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## Multilingualism, Afrikaans and normative political theory

This contribution focuses on the survival of Afrikaans within the framework of a multilingual South Africa. The first section provides a brief historical reconstruction of the power-political shifts that Afrikaans underwent between 1966 and 2004. In the second section some of the arguments that were used for and against Afrikaans between 1994 and 2004 are presented. In the last section these arguments are shifted to the terrain of contemporary normative political theory, where three aspects are important: the question of addressing language loss in the world; the importance of multicultural citizenship, and the need for a more profound and multilingual understanding of democracy. In short: a democracy is not just characterised by the instrumental counting of votes, but also by the qualitative articulation of different voices.

### Veeltaligheid, Afrikaans en normatiewe politieke teorie

Hierdie bydrae fokus op die oorlewing van Afrikaans binne die raamwerk van 'n veeltalige Suid-Afrika. In die eerste afdeling word 'n bondige historiese rekonstruksie van die magspolitiese verskuiwing wat Afrikaans tussen 1966 en 2004 ondergaan het, verskaf. In die tweede afdeling word enkele argumente wat tussen 1994 en 2004 vir en teen Afrikaans aangebied is, gesistematiseer. In die laaste afdeling word hierdie argumente na die terrein van die kontemporêre normatiewe politieke teorie verskuif, waar veral drie aspekte uitgesonder word: die kwessie van taalverdwyning in die wêreld; die belang van multikulturele burgerskap en die noodsaaklikheid van 'n diepgaande en veelstemmige verstaan van demokrasie. Kortom: in 'n demokrasie moet dit nie net gaan oor die instrumentele tel van stemme (*votes*) nie, maar ook oor die kwalitatiewe luister na verskillende stemme (*voices*).

Debates about Afrikaans have shifted in the period 1994-2004 toward the survival of the language.<sup>1</sup> Other issues that were previously central to this language— for example the origins of Afrikaans as a language, its different sources, the complex relationship between Afrikaans and English and language purity — seem to have moved to the background. The issue of the survival of Afrikaans has become especially pertinent in the “new South Africa” which has language diversity entrenched *de jure* in its constitution, but a *de facto* policy of monolingualism — English only.<sup>2</sup>

In this contribution, the issue of language survival will be approached in the following way: first, an historical reconstruction of the debate on the role of Afrikaans in South Africa will be provided. This will be followed by a basic reconstruction of some arguments on the status and identity of Afrikaans as a public language in a multilingual South Africa. Here it will be indicated that pro- and anti-Afrikaans arguments tend to appear in a regular pattern (this is for example the case with recent arguments by Jakes Gerwel and Antjie Krog on the survival or death of Afrikaans). Finally, some comments will be made on the link between language survival, multilingualism and normative political theory.

Two arguments in particular underlie these remarks: the moral framework within which Afrikaans was interpreted before 1994 differs from the moral framework after 1994. Many participants in the debate on the future of Afrikaans in a multilingual country miss this point, especially those who played a prominent role in the struggle against apartheid. Secondly, the debate about Afrikaans and multilingualism is closely connected to the question of what kind of democracy will eventually prevail in South Africa. To paraphrase the philosopher Derrida by way of a question: will the democracy that is still to come in South Africa be one that is open, plural, or one directed from the centre in all its one-dimensional restrictiveness?

- 1 In its initial form this article was presented as a paper at the International Colloquium on Multilingualism and the Media, University of Antwerp, 30 November 2004. I thank Theo du Plessis for his general support. Two anonymous reviewers also provided me with valuable critiques.
- 2 In the period mentioned, the debate on the survival of Afrikaans has not been framed in the language of resistance. On the complex issue of the right of minorities to resistance, cf Walzer 1970: 46-70.

