Reason, Recognition, and Diversity

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Cultural controversy combined with an intensified awareness of cultural difference and of the salience of culture as a political force has done much in recent years to erode the liberal consensus that was a mark of postwar European politics.[1] Ethnic and religious differences threaten the stability of democratic regimes. Liberal democracy is faulted for ignoring indigenous cultures and postcolonial peoples while embracing schemes of economic development that disrupt traditional values and ways of life. Communitarians and cultural conservatives argue that liberals ignore the role of cultural traditions in shaping the character and goals of democratic political institutions. Social theorists and postmodernists see in liberal institutions an apparatus of domination that abandons cultural diversity to industrial development and the forces of economic globalization.

In this paper I argue that liberals must respond to such challenges by re-examining the role of culture in liberal political theory.[2] There was a time when

1 Cf. Fraser 2003, 112.

2 My understanding of the term "liberalism" is closely linked to the theory of political liberalism presented in Rawls 1996.This is not to overlook the substantial literature devoted to what Kymlicka calls "liberal culturalism" that has accumulated in recent years. See Kymlicka 2001, 42-48 and Hooker 2009, 55-86. My concern here, however, is less with questions of multicultural rights and the rights of ethnocultural groups, than with a type of scepticism about the liberal project that is associated with

political economists assumed social and political institutions to be culturally homogeneous. Culture was regarded as a public good that should be available to all rather than as a source of differential rights claims.[3] Even liberals who rejected perfectionist cultural ideals assumed the communities within which political institutions were embedded to be culturally homogeneous.[4] For the purposes of cultural policy the existence of a common language, literature, and cultural traditions could be taken for granted. Cultural diversity was not a factor in political policy and rarely viewed as a source of claims against the state. The cultural choices of the representative citizen were treated as a matter of preferential rationality.

As time passed, the assumption that modern political communities are culturally homogeneous became controversial. Cultural diversity acquired a new salience.[5] Cultural difference, it was argued, may be an important source of political injustice.[6] Modern societies are composed of different cultures, many of which are invisible from the perspective of what came to be seen as the "dominant culture".[7] The culture of the nation state was dominated by ruling elites. As the culture of the *status quo* it embodied a dominant identity, an authoritative set of cultural practices and norms that shaped not only the way members of minority groups were viewed by others, but also the way they viewed themselves.[8] What is sometimes called the "politics of identity" is a reaction to the discovery and rejection of the hegemony of these established cultural powers.

For the politics of identity culture is a matter not of perfection or of preference satisfaction but of identity, of who a person is. The consciousness of cultural oppression is the consciousness that one has been denied one's true identity by assimilation into the narratives of another culture. When people are compelled to view themselves not from the perspective of a culture they call their own but through the eyes of a culture that is not their own they experience this discrepancy as a loss of self. Such misrecognition is not merely a matter of misrepresentation or of mistaken identity. It is a matter of being overlooked altogether.

what Fraser calls the "cultural turn". Fraser uses this phrase to identify a (new) salience of culture and cultural paradigms, closely connected with the emergence of post-socialist political movements; see Fraser 2003, 212.

[3] See Kymlicka 1995, 77; Stopford 2009, 76.

[4] The term "perfectionism" is used here and below in the stricter of the two senses discussed by Rawls 1971, §50.

[5] Fraser 2003, 212; Stopford 2009, 7.

[6] Kymlicka 1989, 123.

[7] See e.g. Appiah 1994, 23.

[8] Said 1979, 25; Stopford 2009, 94.

Cultural domination is an instrument of political domination. Misrecognition and marginalization allow one culture to manage another politically. What Said calls "Orientalism" is an integral part of European material civilization, a kind of cultural discourse "with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles" through which knowledge of the Orient is filtered into Western consciousness.[9] Orientalism is more than a cognitive and semiotic lens that shapes perceptions of the Orient. It is a medium by which discourse is translated into power, "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."[10]

The constitution of power through discourse is not a matter of cultivating negative attitudes, far less of conspiracy. It is an effect of systems of representation --- treatises, histories, novels, handbooks --- that structure the political and cultural profile of the colonized domain in such a way that the culture of the "Other" is no longer visible. To the extent that they also adopt the cultural perspective of the oppressor, people whose experience is constituted in this way become involuntary agents of their own misrecognition. To manufacture cultural invisibility is not merely to deny the other a voice.[11] It is to win their complicity in denying themselves that voice.

