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Preserving Societal Values Mechanisms in a Liberal Democracy
An Arabic Perspective

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1. Introduction

Liberalism and socialism are the two essential political systems in Western modernism. With the demise of socialism by the end of the twentieth century it appeared that liberalism have succeeded at the end to prevail. However, liberalism, too, had its own internal problems, which lead to major transformation in its basic features.

These basic transformations are usually referred to through the distinction between the 'Enlightenment' and the 'Post-Enlightenment' views. The first is characterized by the concepts of 'objectivity', 'reason', 'truth' within the general framework of 'subject/object' or 'fact/value' divide. Such a view is epitomized in the strict divide between religion and the state known as 'secularism'.

The second view, which is the 'Post-Enlightenment', is characterized by value pluralism, multiculturalism, complexity of reality, and the possible disagreement about truth, within a general framework of the different possible 'subject/object' or 'fact/value' relations. Consequently, culture, religion, and values, play, in one way or another, a role in the political system. In this view terms such as modernism, secularism, and reason has acquired new meanings in order to be applicable within the new view.

However, the central challenge for the 'post-Enlightenment' view of liberalism is how to combine its central principle, which is autonomy of the individual, with the central feature of multiculturalism, which is value pluralism. Giving autonomy, as a value, a priority contradicts the principle of value pluralism. Such a dilemma is especially important in societies other than contemporary Western societies. For, in such societies imposing external values with priority over its own generates resistance to the liberal system.

In this work, we endeavor to solve such a dilemma as a means to solve the problem of transformation of contemporary Arabic societies into modern societies. Based on a previous comprehensive study we introduce the concept of 'Societal Values' as the central concept, and the 'Societal Values Council' as the basic means in the mechanisms we implement in order to achieve such a goal.

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2. The Problem of Liberalism

The liberal tradition in politics is, first and foremost, about individual liberty. Although its roots go far back in the history of political thought, liberalism emerged as a distinct political theory as a call for freedom of speech and of thought.[1] In addition, it is a general approach to the justification of political authority that sees such authority as resting fundamentally on the rights and choices of individual citizens. Therefore, the concept of the 'person' or 'citizen' assumed in liberal theory is that of an independent rational agent, one who has the capacity to reflect upon and alter his choices and to form commitments with others by way of this rational reflection.[2]

However, liberalism is best understood as a negative thesis about human social and political activity[3]. For every basic liberal concept, (such as toleration, equality, the social contract, democracy, etc) expresses essentially some form of defending individual freedom through 'rejecting' or 'denying' different forms of coercion, whether physical or intellectual. Due to such a lack of positive content, different views of liberalism have been introduced on different levels of political thought. To the extent that some prefer to speak, instead, about 'liberalisms', expressing such an undefined nature of liberalism.

William Nelson expresses such features of liberalism as follows:

> I speak of "liberal theories," instead of "liberalism," partly because it is a matter of dispute what liberalism "really" is. Some liberals characterize it in terms of a specific methodology, others in terms of its historical role. Some believe in natural rights, some are contractualists, and some consequentialists. As a rough generalization, liberals are concerned to protect individual freedom against the power of the state and the power of other individuals or institutions. They advocate toleration of different beliefs and values. They value legal and political equality, seek to ensure opportunities and to protect individuals' economic welfare and independence. Still, liberals differ as to just what this list should contain, how key components should be understood, and which items should be regarded as fundamental, which derivative.[4]

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[1] Gerald F. Gaus, 2003, "Contemporary Theories of Liberalism -Public Reason as a Post-Enlightenment Project", SAGE, Pp.1.

[2] John Christman, 2002, "Social and Political Philosophy - A contemporary introduction ", Routledge, Pp. 7.

[3] Raymond Geuss, 2002, "Liberalism and its Discontents", *Political Theory*; V. 30, no. 3; Pp. 322.

[4] Nelson, William, 2002,"Liberal Theories and their Critics", in Robert L. Simon, (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Social and Political Philosophy*, Blackwell, Pp. 197.

This fragmented and ill-defined nature of 'liberalism' is manifested on the theoretical, historical, and conceptual levels.

On the theoretical level, liberalism is viewed, in addition to Marxism, as one of the two basic political theories that emerged within the modernist European thought. Here, liberalism is meant to apply to the philosophical principles underlying the model of the democratic constitutional 'Capitalist' system, which is contrasted as such, to the socialist system that is based on 'state-directed economy. At the same time, it is viewed as one of the main political views in a democratic constitutional system, along side conservative and communitarian views (Christman: 6).

