

European Cosmopolitanism and Civil Society; Questions of Culture, Identity and Citizenship.

‘Democracy is the slow, painful effort to put right the blunders that we have incorporated into our conditions of life’ (Konrad 1984: 193).

The concept of civil society has been essential to democratic theory and numerous social movements. The idea of civil society usually refers to the networks and associations that are formed between the home and the state that allow for public forms of discussion and argument. Talk of civil society came back during the eighties when a number of Eastern European dissident intellectuals pointed out how Communist practice and ideology severely restricted civic forms of expression. In the West a number of other writers also sought to point to the ways in which civic association was limited by privatised lifestyles, the power of money and the influence of dominant ideologies. The period directly proceeding the Cold War however has offered a different set of hopes and projections. The disappearance of the binary logic of the Cold War which had limited democratic experimentation in the West and the removal of state control in the East all heralded new prospects for civil society. Yet the power of the media of mass communication and mainstream political parties to control ‘political’ agendas, the dominance of consumer rather than politically oriented life-styles and the erosion of the public by market values continue to point to the withering of civil society rather than its growth and development. Further, there are more recent fears that Europe’s 9/11 in Madrid will by putting democracies on a permanent war footing lead to the progressive erosion of civil society. Ideologies of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ not only restrict democratic horizons closing the minds of the

public to alternative forms of politics, but serves the interests of secrecy rather than publicity.

Here I wish to investigate these questions by returning to the essential ambiguity of the concept of civil society. It is with the double character of civil society that I wish to start. Present in the concept of civil society are democratic movements and political initiatives that offer the possibility of civic exchange and democratic argument, but also the possibility of normalisation and domination. The problem has been for many to concentrate on one side of the question to the exclusion of the other. We need to be able to hold onto the idea of civil society as a duality if we are to capture on the ongoing ambivalence of European civil society. Further, in an age of globalisation these features also need to be substantially recast so to build upon the possible emergence of new kinds of citizenship above and below the nation-state.

Here we might return to some of the debates that emerged out of the 1989 European revolutions. The so called velvet revolutions proposed new definitions of European civil society that are still being worked through today. In particular Mary Kaldor (2003) has argued that the distinctive contribution of 1989 invented the possibility of a genuinely European civil society. Despite, the views of other political theorists like Dahrendorf (1990) who argued the revolutions were a triumph for liberalism, Kaldor argues such views are too sweeping. The Anti-Politics of dissidents like Vaclav Havel, Georg Konrad and E.P. Thompson sought to develop an intellectual politics or civil society that did not compete for power, but create small islands of civic initiative. Beyond the disciplines of the bloc system, the aim was to invent transnational dialogues that sought to drag humanity back from the abyss of nuclear war and assured destruction. The revolutions of 1989 made possible the invention of a transnational civil society that could put pressure on the centers of political and economic authority.

While being sympathetic to many of these arguments, the development of a European civil society has to be cast in different terms. While notions of civil society were mobilised to reveal the repression of civil exchange more symbolic forms of violence are not evident in the discussion. In other words, public exchange is not just an instrumental matter, but also signifies who is listening, who is talking and ofcourse who is excluded (Bourdieu 1991). These more 'cultural' definitions of the political will become apparent in what follows. We need to recognise that the communicative

possibilities of civil society are intimately bound up with how we deal with otherness and difference.

In what follows, I want to look at the argument that a European civil society requires the support of cosmopolitan institutions, most notably in respect of the European Union. Here I investigate the position of liberal cosmopolitanism mainly through the writing of the prominent German social and political theorist Jurgen Habermas. Secondly, I make the argument that liberal cosmopolitanism can be criticised for neglecting to analyse the checkered history of civil society in the European context. Here the inevitably broad sweep of these viewpoints points to a different kind of politics that seeks to be more receptive towards the 'Other'. Finally, I agree that a Europe that has been made safe for the 'Other' would need both a complex vocabulary of cultural identity and a more genuinely multicultural politics. It is to these features I shall now turn.

