

BOUNDED CULTURE AND LIBERAL EQUALITY

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ABSTRACT

The first part of the article discusses the sources of liberal equality, that is, the basic notions in contemporary analytic egalitarian thought. It turns out that human reason is not the only source. There are internal sources, such as the liberal idea of tolerance, and external sources, such as the Christian idea of moderation. There are also philosophical external sources, such as the love of country, and sociological external sources, such as the landscape. The second part of the article discusses two approaches for broadening the sources of liberal equality, namely separating egalitarian citizenship and cultural identity (Rawls, Habermas) and connecting citizenship and culture (Kymlicka, Miller). The second approach is not flawless, yet it is superior to the first one in dealing with the issue of migrants in democratic society. The article concludes that egalitarians have to turn to the question 'Equality between Whom?'

Sources of Egalitarianism

Since the early 1970's analytic philosophers are trying to develop a liberal theory of economic equality. There is no agreement as to how to do this and where to stop properly. Yet the common enterprise of philosophers such as John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, Alan Gewirth and Amartya Sen does appear to be based on some common assumptions.

The first assumption concerns completeness. A theory of equality concerns the equality of conditions or the equality of life prospects, that is, the distribution of certain means that are vital to citizenship in an economic 'space', 'context' or 'sphere' (work, trade, and so on) (Arneson 1993). A well-formulated theory of liberal equality determines the boundaries of membership of a political community (the domain of equality); the index of human interests which measures equality between the mem-

bers (the focal variable of equality); the morally and legally relevant classifications between the members as bearers of rights (the depth of equality); the fair distribution of responsibilities between individuals and groups within the political community (the scope of equality); the rule of combination which takes other legitimate public goals into account (the weight of equality); and, finally, the procedures for transforming a clearly unequal status quo into a more equalized social state (the improvement towards equality). Complete determinacy of egalitarianism has to be related, of course, to adequacy. Egalitarianism as a philosophical system has to cohere in the right way with the considered convictions of the most inclusive and sustainable union of citizens.

The second assumption concerns liberalism. The ideal of equality should not only be compatible with the demands of liberty, it should also follow from these demands. Liberal egalitarians try to conceive the pursuit of equality as a consistent and more or less radical extension of the pursuit of liberty. They appeal to both the liberal tradition of civil society (such as the rule of law and constitutional democracy) and the tradition of liberal thinking about citizenship (such as the value of autonomy in a wide sense, the separation between the public and the private domain, and the preservation of basic rights and political virtues).

The final assumption concerns moral reasoning. Modern liberal egalitarians are constructivists, in the sense that they attempt to deduce their specific view of economic equality from their view of a just situation for reasonable public judgement and decision-making concerning the principles of equality and their implementation. There are, of course, many different ways to characterize this background structure of moral reasoning, such as Rawls's original position, Dworkin's equal concern and respect, Nagel's impersonal point of view, or Scanlon's and Barry's impartiality (unforced, informed and reasonable agreement about the rules of an egalitarian social order). Liberal egalitarians tend to see these differences as different interpretations of certain standards of moral reasoning, like ethical individualism (human sovereignty), universalism (human rationality) and constitutionalism (human rule-making). Such standards constitute an 'egalitarian plateau' (Kymlicka 1990: 5).

The concept I would like to introduce and examine in this article is the concept of source. Egalitarianism can be — and has been — based on many basic notions. Tawney defends his socialist strategy of equality as an interpretation of the equal value of men in the eyes of God, which is

a Christian notion. Gellner explains and endorses the pursuit of equality as condition and outcome of a modern market culture, marked by individualism, mobility, legal equality and democracy. Gellner's market culture is a sociological notion. I will call these basic notions the sources of justification of equality. As the debate on the issue of 'equality of what' clearly shows, liberal egalitarianism has been mainly concerned with ideal theory, based on certain assumptions about adequate and given information, compliance, technical feasibility, and so on. Furthermore, it is mainly focused on pure theory. Egalitarians are informed by social sciences and even attach some foundational standing to certain scientific propositions about society (the Humean circumstances of justice come to mind here). But their priority is to get the substantive formulation of the egalitarian ideal right. The role of equality in history, daily life, politics and public or corporate policy-making is altogether an important, yet different and secondary issue. The primary virtue of egalitarian philosophers is to understand human reason and its practical implications for a liberal social order. Liberal egalitarianism, conceived as ideal and pure theory, is supposed to be based on one final notion, namely human reason.

Well, is it? Clearly, complete equality is not a source but the central output of egalitarianism, which entails the informational meaning of its central propositions about relevant and irrelevant inequalities (Sen 1979). It seems plausible to see arguments about the economic role of political and legal equality as part of this output. Furthermore, the interpretations of reason and its demands clearly provide a set of sources. The presumption of moral equality (the equality between humans as moral agents) belongs to this set. I will call it the internal set, since it follows from the very nature of the ethical exercise according to certain standards of analysis in political and social philosophy. A nice example is the standard that the quality assessment of arguments should be independent from the assessment of the inner conviction of the authors, such as faith, hope and charity.

Liberalism, the second feature of modern egalitarianism, appears to be intermediate. It is both an input and an output of liberal egalitarianism. Liberal culture in a broad sense (ideas, passions, values, virtues, rules, organizations and practices) does operate as a set of sources. Egalitarians tend to see certain elements of liberalism as given, in order to determine the structure of its connections with the demands of equality. But they

will only do this when they feel certain about the reasonableness of these given elements (for example, the reasonableness of privacy, tolerance or choice of occupation beyond state borders). Furthermore, liberalism often operates as the political point of practical egalitarian thought. Theorists of equality are not only concerned with the general tasks of philosophy, like the solution of divisive conflicts, orientation, reconciliation and social critique. They also draw lessons about the active role of defensive, offensive or pragmatic liberalism. While some egalitarians, such as Nagel, do not have the stomach and the talent for playing the role of a public intellectual, many egalitarians follow the example of Dworkin (health care) and Van Parijs (basic income) and present their arguments in academic and intellectual circles and in the spheres of public debate, partisan politics and social struggle (Nagel 1995: 9).

