Too little culture - too much culture:
The strange coexistence of two opposite notions of culture

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It is a remarkable fact that a wide range of very different notions of culture may be found in academic and political debates. Undoubtedly, this may be explained by the fact that, in itself, the concept of culture is complex (Williams 1983: 87) or even hypercomplex (Fink 1988), and that many particular variants of the notion make use of reduced or simplified versions of it.[1] As long as this takes place with the explicit recognition that such use is simplified for specific purposes, this is unproblematic. More problematic, however, are the many cases where such simplified versions are taken to be exhaustive and sufficient, maybe even identical to the concept of culture as such. Such uses lie behind the fact that very different, competing, even mutually exclusive notions of culture are circulating, causing problems which are not conceptual only.

This article critically isolates and compares two such simplified and deficient concepts of culture – they could be called "too much" and "too little" culture, respectively – and finally observes their strange coexistence, sometimes even in the same persons, currents, and conceptions. In the following, I shall introduce the two notions one by one. Current discussions of radicalization are chosen to illustrate different consequences springing from adopting each of the two notions. This also forms the basis for the final discussion of how and why the two notions may sometimes – even if contradictory – coexist.

The two conceptions – "too much" and "too little" – spring out of academic currents to which they, to some degree, remain allied – but what interests me here is not so much their current academic state but their function as *versunkenes Kulturgut* – disseminated culture – in the public sphere and politics. Sometimes, academic notions have the fate of surviving, even in simplified, strengthened versions in public and political discussions, and this is the case, to an eminent degree, with the two versions of the culture concept discussed here.

The former, the "too much" version, was traditionally a conservative notion, in the 20C most often closely allied to nationalist positions claiming cultural inheritance and traditions to prevail over economic and social structures and thus form the deepest level of human behaviour and societies. Such a notion may be called "culturalism"[2]; an interesting fact is that the recent decades have seen a left wing version of such a viewpoint emerge and grow strong in many of the different versions of so-called "multiculturalism", claiming, like nationalism, that culture determines human individuals through and through and should, for that reason, enjoy center stage in policies regarding minorities, immigration, ethnicity, religion, etc. The broader notion of "communitarianism", claiming that certain pre-political, shared, traditional values are necessary for democratic societies, often also includes aspects of such culturalism. But even if nationalism and multiculturalism most often appear as hard opponents in actual Western politics, they thus share the same basic, anti-liberal anthropological notion of culture.

The other cultural version – the "too little" notion – has its roots particularly in sociology and social policies, reducing culture to an epiphenomenal surface level determined by deeper, social, and essentially non-cultural forces. A classic version of this notion, of course, is found in Marxism where the basis-superstructure conception relegates culture to the level of superstructure, as a mere surface effect of real economical and political forces considered more basic. Such a view, however, is not found only in Marxism proper but also in many versions of modernization theories in sociology – and indeed in many political currents on the center-left inspired by that tradition. Interestingly, liberal, anti-Marxist versions of such a theory may also be found – liberalism and socialism often sharing a basic economism taking economical interests and regularities to form the basic level of human behaviour and politics from which other levels ultimately derive.

The two versions may be summed up, by simplification, as an anthropological (too much) versus a sociological (too little) notion of culture. It goes without saying that this is not to say that all of the respective disciplines of anthropology and sociology subscribes to the two versions of the concept – rather that the two versions have important roots in each of these two disciplines. Notions of culture are generally essentially contested, and many sociologists and anthropologists may hold reservations about such conceptions of culture.

Too much

The "too much" notion of culture has been, in recent decades, in ascendancy as compared with the relative dominance of the "too little" approach in the West in mid-20 century, especially after WW2. In the "hard" versions of multiculturalism particularly, the "too much" idea appears in claims such that 'all cultures merit respect', that 'culture forms the horizon of all human activity', that 'all values are dependent upon culture', that 'cultures should be given political protection', etc. Jens-Martin Eriksen and I have analyzed parts of the intellectual history of the "too much" version under the headline of "culturalism" (Eriksen and Stjernfelt 2012). Its general claim is that culture forms the ultimate horizon of human activity, thus making all of human behaviour, including economics, sociology, psychology, philosophy, etc. deeply if not exclusively, dependent upon culture in the last resort. Thus, the main strategy of this concept is totalising – making the concept of culture so all-encompassing that it is taken to constitute the broadest characterisation of all human activity. Making concepts broader usually make them more vague – not, however, in this case. Simultanously with the totalising strategy, culturalism makes of "culture" something very active: a force penetrating and determining all human activity in the most minute detail.