On the historical level, liberalism has passed (or still passing) through essential transformation from a 'Eurocentric modernist' view to a multicultural modernist 'post-Enlightenment' one. In the first, liberalism is based on the modernist Enlightenment 'reason', in which belief of convergence toward truth is the central theme. Here, diversity is expected to converge through reason into the just and homogeneous society. In the second, plurality of belief systems can't be eliminated, reality is complex, hence differences about truth is possible. And the just society is not based on pre-stated 'reasonable' theories but on specific practical mechanisms (such as overlapping consensus, deliberative democracy, etc) that are articulated in order to accommodate such a state (Gaus: x).

On the conceptual level, liberalism is divided into a free floating political system and a comprehensive one. In the first, politics is separated, through specific mechanisms, from the comprehensive doctrines that people belief in. Here, diversity in belief systems is acknowledged, but the political arena itself is thought to be based on reason alone through the proposed 'neutrality' of the state. In the second, liberalism is comprehensive, for it is not possible to separate politics from the underlying comprehensive beliefs, 'thought can't be bounded'. Hence, the problem of competing comprehensive belief systems, and its implications on the society, appears.[5]

Given such a fragmented picture, the central challenge for liberalism is how to formulate a positive position that acknowledges diversity of belief systems

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[5] Jeremy Waldron, 2004, "Liberalism, Political and Comprehensive", in Gerald F. Gaus and Chandran Kukathas (eds.), *Handbook of Political Theory*, Sage Publication, Pp. 89.

and at the same time fulfills its basic 'negative' thesis of individual freedom. Up till the present time, liberalism has not been able, theoretically and practically, to meet such a challenge. Raymond Geuss delineates this situation clearly as follows:

> Agents in contemporary Western societies find themselves in an odd situation. On the one hand, we seem to have no realistic alternative to liberalism; that is, we know of no other approach to human society and politics that is at the same time as theoretically rich and comprehensive as liberalism and also even remotely as morally acceptable to wide sections of the population in Western societies, as they are now in fact constituted.… Prima facie non liberal forms of habitual belief, such as those associated with certain religions, forms of nationalism, residual class enmities, and so on, still, of course, exist, but they seem to be, at best, isolated and localised foreign bodies in a universe, the overall structure of which is essentially liberal… On the other hand, there are signs of a significant theoretical, moral, and political disaffection with some aspects of liberalism. Liberalism has for a long time seemed to lack much inspirational potential; it is good at dissolving traditional modes of life and their associated values, but less obviously good at replacing them with anything particularly distinctive or admirable… Liberal ideals like individualism, toleration, or limitation of state power, seem either shortsightedly confused or mere covers for hegemonic designs.[6]

The central problem for liberalism, therefore, is its lack of a clear positive content. It introduces a specific view about the nature of the society 'individualism', and rejects specific political systems, such as communism and despotism, but with no specific positive position about the formulation of that *would be* an 'ideal' society. Here it is important to differentiate between the two 'historical' stages of liberalism, the 'Eurocentric modernist' and the 'multicultural modernist' views of liberalism.[7] What differentiates these two stages of liberalism is its position from the question of multiculturalism.

In the first stage, the 'Eurocentric modernist' view (i.e., the Enlightenment view), the traditional liberal project presupposes the Enlightenment View of reason; it supposed that the application of reason would lead to a set of

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[6] **Raymond Geuss, 2002, "Liberalism and its Discontents", Pp. 320 – 321.**

[7] **We chose such titles for these two stages of liberalism in order to make clear the basic difference between them, which is cultural 'pluralism'. The first is based on Enlightenment reason, and hence, ignores or rejects cultural differences about reason. The second acknowledges the irresolvable differences of cultures about reason and truth. In literature it is also referred to these two stages, as shown above, as the 'Enlightenment' and the 'Post-Enlightenment' views.**

principles with universal, rational, authority. The Enlightenment View maintains that rational agents will tend to converge on the same conclusions, producing a universal consensus on liberal values and principles. According to what we might call 'Enlightenment Liberalism', the application of human reason leads to the progressive uncovering of moral and scientific truths. Thus freedom of conscience and thought are the most basic freedoms, for they are necessary for the use of reason. And under conditions of freedom, humans will tend to agree about the truths of moral and political life. Freedom, especially freedom of thought, does not lead to disagreement and strife, but to an ever-increasing shared body of truths (Gaus: 15).

Such a view of liberalism that is based on the Enlightenment reason has encountered throughout the twentieth century different challenges. Gaus reduces these challenges to three sources, challenges from the social sciences, challenges from philosophy of science, and challenges from pluralists.

social sciences shows that morality is relative to culture: different cultures adopt basically different moral codes, and there is no right and wrong to the matter. Therefore, if the norms of good reasoning differ from person to person, the free exercise of human reason will not necessarily lead to a convergence of belief (Gaus: 9).

