Culture, Context and Equality: A Cosmopolitan Critique of Kymlicka's Theory of Multiculturalism

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Abstract

Will Kymlicka is the most influential theorist of multiculturalism in the Anglophone world today; his *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* is widely seen as marking the inception of the multicultural debate in contemporary political theory, and his subsequent *Multicultural Citizenship* is regarded as the core text. This paper will look at the impact of the so-called cosmopolitan critique on liberal multiculturalism. I will examine the ways in which Kymlicka has defended himself, or could defend himself, against this cosmopolitan critique and assess the ramifications of those defenses for his theory in the round. The crux of my argument is that the cosmopolitan critique of Kymlicka's multiculturalism, whilst it appears to operate on the surface, or at the margins, of his theory, has potentially devastating consequences for his position, and that the only credible replies he can make either require him to (re)articulate the core claims of his theory in such a way that they are philosophically untenable, or collapse his position into something like the communitarian one he is responding to.

1.   Introduction

Whilst the idea of cosmopolitanism, of being in some sense a "citizen of the world" is a venerable one, going back, as the word itself indicates, to the ancient Greeks, there has been a resurgence of interest in the concept in recent years, both outside and inside the academy. The term can be understood in a variety of ways, but there seems to be a common understanding between advocates and critics of cosmopolitanism that it involves an orientation in and towards the world that prioritizes the general over the particular, the global over the local, and the plural over the singular. Thus cosmopolitanism downplays the importance, or even the existence, of local attachments to entities or groups such as one's country, nation, city, community, culture and even family, and emphasizes rights, interests and obligations that apply to individuals as human beings, not because of their allegiance to, or membership in, those particular entities or groups. The renaissance of cosmopolitanism may be at least partly explicable in terms of a broader trend of globalization post World War II, which has seen the creation of the United Nations, the rise of human rights discourse, increasing calls for and attempts to bring about global economic development and justice, mass migration and travel following the dismantling of the European colonialism, and an explosion of media and communications technology that transmits information around the world in a moment. All of these changes can plausibly be seen as facilitating and perhaps encouraging a change in focus from the local to the general, particularly in terms of the source and bearers of rights and obligations.

Nevertheless, at the same time as the rise of globalization and cosmopolitanism in the world and the academy there has been an alternative current of thought that has pulled in the opposite direction, stressing the importance and desirability of smaller-scale attachments and groups, whether it be at the level of nations, peoples, cultures, or communities even more local. For example, increasing attention has been paid to the plight of indigenous peoples, and a significant body of jurisprudence and literature

relating to them has developed, which, whilst it may have arisen in the context of universalist human rights discourse, clearly emphasizes the distinct issues surrounding indigenous peoples and advocates for some form of special treatment for them. Within political theory there have been various advocates for the local, most notably communitarians, liberal nationalists and defenders of multiculturalism.

In this paper I will examine some of the key implications of cosmopolitanism for liberal multiculturalism, focusing on the theory of its most prominent exponent, Will Kymlicka. I will start by giving a brief sketch of his theory and the circumstances that gave rise to it, before delineating the strand of cosmopolitan thought that is most relevant to that theory and setting out the way in which it may undermine his position. I will then examine the ways in which Kymlicka has defended himself, or could defend himself, against this cosmopolitan critique and assess the ramifications of those defenses for his theory in the round. The crux of my argument is that the cosmopolitan critique of Kymlicka's multiculturalism, whilst it appears to operate on the surface, or at the margins, of his theory, has potentially devastating consequences for his position, and that the only credible replies he can make either require him to (re)articulate the core claims of his theory in such a way that they are philosophically untenable, or collapse his position into something like the communitarian one he is responding to. I will then conclude by indicating how the cosmopolitanism critique of liberal multiculturalism might be transformed into an alternative account and defense of a form of liberal multiculturalism.

2.   Kymlicka's Liberal Multiculturalism

Kymlicka's liberal multiculturalism arose in response to the debate between Rawls and the communitarians, and is best understood (philosophically speaking at least) as an attempt to defuse that debate by adapting something like a Rawlsian liberalism to make it more friendly towards communal attachments. One of the key communitarian claims is that our attachment to our community

(howsoever understood) is at least partly constitutive of the self and thereby our final ends and values, which means we *need* our community because in some sense it is part of us. Therefore any attempt to offer an account of morality that is abstracted from the community is misguided. This means that communitarians often see our attachment to local groups, including cultural ones, as a valid and vital source of moral claims and duties, and see the recognition of these groups and their importance to their members as crucial. Thus this communitarian attitude to minority cultural groups turns largely on arguments about the nature of the self and society, and flows out of a rejection of liberal "atomism" and of what they see as the liberal conception of the self understood as a an abstracted entity which chooses its ends. This means the communitarian position, or at least a plausible variant of it, can be interpreted so as to advocate the protection of minority cultures in a given territory against the dominant culture, which would seem to lead to a degree of differential treatment of the minority culture and its members.

Whilst Kymlicka is not a strict Rawlsian, and therefore is not tied to Rawls' particular theoretical apparatus, he does share with Rawls both the view that a crucial aspect of individual well-being stems from the process of choosing our (rights-respecting) plan of life, and Rawls' account of the self as a "rational reviser" that can choose its ends and values. Unlike Rawls, however, Kymlicka emphasizes the importance of culture for individual choice, arguing that one's "societal culture" provides a "context of choice" that provides individuals with "meaningful options" and thus a strong culture is a "precondition" of rational revision and thereby well-being.[1] Hence, while Kymlicka shares with a communitarian defense of multiculturalism the view that the recognition of our cultural community is crucial to self-respect, he rejects the communitarian claim that our cultural attachments *constitute* the self and provide our ends and values in some way, instead defending special rights for those in minority cultures

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[1] Will Kymlicka *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* (OUP 1989) p166.

on the very different basis of the role of culture in our choice of those ends and values. He therefore believes that being in a "weak" culture has a negative impact on the individuals within that culture and their ability to choose and act on their plan of life.[2] He sees the "cultural structure" we are born into as an "unchosen circumstance" from within which we choose rather than an object of choice itself. He therefore argues that liberal egalitarianism requires that any cultural disadvantage be corrected for by "group-differentiated rights" (**'GDRs'**) aimed at supporting the status, security and vitality of minority cultures, leading to something like equality of outcome in matters of culture, which translates to equally healthy and vibrant cultures. Whilst he does not use the phrase, this argument is cast in luck-egalitarian terms, and turns substantially on the distinction he draws between unchosen circumstances (which must be corrected for) and individual choices (which are legitimate but must not be subsidized by the liberal state).   His defense of multicultural rights is therefore on the basis of the instrumental importance of culture for individuals, not on the intrinsic value of culture or cultural groups. Kymlicka is therefore defending special rights for particular cultural groups based on the important role culture plays in the life of the members of those cultures, and in that sense is defending the local and particular over the general and universal. Hence it would seem likely that Kymlicka's liberal multiculturalism may come into conflict with cosmopolitanism. To understand precisely how and why we must disaggregate the term "cosmopolitan" and delineate the cosmopolitan positions that are most relevant to Kymlicka's theory.

3.   Cosmopolitanism

As one might expect, cosmopolitanism is itself cosmopolitan. In other words, cosmopolitanism is not a strict school of thought with a completely consistent and constant set of arguments, but rather a

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[2] It is a little unclear precisely what Kymlicka thinks a "weak" as opposed to "strong" culture is, but he clearly values cultural "security" and "vibrancy" and wishes the nature and status of the culture to be the result of the choices of its members not the choices of those in the majority culture.

general philosophical and political orientation toward the global and universal, and therefore there are many different strands of it. At its broadest level cosmopolitanism is based in the idea of "world citizenship", and therefore in moral and political theory it is often associated with global justice claims and a rejection of nationalism and nation-based claims in favor of moral claims and duties that apply to individuals in virtue of their common humanity. Nevertheless, there is also a distinct form of cosmopolitanism that focuses on the role of culture in human life and whether this can give rise to particular and special rights and duties. Whilst some scholars argue that the two strands of cosmopolitanism, the justice strand and the culture strand, are linked on the conceptual level and so must be considered together, it seems clear to me that the two strands are importantly different and can be considered separately.[3] Briefly put, this is because the cosmopolitan claims about culture are (in the first instance at least) descriptive claims about the nature of the self/culture and the role of culture

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[3] Samuel Scheffler sees cosmopolitan claims regarding justice and cosmopolitan claims regarding culture as going back to a common root in the idea of world citizenship and therefore as conceptually connected in some sense, with both strong and weak versions of each (what he calls extreme and moderate) mirroring each other and reflecting what he sees as an ambiguity in the concept of world citizenship that underlies both (see *Conceptions of Cosmopolitanism* in Utilitas Vol 11 No.3 Nov 1989 p255 to 276). The connection between world citizenship and cosmopolitan claims for justice seems more direct, however, than the connection between world citizenship and cosmopolitan claims about culture. The claim that as world citizens we owe allegiance "to the worldwide community of human beings" seems directly normative, and therefore of a kind with claims for global justice, in a way that cosmopolitan claims about culture do not. Cosmopolitan claims about justice, which seem to be variants of the idea that that justice should not be restricted significantly by sub-species group, flow naturally from the idea of world citizenship understood as a normative claim; in many ways cosmopolitan accounts of justice, although they vary in the details, can be seen as simply an articulation of the idea of world citizenship. Cosmopolitan claims regarding multiculturalism seem less obviously connected to world citizenship understood in normative terms; they are claims regarding the nature of the self, and of culture and its role in human life, and as such are more descriptive than normative. These descriptive claims may have important ramifications for theories of justice, such as under-cutting claims that out cultural attachments have normative consequences but reinterpreting the nature of the cultural attachments, and may share a common orientation with cosmopolitan claims regarding justice, but they are of a different stripe, and are not inherently connected to those claims about justice. Jeremy Waldron tries to link cosmopolitan claims about justice with cosmopolitan claims regarding culture in a different way through a discussion of Kant's account of cosmopolitan right as the area of jurisprudence "concerned with people…sharing the world with others" and the ramifications of both for how we understand personal identity (see *What is Cosmopolitan?* The Journal of Political Philosophy Vol 8 No. 2 2000 pp227 to 243). Even if this link is fruitful, however, the Kantian cosmopolitanism is not a full-blown theory of justice, but rather stems from a more pragmatic concern with managing contact between people (and cultures) on a crowded planet. Again, here the cosmopolitan examination of culture is not a direct claim about the nature and scope of justice, but rather a descriptive analysis of culture, identity and human life that may have ramifications for other claims about justice, and which therefore suggests a different understanding of multiculturalism from the standard communitarian and liberal accounts.

in human life that may have normative implications, but are not directly normative in the way cosmopolitan claims about justice must be. Cosmopolitan examinations of culture seem, initially at least, to operate as something like a critique of multiculturalist claims regarding the nature of the self/culture and the importance of culture to individuals, a critique that undermines the communitarian and liberal multiculturalist claims that members of minority cultures have claims against the wider society for help and support.[4] Thus the cosmopolitan critique of multiculturalism seems to be conceptually separable from broader cosmopolitan claims regarding justice, although it need not be separated. Therefore it seems reasonable to leave the precise connections between justice and culture open, and to focus on cosmopolitan accounts of culture understood as descriptive claims which operate as a critique of something like the communitarian and liberal multicultural position.