European Cosmopolitanism

Since the fall of the Berlin wall the cosmopolitan view has sought to dispense with specifically national responses. Citizenship, it follows, has to become a trans-national form of governance by breaking with the cultural hegemony of the state. A cosmopolitan political community should be based upon overlapping or multiple citizenships connecting the populace into local, national, regional and global forms of governance. The cosmopolitan polity, guided by the principle of autonomy, would seek to achieve new levels of interconnectedness to correspond with an increasingly global world. These dimensions remain vital, surpassing older divisions in the democratic tradition between direct and representative democracy by seeking to maximise the principle of autonomy across a range of different levels. The prospects for a cosmopolitan democracy is guided by the argument that problems such as HIV, ecological questions and poverty are increasingly globally shared problems.

Jurgen Habermas (1997) locates ideas of cosmopolitan democracy in Kant's (1797) desire to replace the law of nations with a genuinely morally binding international law. Kant believed that the spread of commerce and the principles of republicanism could help foster cosmopolitan sentiments. As European citizens individuals would act to cancel the egoistic ambitions of individual states. Kant's vision of a peaceful cosmopolitan order based upon the obligation by states to settle

their differences through the court of law has arguably gained a new legitimacy in a post cold-war world. For Habermas (1997) while this vision retains a contemporary purchase, it has to be brought up to date by acknowledging a number of social transformations. This includes the globalisation of the public sphere and the declining power of states, while also recognising that it is individuals and citizens and not collectivities who need to become sovereign. In this setting the European Union takes on an added significance given its commitment to a pluralistic democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights. Indeed observance of these principles is a key condition for a states membership. Membership also entails the obligation to continue to respect these rights with the European Commission retaining special enforcement procedures. Hence despite its many detractors from the beginning Europe has been more than a trading bloc and represents a new kind of transnational political community. The European Union, as is well known, emerged into a society ravaged by war and nationalist violence with the question of collective security being central to its foundation. However, as most observers recognise, the process of European integration has been driven as much by economic considerations as political aims and objectives (Anderson 1997). This has not prevented many on the political Left from investing in the idea of Europe a utopian significance that aims to tame globalisation, enhance democracy and put European societies on a more secure footing than was evident for the early part of the twentieth century. In this context, Habermas has recently advocated the need for a constitutional debate that would engage the collective imaginations of the citizens of Europe. The challenge for the European Union is to be able to conserve the democratic achievements of the nation-state in a global era. What has seemed to many of its critics as institution building without the necessary democratic legitimacy, is actually a normative political project that can be sharply contrasted with the overt power politics represented by the worlds remaining super power the United States.

Despite the widespread unpopularity of the European Union with many of its citizens, Habermas argues that there are five main reasons for supporting its development. Firstly, as is well known, many of the founders of the European Union were motivated by the immediate memory of war and nationalist violence. This remains a strong motivating force behind the need to develop post-national forms of solidarity and security. In this vision Europe is not only a trading bloc, but an integrative force seeking to collectively bind nation-states to a legal community.

Secondly, as I have already mentioned, the history of European nation-states saw national consciousness and democracy develop along with one another. Yet there is no reason why democracy and civic solidarity should remain at this level. That is the legitimacy of the European Union will indeed depend upon the creation of a civil society beyond national borders. For Habermas, despite his nationalist critics, there is no good reason why this might not be possible. Thirdly, Europe remains a global space of democracy and human rights that has few current rivals. While ideas of democracy and human rights are not owned by Europe and not withstanding its own barbarous past, these features have an institutional grounding that are part of a wider collective achievement. Fourthly, European societies face a number of common problems which are easier to deal with collectively than alone. These include global markets, immigration and asylum seekers as well as increasing levels of fragmentation and multiculturalism. There is then the growing realisation that individual states can not protect their citizens from the ‘external’ realities of globalisation nor some of its ‘internal’ consequences. Fifthly, and in Habermas’s estimation the key to the success of the European Union, is its ability to provide a response to global economic pressures. Under the conditions of global finance national governments are under increasing pressure to lower taxes and provide economic environments in the interests of corporations rather than people. Such downward pressures compel national governments to accept increasing inequalities while downgrading systems of social welfare. In this scenario what happens is that money replaces politics. Here the European Union would need to develop a market-correcting ethos with new forms of regulation and redistribution.

