
[528] C.Culshaw, J.Wales, P.Clarke and N.Reaich, *Citizenship Today*, London, Harper Collins, 2002, pp.7-8.

their policy-making'.[529] In particular, the goal of creating a flexible workforce ripe for re-skilling whenever employer demands change has had a major impact on education policy. As a result, schools are expected to stress the importance of work and the contribution made by 'businesses to the local economy'[530] as part of their responsibility to deliver political education across the curriculum. The significance of these developments leads us to consider the precise implications that they have for the character-development of children.

Responding to Global Capitalism

In response to global capitalism and the neo-liberal re-evaluation of the welfare state Western governments have acknowledged the increased power of economic competition. However, acceptance of some of the rigours of global capitalism should not negate the ethical role of politics and policy-making. Rather, policies in areas such as education should ensure that agents may flourish despite demands for economic competitiveness. A liberal character-ethics can indicate how tensions between capitalism and living well are handled in *Citizenship*.

In the UK, educational responses to the flexible labour market have led to the emergence of a 'skills-discourse' centring on what Anthony Giddens has called the idea of 'portability'.[531] That is, the notion that agents should possess a core of common skills that are portable from job to job and that form a foundation upon which to build new employment skills. This is highly evident in the *Citizenship* orders, where generic key skills are emphasised as part of the 'skills approach' to political education. Drawing on the doctrine explicated here, perfectionist liberals would contend that emphasising these

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[529] A.Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1998.
[530] 'Citizenship', *Key Stage 4 Schemes of Work*, London, QCA, 2001.
[531] A.Giddens, *The Third Way*, p.125.

types of transferable or core employability skills in education (especially in political education) undermines much that is at the heart of liberalism. To focus on promoting skills associated with employer demands is to diminish liberal aspirations for individual flourishing. Portable employment skills are not inherent in the virtues of moral and individual character; character requires that an agent's autonomy is given liberal ethical content. There is also an inherent contradiction between a character-ethics and the demand for a predefined type of end product. The development of distinctive diverse character-configurations by agents in liberal societies is seriously constrained where they are only equipped to be at the mercy of the labour market. Such a situation would not be consistent with the state's duty to promote significant autonomy nor would it reflect perfectionist liberal policy-making principles.

Employment-orientated educational aims leave the state playing second fiddle to employers within the development and regulation of the curriculum.[532] Indeed, preparing citizens for the capitalist labour market in British schools has already sanctioned a variety of public and private sector partnerships that constrain opportunities for individual flourishing, including direct business involvement in developing the school curriculum and the establishment of 'Business and Enterprise' special status schools which place greater emphasis on economic understanding in *Citizenship*.[533] These developments have also been reflected in the school improvement agenda at the heart of the National Curriculum which views learning as a series of tightly defined 'outputs' and 'outcomes' - a notion which clearly narrows the range of possibilities for the configuration of character.

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[532] To some extent skills-discourse has altered the traditional perception in British education that workplace and management skills could simply be picked up along the way. C.Barnett, *The Verdict of Peace*, London, Macmillan, 2001.

[533] http://www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk/item.asp?item=54&page=15.

A further problem associated with opening up education to employers' demands has been the reduced political influence of local education authorities. This has undermined local accountability by parcelling greater responsibility for learning objectives to non-elected managers and local business interests. The growth of such local governance[534] is linked to government responses to risk and globalisation, but it has profound consequences for significant autonomy because it reduces the scope for citizens to manifest the political virtues (especially by enhancing managerial over local discretion). This is also important as political education in England is also associated with encouraging local economic prosperity.

Local prosperity and decision-making

For many observers, the tensions between citizenship, local communities and global capitalism reflect the 'risk' and uncertainty inherent in a market society. We all experience risk when we compete for resources, employment and cultural goods. Consequently, citizens and local communities have to constantly assess and re-assess their strategies to 'keep-up'. For some, this makes it imperative that political education equips children with the skills necessary to contribute to the economic prosperity of their local communities. Indeed, a 'positive engagement with risk' is described by one observer as a 'positive and inevitable part of a successful market economy.'[535] However, uncritical acceptance of risk and uncertainty in education policy-making reduces character and community development to gambles on a highly restricted set of choices.

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[534] C.Skelcher, *The Appointed State: Quasi-Governmental Organisations and Democracy*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1997.
[535] For Giddens, in 'a society such as ours, oriented towards the future and saturated with information, the theme of risk unites many otherwise disparate areas of politics: welfare state reform, engagement with world financial markets, responses to technological change, ecological problems and geopolitical transformations.' A.Giddens, *The Third Way*, pp.63-4.