If liberal culture is endogenized in philosophical theory and subsequently becomes part and parcel of the demands of reason which finally determine the demands of equality, then a purer form of liberalism is emerging. One might also call it liberal culture in 'the best light', that is, its best form as interpreted by the egalitarian philosopher. This provides a second set of internal sources. However, if liberal notions merely serve as exogenous variables or as partisan political statements, I will classify them as belonging to the external set of sources. This set is relevant to the success of the project of liberal egalitarians in the real world but not relevant to the plausibility of their core theory, in particular to its internal consistency. It entails notions such as Christian moderation (say Hume's 'monkish virtues'), the solidarity of the working class (say the image of brotherhood in the socialist battle songs) and egalitarian understandings of national identity (say the Dunkirk spirit in the post-war construction of the British welfare state). As Elster's pioneering studies of local justice indicate, it may be helpful to draw a distinction here between philosophical external sources and sociological external sources. The former are philosophical basic notions beyond (the canon of) rationalist liberalism, such as envy, the love of country and the survival of the fittest. The latter are empirical basic notions beyond (the canon of) analytic philosophical argument, such as the landscape and the effect of phrasing survey questions about issues of distribution (framing) (Elster 1989, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 1996).

The distinctions between internal and external sources of equality and between philosophical and sociological sources are seldom clear-cut and

widely accepted. For example, some economists have been claiming that redistribution by the state enhances labour productivity, labour market efficiency and national prosperity (Bowles and Gintis 1994, Glyn and Miliband 1994). However, most contemporary egalitarian philosophers do not defend equality in terms of its instrumental value to productivist or welfarist ('Paretian') efficiency. They tend to see empirical claims about efficient equality as an external and sociological source of justification which makes the egalitarian argument particularly contingent or functionalist. Many normative economists respond by arguing that the trade-off between equality and efficiency should be internal to any sensible egalitarian approach (see Hausman and McPherson 1993: 696-701).

Three other examples may help to show that the lack of agreement about the sources of liberal equality not only affects interdisciplinary research but also philosophical research. Barry's monumental revision of liberal egalitarianism is both philosophic and partisan. As a constitutional theorist, Barry gives a sophisticated account of neutrality of egalitarian government as 'impartiality'. As citizen from the left and a fierce opponent of Mrs. Thatcher (and Mr. Blair?), Barry discredits neutrality as the wrong strategy. It fails to persuade dogmatic and offensive non-liberals and it also fails to help anti-dogmatic and vigilant liberals. It appears that neutrality is necessary to develop egalitarian theory but is useless as far as egalitarian political practice is concerned (Barry 1991b: 35-39; Barry 1995: 123, 139)!

The very debate on neutrality between Rawls, Dworkin, Ackerman, Larmore, Raz and many others provides a second example. Before Rawls, the conventional liberal notions about civic tolerance, judicial independence and non-meddlesome public policy were seen as an intermediate source of egalitarian thought. After Rawls, these notions have been endogenized and transformed into a specific conception of neutrality. Neutrality is defined as the absence of correlation between the principles of equality on the one hand and the privileged (political, social) standing of certain personal or comprehensive conceptions of the good life on the other hand. Neutrality has become an internal, reason-based and duly specified source of equality. My final example of the contestability of egalitarian sources is Walzer's theory of justice (Walzer 1983). According to Dworkin, Walzer's theory is pseudo-egalitarian since he uses two dubious sociological sources (shared understandings, spheres of distribution of social goods) (Dworkin 1986: 214-220). But according to

Miller, Walzer's theory is egalitarian. Walzerian justice boils down to equality of status, which is a strong politico-economic ideal. Its sources are truly valid. Liberal egalitarians should begin to understand the philosophical and sociological relevance of communal boundaries and plural institutions to the pursuit of equality in civil societies (Miller 1995a).

Notwithstanding these controversies, egalitarians appear to be forced to reflect upon their sources more explicitly and to enlarge them. This is mainly caused by the decline of egalitarian politics, the divergence of national distributive cultures and the inability of liberal egalitarianism to come to terms with this recent dual phenomenon. The decline of egalitarian politics is related to tendencies such as the contraction of the Keynesian welfare state, the disappearance of the Fordist working class (decreasing unionization), the decline of classical social democracy and christian democracy, and the emergence of a global market economy (mobility of goods, capital and labour). Since the early 1980's politics generates inequalities in terms of wealth, earnings and social entitlements. In countries like the United States and Great Britain the new economic inequality came about much earlier and more intense than in countries such as Sweden and Germany. This relates to the variety of distributive cultures, that is, values, rules and virtues concerning the distribution of means within national economies (Thompson et al. 1990, Esping-Anderesen 1990, Wildavsky 1991). The Dutch Social Planning Bureau discovered a negative relation between factual inequality and desired equality (SCP 1990: 346). Table 1 ranks nine countries in terms of Theil's coefficient (in column I; 1 means highest income inequality), of the national public's judgement about income differences (in column II; 1 means the most agreement that differences are too large) and of the national public's support for egalitarian arrangements (column III; 1 means the most support). The most fascinating result is that there is less support for smaller income differences and policies against those differences in countries with high inequality. This result roughly follows from leaving out the Netherlands as the outlier. It may be explained in terms of different equilibrium degrees of acceptance of inequality between countries like the United States and Australia (high inequality, high acceptance of inequality) and countries like Austria and Italy (low inequality, low acceptance of inequality).¹ Surely this explanation is easy-going and incomplete. But it does force egalitarians to examine the case of given *and* well-considered anti-egalitarian preferences. It is unlikely that table

1 can be reduced to adaptive and prudential preferences of the victims of anti-egalitarian institutions in the sense of Elster and Sen (Sen 1992: 55). As Reich has argued, globalization of capitalism may well result in a stable distribution between symbolic analysts (the new rich), routine producers (the falling middle class) and in-person servants (the growing urban underclass with marginal positions in the firm, at the labour market, in party politics and in welfare state policy complexes). It is not unlikely that the modal members of a modern service economy hate egalitarian intellectuals and politicians. To put this in Reich's terms, a symbolic analyst wants to distinguish himself from the masses and to insulate an expensive life-style; a routine producer wants protection against migrants and rejects the welfare rights revolution; and an in-person servant wants concrete forms of assistance like cheap childcare. Today, only the latter (and lowest) group of citizens seems to favour redistribution. And its demand for helping the worst off is egalitarianism at its weakest, as Raz, Parfit and Nagel have shown (Reich 1992, De Beus 1993: 20-30).

