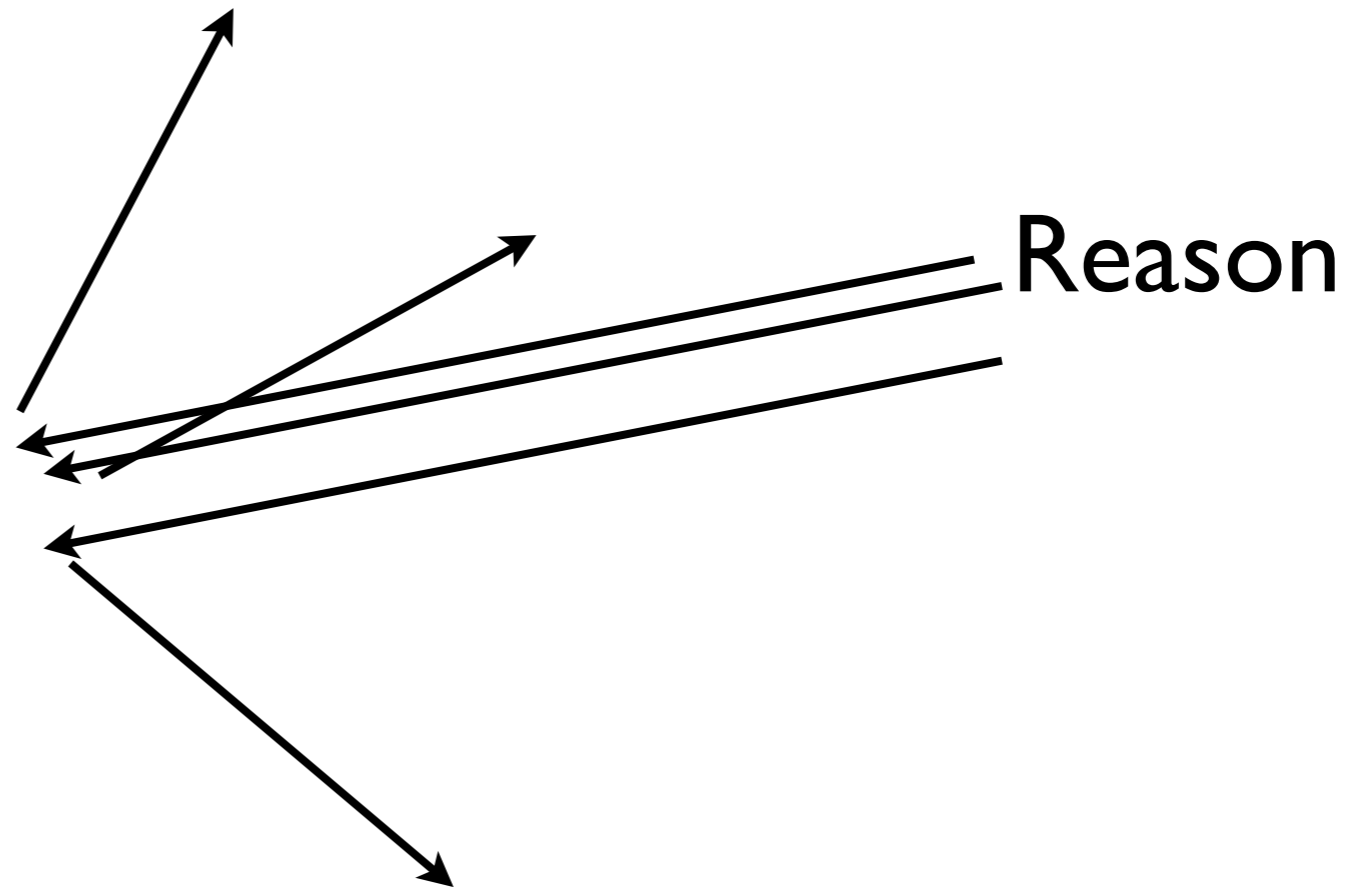


Taylor Chapter 5

The Need for Recognition

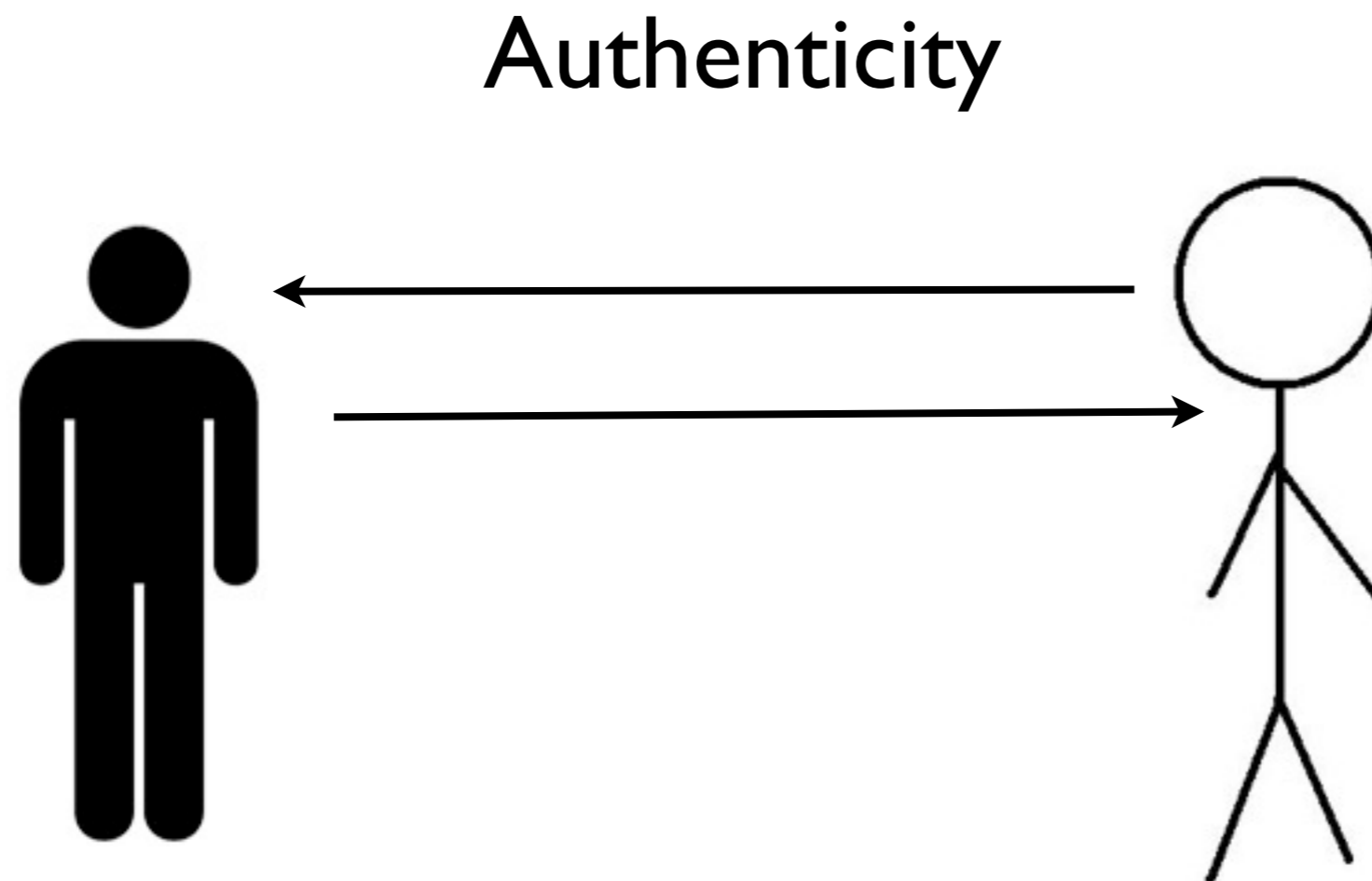
Connections to previous chapters

- Taylor's goal is to demonstrate that one can reason with people who are bought in to the culture of authenticity
- If everything is subjective reason is powerless - no conversation is possible because significance, right and wrong, meaning and everything else is determined at the subjective level



Connections to previous chapters

- If we accept Taylor's assertion that significance must be determined in relation to things external to the self (horizons of significance), then reasoned conversation is possible



Now that he has established that reason is possible within the context of modern authenticity, he seeks to reject (using reason) the idea that authenticity is possible if we treat our social and intimate associations in a purely instrumental fashion

This Chapter's Key Question and Argument:
“Can a mode of life that is centered on the self, in the sense that involves treating our associations as merely instrumental, be justified in light of the ideal of authenticity?” (Taylor 50)

Taylor's argument is a resounding “NO!”

Taylor uses authenticity in two ways:

- The contemporary culture of authenticity - This is the debased form of authenticity that is characterized by instrumental reason, subjectivism and narcissism.
- The ideal of Authenticity - This is the concept of authenticity as a moral ideal. It is this concept of authenticity that Taylor seeks to more clearly define in this book.

In this chapter, Taylor explores the conflicts between these two ideas on two levels - the social and the intimate, and attempts to demonstrate that the contemporary culture of authenticity fails on both levels.

The Argument

1. “Our identities are formed in dialogue with others, in agreement or struggle with their recognition of us” (Taylor 46).