State-sponsored local entrepreneurial initiatives, public-private sector partnerships and the voluntary sector are increasingly thought to be vibrant sources of community renewal and development, especially in areas of socio-economic deprivation.[536] Indeed, in the UK, Education Action Zones have been created in deprived areas to attract private sector finance to local schools and communities.[537] However, many critics have asked if the 'emphasis on the role of the voluntary and private sector might simply be a means for the State to abdicate its own proper responsibilities.'[538] Although governments may redefine the 'proper responsibilities' of the state, it seems clear that laying stress on local enterprise has profound consequences for the types of life-choices available to local citizens.

Stressing the place of entrepreneurialism in *Citizenship* indicates that children will be expected direct some of their energies towards adaptability to the changing requirements of the capitalist economy. But a liberal political education would not be concerned to organise their lives and social activities around economic growth and local prosperity. In addition to impoverishing many of the ethical aspects of community development associated with political education, the single-minded pursuit of economic prosperity may also have a detrimental effect on character. Individual flourishing hinges on citizens being autonomous in a diverse variety of ways. Although it can play a role in an agent's conception of the good life, entrepreneurialism (or responsiveness to capitalism) is neither a necessary or sufficient feature of a liberal conception of the good life. By contrast, a concern with local issues promotes shared ownership of the autonomy-practising environment generating ethical, collective and non-economic social

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[536] ibid., p.65. Giddens notes that the 'renewal of deprived local communities presumes the encouragement of economic enterprise as a means of generating a broader civic recovery'. ibid., p.82.

[537] As a consequence, schools in these areas can also opt-out of the National Curriculum to provide predominantly basic vocational training.

[538] P.Harrington, *The Third Way*, p.9.

capital. Encouraging this type of local focus in political education would elicit mutual interest and trust amongst fellow pupils, especially in less-advantaged areas, where disaffection with local decision-making is often greatest.[539] These aspects of significant autonomy can also be addressed by the involvement of public institutions in community education at the local level.

A distinctive approach to political education that gives full value to the opportunity for significant autonomy in local decision-making is essential for the development of the virtues associated with responsible political engagement. However, entrepreneurialism is not inherent in the development of virtues associated with community development. The place of entrepreneurialism and skills-discourse in the *Citizenship* orders indicates that there are significant tensions in the Labour government's conception of citizenship and political education – though these may be more deep-rooted than party political pronouncements. Further reflection on the citizenship ideals guiding the formulation and delivery of *Citizenship* can therefore elicit valuable insights into the nature of an ideal liberal political education.

iii) *Citizenship* and citizenship ideals

The pedagogical principles of *Citizenship* clearly chime with those of an ideal liberal political education, but there are serious concerns about its likely content and outcomes in English secondary schools. Although considerable notice is paid to reducing certain aspects of the civic deficit, perfectionist liberals will feel that the liberal political virtues may not be adequately conceptualised in the teaching material and could receive insufficient attention in schools. The growing influence of skills-discourse and the stress

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[539] I.Docherty, R.Goodlad, and R.Paddison, 'Civic Culture, Community and Citizen Participation in Contrasting Neighbourhoods', *Urban Studies*, vol.38, no.12, 2001, p.2244.

on employability in education make these concerns increasingly urgent. Final evaluation of political education in England will therefore turn on the aspirations for active citizenship which inform relevant policy-making. These aspirations are found both within the curriculum orders and the teaching material. This section critically examines them in relation to the 'Third Way' theorising of the Labour government, assessing their future prospects before restating the importance of virtues associate with responsible political engagement.

Citizenship and the Third Way

Third Way theorising in the UK has focused government policy on developing new ways to approach the resolution of pressing social issues, especially the growing civic deficit. In particular, Third Way protagonists have developed a variety of proposals for the promotion of active citizenship. However, the 'stakeholding' ideal of citizenship at the heart of these initiatives has attempted to reconcile civic-individualist and civic-republican ideals. This Third Way approach has inevitably influenced the ideal of citizenship found within *Citizenship*.