In a British context, a prominent source for this notion of culture is, of course, E.B. Tylor's famous definition of culture as "an entire way of life"[3]; on the Continent, an important intellectual root is Herder's conception of "the nation" as an irreducible whole, rooted in popular language, traditions, and customs and claimed to be specific to entities called "peoples". It is well known how Herder's originally tolerant, cosmopolitan version of the concept – envisaging an open plurality of "nations" – quickly yielded to the political use of the concept in liberal nationalisms in early 19th-century Europe, only to form a bundle of general right wing positions in the European nation states which came out of the 19th and 20th centuries. According to this idea, the population of such a state must share a large amount of "culture" in order to count as politically viable. The further use of political nationalism in the totalitarianisms of the 20 C is well known in the right wing cases of fascism and nazism.[4] Herderian culturalism, thus, came in both more benign and more malign variants. A strange and often overlooked fact is that the very same ancestral tree in intellectual history also gave rise to another culturalist doctrine, this time on the left wing, ulltimately culminating in multiculturalism. This is based on the idea that also people without states might count as nations (already Herder, living in imperial Europe with many state-aspiring groups suppressed by empires, realized this), and so could be taken to possess cultures in the same holist sense as those politically equipped with their own states. This became the idea of early

anthropology where the "culture" concept especially was developed in the American anthropology of the first half of the 20th century.

A very influential book for the development of this anthropological notion of culture was Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* (1934). Benedict's argument has two main pillars. One is that cultures consist of infinitely variable sets of values; the other is that once a culture is articulated, it forms the indispensable horizon of all of its members. The process of "enculturation" ensures that all members share the basically same set of values and behaviours. These two ideas taken together thus give the culturalist notion of "culture": cultures form large, integrated wholes which are closed off as against other cultures – self-sufficient, inward-turned bubbles at safe distance from each other, and fundamentally incapable of understanding one another. The same tradition interpreted this concept in terms of cultural relativism: as all values depend upon culture, there is no common measures enabling anybody to compare values and practices across cultures, because any measure stick will be, in itself, culture specific.[5]

Eriksen and Stjernfelt (2012) relate in more detail how this idea became part of the UN: in 1947, the American Association of Anthropologists protested against the universalism of the UN Declaration of Human Rights in the making. Through the inspiration and contribution by anthropologists like Lévi-Strauss, culturalism became part of the ideology of UNESCO, and came to form a constant and never resolved tension in the UN system between the universalism and individualism of human rights on the one hand and culturalism and group values on the other. Multiculturalism, in its many variants and guises, is the child of this tension. This implies that multiculti comes in many different versions, dependent upon which side - universalism and culturalism - are given preference and to which degree.

Eriksen and Stjernfelt (2012) propose the notions of "soft" versus "hard" multiculturalism to refer to the range of compromises between these two determinants. "Soft" multiculturalism, then, is freedom for individuals to live, choose, and change cultures, under the proviso that cultural traditions which are in contradiction to basic, liberal, democratic norms (such as human rights, rule of law, equality before the law, etc.) must be given up. "Hard" multiculturalism, on the other hand, will claim that liberal democracy is but one "culture" among many and that non-democratic cultures possess equal rights to thrive in modern societies, even to some degree at the expense of basic human rights of their members or of specific non-members. This soft-hard distinction is often not recognised, which is a source of much confusion. It seems as if many multiculti believers think that the liberal, democratic individualism and illiberal culturalism

may easily find a stable compromise; some even think the two in some sense are basically one and the same thing – this seems to be the case with Kymlicka's much-discussed "liberal multiculturalism" (Kymlicka 1995; 2007), which claims that multiculti grows directly out of democratic liberalism as sort of further extension.[6] It seems as if once you have admitted the equality of individuals, the extension to the equality of culture is an automatic outgrowth which need not give rise to any conceptual tensions nor political problems. Dissident voices (Barry 2001; Eriksen and Stjernfelt 2012) claim that Kymlicka's position remain deeply culturalist and just glosses over deep conceptual tensions with universalist lingo.

