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Equal Recognition: The Moral Foundations of Minority Rights

Alan Patten

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Conflicting claims about culture are a familiar refrain of political life in the contemporary world. On one side, majorities seek to fashion the state in their own image, while on the other, cultural minorities press for greater recognition and accommodation. Theories of liberal democracy are at odds about the merits of these competing claims. Multicultural liberals hold that particular minority rights are a requirement of justice conceived of in a broadly liberal fashion. Critics, in turn, have questioned the motivations, coherence, and normative validity of such defenses of multiculturalism. In *Equal Recognition*, Alan Patten reasserts the case in favor of liberal multiculturalism by developing a new ethical defense of minority rights.

Patten seeks to restate the case for liberal multiculturalism in a form that is responsive to the major concerns of critics. He describes a new, nonessentialist account of culture, and he rehabilitates and reconceptualizes the idea of liberal neutrality and uses this idea to develop a distinctive normative argument for minority rights. The book elaborates and applies its core theoretical framework by exploring several important contexts in which minority rights have been considered, including debates about language rights, secession, and immigrant integration.

Demonstrating that traditional, nonmulticultural versions of liberalism are unsatisfactory, *Equal Recognition* will engage readers interested in connections among liberal democracy, nationalism, and current multicultural issues.

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