

On Claims of Culture and Duties of Recognition in Democratic States

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Abstract

One important way in which individuals and groups express their ideas and principles, and present their proposals and demands, is in the language of identity or difference. They argue that what they value and what they deserve are related to their distinctive identities. Working within the framework of a political theory of recognition, I argue in this article that particular cultural communities may have reasonable expectations that their distinctive identities receive public recognition, and that others may therefore have good reasons to give those identities such recognition. To be specific, I contend that there are distinct and complementary ways in which the state and its citizens should respond to identity-related demands for public recognition. Using terms introduced by Axel Honneth, I argue that the state should give 'public attention' to some cultural communities, and that citizens should show one another 'well-meaning attention'. I conclude that both of these forms of attention can be justified by reference to a new, fourth principle of recognition, so long as this is understood as a principle of political inclusion rather than one of cultural recognition.

Keywords

Axel Honneth; claims of culture; public attention; recognition; well-meaning attention

Introduction

In contemporary politics, one important way in which individuals and groups express their ideas and principles, and present their proposals and demands, is in the language of identity or difference.

They argue, in other words, that what they value and what they deserve are related in some way to their distinctive identities. For example, one group might demand an exemption from a general law which it believes has a disproportionately adverse effect on it; another might ask the state to take measures to protect its minority language; yet another might demand that the public calendar be adjusted in order to recognize its most important days of religious celebration. It might be thought that those who identify themselves with the politics of recognition would be well equipped to analyze and evaluate these various sorts of identity-related demands. After all, many of these groups put their demands in the language of recognition themselves, insisting that they deserve such acknowledgement in virtue of the distinctive features of their collective identities. And a good number of political theorists of recognition are indeed concerned with the struggles of various sorts of groups to have their identities appropriately acknowledged. For example, in his seminal essay on the politics of recognition, Charles Taylor considers the struggles of Québec to be recognized as a “distinct society” within Canada (1995, pp. 242-8).

In light of these observations, it is interesting to note that Axel Honneth – arguably the leading contemporary exponent of the politics of recognition – is at best rather sceptical about the claims made on behalf of the politics of identity and difference. A decade ago, in his well-known exchange with Nancy Fraser, he did consider – albeit rather briefly – whether his theory of recognition needed to be expanded in order to be able to respond more appropriately to this sort of politics (2003, pp. 160-70). To be specific, Honneth pondered whether, alongside his three existing principles of love, respect and esteem, it was necessary to introduce a new, fourth principle of recognition, one capable of explaining and evaluating demands made in the name of distinctive collective identities. But his conclusion was that his existing analytical framework could inform an appropriate response

to demands of this kind. To put it in the briefest possible terms, he argued that his 'equality principle, often bolstered by additional assumptions' (2003, p. 169) could be used to determine which identity-based demands were legitimate and which were not.

Ten years on from Honneth's exchange with Fraser, I want to revisit this subject, and to ask again the question that he asked there: namely, 'which normative principle can the different groups in question lay claim to in order to publicly justify their demands for "cultural" recognition?' (2003, p. 160). Rejecting Honneth's sceptical answer, I argue in this article that particular cultural communities may have reasonable expectations that their distinctive identities receive public recognition, and that others may therefore have good reasons to help meet those expectations. To be specific, I contend that there are distinct and complementary ways in which the state and its citizens should respond to identity-related demands for public recognition. Using terms that Honneth introduces in his analysis, I argue that the state should give 'public attention' (2003, p. 166) to at least some of the various cultural communities with which its citizens identify themselves, and that those citizens themselves, when engaged in democratic deliberation, should show one another what Honneth calls 'well-meaning attention' (2003, p. 169).²

Thus, although my argument starts from Honneth's analysis of the claims of culture, it reaches conclusions which are very different to his. To be specific, I aim to justify a range of measures of public recognition which he would reject, and also to determine where the responsibility for taking such measures lies. Given that I want to put considerable distance between my account and Honneth's, it might be asked why I use his theory as my point of departure. In reply, I would say that, since Honneth is such an influential thinker in contemporary debates about the politics of recognition, it will be highly significant if I can show – against his conclusions – that a wide range of claims of culture are legitimate. If, furthermore, I can show that there are resources within Honneth's own theory which can be used both to justify such claims, and to specify the practical measures which they entail, then this will sharpen the significance of my argument. For one thing, it

should make it more likely that those who are working within Honneth's theoretical framework will be persuaded by my argument. Having said all of this, I should emphasize that, although I present parts of my argument in Honneth's terms, I have nevertheless taken care to ensure that it is free-standing. The case that I make for the legitimacy of certain claims of culture does not depend on the prior acceptance of any particular elements of Honneth's theoretical framework.

My argument develops in a number of stages. In the next section, I outline Honneth's own analysis of the demands of cultural communities, and I present the conclusions which he draws from this analysis. In the following section, I concentrate on public attention, showing why the state has good reason to take the identities of at least some of its constituent cultural communities into account when shaping its key institutions and public environment. In the section after that, I argue that one important way in which the state can and should acknowledge the distinctive identities of its citizens is by establishing and maintaining a set of democratic institutions which, where appropriate, shows special attention to some cultural communities. In the penultimate section, I focus on the quality and character of the deliberation which takes place within democratic institutions. To be specific, I show why in democratic deliberation citizens should show their fellows well-meaning attention. In the final section, I present my conclusions: first, that the state should respond positively to at least some demands for recognition made by cultural communities; and, second, that citizens should respond to those same demands by showing their fellows the proper attention that they deserve. I conclude that both of these forms of attention can be justified by reference to a new, fourth principle of recognition, so long as this is understood as a principle of political inclusion rather than one of cultural recognition.