The bottom line, then, is that the "too much" position is really "too much" in two different senses of the word. One is ontological. The claim for the role of culture is hypostasised in an erroneous manner. It is not true that cultures in reality form completely integrated, completely segregated wholes. Rather, cultures develop and change through futurist or traditionalist awakenings, they meet other cultures, merge, hybridise, vanish, often over surprisingly short periods. It is also not true that culture – inherited collective norms and practices – is the root of all human value and behaviour. Such values and behaviours have many different roots, causes, and purposes, some of them physical, biological, sociological, economic; some apriori, some empirical, some due to individual experience and invention. Only certain aspects of values and behaviour are cultural in the sense that they spring out of how young children experienced or were taught the traditions and ways of their parents and ancestors.

Another such sense is political. Giving culture too large a place in your ontology may prime you to give it too large a role in your policy as well. It is for this reason that the concrete politics of culturalism is generally of a conservative, even reactionary tendency.[7] If one believes that the most important in the life of individuals is the mores and customs inherited from certain ancestors, then culturalist policy easily becomes one of preservation, one destined to rule out influences from other cultures, from science, from modernity, including liberal democracy. This fact is easily grasped in hard versions of nationalism, but exactly the same thing is at stake in multiculturalism. In some sense, multiculturalism as a political ideology is nothing but nationalism in the plural.[8]

Already Herder had this idea - and it becomes extremely clear in the actual version of far-right multiculti known as "ethnopluralism". Again, the central role of culture, its preservation and purity, is called for – with the conclusion that cultures should remain where they are (and, a fortiori, go back to where they were) - only territorial segregation will keep cultures pure. The only

difference to received left-wing multiculturalism here is the notion of territory: hard multiculti claims that it is possible and realistic to preserve cultures within the same polity, in one and the same territory, particularly in modern, democratic states. But this immediately gives rise to tensions between illiberal features of "cultures" (such as different rights accorded to in-group and out-group, to men and women, to believers as non-believers, etc.). Hard multiculti either claims such illiberal features should be accepted as exceptions, or should even enjoy equal prominence with liberal principles.

The democratic, liberal counterargument is that cultural features should enjoy neither more nor less prominence than all other political claims – and that they, for that reason, should not be allowed special status, not to speak about legal exceptions.

Too little

While culturalism is deeply wed to conservatism – despite its recent popularity on the left wing – the "too little" culture position comes out of a basically modernity-oriented current of intellectual history. In the universalist individualism coming out of the Enlightenment, culture was not seen as the horizon of all things human. Humanity was rather seen as something only partially realised as yet, rather, it was possible to develop it further in the future, cf. the ideas of man's perfectibility, of social engineering, of democratic politics as a process integrating the opinions of large masses of people and aiming at the improvement of their lot. This did not immediately imply, however, that cultures mattered little; rather, cultures were measured on their contribution to this overall future-oriented process of civilization.[9] Thus, many early Enlightenment figures emphasised the contributions to that process not only of European antiquity, but also of ancient High Cultures of Eurasia, of China, of Muslim empires, and much else. Out of the Enlightenment tradition, however, certain currents tended to reduce culture to a very superficial, epiphenomenal status in human life. One particularly influential idea of this kind was the claim for reduction of all human intentions to economic purposes. This idea lay behind extreme articulations of both liberal and socialist social theories. It is well-known how Marx deemed religion to be but an "opium of the masses" which would cease to be necessary under future communist paradises – and it is well-known how liberal economists fashioned the idea of rational man, aware of all his preferences and able to judge any issue in life as one of rationally weighing different possibilities against each other in a cost-benefit analysis. In such ideologies, cultural motivations for human action shrink if not vanish completely.

