

## Review of Taylor Chapter 6

## Notes

### Key question in Chapter 6:

Why is the ideal of Authenticity so “prone to deviation into the trivial”(Taylor 57)?

In other words, why is authenticity so often manifested in the debased forms of self-absorption and narcissism which deny horizons of significance?

### Taylor suggests three answers:

1. Self interest and survival  
Taylor argues that the struggle of the individual to survive has been a constant in history and thus this doesn't explain why there is “greater ease with which . . . External constraints can now be dismissed or delegitimated” (Taylor 57).
2. Broad social changes
  - Mobility inevitably increases the atomism of the individual and reinforces self absorption
  - The development of technocratic, bureaucratic societies lend credibility to and encourage the use of instrumental reason.
3. Reasons internal to the ideal of authenticity  
Here, Taylor sees two potential factors leading to debasement:
  - “The slide towards self centered modes of the ideal of self fulfillment in the popular culture” (Taylor 60). Think about the mid life crisis book quoted in the last chapter.
  - The movement in high culture towards increasing nihilism and “denial of all horizons of significance” (Taylor 60)

### Nihilism in High culture

Taylor argues that tendencies in modern and postmodern thought have tended toward the “negation all horizons of significance” (Taylor 60), thus empower the individual and individual judgement:

“In the end, it leaves the agent . . . With a sense of untrammelled power and freedom before a world that imposes no standards, ready to enjoy ‘free play,’ or to indulge in an aesthetics of the self” (Taylor 61).

From this “aesthetics of the self” we can see how the idea of the artist as creator parallels the idea of the authentic self as creator of itself.

“Since about 1800, there has ben a tendency to heroize the artist, to see in his or her life the essence of the human condition, and to venerate him or her as a seer, a creator of cultural values” (Taylor 62)

The connection is furthered by the idea that both artists and authentic selves will have to “struggle against some externally imposed rules” (Taylor 63).

Thus in both art and authenticity the creative tends to be emphasized over the moral.

Art and authenticity thus become seen as there own fulfillment (and completely determined from within).

Focus on this end alone denies all horizons of significance and focuses instead only on the individual's creative power (and thus becomes self determining freedom).

The problem, Taylor argues, is that the postmodern trend in high culture to deny all horizons of significance emphasizes one aspect of authenticity (creativity) at the expense of another essential aspect of authenticity (self definition in dialogue with others). (Taylor 66-7 this long paragraph is the key to the chapter)

This tendency leads to the narrowed and flattened world Taylor spoke of in chapter one, as it reinforces choice (creativity) as the ultimate arbiter of significance and meaning (Taylor 69).