In terms of the development of European cosmopolitan identities, Habermas (2001a) has more recently outlined some of the key conceptual disputes. Opposed to either a Euroskeptic vision of Europe or a neoliberal market driven notion of Europe, Habermas makes the case for a cosmopolitan Europe. This version of European identity has at heart the ability of citizens ‘to learn to mutually recognise one another as members of a common political existence beyond national borders’ (Habermas 2001b: 99). This does not mean homogenising different national and ethnic identities into a super European nation-state. A cosmopolitan European identity actually requires a form of civic solidarity where fellow Europeans take responsibility for one another. These processes are dependent not only on the formulation of a common European civil society, constitution and social policy, but on a common sense of

solidarity being created through political institutions. The development of a European cosmopolitan identity is dependent upon civic forms of solidarity being developed beyond the nation. Habermas goes on that only when Europe is able to develop a genuinely post-national democracy will it be able to provide an alternative to both economic globalisation and shared histories of barbaric nationalism. Habermas is well aware this remains a considerable challenge in the context of competing ideas about Europeaness that continue to dominate the political landscape.

Hence Habermas is clear that a European identity could not be a matter of a shared culture or religion, but is likely to be the uneven outcome of a European wide public sphere. Further, that Europeaness would usher in a composite identity that sought to interact with and not replace national, ethnic and regional identities. There is no reason why a commitment to locality, nationhood and Europeaness could not all flourish in the twenty-first century. For Habermas, just as European states of the nineteenth century created national consciousness, then something similar may become possible at the European level. In Habermas's terms the best bet of a more cosmopolitan Europe is a prolonged debate on the European constitution. While such a process, in Habermas's words (2003:98) 'will not be enough', it will at least set a European wide dialogue in motion. After a period of ongoing debate and controversy within national public spheres citizens are likely to discover that they share common interests with others across national borders. A European civil society is likely to become activated through mediated processes of political communication. Hence a cosmopolitan European identity is an emergent composite identity where identification with others emerges through specifically national public spheres and public communication (Delanty 1998). This is indeed a different model to those who dream of discovering a European identity through a re-emerged high culture or Christian identity. The only other 'cultural' preconditions Habermas recognises in respect of the development of a European cosmopolitan identity is the need for education systems to provide a common linguistic basis. Hence it is transnational political communication underlined by a supportive education system that offers the optimum prospects for a European cosmopolitan society.

Here we might argue that Habermas's description of a European cultural identity remains overly minimal and could be given a 'thicker' content. It is likely that Habermas's liberalism warned him off such a venture should such a description be misunderstood as a description of the cultural requirements that would constitute

‘Europeaness’. Habermas is undoubtedly right to tread cautiously here given that most other writers working on the idea of a European civil society emphasis not only Europe’s linguistic and cultural plurality, but that the vast majority of its citizens live their lives within the nation within which they were born (Outhwaite 2003). However, as Maurice Roche (2001) demonstrates, at the level of cultural policy and popular culture there has emerged significant developments in this respect. The creation of events such as the European city of culture, the development of a European tourist industry, Erasmus and Socrates exchange programmes, and the Europeanisation of sport and football all link questions of culture and citizenship in more concrete ways than Habermas suggests. However, while recognising the importance of these processes, a word of caution needs to be added here. For Castells (1998) the idea of European identity can not be assumed but needs to be politically invented. Hence the idea of Europe could become important as a way of defending human rights, democracy and social welfare without regressing into communalism. Europeaness then would need to become what Castells (1997:8) describes as a project identity. A project identity becomes available when social actors and movements seek to simultaneously redefine themselves and their position within society. Yet under current conditions, most of the identities that Castells charts can more accurately be described as resistant or communal identities. Under the impact of globalisation and the shrinking state, both radical individualism and fundamentalist certitude are currently more prevalent than project identities.