## 1. The public debate on Afrikaans: or language and power. Historical shifts in the debate about Afrikaans (1966-2004)

As Eric Louw (2004: 44) indicates, the debate about Afrikaans has a longer historical scope than just the apartheid years (1948-1994) and the specific periodisation in this section (1966-2004).<sup>3</sup> According to him, Afrikaans passed, during the twentieth century, through three phases. The first phase (1902-1947) was effectively a struggle against British cultural imperialism. Following Britain's victory in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), English was imposed by the political administration of Lord Alfred Milner, among others, as the language of commerce, industry, and state administration in British-ruled Southern Africa. Against this anglicising process an Afrikaner (nationalist) elite struggled to achieve the following: Afrikaans as an official language alongside English (1925); the right of Afrikaner parents to send their children to Afrikaans schools, and the principle of bilingualism within the state bureaucracy. The second phase (1948-1990) involved a peculiarly South African form of nation-building associated with apartheid. In this period the Afrikaner nationalist elite (mobilised by the National Party) set about systematically building a nationalist state by separating Afrikaners from white English-speaking South Africans, black ethnic groups and coloured speakers of Afrikaans (Louw 2004: 44). In this phase, the Afrikaans language received significant political patronage from the NP: bilingualism was legally enforced; Afrikaans was actively promoted by the state throughout its institutions; a strong Afrikaans book-publishing industry could deliver books to Afrikaans schools, colleges, and universities; the SA Academy for Science and the Arts (*SA Akademie*) co-ordinated academic work in Afrikaans, and a strong multilingual electronic media infrastructure was developed, broadcasting in eleven languages. In the third phase, the first decade since the end of apartheid (1994-2004), the Afrikaners became a minority group in South Africa and active state patronage of Afrikaans ended, thus creating the context in which the present debate on Afrikaans and multilingualism is situated (Louw 1994: 45-6).

3 For an earlier, but not unrelated, debate on Dutch/Afrikaans in the nineteenth century, cf Scholtz (1967) and Zietsman (1992). For a comprehensive historical background going back to 1652, cf Giliomee 2003.

For the purposes of this contribution it is interesting to note that the first serious critical remarks about the continued existence of Afrikaans as a public language in South Africa (in the period 1966-2004) were made in the 1960s (the second phase above) by the so-called *Sestiger* literary movement.<sup>4</sup> It was the *Sestigers* who were the first to introduce a critical and alternative debate within Afrikaans. Here it was Breyten Breytenbach, following the earlier work of Jan Rabie, who set the example.<sup>5</sup> After his imprisonment (in the 1970s and early 1980s) Breytenbach went one step further by describing Afrikaans as a contaminated (*besmette*) language, only fit for tombstone writing (*grafskrifte*), and unfit for transformation. Later Breytenbach continued that Afrikaans should be made subordinate to the freedom struggle (Galloway 1990: 238-9).<sup>6</sup> Similarly the political philosopher, Johan Degenaar, proposed that Afrikaans and white Afrikaner power should be unlinked (*ontkoppel*); while André P Brink argued that the official status of Afrikaans damages the language and that it will only survive as a language of use (*gebruikstaal*). In the 1980s a further nuance in the debate was added by so-called coloured Afrikaans intellectuals (Jakes Gerwel, Franklin Sonn, and Hein Willemse). In their defense of “brown Afrikaans” they argued against the white establishment position on Afrikaans, and against Afrikaner hegemony (Galloway 1990: 241-2). By 1989 a younger generation of writers (such as Antjie Krog, Gerrit Olivier, Marlene van Niekerk, and Marianne de Jong) argued that Afrikaans is only important if it can help free the country and contribute to a shared South Africanness. Their plea for democratisation implied that if Afrikaans is an obstacle for democracy it should be sacrificed for something more encompassing such as a national democratic culture.

In the period after the first democratic elections in South Africa (1994-2004), which is the focus of this paper (and Louw’s third phase), the debate about Afrikaans shifted into a new context with new chal-

4 It was during these debates that the political distinction between *verlig* and *verkramp* made its appearance in 1966.

5 Cf the biography of Rabie by Kannemeyer (2004).

6 Interestingly enough, Breytenbach defended the rights of Afrikaans after 1994 and especially from 1999-2001, but then sadly cut all ties with the Afrikaans world and South Africa. For a fine earlier interpretation of Breytenbach’s complex position as a social critic, cf Walzer (1987: 210-24).

lenges.<sup>7</sup> A new state was formed in which Afrikaners (and Afrikaans) shifted away from the centre. The new centre was formed by Westernised black South Africans preferring to use English as a language of state administration and a *lingua franca* (Louw 2004: 46). Against this background it is interesting to study the fate of Afrikaans and the principle of multilingualism within the context of constitution-making and language practice in South Africa since 1994. With regard to constitution-making, one may first identify a (brief) period, which could be described as an attempt at reconciliation, underpinning the transitional constitution (1994-1996) in which the principle of eleven official languages was introduced with the qualification that that no language would lose its existing rights and status. The final constitution (1996), though, moving away from the spirit of reconciliation to the spirit of transformation, restated the principle of eleven official languages, but the clause on the existing rights of languages disappeared. The responsibility for developing languages was also made applicable only to the nine African languages (ignoring Afrikaans). Although this constitution is in its formulation against monolingualism, its adherence to the spirit of transformation has led to an English-only practice (Bosman 2002: 56-7).