The Marxist version can be expressed in this way:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. (Marx 1994 (1859): 211)

The Marxist dualism of base and superstructure relegates cultural notions – along with art, religion, ideas, etc. – to the superstructure which has the role of epiphenomenal side effects of economic relations at the level of production only. Such a theory, of course, necessarily comes with a supplementary theory of false consciousness. People who actually believe that art, religion, thought, ideas, etc. really matter are but deceived fools. They are even without any responsibility for their false beliefs because such beliefs stem, as a structural effect, from their social and economic positions in society. This is, then, the root of the "root cause" explanation: when people realize their real conditions, it is only possible because they are part of the proletariat avant garde (or, in any case, believe to be allied with it). When people believe in liberal principles, the root cause is really their adherence to the bourgeoisie in one of its guises. When people are strong believers, the root cause is really their supposedly poor social and economic situation. Today, Marxism hardly has the sway over large swathes of Western intellectuals and academics that it had in the middle of the 20th century, but the idea of "social root causes" seems to have taken root and to have acquired a life of its own beyond the confines of the Marxist tradition, namely in parts of the general theoretical current often called modernisation theory.

The theory is made of a bundle of different sociological conceptions kept together by their common assumption that a general development from "traditional" to "modern" social structures is active and even preferable in many if not all societies. Modernisation theory thus continues the general idea of "progress" of the Enlightenment, in for instance Condorcet, and counts Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Parsons and many more in its ancestral tree. Modernisation is taken to involve a whole parcel consisting of economic growth, division of labor, development of

technology, industrialisation, individualisation, rationalisation, massification, liberalisation, democratisation, secularisation, etc. Very often, but not necessarily, socio-economic development is taken to be the motor of modernisation – making modernisation theory prone to accept "social root cause" explanations. Traditional culture is supposed to perish to a large degree during modernisation processes, and cultural claims may thus be seen as vestiges, undercut by social evolution and most often effectively appearing as a displaced expression of social forces and demands which are not in themselves cultural.

Modernisation theory comes in many variants; in politics both liberal and socialist currents typically subscribe to versions of it, despite their disagreement on the role of the state, of social engineering and of economic redistribution. But common is the tendency to regard culture as a mere, superficial level without much, if any, causal effect, often consisting of behaviours and thoughts long since overtaken by "development" and without real influence on social and political structure. This "too little" theory of culture tends to take cultural claims and demands of nationalist parties or ethnic groups as a bit ridiculous, as effects of false consciousness which would be better addressed by economic growth and an increase in social and economic capabilities of the groups in question. The idea that certain old or new cultural ideas may seem to be very important to certain groups or forces – maybe so important as to trump utility, economy and rational arguments – is regarded as preposterous to the "too little" school.

It probably goes without saying that this author rejects both the too much and the too little theories of culture, preferring a middle road of admitting culture as a force on a par with other basic human motivation types without neither totalising nor ignoring it.

Explaining extremism: radicalization theories as an example

Recent terrrorist attacks have brought the issue of radicalisation on the agenda. What makes certain persons – typically young men – prone to so extreme behaviour as to kill innocent civilians in order to further some political or religious conception, be it right wing ideas like radical nationalism and radical islamism or left wing ideas such as communism? Interestingly, the possible explanations differ with one's concept of culture. Classical sociological conceptualization of radicalization follows the modernist "too little" school. Ted Gurr's *Why Men Rebel* (1970) e.g., takes the reason to be "relative deprivation" (37). Thus, cultural or religious explanations of radicalisation are taken to be superficial as compared to deep economic roots. A current defence of a related position even claims as its title "Muslim radicalisation's socio-economic roots" (Abbas

2009). Abbas expects that "equal opportunities and equal outcomes" in society will serve to abate radicalisation. The obvious problem in such a theory is that most radicals are *not* poor, nor do they cite poverty grievances as the root of their activity. They typically cite cultural, ideological or religious motivations rather than socio-economic ones. So, again, such a theory must be supplemented with root cause theories of false consciousness: such terrorists are simply completely mistaken as to the real motivations for their own actions. A further upshot of this theory is that they may be seen, for this reason, as completely irresponsible persons not really knowing what they are doing – because the violence they perpetrate evidently is an ill-chosen means to the supposedly economic end. Even if intended as an apology for their actions, such explanations categorize radicals in a way not far from racism: as persons without the same ability for rational thinking as the analyst.