Table 1: Equality as a Fact and a Norm in Nine Countries in 1987

	I	II	III
USA	1	9	8
Australia	2	8	9
Suisse	3	6	7
UK	4	5	5
FRG	5	4	3
Hungary	6	3	4
Italy	7	2	1
Netherlands	8	7	6
Austria	9	1	2

Since the rise of communitarianism it is the new game in town to accuse liberal egalitarianism of being excessively abstract and of neglecting practical political issues with respect to the legitimate goals and means of egalitarian strategies (ecology, citizenship, identity politics, cosmopolitan justice, affirmative action, and so on). I agree that parts of this accusation are well taken, in particular the criticism of idealization

(O'Neill 1991: 279-282, 1993: 307-312). Recently, Van Parijs has proposed two strategies to revitalize the struggle for egalitarian principles (such as leximin opportunity) and schemes (such as basic income). These strategies are democratic scale-lifting and solidaristic patriotism (Van Parijs 1995: 220-233). His sophisticated and elegant analysis illustrates that contemporary egalitarianism does not have to be abstract and nostalgic at all. Yet by pulling political action in two different directions (deconstructing *and* consolidating the distributive function of national states), Van Parijs also exemplifies the old egalitarian's vice: an impotence to take the phenomenon of bounded culture seriously.

I believe that egalitarians simply cannot afford this vice in the present unfavourable situation. Therefore, I want to focus on the relation between bounded, mostly national culture and liberal equality. My argument will be restricted in two ways. First, I will examine some ideas of John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, Will Kymlicka and David Miller. All these prominent thinkers stick to a fundamental idea in post-war social science, which is the 'prerequisite idea', as Hirschman calls it. The prerequisite idea says that democratic society can only emerge, stabilize and flourish when and because some cultural preconditions concerning intentional political agreement have been fulfilled. It denies the truth of invisible-hand approaches to political conflict (Hirschman 1995: 238). Furthermore, all these authors are constitutional theorists who try to endogenize and 'save' some wider sources of egalitarianism, including the distributive state function. They all represent the left and they all try to reconcile constitutional unity and cultural diversity without losing civil rights or excluding minorities (Tully 1995). But Rawls and Habermas update civic political culture as a source of equality (political constitutionalism), while Kymlicka and Miller are in the process of updating national social culture as a source of equality (social constitutionalism). Second, I will check all arguments in the case of ethnic minorities, since this case demonstrates both the cutting power (if any) of liberal egalitarianism and the urgency of the question of domain (equality between whom?) (Spinner 1994). All these philosophers reject the Hobbesian *modus vivendi*, the perfectionist account of the unique good life and the radical multiculturalist's celebration of difference. Yet they disagree in an interesting way about the role of culture in assessing and justifying the demands of equality. My survey will be largely critical, but I will end with a positive and ecumenical note about further research.

Separating Egalitarian Citizenship and Culture

Rawls and Habermas have both spelled out normative conceptions of citizenship based on the fundamental liberal ideas of personal autonomy, social plurality and legitimacy of the state (freedom, equality and promotion of the public interest under the constraint of consent in the political sphere). Both conceptions entail fair democratic procedures, the moral obligations of active citizenship (joining the discourse of constitutional politics, applying public reason, being tolerant, following legitimate legal rules) and egalitarian outcomes (Rawls's equal distribution of primary social goods, Habermas's basic rights).² Both Rawls and Habermas approach civil society in a rationalist and consensualist manner. Yet they both agree with Kant that a pure conception of justice can be justified which will draw common sense and broad emotional support. Rawls talks about civic friendship and Habermas talks about constitutional patriotism. These notions belong to standard republican discourse.

There are, of course, subtle differences between these thinkers (Habermas 1995b, Rawls 1995). Rawls refers to the classical liberal view of international obligations of the state (such as the duty to comply with international treaties) and he postpones the discussion of supra-national justice. He introduces the abstraction of a closed society, in order to focus on the simple main case of intra-national justice, to account for social identification in the real world, and to develop arguments which are sensitive to the coercive nature of social cooperation and constitutional regimes (Rawls 1993a: 12, 68). While Rawls with all reservation takes first moves in elaborating a thin contractual law of peoples, Habermas passionately falls upon the concrete problems of migration, state sovereignty, European migration and ethnic nationalism (Rawls 1993b; Habermas 1992: 632-600, Habermas 1995b). Rawls wants to articulate the best of American democratic society and its dynamic culture, partly by leaving out the basic problems of 'race, ethnicity, and gender'. Habermas, however, wants to watch the worst of German nationalist history. All these differences do not alter the fact that both Rawls and Habermas see high constitutional politics as the only strategy to keep together an ethnically divided society and to let social pluralism grow amongst the citizens. Both egalitarians emphasize the importance of collective identity and culture (within families, associations, firms, minorities and nations). Yet they tend to see membership of these groups as an external source of

either the philosophical kind (liberalism implies pluralism) or the sociological kind (modernity implies pluralism).

Rawls fully understands and accepts the existence of national identification and the impact of language, speech, education, customs, conventions, group distinction, historical legacy and moral authority on personal identity (Rawls 1971: ch. VIII, Rawls 1993a: 222). However, Rawls's conception of justice as fairness radically abstracts from the specific identity of the affected individuals. This abstraction is not only needed to eliminate the morally arbitrary influence of genetic and social contingencies on the distribution of goods, it is also needed to bring in political liberalism, that is, the specific Rawlsian interpretation and defence of liberal social ordering as a process of collective, rational and reasonable decision-making about the protection of essential human interests. The liberal idea of autonomous (critical, public, open) revision of the individual's conception of the good life is a political idea, in the sense that it applies to the public political sphere of civil society but not to the private sphere (Kymlicka 1995: 158-164). In the model of the Original Position the contracting parties do not know whether they are man or woman, white or black, Hollander or Fleming. While elaborating and applying basic human rights, one has to sustain this abstract, universalist and legalist approach quite strictly. In debates about constitutional essentials and issues of fundamental justice one should not appeal to comprehensive religious, scientific, philosophical and ideological beliefs — to what we as individuals or as members of associations see as the whole truth (Rawls 1993a: 223-227). Rawls argues that any pursuit of dominance by movements such as Catholics, latitudinarians and ethnic nationalists is incompatible with a pursuit of civil society consistent with the demands of liberalism. Only if the just society is nearly perfect and has become a solid tradition, that is, only if a passionate expansionist line of certain movements does not jeopardize the 'overlapping' consensus between diverse individuals and groups, it is permitted that citizens reveal their comprehensive conceptions of the good life in politics. A virtually Dutch example of Rawls concerns the equal assignment of subsidies to public-secular schools and private-religious schools. According to Rawls, this issue about the separation between church and state can be settled satisfactorily in a public dialogue in which the parties explain how their deepest convictions affect the way in which they conceive and affirm the constitutional principles of freedom of association and equality of oppor-

tunity (Rawls 1993a: 247-254).