As we have seen, the conceptual coherence and attractiveness of political ideals and aspirations are important objects of scrutiny for students of politics and ideology. They also form a crucial focal point for policy-makers seeking to articulate systematic programmes for reform. Third Way policies to promote active citizenship have reflected civic-individualism by supporting consumer rights, skills-discourse, entrepreneurialism and volunteering, while also seeking to promote civic-republicanism through support for direct participation in political decision-making. The introduction of *Citizenship* has been no exception to this conflation of theoretical perspectives. But can such an artificial

congruence between opposing views of what it means to be a good citizen be sustained in theory and in practice?

Third Way theorists argue that for a social democratic government to construct 'a moral community' that can co-exist with 'a successful capitalism' then the promotion of divergent aspects of active citizenship are essential policy objectives.[540] This has become an increasingly important determinant of policy aims because the civic deficit has undermined what it means to be empowered as a citizen. The Third Way response to the perceived effects of the civic deficit has been to stress the need for developing a stakeholding democracy where citizens are 'producers of government, its shareholding owners and its customers'.[541] But stakeholding citizens only have a role in political decision-making where they have a relevant relationship with the decisions being debated. So for instance, as *citizens* (in a strictly formal sense) they vote in elections; as *consumers* they use local services; and as *shareholders* they pay local (and national) taxes.[542] Consequently, the extreme individualisation implicit in the stakeholding ideal of active citizenship undermines both responsible individual and collective political engagement.

Active citizenship presupposes that agents demonstrate moral character when participating in local communities and democratic decision-making, by exhibiting the virtues associated with responsible political engagement rather than through the preference maximisation associated with stakeholding. Indeed, the Crick Report highlighted that *Citizenship* should be based on a civic-republican understanding of

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[540] W.Hutton, 'An Overview of Stakeholding', in G.Kelly *et al* eds., *Stakeholder Capitalism*, London, Macmillan, 1997, p.8.

[541] A.Barnett, 'Towards a Stakeholder Democracy', in ibid., p.91.

[542] J.Gyford, *Citizens, Consumers and Councils: Local Government and the Public*, London, Macmillan, 1991, p.181.

active citizenship. So to what extent does *Citizenship* reflect perfectionist liberal aspirations for political education?

Citizenship has been introduced on the understanding that the right to share and participate in a civic culture must begin in schools. It is therefore 'an entitlement for all pupils'. This notion of entitlement is clearly equivalent to the notion that all liberal citizens require opportunities for the exercise of their right to be able to be significantly autonomous and resonates with civic-republican notions of active citizenship. The inclusiveness which the orders specify also includes a direct civic-pluralist exhortation to ensure that school provision 'reflects and values all social and ethnic groups'.[543] However, as we have seen there have been and continue to be a wide range of competing influences on the development of political education in England. In particular, we earlier questioned the attractiveness of much of the course material for *Citizenship*, highlighting that liberals are likely to be concerned that it stresses civic-individualism at the expense of the appealing aspects of civic-republicanism.

Civic-individualism promotes the idea of the citizen as a consumer, entrepreneur, worker or volunteer rather than as an agent with a moral interest in developing character through responsible political engagement. This highlights that there is a deep conflict between the roles of individual consumer or stakeholder and that of the public-minded citizen, moreover, viewing the public as simply 'an aggregate of consumers... by definition fragments the idea of a public as a public'.[544] The democratic 'forum' and the 'marketplace' are qualitatively different institutional forms with different imperatives.[545]

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[543] Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, *Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4: Initial Guidance for Schools*, p.5.

[544] S.Ranson, 'Towards a Political Theory of Public Accountability in Education', p.95.

[545] J.Elster, 'The Market and the Forum: Three Varieties of Political Theory', in J.Bohman and W.Rehg eds., *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*, London, MIT Press, 1997, pp.3-34.

The *Citizenship* course material clearly reflects the ideological tensions at the heart of Third Way thinking. For instance, it proposes a range of activities that would do little to assuage our earlier concerns about the possible over-emphasis on volunteering and employability. This civic-individualism was also reflected in the stress laid on improving the provision of public services. The participation that perfectionist liberals envisage is not simply a matter of engaging in civic volunteering nor is it equivalent to the promotion of consumers' or stakeholders' 'voice'. It presumes that citizens can display liberal virtues inherent in acting politically, by individually and collectively developing and defending political positions and diverse modes of flourishing.

