

An Analysis and Evaluation of the Theories of Neutrality in the Spheres of Moral and Political Philosophy

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Abstract

Although neutrality as a moral and philosophical issue in contemporary world is studied in a theoretical sphere, but it has close connection to daily life of people, from family management and physician treatments to governmental functions and international relation. Neutrality is a controversial concept; for there are various theories in this field put forward by thinkers such as John Locke, Alan Montefiore, Ronald Dworkin, and Joseph Raz which all attempt to clarify this concept. These theories partly deal with the *meaning* of the concept, and some try to find out the *reason* of being neutral. Furthermore, some of these theories are linked with liberty, while some others are based upon equality. Although the main argument on neutrality which examine some important aspects of the concept, fail to suggest an inclusive theory, none the less, as evaluated in this paper, they are considered as positive steps towards achieving a comprehensive theory of neutrality.

Key Words: Neutrality, Liberty, Equality of Opportunity, Liberalism, Morality, Political Philosophy.

Introduction

Neutrality is one of the most complex and controversial subjects to approach in the contemporary world. In the field of philosophy, neutrality is on the one hand linked with moral philosophy, while on the other hand has a permanent connexion with political philosophy.

Although liberal philosophers in the arena of contemporary moral and political philosophy have given serious attention to the concept of neutrality and put forward theories about it, none the less endeavours to cope with this concept seem to be endless. Meanwhile, some people favour neutrality because of a commitment to another more basic concept. For instance, Dworkin's commitment to neutrality - as I shall argue - is based upon a prior commitment to the importance of equality. Among theories of neutrality, some are based upon conceptions such as equality, liberty and self-determination. Since there is no unanimity about these issues, all are engaged

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in different interpretations and in consequence, disagreement over the conception of neutrality begins at its bases. However, it is essential to bear in mind that attempts to deal successfully with the concept of neutrality present a progressive process; that is to say, recent theories of neutrality seems to be more convincing and satisfactory.

The purpose of this paper is, on the one hand to explain briefly the main theories of neutrality and on the other hand, to analyze and evaluate them. The theories of neutrality which I in turn shall sketch out and analyze, consist in:

1. "Leaving people Alone" from John Locke;
2. "Equal Fulfillment" from Alan Montefiore;
3. "Equality of Opportunity" from Ronald Dworkin;
4. "Comprehensive (political) neutrality" from Joseph Raz.

In connection with the theories of neutrality, two distinct fundamental questions should be borne in mind:

- (I) what does it *mean* to be neutral?
- (II) what are the important *reason* for being neutral?

Consequently, for instance, Locke's theory of neutrality: "Leaving people Alone", expresses what some people mean by neutrality, whereas "Equality of Opportunity", which has been presented by Dworkin as a theory of neutrality, expresses the reason why people should be neutral, whatever neutrality consists in.

Now as a first step, I start with what is understood in John Locke's philosophy as a concept of neutrality.

Leaving people Alone

One version of the doctrine of neutrality is considered in John Locke's political philosophy. Locke urges that neutrality consists in leaving people alone or doing nothing to harm them. Suggesting a separation of power between church and commonwealth, Locke declares that neither the magistrate nor the church, nor the individuals themselves, have any right to intervene in the way in which people choose to live. In the *Second Treatise of Government*, he argues that mankind is "naturally free" and there is no legitimate (earthly) power to put him into subjection, unless by his own consent. (Locke, 1980, 63) In the seventeenth century, what Locke as a classical liberal was looking for

was "a liberty to follow (his) own will in all things". (*Ibid.*, 17) Although as Locke's philosophical texts show, he does not use the word "neutral" in connection with the theme of neutrality, none the less it is in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* that he explains what could be understood as an idea of neutrality. He points out that: "no private person has any right in any manner to prejudice another person in his civil enjoyments because he is of another church or religion". (Locke, 1955. 24) He emphasizes that whether a man is Christian or pagan, neither violence nor injury should be offered him. Locke, then evidently appreciates that:

"if any man err from the right way, it is his own misfortune, no injury to thee; nor therefore art thou to punish him in the things of this life because thou supposest he will be miserable in that which is to come". (*Ibid.*)

According to Locke, civil rights and "worldly good of each other" must be protected from the intervention of commonwealth, church and individuals. "The care of every man's soul belongs onto himself, and is to be left onto himself". (*Ibid.*,30) It is crucial to point out that although Locke in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* argues for religious toleration and the separation of power between commonwealth and religious organizations, none the less he does not finish with this problem and goes further in order to suggest a framework in which every individual can find a private area to plan his own life on this view, Locke holds that:

"In private domestic affairs, in the management of estates, in the conservation of bodily health, every man may consider what suits his own convenience, and follow what course he likes best". (*Ibid.*, 28-29)

In so doing, you do not complain if, for example, your neighbor manages his affairs badly and similarly there is no ground for interfering when a man makes error in "sowing his land or in marrying his daughter". Likewise, if a "spendthrift" wants to use all his money on his pleasure in "taverns", let him do this: "Let any man pull down or build or make whatsoever expenses he pleases, nobody murmurs, nobody controls him, he has his liberty". (*Ibid.*, 29)

What should be noted here is that Locke's conception of neutrality is based, firstly, upon liberty as one of the elements of "civil interests". *

* "Civil interests" Locke calls: "life, liberty, health and indolency of body, and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, furniture and the like." (Locke, 1955, 17)

According to Locke, human beings are naturally free and should have liberty to achieve their own will. In consequence, they must not be controlled and each of them should have his own liberty to follow his desires in all things. Secondly, by bearing in mind the elements of commonwealth, religion and individual and relation between them, Locke endeavours to present as much as possible a comprehensive conception of neutrality in seventeenth century. For Locke's conception of neutrality, not only covers neutrality in relation to religious affairs where every individual is to be left alone to choose the way for the salvation of his soul, but also gives a private area to individuals to have their own interests and to plan their own lives. Thirdly, Locke's doctrine of neutrality is a negative one by which he prescribes not intervening with the arena which has been chosen by each individual in order to do what is interesting for him. Fourthly, it none the less must not be forgotten that man is, according to Locke, free in so far as his liberty is acknowledge by "the laws of nature". In other words, man has the right to practice his way of life, he is free to choose his religion, he is left to worship God in whatever way which he arrives at the salvation of his soul, provided that the laws of nature have not been broken by him. For, according to Locke, the laws of nature are the laws of God and even in the state of nature which Locke calls "a state of liberty" man has no liberty to destroy himself. Besides, "no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions". (Locke, 1980, 9) Thus, the state of nature is not "a state of licence". (*Ibid.*) Consequently, freedom of mankind in Locke's view is circumscribed to the realm within which the laws of nature dominate. However, church, commonwealth and individuals must obey (and it is assumed that they have an obligation to) the laws of nature.

In short, Locke's negative and limited neutrality indicates that being neutral means leaving people alone and not interfering with them; either in the ways they choose worshipping God and for the salvations of their souls, or planning their lives and selecting the means for achieving their interests.

Equal Fulfillment

Concentrating upon the doctrine of neutrality in the field of contemporary political philosophy, I start with Alan Montefiore and his conception of neutrality which is called: equal fulfillment. He defines neutrality "in terms of an agent's doing his best to help or to hinder to an equal degree all the parties concerned in any situation of competition or conflict". (Montefiore, 1975, 5) It follows from Montefiore's definition that one who want to be neutral, must have influence in a specific situation whether or not he exercises that

influence. Thus, neutrality, as explained by Montefiore is an intentional and causal concept in terms of its directed or directable causal impact, by one agent on the plans of another. To reply to a tacit question as to why Montefiore presents the above definition of neutrality rather than one in terms of "avoiding giving any help or hindrance at all to any of the parties involved", he holds that in a situation of conflict, for a potential neutral, there must be a way open to exercise an influence. He calls it a necessary condition for the concept of neutrality.

One of the crucial points in Montefiore's definition of neutrality is his reference to the way in which equal (rather than to no) help or hindrance to the parties, causes "prima facie difficulties of its own". These difficulties occur when there are cases in which the parties to the conflict have unequal strength. Montefiore gives an example in relation to this problem which goes as follows:

"two children may each appeal to their father to intervene with his support in some dispute between them. Their father may know that if he simply "refuses to intervene", the older one, stronger and more resourceful, is bound to come out on top. If he actively intervenes with equal help or hindrance to both of them, the result will necessarily be the same. If he wants to make sure that they both have roughly equal chances of success (that is if he wants to render the outcome of their conflict as nearly unpredictable as possible), then he has, in practical term, to help one of them more than the other. In other words, the decision to remain neutral, according to the terms of our present definition, would amount to a decision to allow the naturally stronger child to prevail. (*Ibid.*, 7)

Montefiore, then, adopts this problem as an "odd form of neutrality".