My first objection to Rawls is that liberalism gets imposed on ethnic minorities. Rawlsian justice is an interpretation and idealization of certain fundamental ideas in the public political culture and the background culture (daily life, associational life) as these have developed in American civil society. Ethnic minorities in the United States — and elsewhere — demand special rights to collective representation, to cultural support by the state, and even to self-government (Kymlicka 1995: 37-38). In the case of liberal demands, Rawlsian justice will probably contribute to the morally satisfactory solution of ethnic conflict. But what about the case in which minorities express illiberal demands, say the return of patriarchal family law or a ban on the selling of land, or the introduction of group-libel law? Rawls does not discuss this hard case explicitly but perhaps the analogy between the position of illiberal minorities in domestic relations and the position of illiberal societies in international relations is helpful here. Rawls argues that a contractual common ground for international justice can only be found if illiberal societies accept requirements such as peaceful strategy, an authentic orientation toward the common good (which also includes the interests of female members) and the respect for basic human rights. Rawls sees these requirements as demands of minimal decency (Rawls 1993: 69). I disagree. Rawls' requirements are distinctive of the Western tradition of liberal democracy and exclude societies and cultures which are profoundly hierarchical. A Rawlsian theory of citizenship in plural democracy could very well formulate similar requirements as to the political action of ethnic minorities which, after all, are often only partially rooted in liberal institutions and practices. But this move would boil down to forced assimilation to liberal culture. It would fetter integration in the sense of mutual adaptation of ethnic minorities (like immigrants) and mainstream society (Kymlicka 1995: 96; Miller 1995b: 143).

My second objection draws on Rawls's explicit argument and concerns the risk of depoliticization. Rawls's political liberalism fixes the terms of public debate and constitution-making by eliminating ordinary democratic conflict and its inherent uncertainty. His scheme generates an extreme and constant tension between, on the one hand, the lively plurality of rival subcultures and, on the other hand, the stiff liberal consensus about principles of justice and the heavy burdens of public reason pressing hard upon every political activist. In point of fact every politically

active citizen is asked to not to be her or his self but to act as if she or he joins a supreme judicial college. All human beings hold a personal point of view, which also includes their sympathy and loyalty with others in their circle (family, neighbourhood, professional community, denomination, country). However, Rawls invites humans to let prevail the common good from their converging impersonal points of view to such an extent, that the personal point of view becomes politically irrelevant.

Habermas concurs with Rawls's opinion that there is no substantive consensus about the good life in a well-ordered civil society, kept together as it is by a republican constitution. Among other things, this constitution preempts the display of fundamentalist strategies. Yet Habermas denies that democratic law is freestanding with respect to prevailing morality. It is interwoven with morality. Its universalist and neutralist claims do not eliminate its context-boundedness in the majority's choice of official language, core curriculum and much more (Habermas refers to the special legal position of christian churches in Germany). It is crucial that both ongoing struggle of political movements (labour movement, feminism) and socialization bring about moral commitment and affective ties with the 'Rechtsstaat', that is, a rule of law which enforces a scheme of basic human rights as coherent as possible within a given common horizon and a given national self-image. In Habermas's theory the personal point of view is not so much irrelevant as fused with the impersonal point of view: the constitution and its underlying values become the focus in the public and national dimension of everyone's identity.

This fusion cannot be total, since Habermas naturally appreciates that someone's identity is also determined by someone's course of life in certain communities being higher politics. Now when the question emerges what it means in a constitutional democracy to stand up for the protection of national culture and assimilation to this culture, two answers are given. The first answer is the demand of acceptance of the host country's constitutional principles by immigrants. The second answer is the stronger, more comprehensive demand of acceptance of the host country's culture in a broad sense by immigrants. It is presupposed in both answers that the native population will continue to display a similar and credible acceptance.

Habermas concludes that only the first answer can be justified. The second answer boils down to imposing a majority culture, to a forced

surrender of immigrant traditions and to the denial of any positive influence of communities of newcomers (including guest workers, refugees, ex-colonials and aliens) on the permanent improvement of the rule of law, the social horizon and the national self-image within the host countries (Habermas 1994: 135-140).

Habermas's constitutionalism is more appealing than that of Rawls because he leaves room for a creative political struggle in which newcomers do not completely stand on the sideline as an object of good intentions of third parties. It is also to the credit of Habermas that he does not need an exact definition of the essentially contested concept of 'national culture', since he simply does not claim that everyone in a certain period of entrance and transition ought to have a modicum of intimate and common knowledge of it. However, my objection to Habermas is that he reduces the relations between and amongst immigrants and natives to liberal politics and nothing more. Yet, decent social relations require much more than merely constitutional knowledge and a perception of the stabilizing function of the procedures of a constitutional state and a deliberative democracy.³ It also contains, as Hume and Smith have argued circumstantially, daily conversation (thus a common language), daily intercourse (instead of spatial segregation), fellow-feeling between the haves and the have-nots, active justice, and a catalogue of civic virtues (thus much more than an existentialist or postmodern morality of ambivalence and irony). It contains, as Burke established after Hume and Smith, a partially irrational layer of (quasi-)religious representations, that is, ceremonies, symbols and myths (like the myth of the February strike concerning Dutch resistance against German occupation in the Second World War). Undoubtedly, a lot is gained when native majorities acknowledge that liberalism in the spirit of Voltaire entails respect for traditional or eccentric exercises of the freedoms of religion, education and family life by immigrants. But this is not enough as far as the dynamics of plural democracy is concerned. What we need is a vision of the public political and social culture of plural countries like the Netherlands and Belgium, and a prospect of civil societies as 'new fatherlands'. A new fatherland is marked by shared and newly articulated values, well-considered support for the diversity of expressions of nationhood, and a legitimate culture in which both indigenous and immigrants show the signs of civic dignity, act as critical state-bearing forces, feel at home and rooted, and are proud of the institutions and practices of civil coopera-

tion, and the fair distribution of its benefits (rights, material freedoms, forms of well-being, responsibilities).