Surprisingly, culturalists subscribing to versions of hard multiculturalism, defending the role of culture, rarely extend this framework to describe radicalists and terrorists. It is as if terrorists form an exception to their doctrine that culture has this deep determinative power – obviously because making radical acts the product of cultural backgrounds inevitably would taint that culture. Sometimes, they may even go so far as to adopt remnants of the "root cause" explanation which is better fit to exculpate culture for having caused the terrible acts which the perpetrators themselves may cite cultural reasons for doing. The culturalist theory here is rather adopted by the *opponents* of the specific terrorists. When e.g. the Norwegian extreme nationalist Breivik committed his infamous act of terror, many on the left wing blamed the culture he grew out of – namely the extremely nationalist, so-called islam-critical right wing blogosphere. Conversely, in case of islamist attacks, right-wingers may easily ascribe the cause of such attacks to nothing less than "islam" itself in all abstraction – claiming again that cultural factors are to be blamed for the actions of the terrorists. This, at first glance, strange structure – that culturalist explanations for radicalisations work only for your opponents – naturally comes from the fact that radicalisation is perceived as an evil to be explained (away), and no culturalist will like to see his own preferred culture appear as the guilty party behind atrocities. Culturalists typically *defend* cultures, which is probably why culturalist explanations of radicalisation are rare among academics, who strive for consistency. Only in public debate, where one may be culturalist about one's enemies and make exceptions for one's own culture, culturalist theories of radicalisation prevail.

Radicalisation theories ascribing a more moderate role to culture then seem to be preferable. Griffin (2012) provides such a theory, using Berger's 1967 description of cultures as

"sacred canopies", granting the life of their members under their shelters. Modernity having eroded such shelters, spiritually homeless youngsters may choose to become terrorists. This gives rise to two different types of terror – oriented towards protecting or reconstructing a threatened canopy or towards constructing a better canopy from scratch in the future. In a certain sense, Griffin's explanation is culturalist – finding the explanation of terrorism in the painful modern erosion of traditional cultures. But he is not culturalist in the sense that he accepts the totalising assumption of culturalism: modernity, in his account, is no sacred canopy, and you can add that most of us who live in modern societies do not become terrorists for lack of protective canopies.

Another explanation claims that the sociological approach of modernisation theory misses the mark because it is too wide. Instead, it proposes micro-sociological explanations based on the small networks of youngsters looking for meaning in life. The ARTIS report, for instance, claims that the development of such "[...] networks, plots and attacks resembles more the development of a complex system, with inherently chaotic and unpredictable characteristics, which can nevertheless be evaluated for probabilistic and path-dependent developments," (2009: 4). The authors claim excplicitly anti-culturalistically that "[i]nstead of viewing culture as a "top-down" structure that imposes itself on individual beliefs and behaviours, we recommend focusing on modeling micro-processes at the level of individual beliefs and behaviors" (10). Instead, they point to a "cultural epidemiology" (ibid.) facilitated by the emergence of strong bonds between persons in a micro-social environment, leading to a willingness to sacrifice oneself for the fate and beliefs of one's close fellows, thus assuming a sacrality of values overriding other obligations and principles such as those of economic man. Only when active in such micro-networks, cultural representations may achieve a dangerous role, but the complexity of such networks makes it impossible to predict, in the single case, when the important threshold is crossed between "violent extremism" and "extremist violence".

The theories of Griffin and ARTIS may be said to give culture a moderate but non-negligible role and are thus quoted here to indicate positions in a middle ground between the "too much" and the "too little" schools.