The Claims of Culture

Honneth places the idea of recognition at the heart of his social and political theory: it is the key to understanding the formation of individuals' identities, it serves as the measure of social and moral progress, and, of most relevance to my current argument, it provides criteria for assessing the justice of social and political orders. As he says: 'The justice or well-being of a society is proportionate to its ability to secure conditions of mutual recognition under which personal identity-formation, hence individual self-realization, can proceed adequately' (2003, p. 174). With reference to this last role, Honneth identifies three modes of recognition, each of which make individuals – and not, it should be noted, collectivities of any kind – the direct objects of recognition: love is the appropriate response to make to the vulnerability and neediness of specific individuals; respect is the attitude which should be taken to all individuals in virtue of their capacity for rational autonomy; and esteem should be shown to individuals who make a contribution to a society's goals. It is the enjoyment of these three modes of recognition that makes 'individual self-realization' possible.

Putting aside the first mode of recognition, which is not germane to my current concerns, it is important to understand that, corresponding to the second and third modes, there are normative principles which can be used to judge the fairness of social and political arrangements.

Corresponding to recognition as respect, there is what Honneth calls the 'principle of legal equality', according to which 'equal respect' should be shown for all citizens' 'individual autonomy' (2003, p. 152). As we shall see in a moment, Honneth understands this principle to imply a commitment to a Kymlicka-style minority-rights liberalism. Corresponding to recognition as esteem, there is the 'principle of achievement', according to which one should have 'the chance to experience oneself to be recognized, in light of one's own accomplishments and abilities, as valuable to society' (1995, p. 130). In his critical exchange with Fraser, Honneth considers how these two principles might be used in order to determine which claims of culture are legitimate and which not. His argument, in short, is that those claims that fall under the remit of his 'equality principle of legal recognition' (2003, p. 164) are legitimate, and those which do not, are not. I shall now explain why.

Applying Honneth's equality principle, three types of claim of culture are definitely legitimate: "individualistic" demands not to be discriminated against, one sort of "communal" demand for certain legal exemptions, and another sort of "communal" demand for positive discrimination are all legitimate ways of treating individuals as equals (2003, pp. 164-5). There is, however, a third type of "communal" claim which Honneth finds more problematic. This is the demand that 'a minority communal culture be socially esteemed for its own sake' (2003, p. 167). He contends that, even in this case, there are two legitimate forms which such claims may take. First, there are calls for the group to be protected 'from forms of public degradation, disrespect, and humiliation' (2003, p. 166). Here Honneth gives the example of the feminist argument that pornography should be criminalized on the grounds that it depicts women in a degrading manner.³ Second, there are demands for 'public attention for one's group-specific value convictions'. Honneth believes that the meaning of such demands 'can best be explained in terms of a procedural virtue of democratic institutions that is measured by their capacity for respectful interaction with cultural minorities' (2003, p. 166). (As I suggested in the introduction, I shall make much of this idea of public attention in what follows.)

However, the final form which this third type of "communal" claim may take falls outside the remit of the equality principle and is thus illegitimate. Honneth cannot imagine how claims for 'a special form of appreciation' for 'the cultural community's constitutive practices, way of life and value orientation' (2003, p. 166) could be reasonably justified. He contends that they cannot be dealt with by applying his equality principle since they do not ask for equal consideration to be given to individuals, but rather for the culture of a particular community to be esteemed as of right. Nor can they be dealt with by applying his achievement principle since to try to do so would be to distort the demands that members of the community in question are making, and it would also be to expand this principle 'to the point of exceeding its remaining "material" substance' (2003, p. 167).

If Honneth's existing principles of recognition cannot accommodate the demand that a community's culture be valued for its own sake, he thinks that the only option would be to introduce a fourth

principle, according to which a 'culture should enjoy social esteem ... because it in itself represents a good that the society should acknowledge' (2003, pp. 166-7). As it stands, Honneth argues, this principle is incoherent since the positive valuation being insisted upon must be according to standards by which the culture in question may be found to be *lacking* in value (2003, p. 168). But he considers the possibility that 'an indirect, secondary claim to well-meaning attention and consideration by the majority' (2003, p. 168) may be justifiable. According to this claim, 'we also have to recognize one another as members of cultural communities whose forms of life deserve the measure of well-meaning attention that is necessary to judge their value' (2003, p. 169). (As I have suggested, I shall give this idea close attention later on.) But Honneth ends what he calls his 'speculative reflections' about the prospects for a fourth principle at this point. He concludes that 'an innovative application of the equality principle' (2003, p. 169) can be used to determine which of the many and various claims of culture are justified. From this perspective, he rejects the idea of a fourth principle, concluding that 'the concept of "cultural" recognition ... leads to confusion rather than clarification' (2003, p. 170).

In what follows, I shall not discuss laws against discrimination, group-specific legal exemptions, positive discrimination policies, and ways of protecting members of specific groups from degradation, since these are all relatively uncontroversial measures which do not require public recognition.⁴ In the rest of this article, therefore, I shall focus on the second and third forms which the final type of "communal" claim of culture can take. My aim is to show that the ideas of public attention and well-meaning attention can be used to defend a range of measures – including the revision of the public calendar to include the religious holidays of different faiths, and the introduction of schemes of minority political representation – which, even if they do not violate rights, are nevertheless highly controversial. I shall conclude that these ways of showing public attention and well-meaning attention can be justified by reference to a fourth principle of recognition, which I shall describe as one of political inclusion.