The focus on civic volunteering and democratic consumption in the *Citizenship* teaching material reflects a one-sided view of the civic deficit that is not apparent in many of the recommendations made in the curriculum orders. This disjuncture between the orders and the teaching material being produced for *Citizenship* tends to support the conclusion that: (a) civic-individualist notions of good citizenship could influence its future development; and (b) that Third Way aspirations for citizenship require more careful explication. For many critics suspicious of the aims of political education, civic-individualism may be the most desirable outcome of *Citizenship*. However, such a pacifying and individuating conception of active citizenship may render children unable to later participate in the 'active, collective engagement that was part and parcel of involvement in autonomously organised grassroots community associations.'[546] For perfectionist liberals committed to the political virtues inherent in responsible political engagement, this is clearly not an attractive outcome of a programme of political education.

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[546] D.Chandler, 'Active Citizens and the Therapeutic State: The Role of Democratic Participation in Local Government Reform', *Policy and Politics*, vol.29, no.1, 2000, p.12. This pacification is also

The requirement for a full recognition of the contribution of the political virtues to living well entails that a liberal political education is ultimately based on a civic-republican ideal of active citizenship. Encouraging good citizenship thus presupposes an overall pedagogic approach based on promoting responsible political engagement. The teaching material for *Citizenship* focuses on a pedagogy that coheres around civic-individualist citizenship, such as respect for the law, democratic consumption of public services and volunteering. The pedagogic focus of a political education should be political participation and political deliberation, to enable pupils to continually develop and revise the liberal political virtues throughout their life.[547] The political virtues are not simply instrumentally contributory to a civic culture, but are an inherent feature of developing character and living well in a liberal society.

As we saw in Chapter Five, an appropriate learning environment for political education should reflect the ideal and actual nature of political debate. If a liberal political education is to generate serious political study, reflection and discourse then it must avoid simply promoting neighbourliness, charitable involvement or stakeholding. It must be conceived in such a way as to encourage the manifestation of diverse configurations of the virtues inherent in responsible political engagement, because these are integral to the development of character. Such engagement implies responsible individual and collective participation in politics and political decision-making. *Citizenship* should therefore focus on encouraging pupils to be reflective autonomous agents when displaying the liberal political virtues. This means that they should be able to

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evident in the proliferation of consultation procedures which substitute individual expression for collective decision-making.

[547] An approach which can link the ethics of moral character and the ethics of individual character, by stressing how the political virtues can contribute to the development of good moral character and a distinctive mode of living well.

develop an awareness of the vital contribution that responsible *political* engagement can make to their own flourishing and that of others in a liberal democratic society. A dedicated learning environment could provide pupils with an opportunity to gain such awareness and become committed to liberal democratic politics. Meta-theoretically speaking, it can inculcate certain key technologies of the self associated with significant autonomy.

Responsible political engagement presupposes a shared interpretation of some of the key political virtues of good citizenship that agents must manifest when they participate in the democratic processes. As a result, we can reiterate that the activities proposed in the teaching material for *Citizenship* to encourage civic behaviour (such as community work and democratic consumption) do not provide sufficient opportunities for the development of good citizenship. A liberal political education that seeks to stimulate the capacities for individual and collective responsible engagement would concentrate on promoting political participation and democratic deliberation. These aspirations for significant autonomy highlight the vital role that democracy can play in eliciting diverse ways of conceiving the good life. It also indicates that the evolution of a differentiated liberal culture should nonetheless be guided by the virtues associated with responsible political engagement.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This thesis has explicated a non-metaphysical perfectionist liberalism based on a liberal character-ethics. The doctrine is an important project because diversity in contemporary Western societies has engendered widespread liberal scepticism about the good life. Pluralism and scepticism have undermined the metaphysical claims to universal objectivity made by many liberal political theorists in the past, calling into question the promotion of liberal values and generating fierce debates about the limits of state intervention in the moral lives of citizens. Nevertheless, few liberals have adopted the language of character to address these issues. Yet the concept of character is highly pertinent to these philosophical disputes about the good life, especially as a growing civic deficit in liberal societies has lead to wide-ranging concern about the prospects for democratic citizenship. Indeed, contemporary liberals have been forced to re-appraise the philosophical cogency of their normative positions in response to each of these contemporary developments.

Impartialist liberals have proposed that the application of a principle of liberal neutrality between different conceptions of the good life is the only coherent means for liberals to render their political thought sensitive to diversity. By contrast, perfectionist liberals have claimed that renewed justification of liberalism must concentrate on providing foundations for an explicitly liberal conception of the good life that can guide political thinking and decision-making. This thesis has argued that an especially attractive way for perfectionist liberals to respond to diversity and the civic deficit is to view liberalism in terms of its ethical commitments and ideals as a political ideology. That is, to theoretically explicate what liberals 'stand for' *qua* liberals, in particular, by stressing the role which character, politics and education play within a doctrine based on a right to be able to be significantly autonomous.

