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Kamminga, M.R.

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Conflicting Values of Citizenship in Europe: A Short Reply

Menno R. Kamminga

University of Groningen

Abstract

The author offers a short reply to De Beus and Mak ('The Missing European Public', 2001). He claims to agree with De Beus and Mak on what are the three relevant values for citizenship in Europe – national identity, European democracy, and global justice – as well as on their conflicting relationship. Against De Beus and Mak, the author maintains that the obligation to global justice is not weakened by the need for a European identity as the precondition of European democracy.

1 A short reply to De Beus and Mak

In the Autumn 2001 issue of *Acta Politica*, my article 'For love of Europe' was published, which discussed the ethical adequacy of the recent case for 'Euro-patriotism' (Kamminga 2001). Particular attention was given to Jos de Beus's argument for a 'quasi-national European identity' as being conducive to the rise of European democracy (De Beus 2001). Drawing on a dualist ethical perspective that advances the moral significance of patriotic loyalty and global distributive justice, I claimed that serious moral objections could be raised to De Beus's plea for 'love of world region'.

In this issue of *Acta Politica*, Jos de Beus and Jeannette Mak join forces to respond to my critique, defending the normative desirability of a 'European public' and outlining a research programme on the empirical question of the likelihood of such a public (De Beus & Mak 2001). This 'European public' is said to consist of an encompassing set of European citizens with free access to a common public sphere, and that cultivates a European culture, develops a European identity, and is engaged in a democratic European politics. Against my position, De Beus and Mak argue that Europeanization of national publics in EU member states can pass the dualist test of 'moral integrity' and global justice.

What should be said about this response? In what follows, I must limit myself to making some general comments concerning what the authors have to say in section 3 of their article, which directly addresses the ethical issues.

But first of all, I wish to express my gratitude to De Beus and Mak for their extensive, even helpful discussion of my criticisms.

I think that substantial agreement exists between the authors and myself about the normative content of citizenship in Europe. First, the morally relevant values involved are 'national identity', 'European democracy', and 'global justice'. Second, these three values are, at least partially, conflicting. We may differ about the extent to which they conflict. Nevertheless, we appear to agree that tensions exist between: (1) national identity and global justice; (2) between national identity and European democracy (the latter requiring a partial 'denationalization' of popular self-images for the sake of a European identity); and (3) between European democracy (requiring solidarity among 'fellow Europeans') and global justice (if only because of the problems of 'moral Eurocentredness' and the 'impossibility of the European egalitarian'). Consequently, citizenship in Europe cannot be about striving for a simultaneous and full realization of even only two of these values, let alone of all three. Moral loss cannot be avoided.

However, what we disagree about is the order of these values. Drawing on cosmopolitan and communitarian ethical theory, in *For Love of Europe* I argued for the plausibility of two *prima facie* moral obligations: those of patriotic loyalty and global justice. The rationality of patriotic loyalty, I claimed, seems to be sufficiently consistent with the value of national identity, but not so with European identity, which is required for the realization of the value of European democracy. Hence I would say that national identity and global justice are the most fundamental values, and that the value of European democracy ranks third. In contrast, De Beus and Mak defend, or should defend, the particular importance of the values of European democracy and national identity, and, in so doing, have to accept that global justice comes at the bottom of their list. Let us say, then, that the most important question our disagreement entails is the following: as both a European identity – the precondition of European democracy – and an acceptable level of global justice are missing today, which value should have priority for citizens in European nation states: European democracy, global justice, or perhaps some compromise of both?

I would argue that a defence of the primacy or the mere equivalence of European democracy to global justice must be built up from the perspective of the citizen. For what must be made clear is that citizens in Europe have a moral obligation to be loyal to the 'European community', the precondition of European democracy. But it is, then, not sufficient to show that for the rise of European democracy such loyalty is required from the citizens. What must be shown is that there is something special about 'Europe' and one's 'fellow Europeans', so that the citizen will acknowledge the existence of special moral obligations. I do not feel that the authors have dealt adequately with this