

LIBERALISM and the RIGHT to CULTURE

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ÖZET

Bu makalede farklı kültürel ve dinsel grupların ayırdedici kültürel ve dinsel pratik ve değerlerinin kamusal alanda tanınmasına ilişkin taleplerinin ve genel olarak kültürel üyeliğin liberalizmle ilişkisini tartışıyoruz. Bu tartışmada geliştirmeye çalıştığımız temel argüman şudur: Birçok birey için kültürel ve dinsel kimlikleri önemlidir ve bu kimliklerin kamusal alanda güvenli bir şekilde yaşanmaları onların bireysel esenliği açısından elzemdir. Bu kabul bizi, ilgili bireylerin esenliği açısından, söz konusu kolektif kimliklerin yaşanıp gelişmesini sağlayabilecek bir kamusal alanın yaratılması gereğine götürecektir. Ancak birey merkezli böylesi bir argüman, kültürel üyeliğin değerini onun bireysel otonomiye geliştirici işlevselliğine bağlayan liberal görüşü kabul etmemizi zorunlu olarak gerektirmiyor. Tersine, kültürel üyeliğin değerini onun liberal anlamda bireysel otonomiye geliştirme işlevine bağlayan bu görüşü reddedeceğiz, çünkü o liberal olmayan ve dolayısıyla liberal anlamda bireysel otonomi anlayışını genel bir ilke olarak kabul etmeyen kültürleri dışta bırakır. Burada vardığımız genel sonuç, farklı kültürel ve dinsel grupların bireylerine iyi yaşama ve onlara bireysel esenliklerine ilişkin farklı yaşam konseptleri ve biçimlerini sağlamalarından dolayı, bu grupların ayırdedici kolektif kimliklerini yaşayabilecekleri bir kamusal alanın yaratılması gerektiğidir.

ABSTRACT

This work is about the relevance of liberalism to cultural membership and to the claims of different cultural groups that their distinctive group identities should be respected and accommodated in the public domain. The basic argument we try to develop is that different cultural identities should be provided with a public space in which they can be maintained securely, since these identities matter to most individual members and are relevant to their well being. However, this individual-centred approach does not lead us to endorse the autonomy-based liberal argument that connects the value of cultural membership to its individual autonomy fostering function. Rather, we reject it on the ground that suggesting a liberal understanding of individual autonomy as a justificatory ground for the right to culture dismisses non-liberal cultures, which do not endorse it as a general value. Our overall conclusion is that since different cultures provide different ways of defining the spheres of the good life and individual well being, we should respect their right to maintain themselves as distinct entities

I

Liberalism is defended in many distinct forms and for various reasons. Although there is obviously not a single conception of liberalism, the core value unifying all liberals is their commitment to equal liberty of individuals in, for example, freedom of association, freedom of speech and civil liberties. In this sense, it has some distinctive features that have more or less been common to all liberal traditions. First, it is “*individualist*” in the sense that its moral ontology is based on the moral importance of the individual; second, it is “*egalitarian*” on the ground that individuals have the same moral status and moral worth to be respected; third it is “*universalist*” in terms of “affirming the moral unity of the human species and according a secondary importance to specific historic

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associations and cultural forms.”¹ Thus, such features as a certain conception of equality, an emphasis on individual freedom and autonomy, tolerance, respect for individual rights, a pluralistic conception of the good life for individuals, a cosmopolitan conception of the individual as carrying a universal moral nature regardless of her communal ties have in varying degrees been central to liberal moral thought. And the state, in liberal political thought, is seen as an entity accommodating individual freedom, justice and democracy on the grounds that each individual should have an equal sphere in forming her conception of the good, and it should not interfere in her sphere of autonomy which is defined as her own self directed behavior. Thus, the basic idea that has been dominant in liberal political thought is that “the state should not impose a preferred way of life, but should leave its citizens as free as possible to choose their own values and ends, consistent with a similar liberty for others” (Sandel,1984a:1). Individuals therefore are seen as separate autonomous entities with their separate conceptions of the good, and thus they have separate aims and interests that are protected through *equal* individual rights.

This is exactly what communitarians reject; that is, liberalism’s focus on the individual and her rights independent from society, it is argued, reflects “an atomistic, materialistic, instrumental or conflictual view of human relationships” (Bowring,1999:9). The outcome of such a view, Ephraim Nimni argues, is “the erosion of ethnic solidarities in the public domain and the promotion of a more ‘rational’ state based on equal individual rights” (Nimni,1999:290). Indeed, the core thesis that has been dominant in a liberal understanding of society is, as Michael Sandel observes, “not the *telos* or purpose or end to which it aims, but precisely its refusal to choose in advance amongst competing purposes and ends.” Such a society, Sandel maintains, “seeks to provide a framework within which its citizen can pursue their own values and ends” (Sandel,1984b:82). Thus, the liberal conception of society, it is argued, is the one in which “forms of life are dislocated, roots unsettled, traditions undone. [Individuals are] atomized, dislocated, frustrated selves at sea in a world where common meanings have lost their force” (Sandel,1984a:7). Liberalism’s individual, Alasdair MacIntyre argues, is the one who is “precisely to be able to stand back from any and every situation in which one is involved,

¹ John Gray, *Liberalism*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986, p. x. We are here presenting liberalism as an ethical theory. However, this does not mean that we do not regard it as a political theory as well. Jacob T. Levy, for example, argues that “the essence of liberalism” is that it is “a political doctrine [aiming] at preventing cruelty and the terror cruelty inspires, especially (though not only) political cruelty and political terror”. (Jacob T. Levy, *The Multiculturalism of Fear*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 12.) His main aim in his book is to establish a political theory of multiculturalism, through which “state violence toward cultural minorities, inter-ethnic warfare, and intra-communal attacks on those who try to alter or leave their cultural communities” can be prevented. pp. 12-13.) For a detailed account of his claim that liberalism is a political doctrine that must be responsive to the realities of where cruelty comes from and what form it takes, see especially, *Ibid.*, pp. 23-39.

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from any and every characteristic that one may possess, and to pass judgment on it from a purely universal and abstract point of view that is totally detached from all social particularity” (MacIntyre,1981:30). Such a conception of the self MacIntyre maintains, conceived “utterly distinct on the one hand from its social embodiments and lacking on the other any rational history of its own, may seem to have a certain abstract and ghostly character” (MacIntyre,1981:30).

