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DOES AN ARGUMENT FOR A DETACHED SCHOOL CONTAIN AN
INCOHERENCE?

Master's Thesis in Philosophy

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Tartu 2018

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Introduction

The aim of this thesis is twofold: firstly, I will argue that Levinson's (1999) argument for an autonomy-promoting liberal school – a detached school – contains an incoherence. Secondly, I will argue that there are two ways of solving the problem of this incoherence. By “incoherence” I will mean that Levinson's reply to one of the challenges to an autonomy-promoting ideal liberal school is inconsistent with the purpose of such a school – development of a child's autonomy.

In my thesis, I will proceed as follows. In the first section, I will explain why education of children is an important issue and how it is related to autonomy. The purpose of the first section is to show that a problem of children's education¹ in liberal states warrants further discussion.

In the second section, I will present Levinson's argument for the conclusion that a liberal state should be committed to the value of autonomy in the sense that a liberal state should value adult citizens' right to exercise autonomy. This section is relevant to my thesis since valuation of autonomy in a liberal state is not an additional commitment, but it follows from a liberal theory. Valuation of autonomy has important ramifications for the system of children's education.

In the third section, I will explain Levinson's conception of autonomy – the minimal substantive conception of autonomy – that is supposed to sustain a liberal state and hence buttress a system of formal schooling in a liberal state. These explanations are essential as one of the requirements of the conception of autonomy gives rise to a problem of incoherence, which is central to my thesis.

In the fourth section, I will proceed to explain Levinson's argument for the necessity of developing children's capacity for autonomy through an ideal liberal school – a detached school, which is intended to suspend parental values and convictions and provide a child with a plural community that embraces a wide variety of conceptions of a good life. A detached school would prepare a child for adult life in a diverse society of a liberal state.

Finally, in the fifth section, I will elaborate on one of the challenges to a detached school and explain Levinson's reply to the challenge. I will argue that Levinson's solution is problematic since with such a solution in place a detached school is incapable of developing children's autonomy. However, I will defend Levinson's solution by introducing an additional requirement to it which would secure the core function of a detached school. I will explain further possible objections to my solution and reply to them.

¹ I should specify that by “children”, Levinson means persons who are under 18 years old and by “education” is meant formal schooling (Levinson, 1999: 7-8)

1. Why Educate Children for Autonomy?

Before I proceed to present Levinson's argument for the conclusion that valuation of autonomy is essential for a liberal state, let me give a compelling reason for exploring the problem of education and autonomy in liberal states in the first place. Children's education is of vital interest for at least three parties: children, their parents, and a liberal state. Children, even if they do not yet realise the importance of being educated, need a good education in order to pave their way in adult life and realise their potential to the full. Most parents would desire a better education for their child so that a child could enter adulthood with knowledge and skills that are essential for making good decisions and choices, setting and achieving goals, and overcoming life obstacles. Of course, a liberal state is also interested in creating well-educated citizens who can contribute to a state's prosperity by sustaining its political structure, economy, culture, etc.

However, a question of how and to what ends children should be educated is a matter of dispute among citizens of a liberal state. Another important question is to what extent parents should be involved in the process of children's education and to what extent a liberal state should be responsible for education provision.

In her book, Levinson (1999) aims to formulate "a carefully conceived, coherent liberal political theory of children's education" that responds to the needs of children, parents, and liberal state (Levinson, 1999: 3).

Education in a liberal state should necessarily be committed to the protection of individual freedom. However, in case of formal schooling, there are two parties whose freedom is of interest: parents and children. Levinson's argument for a detached school stands against the view that a liberal state should protect freedom of parents by providing them with a right to educate their children as they wish and to offer a wide range of schooling options to parents. According to Levinson, the current system of formal schooling in liberal states is illiberal in the sense that it violates a child's right to develop her capacity for autonomy into an ability for autonomy.² Parents expect a liberal state to offer a wide variety of different schools so that parents can pick and choose a particular social environment for their children. Such a preferred school environment is expected to promote (or, at least, not to contradict) those values and conceptions of the good that children's families hold. In such a way, parents pass their values over their children not only at home, through informal education, but also with the help of formal schooling. While children do not yet have the ability to formulate their conception of the good, they become passive

² I will explain and make use of Killmister's (2013) distinction between a capacity for autonomy, an ability for autonomy, and an exercise of autonomy later in section 3 of this thesis.

consumers of the conception of the good preferred by their parents. For this reason, a state should provide children with a schooling system that does not necessarily repeat values held by parents and which develops a child's capacity for autonomy (Levinson, 1999: 50). Since Levinson gives a complex argument for the conclusion that children in a liberal state should be educated for autonomy³, I should explain what types of autonomy one can differentiate between and which type of autonomy is discussed in Levinson's argument.

In her book, Levinson argues for the promotion of individual (personal autonomy) by a liberal state. (Levinson, 1999: 22) It is worth clarifying what this type of autonomy stands for and how it is different from the other types of autonomy, namely political autonomy and moral autonomy.

Individual autonomy should be understood as "self-governance" – one's ability to control and direct one's life in a chosen direction. A person is autonomous in this sense if she possesses particular skills and capacities that allow her to ensure that she entirely identifies with her desires, decisions, and choices. An autonomous agent's actions are hence her own ones in the sense that they are not imposed upon her by external authorities. (Sneddon, 2013: 3)

Political autonomy should not be conflated with personal autonomy. While a carrier of personal autonomy is an individual, a carrier of political autonomy is a citizen. This implies that personal autonomy entirely belongs to an agent, and political autonomy of an agent can only be exercised in a particular environment, i.e. state and with particular external factors involved, i.e. voting, laws, policies, regulations, etc. So, a person exercises her political autonomy by participating in state's organisation, for example, by voting for state's representatives or particular laws or policies. (Sneddon, 2013: 4) Although personal autonomy and political autonomy should not be conflated, one still should not view these notions as entirely isolated from one another. Political autonomy should be seen as a realisation of personal autonomy within the political sphere. So, although Levinson's major argument is built around the definition of personal autonomy⁴, she will proceed by first showing how personal autonomy is justified as political autonomy⁵ in the context of a liberal state.

³ Since a preposition "for" allows for different readings of this sentence, I should specify that in this thesis, I will use a preposition "educate for autonomy" meaning autonomy as the aim of education, not the content of education.

⁴ In the third section, I will give Levinson's main definition of personal autonomy and refer to it as Autonomy-2

⁵ in the second section, I will give Levinson's preliminary definition of autonomy. I will refer to it as Autonomy-1. However, a reader should understand Autonomy-1 and Autonomy-2 as definitions of the same kind of individual autonomy with Autonomy-2 being a more detailed description of properties that an autonomous agent should possess to count as such.

Moral autonomy implies that the agent is capable of formulating and/or adopting of certain moral standards and acting in compliance with these chosen standards. For example, there is a person, Pat, who finds herself in the following situation: a taxi driver gives her too much money in change, and she notices it. There are several possible ways of dealing with the situation: to correct the error and return the money back or to pretend that nothing happened and keep the money. Pat, having earlier formulated for herself a particular moral standard which motivates her to be honest, realises that keeping the money would mean stealing it. So, she exercises her moral autonomy by acting in accordance with a moral standard that she has adopted for herself and returns the driver's money back.

With the three different types of autonomy being clear, I should specify that Levinson's view is based upon the notion of personal autonomy; however, for a better understanding of the argument presented in the following section, it is worth keeping in mind the notion of political autonomy as well.

2. A Liberal State Is Committed to the Promotion of Autonomy

In this section, I am going to present Levinson's argument for the conclusion that a liberal state is committed to the promotion of autonomy. I will proceed in three steps. Firstly, I will explain Levinson's assumption about the essential components of liberalism. Secondly, I will present Levinson's defence of comprehensive (autonomy-promoting) liberalism. As my third step, I will explain Levinson's view on a liberal state's organisation that is the most suitable for the purpose of promoting citizens' autonomy.

2.1 Three Commitments of Liberalism

Levinson's defence of the argument in question rests upon the assumption that liberal theories have three essential components: pluralism, a legitimisation process, and liberal substantive institutions. Let me elaborate on each of the commitments in what follows before I start presenting the defence of comprehensive liberalism.

Pluralism. means that in a liberal state, there exists a wide range of conceptions of the good life and various values that one can endorse. It is citizens who shape those conceptions and pursue them. In what follows, I will refer to this commitment as *good life pluralism* – GL-pluralism. If one is a liberal, one recognises GL-pluralism and accepts it on normative grounds, which means that GL-pluralism is a good feature of a liberal state. However, this element is also problematic since it is not possible for a liberal state to remain neutral to the content of just any conception of the good. Those conceptions of the good that violate some citizens' freedoms are illiberal and cannot be tolerated within a liberal state.

Legitimation process. Having formulated various conceptions of the good, citizens have to make them available for general "consumption" by shaping them into policies, rights, and freedoms. It is essential that citizens also agree upon laws since laws are coercive measures. Citizens of a liberal state should not be subordinate to a state without consent. Even though political power, by its nature, entails heteronomy (non-autonomy), in a liberal state, citizens autonomously consent to particular political authority. In such a way, citizens exercise their political autonomy – by authorising "those who would exercise control over them" (Sneddon, 2013: 151). So, for example, if a person commits a crime and gets arrested for that, this person understands why arresting her is a reasonable measure since she has earlier consented to a particular set of laws that prescribe punishments for crimes.