The Decent Society

As I have explained, Honneth accepts the legitimacy of those demands for recognition which take the form of 'public attention for one's group-specific value convictions' (2003, p. 166).⁵ However, he says little more about such attention, what it might entail and when it might be justified, beyond two brief remarks. First, in his main text Honneth says that demands for public attention can be met by 'democratic institutions' which display what he characterizes as the 'procedural virtue' of 'respectful interaction with cultural minorities' (2003, p. 166). Second, in an accompanying footnote he suggests that the institutions of Avishai Margalit's 'decent society' show such attention (2003, p. 195). Putting aside the role of democratic institutions until the next section, my focus here will be on the idea of a decent society. I shall explain why I believe that Honneth is right to suggest that public attention is an appropriate way of acknowledging the demands of a range of identity groups. But I shall argue that Margalit's decent society fails to show enough public attention if the idea of decency at its heart is understood negatively so that it requires only the avoidance of humiliation. My conclusion will be that, in order for such a society to show its members an appropriate degree of public attention, decency must be understood positively so that it requires the meeting of a range of identity-related demands for recognition.

In order to justify these claims, I shall begin by explaining what a decent society looks like. Margalit characterizes it negatively rather than positively, as a society which does not humiliate any of its members rather than one which treats them with respect. For him, humiliation is a relationship between two parties. From the perspective of those doing the humiliating, it is a matter of 'treating humans as nonhuman', or of 'rejecting' them 'from the human commonwealth' (1996, p. 89). From the perspective of those who are humiliated, such treatment is experienced as 'utter loss of freedom and control over one's vital interests' (1996, p. 115). To put it in these terms, then, a decent society

is one which tries to treat its members as part of the 'human commonwealth' so that they do not suffer such a loss of control. This general aim shapes both the basic principles on which this society is based, and also the design of its various concrete institutions. For example, such a society should *inter alia* lack 'institutional snobbery', protect 'personal privacy', and not humiliate the criminals which it imprisons (1996, pp. 189, 201, 262).

There is a short section of Margalit's book in which he provides more details about the aspect of a decent society in which I am particularly interested here (1996, pp. 158-61). In a discussion of citizenship, he argues that, in addition to its legal, political and social dimensions, it has a fourth, 'symbolic' dimension. With respect to this dimension, Margalit's claim is that 'a decent society is one that does not exclude any group of citizens from symbolic citizenship' (1996, p. 158). Once again, this condition is expressed negatively rather than positively: it requires that 'the society's symbolic treasury ... should not contain symbols directed against a minority' (1996, p. 160), but it does not require that the state provide 'a just distribution of the symbols of its treasury' (1996, p. 161). Margalit provides an example of how this condition might be met in practice when he suggests that the establishment of the Church of England humiliates non-Anglicans by 'turning' them 'into second-class citizens'. The solution that he proposes in this case is to disestablish the Church, thus ensuring that non-Anglicans are not humiliated since they are not excluded from 'the symbolic realm' of the state (1996, p. 159).⁶ In this example, I would suggest, the standard of treatment required to ensure that no-one is humiliated is set quite high. If Margalit characterizes humiliation in general terms as the effect of a situation in which I am treated as less than human, in this specific case I may be humiliated if the state officially endorses a religion other than my own.⁷

Staying with this example, I want to argue that Margalit is wrong to think that disestablishment would be enough to guarantee that citizens who are not members of the established church are not humiliated. This is because, even if the British monarch was no longer head of the Anglican Church, its various signs and symbols would continue to mark the state and its public realm. For example,

twenty six Anglican bishops currently sit in the House of Lords; in 2010, over 4500 state-supported faith schools were Anglican (this is over 22% of the total number of state-funded schools); and the pattern of the working week and the schedule of annual public holidays are shaped around the Christian calendar. (I shall say a bit more about this last example in a moment.) In these circumstances, I would suggest, it is very unlikely that all citizens would feel equally at home in their society. Anglicans (and Christians more generally) would be likely to feel much more at home than those of other faiths or those of no faith at all. Although speaking generally of culture, rather than specifically of religion, Bhikhu Parekh helps us to understand why. He suggests that the existence of a 'monocultural public realm', shaped in the image of the cultural majority, signals to members of minorities that their cultures 'are largely seen as marginal and worth practising only in the relative privacy of the family and communal associations'. As a result, some individuals associated with these cultures may 'internalize their inferior status and opt for uncritical assimilation' (2000, p. 204). To return to the current example, a public realm marked by the signs of the Anglican faith might undermine non-Anglicans' sense that they were regarded as equal members of society in good standing. In short, since a radical separation of state and religion is impossible, some citizens will inevitably feel less included in that state than others.

My argument here is not a counsel of despair. Instead, I would suggest, it points to the need to take an alternative approach to what Margalit calls 'symbolic citizenship'. To put it in his terms, rather than try to remove from the state's treasury all symbols which alienate members of particular faiths, it would be better to diversify that state's portfolio of religious symbols in order to achieve what, as we have seen, Margalit calls 'a just distribution of the symbols of its treasury' (1996, p. 161). For example, the current schedule of public holidays is based on a Christian calendar: in 2013, there were holidays on March 29 for Good Friday, April 1 for Easter Monday, December 25 for Christmas Day, and December 26 for Boxing Day. Following the approach I am recommending here, the UK's public calendar could be revised so that it incorporated the religious holidays of a number of important faith groups. In 2013 Christians might stick with December 25 for Christmas, Muslims

might choose a day on or around August 8 for Eid al-Fitr, Hindus November 3 for Diwali, and Jews October 4 for Yom Kippur. (If atheists were also given a choice, they might go for February 12 to celebrate Charles Darwin's birthday.)⁸ I would suggest that, if the public calendar were to be reformed along these lines, it would send a message to the members of all of these faith groups that they were regarded by the state as rightful members of their polity. To generalize from this particular example, if the most important institutions of the state and the various features of the public realm were shaped in ways which were sensitive to the identities of its various constituent groups, then the individual members of those groups would feel, not just that they were treated as part of the 'human commonwealth', but also that, when they entered the public realm and interacted with state institutions, they were acknowledged as equal members of the political community in good standing.