From philosophy of science, well-informed scientists employing their reasoning in perfectly legitimate ways can arrive at different judgments about what is the preferred theory, and so about what is true. These developments in the philosophy of science have thus systematically challenged the very heart of the Enlightenment View – the link between reason and truth as exemplified by scientific inquiry (Gaus: 12).

Finally, with respect to the question of plurality, pluralists insist that there are a plurality of values for which the free exercise of human reason cannot discover a single correct ordering. According to *radical pluralism*, because of the inherent plurality of relevant considerations there is no single rational, or correct, ranking of important personal, social, political and scientific values. Reason does not determine choice between various theories and moral/political perspectives. According to the radical pluralist there simply is no rational, right way to order values: any ordering is a matter of choice rather than reason (Gaus: 13).

These challenges have created a newly admitted problematic to the traditional 'Enlightenment view' of liberalism. For, if we acknowledge multiculturalism what would be the basis of liberalism. Such a problematic is stated in various forms in literature.

Jeremy Waldron states such a situation as follows:

But here is the difficulty. The ideas that we draw on in order to elaborate and defend liberal principles and liberal solutions to the problems outlined above are often ideas associated with particular philosophical traditions. The sanctity of life and bodily integrity, the importance of autonomy, consent and individuals' control of their own destiny,… – these are artefacts of a particular tradition or cluster of traditions that have grown up in our civilization. Many of us find them compelling. But we cannot be under any illusion that they are features of every culture or tradition that we expect to find represented in a modern pluralistic society. So: by elaborating and defending liberal principles and liberal solutions to the problems of social life on this sort of basis, we seem to be taking sides in the midst of cultural and ethical plurality. We seem to be picking and choosing among the variety of ethical, philosophical and religious traditions in the world, privileging some as foundational and marginalizing others.[8]

Similarly, William Galston states such difficulty in the following way:

The problem should now be obvious: Any liberal argument that invokes autonomy as a general rule of public action in effect takes sides in the ongoing struggle between reason and faith, reflection and tradition. Autonomy-based arguments are bound to marginalize those individuals and groups who cannot conscientiously embrace the Enlightenment impulse … Liberal life, as I understand, makes place for the Enlightenment impulse as one important possibility but need not – indeed, must not – officially endorse Enlightenment values over all others.[9]

In the same vein, Gaus states the problem as follows:

Our question, then, is whether liberalism can be sustained in the light of the accumulation of criticisms of Enlightenment universalism. In Gray's language, can there be a post-Enlightenment liberalism? As John Rawls, the greatest liberal philosopher of the twentieth century worries, given that 'Enlightenment liberalism' failed to appreciate the diversity of reasonable views, can we develop a liberal theory that takes seriously the fact of reasonable pluralism?[10]

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[8] Jeremy Waldron, 2004, "Liberalism, Political and Comprehensive" , Pp.90.

[9] William Galston, 2004, "Liberal Pluralism - The Implications of Value Pluralism for Political Theory and Practice", Cambridge University Press, Pp. 25 - 26.

[10] Gerald F. Gaus, 2003, "Contemporary Theories of Liberalism ", Preface, 18.

Gaus, then, describes the current situation by distinguishing two broad liberal responses to attacks on the Enlightenment View. First, a good deal of contemporary liberal theory can be understood as defending versions of the Enlightenment View against the difficulties it encounters (Gaus: 18).

Second, 'Post-Enlightenment liberalism'; *not* in the sense that it rejects the Enlightenment's conviction that freedom is a public political principle endorsed by reason, or that a political order based on freedom can yield peaceful cooperation. Its post-Enlightenment feature is that its main task is to *explain* how there can be such principles in a world where the exercise of reason so often leads to divergence and disagreement (Gaus: 19).

Matthew Moore, in a recent study, followed the logic of three of those 'Post-Enlightenment views' as representative arguments - one from William Galston, one from Bernard Williams and George Crowder, and one from John Gray.[11]

He concluded that all three of these otherwise quite different efforts to find some normative consequences in value pluralism rest on the same illegitimate move: all of them implicitly violate the premise of value pluralism by assuming that some value or combination of values can be treated as supremely important and therefore capable of rank-ordering value systems. His more general conclusion is that there is no way to simultaneously argue for value pluralism and the moral preferability of a particular value or set of values. The situation is not simply that these three authors make mistakes of logic but that the problems in their arguments reveal that the task they attempt is impossible (Moore: 245).