Substantive liberal institutions are designed to implement the results of the legitimation process and form a constitutional democracy. This element of liberalism is important since at the stage of legitimation process people could potentially vote for any conception of the good, even if this conception of the good is illiberal in the sense that it infringes upon other citizens' rights. If the majority votes for such laws and regulations, citizens from minority groups are not protected. So, to both implement the results of the legitimation process and to ensure that interests of all citizens are met, a liberal state provides liberal substantive institutions. (Levinson, 1999: 21).

It is problematic for a liberal to be simultaneously and equally committed to all the three elements of liberalism. There is a tension between them: given the fact of GL-pluralism, it is not plausible that citizens can reach unanimous agreement at the stage of a legitimation process. There would be reasonable disagreements among citizens. For a state, to design substantive liberal institutions means to seek for “overlapping consensus”⁶ among different conceptions of the good.

With the important assumption that a liberal state is committed to the above three elements being clear, I should now explain Levinson's understanding of how these elements are best unified by the value of autonomy.

2.2 Levinson's Defence of Comprehensive Liberalism

The task for Levinson is to give reason to believe that one can unify the three elements – GL-pluralism, a legitimation process, and substantive liberal institutions – with the help of autonomy in the best possible way. For that, Levinson, following Raz (1986), intends to show how recognition of the value of autonomy within *comprehensive liberalism* helps to resolve the tension between the three elements at least partially. As a contrast to the autonomy-based picture of liberalism, Levinson explains how *political liberalism* – as presented by Rawls (1993) – proceeds in an attempt to unify the three elements of liberalism while avoiding the commitment to the value of autonomy. In what follows, I will describe Levinson's defence of autonomy-promoting liberalism in more detail.

To understand how the two theories of liberalism view the value of autonomy, it is necessary to adopt a particular definition of autonomy. Although Levinson presents a detailed conception of autonomy at a later point in her argument, she does provide a working definition of autonomy that suffices for her purpose of contrasting the two theories of liberalism. So, at this point, autonomy should be understood as “the capacity to form a conception of the good, to

⁶ I borrow the term “overlapping consensus” from Quong, J. (2010) *Liberalism without Perfection*

evaluate one's values and ends with the genuine possibility of revising them should they be found wanting, and then to realise one's revised ends" (Levinson, 1999: 15). I will refer to this definition as Autonomy-1. Let me briefly elaborate on the building blocks of it. Autonomy-1 implies that an autonomous citizen of a liberal state, a member of a pluralistic society, can:

- independently formulate his or her conception of the good life;
- critically revise the formulated conception over time to make sure that he or she truly identifies with the preferred conception of good life;
- pursue the preferred conception of good life; however, reserve the right for future critical revision of the chosen conception of the good.

With this definition in mind, I now can explain in more detail Levinson's view of the autonomy-based, comprehensive theory of liberalism. She follows Raz (1986) and Mill (1974) both of whom, although in different ways, show how to partially resolve the tension between the three elements of liberalism with the help of autonomy. Let me first explain Raz's view. According to Raz, it is possible to deduce a commitment to substantive liberal institutions directly from GL-pluralism, whereas a commitment of liberalism to a legitimization process is explicitly rejected. This means that pluralism should be understood in a deeper sense. A liberal state has to satisfy the needs of a pluralistic society and provide citizens with the widest possible range of rights and freedoms so that everyone could formulate, revise, and pursue an independently formulated conception of the good. (Levinson, 1999: 15)

Mill's view is close to Raz's in the sense that both thinkers value autonomy; however, Mill has a different picture of pluralism which allows him to make commitments to a legitimization process and substantive liberal institutions consistent. For Mill, the participants of the legitimization process – rational, competent individuals – will unanimously value autonomy. Such rational individuals would genuinely realise that other individuals have an equal right and desire to exercise their capacity to form particular conceptions of good life. So, this is more of an ideal case when everyone in a liberal state sees an autonomous way of living as the only right one. However, the modern understanding of GL-pluralism implies that those conceptions of the good that do not embrace autonomy as a central value equally deserve to be present in a liberal state along with an autonomous conception of the good life. Rational people can well decide to opt out from an autonomous way of life. (Levinson, 1999: 15)

So, Levinson concludes that although autonomy is central to comprehensive liberalism (perfectionist liberalism), this theory of liberalism does have weaknesses. Comprehensive liberalism either neglects the importance of a legitimization process as a process which allows

citizens to freely and equally consent to particular laws and policies (Raz) or misrepresents GL-pluralism, neglecting citizen's right to opt out of an autonomous way of living (Mill).

With the weak points of comprehensive liberalism being clear, let me proceed to Levinson's interpretation of political liberalism, as formulated by Rawls, who argues that the three elements of liberalism can be fully unified without a commitment to autonomy. To reach an agreement among citizens as to what conceptions of the good are worth recognising in a liberal state through a legitimization process (taking into account the fact of GL-pluralism) and, therefore, to ensure and justify the presence of substantive liberal institutions, a political liberal should acknowledge the existence of the two moral powers that are peculiar to a human being and accept the ramifications that these powers have for the nature of power in a liberal state and status of a person in a liberal state. The two moral powers are a human's capacity for a sense of justice and a human's capacity of formulating a conception of a good life. (Rawls, 1993: 302) Let me explain what each of them means.

According to Levinson, to possess a sense of justice means that members of a plural society, participants of a legitimization process, are capable of accepting the so-called *burdens of judgment*.⁷ To accept burdens of judgment means that a rational citizen – even though she values her own conception of good life in the first place – can admit that her conception of the good represents only a single option among the plurality of other reasonable views. Moreover, a person not only admits the presence of other possible ways of living, he or she also understands what makes those alternative ways of living reasonable and why it is worth having such conceptions of the good in a liberal state. Burdens of judgment are differences in people's opinions that arise due to differences in people's prior experiences, etc. (Rawls, 1993: 56-57)

This is how the tension between pluralism and a legitimization process is solved, according to Rawls: there is no way to achieve a unanimous agreement among the participants of a legitimization process. There is a fact of burdens of judgment and for a state to provide a defensible ground for a legitimization process is to find “an overlapping consensus”⁸ among different conceptions of the good.

⁷ It can be objected that in Levinson's argument two concepts are conflated – “burdens of judgment” and “a sense of justice” which are similar but not the same for Rawls: “A sense of justice is the capacity to understand, to apply, and to act from the public conception of justice which characterizes the fair terms of social cooperation” (Rawls, 1985: 233). Whereas “burdens of judgment” is a part of being a reasonable agent. Although this possible inaccuracy does not directly affect the final set of arguments for a detached school (which are my main focus in this thesis), it is worth mentioning here as a prospect for future research.

⁸ I borrow the term “overlapping consensus” from Quong, J. (2010) *Liberalism without Perfection*

According to Levinson, evidence for the fact that political liberalism inherently relies upon the value of autonomy comes into view when Rawls introduces a second moral power – the capacity of an individual to form a conception of the good (Levinson, 1999: 19) Rawls argues that participants of a legitimation process have to accept that individuals possess capacities “to form, revise, and pursue” a particular conception of the good. (Rawls, 1993: 30-31) Presence of this capacity of a person obliges a liberal state to ensure that there are enough rights and freedoms that allow citizens to form, revise, and pursue a certain conception of the good. This is how a commitment to substantive liberal institutions is justified. No matter what particular conception of the good most citizens claim to be valuable at the stage of a legitimation process, a state nevertheless provides rights and freedoms to all citizens of a liberal state through liberal substantive institutions.

With the explanation of Levinson’s picture of comprehensive liberalism and political liberalism in hand, we can now see what is Levinson’s critique of political liberalism: political liberalism implicitly relies on the value of autonomy. Political liberalism cannot build its principles with no regard to the importance of autonomy; it presupposes autonomy. This is how Levinson reaches the conclusion that perfectionist state’s structure should be favoured, though not the strong perfectionism.

2.3 Levinson’s Weak Perfectionism

In this subsection, I explain how Levinson intends to take into account the findings about both comprehensive and political liberalism and formulate a more robust theory, namely, weak perfectionist autonomy-promoting liberalism.

Levinson shares Raz’s view in the sense that autonomy is a central value for liberalism; however, she argues that rejection of the importance of a legitimation process is too radical. The state should not be strongly perfectionist and underestimate citizens’ right to equal and free participation in a legitimation process. Levinson advocates weak perfectionism, which she interprets as follows: “an autonomy-based weakly perfectionist state values citizens’ exercise of autonomy, but does not discriminate against those who do not exercise autonomy in their own lives.” (Levinson, 1999: 21-22) So, under such a definition, a liberal state is perfectionist in its promotion of autonomy, but it also respects those citizens who do not value autonomy.⁹

⁹ There could be an objection to Levinson’s definition of her view as “weak perfectionism”. Liberal state’s valuation of citizens’ right to be self-governing would mean state’s neutrality rather than state’s promotion or discouragement of any particular activities or conceptions of good life – as perfectionism implies.