4. Cosmopolitanism and Culture

Even within cosmopolitan accounts of culture there are multiple strands and a variety of issues. There seem to me to be four main issues that the cosmopolitan account of culture addresses.

First, there is the issue of how the self and personal identity are formed and constituted, and the relationship of this to culture and to self-respect. This issue is addressed by both the communitarians and Kymlicka's liberal multiculturalism, although they come up with differing answers.

Second, there is the question of the precise nature of cultures (whether they are closed or open, inward or outward looking, homogenous or diverse), and the relationship of culture to individual choice (e.g. how it informs, frames or influences choice) including the relationship of the security and vibrancy of

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[4] Samuel Scheffler's attempt to link cosmopolitan claims about justice and culture through an examination of whether individuals have moral rights and duties to members of their culture is therefore not directly relevant to the main thrust of the cosmopolitan critique of multiculturalism, because he focuses on whether we have duties to other members of our group, not whether the group has rights against non-members (see *Conceptions of Cosmopolitanism* in Utilitas Vol 11 No.3 Nov 1989 p255 to 276).

culture with that choice. This issue is clearly related to the above in as much as an account of the self and its relationship to culture may be relevant to how we think about culture and choice, and it can clearly lead to alternatives to the communitarian defense of multiculturalism. It is particularly important for Kymlicka, as it is his account of the self and its choice of ends and the role of culture in that choice that provides the basis for his distinctively liberal defense of multicultural rights; for Kymlicka culture has to be important to the self and important to choice of ends by the self, but his account of the self has to allow for choice of ends in a way the communitarian one does not.

Third, there is the issue of whether it is possible to identify and pick-out distinct cultures and, if so, in what circumstances. This is important for the liberal multicultural position which would seem to base its defense of differential rights for members of minority cultures on the basis of the role of their particular culture in facilitating choice. As such, the argument presupposes there is such a thing as separable and identifiable cultures that can be supported by these rights.

Fourth, there is the question of the location of individuals within cultures. Do individuals exist in a single cultural framework at any one time or do they exist in multiple and overlapping cultures? Can they move between different cultures and, if so, how? This is important for any defense of special rights for members of minority cultures, particularly a liberal defense such as Kymlicka's, as the justification for the support of a particular culture assumes that its members are located primarily, or even completely, within that culture.

All of these issues are concerned with the nature and role of culture and the self and thus are descriptive in the sense I used the term above, but obviously have normative ramifications, and may naturally lead into arguments about the proper responses to minority cultures, especially whether (and if so how) we should grant multicultural rights or whether we should adopt a "cosmopolitan" attitude to

other cultures and even to our own. Scheffler seems right that there are two levels on which the cosmopolitan multiculturalist can approach these issues. The cosmopolitan can be content with an account of culture and the self that supports or (more likely) undermines the communitarian and/or liberal multiculturalist claims, or he or she can try to provide a positive account of the importance of a cosmopolitan understanding of culture and advocate the worth or appropriateness of a particular response to the cosmopolitan account of culture.[5] It is possible, however, to separate off the negative critique of multicultural positions from the positive arguments regarding the appropriate cosmopolitan response to culture.[6] Just as cosmopolitan multiculturalism can be related to cosmopolitan justice but need not be, the cosmopolitan account of culture and critique of standard forms of multiculturalism can give rise to separate normative claims about culture but need not do. I am therefore proposing that in this paper we assess the first step in a cosmopolitan approach to culture and multiculturalism, which itself logically (and, as we shall see, historically) forms something like a critique of the communitarian and liberal multiculturalist approaches.

The final question we need to address in this section is, therefore, which of the four key issues noted above we should address first and, indeed, whether it is possible to address all of them within this paper. All of these points are relevant to an assessment of Kymlicka's theory of liberal multiculturalism, as part of which he needs: (1) to be able to give an account of the self that differs from the communitarian one; (2) to be able to establish a plausible account of the role of culture in meaningful choice that supports his liberal claims for GDRs; (3) to be able to show that it is possible to pick out a

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[5] Such as, for instance, defending the possibility and attractiveness of a cosmopolitan self which exists in multiple cultures or setting out a particular orientation towards and from within cultures. These arguments may provide an alternative defense for multicultural rights from the standard communitarian and liberal approaches.

[6] This can be done without doing violence to the issues because the first stage, the descriptive account of the self and culture and an analysis of the ramifications of this for the standard communitarian and liberal defenses of multiculturalism, seems like a necessary step for the second, the positive normative arguments regarding the correct response to this analysis. This second step may be a logical one to take, and may be strongly implied by the first, but it is not required by the first.

particular culture which can act as a context of meaningful choice and which can plausibly be supported, and made equal to other cultures, by GDRS; (4) to be able to locate individuals within that single cultural framework by showing that the context of meaningful choice for individuals is a single culture and this unequal and unchosen circumstance needs to be corrected for.

Whilst the ordering of the points as I have set them out is something like a lexical ordering of the points which reflects the steps necessary for Kymlicka to make his argument, I will approach them in reverse order. I am concerned with the cosmopolitan critique of that theory and that concern should therefore dictate my approach to some degree. I see the core cosmopolitan claim regarding culture, the claim that makes it a distinctively *cosmopolitan* account of culture, to be the claim that our experience of and location in culture is itself a cosmopolitan one, characterized by a diversity of cultural material and degree of instability and flux. If this is the case, we should expect any cosmopolitan critique of multiculturalism generally, and Kymlicka's theory specifically, to be aimed primarily at points (3) and (4) regarding individuation of cultures and the location of individuals within cultures. So, just as the logical development of Kymlicka's position seems to be to go through steps (1) to (4) in that order, the way the cosmopolitan critique of Kymlicka operates seems to be in reverse, from step (4) through (1).

I will set out the main points of this critique which, roughly put, is that it is impossible to identify individual cultures in any useful way, and that individuals live in a "kaleidoscope" of cultural influences not a single culture. I will focus on the articulation of it by Waldron, and then examine Kymlicka's actual and possible responses to it. In doing so, I will argue that the critique not only has bite, but operates on a much deeper level than even its proponents seem to realize, in that the only plausible defenses against it on points (4) and (3) would involve Kymlicka making commitments that would undermine his claim at point (2), and force him back into something like a position on point (1) which looks very much

like the communitarianism he is attempting to distinguish himself from. I will now set out the basic outline of the critique.

5.   The Many Cultures Critique

The most prominent cosmopolitan critic of Kymlicka's multiculturalism has been Jeremy Waldron, and his most famous articulation of that critique was set out in his article *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative*,[7] although he has refined and developed it in subsequent articles. Waldron's version of the critique was aimed at *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* and Kymlicka responded to it in the more famous *Multicultural Citizenship*.[8] There are many aspects of this critique, some aimed directly at Kymlicka, some at the communitarians. I will focus on what I see as the core cosmopolitan claims regarding culture I identified above, which is that our experience of and location in culture is itself a cosmopolitan one, characterized by a diversity of cultural material and degree of instability and flux. Thus Waldron can in large part stand in for the cosmopolitan critique of multiculturalism, and is a useful point of entrance for that reason, and because Kymlicka's responses to the critique in *Multicultural Citizenship* are articulated as a reply to Waldron.

Whilst Waldron seems to concede that the different values, ends and ways of living that Kymlicka's rational revisers choose between are made "meaningful" by culture,[9] he disputes that individuals need to exist in a single cultural framework that provides meaningful options, arguing that "it does not follow that there must be one cultural framework in which each available option is assigned a meaning.......[m]eaningful options may come to us as items or fragments from a variety of cultural

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[7] Jeremy Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* 25 U. Mich. J.L. Reform 751 (1991-1992) p751 to 793.
[8] Will Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: OUP 1995).
[9] *Multicultural Citizenship* p102 Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* 25 U. Mich. J.L. Reform 751 1991-1992) p783 to 784.

sources"[10] and that whilst this "shows the importance of access to a variety of stories and roles...it does not...show the importance of *membership* in a [particular] culture".[11] Instead Waldron posits that individuals can (and often do) live in a "kaleidoscope of cultures" composed of different "cultural fragments" and so they are not rooted in the "particular culture in which they and their ancestors were reared". He therefore concludes that individuals "need to understand our choices in the contexts in which they make sense, but we do not need any single context to structure all our choices"[12] and therefore that, whilst we may want our culture, it is not "a necessary presupposition of rational and meaningful choice".[13] He illustrates this contention using the example of an Irish-American who reads her child *Grimm's Fairy-Tales* and eats Chinese food.[14]

Waldron concludes from this that any claim that we need our particular culture is flawed, and so we can only be assumed to want it, which is a substantially weaker claim.[15] This "cosmopolitan" account of moving between and within a variety of cultures also leads Waldron to conclude that it is not possible to individuate cultures in the way Kymlicka supposes.[16] This is partly because of the constant overlap and exchange between them, and partly because to insist that all the cultural fragments of different provenance are in fact "part of the same matrix" just because they are "available" to individuals in some sense "would trivialize the individuation of cultures".[17] In other words, Waldron believes it would require the proposition that simply knowing about a cultural fragment would make it part of an

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[10] Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* p783.