This conclusion, according to moore, raises serious problems for social cooperation. When we act, either as individuals or as groups, we inevitably rank the possible alternative courses of action. Moral choice requires choosing the most moral, or morally most appropriate, course of action. Similarly, political choice requires a group of people to all live by and obey (to some extent) some common set of values and value-reflecting institutions. If there is really no way to rank values or value systems, we may be unable to agree on the values that should guide our society, with potentially devastating consequences for social cooperation (Moore: 245).

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[11] Matthew J. Moore, 2009, " Pluralism, Relativism, and Liberalism", *Political Research Quarterly*, Volume 62 Number 2, Pp. 244.

Hence, it seems that the claims of the 'Post-Enlightenment liberalism' has made some advancement toward the task of multiculturalism, but not a sufficient one. The core of the Enlightenment 'Euro-centric modernist' view is still prevailing. This suggests that the best we can do with respect to the question of multiculturalism is to take value pluralism into consideration but within a general framework of some relatively prevailing culture. This conclusion will have deep and profound implications on our efforts to advance forward from a Euro-centric modernism toward a multicultural one, as we will see in the next sections of this paper.

3. Values and Liberalism

Liberalism, as a negative thesis about individual freedom, especially its 'Enlightenment view', is but a part of the analytical philosophy. For, Analytical philosophy is philosophy in the mainstream tradition of the Enlightenment (Pettit; 2007: 5). As such, liberalism has been resistant throughout its history to making use of the concept of social values. This is of no surprise, for society, in the classical liberal tradition, works through 'the will' of the 'autonomous' individual, not through a pre-existing social set of values. Philip Pettit explains such a situation as follows:

> Why should the analytical tradition have proved so resistant, over such a long period, to the idea that social values might offer the basic terms of political assessment? Why should it have tended to endorse, not just personalism, but solipsism? The main reason, I suggest, has to do with the social atomism that has characterized the tradition from its earliest days (Pettit, 1993). The social atomist holds that the solitary individual – the agent who is and always has been isolated from others – is nevertheless capable, in principle, of displaying all distinctive human capacities. The anti-atomist or holist denies this, arguing that there is an intimate, non-causal tie between enjoying social relations with others and exercising certain distinctive human capacities. 'The claim is that living in society is a necessary condition of the development of rationality, in some sense of this property, or of becoming a moral agent in the full sense of the term, or of becoming a fully responsible, autonomous being'.[12]

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[12] Philip Pettit, 2007, "Analytical Philosophy", in Robert E. Goodin, Philip Pettit and Thomas Pogge, 'A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy', 2nd Ed. Vol. I, Blackwell, Pp. 26.

However, the appearance of the 'post-Enlightenment' views of liberalism, which acknowledge cultural pluralism as a basic feature of society, put the concept of social values at center stage, albeit with much ambiguity and confusion. For, differences of cultures are reflected politically through differences of systems of values, as well as of the ordering of values. Hence, if the society is inherently multicultural then the concept of autonomy includes indirectly freedom of choice of values as well as the order of preference of those values. In other words, the concept of autonomy becomes an essential basic value (instead of being the sole value), upon which other values rest.

William Galston explains this situation as follows:

> Some philosophers argue that it is theoretically improper and practically imprudent to link political principles to other parts of philosophy, even ethics or value theory. Political theory should be freestanding, not "comprehensive." For reasons that I discuss at length in Chapter 4, I disagree: Political theory cannot be walled off from our general understanding of what is good and valuable for human beings, or from our understanding of how human existence is linked to other beings and to existence simpliciter.[13]

However, the admission of values into liberal political theory has been accompanied with deep differences about several basic issues.

First, there are differences with respect to the nature of 'the self', the responsible autonomous individual who is supposed to be morally capable of taking decisions about value ordering and participating in a process of democracy. The atomistic view is based on the assumption of the isolated self, which produces what is termed a 'freestanding' political liberalism separated from the background comprehensive doctrines. The anti-atomistic view countenances a socially related self, which produces 'comprehensive liberalism' that is based on comprehensive doctrines about values and reality.

This difference of views about the nature of the 'self' is manifested in the way the concept of autonomy is related to value pluralism.

The atomists rather than claiming that respect for autonomy is simply one overridable value among others, argue that autonomy is simply a constitutive element of a person's commitment to any other value. The claim is that value

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[13] William Galston, 2004, "Liberal Pluralism",Pp. 8.

commitments are valid for a person only if that person autonomously embraces that value for himself (Christman: 105). On the other hand, from a value-pluralist standpoint, there are many valuable ways of life, individual and collective, that are not autonomous in the sense that they are not the product of conscious reflection and choice but, rather, of habit, tradition, authority, or unswerving faith (Galston: 49).

