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Tiivistelmä-Referat-Abstract

The two questions that I will address in this paper are: (1) How should justice for cultural minority groups be defined in culturally diverse democratic societies? (2) How equal justice is best secured? The primary focus of my discussion is the secularism law in France.

I will first argue for the view that common rights of citizenship (i.e. basic liberal civil and political rights) are not by themselves enough to secure equal justice for cultural minority groups. Cultural minority groups need to be granted differentiated citizenship rights, because democratic politics is typically connected to a dominant culture and thereby unjustly disadvantage members of cultural minorities. I will also argue for the view that justice for cultural minority groups includes their right to challenge the prevailing norms of the society.

Subsequently, I will point out that the right to challenge the prevailing norms of the society is an essential ingredient of deliberative democracy, albeit controversial for liberal democratic theories. However, theorists of deliberative democracy most directly influenced by Jürgen Habermas's discourse ethics are not able to translate the discursive conception of democratic legitimacy into substantial political participation for cultural minority groups. The reason for this is that their theories incorporate exclusionary assumptions. I shall argue for the view that deliberative theory of democracy need not abandon the discursive conception of democratic legitimacy, even though it abandons the problematic and exclusionary ideals of strong consensus and common good.

Lastly, I attempt to present a practical solution to the problem of how to ensure inclusion of cultural minority groups to mainstream political institutions. I will first argue for the view that Iris Marion Young's conception of a fully differentiated citizenship to ensure the inclusion of cultural minority groups is both problematic and untenable. Following this, I will argue that Will Kymlicka's conception of group self-representation rights within a framework of universal citizenship rights provides a much better alternative. However, the practicality of group self-representation rights requires that the issue about how to combine individual rights with group rights is solved. I will argue for the view that both political decision-making processes and the outcomes of political decision-making processes must respect each individual's agency rights.

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