[11] Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* p783.

[12] *Multicultural Citizenship* p85 and p102 and Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* p762, pp783 to 784 and p786.

[13] Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* p786.

[14] Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* p754.

[15] *Multicultural Citizenship* p86 Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* p762.

[16] See *Multicultural Citizenship* p101 for Kymlicka's admission that he assumes this, and Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* pp783 to 785.

[17] Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* pp784 to 785 and Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship* p102.

individual's culture, and therefore we would end up with the absurd-sounding conclusion that each individual has their own "culture".[18]

Thus Waldron attacks Kymlicka directly on points (3) and (4) noted in section 4 above, undermining Kymlicka's crucial claims that individuals exist in a single societal culture as their context of meaningful choice, and casting doubt on our ability to even identify separate cultures with confidence in a non-trivial fashion. Waldron argues that if a cosmopolitan life is possible, and perhaps even rich and satisfying, this completely undercuts the claim (whether made by the communitarians or Kymlicka) that we need a particular culture, and/or that we need *our* particular culture. Any right to culture would therefore look more like a traditional liberal universal right to non-interference, such as freedom of religion, than Kymlicka's claim for differential and positive rights to support, and would presumably be on the basis that we have strong desires relating to culture rather than a need for it.[19] Waldron's overall conclusion, which goes beyond simple critique, is that we should abandon the attempt to maintain distinct societal cultures via GDRs and instead promote a cosmopolitan range of cultural meanings and options from different sources.

It should therefore be clear that the cosmopolitan critique of Kymlicka as articulated by Waldron has potentially devastating effects on Kymlicka's theory. Kymlicka's luck-egalitarian argument presupposes that individuals are situated in identifiable and distinct cultures which form their context of meaningful choice, and that these cultures can feasibly be allocated GDRs to the degree necessary to equalize cultures as contexts of choice. If Waldron is correct, all of these assumptions are untenable, in which case, even if Kymlicka is right about the role of culture in rendering ends and options for living meaningful, there is no basis for advocating GDRs for minority cultures. Kymlicka's argument requires

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[18] Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* pp784 to 785 and Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship* p102.
[19] Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* p762-3, and p785 to 786.

equality of cultures on the basis that they are the context of meaningful choice for individuals. If this is not the case, equality is not required. Also, it must be possible as a technical matter to be able to bring about equality of cultures as contexts of meaningful choice through GDRs, so if it is impossible to cleanly identify cultures and separate them from each other, as a matter of *fact* we will not be able to put Kymlicka's theory into effect even if the theoretical analysis is sound. It is vital therefore Kymlicka can defend himself against this critique, so I will now turn to his initial response as set out in *Multicultural Citizenship*.

6.   **The First Reply: Diverse Cultures**

Kymlicka responds to Waldron in *Multicultural Citizenship* by arguing that the culturally diverse elements Waldron cites in his example, even though they originated in different cultures, are now all part of the single, albeit diverse, societal culture of the United States, and therefore individuals do not move between societal cultures in the way Waldron supposes.[20] He argues that *Grimm's Fairy-Tales* "are part of our culture" and "available" to us because "they have been translated and widely distributed in English".[21] He therefore concludes that the fact that "we learn in this way from other cultures, or that we borrow words from other languages, does not mean that we do not still belong to separate societal cultures, or speak different languages".[22] He therefore does not back away from his claim that "freedom involves making choices amongst various options, and our societal culture not only provides these options, but makes them meaningful to us".[23]

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[20] Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship* p85.

[21] Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship* p103.

[22] Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship* p103. The final part of his response is to dispute that GDRs are aimed at, or can in fact enable, preservation of minority cultures in an "authentic" or "pure" form, which Kymlicka thinks is not something minority cultures tend to desire in any event. This final response to Waldron allows Kymlicka to segue into the familiar character/structure distinction and the internal versus external change distinction which underpin his defense of GDRs but this is not directly relevant to the strand of the cosmopolitan critique we are examining here (*Multicultural Citizenship* 104 to 105).

[23] Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship* p83.

Kymlicka also uses his idea of a "societal culture", a more heavily institutionalized and concretized understanding of culture than was present in his earlier work, to help him identify distinct cultures and to limit the impact of Waldron's critique, arguing that "options are only available to us if they become part of the shared vocabulary of social life - i.e. embodied in social practices". Kymlicka's concept of a societal culture is concretized to such a degree that to qualify as a *societal* culture, a culture must come close to a fully functioning society "which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities" and therefore must have "common institutions and practices" and "not just shared memories or values".[24] These last two aspects of the definition seem to me to be particularly important; a societal culture must have both the concrete aspects of institutions and practices and less concrete aspects such as "shared memories or values". It seems clear that the actual options between which people choose as to how they live their lives will be largely provided by the concrete elements of the societal culture (i.e. by the different roles, jobs, lifestyles etc that are embodied in practices and institutions) and that that the meaning of the concrete options that form part of the societal culture are provided by the less concrete elements of that societal culture, such as the "shared memories or values" mentioned above.[25]

Therefore the crux of Kymlicka's response to Waldron's accusation that individuals live in multiple and overlapping cultures and that these cultures cannot be individuated save in a way that necessarily undermines his argument, is to assert that what Waldron sees as the individual existing in a variety of cultural frameworks is in fact an individual living in a single cultural framework, that of the diverse and

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[24] Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship* p76.
[25] He clearly says that understanding "the meaning of a social practice…….requires understanding this shared vocabulary [and] the shared language and history which constitute that vocabulary", a comment which is immediately followed by the statement that "our culture not only provides options" but also "provides the spectacles through which we identify experiences as valuable". See Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship* p83. Therefore Kymlicka seems to admit that it is the "shared vocabulary" of a culture that provides the meaning of options, rather than the institutional elements per se, which presumably provide the actual concrete option of a way of life.

primarily Anglophone culture of the US. I think this response is not tenable as stated, primarily because

of an ambiguity in the way Kymlicka talks about options being "available" and "meaningful" to

individuals in the course of his response to Waldron.

This passage is worth quoting in full (my emphasis):

> "However, Waldron's conclusion is, I think, mistaken. It is true that the options available to the
> members of any modern society come from a variety of ethnic and historical sources. But *what
> makes these options 'available', or meaningful*, to us? After all, there are limits on the 'cultural
> materials' which people find meaningful. I have argued that options are *available to us if they
> become part of the shared vocabulary of social life—i.e. embodied in the social practices, based
> on a shared language, that we are exposed to*. Indeed, I think Waldron's examples support this
> view. For surely one of the reasons why *Grimms' Fairy-Tales* are so much a part of our culture is
> precisely that they have been translated and widely distributed in English. *Were Grimms' Fairy-
> Tales only available in the original language*, as is the case with the folklore of many other world
> cultures, *they would not be available to us*. It is often possible to trace the path by which our
> culture incorporates the cultural materials of other nations. *The works of other cultures may
> become available to us through translation*, or through the influx of immigrants who bring certain
> cultural narratives with them as they integrate. That we learn in this way from other cultures, or
> that we borrow words from other languages, does not mean that we do not still belong to
> separate societal cultures, or speak different languages."[26]

Kymlicka seems to shift between two senses of the word "available" during the course of his response to

Waldron. First, he seems to state that the idea that options are "available" to individuals is equivalent

to them being "meaningful" to those individuals, and that for options to be "available" to us they must

be embodied in social practices, which would seem to indicate a hard-link between cultural meanings

and concrete options for living. On the other hand, a few sentences later he refers directly to *Grimms'*

Fairy-Tales as being "available" to us because they have been absorbed into our culture through

translation; he argues that if they were "only available in the original language, as is the case with the

folklore of many other world cultures, they would not be available to us", but the clear implication of

this is surely that as long as they are translated and disseminated, they are "available" to us. The first

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[26] Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship* p103.

use of "available" therefore seems to mean something like "options for living we can actually adopt because they are embodied in our societal culture", whereas the second use of "available" seems to mean something like "things we know about because they have been disseminated in our society/culture".

Kymlicka seems therefore to be muddling up two distinct elements of societal culture, the "option we can take part" with the "provides meaning" part. Obviously *Grimms' Fairy-Tales* don't provide us with a practical option for living which we can literally take - I'm fairly sure wearing glass slippers and marrying a prince isn't a viable career option for me - what it provides us with are different examples of the "understandings", "narratives", and "perspectives" that Kymlicka refers to elsewhere as being part of a culture. In other words, *Grimms' Fairy-Tales* provide "stories" as opposed to actual concrete roles; they provide different understandings of human life and relationships, and perhaps new ways of valuing and evaluating these.[27] I shall call these non-concrete but still meaningful stories "examples" in order to distinguish them from the concrete "options" for living that we can actually take.[28]

Once we see that "examples" are different from, and can be disconnected from, concrete "options", and once we acknowledge that Kymlicka believes options are only available if they are socially embodied in practices and institutions, but examples can be available if they are simply known about, then it is

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[27] In fact, this seems to be the precise way Kymlicka phrased his original articulation of this point in Liberalism, Community, and Culture, which is the iteration of Kymlicka's theory that Waldron is responding to. See Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* p782 to 783, where he quotes Kymlicka *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* p165 "The physical movements only have meaning to us because they are identified as having significance by our *culture*, because they fit into some pattern of activities which is culturally recognized as a way of leading one's life. We learn about these patterns of activity through their presence in stories we've heard about the lives, real or imaginary, of others….We decide how to lead our lives by situating ourselves in these cultural narratives, by adopting roles that have struck us as worthwhile ones, as ones worth living (which may, of course, include the roles we were brought up to occupy)."