Before drawing out the further implications of my argument, it may be worth clarifying what my approach is meant to achieve. It is probably impossible to forge a political culture in which all citizens feel equally at home. Each political community has its own unique history and identity, and different groups of citizens will relate to this history and identity in different ways. Some will be able to identify closely with it, others with just parts of it, and yet others with little of it at all. For example, a white Anglo-Saxon protestant who can trace his family back to the same part of England for hundreds of years, a Jewish woman whose grandparents arrived from Lithuania half a century ago, and a Somali Muslim who has just been granted indefinite leave to remain, are likely to have very different relationships to the UK's political institutions and public culture. However, even if it is impossible ever to create a political culture to which all citizens could feel equally attuned, it does not follow that it would also be impossible to signal to all of them that they are regarded as equal members of the state in good standing. Although adding Eid and Yom Kippur to the schedule of public holidays might not make Muslims and Jews feel as at home as Christians in the UK, it should at least signal to them that they have a legitimate place in this political community.

I began this section by agreeing with Honneth that public attention is an appropriate way of acknowledging a range of identity-related demands for recognition. I also agreed with him that Margalit's idea of the decent society can explain how such attention should be shown. But I insisted that it can only do so if decent treatment is understood to require the public recognition of a diversity of group identities. In making this argument, I have not deployed one of Honneth's principles of recognition. Certainly I have not used some version of the equality principle, since this is used to determine which rights individuals need to protect their equal capacity for rational autonomy. Allowing the public realm to be marked by the symbols of a particular faith group is not to recognize such a capacity, and nor are group members likely to have a right to be recognized in this way. I have not employed a version of the achievement principle either, since this is used as a way of recognizing individuals' achievements or the contributions that they make to shared societal goals. For example, to make Diwali a national holiday would not require or imply any positive judgement about the value of Hinduism or the achievements of particular Hindus. The taking such a measure would simply be to acknowledge that some citizens of that particular polity are Hindu and that Diwali is a significant part of their religious identity.

It follows that, when I argue that the state should design its key institutions and shape the public realm in ways which are sensitive to a range of distinctive group identities, I am deploying a new principle of recognition. Thus far I have characterized this principle in a variety of ways. I have argued that its deployment sends a message of inclusion to all members of the political community; that it ensures that all citizens feel at home in their polity; and that it publicly confirms the equal status of all individuals. I shall call the principle which justifies and guides the giving of such public attention one of *recognition as political inclusion*.⁹ The deployment of such a principle to determine the structure of key public institutions and to shape the appearance of the public realm sends all citizens a clear message that they are fully included in their political community. It should finally be noted that this principle of political inclusion is very different to that which Honneth refers to as the principle of cultural recognition (2003, pp. 166-7). On my principle, the public recognition of some

cultural groups is justified, not because certain cultural creations are of intrinsic value, but because such recognition says to members of those groups that they are regarded as equal members of their political community in good standing.

Democratic Institutions

As I said at the start of the previous section, Honneth suggests that the political institutions of a democratic state should incorporate processes and procedures which enable them to attend carefully and respond appropriately to the interests and opinions of members of minority cultural groups. Since Honneth singles out 'cultural minorities' here, it seems safe to assume that he thinks that, in at least some circumstances, democratic institutions should be designed in such a way that they are able to give additional consideration to the members of some such minorities. In this respect, Honneth appears to agree with those who believe that, in order for a democratic political system to show equal concern for all of its members, it will have to show special attention to some.¹⁰ In this section, my aim is not to provide a detailed account of the various schemes which may be used for showing such attention; nor is it to assess the relative merits of these different schemes. Rather I want to argue that such schemes – whatever concrete form they take – may sometimes be necessary and legitimate means of expressing public attention. To be specific, my argument will be that democratic institutions – including, where appropriate, special arrangements for the representation of cultural minorities – are a particularly important way of showing such attention since they are the means by which each individual citizen, and each group of citizens, can become part of a *demos* capable of exercising collective self-determination, where the existence of such a *demos* is a necessary condition of democratic legitimacy.¹¹

In order to make this argument, I shall begin by returning to Honneth to see what else he has to say about democracy. If he says no more in the section of the essay on which I have concentrated most

of my attention thus far, he says rather more in an article first published in English in 1998 (and reprinted in his 2007), in which he gives a highly laudatory account of John Dewey's theory of democracy. According to Honneth, there are two aspects to Dewey's theory. One is an understanding of 'democracy as a reflexive form of community cooperation' (2007, p. 220). In such a political system, in other words, each citizen understands themselves to be playing a role in an important cooperative venture. Honneth notes that, for Dewey, democracy can only be experienced in this way if each individual is able to make a contribution to the good of the whole, and this requires a fairly regulated division of labour (2007, p. 232). Only if this condition is in place will all citizens have an equal chance of playing a socially useful role in the life of their political community. The other aspect of Dewey's theory is an account of what Honneth describes as 'procedures of democratic will-formation as the rational means by which a cooperatively integrated society attempts to solve its own problems' (2007, pp. 220-1). Here Honneth contends that the more freely the individuals taking part in democratic deliberation are able to articulate their views, the more likely it is that rational solutions will be found to the collectively shared problems which they face (2007, p. 228). These two aspects of Honneth's conception of democracy come together when he argues that a just division of labour makes possible an experience of communal cooperation, which in turn brings a valuable diversity of views to bear on particular collective problems (2007, p. 233).