2. While in prior times this recognition was based on social rank (which was exclusive), the modern notion of dignity demands equal recognition for all (universal and non-exclusive).

The Argument

3. Individual identity “depends on my dialogical relations with others” (Taylor 48)
4. Thus equal recognition becomes essential to the formation of identity and “its refusal can inflict damage on those who are denied it ” and thus can be seen as “a form of oppression” (Taylor 49-50).
5. Thus modern democratic society demands equal recognition of difference.

The Argument

5. But the basis of this equal recognition cannot be simply choice (as we saw in 4)
6. Thus “recognizing difference . . . requires a horizon of significance, in this case a shared one” (Taylor 52) Without these shared horizons “equality will be empty and a sham” (think of the number of hairs example from chapter 4) (Taylor 52).
7. Likewise identity forming relationships by definition cannot be seen in purely instrumental terms because “If my self exploration takes the form of such serial and in principle temporary relationships, then it is not my identity that I am exploring, but some modality of enjoyment” (Taylor 53).
8. Thus on both the social and personal spheres, the ethic of authenticity is incompatible with both subjective formulations of meaning and instrumental reason.

The Conclusion

“Another one of the common axes of criticism of the contemporary culture of authenticity is that it encourages a purely personal understanding of self fulfillment, thus making the various associations and communities in which a person enters purely instrumental in their significance. At the broader social level, this is antithetical to any strong commitment to a community. In particular, it makes political citizenship, with its sense of duty and allegiance to political society, more and more marginal. On the intimate level, it fosters a view of relationships in which these ought to subserve personal fulfillment. The relationship is secondary to the self realization of the partners” (Taylor 43).