Perfectionism is justified because a liberal state's commitment to autonomy stems from the commitment to GL-pluralism. Citizens from a pluralistic society can formulate their own conceptions of the good life, revise those conceptions, and pursue them. At the stage of a legitimation process, citizens are expected to accept the burdens of judgment (which is a first moral power, in Rawls's terms), i.e. to admit that other citizens have a right for having their own conceptions of the good, and those alternative conceptions of the good are reasonable and worth respecting within a liberal state. This is how commitments to GL-pluralism and to a legitimation process are proved to be consistent with one another. In order to justify existence of substantive liberal institutions, citizens are required either to endorse the second moral power (which implies citizens' presumed ability to formulate their conception of the good) or merely to admit that this second moral power, or Autonomy-1, is valuable for some citizens. At the same time, citizens who admit that Autonomy-1 is valuable for others, do not necessarily have to value autonomy themselves. Liberal substantive institutions will hence provide the widest possible range of freedoms and rights to those citizens who desire to shape their life autonomously and will equally respect those citizens who prefer to opt-out of an autonomous way of living.

Since Autonomy-1 is Levinson's preliminary definition of autonomy, it requires more explanation as to what properties a self-governing agent should possess. This is where I proceed to Levinson's conception of autonomy that is supposed to unify the three commitments of a liberal state and serve for the purpose of developing children's capacity for autonomy within an ideal liberal school.

Levinson's view, as she describes it, would then be more clearly understood as "comprehensive antiperfectionism". (Quong, 2010: 19) Since in this thesis I am focused on the problem of a different incoherence – the one related to the role of a detached school – I am not going to elaborate on this objection more. However, this could be a matter of further research of Levinson's argument.

3. Minimal Substantive Conception of Autonomy

It should be clear from above that autonomy is a central tenet of the weakly perfectionist liberal theory advocated by Levinson. Autonomy-1 has served its function for this thesis and from here on I am going to focus on a more detailed definition of autonomy (Autonomy-2) that is central to Levinson's further argument for the conclusion that children in a liberal state should develop their capacity for autonomy. But before I start elaborating on Autonomy-2, let me make a quick summary of things that should be clear to a reader this far. Levinson is a comprehensive (perfectionist) liberal who argues that comprehensive liberalism (perfectionist, autonomy-promoting liberalism) is the only defensible theory of liberalism. Political liberalism cannot avoid valuation of autonomy and collapses into comprehensive liberalism. However, Levinson does not favour strong comprehensive liberalism; she advocates weak perfectionism which allows for opting out of the autonomous way of living should an individual decide to do so.

So, let me now proceed to explain Levinson's conception of autonomy which is both a foundation of comprehensive liberalism and would serve, as I explain later in this thesis, for developing children's capacity for autonomy within a detached school. Levinson sets out to formulate a *minimal substantive conception of autonomy*. According to Levinson, autonomy is a "substantive notion of higher-order preference formation within a context of cultural coherence, plural constitutive personal values and beliefs, openness to others' evaluations of oneself, and a sufficiently developed moral, spiritual or aesthetic, intellectual, and emotional personality" (Levinson, 1999: 35). So, according to Autonomy-2 an autonomous agent should:

- be able to formulate higher-order judgments over first-order volitions in order to ensure that she identifies with the desires she has, and decisions and choices that she makes;
- to have a sufficiently developed personality: possess deep commitments to people and causes, as well as a variety of values and cultural coherence that support an agent's personality;
- not have desires, decisions, and choices that in their content allow for relations of subservience.

The last requirement is what makes Autonomy-2 a substantive conception (as opposed to a procedural conception of autonomy) since it places particular limitations on the content of an autonomous agent's desires, decisions, and actions. Let me explain the components of Autonomy-2 in what follows.

3.1 Higher-order Preference Formation

In this subsection, I will answer the following question: what does it mean for an autonomous agent to formulate a higher-order preference/judgment? This can be illustrated with an example.

Suppose that Kim has a first-order preference to miss a dancing class due to tiredness and lack of inspiration. She knows that she is losing motivation because her dancing teacher is too demanding and strict. However, when she reflects upon her first-order preference, asks herself if she genuinely *wants to want* to miss the class, she realises that taking ballroom dance classes is valuable for her. Moreover, she does realise that both regular attendance and attention to the instructions of a strict teacher help to polish up her, Kim's, dancing skills. Kim regains her motivation and realises that she is truly dedicated to her hobby and her first-order preference is just a momentary hesitation.

To make sure that Kim's decision not to attend a class is autonomous, she needs to formulate a second-order judgment over her first-order volition to miss a class. To make a higher-order judgment, she reflects upon her values and makes her final decision.

So, if a first-order preference is "I want X", then a higher-order judgment is "I want to want X". At this point, it should be clear what a higher-order preference/judgment implies. Since Levinson intends to formulate a *minimal* substantive conception of autonomy, she needs to give reasons for rejecting a procedural account of autonomy, which is content-neutral.

Levinson chooses Gerald Dworkin's' (1988) procedural account of autonomy in order to demonstrate weaknesses of content-neutrality towards an autonomous agent's desires, actions, and choices. Dworkin describes an autonomous agent as follows:

Autonomous individuals are those people who are able to form and act upon second- order desires and volitions (which are desires that one wishes to act on), which in turn involves acting upon those first-order desires with which they identify and revising or rejecting those first-order desires with which they do not identify which they do not 'adopt as their own' (Dworkin, 1988: 15-17).

To illustrate the problem with Dworkin's procedural account, Levinson gives her example of two persons, Harry and Abner, who both decide to do what their mother tells them to do. Although they both decide to do the same thing – namely, obey their mother – they formulate different higher-order judgments over their first-order decision: "Harry declares, 'I will do whatever my mother tells me to do, regardless of the consequences.' After a similar period of reflection, Abner announces, 'I will do whatever my mother tells me to do because she is wiser than I and will help me achieve my goal of X.'" (Levinson, 1999: 27) This example shows, in Levinson's view, that Abner gives an explanation that does not contradict his status of an

autonomous agent: he gives a clear explanation of his decision and follows his mother's advice insofar doing so facilitates his pursuit of the desired end. However, one cannot describe Harry's behaviour in the same way since he explicitly rejected his responsibility for his actions and choices under mother's authority. This means that Harry has no intention to see what makes his mother's advice reasonable, his whole personality rests upon his trust to his mother. Harry is non-autonomous "under any reasonable understanding of autonomy", as Levinson argues (Levinson, 1999: 27). However, according to Levinson, both agents did reflect upon their decisions and formulated their second-order judgements over it; therefore, they both affirmed their autonomous status within Dworkin's procedural account. Levinson argues that Dworkin's procedural account makes wrong predictions about who is autonomous – too many people would formally count as autonomous, but this would be intuitively wrong – as with Harry. So, Levinson concludes that a conception that sets no prescriptions and limitations to the normative content of the agent's decisions, desires, and choices can too quickly grant autonomous status to those agents who agree to be mindlessly obedient to the chosen authority.

I can now proceed to another building block of Levinson's definition of autonomy, which requires an agent to possess a sufficiently developed personality.

3.2 A Sufficiently Developed Personality

In this subsection, I will explain two things. Firstly, I will explain what it means for an agent to have a sufficiently developed personality. Secondly, I will clarify what motivated Levinson to introduce such a requirement within her conception of autonomy. The second clarification is essential since it shows why Levinson introduces the requirement for a sufficiently developed personality within her conception of autonomy.

According to Levinson, being autonomous does not imply being atomistic. If a person chooses to be fully and completely self-governing at her every step, it might become impossible for such a person to achieve goals in life that require discipline or reasonable conformity to particular rules or authority. Among these goals one can name military service, learning a language, or mastering a musical instrument. It is also essential for a person's development to have deep commitments to other people, such as family members or friends. Having deep commitments to other persons helps one to develop an emotional aspect of one's personality: to understand what loyalty, love, and friendship mean. So, having deep commitments to other people or certain causes is the first component of a fully-developed personality:

...the adoption and development of deep commitments to one's friends or spouse, one's religion, one's country, to music or dance, to teaching and research, or to the virtue of honesty are important elements in the construction of an autonomous personality... (Levinson, 1999: 32)

Only a sufficiently developed personality can afford to choose and revise values critically.

So, possessing *deep commitments* to other people or particular reasons is one precondition for developing autonomy. Another two preconditions for possessing a sufficiently developed personality and hence developing autonomy are cultural coherence/embeddedness and a plurality of values. Let me explain each of these before I proceed to explain what prompts Levinson to incorporate such a complex requirement for a sufficiently developed personality within her conception of autonomy.

