

## **Reading/Discussion Questions for December 10**

### **17.042. Citizenship and Pluralism**

#### **Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, Introduction, Ch. 3-5, 7-9**

Chapter 3: What, according to Parekh, is wrong with contemporary liberal responses to diversity?

Chapter 4: How does Parekh conceive of human nature? (What are the properties that all human beings share?) What is the relationship between culture and human nature? Parekh rejects relativism and monism, and defends a version of minimal universalism which holds that there are universal moral values but that they are mediated by the “thick moral structures” of different cultures (127). How does this mediation work? What, if anything, grounds the moral values that Parekh discusses, including respect for human life and respect for human dignity?

Chapter 5: How does Parekh define culture? What is the relationship between culture and morality? Between culture and religion? Between culture and individuals? How is it possible to retain one’s culture but lose/sever ties with one’s cultural community? Does one have duties to one’s cultural community? Why? Parekh points out that cultures have always interacted and influenced one another; what, if anything, does this point imply for the normative debate about special protections for minority cultures? Do you find Parekh’s case for cultural diversity convincing?

Chapter 7: What are the limits, in Parekh’s view, of the following models of multicultural society: ‘proceduralist,’ ‘civic assimilationist,’ and millet? Parekh goes on to outline the elements of his own (admittedly minimal) model for a multicultural society: a collectively acceptable set of constitutional rights, a just and impartial state, a multiculturally constituted common culture, and an inclusive conception of national identity. Is a “multiculturally constituted common culture” possible? How has/would it come about? Why in his view do multicultural societies need a shared conception of national identity?

Chapter 8: “Broadly speaking equality consists in equal treatment of those judged to be equal in relevant respects. In a cultural diverse society citizens are likely to disagree on what respects are relevant in a given context, what response is appropriate to them, and what counts as their equal treatment.” (242). Parekh calls this view of equality “a contextualized view of equality” (256). What exactly does this view entail, and do you find it persuasive? Why or why not?

Chapter 9: How would the model of “intercultural dialogue” advanced by Parekh work? How would this model address the case of female circumcision? Polygamy? Parekh argues that “there is no single principle in terms of which disputed practices can be evaluated” (267). On what grounds then does Parekh advocate banning female circumcision and polygamy?