Along with the transformational spirit in the final constitution, various developments in South African public life since 1994 have also contributed to a massive reduction of Afrikaans and the principle of multilingualism. Some major developments in this regard are the following: the state's bureaucracy (at all levels) has, since 1994, switched to functioning almost exclusively in English; state-owned enterprises have switched from their bilingual acronyms (for example, SABC/SAUK) to English-only (SABC); there are pressures to downgrade Afrikaans in the legal system; there has been a dramatic decline in Afrikaans usage on television (with English dominating);<sup>8</sup> Afrikaans has effectively been abandoned as a language of signage on products and in the public sphere; Afrikaans has declined as a language of commerce, industry, and advertising, with Afrikaner-owned companies changing their names to hide

7 On the debate about the survival of Afrikaans in the second phase, cf Steyn 1980, Prinsloo & Van Rensburg 1984, Du Plessis & Van Rensburg 1986, Du Plessis 1987. More specifically on the third phase, cf Steyn 1995, Du Plessis & Van Gensen 2000, Giliomee & Schlemmer 2001.

8 On the position of Afrikaans and television, cf Du Plooy & Grobler 2002.

their Afrikaans character, and the state has pressured Afrikaans universities, colleges, and schools to become bilingual (and in some cases English-only) institutions to provide “access” to non-Afrikaners (Louw 2004: 46-7). In addition, the principle of multilingualism was not always upheld in court cases, while the official state body for multilingualism (Pansalb) could only act as an advisory body (Bosman 2002: 57).

Given these enormous cultural-political changes in South Africa, a vigorous public debate about the identity and the role of Afrikaans could be expected to develop. A strong feeling emerged that Afrikaans was not being fully recognised in line with the spirit of multilingualism, that the higher functions of Afrikaans were being eroded fast, and that the development of the nine African languages was hardly taking off. Historically speaking, the Open Letter of November 1999, signed by a number of prominent Afrikaans intellectuals, gave structure and substance to the debate.<sup>9</sup> This was followed by the establishment of new post-apartheid lobby groups such as Praag and the Group of 63 in 2000. Although membership of these organisations is open, and some prominent anti-apartheid figures took part in the establishment of the Group of 63, neither succeeded in attracting all Afrikaans speakers. Since 2000 various arguments have emerged with regard to the role of Afrikaans and multilingualism in South Africa. In the next section a basic outline of these arguments will be provided.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Arguments about the role and status of Afrikaans since 1994

If one studies the various arguments that were made about Afrikaans as a public language in the the last few years an interesting pattern emerges. This is mapped in this section by considering the arguments in favour of and against Afrikaans, as well as a recent argument be-

9 One of the key aspects of the Open Letter to President Mbeki was a plea for a charter of minority rights in the South African Constitution. The letter had 24 signatories, including the poet and writer Breyten Breytenbach, the philosopher Johan Degenaar, the historian Hermann Giliomee, the philosopher Danie Goosen, the film-maker Katinka Heyns, and the writer and critic Jaap Steyn.

10 It must be emphasised, though, that the arguments presented here are not exhaustive. For a more detailed account of arguments for and against Afrikaans, cf Lubbe & Truter 2005 and Truter & Lubbe 2005.

tween Jakes Gerwel and Antjie Krog about Afrikaans, which also fits the pattern.