Cultural coherence (cultural embeddedness) is essential since "membership in a complex, and wide-ranging culture will help individuals develop a strong and varied personality" (Levinson, 1999: 32). If an individual is embedded in a particular cultural environment, then the individual is likely to establish strong commitments to other people, certain values or causes which is essential for a sufficiently developed personality that is required for the development of autonomy. Culture should be hence understood as "[a] pre-established but malleable normative structure" comprised of social norms that are peculiar to a certain culture or set of cultures. (Levinson, 1999: 59) Such a set might well include moral standards, patterns of behaviour, habits, cultural rituals or practices. All these cultural components facilitate agent's decision-making process in the sense that background culture narrows down a scope of options that an agent views as practically available to her. Therefore, an agent who finds herself in a situation that requires a particular response from the agent (making a choice or a decision) would first seriously consider responses that are compliant with her background culture. Such a limitation is necessary for protecting a person from being overwhelmed with too many options that are, in theory, available to her.

The complex requirement for possessing a sufficiently developed personality is indeed reasonable. Suppose, there is a so-called no-person – someone who has no commitments whatsoever and no values at all. It is hard to see how such a no-person would make any choice or decision in life. There would not be any touchstones that could have shaped a no-person's preferences or guide her through a decision-making process.

In addition, if one has a well-developed personality that is shaped in a solid¹⁰ cultural environment, it means that one's personality rests on a number of constitutive values and desires.

¹⁰ by arguing for the importance of a "solid" culture, Levinson does not imply that culture should be acquired from one source. As I have already specified earlier in this page, a requirement of cultural coherence (cultural embeddedness) can be satisfied by an agent whose cultural background is comprised of several cultures. "Solid" culture, in the given sentence, means that there should be enough cultural

Such a plurality is of crucial importance for one's development of the capacity for autonomy. If an agent comes to reflect upon a certain value or a desire, it is important that the whole personality of this agent does not rely on this single value or desire:

If someone is committed to a single overriding value upon which her entire identity is based, then she cannot question it, let alone reject it, without questioning or rejecting herself in a way that would seem impossible for most people to endure without undergoing a nervous breakdown or worse. (Levinson, 1999: 33)

The requirement for a *plurality of values* and desires is relevant to the Harry-Abner example from above since the example illustrates why Harry, according to Levinson, ended up being non-autonomous. Harry decides to accurately and obediently follow his mother's advice regardless of the consequences. If Harry's personality relies upon a single value – his commitment to his mother – it is unlikely that he will get to reflect upon that single value. His emotional attachment to his mother shapes and determines his whole personality. However, if Harry would have a plurality of values and desires, he would be less likely to decide to be mindlessly subordinate to whatever advice his mother (or anyone else) would give. Having developed his personality in as many different aspects as possible, Harry would want to see the reasons behind others' recommendations and instructions. With a plurality of values that sustain Harry's personality, he could have a variety of alternative standpoints from which he could assess his commitment to his mother. Moreover, a plurality of values helps one to adequately react and respond to criticism.

Having explained the first major point of this subsection – what it means for an agent to possess a sufficiently developed personality – I now should address the second question: what prompts Levinson to introduce such a requirement within her conception of autonomy in the first place. For this, I should remind the reader of the procedural account of autonomy explained in the previous section. There is a reason why Dworkin is more sympathetic to the procedural conception of autonomy as opposed to a substantive conception. In his view, substantive conceptions of autonomy demand from an autonomous agent to be free from deep human commitments, which robs life of a person of a vital component. Normative prescriptions for the content of an autonomous agent's desires, decisions, and choices rule out the possibility of letting certain commitments affect the course of life. So, getting back to the Harry-Abner example, Dworkin would, in Levinson's view, say that it is a natural thing for a son (Harry) to take his mother's advice trustfully. If a person is genuinely committed to another person or a cause (such a work, idea, religion, sport), then the person allows another person or cause to affect and shape her life in a particular way. It is hard for a person to live a fulfilling life with no commitments to

practices, social norms and standards, which serve as a secure foundation of a person's agency (Levinson, 1999: 97-98)

anyone or anything. Deep commitments such as friendship, love, loyalty to one's family, to life principles, or home surroundings are widely considered to be valuable. If autonomy implies constant emotional distancing from anyone or anything, then the self of a person would most likely suffer from incompleteness. There is a lot more to a good life than just an independent atomistic existence. For this reason, Dworkin preferred a procedural account over the substantive one (Dworkin, 1988: 21).

Even though Levinson does adopt a requirement for a well-developed personality shaped by a variety of deep commitments for her conception of autonomy, she understands “deep commitments” in a different way. Let me elaborate on this difference so that one sees why a procedural account is rejected by Levinson. Levinson scrutinises a concept of ‘deep commitment’ to make sure that an emotional attachment to another person, to surrounding, or a cause is not conflated with a notion of “psychological dependence”.

Levinson’s and Dworkin’s understanding of “deep commitments” are different, though. Let me add more details to the example from above to illustrate what the difference is. Suppose that Kim's mother has always wanted her daughter to become a ballroom dancer. Kim spent her whole childhood attending dance classes because her mother convinced her that being a ballroom dancer was valuable. Although she did not enjoy it much for various reasons, she still could not quit dancing even when she was already 18. Apart from endorsing her mother's value that ballroom dance was good, she also had an important value of being a good daughter. So, Kim did not want to disappoint her mother and never quit dancing. If she had decided to quit, her commitment to her mother – which was of crucial importance to her self – would have suffered.

One should not too quickly justify Kim’s decision to follow her mother’s advice as a case of her deep commitment. Her inability to gain more control of her own life is a result of her pernicious dependence upon her mother. So, it is essential not to conflate cases of codependent behaviour between family members or friends, and cases of one’s commitment to one’s family members or friends. It is up to Kim to organise her life as she sees fit, regardless of her mother ambitions towards her. Both Kim and her mother should build their mutual commitment on a different ground. Just as such emotional dependence, physical ill-being also prevents one from developing autonomy. When a person finds herself in dire straits, struggles against poverty and is led by a desire to survive, there is not much room for developing autonomy. Such a person is pushed to choose the lesser of evils to survive, and a capacity for autonomy simply does not have a chance to develop and flourish. (Levinson, 1999: 33)

So, although Levinson responds to Dworkin's concern that deep commitments are essential to a life of an individual, she defines deep commitments in a stricter sense. One should not be mindlessly subservient to any person or a cause. This is what makes Levinson's conception of autonomy substantive. There is a limitation to the desires, decisions, and actions of an autonomous agent. One cannot be mindlessly obedient to anyone or anything, no matter how deeply one is committed to a particular person or a cause.

Thus far, I have identified the normative prescription that Levinson sets for her conception of autonomy – an autonomous agent cannot be mindlessly subordinate to any other person or cause. The first requirement of the minimal substantive conception of autonomy is that an autonomous individual should be capable of making second-order judgments over the first-order desires, preferences, and decisions¹¹. An autonomous person has to be able to ensure that she truly identifies with her volitions. However, if the content of a person's desires involves self-enslavement (which can appear in the form of the earlier described emotional dependency), no such higher-order decision could justify that desire. Such a person would not be autonomous.

3.3 An Objection to Levinson's Interpretation of Dworkin's Procedural Account¹²

Before I proceed to the second part of my thesis, where I assess how the proposed conception of autonomy is supposed to transform schooling, let me raise an objection to Levinson's interpretation of Dworkin's procedural account of autonomy. This criticism is relevant since a properly understood notion of "formulation of a higher-order preference" might well let us defend a procedural account of autonomy as a suitable one for the needs of a liberal state.

To explain my concern, I need to refer to the Harry-Abner example again and remind the reader how differently the two persons gave their reasons for following their mother's advice:

"Harry declares, 'I will do whatever my mother tells me to do, regardless of the consequences.' After a similar period of reflection, Abner announces, 'I will do whatever my mother tells me to do because she is wiser than I and will help me achieve my goal of X.'" (Levinson, 1999: 27)

I argue that Dworkin's most probable response to this example would be that Harry's second-order judgment does not qualify for a procedural account either since he failed to provide a clear reason for his obedience to his mother. Higher-order judgments should contain reasons,

¹¹ So, even though Levinson rejects a procedural account of autonomy formulated by Dworkin, she still borrows preference hierarchy from Dworkin as an instrumentally valuable conceptual tool.

¹² Although this criticism is not directly related to the problem of incoherence that this thesis focuses on, it is still worth pointing out the mistake that Levinson makes about the notion of a higher-order judgment.

not mere repetitions of the first-order preferences. One cannot say “I want X because I want X”, it is not sufficient. To make a second-order judgment means to give a reason for the first-order volition: “I want X because X is valuable” or “X helps me in pursuit of a particular end”.

So, Levinson’s point that Harry would count as autonomous within a procedural account is false since Harry’s explanation of his decision does not suffice for a higher-order judgment.

3.4 Autarchy as a Necessary Condition for Citizenship

With the conception of autonomy proposed by Levinson being clear, let me proceed to explain “autarchy” that is supposed to serve as a minimal condition for citizenship that has to be met by an individual.

An adult citizen can well opt out from an autonomous way of life and be treated with equal respect by the state. However, there is still a need to differentiate between people whose agency is intact, who are capable of taking responsibility for their choices, actions and decisions and those people whose agency is severely impaired by a physical or mental disease. For this reason, Levinson follows Stanley Benn and introduces a capacity for *autarchy* which serves as a precondition for liberal citizenship (Benn, 1988). It is important that the reader keeps the concept of autarchy in mind since I am going to use it quite often in the second part of my thesis.