In connection with this oddity, Montefiore and Locke seem to be in the same boat, that is, this oddity also arises from Locke's definition of neutrality. For the father can remain neutral neither by intervening with equal help nor by hindrance to the two children in accordance with Montefiore's definition of neutrality, if he refuses to intervene and leaves the children alone. He also fails to act neutrally. Although the criteria of being neutral are different for Locke and Montefiore, that is, the former prescribes leaving people alone, while the latter suggests help or hindrance equally, none the less, both of them come to the same conclusion whereby in relation to the case of father, it is not possible to be neutral. However, Montefiore seems to be satisfied that this case can be

solved. As one way of resolving the problem, he conceives neutrality as an open room provided that the strength and weakness of the parties to the conflict are the same.

Considering the case of the father and his children, as accepted by Montefiore, there are three possible actions for the father:

1. refusing to intervene;
2. intervening with equal help;
3. helping one of them more than the other;

If the father adopts policies (1) or (2) the consequences are that the older child will be on top. If he chooses case (3) he will go against Montefiore's definition of neutrality ("... to help or hinder to an equal degree"). In consequence, the father in this case cannot be called neutral. Is Montefiore's proposition actually insoluble? Is there not any feasible way of dealing with the problem? Should it be counted as a difficulty for neutrality or for Montefiore? Let me temporarily leave the problem at this point in the paper. I shall return to this point later on.

The distinction between actions as neutral or not neutral has been argued by Montefiore. He takes the situation of a German doctor in Second World War as an example. The doctor whose personal commitment is to treat patients regardless of their ideas and professions, finds himself responsible for the care of patients who might influence the outcome of the war. The doctor who, for instance, encounters key Nazi officials as his patients knows that if he treats them in accordance with his duty, he will significantly affect the process of the war. If, on the other hand, his patients die or remain invalids, this obviously will have a bad affect on the S.S. army. As Montefiore demonstrates, accusing the doctor being non-neutral regarding the case of Nazi's patients is absurd; simply because he treats them.

In order to clarify the case above, Montefiore sketches out theories of intention and responsibility. He assumes that an agent performs two actions, A and B, which are so related that the doing of A has as a causal consequence the doing of B. Here, there could be two assumptions: on the one hand, the agent knows that he is doing A and wants to do A and knows he is doing B by doing A, but does not want to do B; on the other hand, the agent knows that he is doing A and want to do A and knows he is doing B by doing A, and wants to do B. This case Montefiore holds, is analogous to the position of the doctor. Because he knows that he is helping the Gestapo by restoring the patients to

full health, though he does not want to help it. Thus, such performances, according to Montefiore, should not be classified as intentional but causal. He emphasizes that:

"certainly there may be significant differences between cases in which an agent perform A knowing that it is likely to have as its consequence the doing of B, but where he does not himself want to do B, and cases where he either does A expressly in order that it should lead to the doing of B or where he at least foresees the consequential doing of B and is content to do it". (*Ibid.*, 12)

In so far as Montefiore's doctrine of neutrality has been explained, it is manifest that he takes for granted an absolute neutrality which is based upon "the rules" and the way in which an agent must conduct his actions whatever the consequence of the actions, the agent has a responsibility to carry out the rules. Just as a referee is responsible for conducting a game with regard to the rules of the game, a doctor must treat any patient in accordance with his Hippocratic oath, regardless of whether treating a member of Gestapo or healing the virtuous. Strictly speaking, Montefiore's absolute neutrality does suffer from the lack of background of values. It is, on this view, vulnerable because there are significant circumstances in which the necessity of background values is vital. For instance, take a case which has been set out by Charles Taylor also in relation to Second World War. He writes:

"imagine that Hitler is victim of a road accident in France sometime in 1943; a French doctor is called to the scene. He knows that Hitler's death will in all probability shorten the war, reduce the German will to resist; in short, cannot but produce good. Let me add, quite implausibly, that he knows about the S.S. extermination plans, so that he knows that every day of shortening the war counts. In addition, he has simply to introduce the wrong drug in place of the anaesthetic for Hitler to succumb, and he has a sure fire escape route".