## 2.1 Arguments in favour of Afrikaans

There are two major arguments in favour of Afrikaans:

- The qualitative argument focuses on the inherent quality of Afrikaans and its cultural products, emphasising its extensive vocabulary, its ability to create new words, its ability to perform higher functions (for example its use in science and technology, law, state administration, and politics), its vast register covering many terrains, and the accomplishments of Afrikaans literature. From a demographic and geographical point of view Afrikaans is the third largest language group in the country, the language that most people understand as a second or third language, and the only indigenous language that is used in all nine provinces (Bosman 2002: 58).
- The pragmatic-instrumental argument defends the language purely on the basis of market forces. According to Botha (Van Louw & Carstens 2004: 14), 33% of the marketplace in South Africa is Afrikaans. At a recent “Taalberaad” [Language Indaba] at Stellenbosch (August 2004) on the role and identity of Afrikaans in the South African public sphere, many participants in the session on the media and multilingualism took the line that only the market, and not sentiment, can secure the future of Afrikaans.<sup>11</sup> Tim du Plessis and Conrad Sidego (of the Afrikaans press), Theo Erasmus (from the private Afrikaans television channel, *Kyknet*) and Magdaleen Kruger all defended this argument.<sup>12</sup> Erasmus, like Du Plessis, emphasised the market argument by arguing that the Afrikaans media must be-

11 The other sessions were on Afrikaans and education; art, culture, and heritage; law and labour (unions); business; service delivery and language courses; science and technology; media; multilingualism; Afrikaans and the outside world (Afrikaans/Dutch); books and publishers; the past (apartheid) and future.

12 Cf Du Plessis (2004), Erasmus (2004). Du Plessis's contribution highlights circulation figures, advertising, the quality of Afrikaans journalism, the diversity of voices, and political/ideological repositioning. On the negative side he mentions the world-wide decline in newspaper circulation, the new tastes of the younger generation, new advertising markets, and differences between white and coloured readers.

come “cool” (or cleverly positioned) within the Afrikaans community. In his opinion, the obstacles to the market (or commercialisation) include the wrong political message being given (back to the laager); the wrong political stance, because advertisers want to align their products with a more inclusive (and politically correct) Afrikaans environment; and the fact that the younger generation (white and coloured) does not want to associate itself with anything old-fashioned and “uncool”. Erasmus added that two of his channel’s “strategic philosophies” are that it will not touch any form of *taalstryd* (or language activism) and that it must not give the impression that Afrikaans is superior to other indigenous languages. Finally, paraphrasing the Calvin Klein advertisement, he said that his channel is just Afrikaans, period (*basta*). Magdaleen Kruger (head of the state-run Afrikaans public radio station, *Radio sonder Grense* (*Radio without Borders*)) expanded Du Plessis and Erasmus’s market argument by defending the informal style of Afrikaans used on her station and by defending entertainment versus education on radio.<sup>13</sup>

The problem with both the qualitative and the pragmatic arguments, as Bosman (1992: 59) indicates, is that both could create a false optimism about the future. Will the creation of neologisms, the flowering of Afrikaans rock music, the crispness of the copy-writing in advertisements, the diversity of Afrikaans speakers, and the enormous success of arts festivals such as the *Klein Karoo Arts Festival* (KKNK) and the Potchefstroom Arts Festival (*Aardklop*) be enough to secure the survival of Afrikaans? There is no doubt that all the abovementioned arguments for Afrikaans have played some role in the broader political terrain of language use in South Africa since 1994. In terms of its higher functions there is not one domain in which the rights of Afrikaans speakers (and, even more so, those of speakers of the nine black languages) have remained unaffected.

13 Only Ivor Price (on language variants) and Koos du Toit (on Afrikaans public television) interpreted Afrikaans and the media in terms broader than a purely market analysis.



## 2.2 Arguments against Afrikaans

Two broad arguments against Afrikaans can be distinguished. According to the monolingualist argument, attempts to defend Afrikaans in the public and private sectors ignore the need for one binding *lingua franca* — English. English is defended on the following grounds: it is more cost-effective; it levels the playing field; it is the language of international communication, commerce, and politics (even though it may create a distance between the elites and the masses). It also serves as a linguistic vehicle whereby Africans may enter the economical and political elites. For many white Afrikaans speakers, using English is an opportunity to disappear as a tainted group. This is used as a mechanism against rationalisation, restructuring, affirmative action, and transformation. This is one of the reasons why some Afrikaans parents have sent their children to English schools, in an attempt to escape a language community that has been stigmatised for ideological reasons (Bosman 2002: 59).