Being an autarchic individual implies that one can be conscious of herself as a "source of cause-and-effect relationships", takes responsibility for her actions, and, most importantly, is capable of making rational choices. An autarchic individual does not need to formulate her own conception of the good or her own strategy in pursuit of some goal – it is enough to be able to choose rationally between those options that are available to her. Although such requirements do sound reasonable and are not too demanding, not every person in a liberal state could qualify as an autarchic person. Those people who for various reasons, such as age, severe illness, or genetic traits, can be allowed to participate in decision-making neither at the level of their personal life nor at the level of a state, will not be able to satisfy the conditions prescribed by autarchy. (Levinson, 1999: 24-25)

4. What to Do about Children?

In this section, I am going to explain Levinson's argument for the conclusion that a specially designed autonomy-driven school – “a detached school” – is necessary for the state's developing of autonomy in children. To do this, I need to take the following steps. Firstly, I will present Levinson's argument for the conclusion that a liberal state must be committed to developing autonomy in children. Secondly, I will explain why, according to Levinson, parents do not have a right to educate their children as they wish. Thirdly, I will show whether a concept of Autonomy-2, which I have explained in the previous section, is conducive to generation of children whose capacity for autonomy has developed into an ability for autonomy.

4.1 Why Children Should Be Treated Differently?

In this subsection, I am going to explain Levinson's view that a liberal state must be committed to the development of a child's autonomy if this state recognises and values an adult's exercise of autonomy. According to Levinson's picture that I have presented this far, a liberal weak perfectionist state promotes the exercise of autonomy, but those adult citizens who prefer not to endorse autonomy as a value for life can well opt out of an autonomous way of living and retain their citizenship as autarchic citizens. A state is not committed to developing an adult's capacity for autonomy – this would be too demanding since a state would then need to evaluate citizens, one by one and decide whether they are autonomous or not:

The liberal cannot permit the state to decide on a case-by-case basis who is autonomous and who is not, for tyranny would rapidly result. Massive numbers of adults would end up being denied fundamental liberal rights – or would be if we treated them like the children to whom they turn out to be similar. Also, there is a real fear that if the state were given the power to decide who possesses autonomy and who does not, it could establish arbitrary and coercive requirements that would in essence give it total (tyrannical) power over all individuals' lives. (Levinson, 1999: 44)

So, a liberal state acts upon an assumption that all adult citizens are autonomous (as defined in section 1.3), and therefore, all adult citizens are in a position to opt out of exercising autonomy. Having done so, such citizens have equal rights as long as they are autarchic. Since children cannot be treated as autonomous (because they have not developed their capacity for autonomy yet), a liberal state cannot allow them not to develop autonomy – children are yet not in a position to decide this for themselves:

Given that children are viewed as not having the capacity adequately to judge their own interests, it would not make sense for the state to decide that children's interests lie in the development of a capacity for autonomy yet allow them to refuse to develop this capacity. (Levinson, 1999: 39)

A state can only develop a child's capacity for autonomy by coercion. Coercive measures towards children are present in a liberal state in the form of compulsory schooling and denial of those rights and freedoms that are granted to adults. Limiting a child's freedom, a state protects a child's future autonomy since a child who is acting upon capricious preferences and desires can harm herself and stunt her development of autonomy.

Levinson, however, considers an objection to her view that is raised by the camp of child liberationists. Cohen (1980) argues that both a child and an adult have equal moral status and, therefore, both a child and an adult should be treated equally by the state. Harris (1982) argues that there are many cases when children prove to be even more competent and rational than adults.¹³

I will not explain Levinson's answers to these objections since this will distract me from the main argument. Instead, I will borrow the distinction between a capacity for autonomy, an ability for autonomy, and exercise of autonomy from Killmister (2013) in order to argue that children possess only a capacity for autonomy. For this reason, they are rightfully excluded from a legitimization process and are denied those liberal rights that are granted to adults.

While a capacity is a latent potential, an ability refers to the immediate possibility of realisation. The exercise, finally, refers to the actual realisation. For instance, we can say that an infant has the capacity for language, but that in her present state of development she does not have the ability to realize that capacity. By contrast, an inanimate object such as a stone has neither the capacity nor the ability for language. An adult may have both the capacity and the ability for language, but may for a variety of reasons fail to exercise it. Moreover, a capacity is an all or nothing affair. One either does or does not have the capacity for a particular function (though of course a capacity can be lost, i.e. through accident or illness). Abilities and exercise, meanwhile, come in degrees, or may be temporarily blocked: while the child's capacity for language is (in most cases) given, her ability to speak will develop and improve over time. (Killmister, 2013: 358)

So, children and adults indeed both have an inborn capacity for autonomy. In this respect, they are morally equal agents. However, a weak perfectionist state presumes that adult citizens possess the ability for autonomy (which is autarchy in Levinson's terms), whereas those citizens who satisfy the requirements prescribed by a minimal substantive account of autonomy are exercising autonomy. For a child to become a citizen in the fullest sense means to develop her ability for autonomy – to become autarchic.

In what follows, I will rely on the conclusion that children are non-autonomous in the sense that they lack an ability for autonomy. A weakly perfectionist liberal state is paternalistic towards children for their own good and regardless of their will. This restriction of freedom protects a child's capacity for autonomy in the sense that a child would otherwise lose this

¹³ If a reader is interested in how Levinson replied to the criticisms raised by child liberationists, it is worth focusing on pages 42-46 of *The Demands of Liberal Education* (1999).

capacity. A liberal state's paternalism against children also implies the coercive development of a child's capacity for autonomy through formal schooling.

In the next subsection, I am going to present Levinson's arguments for the conclusion that children should not be educated according to their parents' convictions.

4.2 Parental Privilege over Children

In this subsection, my aim is to present Levinson's view on how parents fulfil their role in a developing a child's capacity for autonomy (even if parents do not value autonomy themselves) by proper parental care and support. As it should be clear now, in order to have Autonomy-2, one should develop:

- (1) one's ability for making second-order judgments;
- (2) one's personality (which includes deep commitments, cultural coherence, and a plurality of values).

So, in order to develop a child's capacity for Autonomy-2, one should be committed to developing child's (1) and (2). Whereas (1) is a responsibility of an ideal liberal school, (2) would be a task for parents.¹⁴ At home, a child is supposed to shape her first deep human commitments, acquire cultural coherence and her first set of values.

This means that a liberal state and parents are supposed to complement each other's roles in developing a child's autonomy. A state takes care of a child's self as a future citizen of a state (through formal education in plural community of a detached school that fosters autonomy) and parents ensure that a child satisfies the preconditions for a sufficiently developed personality at home (acquires cultural coherence and a number of values and beliefs that buttress a child's personality). Within such a picture, parents can well pass their own values to their children; however, children also have a place where they learn about other values and conceptions of the good, which means that they also learn to reflect critically upon values endorsed at home. Such division of responsibilities is unlikely to gain unanimous support among a certain type of parents in a liberal state since some citizens have an intuition that a liberal state should offer a wide variety of schools so that they, parents, could pick the most suitable, in their view, environment for their children. A preferred school environment is not supposed, as such citizens believe, contradict values that a child's family holds. This is, as a reader can see, the opposite of a detached school.

¹⁴ Of course, a task for a detached school would not boil down to developing critical thinking alone. A detached school would also contribute to shaping commitments, plurality of a child's values, etc. However, the point is that a family is a primary source of those capacities for a child.

Such intuitions of parents stem from parents' belief that they have a right to educate their children according – and strictly within – their, parents', conception of the good. A liberal state is expected to respect such a right of parents: "Respecting diversity in a liberal society in part means valuing parents' freedom to educate their children as they wish" (Levinson, 1999: 1). In addition, a liberal state is expected to offer as many possibilities for parents to educate their children, as possible, which means that a state has to provide various types of schools so that parents could pick one that suits them best and promotes exactly those values that are held by parents: "Schools provide a service or product to parent and student consumers. As with any business, therefore, schools should be responsive to their consumers' preferences and directly accountable to them." (Levinson, 1999: 1)

According to Levinson, parents do not have a right to educate their children as they wish. School is not supposed to be an extension of home values and beliefs – this violates a child's right for developing the capacity for Autonomy-2. A child should be viewed as a separate person, a citizen-to-be who has a genuine right to organise her life as she sees fit and valuable. Levinson does, however, present a set of arguments for parental right over their children and replies to them. Let me explain these arguments and elaborate on Levinson's view on them. This will help a reader to see how these arguments work against a child's autonomy and why parents cannot educate children for autonomy without state's intrusion.

The arguments for parental right over children can be referred to as "parent-autonomy-regarding" arguments. So, all these arguments, though in slightly different ways, establish a conclusion that parents have a right to raise their children as they see fit.

