National Identity: Belonging to a Cultural Group? Belonging to a Polity

Abstract: In this paper, I began by examining national identity understood as cultural belonging. I tried to show that this kind of belonging fails to give a justifiable account of the pluralistic reality found in modern states. I then proceeded to examine the idea of belonging to a polity. My claim is that this sense of belonging is more suitable for nation-states that have multicultural societies and consider this plurality as a vital part of their national identity. If the arguments presented here are convincing, we will have to stop thinking of national belonging as belonging to a cultural group, and pay more attention to belonging to a polity and all that that entails.

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Belonging to My Cultural Community

What is national identity?[1] National identity is conventionally thought of as a social phenomenon that helps me to understand who I am, to understand my place in the chain of being and in the world I inhabit. This window to the world at large is given to me by my nation. Together with other national members we make up an entity that is extended in time, is of a continuous nature, and is characterized by the will to belong together. The latter is based on a belief that there are some commonalities (language, territory, common values, etc.) which unite us and set us apart from other groups. Such an entity, with its own tale of the past, present and future, is a nation.[2]

KEY WORDS:

boundaries, constitutional belonging, immigration, national identity, particularism

For many proponents of cultural nationalism, membership in a national community is thought of as a basic good of being human. This argument can be broken down into two parts. According to the first descriptive part of the argument, one can, as a "contextual" being, reflect on communal and moral attachments only from the vantagepoint offered by the nation. An Archimedean point of departure apart from national categories is not possible. To step outside the web of national relationships is to repudiate the very particularity of this moral force.[3] Attempts that downplay this sense of belonging are considered 'pathological'.[4]

According to the second normative part of the argument, a complete and flourishing life is possible only within the bounds of a nation. In other words, a good life can only be realised through national membership. In this context it should be pointed out further that nations are thought of as being ethical communities which are ruled by internal principles. Each nation has its own principles that attempt to answer to problems faced in a human life. These national, ethical principles are said to be passed on from one generation to another.

The cultural argument for national belonging links the historicity of national communities with their ethical significance. As historical communities, so the argument goes, nations bind current members with their forefathers and their progeny. By finding her place in this chain of being, an individual transcends her own mortality. In return, she has to fulfil her obligations that arise due to communal relations. Just as members of a family have a greater and more extensive responsibility towards each other, so do members of a nation. These obligations help to dissipate the tension between self-interest and communal good. Because of their "connectedness," members of a nation overcome their individual preferences and work for the good of the whole.

Another characteristic of nations as ethical communities is said to be the mutual responsibilities that national members have towards each other. In other words, members deserve and get preferential treatment. This is because members are bound together by ties of care and co-operation. Seen this way, a nation is a unit which generates a feeling of belonging and distributes rights and burdens of care and cooperation amongst members, not only in the present but also in the future. This point is important because the future of a national community can be guaranteed only if members seek to keep each other above board.

Of course, the above account does not automatically imply that demands of those outside the nation are to be completely ignored. Obligations to outsiders, to humanity at large, need not collide with communal ones. In fact, both can be fulfilled if the following rules are upheld: if only non-members are in need of aid, one should act according to general moral rules. The same also holds for situations in which only members need help. One should be impartial towards members. However, if members and non-members are in need of aid at the same time, one should help members first. Duties towards fellow members can be overridden only when the "needs of strangers are significantly more urgent than those of members."[5] In this way, special obliga-

tions towards fellow members can be restricted by demands of justice and equality.

National membership, in the cultural argument, is not exhausted merely by duties to the nation. Members also have certain rights in relation to their nation. The right to a national culture and to the enriched life offered by such a culture are two important ones. Another more controversial right is the right to a selective national identity. Relating to this, I would like to focus in the following.[6] National membership, as we have said, is a constitutive force in human life. The status of their national community is closely linked to the self-image of its members. A national culture is considered to be satisfying when it gives individual members a sense of belonging to a worthy nation.