Taylor, then, concludes that "perhaps more than half of the world would judge today that he certainly should in these circumstances go ahead and kill Hitler". (Taylor, 1975, 131)

Thus, it is evident that invocation to rules specially in some circumstances is not enough at all. There must be additionally a background of valuation in order to make decisions with regard to neutrality. Hence, Taylor seems to be right when he points out that: "...medical neutrality as any neutrality is not

absolute but assumes a background of overriding common commitment beyond the struggle". (*Ibid.*, 132)

Montefiore's causal conception of neutrality has been rejected by Leszek Kolakowski. He defines neutrality in this manner: "I am neutral in relation to a conflict when I purposely behave in such a way so as not to influence its outcome". It implies:

1. That neutrality is always intentional. When a conflict is unknown to you or when you have lack of knowledge or lack of interest, you are not neutral.
2. That you do not consider yourself as being a party to the conflict.
3. That regarding the same situation, neutrality and impartiality are incompatible. If you are impartial in a conflict it indicates that you intervene in it in order to influence its outcome, but it does not mean that you are neutral.
4. That the concept of neutrality has no material values, but it is "a formal characteristic of behaviour". (Kolakowski, 1975, 73)

"The reason why", Kolakowski writes:

"I am not altogether satisfied with the definition proposed by Montefiore (helping or hindering both sides equally) is because it seems to allow of using the same term for variety of opposed to each other both in content and in motivations in force of one and the same conflict". (*Ibid.*)

For instance in the case of war between two states, a certain state may sell arms to both sides of the conflict, only for the sake of selling arms or continuing the war and weakening both sides. This state may refuse to sell arms to both parties, because it has pacific reasons or because making peace at this moment is profitable to it. For Kolakowski, it is inconvenient to treat all these cases as equal under the category of neutrality. He asserts that selling arms to both states at war with each other is "to actively involved in the conflict" that is to influence its outcome and consequently to put an end to neutrality.

Considering the rights and the wrongs of neutrality, by formulating general criteria, Kolakowski does not deny his anxiety. He confesses that making such formulation, if it is not impossible, is very difficult. He says:

"it is very easy to find example where neutrality is morally inadmissible (for example if a woman is being raped in my presence). But we are not justified in concluding, by multiplying such example, that neutrality is necessarily to be condemned". (*Ibid.*, 74-75)

As mentioned earlier, Montefiore's doctrine of neutrality is not comprehensive, because it is imprisoned within rules regardless of the necessity of background values especially in some crucial circumstances; like the case which has been explained by Taylor whereby the doctor has a duty to kill Hitler. Moreover, his definition of neutrality is so limited that it cannot be used for some cases which it should cover. Remember the case of father and his children in which, in accordance with Montefiore's definition of neutrality (to help or to hinder equally) there remains no way for the father to be neutral.

I now turn to the third theory of neutrality which is specified as equality of opportunity.

Equality of opportunity

As mentioned previously, in relation to the theories of neutrality there arise two basic crucial questions: first, what does it *mean* to be neutral? Second, what are the important *reasons* for being neutral? In arguing Ronald Dworkin's doctrine of neutrality, we move away from the first question towards the second by asking: why we should engage in neutrality? Referring to the first question we understood that what, for instance, Locke means by being neutral is leaving people alone. Dworkin's theory of neutrality is involved with the reason for being neutral. His doctrine of neutrality is based upon what he has constructed as a theory of equality. As explained by Dworkin, there are two elements which can be seen in any coherent political program: constitutive political positions that "are valued for their own sake" and derivative positions that "are valued as strategies, as means of achieving the constitutive positions". (Dworkin, 1986, 183)

According to Dworkin, it is essential to distinguish between two different principle of neutrality:

"the first requires that the government treat all those in its charge *as equal*; that is, as entitled to its equal concern and respect . . . The second principle requires that the government treat all those in its charge *equally*

in the distribution of some resource of opportunity, or at least work to secure the state of affairs in which they all are equal or more equal in that respect". (*Ibid.*, 190)

As illustrated by Dworkin, sometimes it is possible to treat people equally as the only way to treat them as equals, but sometimes not. For instance, suppose there are two equally populous areas damaged by floods; and suppose there is a limited amount of emergency relief available. If the government wants to treat the inhabitants of both areas as equal, it must give more aid to the more demolished area rather than "splitting the available funds equally". (*Ibid.*)