Communitarianism can be best characterized by its emphasis on the values derived from collective life rather than those derived from that of individuals; namely, its criticism of liberalism is based on the view that individual interests and thus rights cannot be prior to the good or interests of community. Our main focus however is not a discussion of the credibility of communitarianism, but the credibility of its criticism against liberalism. Before discussing the different stances of liberal views towards cultures and their protection, we would like to present briefly some liberal responses to that criticism.

Virtually all liberals² do accept that “no one has ever existed completely free of other persons. From the moment of birth, every individual is highly dependent on others, [and that] everyone is interdependent ... [no] individual has uniquely personal aims, interests, conceptions of the good ...” (Phillips,1993:177). Individuality, as Jack Crittenden puts it, is crucial to liberals “not as a self-contained, independent, and unique “I” but, rather, as an embedded part of a social matrix in which both self and sodality are constituted by and known through membership and kinship relations that leave no doubt as to the self’s form, boundaries and nature” (Crittenden,1992:178). Thus, liberalism does accept that individuality can only be achieved with the company and recognition of others through a social and cultural nexus. And liberals do agree with communitarians that individual identity is shaped through social relationships and not a product of self-creation, but they, unlike communitarians, maintain that the construction of that identity is not *determined* by the community they are a part of, but *shaped* through individuals’ critical self reflection on the given values. That is, they accept that “the *contents* of the individual’s aims, preferences, interests, and the like are inescapably social”, but they reject the communitarian idea “that the *self* is constituted by communal ends” (Phillips,1993:179), since, it is argued, “*no end or goal is exempt from*

² Few liberals, Jeremy Bentham for example, argued that “the community is a fictitious *body*, composed of the individual persons who are considered as constituting as it were its *members*.” Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation: The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed by. J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, p. 12; Likewise, Robert Nozick argued that “there is no *social entity* with a good that undergoes some sacrifice for its own good. There are only individual people, different individual people, with their own individual lives.” Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974, pp. 32-33.

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*possible re-examination.*³ Thus what underlies the liberal rejection is the communitarian conception of the individual which denies the possibility of individual autonomy, since its conception of individual regards her, as Margaret Moore observes, “as a recipient of communally held beliefs, conceptions, and values.”⁴

The liberal view, then, like the communitarian one, can accept that the individual is “socially embedded”, but that the individual is one “who understands his intellectual and cultural inheritance [and] is determined to make that inheritance his own by fashioning an individual character and lifeplan, and by turning his participation in social practices into performances expressive of his individuality.”⁵ There is obviously an interrelated relationship between the social productions of culture including social roles and rational and psychological individual capacity in the construction of individual identity. As Amitai Etzioni puts it, “persons cannot be persons outside their social nexus or outside their community, and the community cannot exist, develop, thrive, and grow without the unique contributions of the individuals within it.”⁶ Thus, the “individualism that underlines liberalism is not valued at the expense of our social nature or our shared community. It is an individualism that accords with, rather than opposes, the undeniable importance to us of our social world.”⁷

Such a liberal compromise on the relationship between community and the individual could be valid for communitarianism as well. That is, the communitarian view on the relationships between community and the individual may involve a significant compromise with that of the liberal view. As Moore notes, “once communitarians acknowledge that the person can make choices about which communal ends or values she will pursue, their theories become indistinguishable from liberal theories.”⁸

The difference, therefore, between communitarian and liberal views on individual and society is not to discard one altogether at the expense of the other, but to prioritize one over another. That is, “the liberal ‘difference’,” as Zygmunt Bauman observes, “stands for individual freedom, while the communitarian ‘difference’ stands for the group’s power to limit individual freedom.”⁹ The matter is, then, which entity, community or individual, we should take as morally prior. Although we shall not prioritize one over the

³ Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, p. 52.

⁴ Margaret Moore, *Foundations of Liberalism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, p. 183.

⁵ Stephen Macedo, *Liberal Virtues: Citizenship, Virtue, and Community in Liberal Constitutionalism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, p. 219.

⁶ Amitai Etzioni, ‘A moderate communitarian proposal’, *Political Theory*, vol. 24 (2), 1996, p. 156.

⁷ Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, pp. 2-3.

⁸ Moore, *Foundations of Liberalism*, p. 183.

⁹ Zygmunt Bauman, ‘On communitarians and human freedom: or how to square the circle’, *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 13 (2), 1996, p. 81.

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other, since, as we shall see, there is a dialectical relationship between the two, our main concern is the individual. There could be some potential dangers in prioritizing the good of the community over that of the individual – supposing that they are independent from each other-. In this sense, the concerns of liberals are right on the ground that, as Phillips observes, “racism, sexism, exclusion, forced emigration, deportation and even eradication ... are often involved in attempts to achieve community.”¹⁰ Community or culture would matter in relation to individual *well-being* which, we shall argue soon, may not necessarily be accompanied by a liberal understanding of culture on the grounds that it only fosters individual autonomy, but with a wider understanding of culture as a context of meaning and identity as well as choice for individuals through which they locate and perceive themselves and others meaningfully. Individuals’ culture as a context of meaning, identity and choice is not a causally determinative but a constitutive context in shaping their identities. In other words, they do not choose and shape their identities in isolation, but in a concrete cultural context, within which they are not subjected to the so-called absolute determinative effect of community or culture, but which is necessary for them to be able to perceive themselves and others meaningfully, and is thus necessary for their well being.

II

How far can the liberal acceptance that individuals are socially embedded take us in endorsing the protection and recognition of different cultures, which may require some group differentiated rights? Accepting that individuals are socially embedded does not necessarily call for the need for the state to support the flourishing of minority cultures, which could be based on rejection of the *procedural neutrality* of liberalism. Indeed, some liberals, without rejecting the significance of community for individuals, have been quite critical of the protection of cultures via group differentiated rights.¹¹ This kind of liberalism, what Michael Walzer calls “Liberalism 1”, is, as we said, “committed in the strongest possible way to individual rights and, ... to a rigorously neutral state, that is, a state without cultural or religious projects ...”¹²

¹⁰ Phillips, *Looking Backward*, p. 176.

¹¹ See, for example, Nathan Glazer, ‘Individual rights against group rights’ in Will Kymlicka ed., *The Rights of Minority Cultures*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995; Michael Hartney, ‘Some confusions concerning collective rights’, in Kymlicka ed., *Ibid.*; Jeremy Waldron, ‘Minority cultures and the cosmopolitan alternative’, in Kymlicka ed., *Ibid.*; Chandran Kukathas, ‘Are there any cultural rights’, *Political Theory*, vol. 20 (1), 1992; ‘Liberalism and multiculturalism’, *Political Theory*, vol. 26 (5), 1998; Jurgen Habermas, ‘Struggles for recognition in the democratic constitutional state’, in Amy Gutman ed., *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

¹² Michael Walzer, ‘Comment’, in Gutmann ed., *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 99.