It is well known that nationalists tend to interpret historical events "in ways that fit their needs."[7] This has been interpreted as an implication of the right to a national culture.[8] Further, "cultural affiliations should be respected because they express one's choice regarding the kind of individual one would like to be and the kind of life one would like to live."[9] This collective amnesia is often found in national memories and reflects the situatedness of human life. This argument for selective, national memories can be made using the conceptual tools given to us by cultural nationalists.

However, as I pointed out earlier, this collective amnesia is controversial. Our philosophical selves do not approve of the fact that nations blot out events that they find embarrassing or ignominious. We think that such selective memories are unfair towards the exploited, and the latter are scandalized when they (or the atrocities inflicted on them) are forgotten. Members of a nation may want to think that they are distinct from the rest of humankind. They may want to believe that membership any other nation cannot be as meaningful as membership in their own. Let us note this psychological fact and yet appeal to a more differentiated view of things. As noted above, a national identity is a tale about the past. Since it bridges the past with the future, it has to also take into account the not-so-pleasant episodes which occurred in the past. Does it mean that the argument for cultural nationalism is to be discarded right here? It does not. As Poole, another cultural nationalist, rightly points out, acquiring a national identity means acquiring its history – and the rights and obligations which go with it.[10] Thus, a reconstructed cultural argument would conclude that nations, in spite of their significant role in the human good, do not have a blanket right to selective identities.

Let us now come to a second important characteristic of national identity. Cultural nationalists point out the fact that national identities are malleable. One way of understanding this concept is to suggest that individuals have a right to change their national identity if they desire to do so.[11] Within a multinational state this involves taking on the identity of another nation within the same state. In the case of a monocultural state, this involves emigration.[12] A more plausible understanding of malleability in this context is to say that national identity can be transformed to reflect the complexities of modernity. There is nothing sacrosanct about it. Its

imaginary elements can be altered with the help of "collective deliberation and reform."[13]

Up to this point our focus has been on the identity of nations either in a pluralistic state or in a monocultural one. However, the identity of *states* is just as important because it also gives rise to responsibilities and obligations. How does one arrive at a set of understandings that are adopted by a group of citizens to regulate their coexistence? In the case of monocultural states this is easy to explain since the nation will determine the identity of the state. (A legitimate question is whether there are in reality such monocultural states.) Things get more complicated when two or more groups in a state claim to be nations.

At the outset, let us point out that it is dissatisfactory to suggest that the identity of the majority automatically does and should determine the identity of the whole. There is no plausible justification of such a status quo. If we invoke the argument of respect for individuals and their national membership once again, this has implications for the national culture of individual nations. Since national culture is an integral part of individual life, state identity will have to take into consideration every such culture. Powerful nations cannot simply sideline the national culture of smaller or weaker nations. This leaves us with the following possibilities: the identity of a multinational state is determined by taking the common denominator of all nationalities present in such a state. Public debates help ascertain which elements are shared by and are important to all nations. Another option is that each nation claims a part of the public sphere by expressing itself in it. Newspapers, cultural events, and the like are used as markers by various nations. It is also possible for state identity to be thought of as an amalgam of all cultures present in its midst. National identities are entities that influence and are influenced by others. The various national identities give rise to an identity formed by all. This amalgam also serves as a common base to them all.

Does this mean that every nation, regardless of the projects it pursues, can be involved in this process of public soul searching? Are authoritarian or racist nations, for example, which also offer feelings of "closeness, solidarity, and assurance" to be accepted as equal partners in this debate?[14] It is very difficult to find an easy answer to this question. How are such aggressive nations to be detected? A related question is how one can keep powerful nations in check, which try to monopolize the public realm by banning weaker nations? One way of counteracting these forces would be to suggest that nations should closely monitor ongoing debates in the public realm. If members of some nations believe that there are other potentially dangerous groups in the public sphere, they should get together with the others and discuss their problems.