The first such argument is that raising a child is not an easy task for parents, they invest most of their time and resources into caretaking. As a result, the autonomy of a parent suffers to a certain extent. The state has to acknowledge parents' efforts and pains of caretaking and grant them with a right to raise their children in such a way that parents' conception of the good does not suffer. So, parents raise their children according to their beliefs and convictions so that a child entirely endorses those beliefs and convictions and does not bring disturbance to parents' conception of the good. By granting such a right to parents, state compensates a partial loss of parents' autonomy. Levinson replies to the argument: if raising a child is a heavy burden, then a state could well share the responsibility with parents and assist them in the process of child's rearing through preparing children for citizenship. In such a way, parents do have privilege in taking care of their child, but it is not that they have a right to exercise a total control a child's

future just because parents view upbringing of a child as a sacrifice of parental personal autonomy. (Levinson, 1999: 52)

Another argument favouring parental right over a child, formulated by Fried (1978) is that parents' pursuit of a chosen conception of the good is dependent upon child's complete and unreserved adoption of the same conception of the good (Fried, 1978: 152) This argument is similar to an example of an autonomy-fearing parent (from the last subsection) who cannot allow for child's autonomy in future. Levinson's reply is that such an attitude to a child does seem illiberal: "children are widely recognised to be individuals separate from others, and not mere extensions of their parents or their parents' interests." So, parents are not denied a privilege to be primary caretakers who share their values with their children; however, parents do not have a right to shield their children from other conceptions of good life. (Levinson, 1999: 53)

The third argument, formulated by Shoeman (1980), claims that parental desire to raise their children as they wish is a natural desire that aims at building a close relationship and establishing trust. Such intimacy between a parent and a child is an essential value to lives of both (Schoeman, 1980: 6). As one might remember from the first section, deep human commitment such as family ties is indeed necessary both as a right provided to citizens by (3) substantive liberal institution and as a precondition for developing autonomy. Levinson's reply comes out from the Harry-Abner example: Harry turned out to be extremely dependent upon his relationship to his mother. So, the cost of such intimacy is his inability to develop his capacity for autonomy, and therefore, inability to shape his life independently. The close relationship that is built on trust between a parent and a child is an essential value; however, such relationship should not resolve itself to psychological dependency, which inhibits child's capacity to formulate her own conception of good life in future. (Levinson, 1999: 55)

Another set of arguments that Levinson considers is a set that she refers to as "child-regarding" arguments or "pragmatic" or "psychological arguments" (Levinson, 1999: 52). These arguments demonstrate that parents have privilege, not a right in raising their children. According to one such argument, formulated by Kleinig (1983), a state should respect the integrity of a family in a sense that state recognises parents as primary caretakers and does not prevent parents from shaping a child's personality (Kleinig, 1983: 156). This argument becomes even more convincing if we recall the precondition for autonomy – well-rounded personality and cultural embeddedness. Levinson replies that state intrusion lies not in prohibiting parental influence on their children; it rather means that a state prevents parents from having complete control of the

agency of their child and be the only source of information as to what constitutes a good life. (Levinson, 1999: 56)

So, as one can see from Levinson's picture this far, parents and state are supposed to perform complementary roles in a child's upbringing. While parents, as primary caretakers, have a privilege to shape a personality of their child as they see reasonable and valuable, a state has to ensure that a child develops her capacity for autonomy outside of the family. In such a way, a child acquires a well-developed personality that is supported by deep family ties, cultural background, and a primary set of values – on the one hand; on the other hand, a child is supposed to gain a skill of critical thinking in a plural environment by actively engaging with people having other values and conceptions of the good. This is where I proceed to a description of an ideal liberal school advocated by Levinson – a detached school.

4.3 Detached School

In this section, I am going to present Levinson's vision of an ideal liberal school that is aimed at developing the capacity for autonomy in children. Let me give a definition of such a liberal school that is advocated by Levinson. A detached school is an autonomy-fostering school that is supposed to suspend those values and conceptions of the good that are held by families of students. Such a school is not intended to promote parental values and hence does not serve as a continuation of conceptions of the good that are valued by children's parents. Instead, an autonomy-fostering school provides a child with a plural community (gathers together children who have various backgrounds) in which a child, in an atmosphere of toleration and respect, develops her skills of critical thinking and self-reflection. (Levinson, 1999: 64). In what follows, I will use Levinson's term – "a detached school" in order to refer to an ideal liberal school.

If a detached school is supposed to develop a child's capacity for autonomy, its aims and methods should comply with a definition of autonomy and meet the requirements of Autonomy-2. As a reader might remember, Autonomy-2 requires three requirements to an autonomous agent. Firstly, an autonomous agent has to be capable of formulating higher-order judgments over first-order volitions – this is how an agent makes sure that she genuinely identifies with her desires, decisions, and choices. I explained how the higher-order preference formation works in the subsection 3.1. Secondly, to develop one's capacity for autonomy, an agent should have a well-developed personality. This includes having deep commitments to other people or causes, cultural coherence, and a plurality of values that support an agent's identity. This requirement is explained in more detail in subsection 3.2.

According to Levinson, a detached school responds to the first requirement of the minimal substantive conception of autonomy, namely, facilitates the development of a child's ability to reflect upon first-order preferences. A community of a detached school is supposed to be a plural community – it will bring together children and teachers from various cultural backgrounds. Plurality is essential since such a school environment will hence represent pluralism of a society in a liberal state. A child who is exposed to a rich variety of conceptions of the good on a daily basis gradually develops her capacity for autonomy:

Pluralism and critical reflectiveness can best be achieved in an environment which itself fosters pluralism and reflection. This means that children are most likely to develop the capacity for autonomy in a community whose normative structure is itself autonomy-driven, i.e. in an environment that is explicitly committed to and structured by the norms of critical inquiry and reflection, evidential justification, and mutual respect and toleration. (Levinson, 1999: 61)

In a detached school, different people would hold potentially incompatible views and, for all these people to engage in a meaningful discussion, the discussion has to encourage critical thinking and respect.

[A detached school] would also privilege critical inquiry over indoctrination; it would value beliefs and commitments which are held evidentially and authentically, and disvalue those held as a product of false consciousness; and it would foster an atmosphere of reflection detached from the constitutive commitments of the other arenas of the child's life. (Levinson, 1999: 61)

It is quite evident that a detached school responds to the first requirement of a minimal substantive conception of autonomy – a capacity to reflect upon first-order desires, decisions, and choices and formulate higher-order judgments over them. A child in a detached school finds herself among people whose values and beliefs differ from those of her own. Given that a detached school is committed to tolerance and respect, such a child feels valued and accepted; she gradually and surely comes to learn critical reflection. Having developed critical reflection, an individual can verify if she indeed identifies with her values and beliefs, being well-informed about the existence of other conceptions of the good that are equally valued in a liberal state.

A minimal substantive conception of autonomy has its second requirement – for a well-developed personality, which embraces cultural coherence and a plurality of values that sustain an agent's self. From the description of a detached school, one can see that a plural community of a detached school achieves children's ability for self-reflection through exposing them to a diverse range of other cultures and values. This surely broadens a child's horizon and might well enrich a child's personality in the sense that she might start considering to endorse values she learned about. So, a detached school is supposed to develop a child's personality in various cultural aspects and, in such a way, strengthen a child's self so that it is supported by a diversity of values.

However, a requirement for a well-developed personality views a plurality of values and cultural coherence as two essential preconditions for possessing a sufficiently developed personality and hence for developing a capacity for autonomy (Levinson, 1999: 32). So, for a child to benefit from an environment of a detached school, a child needs to satisfy the two preconditions, at least at a primary level, before becoming a member of an autonomy-driven community of a school. Children should, according to Levinson, be ready to gradually develop in a detached school “sufficient self-esteem and confidence to feel comfortable articulating their views in public and laying themselves and their views open to challenge – but also possess enough humility to take challenges to their positions seriously” (Levinson, 1999: 60)

Therefore, children should satisfy the two preconditions for a sufficiently developed personality within their families, at home.

5. Challenge for a Detached School

Having explained in the previous section how parents and a detached school are supposed to play complementary roles in developing a child's capacity for autonomy, in this section, I will argue that Levinson's response to one of the challenges for a detached school is inconsistent with the purpose of a detached school. I will focus on the argument for the conclusion that lack of cultural coherence (which, as a reader might remember from section 3.2, is a part of a requirement for Autonomy-2) can be compensated by a detached school through civic education.

To do this, I will first explain what is the challenge that poses a requirement for cultural coherence for a detached school. Secondly, I will present Levinson's solution to the problem of cultural incoherence. Thirdly, I will explain how is the solution proposed by Levinson turns out to be inconsistent with the aim of educating for autonomy. Fourthly, I will consider Levinson's most likely replies to my criticism. I will argue for two alternative solutions to the problem posed by a requirement for a cultural coherence. Finally, I will present further possible objections to the defended solutions and reply to them.

5.1 Lack of Cultural Coherence

As should be clear from the section 3 of this thesis, a minimal substantive conception of autonomy requires the following from an autonomous agent:

- an ability to formulate higher-order judgments over first-order desires (ruling out those desires that imply mindless subservience);
- a sufficiently developed personality (deep commitments, a plurality of values and cultural coherence).