Connecting Egalitarian Citizenship and Culture

In this perspective, liberal egalitarians should not stop thinking about the international distributive obligations of nation-states, about forces of convergence toward and approximations of ideal egalitarian justice (on a par with the post-war evolution of the social democratic welfare state and the Rheinland model of organized capitalism), and about distribution-efficient forms of supranational democracy and public policy. But they should stop insulating citizenship from culture, as Rawls and Habermas do. This last move is made by Kymlicka and Miller, who are both extending the set of sources of liberal equality (Kymlicka 1989, 1995; Miller 1989, 1995b).

Kymlicka's argument can be presented as a series of steps. The first step is the observation that contemporary societies with liberal traditions and arrangements fail to incorporate ethnic and national minorities (unemployment, poverty, political alienation, social unrest). Ethnic minorities wish to integrate into the larger society; national minorities wish to maintain themselves as distinct societies alongside the majority culture. The liberal response to this dual demand is a public policy of assimilation and enforcement of individual rights to citizenship. This response does not provide full citizenship in the sense of membership to the political and cultural community, since it is based on the flawed assumption of factual and future 'uninationality', a homogeneity of culture, defined as 'an intergenerational community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and history' (Kymlicka 1995: 18).⁴ It neglects both the minorities' justifiable pursuit of recognition by the so-called politics of identity (voluntary separation) and the exclusive nature of free markets and majority rulings (involuntary separation).

The second step is a reexamination of the meaning of cultural membership in a framework of ethical individualism and liberalism. Kymlicka argues that cultural membership does contribute not only to personal self-realization (embeddedness, self-respect, and other elements of self-identity) but also to real freedom of persons (meaningful individual choice of

life options). Only societal cultures can survive and develop in the modern world. A societal culture 'provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres' (Kymlicka 1995: 76). Societal cultures 'are almost invariably national cultures' (Kymlicka 1995: 8). Kymlicka follows Dworkin and defines ethical individualism as equality of concern and respect, and individualist liberalism as equality of resources. So the theoretical problem is to find the best composition of societal culture, which generates the Dworkinian conception of liberal equality when it is flourishing and, at the same time, requires this conception of liberal equality in order to flourish. Kymlicka argues that the only cultural contexts which are compatible with both humanistic justice in the liberal sense and the pursuit of recognition of most people are national cultures which are bounded *and* interactive with respect to other cultures, stable *and* susceptible to critical assessment, revision and re-negotiation by its members, and unified in their fundamental endorsement of citizenship *and* pluriform in their expressions of civic identity. Although these contexts are necessarily untidy compromises, ethnic minorities can reasonably expect to enrich a given culture of the larger society (majority culture), while national minorities can reasonably expect their specific societal culture (minority culture) to survive.

The third step is Kymlicka's effort to endogenize cultural membership in egalitarian theory. Cultural membership in the sense of voluntary participation in the culture one feels deeply bounded up with should be conceived as one of the primary social goods, the 'things that every rational man is presumed to want' (Rawls). A pluralist cultural framework which protects and promotes legitimate cultural participation of each citizen belongs to the just basic structure of a democratic society. There is room for an egalitarian approach to the state's support for vulnerable minority cultures. Special rights to culture have to be formulated and enforced in order to eliminate specific, morally arbitrary disadvantages to ethnic minorities, such as aboriginals, and to equalize the circumstances to the extent that all members of a plural democracy have the same ability to live and work in their own 'social practices, cultural meanings and shared language'. Kymlicka claims that individual rights in classical, monocultural liberalism and collective rights in modern, multicultural liberalism are compatible: 'a liberal view requires *freedom within* the

minority group and *equality between* the minority and majority groups' (Kymlicka 1995: 152). One of his claims concerns the neutrality of special cultural support.

The final step is the development of concrete strategies to implement multicultural citizenship. Kymlicka argues that an egalitarian approach is superior to conventional approaches, like republican nationalism, consociationalism and laissez-faire liberalism ('benign neglect'). Immigrants differ from members of national minorities, since they are waiving their rights to self-government. However, their group-representation rights and polyethnic rights (cultural protection) should be taken seriously. Kymlicka proposes a combination of fighting prejudice and discrimination, bilingual education and re-creating national culture for immigrants from poor countries, such as Ethiopian peasants. The strategies should be linked with a pragmatic way to impose liberal principles, such as freedom of religion and the rights of women. Pragmatic strategies go beyond legal coercion and liberal militancy. They contain dialogue, open debate, the exemplariness of government agencies, monetary incentives and corporatist bargaining. Kymlicka concludes that neither convergence in the sense of spontaneous cultural overlap nor common political valuation, like a commitment to freedom, peace and non-violent change, are sufficient for the success of his conception of multicultural citizenship. Other preconditions are egalitarian myths of history, a shared identity based on mutual accommodation, and a shared respect for the diversity of ways in which citizens belong to a larger polity and invent culture, based on mutual solidarity (Kymlicka 1995: 187-191).

Kymlicka's vision of multicultural citizenship is one of the best to date in terms of philosophical rigour, liberal commitment, egalitarian imagination and sociological sensitivity. He suggests to see societal culture as an important external source, to endogenize certain elements of certain cultures (internal sources such as reasonable consensus on political values, egalitarian views of history, mutual accommodation and solidarity), and to construct multicultural citizenship as an output of liberal equality. The main practical advantage of this vision is its emphasis on the two-way process of improvement of domestic relations. Yet I want to make some critical remarks about the determinacy and adequacy of this new theory.