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However, some other contemporary liberals have rejected culture-blind versions of liberalism.¹³ They have argued that respect for individuals also requires respect for their cultural community and criticized Liberalism 1's state neutrality on cultural matters as an untenable project. Liberal orthodoxy or Liberalism 1, they argue, cannot "explain or accommodate the political exercise of difference and that the liberal tradition must be reworked to accommodate the political expression of minority cultures."¹⁴ Moreover, some of these liberals, like Raz for example, have rejected Liberalism 1's or classical liberalism's universalistic conception of the self. Emphasising the "contextual nature of political theory" which endorses "value pluralism", Raz argues that contemporary liberalism differs from its classical predecessors in terms of acknowledging the value of community for individual well-being.¹⁵ Thus, these liberals have rejected culture-blind version of liberalism on such different grounds as, that culture provides a context of choice for individual members and is thus vital for the exercise of individual autonomy (Kymlicka and Raz), that a respected culture is one of the significant sources for individual self-respect' and 'dignity' (Taylor and Raz), and that choice of a culture (i.e. no individual should be exposed to a (majority) culture against her will) is a logical extension of the liberal view that individuals should choose and pursue their own conception of the good (Tamir).

III

If we need to specify the stance of different views of liberalism regarding cultures and their protection, we find two different views of liberalism which can be labeled as Reformation (or classical) liberalism and Enlightenment (or revisionist) liberalism. Although they have some overlapping features, some of their distinctive features could have quite different political and moral implications regarding the protection of cultures. Reformation liberalism, which can be derived from a Lockian understanding of liberalism, is based on valuing freedom of political association and toleration. But valuing freedom of political association does not necessarily endorse any special group rights derived from group identity. Reformation liberalism rejects such rights on the ground that since group membership is voluntary, what is needed is to

¹³ See, for example, Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*; and, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995; Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993; Joseph Raz, 'Multiculturalism: a liberal perspective', in his *Ethics in the Public Domain*, Clarendon Press, 1994; 'Multiculturalism', *Ratio-Juris*, vol. 11(3), 1998; Charles Taylor, 'The politics of recognition', in Gutmann ed., *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*, 1992; Neil MacCormick, 'Liberalism, nationalism and the post-sovereign state', *Political Studies*, vol. 44 (Special Issue), 1996; Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz, 'National self-determination', in Kymlicka ed., *The Rights of Minority Cultures*.

¹⁴ Nimni, 'Nationalist multiculturalism ...', p. 302.

¹⁵ Raz, 'Multiculturalism: a liberal perspective', pp. 155, 156, 159.

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secure individual freedom to the extent that individuals freely associate with and exit the community they wish.

As can be seen this understanding of group membership reduces individuals' social bonds, roles and cultural identities to mere individual *preferences*, through which they are able to pick up their own cultural preferences. But, cultural communities cannot be regarded as merely voluntary associations like social clubs and political parties.¹⁶ As Sandel, attacking Rawls' instrumental conception of community, argues, "for [individuals], community describes not just what they *have* as fellow citizens but also what they *are*, not a relationship they choose (as in a voluntary association) but an attachment they discover, not merely an attribute but a constituent of their identity."¹⁷

However, it is exactly the idea of voluntary association that endorses cultural groups' demands for the protection of their cultures including those of illiberal groups to maintain themselves as distinct cultures as long as they secure the right of individuals to *exit* the relevant group. Chandran Kukathas, for example, argues, "from a liberal point of view the Indians' wish to live according to the practices of their own cultural communities has to be respected not because the culture has the right to be preserved but because individuals should be free to associate: to form communities and to live by the terms of those associations."¹⁸ This view, as can be seen, gives an inalienable right to individuals: the right to leave the community when they do not wish to live with its terms. It also gives a considerable power to the cultural community in the sense that it does not suggest that they become some specified sort of society. Thus, it endorses the particularity of cultures, and is cautious about injecting the universality of a rational nature on them. In this sense, it does have an implication of endorsing unlimited diversity and difference, though its main concern is to protect individual freedom. That is, the outcome of regarding cultural groups as voluntary associations and of endorsing individuals' right to exit the community when they do not wish to live with its terms does endorse the particularity of any kind of cultural community.

Unlike the *cultural particularity* of reformation liberalism, Enlightenment Liberalism's roots go back to Kant who argued for an *unchanged* and *universal* rational nature of individuals that enables them to be autonomous moral agents. This emphasizes individual *autonomy* through the

¹⁶ Bhikhu Parekh, for example, rightly argues that "unlike voluntary associations we are ... shaped by our cultural communities and derive our values and ideals from them". Even if it is possible for individuals to divorce themselves from participating in their cultural beliefs, values and practices, they continue to retain some aspects of their culture such as "its language, collective memories, ways of carrying ourselves, and at least some attachment to its rituals, music, food and so forth." Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, Macmillan Press, 2000, p. 162.

¹⁷ Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, p. 150.

¹⁸ Kukathas, 'Are there any cultural rights', p.116.

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maximization of individual freedom. It is the task of the state to ensure its neutrality towards different conceptions of the good life so that the needed “opportunities and resources ... be made accessible to all [as members of the state] on an equitable basis” regardless of their “racial, ethnic, cultural or national identities.”¹⁹ This liberal conception of membership in society is based on the assumption that individuals as bearers of *rational* capacities can create a shared or public identity on the basis of their common needs, which is irrelevant to their being members of different cultures. Here, Rawls’ view in his *A Theory of Justice* should be mentioned. His theory, as Moore observes, “attempts to derive liberal rights and rules of justice from an original position or contract among people denied full knowledge of their identities.”²⁰ Thus, in his account “the *political* significance of cultural ... identity is ignored, because the argument appeals to a conception of fundamental *human* interests and then erects liberal rights and rules on that basis.”²¹

However, as we shall see soon, Kymlicka, within this line of liberalism, has argued that “Rawls’s own argument for the importance of liberty as a primary good is also [implicitly] an argument for the importance of cultural membership as a primary good.”²² Cultural membership, in Kymlicka’s view, is a primary good, since cultures have the *function* of providing a “context of choice” for individuals through which they construct and develop their *autonomy*. Thus, individual autonomy and freedom in his account do require some specific group-differentiated rights for minority cultures.

IV

Having had a brief outline of these different views of liberalism towards the issue, we would like to present the multicultural view of Will Kymlicka. We focus on Kymlicka’s view since it is his works, *Liberalism Community and Culture* and *Multicultural Citizenship*, aiming to reconcile the individualist moral ontology of liberalism with special minority cultural rights, that have occupied the agenda, attracting both liberals and non-liberals.

