

Reading/Discussion Questions for November 5

17.042. Citizenship and Pluralism

Cosmopolitanism

1. In Waldron's view, how does a cosmopolitan's lifestyle undermine the Herderian claim that human beings have a need to belong to a particular group based on a shared language and way of life?
2. Waldron criticizes Kymlicka's case for preserving minority cultures by pointing to two different assumptions about (1) the nature of cultures and (2) the relationship between individuals and cultures. What is it that Kymlicka gets wrong on these matters? Do you agree with Waldron's criticism?
3. Why does Waldron think that particular cultures and national communities owe a debt to the global community? Do you agree?
4. Carens applies Rawls's device of the original position on a global scale. What are the considerations the parties to the global original position would engage in? What would the parties agree to on the question of migration? How could restrictions on immigration be justified, if at all?
5. Do you agree with Carens that liberals could not restrict immigration on the grounds that (1) it would reduce the economic well-being of current citizens, or (2) it would destroy or radically alter the culture and history of the society?
6. Mehta focuses on cosmopolitanism as an existential thesis, as opposed to cosmopolitanism as a moral ideal or a particular legal/political status. He is skeptical that we can seriously engage with deep differences and that we can appropriate different cultural elements for ourselves in the way that Waldron claims we can. What reasons does Mehta give for his skepticism?
7. Mehta defends a "cosmopolitanism of distance," i.e. a cosmopolitanism that recognizes the limits of reflection. How then does he suggest we respond to the fact of deep disagreement after reason has been fully exercised?
8. In light of powerful globalizing forces at work, Mehta remarks that cosmopolitanism might be beside the point. What exactly does he mean by this?