Persons and groups who are overlooked by a dominant culture are sometimes said to be "marginalized". To be marginalized is not merely to be disadvantaged in a distribution of social goods or opportunities. It is to be excluded from the system of distribution and the consensus on which it rests. Cultural exclusion subverts political inclusion. Recognition theorists stress the importance of cultural inclusion as a presupposition of political enfranchisement.[12] Participation in democratic practices presupposes the recognition of cultural identity. Recognition is more than mere respect. It has something to do with social visibility, equality of condition and the independence that arises from justified inclusion within the political community.

The discovery of cultural misrecognition at the heart of the democratic process makes it necessary to restore cultural visibility and a political identity to those who have been marginalized in this way. The politics of identity focuses less on the marginalization of individuals in their own right than on individuals as members of marginalized groups.[13] Such groups range from ethnic and religious minorities to indigenous and postcolonial peoples. Efforts to restore visibility to

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9 Said 1979, 2.

10 Said 1979, 3.

11 Said 1979, 15.

12 Stopford 2009, 57-62.

13 Stopford 2009, 60.

the marginalized may take different forms. Some seek to foster the character and distinctive features of a cultural identity that has been effaced through colonialism or other forms of cultural domination.[14]

For others, the focus of the politics of identity is less on the character of the oppressed than on resistance to the oppressor. Such initiatives are intent on rejecting a dominant regime and only secondarily on reclaiming a lost identity.[15] The resulting struggles are divisive, spawning new orthodoxies rather than fostering cultural inclusion.[16] The reassertion of group identities may promote cultural stereotyping and the "misbegotten politicization" of identity at the expense of a sensitivity to individual differences.[17] Systems of imagined singularity encourage the conceptual partitioning of peoples in ways that blunt the perception of cultural complexity.[18] Group identifications fortified by a sense of destiny crush human sympathy and feed sectarian confrontation. Hatred becomes structural when it sees others only through the groups to which they belong.[19]

When the politics of identity is concerned less with the identity of groups than with the awareness of identity on which the development of group identities depends it becomes the politics of recognition. For the politics of recognition, the inwardly derived awareness of identity rests on a practical consciousness of self that is interpersonal in origin. It is achieved rather than discovered.[20] Some regard the concrete experience of struggle as a condition of moral growth.[21] Modern political persons owe the ability to act as autonomous selves to developmental processes that can only occur in response to a challenge posed by the actions of another subject. Such interactions are necessary to develop and confirm a person's moral status.

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[14] Spivak 1988; Guha 1998; Morton 2003, 50-59.

[15] Stopford 2009, 61; Fox-Genovese 1991, 226.

[16] Fraser 2003, 29.

[17] Sen 2006, 10-11,71; Huntington 1996. Sen argues that Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis is conceptually parasitic on the unsubstantiated presumption "that humanity can be pre-eminently classified into discrete and distinct civilizations, and that the relations *between different human beings* can somehow be seen, without serious loss of understanding, in terms of relations *between different civilizations*." Such classifications are not only divisive, in Sen's view: they are empirically misleading.

[18] Sen 2006, 10-12.

[19] Cf. Stopford 2009, 66.

[20] Taylor 1994, 34-35; Stopford 2009, 58.

[21] On the role of recognition and dialogue in the development of identity see Taylor (1994, 32-35) and Honneth (1995). Honneth develops the theme of the struggle for recognition in Hegel's *Jena Realphilosophie* while passing over the later philosophy of Spirit. His discussion of recognition and the pathologies of modern institutions also borrows from Hegel's early distinction between the spheres of family, civil society, and state which came to play a central role in the *Philosophy of Right*. See Honneth 1995 12f., 31f, 1998, 133-134.

Liberal theory is also said to be in the grip of a monological picture of the self.[22] Political subjects, on this view, develop moral agency in isolation and without other selves or constitutive cultural attachments. This individualistic social atomism lacks psychological and historical depth.[23] Its central doctrine is "an affirmation of what we could call the primacy of rights".[24] Social atomists are unmindful of these developmental aspects of human life and of their political significance. They are oblivious to the shared history of risk, conflict, and agreement with others that is essential to self-discovery and personal autonomy. Whether we are for or against others, human identity is interpersonal and dialogical in a way that individualistic liberal models fail to see.

Some recognition theorists go further and argue that it is in the experience of injustice and social suffering that the normative core of the politics of recognition should be sought.[25] To belong to the human world is to be vulnerable to such harms from the beginnings of one's life.[26] Liberal democracy suffers from a "post-traditional normative deficit". This deficit is evident in a systematic insensitivity to the plight of cultural minorities. Struggles that originate in the interpersonal and pre-political basis of society must be confronted and worked out within the public political community. Failing this, psychosocial dysfunctions that derive from the reification of intersubjective relations of recognition cannot be addressed.[27]

People depend on relationships of recognition with significant others for the way they see themselves and for what Honneth calls their "practical relation-to-self". Misrecognition is a special form of disrespect or moral injury that is damaging to the development of moral autonomy: first, to a person's confidence in abilities that they can only develop within relationships involving love and care or "basic self-confidence";[28] second, to their self-respect as free moral agents who can enjoy and assume the rights and responsibilities of equal citizenship; and

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[22] Thus Taylor 1994, 32: "In order to understand the close connection between identity and recognition, we have to take into account a crucial feature of the human condition that has been rendered almost invisible by the overwhelmingly monological bent of mainstream modern philosophy."