The political-moral argument against Afrikaans normally portrays Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor which should be punished.<sup>14</sup> Afrikaans was unnecessarily advantaged in the previous dispensation.<sup>15</sup> There are more important issues than language that deserve the attention of South Africans: poverty, AIDS, crime, and racism. These issues are sketched as the most important, and the kind that Afrikaners must address.<sup>16</sup> Afrikaans is portrayed as exclusionary. This argument surfaced as early as the 1990s when the language clause in the Private Act of Stellenbosch University was interpreted as exclusionary. The same argument was used after 1994 in the case of Afrikaans schools and universities. In terms of this argument English is non-exclusionary, an argument that neglects the fact that the majority of South African students struggle to study in English at the university level. It is also an open question whether a language can be anything but exclusionary (Bosman 2002: 59-61).

14 It is interesting, though, that English's status as a colonial language is not questioned.

15 On closer scrutiny it is true that Afrikaans has been advantaged in comparison to the black languages, but not when compared with English.

16 The problem is that such a list of priorities may fluctuate and that an over-emphasis on material issues may divert attention from symbolic issues.

### 2.3 A recent debate on Afrikaans and multilingualism in South Africa

Recently Jakes Gerwel (2004a) pursued the question of the survival of Afrikaans in a manner that fits the argumentative pattern outlined above. Gerwel headed a committee on the future of Afrikaans universities in 2001. The hope was that the committee could secure at least two Afrikaans universities within the framework of constitutionalism, social diversity and multilingualism. Unfortunately, at that stage, the rectors of the five historically Afrikaans universities (HAUs) could not agree, which led to further erosion of Afrikaans at these institutions. Against this background, Gerwel continued, the market would run its course. But he also asked:

Maar maak dit uiteindelik nog saak? ... 'n Vraag wat ek my egter dan dikwels afvra, is in watter mate hierdie besinnings oor Afrikaanssprekendheid — die plek, betekenis, rol, toekoms daarvan — hoe-genaamd nog sin het of maatskaplik beduidend is.<sup>17</sup>

According to Gerwel, Afrikaans played a major role in the construction of the identity of the White Afrikaans community under apartheid. In the Afrikaner-nationalist model the Anglo-Boer War also played a role in creating a linguistic identity.<sup>18</sup> This model was applied to other population groups through language identity and the Bantustans, as geopolitical expressions or imaginings (as Kader Asmal has put it). Gerwel continued:

Is een gevolg, of implikasie, of onuitgesproke wens van demokratiese postapartheid-Suid-Afrika dan nie dat ons alle vorme van taalgebonde of taalverwante identiteitskepping verbystee en agterlaat nie? En dus, dat selfs pogings of bedoelings om progressiewe inhoud te gee aan taalgedefinieerde gemeenskappe, eintlik en uiteindelik neerkom op 'n teruggryping, 'n reaksionêre moment in 'n moderniserende samelewing? En dat dit Afrikaanssprekendheid in dubbele maat geld, gegee die politieke geskiedenis van die taal?<sup>19</sup>

17 “Does it matter, in the final analysis ... A question that I ask myself regularly is whether this reflection on being Afrikaans-speaking — its place, meaning, and role — still makes sense or whether it is socially significant.” All translations of Gerwel’s article are mine (with editorial emendations).

18 Gerwel referred here to an influential interpretation of Afrikaner nationalism by Degenaar (1978: 3).

19 “Is one result, or implication, or tacit hope of a democratic post-apartheid-South Africa not that all forms of language-bound or language-related identity creation

Gerwel's article was later strongly contested in *Rapport* by John Miles, Wannie Carstens, Gerrit Brand, and Neville Alexander. In a subsequent article Gerwel (2004b) explained that it is permissible to ask uncomfortable questions and that his argument was not about the death of Afrikaans, but about the creation of a truly non-racial progressive Afrikaans body to take responsibility for the higher functions of Afrikaans — a body that can assist in making Afrikaans attractive to non-white speakers and young people of all backgrounds.