In order to see the relevance of Honneth's Deweyan model of democracy to my current concerns, it will be useful to consider David Owen's critique of this model. Owen argues that, if Honneth's ideal is to be achieved, it is important to attend, not just to the division of labour, but also to the diversity of cultures: 'if a just division of labour is to promote consciousness of social co-operation, then it is necessary ... that this idea is developed in a way that is sensitive to the cultural (and other identity-related forms of) plurality of contemporary societies' (2007, p. 316). In other words, if citizens are to experience their democracy as a system of communal cooperation, then not only must each of them be able to make a contribution to the common good, but appropriate acknowledgement must also be given to each of their distinctive cultural perspectives. For Owen, such sensitivity to cultural

diversity is also worthwhile since it would improve how well Honneth's ideal of democracy functions as a means of collective problem-solving: Honneth 'needs to acknowledge that the political community is not only composed of individuals but also of culturally diverse groups' since this 'diversity of cultural perspectives may help to elucidate different aspects of a social problem and to avoid what may be the significant blind spots of a large but culturally homogenous public' (2007, p. 318). In other words, another good reason for taking account of a diversity of cultural perspectives is that each may have something distinctive to contribute to the solution of collective problems. Thus democratic processes and institutions can help to show public attention for group values, and there are good reasons why they should do so: both to promote an understanding of democracy as a cooperative enterprise, and to enable that democracy to learn from each contributing group's distinctive value perspective.

Thus one reason for thinking that a democracy should have procedures which enable it to interact respectfully with minorities is that such a political system will be better able to find rational solutions to the collective problems it faces. I am not sure that I am persuaded by this part of Honneth's (and Owen's) argument; but I shall not try to assess its plausibility here. Instead I want to claim that another reason for valuing the experience of democracy as a system of reflexive cooperation is that this shared experience could play an important role in incorporating citizens into a *demos* which is capable of collective self-determination. In order to defend this claim, I shall begin from the familiar point that, for a group of people to be able to function as a *demos*, they must *inter alia* possess a quality which David Miller calls 'sympathetic identification'. As he explains, those 'who belong to the would-be *demos* must identify sufficiently closely with the remainder of the group that they are motivated to try to accommodate their interests and their convictions' (2009, p. 208). In a very similar vein, Sarah Song suggests a *demos* must have a 'sense of solidarity', which 'consists of mutual concern: people give each other's interests some noninstrumental weight in their practical reasoning' (2012, p. 47). It is this sort of consideration which has led a good number of democratic theorists to conclude that a well-functioning democracy must be based on a *demos* which possesses

a strong sense of collective identity. John Stuart Mill, perhaps the best known proponent of this view, suggests that a sense of national identity is most likely to fit the bill, declaring that 'it is in general a necessary condition of free institutions, that the boundaries of governments should coincide in the main with those of nationalities' (1972, pp. ???).

It might be thought that these considerations undermine my claim that cultural recognition is necessary to generate democratic solidarity. If Mill and those who agree with him are right, then, rather than supporting such a sense of solidarity, the recognition of plurality would in fact undermine it. By paying attention to those aspects of our identities which make us distinct from one another, we necessarily weaken the feelings of unity that might otherwise exist. Which side of the argument is right? Must a well-functioning *demos* have political institutions that are, where appropriate, sensitive to cultural plurality? Or would the recognition of such plurality – expressed in part by means of systems of special representation – fatally undermine what Mill refers to as the 'common sympathies' on which a *demos* must rest (1972, p. 359)? This is, of course, a very complex and multifaceted issue, one which I cannot hope to fully address in this article. What I can do here is give two reasons for thinking that the forging of a *demos* capable of collective self-determination can – and perhaps must – be effected in part by means of democratic institutions which are sensitive to cultural differences.

The first reason concerns the nature of the 'common sympathies' which Mill claims the citizens of a democracy must possess. If we look again at Miller's and Song's accounts of the necessary qualities of a democratic people, we can see that the sort of shared identity that a *demos* requires is rather thinner than the objection under consideration appears to assume. Thus, when Miller argues that a quality of 'sympathetic identification' is needed to bind a group of individuals into a *demos*, it should be noted that such identification is only needed when people are *not* exactly alike: we use our capacity for sympathy to identify with others despite the fact that they are not exactly the same as us. So when Miller says that citizens must identify *with* their fellows, this is not the same as saying

that they must identify themselves *as* people of a particular kind. Similarly, when Song suggests a *demos* needs a 'sense of solidarity', it is important to understand that such solidarity is a quality of a relationship between people who are to some extent different to one another. Thus we say that members of one trade union 'come out in solidarity' with members of another: although representing different trades or professions, these unions may in particular circumstances come together in common cause. It follows that sympathetic identification or solidarity do not require the *demos* in question to have a completely united sense of identity and common purpose. Each citizen need only have sufficient concern for their fellows to take their interests and opinions into account when it is appropriate to do so. Hence I conclude that sympathetic identification or a sense of solidarity are not necessarily undermined by the acknowledgement of diversity.

My second reason for thinking that the recognition of cultural plurality is compatible with – and perhaps essential for – the development of a sense of democratic solidarity focuses the consequences of a lack of such recognition. In the previous section, I argued that, in the absence of the recognition of cultural plurality, those not recognized feel excluded, disrespected, and perhaps even humiliated. It is important to understand that it is not only cultural minorities themselves which suffer the harmful effects of such a lack of recognition. If members of these minorities feel alienated from what might be called mainstream society, then some of them will be likely to exhibit various forms of dysfunctional behaviour, from an unwillingness to contribute to the common good (through, for example, paid labour), to, at worst, a vulnerability to processes like Islamist radicalization. For this reason, if some members of the political community feel excluded from it, then every member of that community is harmed. Of particular concern in the context of this article, if some minority groups do not enjoy public recognition, then the individuals who identify with these groups will not feel part of the *demos*, and so to that extent the health and vitality of the whole democratic community will be undermined.¹² Hence my conclusion is that the development of solidarity may actually require the recognition of diversity.