A fundamental question for Dworkin is what does it mean for the government to treat its citizens as equals. Dworkin suggested two fundamentally different ways to answer the question. The first is that government must be neutral on what might be called the question of the good life. The second way holds that the government cannot treat its citizens as equal human beings because of the lack of a theory which sets out what human beings ought to be, then the government cannot be neutral. The first theory of equality, according to Dworkin, assumes that political decisions must be, so far as possible, independent of any particular conception of the good life. (*Ibid.*, 191) If the government prefers one conception of the good to another, then since the citizens of a society differ in their conceptions, the claim that it treats the citizens as equal is absurd. The second theory argues, on the contrary, that if treating a person as an equal means treating him the way the good or truly wise person would wish to be treated, then the content of equal treatment cannot be seen independently from theories of the good for man or the good of life. On this view, "good government consists in fostering or at least recognizing good lives". (*Ibid.*) In relation to these theories, Dworkin appreciates that liberalism takes as its constitutive political morality, the first conception of equality. (*Ibid.*, 192)

Concentrating on his conception of neutrality, Dworkin explains two basic forms of liberalism. Liberalism which he claims is based on neutrality, holds the fundamental idea that "government must not take sides on moral issues and it supports only such egalitarian measures as can be shown to be the result of that principle". (*Ibid.*, 205) Liberalism based on equality takes as fundamental that "government treat its citizens as equals and insists on moral neutrality only to the degree that equality requires it" (*Ibid.*)

Liberalism based on neutrality has been rejected by Dworkin because firstly he says, it finds its most natural defense in some forms of moral skepticism; secondly, it is vulnerable to the charge that liberalism is a negative theory for uncommitted people; thirdly it does not offer effective argument against utilitarian and other contemporary justifications for economic inequality and therefore suffers from a lack of philosophical support. In contrast with this conception of liberalism, according to Dworkin, liberalism based on equality suffers from neither of these defects. It possesses a positive commitment to an egalitarian morality. Emphasizing that the main principles of liberalism are based upon equality, Dworkin holds that this form of liberalism insists that government must treat people as equals. "I must impose no sacrifice or constraint on any citizen in virtue of an argument that the citizen could not accept without abandoning his sense of his equal worth". (*Ibid.*) Since no self-respecting person believes the way which he chooses as most valuable for his life can be base or degrading, it follows that liberals should be opposed to the moralism of the New Right. Hence, liberalism based on equality, in Dworkin's view, justifies "The traditional liberal principle that government should not enforce private morality of his sort". (*Ibid.*) In addition to its social dimension, liberalism based on equality also has an economic perspective. "It insist on an economic system in which no citizen has less than an equal share of the community's resources just in order that others may have more of what he lacks". (*Ibid.*) While, according to Dworkin, equality as the basis of neutrality has such economic aspects, is it not right for one to argue that Dworkin's theory of neutrality is based upon a materialistic foundation?

Amongst critics of Dworkin, Patrick Neal argues that Dworkin's conception of liberalism is ultimately indefensible, because it is logically and existentially impossible for governments to be neutral on the question of the good life. Neal quotes Dworkin's words that:

"the government cannot be neutral on that question (the good life) because it cannot treat its citizens as equal human beings without a theory of what human beings ought to do". (*Ibid.*, 191)

Neal explains that the verb "can not" used twice in this passage may be understood in either a moral or logical sense. In the moral sense "can not" means "ought not to" while in the logical sense it denotes impossibility. Neal, deduces that Dworkin clearly uses it in the moral sense; namely: "the government ought not to be neutral on the question of the good life, because

to do so would not be to treat citizens as equals, on this conception of equality". If "can not" were used in the logical sense in the passage, according to Neal, there is no question of logical impossibility here. Thus, Dworkin's neutrality thesis would fail by his own criteria. "For", Neal argues, "his conception of liberal equality to be defensible, it must be logically possible for government to be neutral on the question of the good life; otherwise, it would be otiose to raise the question of whether it ought to be neutral". (Neal, 1985, 670)

Neal takes for granted that it is logically impossible for any government, whether liberal or not, to act in such a neutral manner. Governments play a role in maintaining a form of social life, (and hence they necessarily prevent the development of alternative forms). They also play a role in forming popular perceptions of the good life through the mechanisms of the socialization process. Consequently, they logically cannot be neutral on the question of the good life. "I should think it evident", Neal writes, "that no society can be neutral on the question of how to live, for societies are ways of living". (*Ibid.*, 671)