Kymlicka’s liberalism consists of three propositions; first, individuals have an interest in leading a good life; second, this life should be lived from “the inside”, rather than from “the outside”, since the creator or author of forming a good life is the individual; third, saying that individuals should have authority over the value that shapes their conceptions of the good life does not mean that any form or way of life they choose is good. Since they may be

¹⁹ Paul Gilbert, *Peoples, Cultures and Nations in Political Philosophy*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000, pp. 92-93.

²⁰ Moore, *Foundations of Liberalism*, p. 2.

²¹ Margaret Moore, ‘National self-determination’, *Political Studies*, 1997, 45, p. 903.

²² Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, p. 166.

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mistaken about the good life they choose, they should be able to revise and change their conception of the good about how they should live.

Kymlicka bases his arguments on the common liberal morality that individuals have vital interests in leading a good life. The argument that individuals have interests in leading a good life has two important implications; first, it is important to accept that individuals would never improve their conception of the good life if they were forced to maintain or accept certain practices or beliefs imposed by their community. Liberal morality requires that individuals maintain their own conception of the good in shaping their lives. Secondly, since individuals' judgements are not perfect, they may be mistaken about what constitutes a good life. However, this does not mean that our lives should be determined from "the outside". It is wrong to decide on the values that individuals should pursue if they do not want them. According to Kymlicka's liberalism then, there cannot be a good form of life, determined by the community, by the state, by a certain politics, or by any ideology. Kymlicka writes,

"while we may be mistaken in our beliefs about value, it does not follow that someone else, who has reason to believe a mistake has been made, can come along and improve my life by leading it for me, in accordance with the correct account of value. On the contrary, no life goes better by being led from the outside according to values the person does not endorse."²³

Kymlicka basically draws these arguments from the Rawlsian framework. "Rawls believes", he writes, "that the freedom to form and revise our beliefs about value is a crucial precondition for pursuing our essential interest in leading a good life. The individual is viewed by Rawls as a conscious and purposive agent- she acts so as to achieve certain goals or purposes, based on beliefs she has about what is worth having, doing or achieving"²⁴ Thus, according to Kymlicka, there are two indispensable values for individuals to be able to lead a good life: The value of our own beliefs which give meaning to our lives, and the value of being able to change them: these two values are necessary preconditions of leading a good life. And culture is seen as a context in which these values are realized.

Kymlicka's Account of Culture

The sort of culture on which Kymlicka focuses is what he calls 'societal culture'; "that is, a culture which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational,

²³ Ibid., p. 12.

²⁴ Ibid., p.163.

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religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres.²⁵ Deriving his argument from the Rawlsian idea that self-respect is a primary good because our life plan is worth pursuing insofar as it is based on our own choices, Kymlicka argues that cultural membership is, in addition to the Rawlsian list²⁶, also a primary good, since it is also a precondition of self-respect. It is a precondition of self-respect, since meaningful individual choice can be possible only in a cultural context.

As can be seen, in this liberal account of culture, what matters is individual rather than community. Culture is not valuable *per se*. In his view, culture, as a context of choice, is not valuable in itself; it is not intrinsically good, but good insofar as it provides a context of choice for its members, since it is individuals who are the basic moral units, and thus they are the only right holders and subjects of obligation. In this sense, cultures have no independent moral status. The value of cultural belonging therefore is derivative; that is, its value is based on its contribution on individual well being. Secure cultural structure²⁷, he argues, is needed not because “cultures are valuable, ... in and of themselves, but because it is only through having access to a societal culture that people have access to a range of meaningful options.”²⁸

Thus, the value of culture is based on whether it provides its members with a variety of options through which meaningful individual choices can be possible, which is, in turn, a precondition of leading a good life. Culture matters when it provides its individual members with choice and critical self-reflection. Through choice and critical self-reflection, individuals build their “autonomy”. In this sense, in Kymlicka’s liberal view, culture has the function of fostering *individual autonomy*.²⁹ The connection between the value of culture and its

²⁵ Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, p. 76. There are a variety of uses of the term culture. For a brief explanation of some different usages of culture such as business culture, drug culture, and moral, political, academic or sexual culture; and such as gay, youth, mass and working class culture on which we do not focus in this work, see Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 143. The culture we focus on in this work is the kind that can be regarded as “a system of beliefs and practices [or meaning and significance] in terms of which a group of human beings understand, regulate and structure their individual and collective lives.” (Ibid.)

²⁶ These primary goods are “rights and liberties, opportunities and powers, income and wealth” and “self-respect”. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 92 and 440.

²⁷ By emphasizing secure cultural structure, Kymlicka does not rule out changes involved in some aspects of a given cultural community. The particular character of a culture such as membership in churches, political parties, etc., he argues, can and should change when individuals do not value pursuing it; but what matters is the existence of the cultural structure itself. A cultural community will continue existing and providing its members with a context of choice even if it is character changes over time. (Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, pp. 166-167)

²⁸ Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, p. 83.

²⁹ What can be understood of individual autonomy is that it is the capacity or ability of individuals to make their own choices in forming their life plans about how to lead their life. “The ruling idea behind the ideal of personal autonomy”, Raz argues, “is that people should make their own lives. The autonomous person is a (part) author of his own life. The ideal of personal autonomy is the

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autonomy fostering function lies at the heart of Kymlicka's liberal project for the rights of minority cultures on the ground that respect for the autonomy of the members of minority cultures requires respect for their cultures, and this in turn may require some special group rights for them.

V

Does Kymlicka's view provide a viable framework for the protection of cultures? It can be said that although it has some considerable points, they are not enough for accommodating the demands of non liberal cultural groups. We limit our criticism to one consideration³⁰; that his argument that respect for

vision of people controlling, to some degree, their own destiny..." (Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, p. 369.) "Autonomy", writes Raz, "is exercised through choice, and choice requires a variety of options to choose from" and "a person lives autonomously if he conducts himself in a certain way (does not drift through life, is aware of his options, etc.) and lives in a certain environment, an environment which respects the condition of independence, and furnishes him with an adequate range of options." (Ibid., pp. 398 and 391) Autonomous life not only requires a variety of options, but also a rational, and self-reflective capacity through which an individual should be able to question the range of options. Thus, as Crittenden notes, "more than a kind of choice, [part of individual autonomy] is a process of choosing ... [through which] one must have some critical distance from the range offered." (Crittenden, *Beyond Individualism*, p. 75.) Individual autonomy, then, requires individuals, first, to be aware of their own individual beliefs and (intellectual) capacities; and second, to be aware of their cultural traditions, practices and values. However, being aware of these is a necessary but not sufficient condition for individual autonomy. It also requires, first, the individual has a *critical self-reflection* on her own beliefs; and second, as Moore says, can "reflectively ... criticize the practices, beliefs and conceptions of her community." (Moore, *Foundations of Liberalism*, p. 185.) It should, however, be noted that Moore does not discard communal values for the exercise of individual autonomy. Rather, she rightly finds it necessary that "the acceptance of at least some of the tradition's conceptions" is required for individual autonomy.