Its determinacy can be checked by raising a specific issue. Should the state subsidize the media of Turkish immigrants (newspapers, broadcas-

ting organizations)? Clearly, these media have a broad cultural function, as to articulation of interests, religion, education, economics (trade unions, jobs, ethnic entrepreneurship) and entertainment. So Kymlicka's general sympathy with this type of positive measures is understandable. But the final decision here depends on many morally relevant distinctions.⁵ Subsidies are *not* required if the Turks form a rich community, if the host country's media market is open and competitive in the sense that every Turk can reasonably be expected to collect whatever information she or he wants to collect, if the Turkish immigrants derive self-respect from financial and commercial autonomy, if they operate as national minorities with or without affiliations with the Turkish state apparatus and Turkish political movements, if they are only aiming at delivering illiberal (authoritarian, racist, sexist, fundamentalist) messages, or if the Turkish leadership does not really represent the considered convictions of new generations of Turkish immigrants. Perhaps subsidies are also unwarranted if they trigger off a hostile response by the native population for good reasons, say if native minorities (like a life-style enclave of green farmers) have to finance their own media themselves and therefore perceive subsidization of Turkish media as discrimination. Kymlicka's argument contains too few distinctions to determine the egalitarian position on this issue. Furthermore, his emphasis on choice fails to come to terms with the urgency of a specific outcome which is highly relevant to citizenship as desirable activity, namely, that Turks actually read papers and see television in the language of the host country. (In the inner cities of the Netherlands the rate of newspaper subscription — and many other indicators of participation — goes down while the rate of ethnic mixing goes up.)

As to adequacy, there is some tension between Kymlicka's egalitarian reasoning and his rejection of national identity. On the one hand, he dismisses the classical liberal nationalist's defence of homogeneous national identity (J.S. Mill) as being futile, perverse or dangerous under the present circumstances of justice. On the other hand, he agrees with the new liberal nationalism (Berlin, MacCormick, Miller, Raz, Tamir, Gray) that there may be no viable alternative. Citizens in a plural democracy do need a basis of social unity. National identity may offer solace here since it does not rest on shared values in a wide sense (Kymlicka 1995: 72-73, 93, 105, 184, 186, 191). The prominent place of cultural membership in egalitarian theory implies a strong kind of sociability amongst the native

population and the immigrants. Somehow they have formed a capacity to hold a common point of view, to stick to the spirit of universalism and to determine the terms of fairness together (anti-racism, and so on). I agree that the dirty paths of coercive assimilation and violent secession can both be avoided if a Humean mechanism of evolution has led to a shared sense of fairness between majority and minorities. It is, however, inconsistent, to construct a process-view of multicultural politics based on the explicit assumption that common ground is missing today, and an idealized view of this process based on the implicit assumption of agreement on liberal procedures and understandings.

Miller's plea for the reappraisal of nationhood touches upon a set of closely connected issues. Just like Walzer's propositions about local justice, all of Miller's propositions go against the self-image of his professional community, since most political theorists are used to conflate things like the role of political theory, the future of the left, the cosmopolitan nature of academia, and the championship of post-nationalist causes. First, nations do really exist. Your or mine identification with a nation is a legitimate way of understanding your or mine world. Whatever the differences between intellectual constructions of nation-based collective identification (individualist or collectivist), between the strength and content of national allegiances in different societies, *and* between personal conceptions of national identity in a single society (stable or unstable, central or peripheral, supportive or hostile, autonomous or heteronomous, rational, irrational or extrarational, unanimous, majoritarian or minoritarian), these conceptions are the cement of nationhood and affect the moral and political behaviour of modern citizens.⁶

Second, national identity is a legitimate category in liberal science and philosophy. It can be defined as a community constituted by a shared belief and mutual commitment, extended in history, active in character, connected to a particular territory, and marked off from other communities by its distinctive public culture (Miller 1995b: 22-27; compare Miller 1989: 238-239). Compared to more immediate communities, such as clans and neighbourhoods, national communities are special. The potency of nationality as a source of personal identity and of strongly felt and farly extended obligations is related to its indeterminacy. National identity is strangely amorphous about the rights and obligations which flow from it. It is the public culture which helps to divide responsibilities here. A public culture is a set of understandings about how a group of compa-

triot is to conduct its life together. It emerges by means of political debate, mass media and ideology. Miller claims that the novelty of national identity concerns its link with modern ideas about democracy. He also claims that the mythical and unchosen elements of many conceptions of national identity do not undermine a liberal defence of certain patterns of national identification as desirable patterns of personal and political development.

Third, liberal egalitarians who are inclined to justify the role of national identity in their studies of egalitarian civilizations, cannot start from ethical universalism and ought to start from ethical particularism. The usual universalist approaches to justify national loyalties and duties — Miller calls them the ‘useful convention and ‘voluntary creation’ approaches are flawed. Therefore, a consistent universalist ought to be a cosmopolitan. All the other egalitarians have to settle for a conception of particularism. Miller’s own particularism draws attention to three points: (i) obligations which spring from communal relations diminish the opposition between self-interest and moral obligation, (ii) nation-states are paradigmatic examples of mutual reinforcement of communities and formal practices of loose reciprocity, and (iii) obligations amongst compatriots are compatible with universal human rights, in particular with humanitarian considerations and commitments. Miller recognizes the fact that the openness of a nation and its willingness to bring sacrifices for the realization of liberal values on a global scale are both dependent on the specific public culture, in particular on a ‘common ethos’ regarding the definition of needs of members and non-members (Miller 1995b: 74). He concludes, however, that a well-ordered set of well-ordered nation-states (practising mutual aid, amongst other things) will have some degree of global inequality that is both inevitable and not unjust in an ethic of national primary obligations (Miller 1995b: 191-192).

Finally, the claim of national communities to be politically self-determining and to establish a national state of their own can be broadly justified in three ways. National determination may be the best device for realizing ideals and schemes of social justice, for protecting and fostering common culture, and for expressing and maintaining collective autonomy in the sense of democracy. Conversely, states are likely to function most effectively when they embrace a single national community: ‘Where the citizens of a state are also compatriots, the mutual trust that this engenders makes it more likely that they will be able to solve collective

action problems, to support redistributive principles of justice, and to practise deliberative forms of democracy. Together, these make a powerful case for holding that the boundaries of nations and states should as far as possible coincide' (Miller 1995b: 98; see Barry 1991a: 170-178).