It was explained previously that Dworkin distinguishes between two different principles of equality: treating people *as equals* and treating them *equally*. John Harris has criticized these principles with reference to Dworkin's doctrine of neutrality. He sets out his criticism with an example:

"imagine that we, our nation, are bystanders to a conflict involving a large power that wishes to annexe a smaller one, how should we behave if we wish to be neutral? On the present view we should take into account what each has to loose and, as with Dworkin's children, did the one whose very existence is threatened. But a concept of neutrality which required us always to aid the weaker party would prove unacceptable to all but weaker parties. It could hardly be adopted as a rule to be observed by all neutrals in international conflict". (Harris, 1980, 133)

Some points should be noted here. Firstly, Harris objects that Dworkin's conception of neutrality aids the one who is weaker, but he suggests no alternative. Secondly, he mentions it is unacceptable to all but weaker parties. On this view, he seems to adopt categories of "acceptability" or "unacceptability" as criteria of the validity of conceptions. Thirdly, by alleging that Dworkin's conception of neutrality which aids the weaker party could hardly be adopted by all neutral parties in international conflicts, he again falls

into former difficulty; that is, he bears in mind acceptability as a criterion to validate a concept.

In evaluating Montefiore's conception of neutrality, in the case of the father and his children with different strength, it was explained that Montefiore calls it as an odd form of neutrality. According to Montefiore's definition of neutrality (help or to hinder to an equal degree) the father cannot in this case to be neutral because he must either refuse to intervene or intervene with equal help, or help one of them more than the other. Now, if we accept Dworkin's distinction of two principles of equality, it seems to be possible to avoid what caused difficulty for Montefiore. We can say the father could be neutral by treating his children *as equal*, that is, to help the weaker child.

Now, according to Dworkin's distinction between two ways of characterizing of equality, is it right if an agent takes the side of an important person rather than an ordinary one in order to be neutral? To illuminate the presupposition, let me give an example. Imagine that in the case of war there is a temporary medical camp near the battlefield with one doctor and two nurses. No sooner is a wounded soldier being carried into the camp than they encounter the commander-in-chief who is also wounded. Both of them need to be operated on immediately, otherwise there will be the danger of death. There is no other camp nearby and no helicopter to transfer them to the nearest hospital. Now, in this case what should the doctor do to act neutrally? With regard to his professional duty and responsibility, he must first operate on the soldier, for he was removed to the camp earlier. If he do so, at least he will save the life of an ordinary soldier. But it could be a dangerous risk, because if the commander-in-chief dies, the fate of the war and the life of thousands of members of the army will be at stake. In this circumstance, if the doctor takes the side of the more important, namely the commander-in-chief, he will treat them as equal. Undoubtedly, in this case he ought not to treat them equally.

Although, by and large, Dworkin has constructed an ingenious theory of neutrality, none the less, it suffers from some difficulties. He accepts liberalism based on equality, whereby government treats its citizens as equals and insists on moral neutrality only to the degree that equality requires it. He avoids adopting liberalism based on neutrality because he holds that it collapses into moral skepticism. Now the fundamental question is how and why does he takes for granted that the equality thesis itself is immune from moral skepticism? Why when liberalism is based on neutrality does it suffer from skepticism, but while it is based on equality it does not? As long as the basis of

Dworkin's doctrine of neutrality, namely his conception of equality is problematic, the force of his theory of neutrality will also remain problematic.

Comprehensive (Political) Neutrality

Now, in the last part of this paper, I attempt to focus on what Joseph Raz explains as "Comprehensive (Political) Neutrality". He distinguishes it from another concept which he calls "Narrow (Political) Neutrality". The latter is defined by Raz in the following way:

"No Political actions may be undertaken if it makes a difference to the likelihood that a person will endorse one conception of the good or another, or to this chances of realizing his conception of the good, unless other actions are undertaken which cancel out such effects." (Raz, 1986, 114-115)

To define comprehensive (political) neutrality Raz holds:

"one of the main goals of government authority, which is lexically prior to any other, is to ensure for all persons an equal ability to pursue in their lives and promote in their societies any idea of the good of their choosing". (*Ibid.*, 115)

Narrow (political) neutrality binds the government not to intervene with the choices of persons, because they must have the chance to choose their conception of the good. However, this concept of neutrality seems to be negative. Comprehensive (political) neutrality, on the other hand, not only acknowledges equal ability for all persons, but also binds the government to promote an idea of the good. Hence, this concept indicates a positive notion of neutrality.