The presumption involved here is that there is a constant debate on such an identity and on what it means to be a member of a multinational state. This debate can become reflective only under conditions defined by deliberate considerations.[15] This means that persons involved aim for fairness and for the common interests of the whole community. With the use of ratio-

nal arguments, every person will try to convince the other. She will only present those arguments that can be offered publicly. In the process of deliberation, an identity can be purged of its negative elements, especially those that exclude the other.[16] Racist arguments, for example, will be filtered out right from the start and will not be incorporated in the debate.

I now want to suggest that the cultural account of national identity is fraught with weaknesses. It is, to begin with, based mainly on the contingent factor of birth. National membership is still determined by a "transgenerational, genealogical continuity."[17] As such, it runs the risk of playing a divisive role in a pluralistic society. Using Kymlicka's phraseology, one could say that both external and internal minorities stand to lose in this version of national identity. They will not feel adequately represented in the public sphere. In the following, I will focus only on the first group to show the dynamic of exclusion that is inherent in the account of cultural belonging.

One problematic aspect of this issue is the nature of closed ethical communities. If it is believed that nations are communities that generate their own internal principles, and that since members of such communities are ruled entirely by these principles, there is no external point for reflection available to them. Members are likely to comprehend criticism levelled at them only if critics are fellow nationals or belong to nations that pursue similar projects. In both cases, such criticism will probably not be forthcoming if one believes that the ethical world of individuals is formed wholly and solely by the nation. In such a culturally relative world, criticism by outsiders, who are members of radically different nations and who demand changes in national projects, will be turned down as being arrogant, as being a new form of colonialism, or in extreme cases perhaps even as being incomprehensible.[18] Furthermore, the arguments for changes can be countered with the observation that national cultures, regardless of their ethical content, are of enormous significance to members and cannot be altered without psychological and moral loss.

In defense of cultural belonging it can be argued that nations are self-correcting entities. It can be held that they are blessed with (only) internal devices that support rules of fairness in the public sphere.[19] Smaller and weaker nations should adapt themselves to the public culture, and the rest will just follow. But this is not convincing. As the praxis shows, states have very often used brutal means in the attempt to assimilate smaller and weaker nations into their fold. Methods of suppression range from hindering the expression of minority cultures to ethnic cleansing. External minorities, like immigrants, are subjected to other forms of exclusion. Especially in the West, many debates in the public sphere attempt to underline the priority of co-nationals as against immigrants. More often than not aliens are openly resented, since they are pictured as merely wanting to stake their claim to the prosperity of the West. Only a small minority is willing to take notice of and support their interests.[20]

It is hard to see what could motivate people to be fair towards aliens. It should be remembered that a sup-

posed fairness in deliberation arises due to a sense of belonging which members feel towards each other. It does not arise because of principles external to national life. Also, nations, as ethical communities, demand special obligations of fellow members. These obligations are thought of as being different and extensive. Since one does not have this thick mesh of rights and obligations with aliens, there will be no case to treat them fairly.

A related difficulty has to do with the importance placed on historical communities. Remember, bearers of a national identity are considered to be part of a historical project which makes one what one is.[21] Although it is granted that such a national identity can also be obtained by adoption, this remains an exception. National culture, which ensues because of such historical continuity, is considered to be unique and is passed on to future generations. (As we saw, a member of a Tamirian nation can move from one nation to another. Continuity, however, is important even for this account). It will be difficult to deal with and integrate immigrants who are not part of such a historic community.[22]

At this point the proponents of cultural belonging would accuse us of moving too fast. They would ask us not to understand special obligations to one's co-nationals so myopically.[23] As mentioned above, one has obligations even to those outside the nation, provided that one has a human relationship with these persons. But this point is not convincing. Can a relationship with aliens be established when one does not share any common ties with them?[24] And how is a human relationship to be established with people who, because of their vulnerable status in a new land, are more often than not absent from the public sphere?