Similarly, Alain Touraine (2000) argues that it is only by embracing multiculturalism that Europe can avoid the twin threats of rampant individualism and regressive communalism. Hence in distinction from liberalism’s ideas of tolerance or Habermas’s of political communication, Touraine argues for a Europe that is based upon the ethic of inter-cultural communication. This would move society beyond models of either unrestricted pluralism, communalism or the elite forms of political dialogue described by Habermas. The key here is not merely to provide identification with a European constitution amongst those involved in the political process, but allow for communication between cultural enclaves. Hence an inclusive European identity would need to make space for the ‘Other’ and recognise the relations of dominance that have previously existed between them. The European project is better served by a form of politics that provides spaces and places where inter-cultural dialogue can take place. These are important considerations to which I shall return

later. For now, it is important to note Touraine's view is more suggestive than specifically realised. He does however acknowledge a key dimension that has been overly subsumed by our discussion thus far. That is given Europe's long history of nationalist violence, chauvenism and racism where does this leave Habermas's vision of a cosmopolitan Europe?

A Europe for the Other ?

The quest for a European cosmopolitan social order looks somewhat different against the back ground of the long history of European racism and nationalist violence. Whereas liberal cosmopolitanism keeps open the possibility of a Europe built upon rationality, social justice and democracy viewed against a history of genocide such sure footed ideas of moral progress are difficult to sustain. Indeed just as the cosmopolitans make their appeal for a new European order based upon the transnational application of Enlightenment principles so we have also witnessed the rise of the far Right and racist forms of reaction to asylum seekers and immigration. In this respect, Europe less resembles the rational polity, than a place of fear, anxiety and hatred. Here the charge is that the European enlightenment has a barbarous heritage and that ideals of cosmopolitan democracy seek to obscure this from view.

Zygmunt Bauman (1995) has argued that the shadows of Auschwitz and the Gulag continue to cast their shadows over more liberal forms of collective identity. European modernity is as much about the establishment of the principles of liberal democracy as it is of racism and the politics of genocide. We might then choose to console ourselves with ideas of European civilisation and democracy, and yet we live under the continual threat of new waves of barbarism. It is noticeable, that most of the advocates of a European civil society tend in William Outhwaite's (2003:1) phrase, to 'be looking at the brighter side of the European picture'. Indeed, Bauman argues that rather than seeing the death camps as a form of atavism we might view them as the expression of European modernity. In other words, European genocide was made possible by rationality, technology and science. The development of modern bureaucratic rationality and functional division of labour leads to the floating of responsibility. Moral impulses are neutralised by the modern requirement to forefill a role and reach targets while remaining loyal to an organisation. The holocaust is less symbolised by rage rather than the willingness to follow orders. Bauman writes:

‘The modern mind treats the human habitat as a garden, whose ideal shape is to be predetermined by carefully blueprinted and meticulously followed up design, and implemented through the encouraging the growth of bushes and flowers envisaged by the plan – and poisoning or uprooting the rest, the undesirable and the unplanned, the weeds’ (Bauman 1995:199).

Along with modernity comes liberal democracy and the dream of a society free of ambivalence, otherness and cultural difference. The aim of the modern spirit is to push humankind toward a society that is orderly, rationalised and where all social problems have been solved. Hence modernity’s self image of the progressive elimination of violence and the establishment of a genuinely civil society is a false one. Instead in modernity violence is made invisible by being removed from the fabric of everyday life. Violence becomes professionalised in armies and police forces maintained by a bureaucratic hierarchy (Bauman 1989). Similarly, Michel Foucault (1977) argued that the modern disciplinary society contains within its rituals the utopian ideal of the perfectly governed community. Human multiplicity is managed through a number of mechanisms that aim to ensure through legal-administrative forms of punishment that power flows with as little resistance as possible. The Janus faced nature of European modernity is characterised as much by the deliberative ideals of democracy and modern social movements as it is by practices of surveillance and exclusion. In Bauman’s and Foucault’s terms the idea of Europe should become detached from notions of ‘moral leadership’. Following the writer Caryl Phillips (1986) Europeans remain trapped inside an illusion of supremacy that allows them to forget their own barbarous past. This is a dream ‘in which whites civilise and discover and the height of sophistication is to sit in a castle with a robe of velvet and crown dispensing order and justice’(Phillips, 1986:121). Phillips goes on that the idea that facism was simply an ideology that can be connected to a ‘lunatic fringe’ is increasingly difficult to sustain in the context of continued and sustained European racism.