³⁰ Kymlicka's liberal theory of multiculturalism has received some other criticisms; for the claim, for example, that Kymlicka's understanding of individual autonomy is not compatible with liberal understanding of autonomy in the sense that it views individual autonomy as an *instrumental* good for individual well being rather than viewing it as an *intrinsic* good independent whether individuals' life go better or not; see Don Lenihan, 'Liberalism and the problem of cultural membership: A critical study of Kymlicka', *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence*, vol. 4 (2), 1991, pp. 403-405; For the same claim that Kymlicka's instrumentalist view of individual autonomy should be abandoned for the Kantian understanding of "moral autonomy", which "suffices to rule out internal restrictions as illegitimate on moral, not specifically 'liberal', grounds", see Rainer Forst, 'Foundations of a theory of multicultural justice', *Constellations*, vol. 4 (1), 1997, pp. 65-71; For the claim that cultural belonging is not a primary good in the sense that it cannot be "only path for most individuals to achieve a secure self identity", and that it can in some cases be a source of "persisting feeling of inferiority", of "shame", see Markus Haller, 'Doing justice to multiculturalism', *Acta Analytica* vol. 18, 1997, pp. 132 and 131; For a similar view that secure cultural structure may not be a source of self-respect for individuals "who are held in low esteem by their cultural group", see Andrea T. Baumeister, *Liberalism and the Politics of Difference*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000, p. 114; For the claim that "context of choice argument does not presume that nations constitute the relevant sort of cultural framework", since "an individual is related to and has allegiances to many sorts of group identity, including family, occupation, region, neighbourhood, religion", one of which "may be more important to an individual's framework for choice than national identity", see Matthew

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individual autonomy requires respect for one's own cultural structure disregards the demands of non liberal cultures for whom a liberal understanding of individual autonomy has no relevance to the protection of their cultures.

The major difficulty in Kymlicka's account of culture is his strong emphasis on individual autonomy, which neither leaves room for consideration of non-liberal minority groups' demands for cultural protection nor takes into account the multiple sources of culture in an individual life. One serious outcome of such a strong emphasis on individual autonomy is that it implicitly suggests monoculturalism rather than affirmation of the culturally diverse structure of the relevant society. That is, given that culture is valuable insofar as it furthers individual autonomy and that individual autonomy requires a *certain* culture that provides an *adequate* range of options, then it can be said that Kymlicka's account of culture has an implication which discards cultures that do not, more or less, promote cultural values for the exercise of individual autonomy. To connect the value of culture to the options it provides and thus to the individual autonomy it fosters implicitly either discards the values of non liberal cultures, or does not value them at all. This understanding of culture as valuable on account of its autonomy fostering function implicitly suggests that such a culture is a superior culture. Once protection of culture is linked to whether it fosters individual autonomy, self-reflection, and self-criticism, the outcome of such a protection would be conditional, on the requirement that every culture *should* foster individual autonomy. Such a condition inevitably suggests a liberal culture. In this sense, Kymlicka's theory has no relevance to non-liberal cultures, and therefore it is, as Parekh notes, "unable to show why liberal societies should respect the minority rights of these groups."³¹

According to Parekh, western societies include not only liberal groups but also non-liberal groups such as religious communities, indigenous peoples,

Festenstein, 'New worlds for old: Kymlicka, cultural identity, and liberal nationalism', *Acta Politica*, vol. 33 (4), 1998, p. 369; For the claim that Kymlicka's argument for secure cultural context which has no relevance to a present character of a culture, but has relevance to its stable cultural structure cannot explain individual critical thinking on a given cultural value, and thus "a certain degree of cultural instability – including an instability that affects the deep sources of people's beliefs about value" is needed for individual critical thinking, see John Tomasi, 'Kymlicka, liberalism and respect for cultural minorities', *Ethics*, vol. 105 (3), 1995, p. 591; For the claim that Kymlicka's distinction between the structure of a culture and its character is untenable in the sense that changes in one causes changes in the other, and that ruling out character of a culture for its secure (unchanged) structure is not compatible with his "liberal" concerns regarding individual autonomy, since this distinction "has produced an illiberal result." see David C. Bricker, 'Autonomy and culture: Will Kymlicka on cultural minority rights', *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, vol 36 (1), 1998, pp.52-53; For a similar view that his distinction between the structure and the character of a culture for the "effective exercise of autonomy" is untenable, see Baumeister, *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

³¹ Bhikhu Parekh, 'Dilemmas of a multicultural theory of citizenship', *Constellations*, vol. 4 (1), 1997, p. 58

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long-established ethnic communities and newly arrived immigrants, and to regard them as liberal societies would mean that we “rule out” non liberals for the sake of our liberal view. These non-liberal groups are very much part of western societies and have a constant “struggle” with liberals. The main difficulty in Kymlicka’s definition of culture, as Parekh notes, is that it is based on the assumption that every society involves a single “societal culture”, and this assumption leads him to tackle “the problem of multicultural societies in monocultural liberal terms.”³²

Kymlicka, on the other hand, rejects this claim that minority groups in Western societies do not share basic liberal values. Their conflicts with the majority, he argues, are not about the legitimacy of liberal principles. Minority nations like the Catalans, Scots, and Flemish in Europe; and immigrant groups of Canada and of Australia which have integrated into the political system do not have any dispute with the majority over “basic political values”.³³ Majorities and minorities in these societies agree on liberal-democratic values, but they, he maintains, disagree over the interpretation and applications of these principles to the concrete cases like “questions about the distribution of power between federal and regional governments, or about the legitimacy of affirmative action, or about naturalization rules, or about the designation or public holidays, or about the scope of minority language rights.”³⁴ Thus, in Kymlicka’s view, the main problem of multicultural societies in the west is not about “basic” political values, but about their applications and interpretations.