[28] The point seems to be that these "stories" can therefore change our self-understandings and possibly our actual behavior, even if they do not necessarily provide literal models for those self-understandings and behaviors. In this sense these "stories" can lead to different understandings or evaluations of the concrete options provided by a societal culture, and so potentially alter the "meaning" of these options for the individuals within that culture. In fact, this is at least partly Waldron's point, as he sees the influence of "fragments" from other cultures potentially operating as some sort of critique of the existing practices of a culture, see Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* p786ff.

apparent that Kymlicka makes a fundamental mistake in trying to cover Waldron's objection in this way.

In stating that examples such as those provided by *Grimms' Fairy Tales* are not examples from a *different* societal culture, but rather are part of *our* societal culture once they are translated,[29] he seems to trivialize the idea of our own, distinct culture, to the point of meaninglessness in precisely the way Waldron suggests. If all that is required to make something part of a culture is translation of it then we have moved a long way from Kymlicka's initial explanation of societal culture as shared language, conventions, traditions, practices and institutions; the definition of culture now seems to include non-shared and non-concrete examples that we as individuals know about. As Waldron points out, if knowing about something is enough to make it part of my culture, it would be "logically impossible for an individual to have access to more than one cultural framework".[30] We would therefore end up with a near infinite range of "personal" cultures, which is a vision that directly contradicts Kymlicka's understanding of societal cultures as shared, which he specifically disavows, and which undercuts his argument for GDRs for minority cultures.[31] Kymlicka seems to me to be caught in a dilemma: either simple knowledge of examples renders those examples part of our societal culture, which takes us down the path of personal cultures; or we can have knowledge of examples that are from other cultures without them being part of our societal culture in the full sense, in which case Waldron is right in his claim that we can exist in more than one cultural context, leaving Kymlicka's claim that we need our own societal culture to provide meaningful options in tatters.

7.   The Second Reply: "Wide Distribution"

The obvious response if one wishes to defend Kymlicka's position is to focus on the criterion of "wide distribution" he builds into his treatment of the *Grimm's Fairy-Tales* example. He states that for

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[29] Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship* p103.
[30] Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* p785.
[31] Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship* p101 to 105.

something to become part of a societal culture it must not just be available in the sense of being translated and known about by individuals, but must also be "widely distributed".[32] This would seem to undercut Waldron's individuation of cultures point in that it would mean that a particular individual knowing about a particular example from another culture would not automatically make it a part of an individuated culture possessed only by that person, instead the example would need to be known about widely before being part of the societal culture, thereby reintroducing the "shared" element that seemed so crucial a part of Kymlicka's concept.

The problem with this response is that Kymlicka provides no clear guidance as how many of the population need to know about something for it to be "widely distributed". Clearly it cannot be required that everyone knows about it, as almost nothing would pass that test. For the sake of argument, however, suppose we could fix the number and verify it;[33] a bare majority of those in the culture, say. This would seem to mean that Kymlicka is able to resist Waldron's individuation point, but only at the price of placing himself in the other half of the dilemma we identified earlier; it defends him against the charge that simple knowledge of an example renders it part of our societal culture, but only at the cost of acknowledging that we can know about an example that originates in another culture without it being part of our societal culture. If "widely distributed" is taken to mean knowledge of an example by fifty one percent of the entire population, then if fifty one percent know about an example it is part of a societal culture. This necessitates the claim, however, that if forty nine percent of the population know about an example it is still not part of the societal culture. Yet, given that is still known about by those forty nine percent of the people in the societal culture, we must also accept that people

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[32] Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship* p103.

[33] In addition, there would seem to be an epistemological problem of sorts, in that even if the percentage of dissemination could be fixed at the "correct" level, it would be very difficult to tell how many people actually knew about the relevant example. Therefore in and of itself this vagueness would seem to rob Kymlicka's rejoinder of any real philosophical force; if Kymlicka's attempt to sidestep the individuation of cultures point turns on a criterion of wide distribution, being unable to specify that criterion and apply it accurately would seem to render his response otiose.

can know about examples from societal cultures that are not their own and, given that we saw these examples are plausibly the parts of a culture that provide "meaning" in some sense, this means that the individuals who know about these examples from a foreign culture exist in or have access to more than one culture, in which case we cannot be said to require a single societal culture as the context of meaningful choice in the way Kymlicka's supposes.

8.   A Third Reply: Strong Cultural Incompatibility

So far we have examined the two actual responses made by Kymlicka to Waldron's cosmopolitan critique, and have found that neither of these replies can effectively defend him against the critique. In this section and the next I will look at two possible replies that could be made by someone wanting to defend Kymlicka's position, even though he does not in fact make these arguments. Again, we will find that these two defenses do not work and, in fact, would involve Kymlicka making certain philosophical commitments on the nature of the self, culture and meaning that would push him back to an either untenable position or to something very like the communitarian one.

Both the third and fourth possible responses that we shall examine focus on the way in which culture facilitates meaningful choice in human life, which we have seen is a core part of Kymlicka's argument. We have seen that Kymlicka needs to maintain that the self can (and should) choose between different ends and ways of living, and that culture plays a crucial role in this choice by forming "a context of meaningful choice", by providing the various concrete options for living which individuals can plausibly take but also by rendering these "meaningful" in some way. We have also seen that Kymlicka's luck-egalitarian argument for GDRs for minority cultures operates to equalize cultures because, and only insofar as, they form the context of meaningful choice for their members. Thus someone who wanted to defend Kymlicka's position could attempt to sidestep the cosmopolitan critique by arguing that whilst

we may have knowledge of examples or fragments from other cultures it is still our culture that provides "meaning" in respect of them in some sense, and therefore it is still our culture that forms our context of *meaningful* choice.

There are two obvious versions of this claim, one very strong claim that seems inherently implausible, and a second, weaker claim that seems more believable. I will examine the first despite its apparent implausibility partly because my response to it will clarify and justify important parts of my own position, and partly because it will throw into sharp relief the second, weaker claim. I will argue later, however, that within the context of Kymlicka's theory and his response to the cosmopolitan critique, the second weaker claim actually collapses back into something like the stronger implausible claim if it is to do the work assigned to it. Thus I will argue that the differences between the two claims are, for Kymlicka at least, illusory. In other words, the strong claim may initially look like a straw man but will perform a useful function nevertheless, and it will later transpire that it is not a straw man at all.

The first claim is that cultural fragments simply cannot be understood other than through the lens of our culture because some cultures are so radically different from ours that we cannot under any circumstances understand the belief and ideas of members of those cultures, which itself would seem to imply that movement between cultures is impossible. The second admits that transition from one culture to another may possible, but holds that meaning is contextual in some sense, and so taking an *isolated* cultural fragment from one cultural context and placing it in another inevitably changes its meaning since that meaning is derived from the surrounding cultural context not the cultural fragment itself. The third reply to Waldron's critique is therefore to argue for something like a strong cultural incompatibility, and the fourth for a contextualist account of cultural meaning.

The strong incompatibility claim is that we are incapable even in principle of understanding an example from another culture on its own terms, according to the meanings attached to it by that foreign culture, because the two world views provided by the two different cultures are simply antithetical and untranslatable, that they are in some sense wholly "other". This in turn would seem to rely on the assumption that there is little, or perhaps no, overlap between them, and thus that the concepts in foreign cultures are so alien they are simply incomprehensible to us in the terms they are understood by the members of that culture. That would mean that any cultural fragments transposed from one cultural framework to another are necessarily misunderstood by the members of the second, recipient, culture. This would help defend Kymlicka against the cosmopolitan critique because it would mean that it is still our own culture that forms our context of *meaningful* choice, because we cannot understand foreign cultures on their own terms. Whilst it would be possible to make some version of this argument that itself was based directly and solely in the idea of contextual meaning (i.e. that meaning is contextual and therefore taking an isolated aspect of one conceptual scheme and placing it in another inevitably mangles the translation), that is not the claim I wish to examine here. This weaker version of the incompatibility thesis is itself barely distinguishable from the claim regarding contextual meaning I will consider below, and therefore will stand or fall with it.[34]

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[34] Kuhn, for instance, embraces an incommensurability thesis which holds that meaning is relative to the overall conceptual scheme in which it is place yet also allows that one may experience a conversion from one paradigm to another in a revolutionary moment rather than by a process of gradual translation and movement. Kuhn's incommensurability thesis is therefore importantly distinct from the strong incompatibility thesis I wish to consider here, and is on a par with the contextualist claims regarding meaning that I will consider in the next section in that the primary claim is that the meaning of isolated fragments is drawn from the conceptual (read cultural) scheme in which it is placed. Perhaps the difference between them is simply that for Kuhn transition from one conceptual scheme to another comes in a moment of conversion and prior to that no form of translation is possible, whereas the claim that all meaning is contextual could allow for a gradual reconstruction and partial translation of the other conceptual scheme/culture by moving isolated fragments from one to the other until a complete transition (and translation) has occurred. The claim that meaning is contextual therefore does not rule out translation and transition per se, only isolated acts of translation, and would also seem to allow on the face of it that gradual movement between cultures is possible, and therefore that once an individual has fully assimilated to a new culture he or she does understand its cultural meanings just as the members do because he or she then has access to the entire cultural context. Nevertheless, the essence of the claims are the same, and both allow for movement between cultures or conceptual schemes.

I will argue that the strong incompatibility argument is untenable. My argument is inspired by semantic

holism and drawn from Mark Bevir's *The Logic of the History of Ideas*,[35] and is aimed at showing there

must be a reasonable degree of overlap between different cultures, which would undermine the

assumption of radical difference that undergirds the argument that we are simply *incapable* in any

circumstances of understanding those from another culture or moving between cultures. The essence

of this argument is epistemological. As a holist, Bevir cannot try to found our knowledge on tautological

analytic truths nor on unadulterated empirical observations; he holds that there are no self-evident

truths either analytically or empirically that can be used to justify our view of the world. There are

therefore no individual propositions, either logical or factual, that can stand apart from the rest of our

beliefs in splendid isolation and hold a privileged place epistemologically. Instead, since our theories

and observations approach the world as a single integrated web of beliefs, with anything potentially

open to revision, we must attempt to justify our understanding of the world as a whole, by judging it by

its ability to make sense of the world against rival theories.