Bringing these two reasons together, my conclusion is that it is possible to acknowledge the existence of cultural diversity without this harming the 'common sympathies' which are needed to bind the members of a *demos* together. More strongly, I believe that, without the recognition of cultural diversity, it may be impossible for such a *demos* to be created and sustained. It is for these reasons that I think democratic institutions can and should be used to show public attention to various cultural minorities by instituting, as and when appropriate, suitable schemes of special representation. Such schemes can enable citizens to feel that they are part of a system of communal cooperation, and such feelings create the sense of solidarity which a democracy capable of self-determination requires. In the previous section, I argued for the introduction of a fourth principle of recognition, one which I described there as one of *political* inclusion. The deployment of this principle, I argued, should be used to publicly confirm the equal standing of all individuals in their political community. In this section, I have finessed this account by suggesting that this mode of recognition should be understood more specifically as one of *democratic* inclusion. If rightly recognized in the ways I have described, all citizens will feel, not just that they are members of some political community or other, but that they are active citizens of a democratic community which is capable of collective self-determination.

Well-meaning Attention

It may be recalled that Honneth rejects claims for 'a special form of appreciation' to be shown for cultures and their values, arguing that, with this sort of demand for positive cultural valuation, 'the normative framework of the legal equality principle is finally exceeded' (2003, p. 166). From the premise that all individuals should be shown equal consideration, it is impossible to get to the conclusion that the positive valuation of a group's culture can be demanded as of right. Whilst the premise reasonably and rightly requires that individuals are treated equitably, the conclusion

incoherently and wrongly requires that a culture is automatically declared to be of value. This latter demand is incoherent since any proper assessment of a culture's value could find it to be without merit. If this is what claims for special appreciation amount to, then I agree with Honneth that they should be rejected, and for the reason he gives.

As I have explained, Honneth briefly considers another version of the fourth principle of recognition, which invokes the idea of 'well-meaning attention'.¹³ However, he says almost nothing more about this version of the principle before ending his analysis with the conclusion that the idea of cultural recognition is more of a hindrance than a help (2003, p. 170). In this section, I want to argue that Honneth is wrong to summarily dismiss this revised version of the fourth principle. It certainly survives the criticism that condemns the first version since it does not make the incoherent claim that a culture is entitled to be considered valuable as of right. More positively, I think that this version of the fourth principle can and should serve two important purposes. First, it can be seen as a way of expressing the widely accepted hermeneutical principle that interpretation must proceed on the assumption that the object under investigation is of value. To re-order Honneth's words, a 'measure of well-meaning attention' is 'necessary to judge' the value of 'forms of life' (2003, p. 169). Second, and building on the previous point, this version of the principle can also be seen as a way of describing how citizens engaged in democratic deliberation should give proper consideration to each other's identity-related claims and demands. Again in Honneth's words, 'we must recognize one another as members of cultural communities' whose forms of life deserve such well-meaning attention (2003, p. 169). I shall discuss each of these distinct but connected purposes which the idea of well-meaning attention may play in turn.

With regard to the first of these purposes, I want to argue that Honneth's revised version of the fourth principle makes the modest and relatively uncontroversial hermeneutical point that any reasonable assessment of the value of an object – including the culture of a particular community – must proceed on the assumption that this object has value. This assumption is not an option which

may be taken up in order to express a benign and generous attitude to others' cultural creations. Rather it is a presupposition which must be made in order to give a coherent and reasonable interpretation of the object under investigation. The *locus classicus* for this hermeneutical claim is Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* in which he articulates the notion of the 'anticipation of completeness' (1975).¹⁴ For Gadamer, interpretation must begin by presupposing that the object in question is complete in the sense that it forms a coherent unity. As Jeff Malpas puts it, understanding 'always involves the revisable presupposition that what is to be understood constitutes something that is understandable, that is, something that is constituted as a coherent, and therefore meaningful, whole' (Malpas 2013).

It should perhaps be noted that, although 'completeness' *in sensu stricto* connotes coherence or meaningfulness rather than value or worth, it is widely accepted that the same sort of anticipatory attitude must be shown when seeking not just to understand but also to evaluate an object such as a culture. As Taylor puts it, the 'presumption' of 'equal worth' 'is a starting approach with which we ought to approach the study of any other culture' (1995, p. 252). He even claims that it 'makes sense to insist as a matter of right that we approach the study of certain cultures with a presumption of their value' (1995, pp. 253-54).¹⁵ Having said this, it is important to emphasize that this assumption of value is provisional. Although it must be made in any proper process of interpretation, this assumption is not a necessary part of any final judgement made of the object of that process. Indeed we may conclude that this object is without merit of any kind. For example, we may find a particular cultural practice immoral, disgusting or abhorrent. As a result, we may want to argue that this practice should be prohibited or at best tolerated rather than valued or esteemed. Again in Taylor's words, 'it can't make sense to insist as a matter of right that we come up with a final concluding judgment that [a certain culture's] value is great, or equal to others' (1995, p. 254). The first purpose that the idea of well-meaning attention may serve, then, is to describe the attitude which interpreters must take to the objects of their interpretation.