Another difficulty has to do with the supposed malleability of a national identity. Authors arguing for the existence of such malleability will have to argue that the number of new migrants is kept to a minimum. This is because the process of immigration could influence and perhaps alter their culture(s) irreparably.[25] In fact, proponents of cultural belonging do argue for the right to restrict immigration of complete nations so that cultural homogeneity can be preserved.[26] They expect immigrants to take "on the essential elements of national character".[27] Immigrants are asked not to expect a privileged position in the debate because their starting position is unequal. The argument is that they are in a new land and members of the latter should be able to decide upon the terms of this debate.[28] They are asked to remember that members are bound by a special relationship, a special kind of belonging to the land they call their own. New members are expected to identify with the new multicultural state, to participate in its public debates, and be ready to take on a new identity under terms set by the majority.

Such a call for assimilation means that one expects immigrants to drop not only those practices that their new society regards as unjust, but also some of their foreign habits and practices so that they become like 'one of us.' Only those immigrants who are ready to accept and function according to the principles internal to the new group are to be welcomed. Notice how the ini-

tial claim was that an identity can be modernized, so that it could also include minorities. Now, the claim is that cultural homogeneity and assimilation still have their place in such an identity.

Determining the identity of a multinational state is also likely to prove difficult. We said that all nationalities present in a state are to be involved in forming its identity. But there is nothing in this account to deter dominant nation(s) from determining the identity of their state. Such nations, for example, can win each other's support and refuse to clear up their differences with smaller ones. How are the latter to enter into a dialogue with them when they are sidelined in the public sphere due to an imbalance of power? We also said that it is pertinent to be able to distinguish between ethical and unethical nations. This is easier said that done. Are the members of a nation to determine this, or is it to be determined by the members of other nations? In the first case, one wonders if members have the distance necessary to decide whether their nation's projects are ethical. In the second case, how does one ensure that the stronger nations do not classify the weaker ones as unethical, simply because they want to dominate the public sphere? Because of these shortcomings, my claim is that we will have to abandon the concept of cultural belonging. Let us now turn to the other sense of national identity and find out whether it fares better.

Belonging to a Polity

Until recently, many thinkers writing on this subject have dismissed belonging to a polity as a development specific to post-war Germany, a state which sought to make a new beginning after the ravages of Nazism. This kind of belonging is also said to be a viable option for states like Ireland, which have been wrecked by internal violence. It is, however, not associated with 'normal' states.

My contention is that this type of belonging is more promising than it is made out to be. As we said before, modern pluralistic states are home to a considerable number of minorities. In the debates on national identity, these groups are marginalized by others who claim to be indigenous to states. In the garb of nations, the dominant ethnic groups of the past continue to rule pluralistic states today. The result: minorities are increasingly becoming objects of racist violence. For some the violence ends fatally. Cultural belonging, regretfully, has no answer to such problems. Such a state of affairs has led to voter frustration, apathy, alienation, and even violence between the vying factions. The need of the hour seems to be for an identity that can account for the cultural diversity of modern pluralistic states, and at the same time create a sense of belonging between these groups. The concept of belonging to a polity could fill this need and bridge the gap between the various groups.

As we said earlier, belonging to a polity involves a sense of identification with the principles embodied by

the main institutions present in a state. To identify with these institutions means that I feel closely associated with them because of my belief that they reflect the main concerns of my life. In this right, I believe that they are valuable. This identification could arise in different ways. A sense of belonging could arise because of the simple fact that I am subjected to them. My identification could also be guided by my belief that these institutions are the most effective means to realise the goals I intend to achieve. It could also be due to my belief that my nation has created these institutions. I identify with them because they reflect my national culture, which I regard as valuable. Another possibility could be that I identify mainly with the culture surrounding these institutions and since these institutions happen to be embedded in this culture, I identify with them. Finally, this belonging could stem from my conviction that the main institutions of my state are worthy in their own right, independent of my national or cultural affiliation. That is why I consider them valuable and worthy of my identification. It is this last option which will concern us now.

Institutions involved in this kind of belonging are able to integrate the various cultures present in a state; minority cultures are not marginalized. They do not arbitrarily restrict the freedom of only some members and are not partial. Most of the members have reason to believe that their institutions are just and legitimate. Just institutions are important to this account of belonging because modern constitutional states are based on the idea that a state is a consociation of free and equal citizens who have decided to come together to regulate their mutual coexistence by means of law. It is believed that there is a consensus among citizens that they are to regard each other as beings of equal worth.