Two things follow from this: our criteria of objectivity is not absolute, it is comparative and provisional;

and our criteria of objectivity is derived from the ability of our theories to make sense of the world.

Therefore, given that our way of understanding and perceiving the world informs our actions, we must

expect a degree of overlap between different ways of looking at the world, such as those of individuals

in different cultures. Our views of the world are not constrained by the world conceptually, but rather

practically; the fact that we live in the physical world means that our understanding of it and

perceptions of it must be broadly reliable, otherwise we would not be able to operate effectively. To

use Bevir's example, if we operated a dog-sledding business in the Arctic Circle, but couldn't tell the

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[35] Mark Bevir *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge: CUP 1999).

difference between wolves and huskies, our business would soon run into trouble. Whilst our understanding of the world and perception of it may not be accurate in every respect, the fact that human beings operate effectively and can organize socially means that our perceptions must be broadly accurate, otherwise there would be no human beings to organize into cultures in the first place.

There is a further point that follows from this, and it is this point that undermines the incompatibility thesis as stated in its strong form. Whilst the understandings of the world on offer in different cultures may be very different, the necessity that they facilitate our interaction with the world (and each other) means that there must be a degree of overlap between them, and so they cannot be radically and permanently "other" in the way the strong incompatibility thesis supposes. We do not all live in the same social world, but we live in the same physical one, and therefore there must be a degree of overlap between our world views; people in different cultures may not have the same beliefs, but they have beliefs about the same world, and often these cultural beliefs relate to patterns of human life and organization (such as religion, economics, the family etc) that are in some sense similar. It is this overlap which means that it seems likely that transition from one culture to another, and that perhaps even some form of translation of one world view to another (even if not entirely accurate), will be possible at least in theory, even if it is difficult in practice.

Even if we do not have any of the same beliefs (which itself seems implausible) the structure of our world view will be similar even if the content isn't. Culture is made up of beliefs and practices that are deemed to be normative in the sense that they are seen as appropriate responses to the world and to particular situations in it, situations which must be recognized as different from other situations, and as demanding a particular form or forms of repeatable behavior. We must therefore be able to see the world and render it intelligible and orderable, so we must have observations about the world we see as exemplary perceptions, as things we must currently take to be facts. Thus the broad structure of our

world views must be the same. Therefore, given the overlap noted above, transition and perhaps translation between cultures seems to be possible in theory.

This transition and translation may be difficult in practice, and may require painstaking linguistic, anthropological and historical work, but it cannot be ruled out simply by an implausible assertion of radical difference. Simply by being human beings who share broadly the same physical environment we must share enough of our worldviews to enable some form of translation of the understandings and meanings in one culture into that of another, at least in principle. The strong incompatibility thesis predicated on radical difference cannot be proven philosophically. In fact, our arguments seem to show that it is incorrect. It therefore cannot be used to defend Kymlicka against the cosmopolitan critique.

I will therefore now turn to the apparently weaker (but related) claim that all meaning is contextual and therefore that, even if transition and some degree of translation between cultures is possible, in any given instance the current cultural context determines the meaning of a cultural "fragment".

9.   A Fourth Reply: Cultural Meaning as Contextual

The last possible response to the cosmopolitan critique I would like to consider is the contention that meaning is contextual, which is a weaker claim than the above, as it would seem on the face of it to allow for at least partial translation from one culture to another to some degree provided there is a proper understanding of context, which in turn would seem to imply that people can effectively move between cultures, albeit perhaps with difficulty. This claim would therefore be that even if some form of translation between cultures is possible in theory, the manner in which human beings understand things as culturally meaningful is dependent on the entirety of their current cultural framework, and therefore Waldron's isolated cultural fragments must derive their meaning from our culture not the culture they arose in, thus rescuing Kymlicka's claim that our individual culture is our context of

meaningful choice and thereby his theory of multiculturalism. Kymlicka's last line of defense against the

cosmopolitan critique therefore turns on a particular understanding of meaning, and the way our

individual culture acts as a meaningful context of choice. Whilst Kymlicka does not explicitly respond to

Waldron in this way, it is a plausible response, and one which would seem to be consistent with (or

perhaps even follow from) Kymlicka's claim that we need a single societal culture to provide a

meaningful context of choice.[36]   I will first examine the plausibility of the general claim that meaning is

contextual, and then I will turn in detail to the ramifications for Kymlicka's liberal theory of

multiculturalism.

Cultural and Linguistic Meaning as Contextual

The argument that the meaning of cultural beliefs is contextual seems to have something like an

intuitive plausibility in the case of culture in that we perhaps assume that individuals in cultures other

than our own are different from us in some sense, and have different ways of thinking, understanding

and behaving from us.   In other words, their culture is foreign to us and ours in some way.   This

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[36] In fact, Waldron seems to anticipate this on *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* p785, where he notes that "Someone may object to the picture of cultural heterogeneity I am painting [by saying]: 'Doesn't each item take its full character from the integrity of the surrounding cultural context, so that it is a distortion to isolate it from that cultural context and juxtapose it with disparate materials?'". Whilst he anticipates the possible reply by Kymlicka, Waldron does not deal with it properly or even in a coherent and consistent manner. His response is to argue that whilst we could take an "anthropological" approach, and attempt to understand these cultural "fragments" on their original terms, this is an "absurd" account of how these cultural materials enter the lives of individuals, "as more or less meaningful fragments, images, and snatches of stories" which have been "misread and misinterpreted", and therefore "[s]ince this is in fact is the way in which cultural meanings enter into people's lives…[it] is at least as authentic as Kymlicka's insistence on the purity of a particular cultural heritage". This response from Waldron is somewhat surprising, given that his position is that simple knowledge of examples from other cultures is not enough to make them part of our societal culture, yet he also maintains that they come with "culturally defined meanings". If these culturally defined meanings are not from the original culture (as he indicates on p785) then surely they must be from the recipient culture, or at least the recipient culture as enriched in some way by the new example? But that would seem to be to concede the point. Waldron's reply to this counter-argument is therefore somewhat puzzling.   Perhaps this move by Waldron is motivated by his desire to undercut any idea of cultural "authenticity" and offer a more cosmopolitan account instead, but nevertheless it seems at odds with some of his other commitments regarding cultural meaning. I will therefore ignore Waldron's treatment of the issue and undertake a full examination of it. In any event, it is a plausible interpretation of the above to see Waldron as thinking that understanding these cultural fragments on their own terms is both conceptually and empirically possible, but that we do not do this as a matter of common practices.

assumption and perception of some difference seems perfectly natural in the case of other cultures, but becomes much more problematic when we analyze its logic and see that it has radical consequences that go beyond an assessment of other cultures. As we saw, the premise of the argument is contextual; the meaning of an individual example or belief comes from the cultural context, and therefore changing the cultural context changes the meaning of that example or belief. The logical conclusion, however, of a theory of meaning that is purely contextual is that the entire context, whatever that is, determines the meaning. I will critique this somewhat deterministic account of meaning below, where I will outline a competing intentionalist understanding of meaning, but here it will suffice to point out that it is not necessarily plausible to fix contextual meaning at the level of different cultures. The logic of a contextualist understanding of meaning does not tell you what the relevant context is. Clearly Kymlicka thinks societal cultures are the relevant context for making examples and options meaningful, but this proposition is not self-evidently true.[37]

Nevertheless, let us ignore the potential problem of why Kymlicka locates the context of meaningful choice at the level of a societal culture and not the individual, and assess the claim that cultural meaning is contextual and therefore Waldron's isolated fragments of cultures derive their meaning from the societal culture they are placed in, not their original culture. In doing so I will outline the key suppositions of the view that meaning is contextual, before moving on to give an account of meaning as intentional which undermines these contextualist claims, yet also disputes a point that Waldron accepts,

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[37] Given that we are talking about how individuals understand examples and options, it is arguable that a truly contextualist account of meaning must go down to the level of the individual. To use the metaphor of a web of beliefs, the relevant context for understanding the meaning attached to examples and options by individuals could be the web of beliefs of that particular individual, not the societal culture. Whilst there may be some overlap between the webs of beliefs held by different individuals in the same culture, and whilst some of this may be because of shared elements of that culture, there is no reason to suppose that each web of beliefs is identical, nor that it draws on exactly the same aspects of the culture. In other words, it seems that the internal logic of the argument that cultural meaning is contextual is that not only will I be unable to understand a member of a foreign culture, I may be unable to understand a member of my own culture. This seems implausible and, in any event, takes us back to the individualist account of culture that Kymlicka is trying to resist.

which is that "[o]f course, choice takes place in a cultural context, among options that have culturally defined meanings".[38]

What I am calling a contextualist view of meaning has been expressed in a variety of ways and defended on a variety of philosophical bases. Nevertheless, I think there are some common commitments and ideas. The core idea is that understanding the meaningful productions in human life is dependent on understanding the relevant context. Most frequently this is understood to be the linguistic context, although for our purposes we are thinking of the cultural context, which is itself no doubt partly made up of the linguistic context. I would argue, however, that a contextualist account of cultural meaning is parallel to a contextualist account of linguistic meaning. Language is the primary medium for the expression of human meaning, and if we are unable to establish a contextualist account of language, that would seem to undercut the possibility of a broader understanding of cultural meaning as contextual which is, if anything, a more wide-reaching contextualism. Whether we are dealing with the quasi-structuralism of someone like J.G.A. Pocock, or a conventionalist account of the intended and actual "illocutionary force" of particular expressions of meaning such as Quentin Skinner's, or Kuhn's account of paradigm shifts in the history of science, or the occasionalism of Tyler Burge, the central claim that is relevant to us stays the same: the conventional linguistic (read cultural) framework determines the meaning of particular utterances or practices, not the intentions of those making the utterances or participating in the practices, nor the understandings of those who are listening to the utterances or observing the practices. This would seem to be equivalent to the claim that the meaning of a cultural "fragment" depends on the cultural framework of meaning in which it is situated, so moving it into another cultural framework will inevitably change its meaning, which will then be derived from the meanings embodied in that cultural framework. I will now proceed to examine the arguments that

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[38] Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* p783.

can be made against this common conclusion, leaving aside some of the more technical arguments aimed at each of the positions individually. For brevity's sake I will refer to all these sort of arguments as the arguments for contextual meaning. I will start by setting out an example which seems to indicate that meaning is derived from the intentions of actors not from the linguistic (or cultural) context, and then examine and critique possible replies by the contextualist. I will conclude by setting out a sketch of an intentionalist account of meaning and then relate this to Kymlicka's theory of multiculturalism.