Krog (2004) took up Gerwel's argument about the market, a legitimate body representing Afrikaans speakers. According to Krog, Afrikaans parents who send their children to English schools and universities do so in the name of survival. English is also chosen because there is the perception that Afrikaans is defended by the formerly advantaged, and by conservative language debates. Krog, like Gerwel, bemoans the fact that there is no legitimate representation of Afrikaans speakers in dialogue with the government about an Afrikaans life in a democratic dispensation. Who speaks on behalf of Afrikaans? For Krog, those who were advantaged — established writers, academics, politicians, committees, foundations, and clubs that stem from the heyday of Afrikaans (and she even includes herself and Gerwel) — should not speak. Those who should decide the future of Afrikaans are those who have never had power — the majority of Afrikaans speakers, and specifically the younger generation (brown, white, and black) who will soon be workers and professionals. Can they be Afrikaans and not alienated? According to Krog, language identity in South Africa must address the issues of diversity and democracy. Is it about Afrikaans *per se* or the broader South African issue of different people having to get used to one another? If diversity is the principle, then it should be visible at all the levels where Afrikaans operates (for example, publishing houses, newspapers, radio stations, and television channels). At a "grassroots level" Afrikaans may be diverse, but at a higher level this is not the case. Krog, like Gerwel, is worried about the possible reactionary moment of language-defined communities in a modernising society. Krog, though,

must be overtaken and left behind? And thus, are even attempts to give progressive content to language-defined communities not ultimately a harking back, a reactionary moment in a modernising society? And is this not doubly true in the case of Afrikaans speakers, given the political history of the language?"

ends on a reconciliatory note by referring to Agamben on the oppositions and tensions within a language (innovation/stability or anomia/norm).<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, language activists (*taalstryders*) and new users need one another, if the language is to survive.

### 3. Multilingualism and normative political theory

The specific case of Afrikaans (its history and recent debates on its status as a language in a multilingual South Africa) cannot be divorced from broader discussions about politics and language. In this section an attempt will be made to link the previous discussion with contemporary shifts in normative political theory. In this process some of the issues raised in the previous section (in particular the arguments of Gerwel and Krog) will be revisited. Following Patten & Kymlicka (2003: 10-11), it is possible to link the issue of Afrikaans and multilingualism with at least three normative political perspectives: the issues of diversity, multiculturalism, and deliberative democracy. These normative perspectives are crucial; only by addressing them fully can the important issues of language policy and language rights be addressed.

Public awareness of language issues has been heightened by recent studies predicting the rapid disappearance of most of the world's languages — up to 90% are now considered to be endangered. This is not only true of indigenous languages and the rights and status of indi-

20 The full quotation reads: "Every language can be considered as a field traversed by two opposite tensions, one moving towards innovation and transformation and the other towards stability and preservation. In language the first movement corresponds to a zone of anomia, the second to the grammatical norm. The intersection point between these two opposite currents is the speaking subject. When the relation between norm and anomia, the sayable and the unsayable, is broken in the subject, language dies and a new linguistic identity emerges. A dead language is thus a language in which it is no longer possible to oppose norm and anomia, innovation and preservation. For Latin this happened at the time of the definitive collapse of tension between *sermo urbanus* and *sermo rusticus*, of which speakers are already conscious in the Republican age. As long as the opposite was perceived as an internal polar tension, Latin was a living language and the subject felt that he spoke a single language. Once the opposition breaks down, the normative part becomes a dead language and the anomic part gives birth to the Romance vernaculars."

genous peoples, but is also applicable to such minor languages as Afrikaans. Patten & Kymlicka (2003: 10) write:

Such staggering rates of linguistic loss are also seen as a symbol of the more general crisis of biodiversity. Saving languages is now widely seen as an important part of the larger challenge of preserving bio-diversity.

It is interesting that both Gerwel and Krog have ambivalent feelings about this issue. Both seem to be willing to sacrifice a language if it proves unwilling to transform according to the state's dicta.

In political theory the debate on multicultural citizenship can be interpreted as an attempt to go beyond the stark dichotomies of individual/community and universalism/particularism (the two central bones of contention in the liberal/communitarian debate). The argument here is that citizens in a democracy should not only believe in certain universal values, but also feel a sense of identification with, loyalty to, and membership of a particular national political community. In other words, this model of a citizenship, which can build common civic identities while simultaneously affirming cultural diversity, has been one of the central goals of political theory in the last decade. This insight generated a vast array of new ideas in political theory in the 1990s (for example, theories of liberal nationalism, civic republicanism, patriotism, and civic virtue). These theories share the notion that democracy presupposes certain kinds of communal identities among citizens. They also further are nuanced, because traditional models of citizenship are inadequate for contemporary pluralistic societies. Critics (feminists, post-modernists, post-colonialists, critical race studies scholars, and others) have articulated the need to reform the traditional idea of citizenship if it is to accommodate the identities, aspirations, and capacities of all citizens. This has created a debate on "multicultural" or "group-differentiated" models of citizenship, including the ideas of "strange multiplicity", an "ethos of pluralisation", and the "politics of recognition". It is quite remarkable that the issue of linguistic diversity (multilingualism) has only recently featured on multicultural agendas. Against this background it is clear that multilingualism is central to any theory of multicultural citizenship. Language plays a complicated role with respect to the building of civic identities (Patten & Kymlicka 2003: 11-2).