Turning now to the second purpose which this idea may serve, I want to argue that well-meaning attention can also be understood as a way of describing the attitude which we should take to our fellow citizens. It may be recalled that, in the opening section of this article, I suggested that there are distinct and complementary ways in which the state and its citizens should respond to identity-related demands for public recognition. Thus far I have argued that the state should give such demands public attention. Now I want to suggest that the citizens of that state should treat their fellows with what I am calling well-meaning attention. To explain further, I shall draw on Jeremy Waldron's account of what he calls the 'duty of civic participation'. This is a duty which citizens have 'to deliberate responsibly among themselves about law and public policy' (2000, p. 155). For Waldron, there are two aspects to this civic duty: first, citizens should participate in deliberation 'in a way that does not improperly diminish the prospects for peace', and, second, they should do so 'in a way that pays proper attention to the interests, wishes, and opinions of all the inhabitants of the country' (2000, p. 155). In the present context, I am particularly interested in the second element of this duty, and I shall take the notion of 'proper attention' which it invokes as a synonym for my conception of well-meaning attention. I want to argue that the showing of such attention requires citizens to take particular attitudes to their own claims as well as those of others.

To take the latter first, my contention is that in democratic deliberation each citizen must try to understand the claims of their fellow citizens in the terms in which they are presented. They should do so by following the hermeneutical approach which I have just sketched: applying more or less shared criteria in order to evaluate the claim in question, and then conducting that evaluation on the provisional but definitely disprovable assumption that this claim is valid. To give a simple example, serious consideration of a demand for the legalization of polygamy will require citizens to try to understand the particular beliefs and values in which that demand is rooted. Although they need not accept that those beliefs and values are true or worthwhile (and indeed upon reflection they may find them false and contemptible), citizens do need to show them such attention in order to understand them and to evaluate the practical demands which flow from them. In short, well-

meaning attention requires citizens to assume, but not necessarily to conclude, that their fellows' values are laudable and their claims justified.

Thus far I have discussed the attitude which citizens should take to their fellows' identity-related claims. I now want to argue that they should also take a particular attitude to their own claims. This can be seen as the logical corollary of the previous point. As I am under no obligation to accept the validity of my fellow citizens' claims, so I should accept that they are under no obligation to accept the validity of mine. Following from the previous point, I may certainly have reasonable expectations that, when I present my claims in democratic deliberation, my fellow citizens should show them well-meaning attention. But what I should not and cannot expect is for the claims that I make to be accepted as of right. As Waldron puts it: 'Having been put forward as a contribution to debate, [a citizen's] opinion must now take its chances in relation to the other opinions milling around in the market-place of ideas' (2000, p. 163). Whilst it is reasonable for me to expect that my fellows will try to understand my opinion as well as they can, it would not be reasonable for me to think that they are under an obligation to accept it.

In this section, I have argued that well-meaning attention is a useful shorthand way of describing the attitude that citizens should take to their fellows when they are engaged together in democratic deliberation. Whilst the state should show its citizens public attention, citizens themselves should show one another well-meaning attention. I would suggest that the reason why they should do so can be explained by reference to my fourth principle of recognition. When citizens show their fellows well-meaning attention, they are not just giving each other's claims and demands the consideration which they deserve. They are also declaring to their fellows that they regard them as compatriots, as members in good standing of the democratic polity to which they all belong. In this way, citizens, jointly with the state, bear responsibility for applying the fourth principle of recognition as political – and, more specifically, democratic – inclusion.

Conclusions

In this article, my aim has been to defend a range of political measures, all of which can be categorized as forms of public recognition. To be specific, I have argued that at least some claims of culture which citizens make are valid, and that others should respond appropriately to those claims. I have suggested, furthermore, that the state and its citizens have distinct and complementary roles to play in this regard. As far as the state is concerned, my argument has been that it should show its citizens public attention. For one thing, it should ensure that its key institutions and the public environment are shaped in ways which are appropriately sensitive to their cultural identities. As an example, I suggested that the public calendar should incorporate the religious holidays of a range of different faith groups. The state should also make sure that its democratic institutions in particular are designed in such a way that they include all citizens on an equal footing, and in some circumstances this might require the use of schemes of special representation. With regard to citizens themselves, I have argued that, when engaged in democratic deliberation, they should show each other well-meaning attention. This means that they should try as well as they can to understand others' opinions and demands in the terms in which they are presented.

At each stage of this article, I have suggested that my various arguments point to the legitimacy of a fourth principle of recognition. Both the giving of public attention by the state, and of well-meaning attention by the citizens of that state, can be seen as expressions of a mode of recognition which I have called political – or, more specifically, democratic – inclusion. To apply this principle is not to respect individuals' capacity for rational autonomy. Nor is it to esteem their contributions to shared social goals. Rather it is to convey to citizens the message that they are fully included as equal members of their political community. This fourth principle, I want to emphasize, is very different to the one with which Honneth is concerned. Whilst the principle of cultural recognition which he rightly rejects implies that certain cultures are of intrinsic value, the principle of political inclusion which I defend suggests only that citizens who identify themselves with those cultures should be

regarded as equal members of their political community in good standing. It is the application of this principle that will, in particular circumstances, entail taking the sorts of measures of public recognition just summarized.