[23] Taylor 1985, 197; 1992, 58-60. Taylor links modern identity and the need for recognition to the search for authenticity. Appiah (1994, 155-156) distinguishes essentialist and monological accounts of authenticity, arguing that a further approach, different from either, is needed to deal with the special case of political morality. See also Stopford 2009, 31.

[24] Taylor 1985, 188.

[25] Honneth 2003, 129.

[26] Honneth 1998, 133.

[27] See Honneth's remarks on reification, self-reification, recognition, and social pathologies in Honneth 2008, 80-85.

[28] "Self-trust" would be a more literal translation of *Selbstvertrauen*.

third, to their self-esteem as valued and contributing members of society.[29] Moral development depends on a social organization that supports these basic categories of recognition in the three corresponding social spheres that Honneth refers to with the terms 'love', 'law', and 'achievement'.[30]

Honneth rejects the view that the recognition spheres are merely cultural.[31] Recognition is a function of economic, moral, and affective relationships that interact with the pre-political psychology of citizens on several levels. Recognition calls for more than the consciousness of cultural diversity. It involves an understanding of how and as what political persons recognize one another.[32] The call for recognition embodied in three recognition principles corresponding to each of the fundamental recognition spheres marks off a 'quasi-transcendental' social perspective from which the moral standpoint can be formed.

The recognition principles are too abstract to guide social policy directly. Struggles for recognition are engines of social change. They emerge from the margins of modern industrial democracies to influence public awareness. But the public sphere is not univocal. As soon as they enter the public sphere, recognition struggles confront hard cases in which competing norms and recognition principles jar.[33] Not only may recognition principles clash.[34] The public sphere is the scene of another kind of struggle that has to do not with recognition and misrecognition but with inequalities of wealth, opportunity and power. The social suffering attendant on misrecognition cannot always be distinguished from the social suffering caused by "maldistribution".[35]

Honneth concedes that it is difficult to spell out the content to his idea of political progress, especially in the recognition spheres of love and achievement. Distribution struggles can be reinterpreted as struggles for recognition surrounding the "appropriate evaluation of individuals' or groups' social contributions."[36]

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[29] "Self-valuing" would be a more literal translation of Honneth's *Selbstschätzung,* rendered here as "self-esteem". See also the translator's introduction in Honneth (1995 xii-xiii). Both "misrecognition" and "disrespect" could serve as translations of *Mißachtung*. Taylor (1994, 25) uses both "nonrecognition" and "misrecognition" to characterize harms of this kind.

[30] Overreliance on the legal system to resolve social conflicts which may have their origins in other recognition spheres and the consequent "juridification" (*Verrechtlichung*) of these spheres is an example of such an imbalance. See Honneth (1998, 133-134) and Habermas (1983, 53-67), whose account of the role of intersubjectivity in moral development Honneth cites.

[31] Honneth 1997, 151.

[32] Stopford 2009, 58.

[33] Fraser 2003, 224-226; Stopford 2009, 64.

[34] Fraser 2003, 228; Stopford 2009, 64.

[35] Fraser 2000, 118: "Distribution and recognition are not neatly separated from each other in capitalist societies"; see also Honneth 2004, 351-352.

[36] Honneth 2004, 353.

He also argues that it is not the task of social theory to address cases in which principles conflict. The proper task of social theory is to develop a pluralist theory of justice guided by the ideal of undistorted identity formation in relation to each of the three recognition spheres.[37]

Unresolved tensions between recognition and distribution principles point to another kind of conflict: between recognition and justice. The moral perspective of justice is no less compelling than the quasi-transcendental moral authority commanded by calls for recognition.[38] The claims of the marginalized must be reconciled with the claims of the citizen who participates in a public system of cooperation involving responsibility and the management of legitimate expectations.[39] Policies that are intended to compensate the misrecognition of some may result in discrimination against others. The failure to resolve such conflicts may trigger social resentment and feelings of injustice among those who believe they are already playing their part in a well-ordered scheme of distribution, as well as among those excluded from that scheme.[40]