Like belonging to a culture, belonging to a polity can be understood as a narrative. Yet such a story has two parts to it. Firstly, there is the element of commonality. Stories that states claim for themselves need not be absolutely different from each other, since they are based on similar institutions. To put it differently: constitutional states will agree about a core of principles central to their self-understanding. On the other hand, their praxis will accentuate different aspects of such principles and interpret them within a particular framework. This means that in practise the common element is supplemented by one of difference, e.g., state narratives also include the common culture in which such institutions are embedded. This culture serves as a "common horizon of interpretation", with the help of which members interpret the particularistic, historical experience of their state.[29] It should be noted, further, that the public culture, which is a mixture of particularistic and universal elements, is open to change. This change is brought about by younger generations, which subject their institutions to close scrutiny. It could also result from new factors in the public arena, for example new forms of life which emerge in time or those which immigrants bring with them.

It is sometimes argued that such an identity is guilty of misrepresenting political reality because of the discrepancy between theory and fact. It is claimed that this

identity overlooks its own limits; for instance, the limit of its own particularity. Factors of political culture, such as political history, the vocabularies involved in political discussion, political symbols associated with the constitution, etc., are said to be givens differing from community to community. Such a political culture is accused of being just as narcissistic as any another nationalism and of having "the capacity to inspire violence and exclusion."[30]

As we said, this belonging is built around institutions that the members of the state believe are just. The culture surrounding these institutions may indeed be particularistic; members may use national hymns, national flags, etc., to concretize the principles of a polity in their daily life. However, institutional principles and a commitment to them will override such particular symbols. Since these principles and a commitment to them are common to all constitutional states, the exclusionary power of particular symbols will be kept down to a minimum.

A related objection attempts to criticize belonging to a polity by pointing to the genesis of liberal democracies. These were able to arise because of nations; defenders of polities now, unwisely it is said, want to transcend them. Theorists who propagate such an identity are accused of taking the nation for granted and propagating a "bloodless ideal."[31] They allegedly base their theories on national bonding, which makes people think of their polity as 'our state', and yet decide to ignore the virtues associated with national entities. The claim is also made that this sense of belonging cannot do away with the contingency of birth; even in this model an affinity to institutions is passed on by birth.[32]

Admittedly, our account cannot do away *altogether* with the contingent factor of birth. However, it does not underline the importance of historical communities, and does not claim that only heredity can guarantee good citizens. Having said this, it is also important to understand the relationship between territory and citizenship. People who share a bit of land will want to decide on the conditions of membership. The amount of time each person spends on this land is relevant to a certain degree. Claims to this land by people who spend a couple of days or months there will probably be rejected by other members. But above a certain time limit, all will have to be regarded as equals.[33] To suggest that membership in a polity must be decided by a global lottery system, so that the criterion of birth is done away with, is to miss the close relationship between citizenship and territory.

Let us recapitulate our discussion in this section. Belonging to a polity can be understood as a relation a member has to just institutions. A commitment to institutional principles will be found in states with similar institutions, even though the concretization of such principles could indeed differ from state to state. An identity based on such principles is in keeping with the equality and intrinsic worth of all human beings. It recognizes that the boundaries of a political community cannot be identical with those of a moral community. It befits pluralistic societies, and can help to integrate

those alienated members who have gone unheard in the debate on cultural belonging.

Notes:

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1 The following account is a reconstruction of arguments used in favour of cultural belonging. The main arguments have been drawn from the writings of Yael Tamir (*Liberal Nationalism,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), David Miller (*On Nationality*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997; *Citizenship and National Identity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), and Ross Poole (*Nation and Identity,* London/New York: Routledge, 1999).