Second, with respect to the system of values, there is the problem of the differences in the order of values within the same value system. Whereas, there is the problem of irresolvable differences between more than one system of values. In the first, the difference between pluralists and non-pluralists lie within the same culture, namely, the Western culture. In the second, differences are between several competing cultures with the Western viewed as the basic one.

In such a case, what might be called the paradox of diversity appears. If we insist that each civil association mirror the principles of the overarching political community, then meaningful differences among associations all but disappear; constitutional uniformity crushes social pluralism. If our moral world contains plural and conflicting values, then the overzealous enforcement of general public principles runs the risk of interfering with morally legitimate individual and associational practices (Galston: 20).

However, despite such a paradox, proponents of 'Post-Enlightenment Liberalism' claim that they are not committed to what is called 'subjective relativism'. Since, while it does deny the validity of values apart from human endorsement of them, it does not rest on the view that a person's subjectively endorsing a value is sufficient for its validity. That would make the validity of all value claims *solely* a function of individual choice. Rather, liberalism assumes that values gain their legitimacy *in part* through people's endorsement. This is called its 'constructivism.' (Christman: P. 95).

Third, There are differences with respect to the origin of values. To begin with, liberalism rejects any fixed metaphysically ordered hierarchy of values, pluralism is the claim that there exists a plurality of valid conceptions of the good. No single overriding value and no fixed ordering of values can be determined to be objectively valid for all agents. On this view the universe, so to speak, is not ordered with its values in place for all to simply discover and live by (Christman: 95).

Within this framework of pluralism, Values may be seen as: 1) related to persons; there is no meaning of values without the actual choice of the individual. 2) as objective systems that are independent of human choice; but "even if some values are objectively supported, pluralism acknowledges that no *single* core value, such as human happiness or religious salvation, defines all that is good in the world" (Chritstman: 101). This 'objective' view of values can be further divided into metaphysical 'secular' systems of values, and spiritual 'religious' systems. In the first case, values are constituents of a metaphysical 'rational' worldview. In the second, values represent some form of a divine command.

The last case is particularly interesting. Despite that objective systems of values might be 'secular' or religious, the definition of the concept of values itself, which is the subject of competition between the different cultures, is implicitly a Western 'rational' modernist one. This produces an interesting paradox that will have deep implications on the possible solution of the problem. For, either we have to define the concept of values within each cultural view then we will get an irresolvable situation of incommensurable value systems, or we define values within the 'rational' Western thought then our conclusions will be illogical.

The solution to such a problematic lies in the need to 'redefine' the concept of values in a way that allows to carry the task of establishing the multicultural view of value systems. This task will be the subject of the next section.

4. The Concept of Societal Values

The theory of value or of the good is one of the two main branches of ethical theory, alongside the theory of the right. Whereas the theory of the right specifies which actions are right and which are wrong, the theory of value says which states of affairs are intrinsically good and which intrinsically evil.[14] However, values are essential components of the 'Worldview' of any society. For, according to Max Weber, Worldviews always imply a coherent set of values. Moreover, although they relate 'internally' to each other to varying degrees, these values nonetheless do so to such an extent that they assume a great comprehensiveness: they offer answers to ultimate questions. What is the

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[14] Thomas Hurka, 2006, "Value Theory", in David Copp (ed.) The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory, OUP , Pp. 357.

meaning of life? What purpose does our existence serve? How do we best live our lives? Why do suffering, injustice and misery persist?[15]

With respect to the nature of values, a worldview's coherent and expansive value constellation may be, according to Weber, grounded in either the supernatural or the 'worldly' realm. Intellectual, social and political movements, as well as religions, may offer broad ranging sets of values and an 'ordered meaningfulness'. Finally, even in those cases when the values of a worldview are anchored fully in the mundane world, their 'correctness' or 'superiority' can never be definitively proven; rather, the legitimacy of this meaningful totality is acquired alone on the basis of a belief in it by adherents (Kalberg: 142).

This means that despite that values generally belong to the domain of ethical theory nonetheless, its nature is not necessarily to be part of 'rational' thinking. Rather, values can be 'mundane' and hence can be product of our 'rational' thought, as well as 'religious' and hence a matter of belief. In other words, values can have an 'upward' source originating from human 'rational' thought and behavior, or a 'downward' source originating from 'divine' commands, or spiritual belief.