In what follows, I will focus on cultural coherence which is an element of a well-rounded personality and serves as a precondition for developing a capacity for autonomy. For a child to benefit from a reflective environment of a detached school, a child should be first embedded in a culture (cultures). This is important for several reasons. Firstly, cultural coherence makes a child confident about her values, beliefs, and a conception of the good that is learned from parents. Confidence and self-respect strengthen child's motivation to participate in critical discussions in a detached school. Secondly, cultural coherence provides a child with social norms, values, and beliefs that a child would eventually learn to question, and, in such a way, learn self-reflection and critical thinking. As a result of reflection, a child might become even more confident of her

values, or would gradually come to abandon them. So, a child who lacks cultural coherence would most likely feel lost among a plurality of views and would not benefit from a detached school.

Levinson differentiates between two groups of children who may lack cultural coherence. The first group of children includes those children who are growing up in an environment with precious little cultural influences. These children do not come to adopt enough of social norms, values, beliefs, and rituals. In this case, children can lack cultural coherence because they are deprived of parental care or suffer from lack of attention. Another group of children includes those children who lack cultural coherence because they represent minority cultures and do not feel integral members of society. Such children might belittle their role in society because they have low self-esteem and might be even ashamed of their background culture under the pressure of the culture of the majority. (Levinson, 1999: 98)

5.2 Public Culture Taught by a Detached School Is a Problem

In order to tackle this problem, Levinson argues that lack of cultural coherence could be well compensated by a detached school's promotion of civic education. According to Levinson, education for citizenship in a liberal state would incorporate "a complex combination of commitments, practices, beliefs, rituals, etc., which help to shape the lives of individuals and communities within the state. These components of civic identity inevitably include cultural, social, historical, and linguistic aspects." (Levinson, 1999: 133) So, those children who need to fill a cultural gap and hence satisfy the precondition for agency could use "public culture taught by the school" (Levinson, 1999: 134).

This solution is problematic since it goes against the aim of a detached school – to generate children with an ability for autonomy. As a reader should remember from the subsection 4.3, a detached school is supposed to create a plural community, to bring together people from different cultural and social backgrounds. An exposure of a child to a wide variety of the conceptions of the good on a daily basis means that a child becomes well-informed about other ways of living. Such an exposure to alternative conceptions of a good life would stimulate a child's choosing capacity and an ability to formulate higher-order judgments. At the moment of making choice, a child would have a wide range of clearly presented options, which would also make increase a probability of a child's making an autonomous choice. A child arrives at adulthood with her eyes open.

In addition, a detached school should encourage and initiate the development of mutual respect rather than tolerance since children with different social and cultural backgrounds would

be actively interacting with each other during the learning process (Levinson, 1999: 103). Let me elaborate more on the difference between tolerance and mutual respect that Levinson points out. Mutual respect is different from tolerance in the sense that mutual respect implies genuine willingness to cooperate with a person who holds a different conception of the good whereas tolerance implies social inclusion, merely admitting that there exist other ways of living. Mutual respect means that people with different conceptions of the good genuinely understand (or have a motivation to understand) why the alternative way of living is valuable. To achieve mutual respect, people should be brought together and encouraged to cooperate with one another. This is what a detached school gives to children: they have a place where they, on a daily basis, not merely learn about other conceptions of the good, but come to interact with people who hold those conceptions of a good life. As a result, a child considers a lot more options as to what constitutes a good life and would be less scared to revise her own values and beliefs.

However, with the introduced solution to the problem of cultural coherence – to compensate some children’s lack of cultural coherence with civic education – such a plural community of a detached school stops performing its function of presenting the competing conceptions of the good neutrally, as equally valuable. If a detached school teaches civic citizenship and the content of learning materials includes a cultural component, this means that a school would promote a particular conception of the good. Culture-laden components of civic education would shape children’s views on particular ways of living that are presented as valuable for a citizen of a liberal state. As long as any school’s structure implies an authority of a teacher and requires some level of obedience from a student, a child would most likely take teacher’s words on trust. This means that culture-laden elements that are delivered to children through civic culture would be passively consumed by children in the sense that children would be unlikely to start questioning the conception of the good that is favoured by a detached school.

Although liberalism cannot tolerate every conception of the good (since complete tolerance would put a liberal state at risk), liberalism should remain neutral towards the competing conceptions of the good that exist in a liberal state. Such neutrality would not be possible in a school that favours a particular conception of the good. Those children who lack cultural coherence would technically satisfy the precondition for Autonomy-2; however, these children would not be in a position to step back from the conception of the good taught by a detached school and appreciate other ways of living seriously as it could have been possible without school’s teaching public culture. Let us remember the two groups of children who lack cultural

coherence (both of which I explained in subsection 5.1) and see how those groups are affected by the solution proposed by Levinson.

Children from the first group (suffering from lack of cultural coherence due to the lack of parental care) would come to fully identify with public culture taught by a school. Having done so, they would most likely conclude that their newly-acquired culture is a prime one – because the school promotes it. Such children would have no motivation to seriously consider other conceptions of the good held by other students – this is what stunts the development of autonomy. A child's options would become very limited, and a plural community of a detached school would be of no use.

Children from the second group (representatives of minority cultures) are supposed to strengthen their self-esteem and stop being ashamed of their native culture by coming to identify with a public culture taught by a detached school. By endorsing cultural values taught by a school, a child would become an insider of the culture of the majority and would no longer become alienated from society. Although this might well develop a child's confidence, a problem of being ashamed of a native culture still remains unaddressed. Veiling ban for Muslim female students in France could serve as an example of a country that pushed students to assimilate with the majority culture. Veil was portrayed as a symbol of an oppressive culture; so, banning it was supposed to liberate girls and help them adjust. However, there could also be girls who would veil not because they are made to do so by their families, but because they genuinely want to. (Narayan, 2002: 426-427) An essential feature of a detached school, I again remind, is a plural community that gathers together people with different backgrounds. It is worth strengthening children's self-esteem by making them feel accepted as representatives of their native cultures, and not by forcing them to assimilate. If children lack cultural coherence because they feel shamed of their cultural background, it is a task for a detached school to help them overcome this feeling, again, by making them feel accepted and respected.

Not only children from problematic groups lose their chances to develop autonomy in a detached school. Those children who have acquired the necessary cultural coherence within their families would be inclined to start viewing their cultures as less valuable as opposed to the culture taught and favoured by a detached school. If these children would come to abandon certain values passed over to them at home, this can well happen not as a result of self-reflection but rather because a school is more persistent in its methods and has a stronger influence on children. Also, it is not clear whether all children are supposed to take civic education classes with a cultural component; it would be fair to say that all students require knowledge on liberal citizenship. So, if

the class on civic education is intended for all students, those children who have their requirement for cultural coherence satisfied at home, would also be affected by school's favouring a particular conception of the good.

So, a plural community of a detached school stops performing its function with the solution introduced by Levinson. The moment a detached school's curriculum starts transmitting culture-laden components, all the conceptions of the good become second-rate in the eyes of students as opposed to the public culture taught by a school. This is where I proceed to Levinson's most likely replies to my criticism.

5.3 What Would Levinson Say?

In this section, my aim is to present Levinson's potential replies to my criticism of the aforementioned solution to the problem of cultural coherence. As I have mentioned in the previous subsection, the advocated solution – to compensate children's lack of cultural coherence by teaching them civic citizenship – is problematic in the sense that it is incoherent with the purpose of a detached school. A detached school's promotion of particular values and culture would significantly reduce, in children's eyes, the value of the other conceptions of the good that are held by other classmates. Also, it would reduce the value of the conception of the good that a child starts off with. A detached school would hence provoke child's uncritical rejection of conceptions of good life rather than encourage child's critical reflection upon them – as it claims to. The plural community would no longer benefit children by exposing them to a variety of equally respected conceptions of the good.

Levinson would most likely defend her view by arguing that values that are transmitted to children through civic citizenship are very thin in the sense that they do not prescribe any specific content and hence do not affect children's development of autonomy. So, civic education would not imply promotion of such very specific cultural elements as traditions or cultural rituals. Public culture taught by a detached school would be based on values that are as thin as possible (as close to content-neutrality as possible), and would not promote any specific culture-laden values or present particular ways of living as the preferable ones. This means that children who lack cultural coherence would satisfy this precondition for agency by learning those values that do not affect children's choosing capacity.

In addition, Levinson could argue that a liberal school cannot avoid teaching values that are essential to the preservation of a liberal state. The promotion of liberal values would not stunt children's autonomy since these values would be compatible with all the conceptions of the good

that are held by children. So, liberal values that are thin enough would serve as a common ground for all children. There would be no particular conception of the good that is favoured by a detached school since there would be no fixed conceptions of the good that are peculiar to life of a liberal. At this point, I should proceed to the final subsection where I elaborate more on this potential Levinson's reply to my criticism.

5.4 What Is the Solution?

In this subsection, I will argue for two possible solutions to the problem of the incoherence that I described in subsection 5.2. Firstly, I will argue that a problem of cultural incoherence of a child's identity could be denied and hence there would be no need to include a cultural component to the content of civic education. Secondly, I will argue that if a problem with a cultural incoherence of a child's personality nonetheless exists, it could be resolved if cultural components of civic education would transmit second-order values but not first-order values. This solution will be built upon Levinson's potential reply (from subsection 5.3) to my criticism.