My basic point is that linguistic (or cultural) context does not determine meaning but rather that the intentions of the actors do. A mistake that is common between the arguments for contextual meaning is to confuse the standard meaning of an utterance abstracted from its particular context with the actual meaning of a particular utterance in its context. The example Bevir uses to illustrate this point is Mrs Malaprop's famous line from Sheridan's *The Rivals*,[39] where she defends her use of English by saying that she is able to present "a nice derangement of epitaphs".[40] What she means, of course, is "a nice arrangement of epithets", which is the entire point of the joke. The linguistic meaning of "a nice derangement of epitaphs" is, however, "a nice derangement of epitaphs", not "a nice arrangement of epithets". Thus the linguistic meaning and what Mrs Malaprop means differ; the latter can only be understood by reference to the intentions of the speaker. The conventional linguistic meaning is therefore not always sufficient to fix the meaning. In fact, as Bevir points out, one would not even need to know what an epitaph was in order to understand what Mrs Malaprop meant, provided one knew what an epithet was.[41]

A plausible contextualist response to the above example would be to argue that whilst the meaning of Mrs Malaprop's utterance "a nice derangement of epitaphs" is clearly "a nice arrangement of epithets",

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[39]Bevir *The Logic of the History of Ideas* p45.

[40] Bevir *The Logic of the History of Ideas* p45 to 46.

[41] Bevir *The Logic of the History of Ideas* p45.

the fact that we understand it to be so is due to the details of the occasion on which it was used, and thus the meaning is still contextual in some sense. Mrs Malaprop is having a conversation with Captain Absolute, during which it is related that a third party has accused her of using words she doesn't understand, at which point she asserts to the contrary that she can make "a nice derangement of epitaphs". Thus one could argue that it is the broader linguistic context and the occasion of her utterance that makes it intelligible; it is because someone else has previously used words conventionally on a particular occasion that we are able to grasp her deviation from linguistic meaning. Therefore the meaning of her utterance is still contextual in some sense.

It is possible, however, to design a set of circumstances in which the broader linguistic context and occasion does not enable us to decipher meaning in this way. For example, on some occasions the linguistically correct use of a word or phrase cannot be used to fix the meaning of a particular use of it. The word bat, for instance, can refer to a wooden object generally used to hit balls or to a small flying mammal, but not to both at the same time. The linguistic meaning of "bat" is one of two alternatives, and thus cannot be used by itself to fix the meaning of this particular utterance. Whilst the occasion of the use of the word bat will normally enable us to determine which referent is intended, this is not always the case; if you are in an room with one other person and nothing else but a wooden cylindrical object and a small flying mammal, and you are told by that person to "pick up the bat", there is no way of telling conclusively from the linguistic context or the broader occasion which object is being referred to. The fact that linguistic contexts and occasions can sometimes be a reliable guide to the meaning intended by an individual making an utterance does not require that the meaning intended by the speaker is entirely derived from or dependent upon the linguistic context or the occasion. To understand what was meant, we must understand the intention of the speaker. If we are to reject the idea that the meaning of "bat" is derived in this instance from the intentions of the speaker, we would

also seem to be committed to the position that the speaker did not in fact mean either object, that his or her utterance is either meaningless or that the meaning is indeterminate. Both of these seem implausible, as the speaker was clearly asking us to pick up one of the two objects. The meaning of the utterance comes from intentions not context.[42]

Another plausible response from the contextualist at this point would be to argue that the intentions of the speaker, whilst relevant to understanding the meaning of an utterance, are in fact derived from the relevant context. In other words, that intentions are the result of the context, and that the relevant context is not just the immediate linguistic context or the details of the precise occasion on which the utterance is made, but the entirety of the speaker's cultural framework. I have two responses to this. The first is to dispute that we have reason to suppose that the relevant context is the cultural one unless we were to define cultural context in a way that it becomes almost meaningless. The second is to argue that even if we were to allow that we could clearly delineate the broader cultural context and locate the individual within it, the claim that the context determines intentions would seem to rule out the possibility of linguistic or cultural change, which is an unsustainable claim.

First, I would argue that even if we were to persist with the claim that the context enters into the meaning of the utterance through intentions, we would have no reason to focus solely on the cultural context as providing the occasion of the utterance, to give it a privileged position when describing the occasion, over and above other all the other aspects of the occasion as perceived by the speaker. As

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[42] Also, the occasion itself would only seem to enter into the meaning of the utterance in so far as that occasion is perceived by the speaker, not as a result of the occasion understood objectively, and therefore the occasionality that relates to the intentional meaning of the speaker is itself part of the intention of the speaker. For example, if the only object in the room were a tennis racket and the speaker told me to "pick up the bat", I would grasp his or her intention provided I realized that he or she thought the tennis racket was in fact a bat, or if I in fact thought a tennis racket was a type of bat. In other words I would only grasp the meaning of the utterance if I understood what his or her perception of the occasion was. But this perception of the occasion that allows me to recover his or her meaning is part of the intentional state of the speaker, and thus to recover the meaning of the utterance we must recover his or her intentions. It is these intentions that comprise the meaning of the utterance, the linguistic context or the occasion of the utterance do not, even if they will often provide a rough guide given the likelihood that our perception of the occasion will be broadly similar.

Bevir points out, the occasion can be comprised of, *inter alia*, other utterances, the linguistic context, personal reflections, social experiences, psychological factors, or socio-economic circumstances. The only way to avoid this criticism would be to alter the understanding of cultural context to such a degree that it includes all the possible aspects of the occasion on which the utterance is made, in which case the definition of the cultural context seems to have collapsed into something like the "entire" context, which broadens the idea of a cultural context almost to meaninglessness. In fact, it seems very similar to the point we met earlier regarding individual cultures where Waldron argues that the logical conclusion of defining culture in this way is to reduce it to the sum total of things that an individual knows about, which leads to the conclusion that each individual has their own culture. If the contextualist were to resist this, he or she would have to define the cultural context so that we all share it, which is not an option open to Kymlicka as he is defending GDRs for different and separate cultures.

Second, and most importantly, trying to identify actual meaning invariably with conventional meaning cannot account for change.[43] The most obvious example of this would be in the case of linguistic meaning; if the actual meaning is derived entirely from the conventional linguistic context, how can there ever be deviation from and changes to that linguistic context? If, according to a strong account of meaning as purely contextual, the meaning of a particular utterance comes from its conventional linguistic meaning, then it follows that the author of an utterance cannot use words in any way other than the conventional linguistic usage. This would mean that not only is the actual meaning of an utterance fixed by reference to the linguistic framework at the time it was made, the linguistic framework cannot be altered by the use of old words in new ways, since such use is deemed to be impossible. In which case, how do languages change, which they clearly do? Advocates of a purely contextual account of meaning are incapable of accounting for internal change of a language, despite

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[43] Bevir *The Logic of the History of Ideas* p48.

Skinner's protestations to the contrary.[44] As Bevir points out, Skinner can only account for conventional use of language to make an unconventional point, he cannot account for unconventional and innovative use of language itself, a la Mrs Malaprop.[45] They also cannot account for new words being invented by members of a linguistic community.[46] Thus linguistic meaning cannot be purely contextual.

The fact that this change occurs seems to me to be fatal to the argument for contextual meaning: the rigidity with which its proponents fix actual meaning to linguistic meaning precludes the ability of speakers/writers to use, and listeners/readers to understand, words in new ways. The fact that individuals do use and understand words in new ways seems to imply that we have some sort of creative linguistic faculty, a faculty that allows us, at least in some instances, to create or grasp new meanings by going beyond the conventional context of meaning. It should also be noted that the contextualist account of meaning cannot be rescued by positing that the context fixes a range of meanings as opposed to fixing specific meanings, as even fixing a range of meanings supposes there are some limits we cannot go beyond, and the fact of linguistic change married to our creative linguistic faculty shows this is not the case; fixing a range of meanings is still fixing meaning, and cannot account for genuinely new meanings entering the language.

The only way a proponent of purely contextual meaning could rescue their position would be if they could account for linguistic change in a way that did not stem from people gradually using new words or using old words differently (consciously or otherwise) to convey a slightly different meaning from the conventional one in use at that time. In other words, they would have to show that a language could

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[44] See Skinner *Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action* in Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics (Cambridge: Polity Press 1988) at p105.

[45] Bevir *The Logic of the History of Ideas* at p49 to 50.