Should we think of misrecognition as a form of injustice, or of injustice as a form of misrecognition? Publicly recognized rules and standards that regulate the legitimate expectations of citizens of a well-ordered society play a central role in determining the fairness and stability of social cooperation. Calls for recognition may, as Honneth believes, constitute a necessary stimulus to social action. But to understand misrecognition as a form of injustice we also need to know something about the relationship between justice and recognition.[41] Do liberal democratic political relationships presuppose mutual recognition? Must the experience of social injustice invariably be "measured in terms of the withholding of some recognition held to be legitimate"?[42]

It is sometimes argued that Rawls's "ideal theory" is blind to the fact of institutional misrecognition because it identifies social justice with the elimination of contingencies that are arbitrary from a moral point of view.[43] Principles that

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[37] Honneth 2004, 351-354.

[38] Honneth and Rawls approach the genesis, function, and character of moral theory and the moral point of view from methodologically distinct perspectives.

[39] Rawls 1971, 310-315.

[40] Fraser 2000, 119. On the relation between reciprocity and the sense of justice, see Rawls's 1971 essay "Justice as Reciprocity", reprinted in *Collected Papers*, 190-224. See also Bankovsky (2012, 120-121, 164-65) and Rawls (2007).

[41] Rawls 1999, 7; 1996. 16, 181. Rawls is aware of the problem of misrecognition. But he holds that analysis of the sources of misrecognition lacks a practical point unless it can be integrated within a workable account of institutions.

[42] Honneth 2004, 351.

[43] Rawls 1971, 15; on ideal theory, 8-9.

are designed to nullify the effects of mere contingencies cannot address injustices that are systematic in origin.[44]This is a misunderstanding. Rawls's theory applies to the special case of the basic structure of a well-ordered society: the major social institutions and the way they fit together to distribute rights and duties and to "determine the division of advantages from social cooperation".[45] It is an ideal theory of institutional justice, developed with the problems of institutional misrecognition and discrimination in full view. *Ad hoc* attempts to address institutional oppression, through antidiscrimination laws and other external remedial measures do not address the systematic sources of injustice and misrecognition.[46] Rawls recognizes that partial compliance deals with the "pressing and urgent matters". But only ideal theory offers us a systematic grasp of the truly urgent problems."[47]

To ask what is practically possible is to seek realistic criteria of agreement rather than criteria of agreement about the real. Lasting solutions to pressing problems presuppose a stable consensus on basic principles. Calls for recognition must begin rather than end with a clarification of the role of recognition in a well-ordered society.[48] Realistic agreement under such circumstances has something to do with the recognition of reasonable difference. The problems faced by societies which are seeking to become more inclusive cannot be solved by compensating historical injustice or policies of redistribution. They call for a renegotiation of reasonable terms of cooperation between parties who may lack not only a common conception of the good but also a common cultural heritage.[49]

In liberal democracies it is the system of public education that is the focus of efforts to develop such a conception of cooperation. Public reasonableness is caught between the forces of exclusion and inclusion; between an exclusive tradition steeped in perfectionism, on the one hand, and progressive but uncritical demands for social inclusiveness on the other. Humanistic educational schemes often rest on perfectionist ideals that are believed to embody the "best that has been thought and said in the world".[50] Advocates of Western civilization

[44] Hooker 2009, 61. Hooker's conclusion that Rawls presumes "that problems of racial injustice are contingent rather than constitutive" may depend on a misunderstanding of the role of the basic structure in Rawls's project.

[45] Rawls 1971, 7.

[46] Hooker 2009, 60.

[47] Rawls 1971, 9; 245-246.

[48] On the connection between the idea of the reasonable, fair terms of cooperation, and reciprocity see Rawls (1996, 51).

[49] Rawls connects the idea of the reasonable with the willingness to propose and honour fair terms of cooperation, and with the readiness to recognize and accept the burdens of judgment.

[50] Arnold 1993, 190. Arnold argues in the introduction to *Culture and Anarchy* that culture as the

programs argue that students must study canonical works if they are to become reflective and reasonable members of civil society.[51]

Sloterdijk has described the powerful sense of belonging engendered within this tradition.[52] Humanistic education was long viewed on the model of the intimate society of letters. Education was a Platonic enterprise reserving the highest knowledge for a few while excluding those deemed incapable of rational insight.[53] Its function was to construct the "armed and literate" nation in which "the power of reading actually did mean something like membership of a secret elite".[54] Compulsory military service for males and the universal obligation of both sexes to read the classics were marks of inclusion.[55] Schools and institutions of higher learning were to forge the intellectual and moral capacities on which the political and economic order relied.[56]

Calls for the recognition of cultural diversity challenge the democratic legitimacy of this exclusive educational model. Critics of traditional humanistic curricula argue that public education must abandon its special relationship to the Western canon.[57] Modern political communities are demographically and culturally diverse. Public education cannot be grounded in the understanding of a single cultural tradition. If culture is a matter of identity, if a political community embraces many cultures, and if no culture is in itself more valuable than any another, then the public representation of marginalized cultures is essential to their rehabilitation.