In contemporary 'rational' ethical theory, according to Thomas Hurka, there are basically three theories of the origin of values. Theories of values may be divided into 1) Hedonism, which is the simplest theory of value. Hedonism holds that only pleasure is intrinsically good and only pain intrinsically evil. Despite its simplicity, hedonism can be formulated in different ways, depending on how the concept of pleasure is understood. 2) Desire Theories, which equates the good in a person's life with his getting whatever he desires. 3) Perfectionism (Hurka: 359 - 367).

Nevertheless, a complete theory of value must be able to combine these values into measures of the goodness or evil of larger states of affairs and, ultimately, of the whole universe. This process has two parts. First, the theory must be able to compare different values to determine the overall value in each person's life at each time. Then it must be able to aggregate these measures

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[15] Stephen Kalberg, 2004, "The Past and Present Influence of World Views: Max Weber on a Neglected Sociological Concept", *Journal of Classical Sociology* ,Vol. 4 (2), Pp. 140.

across times and persons to arrive at measures of the total value in each person's life through time and then in a whole population (Hurka: 367).

In contemporary ethical theory there is another concept that is intimately related to 'Values', namely, the concept of 'Ideals'. Ideals, according to Rosati, are models of excellence. They can be moral or non-moral, and either 'substantive' or 'deliberative'. Substantive ideals present models of excellence against which things in a relevant class can be assessed, such as models of the just society or the good person. Most centrally, ideals serve to justify ethical judgments and to guide people in how to live. However, according to Rosati, reliance upon ideals in the development of ethical theories seems unavoidable but raises difficult questions. How can the choice of a particular ideal be justified? How might conflicts between ideals and other values, especially moral demands, be resolved? Within this view, substantive ideals continue to be important to ethical theorizing, but philosophers in the twentieth century have largely avoided explicit appeal to it, perhaps in recognition of the apparent plurality of defensible values.[16]

However, the relation between the two concepts, Ideals and Values, in contemporary ethical theory is not completely settled. Here, Ideals are pre-existing metaphysical 'models of excellence', in contrast to the 'rational' nature of values. But, John Skorupski in a recent and important paper defines Ideals as follows:

> By ideals I mean conceptions of how it is admirable, excellent, to live, ideas of what constitutes a life that one could be proud of, that one could find dignity, self-respect, self-realization, or at least significance – *importance* – in. Ideals, one may say, constitute one of the three fundamental ethical categories, of which the other two are morality and ends. It is usual to contrast morality, or the right, with the good. I am further distinguishing, within the good, between ends of life and ideals of life… Nevertheless ideals constantly and quietly shape any culture, and they can also break into public arena and become revolutionary historical forces.[17]

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[16] Connie S. Rosati, 1998 , "Ideals", in Edward Craig (ed.) Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Routledge, Volume IV, entry 'Ideals'.

[17] John Skorupski, 2001, "The Future of Ideals", in Anthony O'Hear (ed.) Philosophy at the new millennium, Cambridge University Press, Pp. 193 – 194.

Hence, for Skorupski, Ideals besides morality (the right) and ends represent the three components of ethical theory. Therefore, Values (the good) is further divided into ideals and ends. In other words, for Skorupski, Ideals are subset of Values. If so, then Ideals are the sorts of Values that are not originating 'rationally' form human thought and behavior, i.e., it doesn't have an 'upward' source, but a 'downward' one. And this is the reason for avoiding reliance on substantive Ideals in modern ethical theory.

If we compare such a 'rational' Western view of the two concepts of Values and Ideals with the concept of Values as a part of spiritual or religious worldviews, as shown above, we will discover an affinity between the later and the 'Western' concept of Ideals. Both have a 'downward' origin and both are a matter of belief not a 'rational' thinking or a 'rational' response to reality.

Hence, if we wish to construct a unified concept of 'Values' that works for both kinds of worldviews, the mundane and the religious, then we have to combine both conceptions, Values and Ideals, in one overall concept. Moreover, we will have to differentiate between the concept of the society, as a holistic concept, and the concept of the social, as a particularistic concept. For, ideals, or religious values, apply to whole societies, which belief in it, whereas 'rational' values apply to particular individuals or societies as a result of reflecting upon particular circumstances.