[46] The proponents of the argument that meaning is purely contextual cannot get away from the fact that languages do change, and that new words are introduced from outside the language, new words are created by those who speak the language, and old words are used in new ways within that language. In some senses, this is a simple empirical point: the Oxford English Dictionary definition of "nice" traces 14 different meanings from the Middle English "foolish", through the early 18th century "precise", to the modern day "pleasant".

change independently of the people who speak it, and to show that they would have to be able to show that a language has existence independently of the people who speak it. Both of those propositions seem to me extremely bizarre; there is no Platonic ideal of a language that has existence separate from those who speak it. [47]

This leaves us with intentionalism, which is a position I would like to defend. Bevir would seem to be correct to write, "[w]hen we say something, we normally assume we are communicating our thoughts" and we normally assume the same thing of other people.[48] I hope the import of the various examples we have examined is now clear. When we acknowledge Mrs Malaprop *said* "a nice derangement of epitaphs" but *meant* "a nice arrangement of epithets" we assume that what she means has to do with what she intends to communicate, which is not identical with the conventional linguistic meaning of the words she actually says. This "hermeneutic" meaning of the sentence stems from her intentions, not its form. Without an understanding of her intentions will we will not understand what the sentence means.[49] We therefore have good reason to doubt that linguistic context determines the meaning of a given utterance. Provided one accepts the analogy between arguments about linguistic context providing meaning to utterances and arguments about cultural context providing meaning to cultural examples and options, we also have good reason to suppose that the final possible response by Kymlicka to the cosmopolitan critique fails. He cannot maintain that our context of *meaningful* choice is

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[47] In fact, as Bevir demonstrates, both semantic and linguistic meanings are abstractions from the actual use of language in particular utterances: semantic meanings derive from webs of beliefs held by individual people; and linguistic meanings are conventions based on how individuals, on the whole, actually use the language (see Bevir *The Logic of the History of Ideas* p57 and p61).

[48] Bevir *The Logic of the History of Ideas* p32.

[49] This idea can, like most things, be taken too far: the meaning of an utterance cannot be absolutely fixed by the prior conscious intentions of the speaker/writer, as the relationship of prior intentions to actual meaning is only contingent. This is why Bevir defends "weak" intentionalism, which equates "authorial intentions with the [final] meaning an utterance has for its author rather than the prior purpose of its author", and which includes unconscious and preconscious intentions as well as conscious ones (Bevir *The Logic of the History of Ideas* p62). Bevir also extends his weak intentionalism beyond the author by arguing that meanings can be meanings for the speaker/writer or for the listener/reader (Bevir *The Logic of the History of Ideas* p71ff).

our societal culture, because the purely contextualist account of meaning he would have to use to support that claim is not tenable. He cannot use the cultural context to fix the meaning of any individual cultural fragments within it. I will now examine in detail the ramifications of this for his theory.

Cultural and Linguistic Meaning as Intentional

As we have seen, in order to resist the cosmopolitan critique and maintain his luck-egalitarian argument for multicultural rights Kymlicka must maintain that each individual is located in a single identifiable culture as their context of meaningful choice. Without the individual being in a single cultural context that also forms a single context of meaningful choice he cannot support the contention that they need their culture for meaningful choice, nor can he attempt to bring about equality of contexts of choice by using GDRs to equalize cultures. Following the initial stages of the cosmopolitan critique, we saw that to defend his position, Kymlicka would need to put the entire weight of his claim on the manner in which the societal culture of a particular individual makes the options and examples he or she is faced with meaningful. We also saw that the plausible version of this claim would seem to turn on a contextualist account of meaning. This claim was that we have a single societal culture as our context of *meaningful* choice because any "fragments" of other cultures that are transposed into our societal culture derive their meaning from their current and not original cultural context, and therefore that we need our culture as out context of meaningful choice in some sense. Yet, just as we can use language unconventionally, and so the meaning of an utterance is primarily what was meant by an individual, it seems clear that individuals can evaluate or understand options and examples unconventionally, so that their meaning is primarily their meaning for an individual, not the meaning or meanings provided by their culture. Language may provide us with evaluative terms (good, bad, appropriate, inappropriate) but it does not fix how we apply them. Likewise, it is clear that membership in a societal culture cannot rigidly fix the way that individuals approach, evaluate, or even understand options and examples.

This leads us to another important point. Once we appreciate that individuals can go beyond the ways of understanding or evaluating that are conventional in their culture then, just as individuals can add to and change a language by using words unconventionally, individuals can add to and change a culture by understanding and evaluating options/examples in a new way, or by acting in a new way. A culture is the expression of the beliefs, assessments, understandings and practices of its members; cultural meanings and assessments do not have an existence separate from the people who hold them. I therefore cannot see how there is such a thing as a culture that exists separately from the people who are members of it. Thus I would argue that a member of a society that has an understanding or assessment of an option/example that is deviant from the cultural norm has added to and changed that culture in some way. It is not the culture that is determining meaning for the individuals in it, it is the individuals who determine meaning for the culture. The simple fact of cultural change would seem to disprove the contextualist claim regarding culture, just as linguistic change disproved the claim regarding language.[50]

If the claim we are attributing to Kymlicka is that it is our societal culture that exclusively provides meaning for cultural examples and options, as it must be if he is to defend his position against the

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[50] Perhaps Kymlicka could respond by arguing that these "deviant" views are not, in fact, part of the culture, as they are too unconventional and therefore not shared by the vast majority of people within the culture. This is the sort of "wide-distribution" qualification for what counts as part of a culture that we met during our examination of Waldron's critique, where it caused substantive problems, which I think are mirrored here. We saw that Waldron had put Kymlicka on the horns of a dilemma, either knowledge of an example is enough to make it part of our culture, or we know about examples that come from other cultures. The equivalent dilemma here is that either an unconventional assessment by an individual in a societal culture is automatically part of that culture, and therefore a culture consists of any and every assessment/understanding by a person within it, which totally undermines Kymlicka's idea of culture as shared understandings, conventions etc that fixes meaning, or an unconventional assessment by an individual in a societal culture is not part of that culture, but can be known about by the members of that culture, and so can provide meanings from outside that culture. This means that we cannot be said to need our culture to provide the meaning for options and examples in the way Kymlicka suggests. Whilst it is clearly possible, even likely, that a member of a societal culture will assess/understand an option/example in the conventional cultural manner, there is no reason to suppose that they must necessarily assess the example/option in the conventional manner. They may do, it may be likely that they do, but they could always change their mind and create or adopt an unconventional understanding. Either a deviant understanding is counted as part of the societal culture by the very fact of it being held by at least one person in that society, or this deviant understanding is somehow not part of a person's culture but capable of being adopted by them (and therefore providing meaning), in which case they cannot be said to need the understanding provided by their societal culture.

cosmopolitan critique, then that claim seems implausible. Whilst we may understand the meaning of options through the lens of our cultural context, we need not do so. Our creative linguistic faculty that allows us to grasp what others mean, and the fact that linguistic (and therefore presumably cultural) meaning is intentional and driven by creative individuals, shows that we cannot with any assurance say that the context of *meaningful* choice for individuals is their societal culture; we cannot use an understanding of meaning as contextual in order to locate individuals invariably within a single societal culture understood as their context of meaningful choice. We therefore have no reason to attempt to equalize cultures through GDRs on the basis of Kymlicka's luck-egalitarian argument.

One further important point follows from this analysis. Earlier we debunked the claim of strong cultural incompatibility that relied on a presupposition of radical difference and the impossibility of moving between cultures. That we rejected this claim should not be surprising; I noted earlier that this claim may seem like something of a straw man, given its intuitive implausibility, part of which stems from the assertion that we cannot move between cultures. In examining the weaker claim that cultural meaning is contextual we have assumed that the contextual claim can avoid the intuitive implausibility of the strong incompatibility by allowing that movement between cultures is possible. It is arguable, however, that the weaker contextual claim cannot allow for movement between cultures, at least if it is to do the work Kymlicka needs it to do. If Kymlicka is to fix us to our societal culture as our context of meaningful choice with any permanence he would need to be able to maintain that meaning is *purely* contextual; once he allows for a creative linguistic and cultural faculty whereby we can go beyond our context, he has allowed in a key aspect of the intentionalist account of meaning that undermines his claim. It is difficult to see, however, how he could maintain that we can move between cultures without also maintaining that we possess a faculty that allows us, either piecemeal or in a moment of Kuhnian conversion, to grasp meanings that come from beyond our cultural or linguistic context. If so, that

means that cultural meaning cannot be purely contextual, which means he cannot maintain that we *need* our societal culture as a context of meaningful choice. In other words, a purely contextualist account of meaning actually seems to require a rejection of the possibility of movement between cultures, because such movement can only plausibly function via a creative faculty that undercuts the contextual claim. So a contextual account of meaning that allows for movement between cultures is in unstable in some way, as it has to presuppose that we possess the creative capacity to grasp meaning that is not contextual.[51] Thus for Kymlicka's fourth reply to Waldron's critique to be viable, he has to maintain the claim that *all* meaning is contextual, and to claim that meaning is *purely* contextual requires that movement between cultures is not possible. Thus the third and fourth claims actually collapse into each other.

We therefore cannot defend Kymlicka against Waldron's claim that we would seem to exist in a kaleidoscope of cultural influences and therefore that individuals cannot be located in, nor said to need, a single societal culture in the way that Kymlicka's luck-egalitarian argument would seem to suppose. In fact we have gone farther than Waldron, because we have cast doubt on his contention that "[o]f course, choice takes place in a cultural context, among options that have culturally defined meanings", which means that the cosmopolitan critique goes even further than he thought.[52]

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[51] For a process of conversion to be possible, as Kuhn clearly thinks it is, we must presuppose a creative linguistic faculty that will enable us to grasp and understand beliefs that have hitherto been incomprehensible. A creative linguistic faculty that allowed for a "conversion" from one to the other would therefore seem to undermine Kuhn's claim in so far as it implies that same faculty may facilitate translation. Kuhn's incommensurability thesis is perhaps able to resist this critique and is not unstable in the same way as the purely contextual account of meaning because he only makes the claim in respect of different scientific paradigms, rather than a broader claim regarding all human meaning that the advocate of strong cultural incompatibility or purely contextual meaning would have to make. Thus for Kuhn positing a creative linguistic capacity does not necessarily undermine his more limited claims regarding the nature of scientific paradigms. Nevertheless, the point remains that a contextual account of meaning that allows for movement between cultures is in some sense unstable, and for there to be a purely contextual it must be accompanied by the assertion that movement between cultures is impossible.

[52] Waldron *Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative* p783.

10.   Kymlicka, Communitarianism and Self-respect

So far we have focused on the following claims from section 4:

(4) The question of the location of individuals within cultures.

(3) The issue of whether it is possible to identify and pick-out distinct cultures and, if so, in what circumstances.