Kymlicka does ignore the fact that some religious groups in western societies do hold a considerable doubt about the political values of liberal democracy. Although many of them have endorsed a liberal conception of autonomy, it is not a universal value shared by all cultures. Some communities like Hindus, orthodox Jews, Catholics, Muslims do not view their cultures as entities which provide individual members with a variety of options through which they can, in the liberal sense, construct their own conception of the good and their autonomy. Likewise, some groups such as the Amish in the mid-western United States and the Russian Old Believers in northern Alberta, as Moore observes, “find the liberal emphasis on individual autonomy and critical reflection threatening to their more communally oriented and simple religious existence.”³⁵ Thus, even if we accept his argument that minority groups in the west share some “basic” political values, it would not lead us to provide a justificatory ground for the existence of non-liberal cultures as long as we make a strong connection between culture and individual autonomy. The point is that

³² Ibid., p. 59.

³³ Will Kymlicka, ‘Do we need a liberal theory of minority rights?’, *Constellations*, vol. 4 (1), 1997, p. 81.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

³⁵ Moore, *Foundations of Liberalism*, p. 178.

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some traditions, practices and values involved in some cultures, probably in non-liberal cultures, may not be reconciled with individual autonomy, and that emphasizing individual autonomy for the justification of cultural protection would undermine these cultures' demands for protection. Considering these groups, the liberal conception of autonomy that Kymlicka suggests would not meet their demands for the recognition of their culture. Traditions, some practices and the values involved in such cultures may give rise to tension when individual autonomy is *privileged*. The protection and survival of these non-liberal cultures requires the rejection of a liberal valuation of individual autonomy.

Moreover, given that individual autonomy always requires individuals to engage in critical reflection on their cultural practices and values, Kymlicka's sharp distinction between individual autonomy and cultural values and beliefs becomes untenable, since he situates individual autonomy in such a way that there should always be a sharp distinction between the good of individual and that of the culture in order for individuals to exercise their autonomy. The strong connection between individual autonomy and the good life is, in Kymlicka's view, basically derived, as we said, from the assumption that the good life is the one which is lived "from the inside", and locates that life against "the outside", which could be cultural practices, values and tradition. It is not clear what is the governing principle for drawing such a distinction. To be more precise, we can say that there cannot be comprehensive overall guidance defining the *sources* of the good life. There are not only countless of sources including different individual capacities affecting what individuals understand about the good life, but also different cultures provide different sources defining the spheres of the good life and individual well being. Indeed, it is, as Lenihan notes, not difficult to consider a community, say a tribe, the core values of which are wholeheartedly endorsed by its members, and thus there would be nothing worrying us about their well being.³⁶ This argument is valid for liberal cultures as well. In these cultures, Kymlicka's sharp distinction between the good of community and that of the individual, as Parekh notes, "gets blurred in some of the most intimate areas of interpersonal relations."³⁷ Remaining within Kymlicka's understanding of individual autonomy, we can at best say that the value of individual autonomy, the good life and individual well being should be evaluated through an acceptance of the interdependency of the individual and culture. Thus, such an acceptance would have two implications; namely, as Moore puts it, "the person both (a) embodies communal values and beliefs and (b) has the ability to stand back from (communal) values as an independent centre of consciousness"³⁸. In some cultures individual well being may require

³⁶ Lenihan, 'Liberalism and problem of cultural membership...', p. 404.

³⁷ Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 106.

³⁸ Moore, *Foundations of Liberalism*, p. 187.

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only the first implication while in some other cultures it may require both implications. Whatever the degree of an individual's embodiment of communal values and criticisms of these values is, we should respect the right of cultures to maintain themselves as distinct entities as long as they ensure the well being of their individual members. In this sense Kymlicka's account of culture is not enough, since his commitment to individual autonomy leads him to fail to develop a pluralistic understanding of culture and thus a comprehensive sense of cultural diversity. Putting a strong emphasis on the liberal understanding of individual autonomy as a *single* or ultimate value for assessing and valuing cultures is not enough. It is not enough because it requires to a great extent a *liberal* moral code for the flourishing of the individual and thus fails when we take into account the cultural practices and values of non-liberal cultures. In this sense, as long as Kymlicka equates culture *only* with a context fostering individual autonomy, his account of the value of culture will hold only of a *liberal culture*.³⁹

But, there is obviously no single conception of culture and autonomy. A liberal conception of culture as a context of choice and individual autonomy is just one understanding of it amongst many others. However, these elements are not beyond our consideration. On the contrary we take them as significant features of culture and conditions for individual well being. What is needed is a plural understanding of culture that could have enough room for different cultures. Such an understanding of culture, first of all, avoids any reductionism. Elements constituting culture cannot be reduced to a single element, to its autonomy fostering function for example; and no single value of culture can be prioritized over other values. Constitutive elements of culture cannot be reduced to a single element, because culture, with its constituting elements such as beliefs, traditions, history, practices, spirits, language, religion and so on, is a constellation of beliefs and practices that shape individual life. These constituting elements have a *dialectical* relationship with each other, and with elements of other cultures. The ways these elements come together in a given culture can neither be static nor can be the same for all cultures.

Second, no constituting element is prior to other elements. As Parekh puts it, culture "both opens up and closes options, both stabilizes and circumscribes the moral and social world, creates the conditions of choice but also demands conformity."⁴⁰ Although it does, in varying degrees, provide a context of choice for individuals, culture has, again in varying degrees, some constraints disciplining relevant choices. A cultural community has a balance of

³⁹ Nimni, for example, argues that "a liberal view of culture is by definition grounded in liberal theory and cannot avoid seeing every culture from a liberal angle." Nimni, 'Nationalist multiculturalism in late Austria...', pp. 299-300. For the same view, see Baumeister, *Liberalism and the Politics of Recognition*, pp., 118-119.

⁴⁰ Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 156.

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“restraints and choices”, “authority and freedom”, and regarding one of them as prior to others would destroy its integrity.⁴¹ Giving precedence to autonomy and choice over other constructive elements of community would undermine its stability as well as its capacity for providing its individuals with autonomy and choice.

VI

Thus, the value of culture cannot be derived only from individual choices and individual autonomy, it is also, at the most fundamental level, including these two elements of culture, derived from individual well being.⁴² In this sense, we do not wholly reject the instrumentalist view of culture on the ground that it is one of the significant contributors to individual well being. Having a sense of belonging and a sense of a certain location from within which individuals shape their conception of the good; and perceiving, assessing and making in varying degrees critical judgement about themselves and others through their cultural nexus; all these indicate the interconnected features of culture and individual interests, and thus well being. Culture in this sense does not only provide choices, but also meaning through which individuals locate themselves in a certain context in perceiving and assessing themselves and others and, reciprocally, construct their individual identities. Thus, culture, in addition to providing a context for choice, is also a context of meaning and identity, which are significant conditions for individual well being.