Strange meetings of "too much" and "too little"
The strange thing, however, is that as much as the too much and the too little schools may compete in public debate, unexpected liaisons between them may occur. Strictly spoken, such combinations will be logically contradictory, but one should not expect politics and debate in all cases to follow

logical principles. Thus, a possible version of the "too little" position may admit, to some degree, multiculturalist policies normally connected with the "too much" position – exactly for the reason that as culture is considered socially superficial and causally inert from the modernisation viewpoint, such policies are taken to be harmless, indifferent, inconsequential and in any case temporary and provisional, because modernisation is believed to catch up with them and make them irrelevant, on a short notice anyway. Thus, the very same politician who asserts that "social conditions" are root causes responsible for cultural and religious claims made by certain immigrants may support illiberal multiculti special group rights demanded by those claims.

Such developments may give rise to baroque clashes of ideas. Let me take a current Danish example regarding Muslim immigration. Since the 1980s, a substantial part of immigration to Denmark has come from Islamic countries with the result that Denmark now has around 5% Muslims including a minority of Islamists.[10] These immigrants have a variegated background, from different countries involving many different Islamic currents – and often they have constructed local mosques in poor surroundings such as abandoned industrial buildings and storehouses. These conditions have given rise to a movement supported by left wing Danes, arguing in petitions and comments that Danish Muslims should have a "real grand mosque" ("en rigtig stormoské"), "where building of bridges and openness is the foundation and where democratic values are in focus".[11]

In the summer of 2014, a great mosque was indeed inaugurated in a Copenhagen suburb – the Hamad Bin Khalifa mosque in Rovsinggade in the Nørrebro area. The Danish mosque supporters, however, stayed away from the opening ceremony – the mosque is financed by the Emirate of Qatar, also supporting the Muslim Brotherhood as well as parts of the so-called IS armies in Syria and Iraq. One of the backers of the "real grand mosque", the leading Copenhagen politican Anna Mee Allerslev of a centre party (Det Radikale Venstre), used the occasion to once more market the idea of an even grander grand mosque, supposedly for all Danish Muslims, not only for the special Sunni interpretation reigning in the Qatar mosque. Her party has a long tradition as a modernisation party with little belief only in the values of traditional cultures. So why spend so much effort on a mosque? Probably the support for the "real grand mosque" is taken to be harmless – cultural values and norms are considered as having sparse effect and soon to be marginalised even further by the ongoing modernisation reforms undertaken in her party's government coalition with the social democrats.

The remarkable thing is that this traditional "too little" position hereby allied itself with the "too much" position when it came to describing the utopian "real grand mosque" to come.

This mosque is supposed to be for all Danish Muslims. Such an idea is typically culturalist: Islam is taken to be one culture, all believers are taken to form a homogeneous whole which could, in fact, be represented by one large, grandiose ceremonial building. But as is the case with all real-world cultures, Islam is beset with internal strife and tension, movements, counter-movements, sects and revivals ever since the Sunni-Shia schism of the 7th century. Such tensions, of course, also prevail among the small Danish constituency. Sunnis, Shias, Ahmadiyas, Alevites etc. routinely consider each other unbelievers to be eradicated from the Islamic ideal state to come – and even within such currents, especially the large Sunni tradition, an enormous bundle of warring groups, from Sufists to Wahhabists, can be found, not to speak of the many "traditional" Muslims paying scant attention to theology.

It could only be because of the "too much" understanding of culture that these well-meaning Danes, spearheaded by Allerslev, the Copenhagen mayor of employment and integration, could really believe that all Muslims are actually sufficiently alike to accept to unite in one and the same congregation. To see the absurdity of the case, one might just imagine a parallel proposal of a "real grand cathedral" uniting all Christians, Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants of all sorts, denominations and sects, from Jesuits to Pentecostalists. My guess is that such a degree of naivety is possible only because of the "too much" culture theory and its assumption that cultures are internally homogeneous and possess the power of determining their members through and through – combined with the "too little" assumption claiming that policies pertaining to culture remain, in all cases, superficial circus for the masses.