Public education should encourage participatory inclusion rather than metaphysical exclusion. It derives its standards not from the highest values in any particular tradition but from the representation of disparate values within a democratic tradition. What is at stake for the critic of Western perfectionism is not only the underrepresentation of non-standard voices in the curriculum but also the social and political invisibility of the cultures from which they stem. Hege-

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study of perfection leads us "to conceive of true human perfection as a *harmonious* perfection, developing all sides of our humanity; and as a general perfection, developing all parts of our society" (Arnold 1993, 192); see also Stopford 2009, 91. Many perfectionists attempt to extrapolate from perfectionism as a principle of individual morality to perfectionism as a principle of political morality. See, for example, Cavell's remarks on Emersonian Perfectionism and democracy in the context of Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* in Cavell 1990, 3, 32.

51 Hook 1990, 135-36.

52 Sloterdijk 2009, 13.

53 Stopford 2009, 93.

54 Sloterdijk 2009, 13. This characterization of a Platonic education brings to mind the "Pursuit of the Ideal" discussed by Berlin in his essay of that title: Berlin 1990, 1-20.

55 Sloterdijk 2009, 14.

56 Cf. Plato, *The Statesman*, 311b-c; Sloterdijk 2009, 26.

57 Stopford 2009, 92; Gandhi, 43, 53, 84-86.

monic culture is a system of knowledge about the "Other" and other cultures that secures and maintains the superiority of knower over known.[58] Foucault's reconstructions of subjugated knowledges and Said's studies of cultural hegemony suggest that the first task of education should be to challenge this superiority.[59]

Striving for curricular inclusiveness tells us little about the point of inclusion. Ideals of reason and rationality play only a minor role in many cultures. Given such difficulties it is unsurprising that attacks on Western conceptions of truth and rationality, exemplified in the writing of philosophical and literary poststructuralists and postmodernists, sometimes overshoot and target not only Western perfectionism but also much else that we regard as reasonable. Some, like Barthes and Rorty, reject an intermediate position between the perfectionist tradition – "God and his hypostases" --- and the sanctioned Babel of interpretation.[60] The consequences of this refusal are evident in the postmodern apothegm: "anything goes": "the notion that there is something a given text is *really* about, something which rigorous application of a method will reveal, is as bad as the Aristotelian idea that there is something which a substance really, intrinsically, *is* as opposed to what it only apparently or accidentally or relationally is".[61]

The "text" thus "practises the infinite deferment of the signified".[62] Its dominant metaphor is the self-reproducing network without origin, a semiotic pluralism anchored in the proliferation and ceaseless recycling of signs.[63] The slide into "a space which leaves no language safe outside" discards the hegemonic aspirations of the Western tradition, and with it the ideal of a transcultural moral perspective.[64] Such a utopia of language would be "a space where no language has a hold over any other", a society beyond the dialectic of recognition, Hegelian Socialism and political thinking.[65] No culture can pass judgment on another and none can be judged from outside.[66] The liberated reader provides the model for a society in which the conflict of interpretations is *de rigeur*.

Structuralist models of signification reclaim linguistic difference and cultural diversity from the "totalitarian" control of perfectionist systems, but they have

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58 Said 1979, 7f. Said's *Orientalism*, primarily a study of the role of Western cultural discourse in colonialism, draws heavily on Foucault's studies of the relationship between knowledge and power.

59 Said 1979, 3.

60 Barthes 1977, 147; Stopford 1990.

61 Rorty 1992, 102; Eco 2000, 49-50.

62 Barthes 1984, 171.

63 Barthes 1984, 171; see also Derrida 1984, 18.

64 Barthes 1984, 174.

65 Lübecker 2009, 136-138.

66 Scruton 2014, 86.

nothing to say about political cooperation in a multicultural democracy once the value of diversity has been recognized and accepted.[67] Barthes' reliance on an impersonal and apolitical linguistic model of signification encourages him to abandon the distinction between human and semiotic interpretants.[68] The dialogical and intersubjective aspect of interpretation by living and breathing human beings is absorbed into the monological and aleatoric play of signs – "textuality".[69] But political theory cannot ignore intersubjectivity, or call a halt at the conflict of interpretations. Literature and literary theory may work in the interstices of politics and political theory, but they cannot replace it.[70] Disparate cultures find cohabitation more challenging than the analogy with the "text" suggests. The capitulation of postmodernism to global consumer capitalism and the culture of accessibility reminds us that, left to their own devices, signs have no loyalties but to their language.[71]