To be sure, individual well being depends on the satisfaction of countless factors. Two interconnected points, however, need to be emphasized to show that culture cannot provide all the conditions needed for individual well being. The first one is the inherent nature of culture: it cannot, like any human enterprise, cover and fulfill all individual needs and expectations. Given that individual well being does not only require that individuals live in accordance with their cultural nexus, but also requires the satisfaction of common needs shared by all human beings and the satisfaction of individual needs which emerge from individuals' unique physical and mental capacities, it can be said that no culture, as Parekh notes, could be neutral towards the different interests of its individuals and its groups, and thus cannot provide uniform advantages and disadvantages.⁴³ It may, for example, facilitate the interests of men at the expense of those of women; while it may emphasize respect for family, it cannot, with the same strength of emphasis, encourage divorce; while it may

⁴¹ Parekh, 'Dilemmas of multicultural citizenship', p. 60.

⁴² Alan Gewirth describes well-being as “substantive generic feature of action; it consists in having the general abilities and conditions needed for achieving one's purposes, ...” Alan Gewirth, 'Is cultural pluralism relevant to moral knowledge?', *Social Philosophy and Policy*, vol. 1 (1), 1994, p. 27.

⁴³ Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 157.

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place a strong role on girls as future housewives and child bearing entities, it cannot at the same time suggest a full democratic education for them.

The second point related to the first one is about the availability of social, economic and political activities of a culture to its individual members. The role of social, political and economic conditions on individual well being obviously cannot be denied. Some writers have rightly argued that secure access to one's culture cannot independently be assessed from other "primary goods like income, wealth, opportunities, and power."⁴⁴ Nancy Fraser, too, in her evaluation of Taylor's *The Politics of Recognition*, argues that recognition of cultures should go along side with a fair *redistribution* of resources which are the very conditions of social equality.⁴⁵ Likewise, as Yoav Peled and Jose Brunner put it "when culture is checked for its effects on individual autonomy [and individual well being], it has to be examined in terms of the social, economic and political capabilities it provides for individuals and thus in terms of the social, economic and political practices it enables, furthers or prevents."⁴⁶

The availability for individuals of economic, social and political activities produced by a culture raises a valid case for assessing the value of culture for individual well being, and cultural rights debates cannot be isolated from these conditions. However, we limit our focus to a manageable portion; namely, although economic, social and political conditions play an important role in individual well being, we would like to focus on culture, accepting that it is only one significant context for individual well being.

It is a significant context for individual well being, since individuals, as Ronald Dworkin says, "depend on community in ways that go beyond ... economic and security benefits"⁴⁷ Whatever advantages and disadvantages it provides for its individuals, it remains as, in varying degrees, a context of meaning for them in the sense that it, as we said, provides a certain *location* from within which they perceive and assess themselves and others.⁴⁸ Culture as a context of meaning to some extent shapes the degree and scope of individual

⁴⁴ Joseph Carens, 'Liberalism and culture', *Constellations*, vol. 4 (1), 1997, pp. 42-43.

⁴⁵ Nancy Fraser, 'From redistribution to recognition? Dilemmas of justice in a 'post-socialist age'', *New Left Review*, 212, 1995, pp. 71-72.

⁴⁶ Yoav Peled and Jose Brunner, 'Culture is not enough: a democratic critique of liberal multiculturalism', in Shlomo Ben-Ami, Yoav Peled and Alberto Spektrowski eds., *Ethnic Challenges to the Modern Nation-State*, London: Macmillan, 2000, p. 83.

⁴⁷ Ronald Dworkin, 'Liberal community', *California Law Review*, vol. 77 (3), 1989, p. 488.

⁴⁸ This, however, does not mean that cultures cannot be assessed and criticized in terms of their constituent elements. While some, for example, place a higher value on individual choices than other values, some others endorse values that expect individuals to follow some certain cultural beliefs and practices without critical thinking. Some other cultures, on the other hand, may favor interests of one group, i.e. men, over those of other groups, i.e. women. Even if we do not dismiss or reject these cultures wholly, we may rightly criticize and expect them to respect some fundamental values that have much to do with individual well being.

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belonging and identity, since cultural belonging “has a high social profile”, “affecting how others perceive and respond to us, which in turn shapes our self-identity.”⁴⁹ Individual identity therefore is shaped at two levels: individual and cultural. That individual identity is shaped by cultural narratives is a matter of degree; namely while some individuals construct and develop their personal identities wholly *within* a given social role and communal identity, some other can develop their identities *through* a critical self-reflection upon it. Thus individual identity has two significant sources: On the one hand, it is influenced by a system of values shared by others, and others’ respect for these shared values would provide a context within which individuals would have self-respect; on the other hand, that identity develops and flourishes through individual critical self-reflection on the given values. This points out the “dialogical” or *dialectic* relationship of individual and cultural identity. As Taylor puts it, “we define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others, [who matter to us], want to see in us.”⁵⁰ Our identity “is not something we can sustain on our own, ... [it] is always partly defined in conversation with others or through the common understanding which underlies the practices of our society.”⁵¹ Thus, the construction of individual identity requires dialogue through which individuals recognize each others’ worth and thus they come to see themselves as dignified identity bearing existences.

The construction of individual identity is, as Stuart Hall notes, “a process never completed – always in process.”⁵² Accepting that the construction of individual identity is “a process never completed”, and that the effects of cultural products on the construction of individual identity takes place in varying degrees, cultural identity remains a slippery notion. As long as individuals retain their capacity for critical thinking; as long as there are conflicting individual interests inherent in any culture; as long as culture has a system for favoring some interests at the expense of other interests, and as long as there are interactions between different cultures, it will remain as a slippery notion and cannot be a causally determinative entity over individual identities. Some cultures shape individual identity only partly while some others affect it very deeply, depending on how much room they provide individuals for critical thinking. The scope of an individual’s critical thinking on cultural beliefs and practices would determine the scope of the changes in the relevant beliefs and practices. Whatever the scope for the construction of individual identity and

⁴⁹ Margalit and Raz, ‘National self-determination’, p. 84.

⁵⁰ Taylor, ‘The politics of recognition’, p. 33.

⁵¹ Charles Taylor, ‘Atomism’, in his *Philosophical Papers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, vol. 2, p. 209.

⁵² Stuart Hall, ‘Introduction: who needs identity?’ in Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London: Sage Publications, 1996, p. 2.

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change in cultural beliefs and practices, culture remains a significant source, amongst many others, for providing a context of meaning, identity and choice.