Our first claim was that the centrality of significant autonomy to the flourishing of agents within liberal societies established a right to be able to be significantly autonomous. Our second claim was that the malleability of the self meant that agents could develop a particular type of liberal character to become significantly autonomous, particularly within liberal democratic political decision-making. Chapter Two outlined a liberal concept of character that reflected perfectionist liberal aspirations for significant autonomy, highlighting that character comprises complementary moral and individual aspects. This lead to our third claim, that the importance of the right to be able to be significantly autonomous meant it was important to promote those liberal virtues that can enable agents to develop diverse configurations of character conducive to living well. Chapter Three highlighted that a focus on character and its promotion was an important preoccupation for many perfectionist liberals in the past. Chapter Four explicated a liberal character-ethics that synthesised a range of liberal virtues which agents in liberal societies could display when developing their own configurations of moral and individual character. Moreover, this character-ethics highlighted that good citizenship was a necessary (though not sufficient) condition of good moral character - a contention made more urgent by the civic deficit within liberal democracies. Our fourth claim was that the promotion of a liberal character-ethics by the state could be edifyingly illuminated at a meta-theoretical level in quasi-Foucauldian terms as the inculcation of liberal 'technologies of the self' via a wide range of policies, particularly those pertaining to education. Finally, it was claimed that state intervention to promote liberal virtues should be guided by liberal principles of policy-making. The five principles associated with the promotion of a liberal character-ethics sensitive to diversity proposed here were: (i) the priority of autonomy; (ii) equal respect for agents; (iii) a perfectionist principle of

valuable activities; (iv) a perfectionist principle of legitimate state intervention; and (v) a commitment to moral and political education.

Chapter Four concluded that for perfectionist liberals the most important and interesting area of policy within which liberal technologies of the self could be inculcated was education. The key philosophical claims made in the thesis thus lead us to draw a number of conclusions about the nature of a liberal education

The promotion of a liberal character-ethics that is entailed by the right to be able to be significantly autonomous underpinned a distinctive liberal education for significant autonomy. Conventional character education could not fulfil this role because it does not pay enough attention to autonomy. The radical educational philosophy of de-schooling was rejected as an alternative approach to state education because it does not recognise that an education for significant autonomy presupposes the application of specific disciplinary methods by both teachers and pupils (not least because significant autonomy itself presupposes discipline). Furthermore, it was contended that the principles of liberal policy-making, in particular, the priority of autonomy and the principle of equal respect imply that disciplinary pedagogical techniques require sensitive application within a suitable learning environment. These processes could be illustrated in quasi-Foucauldian terms to indicate the theoretical cogency of a liberal education for significant autonomy. Indeed, the language of technologies of the self can illuminate the constitutive theory of the malleable self underpinning education and character-development.

A liberal character-ethics shaped the focus and the content of the curriculum within a liberal education for significant autonomy. Although much of the curricular content of this liberal education inevitably remained familiar, the priority of autonomy and the dual concept of liberal character generated a very particular way of configuring, conceiving and justifying the subject material taught within liberal state schools. First, the

critical importance of good moral character and good citizenship to living well entailed that moral and (especially) political education were the primary goal of a liberal education. This would be reflected in the secondary school curriculum in the teaching methods and learning environment adopted for all subjects, and through dedicated curriculum time for political education. Second, the distinctive importance of individual character to perfectionist liberals wishing to promote individual flourishing entailed that aesthetic and performative education were also important goals of a liberal education for significant autonomy. This would be reflected in the secondary school curriculum through the provision of certain statutory subject matter and through the so-called 'hidden curriculum'. Chapter Five also indicated that a liberal education for significant autonomy would need to address the 'life-management skills' associated with a capitalist society to enable children to develop significant autonomy.

Overall, the arguments presented in the thesis contributed to a robust perfectionist liberal doctrine. Its engagement with philosophical and political issues (such as diversity and the civic deficit) illustrated its sensitivity to specific contextual concerns and the democratic evolution of its concepts and ideas. This grounding in liberal culture and democracy permitted us to draw on and develop the normative prescriptions and ethical ideals of the liberal thinkers examined in Chapter Three. Hence by emphasising the inherent normativity of theorising we gave the doctrine a distinctive critical and action-guiding character. And in Chapter Six, a liberal character-ethics and an ideal liberal political education were used to assess the coherence, relevance and comprehensibility of the new *Citizenship* orders for secondary schools in England. The ideological influences behind the development of the orders and their implementation were shown to be in a state of considerable tension, with the actual delivery of *Citizenship* teaching perhaps likely to be driven towards volunteering, respect for

authority and democratic consumption. The possible marginalisation of the political education which the thesis showed to be central to developing good moral character remains a matter of serious concern for contemporary liberal theorists.

