
Charles Taylor's essay in this volume is the inaugural lecture for the University Center for Human Values at Princeton. It is preceded by an introduction by Amy Gutmann, center director, and followed by brief comments by Susan Wolf, Steven Rockefeller, and Michael Walzer.

Our identity, says Taylor, is shaped by the recognition of others. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can be a harm and an injustice, "imprisoning someone in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being" (pp. 25–26). In premodern times recognition was not a problem, according to Taylor, since it was built into hierarchical social roles. In the eighteenth century, however, two things happened: equal dignity replaced hierarchy, and a person's identity was seen to come from within. Identity was now something each person had to achieve (or could fail to achieve) by being true to his or her "authentic" self. But identity, even when it comes from within, requires confirmation by others, since human self-understanding, says Taylor, is "dialogical," not monological. "Multicultural" demands on behalf of minorities and other groups, as well as certain forms of feminism, seek the recognition members of these groups need to establish a strong identity.

The politics of equal recognition, Taylor notes, has come to mean two different things. On one view, equal recognition is assured by "an identical basket of rights and immunities" for all (p. 38), based on universal human characteristics and blindness to the differences which have been used to discriminate. On another view, equal recognition requires special rights and entitlements for groups who have been demeaned or whose culture is at stake. For this "politics of difference," difference blindness is equivalent to the neglect and disparagement of 'different' people. Both of these views, says Taylor, have their roots in equal dignity.

Taylor asks whether modern "rights-liberalism," whose basic axioms are equal rights and nondiscrimination, is compatible with the second view. Can it support unequal rights as a way of giving due respect to difference, and so help members of minority groups achieve recognition? The question is raised by Quebeckers and Aboriginals in Canada who demand that the collective goal of the survival of their culture should outweigh such individual rights as the right to conduct business in English, place commercial signs in English, send one's children to schools conducted in English, or buy property in any area. Taylor argues that the powerful forms of "rights-liberalism" defended by Ronald Dworkin, John Rawls, and Bruce Ackerman are inimical to this. They stress individual autonomy, state neutrality, and procedural fairness as fundamental to liberalism. The pursuit of collective goals to override the rights in question, however, interferes with autonomy since it prohibits certain kinds of self-determination, violates state neutrality since it enforces a conception of the good, and is unfair to those not part of the favored culture since their aspirations are diminished.

In response, Taylor puts forth a second 'model' of rights liberalism in which "a society can be organized around a definition of the good life without this being seen as a depreciation of those who do not personally share" it.

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Such a society defends “fundamental and crucial” rights to “life, liberty, due process, free speech, free practice of religion, and so on” (p. 59) but is willing to override “lesser” liberties, such as the right to have signs in a particular language, in order that a community’s character can be maintained or that minorities achieve recognition. Taylor endorses this form of liberalism but does not give any argument for it in this essay. He does nothing to show that those who do not share the favored conception of the good life won't be demeaned. Nor does he defend it against the objection, as Steven Rockefeller puts it, that there is “a danger of an erosion over time of fundamental human rights growing out of a separatist mentality that elevates ethnic identity over universal human identity” (p. 93). It will come as no surprise to readers of Taylor’s other works that he wants a form of society which reconciles liberty and community. It is disappointing that he spends no time in this essay explaining how this is possible.

Taylor deals with two questions raised by multiculturalism. The first, already discussed, is whether the goal of cultural survival can justify restrictions on rights. The second rests on the claim that liberal societies have presumed the superiority of European cultures and have therefore marginalized and demeaned other cultures, hindering their members from developing a stable identity. The site of the battle here has been education. The traditional canon has been castigated and demands are being made to alter it to give much greater prominence to nonwestern sources. Taylor sympathizes with this aim. He thinks, however, that it tends to be based on the unsupported premise that “we owe equal respect to all cultures,” or that all cultures are of equal value (p. 66). To think that all cultures are equally worthy, in advance of studying them, is either incoherent or patronizing. It is incoherent because judging another culture first requires understanding it, and this can result only from a process in which our own standards of valuation are altered as we “fuse [the] horizons” of our own and the other culture (p. 67). It is incoherent also when it rests, as it frequently does, on a “neo-Nietzschean” subjectivism which denies objective validity to any standards of evaluation. Such a subjectivism undermines the judgment of equal worth and turns showing respect into nothing more than “taking sides.” This attitude is patronizing and “an act of breathtaking condescension” (p. 70), because it does not grow out of a real appreciation for the culture but is taken for political reasons. The exaggeration of the claims of equal worth, says Taylor, has played into the hands of “the enemies of multiculturalism [who use] this as an excuse to turn their backs on the problem” (p. 71).

Taylor thinks, however, that the claim of equal worth is valid as a presumption that cultures “that have animated whole societies over some considerable stretch of time have something important to say to all human beings” (p. 66). He thinks this presumption is sufficient to support multicultural demands for inclusion in the curriculum. But is this fact—that we may learn something from such cultures—the basic reason for supporting the demands for inclusion? Whether African-American culture is of equal, greater, or lesser value than European culture seems irrelevant to the question of whether it should be included, if the aim of inclusion is to give African Americans greater recognition of their identity and to promote tolerance and understanding among all members of this diverse society. For Susan Wolf, the result for
minority members of teaching only the traditional canon "consists in ignoring the presence of such individuals in our community or in neglecting or belittling the importance of their cultural identity" (p. 81). The point of inclusion is recognition directly, which needn't wait on an estimate of the culture's worth. I doubt whether Taylor would reject this but I'm inclined to agree with Wolf that Taylor's way of approaching this question is "a line of thought that takes us in an unfortunate direction" (p. 79), a direction which may make it harder rather than easier for "different" groups to achieve recognition.

Some brief remarks on Gutmann's and Walzer's contributions: Gutmann's introduction nicely clarifies some of the issues about multiculturalism in education and effectively criticizes the extremes: the "traditionalists," whose defense of the canon becomes "intellectual idol worship," and the "deconstructionists," whose subjectivism deconstructs itself. Walzer thinks Taylor's version of liberalism is the more basic form of liberalism but says that it makes sense for diverse, immigrant societies like the United States to choose the more neutral, procedural kind of liberalism. A suggestive idea, but not much developed in his very brief remarks.

_Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"_ is vintage Taylor. It is engaging, thought provoking, suggestive, full of insights on questions of intellectual history, philosophical and moral psychology, and current issues in political philosophy and practice. But its most important claims—a new kind of rights liberalism, and the basic premises of multiculturalism in education—are left tantalizingly incomplete. It is also a slender volume, really a journal article plus brief commentary. Its publication in book form may be justified by the importance of the occasion on which it was delivered, but it will seem a bit "pricey" to those who consider buying it.

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Barry, Brian, and Goodin, Robert E., eds. _Free Movement: Ethical Issues in the Transnational Migration of People and Money._
University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992. Pp. 300. $45.00 (cloth); $16.95 (paper).

This book, which is the product of a conference held in 1989, is a collection of papers on the ethics of transnational migration. The editors have imposed a somewhat rigid structure, based on five 'perspectives': liberal egalitarian, libertarian, Marxist, natural law, and political realist. For each perspective there are two advocates and one commentator. The editors add further structure in two chapters which discuss the constraints that consistency imposes on ethical positions concerning migration. (Robert Goodin thinks that consistency imposes significant constraints; Brian Barry does not.)

Transnational migration is an issue of enormous political significance. There is a huge and unsatisfied demand to migrate from poor countries to richer ones—from Latin America to the United States, from Eastern Europe and North Africa to the European Community, from Vietnam to Hong Kong.