I will not go into Miller's qualifications of this strong statement in his discussion of the issues of sovereignty in joint ventures between states (such as the European Union), of international obligations and of national minorities. The qualification which is relevant to my argument concerns two anomalies, namely multinational states sustaining systems of public welfare (Belgium, Canada, Switzerland) and national states reluctant to implement redistribution (the United States). According to Miller, these cases do not refute his thesis about the positive correlation between national identity and equality. Multinational states can only bring about equality by cultivating common national identity and by developing special institutions, such as federalist decentralization and consociationalist bargaining. Furthermore, it is not only the strength of national identity that matters, but also the common ethos of a nation, especially its solidarity (the American ethos is 'unusually individualistic') (Miller 1995b: 94-6).

Miller has applied his 'discriminating defence' of nationality to the case of immigrants. He draws a distinction between three approaches to the problems of ethnic minorities and immigrants, to wit, conservative nationalism, radical multiculturalism and republicanism, which is Miller's own view (Miller 1995c). Conservative nationalism claims that some unique and fixed image of national identity is authorized. The protection of this image against the threat of human mobility requires either exclusion and expulsion of immigrants or state indoctrination (the latter option is obviously second-best). Miller tries to show that this view is both inconsistent and obsolete in modern liberal democracies.

Radical multiculturalism claims that the state should give equal weight to all conceptions of national and ethnic identity. It ought to keep careful watch to see that cultural battles are fair and that legitimate differences are strengthened. Radical equality implies that (i) national identity ought to be abolished (since artificial homogeneity is wrong), (ii) every possible group identity ought to be cultivated (since authentic group differences are right) and (iii) sectarian identity ought to be prohibited (since sectarians, such as racists, are wrong in aiming at the destruction of plural democracy). Here Miller tries to show that a Manichean dichot-

omy between national identity and ethnic identities is nonsense. It fails to show that ethnic identity is 'better' or 'more genuine'. It also fails to recognize the importance of secure national identification to both the emancipation of immigrants and the willingness of the indigenous majority to extend the domain of equality and to respect minority groups all the way down. Briefly, radical multiculturalism is self-defeating since it destroys the cultural preconditions for radical equality (sociability, dialogue, trust, solidarity, tolerance).

Miller's own alternative is republicanism. First, the participants to identity politics must be in a position to make their voice heard. Formal minority group representation may be compatible with the republican idea of active citizenship, namely if the public benefits of political participation are larger than the public costs of the pursuit of authenticity within the political arena and the public costs of moderate sectarianism (dislike of compromise). Second, the dialogue about the public recognition of the demands of minorities must be open. Miller does not require impartiality and absolute separation between the public and the private sphere (which may generate exclusion). He requires (1) a willingness to justify one's own demands and to assess the demands of others publicly, and (ii) a willingness to articulate the best interpretation of equal citizenship in the nation. Third, multicultural politics must be oriented towards the re-making of national identity: 'What must happen in general is that existing national identities must be stripped of elements that are repugnant to the self-understanding of one or more component groups, while members of these groups must themselves be willing to embrace an inclusive nationality, and in the process to shed elements of *their* values which are at odds with its principles (Miller 1995b: 142). Miller suggests that any particularism ought to be constrained by the deliberative pursuit of the public interest and the development of public culture. Miller points at the integrating function of public schools and the French tradition of centralized civic nationalism. Kymlicka's polyethnic group rights are only justifiable if the minority in question sees itself as part of the larger community, and if state support to minority cultures is well established but discriminates against the minority in question (Miller 1995b: 149). In Miller's framework, the immigrants' choice is not between forced assimilation and full differentiation but between recognizing the obligations of membership in the host polity or withdrawing from citizenship and live as internal exiles.

Miller's theory of nationality implies that egalitarianism has one extra internal source, namely public culture, and many external sources which are all related to the communitarian potential of modern democratic society. This is a major step forward. A public culture is not monolithic and all-embracing. It contains political principles, social norms, and cultural ideals. In Great Britain the ideal of 'cultural Englishness' approves of drinking tea, patronizing fish and chip shops and having an enthusiasm for gardening. Yet, in Miller's view it is unjustifiable to demand that British immigrants (and British non-conformists for that matter) follow a conventional but ultimately private way of life (Miller 1995b: 26, 172). Furthermore, Miller's view of public culture is explicitly normative. In his earlier work, Miller relied too much on a purely empirical view, namely the realistic historic view that the nation-state is still the only viable framework for a free society and the realization of social democracy (Miller 1989, Smith 1995).

My objection to Miller's present argument is that it is too general. Although less encompassing than culture itself, public culture is more encompassing than political culture. It includes the national education system, the national media, a national language and literature, and national legal codes. It is partly immune to the liberal cleavage between public and private, since it is unavoidably pervaded by landscape, art, music, dress, food, recreations and folklore (Smith 1995: 142). Let us assume that one wants to promote a duly specified conception of liberal equality, which elements of a public culture should be reaffirmed, revised, rejected or invented then? Miller does raise the question, but his discussion of the changes in British national identity, such as Protestantism, is uncharacteristically evasive and incomplete. Miller does not take Thatcherism seriously (he dismisses it as a cultural epiphenomenon without any relevance to contemporary British identity), nor does he go beyond purely procedural proposals, such as an explicit public debate, a written constitution and civic education. It certainly makes sense to explain social policymaking in terms of national values. But if one wants to use this mode of explanation in an nationalist egalitarian approach, it becomes crucial 'to pinpoint exactly how cultural values, intellectual traditions, and ideological outlooks have concretely influenced processes of political conflict and policy debate. (...) *Whose* ideals and values? And ideas and values *about what* more precisely? We must identify the groups active in politics, analyze the resources that they can bring to bear in

allying or confronting with one another. (...) We must also investigate how the changing institutional configurations of national policies advantage some strategies and ideological outlooks and hampers others. Too often, national values explanations one-sidedly derive political outcomes from values, without revealing that experiences with governmental institutions and political processes profoundly affect the way people understand and evaluate alternative policy possibilities within a given cultural frame' (Skocpol 1992: 16,22).

Equality Between Whom?

I welcome the recent turn to culture in analytical political theory. In these high-days of conservatism, laissez-faire, tribalism, and extreme global inequalities, there is simply no escape from extending the sources of liberal egalitarianism and broadening constitutionalist thought. There are still many unsettled questions, as I have tried to demonstrate in my survey of the ideas of Rawls, Habermas, Kymlicka and Miller. Yet I can think of no good intellectual or political reason to argue that egalitarian theory within the tradition of the Enlightenment is essentially unhistorical, legalist, atomist, monist, practically irrelevant, and dystopian (as far as secularist and cosmopolitan ideals are concerned), as Gray is arguing (Gray 1995).