Notably the histories of national socialism that continue to haunt modern Europe can also be related to a hyper-masculine politics. The work of Klaus Theweleit (1989) has sought to explore the previously uncharted world of fascist man. Theweleit’s study explores the development of a warrior masculinity where the psychique is imagined as a suit of armour and whose self is erected against the fear of the feminine. It is the idea of the feminine that constitutes the most radical threat to an

identity built upon hardness, destruction and self-denial. The body of the fascist male is imagined to be a functioning machine that aims to repudiate any sense of more feminine values. While it is at least arguable that modern European societies have begun to deconstruct these phantasies many of these projections continue to be apparent in much popular culture especially in respect of sport and representations of war and the body [1]. In this respect, the 'othering' and fear of the 'feminine' remains a dominant masculine ideology.

The charge is that the struggle for European cosmopolitanism displaces some of the more 'hidden' features of European modernity in respect of violence, race and gender. We might also note that modernity under certain calculations does not have the cognitive and emotional resources for the forms of solidarity demanded by European cosmopolitanism. Mestrovic (1997) has recently taken these views the furthest by arguing that we are currently living in a postemotional society. This is a society of synthetic feeling where we have all become progressively indifferent to the suffering of others. How else, charges Mestrovic, are we to understand Europe's indifference to the practice of genocide in Bosnia? Civilisation in Europe and the Western world has come to mean the ability to exhibit refined manners alongside a cool indifference to televised murder. The postemotional society values 'being nice' over the collective ability to be able to act on our emotions and intervene to help others. Hence the capacity to be able to feel real deep emotions in an age which endlessly simulates sentiment through news bulletins, talk shows and soap operas is being progressively undermined. The display of feeling is short lived, useless, aesthetic and luxurious and rarely becomes connected to a sense of justice and a genuine concern for humanity. Emotions are progressively regulated by pre-packaged sentiment and the crocodile tears of journalists reporting from war zones. Postemotionalism disallows the possibility of emotions becoming chaotic; instead they are increasingly subject to 'politically correct' forms of regulation. This cleaned up universe leaves little room for the strong passions and commitments necessary for the kind of European project described by the cosmopolitans. The idea of a Europe built upon social solidarity is less likely than a European Disneyland that manages a few pious sentiments in respect of the holocaust but manages to look the other way when confronted with real suffering. In this respect, the European Union becomes a MacDemocracy based upon consumerism and a thin commitment to the ideals of an active civil society.

The argument here is not only that within European cosmopolitanism we may detect an attempt to bury the past, but in a consumerist society of simulated emotion it is just another fake identity. The media's domination of politics leads to form of instantaneous democracy that is based upon personalisation, the simplification of political positions and where state and European politics have become empty rituals (Castells 1997). Notably these are very real threats to the life-worlds of Europe's citizens. They can not I would argue be dismissed as the exaggerated fears of a few cantankourous European intellectuals [2]. Yet we might also reply, that these features could be pressed too far. Ulrich Beck (2004) has recently commented that the European project was actually born out of resistance to the perversion of European values. This argument works on two different levels. Firstly, cosmopolitan Europe does indeed emerge out of the rejection of totalitarian politics and practice. The politics of pluralism, democracy and human rights is affirmed over the states attempt to define the 'truly human', and attempts to exclude or annihilate those who do not fit this model. Secondly, the idea of cosmopolitan Europe is built on the notion that we have a moral duty to attend to the suffering of others and respect for human dignity. Europe is indeed built upon a contradiction between traditions of nationalism , genocide and colonial violence are indeed European, but it is also the location that has sought to development of legal standards that outlaw these acts. Indeed rather than condemning Europe as its radical critics attempt to do we might be best served seeking to strengthen 'a European antidote to Europe' (Beck 2004: 4). Hence the project for European cosmopolitanism could reasonably reply that if we are indeed to invent such a culture out of the turmoil of the present then this legitimates the process of democratic instituion building in the face of the barbarous past and the globalised markets of the present. Related to this question is how can European civil societies retain a place for the 'Other'? How might we foster civic and cultural identities that discover new levels of respect for democracy, peace and cultural difference? It is to these thorny questions that I shall now turn.