This creates the concept of 'Societal Values'[18] as the only concept that is capable of carrying the project of multiculturalism in political theory. For it is capable of making relations between different types of cultural values irrespectively of its basic nature, mundane, or religious. This is so because consensus about values is essential in a successful society. According to Raymond Geuss:

> One standard liberal line of argument tends to run the notions of 'consensus' that are prominent in these different cases together. Effective coordination of action is highly desirable if humans are to survive and live a life any of them will find worth living, but coordination of action requires that some kind of at least minimal and tacit agreement in values

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[18] We have established the concept of 'Societal Values' in details in another work, see,

Abuzaid, Samir, "Constructing the Modern Arabic State – A research in the logic and mechanisms of change in the Arabic area" (in Arabic), in print 2010, Ch. 3.

and normative conceptions exist between the cooperating parties. If the parties did not share a large number of such values, cooperation would break down. Therefore, it is claimed, there exists in every society a basic consensus that can serve as the basis on which further agreements could be reached, thereby expanding even further the human social sphere in which freedom and normativity peacefully intertwine. From this the further conclusion is drawn that it is always possible and rational for humans to try reach consensus with their fellows, or at any rate with those with whom they must regularly deal.[19]

Naturally consensus about values can't be achieved if individuals of the society understand the concept of Values differently. Some understand it 'rationally' and others understand it as a component of a belief system. The only way to avoid failure of consensus is to define Values as having both a 'rational' as well as a 'belief' origin, with a differentiation between social values as 'rational' in nature and 'Societal Values' as both 'rational' and 'belief' based concept. Therefore, the concept of 'Societal Values' becomes the central concept upon which we can continue our efforts toward true multicultural modern liberal systems.

5. An Arabic Version of Liberalism?

Establishing the concept of 'Societal Values' makes it possible for us to advance toward a true multicultural liberal political theory. For by definition, it includes both types of values, those based on rationality and those based on religious belief. Moreover, these two types of values are acquired through the two basic types of mental activity, the conscious and the unconscious. Hence, it becomes quite reasonable to take into consideration that individuals in some cases choose values consciously, and in some others choose values unconsciously, through identifying themselves with their Worldview.

Consequently, the principle of autonomy, which represents the basic principle of 'classical' liberalism should be slightly amended in order to incorporate the 'unconscious' choice of the individual as well. Therefore, it is justified to advance the basic principle of liberalism as "*preserving the right of the individual to live under his own preferred value system, whether his choice of such a system is conscious or unconscious*". This form of the principle of

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[19] **Raymond Geuss, 2002, "Liberalism and its Discontents",** *Political Theory*; **V. 30, no. 3; Pp. 327.**

autonomy is nothing new, for such a conclusion has already forced itself as some way out of the problem of liberalism. For example, Jeremy Waldron expresses such a view as follows:

> This resonated with a theme emphasized by Walzer (1983) that a well-ordered society is a society true to its own understandings or, if it is to be reproached as unjust, it has to be reproached as having fallen away from values that already have a purchase in the life and practice of its members.[20]

Similarly, John Christman states:

> Basic to a liberal society is the claim that policies and laws that regulate peoples' lives must in some way be acceptable to them, otherwise such policies would be oppressive and blindly coercive… What this approach to political justification rests on, then, is respect for (again) the autonomy of people living in that society. For autonomy embodies the capacity to guide one's life only by those values and principles one embraces as one's own, perhaps after critically reflecting on them.[21]

This amendment of the principle of autonomy requires introducing new mechanisms capable of realizing it in real world. In classical liberalism the principle of one equal vote for each citizen realizes the principle of individual autonomy. For, every rational responsible citizen can, in principle, participate with his 'conscious' vote in order to realize his values in a democratic system. If autonomy were extended to the 'unconscious' choice, then obviously voting system would not be sufficient. Hence, new mechanisms should be adopted in order to realize such a principle. In our view, such new mechanism will vary from one society to another according to the nature of the society itself, its present conditions, as well as its Worldview. In the following we will introduce our opinion for the case of contemporary Arabic societies, keeping in mind that what we propose is, in general, useful for every non-Western society that faces the problem of Eurocentrism.

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[20] Jeremy Waldron, 2004, "Liberalism, Political and Comprehensive", in Gerald F. Gaus and Chandran Kukathas (eds.), *Handbook of Political Theory*, Sage Publication, Pp. 93.

[21] John Christman, 2002, "Social and Political Philosophy - A contemporary introduction", Pp. 102.

Preserving Societal Values Mechanisms[22]

The problem of the relation of the principle of autonomy to the unconscious value system of the citizens is not the only problem of liberalism. As we have seen above, the problem of liberalism has turned out to be how to justify priority of basic liberal values in a multicultural society. So, we have two basic problems not one; how to realize the new principle of autonomy, which protects unconscious values of the citizen, and how to justify the priority of the basic liberal values.