It was suggested above that liberal political theory must re-examine its response to the intensified awareness of cultural difference associated with what some have called the "cultural turn". Liberal philosophers have focused on questions of liberty, political legitimacy, and entitlement that arise with the development of modern legal and economic institutions.[72] The role of liberalism as a cultural force at the origin of its own system of cultural significations is rarely scrutinized in any detail.[73] Yet understanding the role of this system in shaping and distorting but also sustaining social cooperation, especially in the public sphere, is necessary if liberal political theory is to clarify the relationship between social justice and cultural domination in multicultural democracies.[74]

It is sometimes argued that liberal governments can avoid arbitrary bias in favour of one culture or another by creating a public sphere that is impartial between different cultures and comprehensive value systems.[75] We can follow

[67] Stopford 1990; 2009, 6; Eco 2000, 50-51.

[68] See especially Saussure 1966.

[69] Compare Stopford 2008, 179f.; see also Habermas 1995, 243-266. Habermas makes an analogous criticism of C.S. Peirce's semiotics which he believes remains locked into a monological (as opposed to "dialogical") view of subjectivity. Peirce, like Barthes, seems to lose sight of the facticity of the relation between self and other. Habermas, by contrast, holds on to the priority of linguistic intersubjectivity and rejects semiotic attempts to reconstruct intersubjectivity in terms of a more general semiotic theory.

[70] Compare Barthes 1979, 35.

[71] On the "culture of accessibility" and the appropriation of culture by the market, see Stopford 2009, 5-7.

[72] Stopford 2009, ix, 3.

[73] On the idea of a liberal cultural structure, see Dworkin 1985, 229-33; Kymlicka 1989, 177; Stopford 2009, 40-41.

[74] Stopford 2009, 40-41, 75-78.

[75] Rawls 1996, 191.

Levinson here in distinguishing between "exclusionary" and "inclusionary" neutrality. Both types of neutrality purpose a public sphere in which no one culture is favoured over any other. Exclusionary neutrality attempts to achieve this through the exclusion of cultural difference.[76] Children, for example, may be expected to discard certain religious and ethnic symbols or types of clothing when they enter state schools. Some culturally significant behaviours might be forbidden in public spaces, and public symbols of state might have to be removed or shorn of some of their cultural associations.

A public sphere that restricts manifestations of cultural difference in this way may encourage rather than inhibit cultural oppression by allowing forms of civic identification that are tainted with state perfectionism to flourish within the space vacated by the forbidden signs and symbols.[77] A space from which the tokens of cultural difference have been banished is a space in which encounters between members of different cultures are inevitably impoverished. In an open society such encounters play an important role in promoting intercultural understanding and the public virtues of tolerance, the readiness to meet others halfway, and reasonableness.[78]

Inclusionary neutrality is less susceptible to such criticisms. Guided by the principle of equal inclusion rather than equal exclusion, its goal is a public identity "in which all private individuals and identities find inclusion".[79] Where exclusionary neutrality sets limits to manifestations of difference and avoids cultural confrontation in the public sphere, inclusionary neutrality permits and encourages members of different cultures to fit together in the same public space despite their differences.[80] In this way it creates a forum in which civic virtue can develop. But where exclusionary neutrality may facilitate state perfectionism, experience suggests that inclusionary neutrality may not do enough to encourage the kind of cultural framework within which identification with civic values can flourish.[81] An inclusionary public sphere may fail to flourish because private identifications remain stronger than allegiances to the public project.[82]

Both exclusionary and inclusionary neutrality are outcome-oriented policies. They seek to create a culture of a certain kind. Yet of what kind remains unclear.

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76 Levinson 1999, 117.

77 Levinson 1999, 123; Stopford 2009, 102.

78 Rawls 1996, 157.

79 Levinson 1999, 117.

80 Levinson 1999, 118.

81 See Stopford 2009, 101-102.

82 Levinson 1999, 121.

What does it mean to say that a culture is neutral? Is a neutral culture just another kind of culture? Is it perhaps a mixture of cultures in which no single culture is allowed to predominate? Or is the idea of a neutral culture in itself impractical or even incoherent?[83] Because it is difficult to make sense of the idea of cultural neutrality as an outcome some argue that theories of public culture should focus on the procedures that precede outcomes rather than on the outcomes themselves.