European Cosmopolitanism and Cultural Difference

At this point, I want to build upon the arguments of the previous section and maintain that liberal cosmopolitanism needs to be reformulated. Here I take the view both that the institution of democracy and human rights at the European level is a form of

moral progress and that it needs to more fully take account of questions of cultural difference. Further, that the introduction of questions of cultural identity, as we have seen in respect of race and gender, problematises what comes to constitute the political in European societies. The problem with liberalism is that its individualism is unlikely to provide the necessary conditions for a genuinely multicultural community. In this respect, I want to turn to feminist and anti-racist writers who have sought to develop a version of cosmopolitanism that takes the questions of culture and identity more seriously than Habermas's more abstract reflections.

The question here becomes how are European societies to provide the necessary protection for those whose identities are excluded by more mainstream versions of politics and the public sphere? In this respect, I shall argue that both difference feminism and critical multiculturalism pose difficult questions for the liberalism of writers such as Habermas. Both feminist and critical multiculturalist perspectives share a similar set of concerns with cosmopolitan liberalism for the need to revive democracy, but argue much more systematically for the need to respect cultures of difference rather than liberal ideas of diversity.

Cultural feminism has long had to live with the paradox of wanting to preserve the 'feminine', while also wanting to deconstruct the ways women's identities are imprisoned within certain assumptions. Hence there has developed a cultural politics that has mutually sought to point to the continued dominance of masculinity, while subverting these assumptions in ways that do not entrench the discrimination of women. Here I want to look at some of the productive suggestions offered by the French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray whose recent writing offers a vision of European societies reconstructed through questions of difference.

For Irigaray if we are to avoid the horror of Europe's past and construct a citizenship that is based on more than property rights and markets then we need to make the public domain safe for the Other. This would be a form of citizenship that actively resists human-beings being reduced to producing and consuming 'robots' that cultivates a 'culture of life' (Irigaray 2000). Ultimately citizenship needs to take account of the fact that within the wider community there exist people of different cultures, genders, races and traditions. However, Irigaray's fear is that in the push for European economic integration capitalism is actually producing a culture that is threatening sustainable human life. Under the law of the market European peoples are increasingly stressed, forced to live and work at ever faster rates and quickly forget

the lessons of human history. Further, that a culture that disrespects the environment, different sexualities, women and ethnic minorities can not be corrected through discourses of equality and liberal neutrality. The continued hegemony of the market, masculine values, Western ideas of logic and rationality require more concerted forms of deconstruction. What is important in the European setting is the establishment of a new symbolic order which signifies a much needed next stage of human development. Hence the 'cultural' is given priority over the economic in seeking to create a new society. It is then the task of critical forms of analysis not simply to restrict ourselves to where we are, but to courageously ask what we might become. In order to begin to answer these questions, we need to begin the task of reconstructing human subjectivity in respect of the relationship between the masculine and the feminine.

For Irigaray we have to start with the recognition that humanity is made up of two different beings. It is the cultivation of the relation between men and women and not the subordination of one pole to the other that will secure human flourishing. Mature human subjectivity therefore depends upon the ability to relate to the other who is not oneself. This is of course only possible if we follow a strategy for citizenship that prefers the acceptance of difference over assimilation. European cultures today have a historic opportunity to develop a citizenship that goes beyond the nation-state and reworks the civic relation between men and women. The crisis of the family and the relative decline of patriarchal authority means that we have the opportunity to culturally disassociate ourselves from a dominant masculinity and establish the civic identities of the masculine and the feminine on an equal footing. This, argues Irigaray, requires the acceptance of new rights at the European level to protect women's right to be women. These rights would grant women an equivalent identity with that of men. The hope being that by giving femininity a civil basis it would grant women:

'the conscious and voluntary recognition, in love and in civility, of the other as other. This cultural becoming of the woman will then be able to help the man to become man, and not only master and father of the world, as he has too often been in History' (Irigaray 2002: 130).

In arguing for a new European civic identity for men and women, it is women's cultural identity that requires special forms of protection. Here Irigaray (1994) draws upon earlier work where she seeks to establish a legal basis for the right to motherhood and the right to virginity for women. The aim is to promote a shared

civil identity across Europe that fosters women's self respect and secures the communal recognition of their physical and moral identity. These rights are not intended to be kept within a narrow legal framework, but would also seek to promote a wider collective culture of respect for women's cultural identity. The aim being to give women an equal footing in the public sphere, but also create a positive form of female friendly citizenship. These rights would establish the respect for human life as a European norm.