Our proposal is that both problems can be solved by introducing a fourth and regulating authority, in addition to the legislative, judiciary, and executive ones. Such fourth authority is the 'Societal values council', which is an elected council designed deliberately in a way that reflects the nature of the society and the functions it is meant to perform. The functions and duties of such a council include: defining the basic system of values; amending it wherever it is required to do so in refection to changes through which society undergoes; to guarantee correct application of such system of values; and finally, to safeguard it from infringement or abuse in society through revising existing jurisdiction system and laws, limiting the power of the state representatives, monitoring the executive system and so on.

This fourth authority performs two basic jobs. First it guarantees that the system of values of the society is constructed through the society itself, not through an external power, whether religious or not. If it turns out that such a system of values doesn't sufficiently reflect 'Societal Values' then the system would correct itself through successive elections, and through the continuous relation between such a council and reality. Second, it will found the basic principles of liberal freedoms not as an externally imposed cultural view, but as a societal value that is chosen and warranted through society itself. For choosing

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[22] Here we only introduce the general form of our proposed mechanism, which is the 'Societal Values Council', as a solution for the problems presented in this paper. However, detailed political justification can't be presented here, for details see our work mentioned above, Abuzaid, Samir, "Constructing the Modern Arabic State – A research in the logic and mechanisms of change in the Arabic area" (in Arabic), in print 2010, especially Ch 9 & 10 where we introduce and discuss in detail the complete form of such a mechanism, its relation to the existing democratic system as well as its theoretical justification with respect to contemporary political theory.

freedom, as a value, by members of the society is natural, with the limit of preserving other values of the same society, at the same time.

In addition, such a proposal represents a solution, on the political level, to the problem of subject/object divide, which characterized modern Western thought from the start. For, the 'just' political system can't be introduced as a theory with isolation from real practice. Rather, justice should be achieved through the combination of the theory and practice. And, this can't be achieved unless we have some mechanism that is capable of connecting theory and practice through transforming the abstract concept of 'justice' into a 'Value'. In such a case justice as a Value will have a theoretical side, in liberal theory, and a practical side, in real life through the 'Societal Values Council'.

Finally, such a mechanism would solve the central problem of liberalism, which is that it represents a negative thesis and lacks a positive content. For, if we amend the principle of autonomy as shown above we would create a positive content for such a principle. This is so because preserving Societal Values represents a positive position, since the term 'Societal Values' possess a positive content. In this way, we have for the liberal society a 'positive' aim that substantiates its efforts for freedom. Moreover, this aim is not a pre-fixed one, and hence, limits the freedom of the individuals, rather, it is the result of the freedom of the society as a whole, and hence, subject to evolution through the society itself, and through democratic means.

Until now such a proposal applies to every society and every culture, even in Western societies. But such a proposal is particularly important in non-Western societies. For, in current literature the 'multicultural' liberal theory acknowledges other cultures but still gives the modernist Enlightenment view a privileged status with no sufficient justification, as we have seen above. However, if our proposal is implemented 'natural' liberties would not be imposed from another culture, and it would be limited by the values of the society itself. Hence, it would not find obstacles from within the society, and consequently, it is likely to succeed in achieving the state of modernity in a multicultural society.

6. Conclusion

In this paper we address the basic problem that faces establishing a liberal system in a non-Western society, which is the possible erosion of its system of values. In order to achieve such a task we first address the fact that there is no one version of liberalism, but different versions. And that what these different versions share is a common negative thesis of individual autonomy and freedom. These different versions are divided in literature into traditional 'Enlightenment' and multicultural 'post-Enlightenment' liberalism. The first represents a Euro-centric liberalism, whereas the second expresses the acknowledgement of cultural pluralism.

However, this last view of liberalism doesn't fully acknowledge cultural pluralism except within a privileged status of the 'Enlightenment' view. This means that adoption of such a 'multicultural' view of liberalism would inevitably lead to marginalize non-Western social values, and consequently leads to its erosion.

The strategy we adopted to deal with such a problem is based on combining the two types of values, the rational and the religious, in one abstract concept which is 'Societal Values'. In this concept, there exists an overall arching system of values of the society that might be 'rational' or 'religious' or a combination of the two.

This newly admitted concept is of no value for our aim unless it is supplemented with some mechanism that guarantees the true expression of 'Societal Values'. Hence, we introduced a fourth authority titled 'Societal Values Council', which is supposed to undertake such a task. And, since freedom is a natural disposition of people, then such a council would preserve the basic freedoms of the population, as individuals as well as a society. In addition, such a mechanism would preserve the basic values chosen by the society itself, as a basic liberal right, and hence, solve the problem of the possible erosion of it.

Therefore, with the advent of such a mechanism, both basic needs for the society is guaranteed through a true multicultural liberal system. And hence, resistance of the 'Arabic' society to constructing a modern liberal state would be weakened if not becomes totally absent.

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