(2) The question of the nature of culture and the relationship of culture to meaningful individual choice.

We have seen that the cosmopolitan critique casts severe doubt on Kymlicka's position on (4) and (3), seeming to show that we are not able to pick out distinct cultures that individuals are located in the way that Kymlicka's argument supposes. We have also seen that Kymlicka's actual and possible replies to the cosmopolitan critique on issues (4) and (3) seem to require him to commit to a contextualist account of meaning, and that this contextualist account of meaning is problematic. For Kymlicka to bind us to our societal cultures as our context of meaningful choice in a way that we can be said to need it as a "precondition" of rational choice, it would seem that he has to insist that meaning is purely contextual, which is implausible. In fact, upon reflection, a purely contextual account of cultural meaning would actually seem to collapse back into something like the strong incompatibility we rejected earlier in the sense that it would have to rule out translation and movement between cultures; if meaning is *entirely* dictated by context that necessitates the claim that we cannot go beyond that context. Thus for Kymlicka to rescue his luck-egalitarian adaptation of Rawls, which states that culture is a primary good in respect of its role as the context of meaningful choice, he would seem to have to persist with the problematic claim of a strong contextual meaning. In fact, the more Kymlicka relies on a strong account

of contextual meaning the more his theory seems to look like a de facto communitarianism in that his account of the self as an autonomous choosing agent gets thinner and thinner, and the role of the cultural community in shaping that self becomes more and more prominent.

In this section I would like to consider what ramifications this has for Kymlicka's answer to issue (1), which is the issue of how the self and personal identity are formed and constituted, and the relationship between culture and self-respect. We saw in section 2 that Kymlicka's theory of multiculturalism was partly derived from the way his account differed from the communitarian one on this issue. The communitarians argue that the self is at least partly constituted by its communal attachments, that it thus cannot choose its ends in the way liberals suppose, and therefore that individual identity and self-respect are closely tied to the recognition of our community or culture. Kymlicka on the other hand defends a conception of the self which chooses its own ends, and is therefore not constituted by its communal attachments in the way the communitarians suppose. Nevertheless, he also argues that the recognition and status of our culture is important for the self-respect of the individuals within it. I will argue that given the cosmopolitan critique on issues (4) – (2), this claim regarding self-respect has to take almost the entire weight of Kymlicka's argument, and that it is incapable of doing so unless it collapses back into something like the communitarian claim.

There is an ambiguity in Kymlicka's account of the link between identity, culture and self-respect that seems to stem from Rawls. Rawls counts "self-respect" as one of his primary goods, although it does not seem to be a primary good that is distributed directly like income, wealth and rights. Rawls seems to have several distinct (albeit possibly related) accounts of self-respect as a primary good, two of which are relevant here. The first account is that self-respect is a primary good because it plays an important role in helping us see the value of the goals and ends that we choose and therefore facilitates our pursuit of them in some way: he writes "[s]elf-respect is not so much a part of any rational plan of life as

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the sense that one's plan is worth carrying out".[53] The second account is that self-respect as a primary good is the sense of one's own value (as opposed to the value of one's plan of life) and that this result of a proper ordering of the basic structure, primarily the recognition of equal moral worth through equal rights and liberties of citizenship, but also through the provision of a certain level of material well-being.[54]

Kymlicka seems to argue for something akin to both of these understandings of self-respect at different points. His dominant argument seems to be that culture is a primary good primarily because of its link to self-respect in something like Rawls' first sense, that is because of its role in facilitating meaningful choice, in giving us a sense that our activities are "significant" and valuable, in that it "renders vivid" the point of an activity, and comprises the "spectacles" through which we see things as valuable.[55] Thus Kymlicka tries to tie the way in which we see our activities as having value (Rawls' first sense of self-respect) with his account of culture as the context of meaningful choice. This understanding of the link between culture and self-respect turns on Kymlicka's rejection of the communitarian account of the self, his own account of the self as a "rational reviser", and his argument that an individual's societal culture is their context of meaningful choice. In other words, some of Kymlicka's account of "self-respect" is simply a manifestation of his position on issue (2) above, which is the main thrust of his defense of multicultural rights. Given the problems caused for this aspect of Kymlicka's theory by the cosmopolitan critique, and the implausibility of the contextualist account of meaning it would seem to require, this account of the importance of culture for self-respect now seems unavailable to him.

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[53] John Rawls *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge Mass. HUP 1971) p178. Also, on p440 Rawls has another related aspect of self-respect, which is the confidence that one has the ability, broadly put, to fulfill one's plan of life. This ability would seem to be secured by the basic structure as set up under the two principles of justice.
[54] Rawls *A Theory of Justice* p179.
[55] Kymlicka *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* p97, p164, p166 and pp192-193.

Kymlicka does seem in other places, however, to have an understanding of self-respect more like Rawls' second account, which is that it is a manifestation of the proper arrangement of the basic structure in one's sense of self and personal identity. [56]   For Rawls, this is achieved primarily through the equal rights and liberties of citizenship, which both instantiate the principle of equal moral worth and help promote a sense one's equal moral worth and thereby self-respect.[57]   Yet for Kymlicka the crucial aspect is the status of one's culture, which is only capable of being protected by overriding these universal rights and liberties via differentiated rights. Thus for Kymlicka the only available sense in which culture is linked to self-respect following the cosmopolitan critique relies on a strong link between self-respect and recognition of one's culture, and this seems to come through in his later work:

> "Hence cultural identity provides an 'anchor for [people's] self-identification and the safety of effortless secure belonging'. But this in turn means that people's self-respect is bound up with the esteem in which their national group is held. If a culture is not generally respected, then the dignity and self-respect of its members will also be threatened (Margalit and Raz 1990: 447-9)."

Given the problems with the rest of Kymlicka's argument for multicultural rights, this second understanding of the link between culture and self-respect seems now to have to do most of the work in supporting GDRs for minority cultures. In fact, if we are correct in our assessment of the impact of the cosmopolitan critique on Kymlicka's theory, the whole of his theory is reduced to this claim that an individual's identity is so closely related to his or her culture that disrespectful treatment of, and unequal status for, that culture has strong negative impacts on individuals. Not only is this essentially an empirical claim that is backed up with little evidence,[58] it also seems like a less persuasive version of the communitarian position.[59]   Whilst the communitarian account of the self as constituted by its unchosen ends and attachments may be problematic, it at least flows naturally from this account that respect for

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[56] Kymlicka *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* p175 and *Multicultural Citizenship* pp89-90.

[57] Rawls *A Theory of Justice* p179.

[58]Kymlicka *Multicultural Citizenship* p89 -90.

[59] As that espoused by Charles Taylor in his *Multiculturalism: Examining The Politics of Recognition* in Multiculturalism: Examining The Politics of Recognition (Princeton: PUP 1994).

one's culture impacts directly on one's sense of self-respect. Kymlicka on the other hand, if he wishes to maintain his account of the self as rational reviser, has a much harder time making this claim, as his account of the self forecloses the obvious way the claim could be supported, which is to stress the role of culture in constituting the self. In fact, the more Kymlicka asserts the claim, perhaps by fleshing out his empirical support for it, the more he would seem to undermine his own account of the self in that he gives culture an ever larger role in the formation of that self. Thus we can see that Kymlicka's entire argument for GDRs for minority cultures seems to collapse into something like the communitarianism he disavows and is responding to, and that this aspect of his position is actually less plausible in some ways than the communitarian one. Far from operating at the margins of Kymlicka's defense of multiculturalism, or on the surface of it, the cosmopolitan critique has reduced his theory to a pale shadow of the communitarianism he was trying to distinguish himself from.

11.   Conclusion

My primary aim in this paper has been to understand the ramifications of cosmopolitanism for Will Kymlicka's liberal argument for rights for minority cultures. To that end I delineated a particular strand of cosmopolitanism, that relating to culture, and focused on the ways in which a cosmopolitanism of culture might operate as a critique of Kymlicka's position. My point of entry was Waldron's famous cosmopolitan critique of the early Kymlicka, and I examined Kymlicka's actual replies to that critique. I soon went beyond Kymlicka's actual response to Waldron, however, and examined two further positions he might take, relating to incompatibility and to contextual meaning, and found that these positions seemed problematic. In so doing I also found that while the cosmopolitan critique appeared to operate on the surface of Kymlicka's defense of multicultural rights, in fact it requires Kymlicka to take problematic positions on the core aspects of his theory, and that the force of the critique pushes Kymlicka back towards the communitarian account that he rejected.

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The overall thrust of this paper has therefore been negative rather than positive in that I have been critiquing Kymlicka's position rather than articulating a free-standing theory of my own, and one logical way of responding to the cosmopolitan critique of Kymlicka would be to retreat back into the communitarian position. There is, however, an alternative response, which would seem to be implied by the sorts of arguments I have been making. In the course of the critique I have taken positions on the nature of the self and the role of meaning in human life that would seem to lay the groundwork for an articulation of a positive cosmopolitan account of culture. An attempt to outline and defend a cosmopolitan multicultural position would seem to be the next logical step, and the work done so far perhaps suggests that a defense of multiculturalism on the basis of the value of a broad cultural diversity for the individual may be fruitful. One may not be able to defend multiculturalism on the basis of the role of individual societal cultures in meaningful choice, but one might be able to defend the instrumental value to individuals of a broad and diverse cultural context, a context that offers a wide-range of resources for individuals to examine, adopt or amend as part of the process of choosing how to live their lives. This would not require being able to locate individuals in a particular culture, nor attempting to bring about the equality of individual cultures via multicultural rights. It would give culture a role in meaning, but not a deterministic one; culture would form the context for agency, but would facilitate that agency rather than restricting it. Thus, one might be able to give a cosmopolitan defense of multiculturalism that bears a resemblance to Mill's "experiments in living" argument from *On Liberty*.[60] Nevertheless, that project is best left to another occasion.

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[60] It would not, however, be strictly Millian, in that Mill's understanding of culture was strongly influenced by Romanticism, and he therefore did not couch his experiments in living argument in multicultural terms.