I would readily concede that the various elements of the argument which I have made here do not, as they stand, add up to a complete theory of public recognition. To see why not, consider two other elements which have remained largely implicit hitherto. The first concerns the role of rights. It may be noted that in this article I have taken great care not to say either that there is a right to public recognition, or that there is a duty to provide it. Instead I have said that some citizens may have reasonable expectations that their claims of culture will be met, and that in such cases others will have good reasons to meet those claims. Having said this, I do think that in some cases individuals have such good reasons to expect to be treated in certain ways that these expectations should enjoy the status of rights, and that others therefore have reasons to meet those expectations which are so compelling that they should have the status of duties. So when do good reasons imply duties and when do reasonable expectations become rights? Of course, I cannot provide a complete answer to these questions here, but, in order to give some indication of my position, here is the line that I would take in the three areas on which I have focused in the article. With regard to the idea of well-meaning attention, I do think that Waldron is right to say that there is a duty of civic responsibility which obliges citizens to give appropriate consideration to others' views, and therefore that those same citizens have a right to expect such attention when engaged in democratic deliberation. So far as democratic institutions are concerned, my argument would be that citizens have a right to participate in schemes of special representation whenever such schemes are necessary to ensure that each individual has an equal opportunity to influence the outcomes of the deliberative process. Finally, regarding the sort of public attention needed to treat citizens decently, I think that the picture is more complex. Ideally, a democratic state should put in place a range of measures which are intended to ensure that every citizen feels at home. But I think that only in some circumstances will some measures of this kind enjoy the status of rights.

To explain a little further, I turn to a second element of my argument which has remained largely implicit up to this point. Any political theory suggesting that distinctive identities deserve some sort of public recognition must provide a satisfactory answer to a tricky question. To put it as polemically as possible, what attitude should be taken to a group of neo-Nazis who claim that they have a distinctive cultural identity, and that as a consequence the state should agree to their demand to make Adolf Hitler's birthday a national holiday? To begin with, I would note that throughout this article I have taken care to say that only 'some' cultural communities, 'particular' groups, or 'certain' cultural claims deserve recognition. In this way, I have signalled my acknowledgement that there is no automatic right for identity-related claims and demands to be met. But what I have not done is to develop a complete account of the criteria by which justified and unjustified cultural claims could be distinguished. Here I can only give the briefest indication of the three tests which I would deploy in combination: (1) *compatible with basic rights*: if, in order to meet the claim under consideration, it would be necessary to violate the basic rights either of group members or of outsiders, then this claim is not justified. Neither state nor its citizens have good reasons to respond positively to it, and it should certainly not enjoy the protection of a right. (2) *objectively necessary*: it is not enough for the members of the group to say that they would *feel* excluded if their claim was not met. They must in addition provide objective reasons – presumably referring to their cultural practices and beliefs – for suggesting that there is good reason for their claim to succeed. And (3) *not exclusionary*: if the meeting of the claim in question would necessitate the taking of measures which would send an exclusionary message to other citizens, then this claim would not be justified. How would these three tests treat the demand to make Hitler's birthday a national holiday? It would pass the first since, to meet it, it would not be necessary to violate any citizens' basic rights. It is unlikely, however, that it would pass the second test since neo-Nazis do not possess the sort of encompassing culture which would be a possible candidate for public recognition. And it would certainly fail the third test, since meeting this demand would send a very strong message to other groups of citizens that they were not welcome members of their political community.

In a fully worked out theory of public recognition, my position on these two issues – and on a good number of others – would of course need to be further elaborated and more adequately defended. However, although I have not attempted such an elaboration and defence here, I would nevertheless maintain that the coherence of the various arguments which I have made is not fundamentally affected by my views on these issues. For instance, my argument that the state should in some circumstances introduce schemes of special representation does not depend on the proof that there is a right to such representation. And my argument that at least some groups deserve to make their distinctive cultural marks on the public environment is not fatally undermined by the absence of a detailed account of which groups are deserving and which not. It is for this reason that my account of the place of rights in my argument, and my account of the criteria for identifying which groups are worthy of merit, can both wait for another occasion.

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² Since I shall make the terms ‘public attention’ and ‘well-meaning attention’ my own, from this point on I shall not put them in quotation marks.

³ I would suggest that *mutatis mutandis* the regulation of hate speech could be justified on the same grounds (Thompson, 2012).

⁴ It may be worth noting that, even if my claim that the measures just listed are ‘relatively uncontroversial’ was not accepted, this would not affect the validity of my principal argument that the state and its citizens should respond to some claims of culture by giving those claims public attention and well-meaning attention respectively.

⁵ ‘Public attention’ is the translation of the German ‘öffentliche Aufmerksamkeit’.

⁶ Another measure of this kind would be the decision in December 2012 to stop flying the Union flag from Belfast City Hall every day (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-20587538>).

⁷ I take this higher standard to be appropriate for my current purposes because it attends to (an aspect of) the relationship between the state and its citizens, and because it focuses on the role of citizens’ distinctive identities in that relationship.

⁸ Another measure of this kind would be the renaming of Northern Ireland’s ‘Royal Ulster Constabulary’ as the ‘Police Service of Northern Ireland’ in 2001 (Thompson, 2003).

⁹ In the next section, I shall finesse this account by saying that I am defending a principle not just of *political* inclusion, but more specifically of *democratic* inclusion.

¹⁰ See, for example, Kymlicka's analysis of what he calls 'special representation rights' (1995, p. 32) and Iris Marion Young's defence of what she refers to as 'the special representation of groups' (2000, p. 123).

¹¹ For the argument that the legitimacy of a democratic regime depends on the existence of a *demos* which possesses particular qualities, see Bellamy (2013).

¹² I would suggest that this argument may also help to mitigate the fear that the recognition of diversity can lead to essentialist thinking and separatist political action. My argument here suggests, to the contrary, that it is a lack of public recognition that may lead groups to think of themselves in essentialist terms and to act in separatist ways.

¹³ 'Well-meaning attention' is the translation of the German 'gutwillige Aufmerksamkeit'.

¹⁴ For a concise and lucid account of Gadamer's notion, see Warnke (1987, pp. 82-91).

¹⁵ In the conclusion, I shall suggest that Taylor is right: Waldron's 'duty of civic participation', including the obligation to show 'proper attention' to others' views, correlates with the right of those others to be shown such attention.