A procedure is sometimes said to be neutral if it is justified by appeal to neutral values such as impartiality.[84] Thus Habermas offers an apparently impartial account of the way in which democratic deliberation can reconcile the claims of individuals from differing communities and cultures.[85] The heart of this view is a model of public deliberation that is inclusive, egalitarian, and noncoercive.[86] Participants must speak and act reasonably and sincerely, strive for mutual understanding, and must be prepared to accept the force of the better argument. Consensual decisions reached through deliberation in accordance with these procedural criteria are said to result from a process of democratic will formation the conclusions of which all participants can accept because of the impartiality of the procedure that led to them.[87]

Here it is not neutrality of outcome but the deliberative procedure by which decisions are reached that determines the character of the political culture. Habermas argues that public deliberations in conformity with the ideal of communicative rationality are the source of an "innerworldly transcendence" and context-transcending validity claims that lift democratic discourse above the systemic forces that are responsible for the 'colonization' of the culture of everyday life.[88] Communicative rationality restores the sense of purpose to moral-practical agency by reconnecting social choice to consensus oriented communication that is rooted in the 'lifeworld' and the factical recognition of different cultural perspectives.

Some doubt whether the innerworldly transcendence of ideal discourse is sufficient to address the marginalization and misrecognition that are the focus of identity- and recognition-theoretical attacks on liberal theory. Honneth thinks that Habermas's preoccupation with system rationality and the distinction between communicative and instrumental rationality leads him to overlook the political importance of pre-political social struggles involving moral conflict and misrecognition. Rawls sees Habermas's conception of the public sphere as per-

83 Rawls 1996, 194.

84 Compare here Rawls 1996, 191.

85 See especially Habermas 1984, 1987.

86 Habermas 1990, 89.

87 Habermas 1994, 138.

88 Stopford 2009, 33.

fectionist. It embodies a civic humanist ideal of political participation according to which human nature is "most fully realized in a democratic society in which there is widespread and vigorous participation in political life".[89]

A public culture that is grounded in civic humanist ideals depends on a "high" conception of rationality that may marginalize those who think and communicate in different ways. Such ideal conceptions represent a significant hurdle for members of cultures that emphasize social interdependence, collectivism, and group learning. Their approach to moral questions may be guided by their responsiveness to the ethical features of particular situations rather than by dialog and criticism.[90] The forum of ideal discourse is not, certainly, elitist in the sense of Sloterdijk. But if ideal discourse theory is wedded to a civic humanist ideal that is foreign and perhaps even puzzling to many, it surely will fail to command a consensus as a model for the public political culture of a multicultural democracy.

Rawls's approach to the public sphere differs from this in three important respects. Firstly, *A Theory of Justice* makes the rejection of perfectionism as a political principle explicit. The use of state power to impose perfectionist cultural ideals, whether by direct or indirect methods, violates the principle of equal liberty.[91] In addition, the standards of reasoning that are operative within the public sphere must be specified in ways that avoid perfectionism. This excludes not just Western civic humanism, but any conception of rationality that is biased towards Western values.[92] For this reason Rawls's "political liberalism" explicitly rejects the idea of a comprehensive political consensus in favour of a practical overlapping consensus between adherents of different value systems based on reasonableness and reciprocity.[93]

Secondly, Rawls characterizes the public sphere in a way that is constructive rather than corrective and remedial.[94] Habermas views deliberative democracy as a way of preserving the enlightenment potential of modernity in the form of an intact linguistic community that is still rooted in the lifeworld. Only a powerful public sphere sustained by the rational communicative accomplishments of citizens

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89 Rawls 1996, 206.

90 Stopford 2009, 98.

91 Rawls 1971, 325-328.

92 See Stopford 2009, 98-99.

93 See Rawls 1996. xlvii: "the thought is to formulate a liberal political conception that those nonliberal doctrines might be able to endorse. To find this political conception we do not look at known comprehensive doctrines with the aim of striking a balance or average between them, nor do we attempt to strike a compromise with a sufficient number of those doctrines actually existing in society by tailoring the political conception to fit them. Doing that appeals to the wrong idea of consensus and makes the political conception political in the wrong way. […] Rather, we formulate a freestanding political conception having its own intrinsic (moral) political ideal expressed by the criterion of reciprocity."

94 See Rawls 1980.

can play this role.[95] The focus of Rawls's approach lies in the construction of a practical, freestanding political consensus that holders of nonliberal doctrines might be able to endorse. Such a consensus seeks normative solutions to practical political problems that comprehensive doctrines are not equipped to solve. It is 'freestanding' because it does not presuppose public agreement on comprehensive values.