Let me elaborate on the first solution to the problem of children who lack cultural coherence, which I described in more detail in subsection 5.2. Levinson argues that children who either suffer from lack of parental care and attention or represent minority cultures do not possess a coherent cultural background. There are not enough values, beliefs, or cultural rituals to buttress a child's personality. So, such children do not satisfy a precondition for developing a capacity for autonomy in a detached school.

However, Levinson also argues that cultural coherence could well be acquired from different sources. The main thing is that a child possesses a functioning framework of values, beliefs, norm, and standards which guide a child through decision-making and facilitates choosing among the available options. The cultural background does not have to be coherent in the sense that cultural elements should not be acquired from a single source. So, a cultural component of a child's identity could be eclectic and embrace elements of different cultures (Levinson, 1999: 133). Any child who lives in society would inescapably acquire certain culture that would be a collection of values, beliefs, patterns of behaviour, habits, etc. This means that a child does have a system of standards that allow this child to make choices and decisions. Of course, a child's cultural identification would not be coherent in the sense that a child could simultaneously hold beliefs that contradict each other. A child's system of values and beliefs would be flexible. However, it is hard to imagine a schoolchild whose cultural identity is perfectly consistent and stable – "coherent" in this sense. Even an adult person is very likely to hold contradictory core values or

beliefs that clash in particular contexts. Given that any schoolchild who is a member of society inevitably acquires some level of cultural background, such a child can be admitted to a detached school and develop her capacity for autonomy into an ability for autonomy.

If this is true, then a detached school would not transmit any culture-laden elements to children through civic education since a detached school would act on a presumption that every child in the classroom possesses a certain culture. This culture would represent a particular conception of the good that should be treated with due respect. Those children who indeed suffer from low self-esteem and tend to be ashamed of their culture should be supported by an atmosphere of mutual respect, as I have already explained earlier in the subsection 5.2. Civic education in a detached school will hence be limited to teaching children practical things about liberal state's functioning. These would include peculiarities of a voting process, information about rights and freedoms, tax regulations, etc. This practical knowledge would prepare children for exercising their citizenship in adulthood.

However, if a problem of cultural incoherence of a child's identity is deeper and there could be found a case when a child lacks core beliefs and values, and her system of norms and standards is extremely unstable, then such a child's choosing capacity (and hence capacity for autonomy) could stunt. Such a child would not benefit from a reflective atmosphere of a detached school.

For this reason, I will now argue for a conclusion that the incoherence of Levinson's argument could be amended by limiting a cultural component delivered to children by a detached school to second-order values as opposed to first-order values.

In order to do this, I should introduce a distinction between first- and second-order values which I borrow from Colburn (2010). This distinction is useful for my argument since it helps me to explain how to amend an incoherence of the argument for a detached school. I will argue that classes on civic citizenship could compensate some children's lack of cultural coherence and at the same time would not affect children's development of the capacity for autonomy in the way that I described in subsection 5.2. So, let me first explain what is the difference between first- and second-order values and then I will show how this distinction help to resolve a problem of cultural coherence.

First-order values carry a specific content, whereas second-order values are content-neutral. Let me give an example. Suppose, Kate and Ben are asked a question: "What constitutes a life worth living?" Kate says: "A life of a traveller is worth living." Ben, in his turn, answers: "Pursuit of those activities that make a person happy is what constitutes a life worth living". As

we can see, Kate's proposition carries a specific content – it is easy to understand what implies the conception of the good to which Kate is referring. However, Ben's answer is content-neutral – any person is free to place her individual content as to what activities are conducive to a good life. (Colburn, 2010: 50-51)

This is how values could be differentiated. A first-order value would give a particular normative prescription for what a person should value. Such a value affects a person's choosing capacity by limiting options significantly. A second-order value would not contain such a narrow content and would hence offer more options for a person to choose among.

Let me now return to the problem of the incoherence. If a detached school compensates children who lack cultural coherence by teaching them civic culture, such civic culture should only transmit second-order values – values that do not prescribe a narrow content to a child who endorses the value. If a cultural component of civic education is comprised of second-order values, then no particular conception of the good would be favoured and promoted by a detached school. Such civic education would facilitate children's development of individuality rather than conformity. This solves the problem of incoherence. Firstly, those children who lack cultural coherence would acquire it and hence satisfy a precondition for autonomy. Secondly, a plural community of children holding various conceptions of the good would safely fulfil its function of exposing children to as many ways of living a good life as necessary for developing their capacity for autonomy.

5.5 Further Objections

In this section, I aim to present two objections to Levinson's project of a detached school. They both relate to my solution to the incoherence of the argument for a detached school. Let me explain and reply to each of them in what follows.

The first objection is that second-order values, transmitted through civic education, are not completely content-neutral. They still carry content, acceptance of which would have particular ramifications for an agent's actions, decisions, and desires. Let us remind ourselves of an example of Kate and Ben from the last subsection. Even though Ben's answer to the question "What constitutes a life worth living?" does not prescribe a narrow content, it still limits the agent's choice. If according to Ben, a person should pursue activities that make her happy in order to live a valuable life, then this person should not consider pursuing those activities that would not make her happy. This means that second-order values would still affect a child's choice, would limit a range of options considered by a child. The very rules of participation in a detached

school demand from a child acceptance of such values as tolerance, mutual respect, and critical reflection.

Let me reply to this objection. This is true that second-order values do not solve a problem of limiting a child's choice completely. However, second-order values would limit a child's choice in a way that is different from first-order values. Instead of prescribing a narrow substantive content to a child's actions or decisions, second-order values would only channel child's considerations in a particular direction. Of course, one could object that an agent's choice would not be autonomous in the fullest sense hence it would be a choice among the predetermined options. However, in this thesis, I follow Levinson in her being a comprehensive liberal which means that a liberal school is allowed to teach such second-order values as tolerance, respect, and critical thinking.

The second possible objection emerges from the fact that a course on civic education that is intended to compensate some children's lack of cultural coherence is compulsory for all children, including those whose need for cultural coherence is satisfied. This means that a course should be:

(A) designed in a way that is effective for children who lack cultural coherence;

(B) should not affect cultural background of those students who do not need the compensation.

A detached school's commitment to both (A) and (B) makes the task of organising a civic education class difficult. School teaches the same material to all children, silently assuming that children who lack cultural background would naturally come to pick up the cultural component from the content of the course. However, this can be very ineffective.

Instead of blending the two things in one (practical material on liberal citizenship and cultural material), a detached school could well separate them in two different courses. The course on practical citizenship would be meant for all students since this knowledge is essential for all citizens-to-be. A course that is meant for children lacking culture should be designed in a way that allows informing the target group of students about cultural values that are peculiar to their native cultures but would also be compatible with liberal values. This means that those children who lack cultural coherence would be able to pick up the cultural component of their personality in a detached school.

Conclusions

In this thesis, I argued that although Levinson's (1999) argument for a detached school contains an incoherence, it could be resolved by promoting only second-order values through civic education. Such a prescription to the content of civic education both compensates some children's lack of cultural coherence and preserves the function of a plural community of a detached school.

In order to identify and resolve the incoherence of the argument, I made the following steps. Firstly, I explained what makes Levinson's argument worth examining. Secondly, I presented Levinson's argument for the conclusion that a liberal state must be committed to a valuation of autonomy – in the sense that state should value adult citizens' right to exercise autonomy if they desire to do so. Thirdly, I explained the conception of autonomy proposed by Levinson and reconstructed the requirements of this conception. As my fourth step, I presented Levinson's argument for the conclusion that a liberal state must be committed to developing children's capacity for autonomy. I unpacked the metaphor of a detached school and explained Levinson's definition of a detached school.

Finally, in the fifth section of this thesis, I presented Levinson's solution to the problem of some children's inability to satisfy a requirement for cultural coherence. I showed what makes the solution in question problematic. Having identified the inconsistency of the argument, I defended Levinson's project of a detached school by proposing a requirement to the content of civic education. I presented two further objections to the defended solution and replied to them.

Does an Argument for a Detached School Contain an Incoherence?

Kas detached school'i pooltargument sisaldab vastuolu?

Abstract

In this thesis, I argue that Levinson's argument for a detached school is inconsistent in the sense that the solution to the problem of cultural coherence of a child's identity violates the function of a detached school. However, I argue, this incoherence could be resolved by introducing a particular requirement to the content of civic education.

With this aim, I explain Levinson's arguments that children in a liberal state should be educated for autonomy. I show why, according to Levinson, valuation of autonomy by a liberal state makes the three commitments of liberalism – to good life pluralism, to a legitimization process, and to substantive liberal institutions – consistent with one another. Since a liberal state must be committed to the valuation of autonomy, a system of formal schooling must be such that generates children with an ability for autonomy. I explain what is the conception of autonomy that, according to Levinson, should be promoted within a liberal state. Since one of the requirements of the minimal substantive conception of autonomy poses a problem for an ideal liberal school, I explain Levinson's solution to it and point out the incoherence of such a solution. Finally, I defend Levinson's argument for a detached school by showing how the incoherence in question could be resolved. I present further objections to the proposed solution and reply to them.

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