In South Africa the problem is that the liberal democratic constitution of 1996 emphasises individual rights (with the qualifications of affirmative action and economic empowerment programmes for the majority of blacks) without any indication that some of the central aspects of multiculturalism, as explained, are to be considered. In the place of multiculturalism the present government prefers to use the concept of non-racialism to steer South African society from above. In this process linguistic homogenisation has been one of the central mechanisms for inculcating a common civic identity within a diverse society. Both Gerwel and Krog seem to go along with this. On the other hand, as Patten & Kymlicka (2003: 13) remark, such attempts to impose a common state language can often generate intense resistance, particularly when they involve depriving a regionally concentrated and historically rooted language group of its traditional right to maintain public institutions operating in its own language: "In such contexts, policies of linguistic homogenization can be a recipe for nationalist conflict."

Language issues in normative political theory have also recently emerged in debates on democratic theory. This may be seen in the shift from "vote-centric" to "talk-centric" (deliberative) theories of democracy. It is more and more clear that a vote-centric ("aggregative") conception of democracy is problematic when it comes to democratic legitimacy. The instrumental nature of the vote-centric model makes it very difficult for citizens to try to persuade others of the merits of their views or the legitimacy of their claims. The vote-centric model is basically a mechanism for determining winners and losers, not one for developing a consensus or shaping public opinion, or even for formulating an honourable compromise. As an alternative, democratic theorists are increasingly focusing on the processes of deliberation and opinion formation that precede voting. Here the emphasis shifts from what goes on in the voting booth to what goes on in the public deliberations of civil society. This deliberative turn in democratic theory implies that political decisions are more legitimate when the decision-making process draws on the unarticulated knowledge and insights of citizens that are critically scrutinised in public. A range of theorists (liberals, communitarians, critical, feminists and multiculturalists) have identified the need for greater deliberation as one of the key priorities of modern democracies. The point is to change other people's behaviour through

non-coercive discussion of their claims rather than through manipulation, indoctrination, propaganda, deception, or threats. Deliberative democracy is especially beneficial to minority and/or marginalised groups. If such groups are to have any real influence in a majoritarian electoral system, and any reason to accept the legitimacy of such a system, this will be achieved through participating in the formation of public opinion rather than by winning a majority vote. For Chambers (2001: 99), “voice, rather than votes, is the vehicle of empowerment”. If democracy is to help promote justice for such groups, rather than leaving them subject to the indifference (or even tyranny) of the majority, then democracy will have to be more deliberative (Patten & Kymlicka 2003: 14-5).

It is interesting that Patten & Kymlicka mention only groups such as gays, lesbians, the deaf or indigenous peoples (and not previously advantaged minorities such as Afrikaners). On the other hand, there is now the recognition that any plausible theory of deliberative democracy has to grapple with issues of linguistic diversity (because the models of deliberative democracy mentioned above presuppose that people share a common language). The very process of selecting a single language, though, may be seen as inherently exclusionary and unjust. Where political debate is conducted in the language of the majority group, linguistic minorities are at a disadvantage. Indeed, the hope of achieving a common language seems utopian in such contexts (Patten & Kymlicka 2003: 16).

If one links the latest issues in normative political theory with the foregoing discussion on Afrikaans and multilingualism, then Gerwel and Krog’s arguments can be challenged. As Bosman (2002: 62-3) argues, it is important to rectify old injustices, but new injustices must also be addressed. Speakers of Afrikaans must find a clear understanding of the links between their history, current arguments, and the latest shifts in normative political theory. Only then can issues of language policy and language rights be meaningfully addressed. It is quite ironic that those who defend Afrikaans today are in the best position to defend multilingualism (and by implication also the rights of the nine indigenous languages) in South Africa.

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