The urgency of cultural egalitarian theory concerns its main question: equality between whom? In standard theory, the boundaries of egalitarian citizenship are given. There are sound methodological reasons to support this convention (parsimonious modelling, fundamentals first, simple cases first). But it does cause some substantive confusion about what this specific datum means. Is it a concession to political realism or to political swindle (like 'socialism in one country')? Is it a case of intellectual's idealism or of scholarly megalomania ('whatever the specific nature of your society, my theory will apply to it!')? Is it the deep point that economic equality — or political equality (democracy) for that matter — can be defined independent of normative propositions about its domain or the shallow one of recognition of the primitive stage of analytical egalitarianism? Does it follow from the universalist presence of distinction between different societies and cultures, or from the particularist base of any rationalist and universalist theory of fairness, albeit implicit or impe-

rialist?

There seem to be two ways to endogenize the domain of equality, the cosmopolitan way and the nationalist way. The advantage of liberal cosmopolitanism is its relaxed attitude towards national and cultural boundaries. It argues that the three tenets of ethical individualism (ultimately, only individuals matter; all individuals matter; any individual matters as much as any other individual) all point directly at the moral arbitrariness of these boundaries. It brings in empirical evidence about cultural integration, such as 'creolization'. It claims open borders for immigrants. The Achilles' heel of these cosmopolitans (such as Carens, Goodin, Held, Pogge, and Waldron) is the lack of a plausible theory of global moral development of persons and polities. Is 'reflexive mongrelization' psychologically possible? Hence the stereotype discussion about the risk of 'rootless' cosmopolitanism.

The advantage of liberal nationalism is its empirical attitude towards the communitarian nature (history, experience, narrative) of Egalitaria.⁷ It argues that an individualist articulation of liberal values presupposes a shared collectivist articulation of these very values, however minimal or thin. To put it crudely, personal freedom and the right to national self-determination go in tandem. Liberalism points directly at the legitimacy of separation within *and* between civil societies and their typical regimes of citizenship. Liberal nationalism brings in the stylized fact that the best practical egalitarian schemes in the history of mankind are the social policies of national and homogeneous welfare states, such as the Nordic countries. It claims that there are legitimate principles of fairness and expediency to close the borders for certain classes of immigrants. Its Achilles' heel is the lack of a plausible theory of national identification and exclusion in a plural democracy. Is 'reflexive nationalization' psychologically possible? Hence, the stereotype discussion about the risk of 'ethnic' nationalism.

My intuition is quasi-Sidgwickian and quasi-Humean. Sidgwick, since we need a balance between national and supra-national considerations, on a par with the balance between egoism and altruism. Hume, since egalitarian citizenship is something intermediate between the extremes of nomadic and sedentary life. Liberal equality will not be needed without safe borders (hence the rise of equality in the post-war era of Western capitalism, and the support of insecure voters from all classes for the New Right after that era). It cannot be realized without open

borders (hence the coexistence of egalitarianism and internationalism in ideology and in practice, and the coexistence of domestic de-equalization and draconic closure in the current European Union and its member-states).

I must confess that I do not know how to proceed from here. We should ask cosmopolitans and nationalists to polemize against the best examples of the argument they detest. But interesting debates in different countries about these issues are unthinkable without boring stereotypes and terrible simplifications (compare the Rushdie-debate, the German Historikerstreit, and the recent debates about the European Monetary Union and Botho Strauss's 'Anschwellender Bocksgesang'). We should ask for synthesis. But the results of some efforts to combine ethical individualism and liberalism in a study of the domain of equality are rather unwordly. The best example here is the liberal theory of conditions for legitimate secession (the only secessionists who care about this theory are the ones who won and retired because of old age). We should ask for more empirical detail and more comparativism (different conceptions of equality across and within countries, different debates about national identity in Europe, and so on). But a better hold of details and comparisons does not guarantee a better egalitarian argument, as Elster's strange combination of superior social science and blunt commonsense thinking about justice shows. So I call for a transition from 'equality of what?' to 'equality between whom?', without being sure whether the answers will really bring back the old egalitarian self-confidence. Perhaps agony ought to become an element of the good life, at least of the examined life of ethic egalitarians.

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NOTES

1. I am grateful to Sam Bowles for providing this explanation and the equations in tandem.
2. Miller's claim that Rawls does not conceive the citizen as an active participant in politics is wrong and too much driven by his rigid distinction between libertarian, egalitarian (such as Rawlsian) and republican notions of citizenship. Cf. Miller (1995c: 437) with Rawls (1993: 81-82, 205, 253).

3. Two marginal notes here. One, Habermas's republicanism is not a remedy for the culture of self-hate and utopian internationalism (like pacifism) in contemporary Germany but a symptom of the difficulties of mastering the German past. Second, I do acknowledge the critical meaning of a constitution for the continuation of the motley American continent after the Civil War and for the survival of a traumatized and defeated nation after Hitler. But the lessons of Montesquieu and Robert Dahl are that the preconditions of a democratic society cannot be reduced to the unique prerequisite of a written constitution and that a distinct set of preconditions determine the effective enforcement of liberal constitutional law itself. Intelligent communitarians do little else than scoring this point in discussions about modern and supranational society. More specifically, if it is only constitutional ethos that counts, why do not we all emigrate to Sweden (the Norwegians first), why does European integration in tandem with waves of pessimism and regress, and why did the unification of the Lower Countries never come about? Compare the Italian debate about Habermas in Virioli (1995: 169-176).
4. Kymlicka also points at a post-war liberal lesson of history, namely disillusionment with the minority rights scheme of the League of Nations, the American racial desegregation movement and the ethnic revival amongst immigrant groups in the United States (Kymlicka 1995: 57)
5. My argument here inspired by G.A. Cohen's unpublished paper 'Expensive tastes and Multiculturalism' (June 1995).
6. The aspect of differentiated and mixed motives for national identity is mentioned by most historians, while it is only barely recognized by political scientists. Compare Colley 1995: 372 and Hardin 1995: ch.3.
7. In this respect, Lukes's distinction between communitarian and egalitarian theories of human rights (both different from utilitarian, proletarian and libertarian theories) is misleading. See Lukes (1993).

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