According to Raz, The state should be neutral about the ability of people to choose and pursue conceptions of the good. Since the concept of the good includes ideals of the good society and world, it is therefore a comprehensive conflict. (*Ibid.*, 123) For Raz, it is significant that the principle of comprehensive neutrality is indeed a principle of neutrality, if the state is subjected to a requirement of comprehensive neutrality and if the duties of the state to its citizens are very wide ranging. On this view, if the state invents what Raz calls "conditions of the good, with an equal prospect of realizing it", then it can be neutral.

In Raz's view, morality is essentially self-determined; for it is an expression of one's rational nature. As Raz would say, on the one hand, there is no unanimity in the outcome of moral deliberation, and on the other hand, the social determination of the concept of a person has been left to himself. Meanwhile, what Raz prescribes is: "to endorse constitutional arrangement neutral between conception of the good in order to enable all individuals to develop and pursue their own conception of the good". (*Ibid.*, 132) Once conceptions of the good have been created by the rational nature of the persons, none of them can be admitted as better than others; consequently the constitutional arrangements should be neutral between them. According to Raz, "the role of the state is to enable all persons to express their nature and pursue their own autonomously conceived conception of the good and plan of life". (*Ibid.*)

Notwithstanding the fact that Raz puts forward comprehensive neutrality, he admits that a complete neutrality is a chimerical notion. "Neutrality", he writes, "is possible in some cases, but it may be impossible in others". (*Ibid.*, 121) To illuminate the proposition, he gives an example:

"Imagine that the Reds are fighting the Blues. We have no commercial or other relations with the Blues, but we supply the Reds with essential food which helps them maintain their war effort. If we want to be neutral, should we continue normal supplies to the Reds or should they be discontinued? If we continue supplying the Reds, we will be helping them more than the Blues. If we discontinue supplies, we will be hindering the Reds more than the Blues". (*Ibid.*)

Raz's comprehensive (political) neutrality seems to be problematic in connection with the concept of self-determination which his neutrality is based upon. In order to justify the theory of comprehensive neutrality, Raz is primarily bound to substantiate the possibility of self-determination for human beings. Suppose we accept that the state must do its best to enable all individuals to develop and pursue their own conception of the good; yet there remain a complex problem. The problem is, how can we be convinced that we are able to choose our own conceptions of the good in order to achieve self-determination? While many elements such as climate, place, time, family, education, ideologies, traditions, customs and etc. shape and form our minds,, whatever wisdom we are capable of, which of us can claim that he or she is able to choose his or her own conception of the good to achieve self-determination? Moreover, albeit individual as rational beings are potentially

able to promote their abilities and capacities and progress in their personal and social lives, none the less, all of them even the most competent are sometimes in situations where their judgments are misguided. (Weals, 1985, 21) Now the point is that once, as a matter of fact, human beings are involved with the problem of fallibility and all are inevitably prone to lapses, how can they proceed to the inner citadel in which they decide the idea of the good in accordance with their own choices? One must be very optimistic to invite individuals into an infinite arena to encourage them to look for their "conception of the good" and their "plan of life" regardless of the intricate difficulties.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is essential to point out that theories of neutrality proposed by philosophers from John Locke in seventeenth century to modern times are divers and controversial. While Locke as a classical liberal philosopher bases his conception of neutrality upon liberty, Dworkin as one of the contemporary philosophers suggests equality as a foundation of neutrality. Moreover, Locke's doctrine of neutrality expresses what some people *mean* by neutrality, while Dworkin's theory of neutrality is involved with the *reasons* (for being neutral). Additionally, some of the political philosophers assume a value background for neutrality whereas others like Kolakowski deny that neutrality possesses any valuation.

In short, theories of neutrality indicate a progressive process. For instance, neutrality from a negative concept which was demonstrated by Locke, proceed to a positive notion which could be studied in Dworkin and Raz's works. Furthermore, while Montefiore's theory of neutrality fails because of its absolutism, what Dworkin has constructed in this context is so flexible that it does not suffer from that deficiency, at all.

It is manifest that each of the theories of neutrality which have been presented by Locke, Montefiore, Dworkin and Raz embodies some axiomatic points in relation to the doctrine of neutrality, none the less the shortcoming of these theories indicates the necessity of the comprehensive doctrine of neutrality.

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