Conclusion

Modernisation theory needs to be modified on a series of points. As Fukuyama has recently argued (2011), the different aspects of modern societies undoubtedly support each other, but this is not the same thing as claiming there is only one inviolable road to modernisation, driven by economic forces. Rather, modernisation may begin with very different parameters and proceed along very different paths, even if the force field of modernity may eventually attract all such pathways in the same overall direction. But modernisation must also admit that even its imagined end point in the future may not necessarily spell the end of all traditional culture with which the process is taken to have begun. The very notion of a completely homogeneous "traditional culture" is, in itself, but a conservative myth, and there has arguably never existed a society without involving also more or

less entrepreneurial, experimental individuals, injecting novelty and tension despite the attempts of ubiquitous religious elders trying to contain such dangerous individuals.

Contrariwise, there is no reason to assume a society will ever appear which has completely dispensed with the irrational power sources of tradition and charisma – the most which can be hoped for would rather be a society keeping them in check. Given the high degree of liberty for which modern societies rightly praise themselves, there is no reason not to expect that significant fractions of the population will always use this liberty to embrace some degree of rigid, conservative, traditional values and behaviours, thereby liberating them from too much choice, deliberation and rational speculation.

The goal of modernisation, hence, could never be the complete eradication of traditional culture and religion – the utopia of "too little". Rather, a more modest and modern secularist goal must be invoked: the idea that no such currents should be able to gain privileged access to political power and privilege. This implies, on the side of "culture" and "religion", that their adherents must be forced to accept basic modern, democratic principles and cease any attempt at curtailing democratic principles and rights with cultural arguments. To me, this would form a mediation of the "too little" and "too much" theories of culture. Each of those positions, of course, will despise it. The "too littlers" will hate that secularism will not, in itself, give rise to secularisation. But even more so, the "too muchers" will hate to see their political ambitions on behalf of culture, tradition, and religion framed by unnegotiable modern, democratic principles. For that reason, the prize to pay is undoubtedly most expensive for the "too muchers", the culturalists. But my guess is they must be forced to pay that price for the sake, not only of all the utilities and advantages of modernity, but also for the sake of what the Enlightenment, not without pathos, called the dignity and liberty of man.

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[1] Already Kroeber et al. 1952 thus list six different types of culture conceptions: descriptive, historical, normative, psychological, structural, and genetic.

[2] In Eriksen and Stjernfelt 2012, we define culturalism, draw an outline over central parts of its intellectural history, especially its multiculturalist branch in the 20th century.

[3] The famous first sentence of Tylor 1871: "Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired my man as a member of society."

[4] In a more general sense, it also influenced the two other large totalitarianisms originating in the 1910-20s, bolshevism and islamism. Even if these are, in different ways, internationalist by principle, they share the sharp culturalist distinction between insiders and outsiders. The four totalitarianisms emerged in the same period around WW1 and gained ground in similar contexts - the loss of empires – and were able to exchange ideas as to cultural homogenisation, aiming at total social shaping and control of the population of a polity, simultaneously boding ill for individuals in the population not sharing those features (Mozaffari 2006: 2013).

[5] This claim obviously goes against the vast amount of international comparisons across nations of, e.g., health, education, economy, corruption, equality, liberty and much more.

[6] Despite the fact that Kymlicka simultaneously clings to a culturalist definition of culture as that which delivers the entire set the action options which an individual has to chose between.

[7] Malik 2009 critically analyses multiculturalist policies of the Blair government: by allotting funding to "cultural" groups, the cultural representatives benefited proved, most often, to be clerics or other religious figures, favoring strongly conservative interpretations of each their "culture". This policy thereby pitted cultural groups against each other, rather than encouraging them to mutual tolerance.

[8] I owe this quip to Amartya Sen who calls multiculturalism "monoculturalism in plural", see Eriksen & Stjernfelt 2012, 306.

[9] The classic Enlightenment locus for this optimism as to progress, of course, is Condorcet 1988.

[10] How many among the Muslim constituency in the West support islamist ideas is an open question as only a few investigations have been made. International and Danish surveys seem to point to the fact that a minority holds views associated with islamism, but not a small minority, cf . Eriksen & Stjernfelt 2013, 40; 399.

[11] Allerslev 2014, my translations.