The challenge to develop a doctrine that is responsive to diversity, scepticism about the good life and the 'civic deficit' is one of pressing importance for liberal political thinkers. As we have seen, a perfectionist liberalism sensitive to these philosophical, ethical and political concerns embraces the inherent normativity of political thinking, in particular, by indicating that political theory can be attractively viewed as an enterprise of conceptual explication. The liberal concepts defended in this thesis focus the attention of students of political theory and ideology on the interplay between political ideas and ethical commitments within liberal thought. The thesis also made it clear that this method is especially relevant to developing a doctrine that relates to liberal society, politics and culture. Indeed, liberals generally should emphasise the link between liberal political thought and policy-making. And quasi-Foucauldian interpretation of perfectionist state intervention reminded us that the promotion of a liberal character-ethics can be given robust meta-theoretical underpinnings.

Focusing on significant autonomy illustrates that liberal citizens, democratic politics and culture only flourish where children are able to manifest virtues inherent in developing their configurations of good character. Indeed, a liberal education for significant autonomy is required to ensure children receive the best opportunity to develop their character in diverse ways by being able to participate fully in a liberal democratic culture. As we saw in Chapter Six, a liberal education for significant autonomy which is sensitive to diversity need not be based on encouraging a civic-pluralist ideal of citizenship. Indeed, it was suggested that the politics of difference (or identity politics) can be accommodated within a civic-republican ideal of citizenship.

Nevertheless, there are a range of important issues that diversity spurs within liberal education policy, which for reasons of space, are not explicitly discussed here. For instance, disputes about state-sponsorship of separatist religious schools and the merits of multicultural education have clear relevance to all liberals seeking to promote good citizenship within political education. These concerns and a host of additional philosophical and practical issues pertinent to liberal politics and policy-making provide further opportunities for reflection and research.

For perfectionist liberals committed to the right to be able to be significantly autonomous, a liberal character-ethics can systematise a wide range of their aspirations for individual flourishing. And its place within a non-metaphysical doctrine can exhibit responsiveness to diversity and the evolution of liberal democracy. A robust liberal character-ethics can also play two key roles in relation to political and policy-making issues. First, it can facilitate the advocacy of perfectionist liberal proposals in a range of areas of society which have serious implications for the opportunities and resources available to citizens. For instance, different types of economic redistribution can be introduced to give full value to the right of each citizen to be able to become significantly autonomous. Or public institutions could be restructured to facilitate opportunities for citizens to develop character by participating directly in decision-making. Second, a liberal character-ethics can provide a tool for criticising other liberal doctrines and the policy-making and politics of liberal states. For instance, it highlights that all liberals can and should openly explore the ethical content inherent in liberal concepts and ideals; and, it could also indicate how policy-making can bolster or undermine the depth of responsible political engagement associated with active citizenship.

These 'advocacy' and 'critical' roles of the perfectionist liberalism explicated here generate a whole series of further research questions: 'What principles of social justice

are supported by a right to be able to be significantly autonomous?'; 'What is the relationship between democracy and the evolution of a liberal character-ethics?'; 'What implications can a liberal character-ethics have for the assessment of non-liberal cultures?'; 'Will a liberal political education successfully encourage responsible political engagement?'; 'Can the use of quasi-Foucauldian language be applied to other projects of conceptual explication?' Answers to these questions can be derived using a wide range of research methods and techniques, but will lead perfectionist liberals back to consider the aspirations associated with individual flourishing and autonomy.

The relationship between character, politics and education will remain an important object of interest for liberals committed to the right of agents in liberal societies to be able to be significantly autonomous. The promotion of liberal virtues in a variety of policy areas and throughout civil society can enable agents to constitute themselves in different ways. Such processes of 'governmentality' thus have major implications for individual flourishing. Liberal political theorists and ideologists must confidently explicate their ethical ideals and their aspirations for significant autonomy, and be prepared to use new conceptual tools, if they are to shape democratic politics, policy-making and culture for ethically noble ends in the twenty-first century.

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