2 Yael Tamir, *Nationalism,* op. cit., pp. 65-66; "The Enigma of Nationalism," *World Politics* 47 (1995), 418-440, p. 422; "Reconstructing the Landscape of Imagination," in: S. Caney et al. eds., *National Rights, International Obligations*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1996), 85-101; p. 87. Her other essays are "Pro Patria Mori!: Death and the State," in: R. Mckim and J. McMahan eds., *The Morality of Nationalism*, (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 227-241; "Theoretical Difficulties in the Study of Nationalism," in: R. Beiner ed., *Theorizing Nationalism*, (Albany: State of New York Press, 1999), 67-90. In his definition of a nation, Miller (*Nationality,* op. cit., p. 19) stresses the political aspect of this concept. Accordingly, a nation is said to be a community of people which aspires to be politically self-determining.

3 R. Poole, *Nation,* op. cit., pp. 105-106.

4 D. Miller, "Reflections on British National Identity," *New Community* 21 (1995), 153-166, p. 157. Miller and Tamir strive for a Humean approach in moral and political philosophy that accommodates our pre-existing sentiments. According to this approach, "the unreflective beliefs of everyday life" (Miller, *Citizenship*, op. cit., p. 40) "should be at the heart of our moral thinking" (Tamir, *Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 106). See also Poole, *Nation*, op. cit., p. 106.

5 Tamir, *Nationalism*, op. cit., 99. See also Miller, *Nationality*, op. cit., p. 68, p. 79.

6 See Miller, *Citizenship*, op. cit., p. 32. A nation could also claim a right to representation in the public sphere of a state. Other rights could be a sense of loyalty from its members, acceptance of its goals and their pursuit, its defence in times of emergency, ensurance of its future by procreation or by being partial to one's fellow members, etc. More controversial rights are a readiness to sacrifice one's life if called to do so, and vengeance because of misdeeds done to it in the past.

7 Tamir, *Enigma*, op. cit., p. 438.

8 Tamir, *Nationalism,* op. cit., p. 71.

9 Ibid., p. 37.

10 *Nation*, op. cit., p. 140. Take for instance the current discussion on German national identity. It would be difficult to argue that post-war Germany has the right to bracket off the aggression it inflicted on others in the past. It seems more plausible to say that this national identity begins with just this past, so that the crimes once committed are never forgotten and never repeated again.

11 Tamir, *Nationalism*, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

12 Tamir stresses the element of choice in national membership. However, changing nations in this way is easier said than done. If one believes that national membership implies a thick web of mutual obligations between members, it is difficult to understand why a nation would let go of its members. It is quite possible that nations look down upon those seeking a new, national membership because such individuals desert their duties, and thereby undermine the concept of national loyalty. After all it is believed that one's forefathers have made enormous sacrifices for the nation, in some cases even spilt their blood to save

its honour. Other practical considerations could also lead nations to try to keep the number of such "traitors" at a minimum. The number of new entrants, for example, who would replace old members, could be marginal.

13 Miller, *Citizenship*, op. cit., p. 106. See also pp. 32-35.

14 Tamir, *Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 31.

15 Miller, *Citizenship*, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

16 Miller, *Citizenship*, op. cit., p. 35; Poole, *Nation*, op. cit., p. 81, pp. 125-126.

17 Tamir, *Enigma*, op. cit., 432; Tamir, *Reconstructing*, op. cit., p. 86.

18 Charges of moral relativism and related issues have been examined elsewhere. See, for example, S. Caney, "Individuals, Nations and Obligations," in S. Caney et al. eds., *National Rights, International Obligations*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1996), 119-138; P. Cole, "Embracing the >Nation<," *Res Publica* 6 (2000), 237-257; T. Hurka, "The Justification of National Partiality", in: R. Mckim and J. McMahan eds., *The Morality of Nationalism*, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press 1997, 139-157; S. Levinson, "Is Liberal Nationalism an Oxymoron? An Essay for Judith Shklar," *Ethics* 105 (1995), 626-645; A. Mason, "Political Community, Liberal-Nationalism, and the Ethics of Assimilation," *Ethics* 109 (1999), 261-286.