Irigaray's argument offers a substantive critique of the liberalism of writers such as Habermas and liberal feminism more generally. While not doubting the importance of equal opportunity legislation for women it has failed to establish a wider respect for the feminine and the Other more generally within European societies. For example, the right to participate in the workplace with men fails to protect motherhood as a positive identity. Turning motherhood into a positive choice is impossible in a culture that promotes the masculine values of competition, individualism and instrumentality over those of nurturance and care. In this respect, Irigaray disagrees with those feminists who view gender identity as simply a form of oppression. Granting women an equal civil status with men would have implications for the value that modern societies place on the practice of caring for others.

Unusually for a philosopher of difference Irigaray along with the European MEP Renzo Imbeni has written a consultative document called the Draft Code of Citizenship (reprinted in Irigaray 2000: 69-72) that was put forward to the European Commission for Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs. Interestingly the report was rejected by the European Parliament over the need to recognise the difference between men and women. The Commission for Women's Rights preferring to stick with a definition of liberal feminism that did not seem to ascribe identities in the way that Irigaray's report seemed to suggest (Martin 2003). Indeed, it remains the case that Irigaray often runs the biological identity of 'woman' and the 'feminine' together in such a way that have led to accusations of 'essentialism' from many of her critics. The problem being for a politics of citizenship is that it is not possible to protect the cultural values we might describe as being feminine without also granting women rights. However, this would have to be done in such a way that did not discount that men might also wish to think of themselves as mothers, peacemakers and having a sense of responsibility towards the community that went beyond the confines of narrow individualism. For example, Sara Ruddick (1990) has famously argued that

there remains a deep connection between maternal values and the politics of peace and anti-violence within civil society. However, she clearly recognises that maternalism (the need to protect, nurture and train children) is a practice that can be undertaken by men as well as women. This said the feminization of citizenship would involve the inclusion of virtues such as caring, compassion and responsibility for the vulnerable that has often been the product of specifically women's campaigns (Werbner 1999). The introduction of new human qualities into the domain of citizenship could only be achieved by redrawing the balance between masculine and feminine values. Irigaray's point remains that before this can be achieved women must be granted equal civil status to men before questions of cultural difference can be renegotiated.

Further, the key question in respect of my earlier reflections is the argument for a Europe that seeks to protect racial and ethnic minorities. Indeed, this debate has particular significance in light of the vulnerability of ethnic minorities in the context of the war on terror. The increase in racist attacks, the languages of civilisations and the enhanced suspicion of Muslims across Europe all make these vital questions. One of the ways that many writers have sought to empower 'minorities' is to give them rights. Difference-blind liberalism can not protect 'minority' languages and traditions in a hegemonic culture of market led choice. Will Kymlicka (2001) a defender of minority rights makes a distinction between good and bad multicultural rights. Good minority rights aim to protect groups from the power of majorities or the external threats posed by living in potentially inhospitable cultures. On the other hand, bad minority rights would seek to protect cultural enclaves from internal dissent and from individuals who wish to exit and live their lives in different communities. By defending the rights of minorities, Kymlicka argues that we are able to reveal the extent to which liberalism unmasked actually supports certain languages, cultural practices and lifestyles over others. While Kymlicka is mainly concerned with the rights of settled national minorities (such as the Catalans in Spain) here I am mainly concerned with his view of immigrants. Previously, Kymlicka had been criticised by Parekh (2001) for his view of culture that leads him to dismiss the claims to special rights by immigrants. As immigrants have left their 'natural' cultural home then they should have no rights to culture, and are required to integrate into the host culture. Hence whereas national 'minorities' have specific cultures that require recognition, the culture of immigrants should be denied public expression. Yet in a world of

unprecedented cultural mobility in terms of peoples and symbols it makes little sense to argue that cultures are confined to national and ethnic boundaries. Partially in response, Kymlicka now argues that immigrants rather than demanding special rights can demand fairer terms of integration. The demand at the national level then becomes to promote a political, educational and media culture that both recognises and respects the culture and identity of immigrant populations.