This consensus is so constructed that citizens who hold different reasonable comprehensive views and doctrines can also affirm the content of the public agreement from their own perspectives. Such a consensus does not presuppose a commitment to Western conceptions of autonomy and individuality. Nor is it procedurally neutral.[96] Rawls rejects both procedural neutrality and neutrality of outcome in favour of what he calls "neutrality of aim".[97] Neutrality of aim is achieved by building a political consensus on the design and intentions of basic institutions. Such an agreement has substantive consequences, and is thus not purely procedural, but it is neutral in the sense that it does not favour one comprehensive doctrine or view over another.

Thirdly, Rawls's approach to religious, moral and cultural conflict begins with the search for criteria of reasonable agreement. Reasonableness for the purposes of a workable political theory is evident in the readiness to propose and honour fair terms of cooperation.[98] When the depth of religious, moral, and cultural diversity becomes apparent the first step of a reasonable person is to determine what it is possible to agree about.[99] Political consensus has its roots in consensus about consensus, in an agreement about what we can agree about.[100] The first task of liberal theory in contemporary multicultural democracies is to establish what kind of consensus we must begin from if we wish to construct liberal political institutions that are not disfigured by the most serious forms of cultural oppression?[101]

95 Stopford 2009, 38.

96 Rawls 1996, 192.

97 Rawls 1996, 192-194.

98 Rawls 1996, 24, 49-54. "The first basic aspect of the reasonable, then, is the willingness to propose fair terms of cooperation and to abide by them provided others do" (54).

99 Stopford 2009, 192.

100 Cf. Stopford 2009, 108.

101 Compare Rawls 1996, 37. Since disagreement on fundamental religious, philosophical and moral questions is more than likely in such circumstances, pluralism is not a surprising fact. Reasonable people accept it as a fact of life. Only the use of oppressive state power can sustain a social consensus on such questions. Rawls refers to this as the *fact of oppression*: "a continuing shared understanding of one comprehensive religious, philosophical, or moral doctrine can be maintained only by the oppressive use of state power."

To answer this question we need to understand what Rawls refers to as the "fact of reasonable pluralism".[102] In a political liberal democracy citizens accept that moral disagreement is not an imperfection that must be eradicated by the use of oppressive state power. It is a permanent feature of the free use of reason in free societies.[103] One of the features of reasonable disagreement is the readiness to accept that those we disagree with are not therefore unreasonable. When people acknowledge this they assume the "burdens of judgment". Judgment is thought of as a burden in such cases because reasonable persons do not assume that the truth of their own views impugns the reasonableness of those with whom they disagree.[104] To assume the burdens of judgment is to accept the diversity of values as an objective fact about the social world; the fact of reasonable pluralism.

Reasonable pluralism is not a joyful pluralism in the sense of Nietzsche or Barthes. Nor does it hold out the prospect of an ever-widening circle of inclusiveness and harmonious co-operation between consociates. The task of political theory is to construct a form of political association that sustains political consensus without eliminating those features of the consensus that make cultural diversity valuable, not merely to a political community but to the individuals who belong to that community. The solution to problems that stem from metaphysical and cultural conflict lies not in political agreement on a single comprehensive view of the good, but in an agreement to take certain kinds of religious and metaphysical question off the political agenda. In this way a plurality of incompatible and irreconcilable yet reasonable comprehensive doctrines or religious views may be combined in a stable system of cooperation.[105]

To acknowledge the fact of reasonable pluralism is not the end of political philosophy but its beginning.[106] Liberal democracy recognizes the objectivity of different beliefs about value and rejects the use of political power to shape citizen's conceptions of the good. But it also recognizes the need for workable political integration. In existing liberal democracies the broadening of political consensus into overlapping consensus is likely to prove challenging. Political integration presupposes that citizens assume the burdens of reasonableness not only

[102] Rawls 1996, 24, 36; 1999, 11-12, 15-16.

[103] See Rawls 1996, xxvi-xxvii: "This pluralism is not seen as disaster but rather as the natural outcome of the activities of human reason under enduring free institutions. To see reasonable pluralism as a disaster is to see the exercise of reason under the conditions of freedom itself as a disaster."

[104] Reasonable disagreement can be explained in part by the burdens associated with assessing and weighing evidence, the effects of personal experiences on a person's judgments and the inscrutability and incommensurability of values. See Rawls 1996, 54-58. There are other ways in which reasonable disagreement may arise. These sources of reasonable disagreement, on Rawls's view, reflect the hazards and uncertainties which accompany the free exercise of reason.

[105] On the idea of a reasonable comprehensive doctrine, see e.g. Rawls (1996, xviii).

[106] Rawls 1996, 37.

when confronted with the diversity of cultures and value systems, but also when the realization of public policies presupposes sustained public commitment over time. Citizens, no matter how diverse their aspirations and cultural perspectives, must be prepared to assume these burdens if they are to play their role in sustaining and defending democratic institutions.

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