19 Miller, *Citizenship*, op. cit., 16; Poole, *Nation*, op. cit., p. 106.

20 See Part II of M. Dummett's, *On Immigration and Refugees*, (London/New York: Routledge, 2001) for an interesting study of the British reaction to immigration.

21 See also W. Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular. Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 220).

22 It is said that current generations reweave the story about their nation's past and adapt it to the needs of the day (Miller, *Nationality*, op. cit., 175). However, if the present generation is an heir to this historical tradition, changes in such identities are likely to touch only the periphery. The core of such a historical understanding continues to be sacrosanct.

23 Poole, op. cit., p. 70.

24 Miller (*Nationality*, op. cit., p.53) believes that obligations to outsiders arise because of our common humanity. The argument that nations are closed ethical communities, however, does not allow this move. By arguing for a common humanity, one would be saying that all internal principles generated by various nations do have some shared content.

25 It should be remembered that national membership is one of the basic goods found in human life. The identity associated with it cannot be altered without causing irreparable damage to these members.

26 Miller, *On Nationality*, op. cit., pp. 128-129. See also Tamir, *Nationalism*, op. cit., 161.

27 Miller, *Citizenship*, op. cit., 30. Miller (*Nationality*, op. cit., pp. 129-130) asks immigrants to show a willingness to "accept current political structures and to engage in a dialogue with the host community." At first sight one could argue that such demands are reasonable. He, however, makes use of a footnote to bring in his allegiance to a group's culture. Miller (ibid.) quotes van Gunsteren, according to whom a prospective citizen must be willing to be a part of the historical community of the host nation, and must have knowledge of the language and culture of the host community, etc. (See H. R. van Gunsteren, "Admission to Citizenship," *Ethics* 98 (1988), 731-741).

28 Poole, op. cit., pp. 126-127.

29 J. Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition in Constitutional States", *European Journal of Philosophy* 1-2 (1993), 128-155; p. 144. Habermas is one of the main thinkers associated with this version of belonging. Aspects of this concept are found in J. Habermas, *Kleine politische Schriften VI*, *Eine Art Schadensabwicklung*, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987); *Die nachholende Revolution*, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990); "Yet Again. German Identity, A Unified Nation of Angry DM-Burghers?" *New German Critique* 52 (1991), 84-101; "Citizenship and National Identity. Some Reflections on

the Future of Europe," in: R. Beiner ed., *Theorizing Citizenship*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 255-281; *Kleine politische Schriften VIII, Die Normalität einer Berliner Republik*, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995); *Die Einbeziehung des Fremden, Studien zur politischen Theorie*, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996).

30 P. Markell, "Making Affect Safe for Democracy. On Constitutional Patriotism," *Political Theory* 28 (2000), 38-63, pp. 52-53.

31 M. Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory* (Cheltenham/ Brookfield: Edward Elgar, 1996), p. 89.

32 M. Canovan, "Patriotism is Not Enough," *British Journal of Political Science* 30 (2000), 413-432, p. 425. Belonging to a polity is said to be a mere *Überbau* on the concept of an ethnic nation. Its supporters are said to defend the status quo presented by political reality because they too use birth as the main criterion of membership in a polity. In my view, political theorists have to strike a fine balance between the constraints set by political reality and the demands made by normative theory. Such tightrope walking may indeed fall short of delivering a gigantic vision, but does point to many small steps which, hopefully, lead in the right direction.

33 Two issues have to be distinguised here. In modern pluralistic states, there is a sizeable amount of so-called guest workers who have spent decades in their 'host' countries and are still excluded from membership. For all factual purposes they are treated like members. They have to pay taxes and abide by the rules of their 'host' countries. Formal membership, however, is often denied to them. A second group of people, which is in search of better life prospects, seeks entrance to modern, pluralistic states. Members of a polity could reason that admittance of the latter has to be reduced so that the workability of some institutions continues to be guaranteed. There are, however, good reasons for accepting the former as members of a polity.