Kymlicka presumes that questions concerning the respect for immigrants is the 'natural' territory of nation-states. Here we might ask whether there is a wider European role for the protection of national minorities and immigrant communities? If European identity is to be conceived as multiple and overlapping then to what extent might 'Europe' seek to secure and protect the identities of minority communities? This is indeed a question, as Craig Calhoun (2001) has argued, that Europe must eventually face. However, just as the rights to recognise distinctive genders have been charged with essentialism so the same might be said of minority rights. For example, Stuart Hall (2000) has argued we need to be careful that demands for group rights do essentialise minority communities. Here the fear is that by giving rights to minorities we will actually interfere with the complex processes of negotiation and hybridisation and reverse into new forms of ethnic closure. Again this does not close the prospect of group rights but suggests that we proceed with caution should we end up naturalising community relations. Indeed, Hall argues less for cultural rights and more for a statutory obligation on the part of government for the duty to expose and confront racism.

The demand to protect cultural identities at the European level both criticises liberal cosmopolitanism and asks complex questions around notions of identity. Notably Habermas's model of European political communication underestimates the importance of this debate. It is unlikely that the political and mediated discourses ushered in at this level would not reinforce some of the dominant features of host national cultures. The problem with procedural arguments such as those of Habermas is that they fail to recognise that public conversations are likely to be shaped by powerful codes and discourses.

Our question, however, has been how women and minorities might be empowered within this process? We have considered the possibility of granting them rights that go beyond the liberal forms of neutrality that remains the dominant form of European politics. We have noted considerable problems in this regard. Indeed I think

we need to accept that the protection of minorities from racism and the redrawing of masculinity and femininity is unlikely to be guaranteed by a rights driven discourse. In this respect, I think we need to develop an ambivalent discourse on the protection given by rights. If as many now argue cultural identities are becoming increasingly reflexive in post-traditional societies then to grant certain identities rights however well intentioned will inevitably remain problematic (Giddens 1991) More important than communal rights is the development of European wide civic cultures of multicultural solidarity that also seeks to question the languages of racial and gendered privilege. A European multiculturalism would require an enhanced liberalism that seeks to undermine the privileges of cultural hierarchies and assert a respect for difference beyond essentialism (Giroux 1994, Gilroy 2004). Arguably there are many features in contemporary European cultures that are pressing these questions from often ambivalent popular cultures to the changing role of men in the family and from the partial acceptance of multiculturalism to political campaigns inspired by feminism and black rights organisations. Multiculturalism only becomes possible if we are both willing to value difference, but to do so in a spirit of solidarity and community with the other (Melucci 1996). A generative civil society requires a two fold logic of a respect for otherness and communication. Such a vision suggests a vision of a future Europe based upon a concern for the well-being of our neighbours along with the desire to make a polity free from normalising assumptions. A genuinely cosmopolitan Europe would also need to become a multicultural Europe.

A new European political logic ?

This article has sought to argue that the double nature of civil society in the European context does indeed necessitate the building of new political institutions like the European Union. The liberal emphasis upon human rights and democracy especially in the context of economic globalisation and the developing 'war on terror' make these commitments ever more pressing. However, I have also sought to argue that liberalism's blind spot remains the way in which the polity is conceptualised as a neutral domain hence missing the effect of powerful cultural discourses and exclusions. These questions can only be highlighted through more concerted attempts to reflect upon the contributions of cultural feminism and multiculturalism in the context of European societies. Such an argument would suggest that our models of

cosmopolitanism need to include both processes of institution building and an appreciation of the ways in which dominant models of citizenship have become constructed. The recent upsurge in populist racism in respect of asylum seekers and masculinist politics evident in the 'war on terror' will makes these features difficult to achieve. Yet the survival of a critical liberalism and social and cultural protest continue to offer sources of hope for the future.

Notes

1. For example, see my recent work on the culture of men's lifestyle magazines as an example of the way that dominant masculine fantasies about the body continue to be reproduced within modernity. This work was carried out with Peter Jackson and Kate Brookes (2001).
2. This problem is highlighted if we consider the liberal optimism of writers like John Keane (2003) who seem to believe such objections can be easily dismissed.

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