VII

Accepting the claim that individual well being requires a cultural context, the question arises of whether this context can be found in just any cultural community or only in their own native culture. James Nickel, for example, evaluating Kymlicka's account of culture as providing meaningful context for individual choices, argues that "secure cultural belonging" is not a necessary condition for having meaningful options for choice. According to him, considering immigrants, the premise that secure cultural belonging is the condition of making meaningful choices does not alter the fact that "many immigrants survive and flourish as autonomous beings after an almost total cultural transplant."⁵³ The situation of these people, he argues, not only shows that they do not need to belong to their native culture, but also not to belong to any particular culture. His argument is based on the widely accepted traditional liberal view that without having a sense of belonging to any particular culture, individuals will still be able to form and revise their own beliefs about the conception of the good. "One's own experience and imagination", he argues, "plus one's memory of one's native culture, plus whatever knowledge of other cultures and ways of life one has acquired, will generally provide one with an adequate stock of options to make meaningful choice possible."⁵⁴

Moreover, Jeremy Waldron argues that talking about "separate" or "distinct" cultures does not make sense in the modern world, since such an approach assumes that there are clear lines between cultures, and thus they are isolated from each other. In fact, we cannot say where one culture starts and another one ends. He agrees with Kymlicka on the grounds that choices, which are culturally defined meanings, take places in a cultural context, and thus every option and choice has cultural meaning. But it does not follow, he argues, "that there must be one cultural framework in which each available option is assigned a meaning. Meaningful options may come to us as items or fragments from a variety of cultural sources."⁵⁵ People, he maintains, need cultural materials, but this does not imply "the importance of something called *membership* in a culture."⁵⁶ Thus, suggesting the term "cosmopolitan self", Waldron argues that our ways of lives do not depend on a particular cultural structure. People, without having a sense of belonging to any particular culture, can be involved in a variety of ethnocultural ways of lives. He writes,

⁵³ James Nickel, 'The value of cultural belonging: Expanding Kymlicka's theory', *Dialogue*, vol. 33 (4), 1994, p. 637.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 637.

⁵⁵ Jeremy Waldron, 'The cosmopolitan alternative', in Kymlicka ed., *The Rights of Minority Cultures*, p. 106.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

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“the cosmopolitan may live all his life in one city and maintain the same citizenship throughout. But he refuses to think of himself as *defined* by his location or his ancestry or his citizenship or his language. Though he may live in San Francisco and be of Irish ancestry, he does not take his identity to be compromised when he learns Spanish, eats Chinese, wears clothes made in Korea, listens to arias by Verdi sung by a Maori princess on Japanese equipment. He is a creature of modernity, conscious of living in a mixed-up world and having a mixed-up self.”⁵⁷

Indeed, individuals relate themselves to their own and other cultures in various degrees, and there is no overall criterion for measuring and assessing how much they commit themselves to cultural beliefs and practices of their own and to those of other cultures. Neither is there a clear-cut distinction between many cultures in a modern world where interactions of different cultures are inevitable. In the modern world, “each of us”, as Jeffrey Weeks notes, “live with a variety of potentially contradictory identities, ... as men or women, black or white, straight or gay, able-bodied or disabled, British or European...”⁵⁸ Moreover, as we saw in our discussion of Kymlicka’s societal culture, not only one particular culture but many cultures provide sources through which individuals can maintain their different conceptions of the good. Considering all these points, it may be possible to argue that some individuals do not feel any sense of belonging and thus commitment to the beliefs and practices of any single culture; moving between different cultures, picking up beliefs, practices and lifestyles of different cultures, and having a sense of belonging to none of them. Indeed, “cultural melange” as Gilbert argues, “hotchpotch, a bit of this and of that ... no doubt captures an aspect of the cultural experience of many in the contemporary world.”⁵⁹

However, cultural melange is an *individual achievement*, rather than the achievement of cultural and religious groups as whole entities. It does not rule out the fact that a considerable number of individuals do attach themselves to their own cultural values and practices, and that their sense of belonging to their own culture is crucial to their well being. Of course their attachments to their culture take place in varying degrees; while some attach themselves to their cultural beliefs and practices in a very strong way, having no critical reflection on the core values of their cultures; some others have critical reflection on them. Without uprooting themselves from their cultures they may find elements of their critical stance against some beliefs and practices of their cultures *from*

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 95.

⁵⁸ Jeffrey Weeks, ‘The value of difference’, in Jonathan Rutherford ed., *Identity*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, p. 88.

⁵⁹ Gilbert, *Peoples, Cultures and Nations*, p. 52.

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other cultures as well as *within* their own cultures. At least for those attaching themselves to their own cultural values and beliefs in relatively strong ways, their individual identity seems, in varying degrees, to be a matter of “belonging” rather than “achievement.” As Margalit and Raz argues, “although accomplishments play their role in people’s sense of their own identity, it would seem that at the most fundamental level our sense of our own identity depends on criteria of belonging rather than on those of accomplishment. Secure identification at that level is particularly important to one’s well-being.”⁶⁰ The fact that most individuals attach themselves in a significant way to their cultural values and that that attachment, which is not a matter of achievement, is a significant source for the construction of their identity calls for the protection of their culture.

Does such an argument have the consequence of endorsing purity for cultures? The inevitable fact that cultures are permeable, and that the more modern technology they use the more permeable they become rules out the possibility of their purity. So, any argument for the purity of cultures would be untenable. The argument that protection of cultures is needed for those attaching themselves to their own cultures can at best suggest maintaining their *distinctiveness*, as long as the relevant distinctive features of these cultures contribute to individual well being. Although there are, as we said, different cultural sources that shape individual identities in different ways, protection of some features of culture, for example religion, language or dress codes, could be quite vital for individuals of the relevant culture. Some would take their religious commitments seriously, rather than the language they speak; some other cultural groups would take language matter as the center of their cultural claims, rather than dress codes; some could find a great significance in maintaining their distinctive dress codes, and so on. Ignoring their demands in the name of cultural melange would dismiss their very existence. Given that their cultural identity is “something like a person’s understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being”, “nonrecognition or misrecognition [of that identity] can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.”⁶¹ Thus, the need for the protection of culture should be assessed on the question of whether the features of culture to be protected are vital for its individuals or not. If so, the argument derived from a culture of melange is refutable; and since cultural attachment is one of the significant sources for individual well being, the right of cultures to maintain themselves as distinct entities should be respected.

⁶⁰ Margalit and Raz, ‘National self-determination, p. 85.

⁶¹ Taylor, ‘The politics of recognition’, p. 25.

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