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Van Parijsian linguistic justice – context, analysis and critiques

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This introduction does three things. We first give an overview of the linguistic justice debate in normative political philosophy. We then situate Philippe Van Parijs’s position within it, by zooming in on Van Parijs’s two major normative claims: the support of the rise of English as the global lingua franca and the defence of linguistic territoriality. Finally, we clarify how each of the essays that follow this introduction relates to those two claims.

Keywords: linguistic justice; Van Parijs; territoriality principle; lingua franca; language policy

In 2011, Philippe Van Parijs has published Linguistic Justice for Europe and for the World. As the first full-fledged normative theory of language policy, it is a landmark publication for linguistic justice theory. This collection of essays contains responses to Van Parijs’s book from some of the most well known theorists of linguistic justice today.

The goal of this introductory paper is to indicate what linguistic justice is about, to sketch Van Parijs’s theory of linguistic justice and to explain the relationship of the ensuing papers to that theory. As we will explain, Van Parijsian linguistic justice rests on two normative pillars: the argument for English as a global lingua franca (EGLF) and the argument that each language group is entitled to a policy of official monolingualism within its territory. Four of the papers following this paper (by Sue Wright, Stephen May, Denise Réaume and David Robichaud) focus on the first pillar. The remaining four papers (by Anna Stilz, Jean Laponce, Daniel Weinstock and Rainer Bauböck) focus on the second, the argument for linguistic territoriality.

Section 1 introduces the recent linguistic justice field, develops a framework for understanding its internal diversity and gives a brief sketch of the theories that have appeared. Section 2 summarizes Van Parijs’s theory within the background offered in Section 1. Section 3 gives an overview of the essays that follow this introduction in this special issue.

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Section 1

The linguistic justice debate is a development within contemporary political philosophy. It is a recent debate. Only in the past decade have several theorists started to come up with some articulations of what linguistic justice amounts to. In 2003, a collection of essays was published on this matter (Kymlicka and Patten 2003). Van Parijs’s *Linguistic Justice for Europe and for the World*, which is the subject of this collection of essays, is the first monograph dedicated to working out a theory of linguistic justice.

Theories of linguistic justice provide an answer to the question: what is the just political management of the presence of different language groups within a political community? This question comprises different sub-questions: Should we go for equality or inequality of recognition between the different languages? Should we go for sub-state territories with monolingual policies, or for states that instantiate statewide multilingualism or for some combination of both? Should linguistic minorities receive special linguistic benefits? Should we endeavour to save moribund languages? Should states have one common language that all speak and understand?

In what follows we first describe the development of this small field of research in political philosophy, before giving a stylized overview of the field by focusing on the most common principles of linguistic justice that have been proposed, and on the normative grounds on which those principles rest.

The linguistic justice debate has two direct antecedents. First, it derives a large part of its driving force from the liberalism-communitarianism debate that animated political philosophy in the 80s. In this debate, communitarians like Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor questioned the individualistic and a cultural atomism of the liberalism of political philosophers like John Rawls or Ronald Dworkin. In contrast to liberal atomism, they set out to develop a more culturally embedded picture of the self, whose identity is not understood as autonomously constructed but rather as largely derived from cultural and linguistic media.

The second and more direct contemporary antecedent is formed by the nationalism and multiculturalism debate. In the beginning of the 90s, important attempts have been made to bridge the gap between liberal thought and communitarian concerns, and to make the liberal premise of individual autonomy compatible with the idea of cultural embeddedness. A crucial figure in this second source of influence for the linguistic justice debate is Will Kymlicka, whose argument is, in a nutshell, that (the liberal ideal of) individual autonomy requires a cultural context of choice (Kymlicka 1995, p. 83). This thesis is also present in some form in the accounts of other liberal nationalists (like Miller 1995, Tamir 1995, Tamir 1995, Moore 2001, Gans 2003) and liberal multiculturalists (like Raz 1995, Carens 2000). Liberal nationalists and multiculturalists are united in defending the moral and political importance of cultural membership, as well as what they see as the political result of this view, the idea that the just accommodation of
cultural difference implies granting cultural minority groups minority (or group-differentiated) rights to state support.

Both ideas are rejected by a wide group of theorists who wish to reject the idea of granting special rights to cultural minorities. Some of these favour the liberal ideal of ‘culturally blind’ political regimes. The best accommodation of diversity and identity pluralism, they say, is a strong separation between the sphere of politics and the sphere of culture and identity. The state should not publicly uphold or prioritize some conceptions of identity or the good life, say the Catholic view, over others that are thereby subordinated. Therefore, what the state has to do is to detach itself, to remain silent over these issues, by not adopting or publicly endorsing any such position at all (see Barry 2001, Kukathas 2003).

Many of the same patterns and positions of the previous two debates are now re-emerging as linguistic justice views. But the linguistic justice debate has one apparent advantage over other debates over identity: it is easier to show for language than for other types of identity-based difference that it is impossible for the state to take its hands off the field of language altogether. In the debate over religious or even national attachments, it is not always easy to argue against the strict separation between the domain of the political and the domain of non-political attachments. The default position in the religious debate, for example, seems to be that the state should adopt a neutral hands-off position. Those who defend special rights for religions then have to come up with complicated arguments for the non-neutrality of states. But this default position is clearly ruled out from the start in the linguistic justice debate. The reason is that states need a way to communicate with citizens: states have constitutions, laws and public schools, and in each case, specific languages must be used for this communication. Kymlicka has argued this most forcefully: ‘The state can (and should) replace religious oaths in courts with secular oaths, but it cannot replace the use of English in courts with no language’ (1995, p. 111). This impossibility is most clearly the case with respect to language: the language public officials use in their interactions with citizens, the language in which the constitution is written, in which the national anthem is sung at official ceremonies, in which passports are printed, in which courts operate, in which public media function, in which primary education occurs, etc. is inevitably situated and not neutral.

So responding to sub-state linguistic diversity with political disestablishment is impossible. States are inevitably linguistically impregnated and we cannot avoid having language policies. As far as linguistic justice is concerned, concepts like ‘benign neglect’ or ‘laissez-faire’ or ‘neutrality’ are confusing (but see Patten (2003) for an account of linguistic neutrality that is not based on disestablishment). We do not have a choice between freedom and regulation, or between neutrality and engagement. Rather we must choose between different forms of regulation and engagement, between different language policies.
Two principles of regulation are common in the linguistic justice field, and most theorists lean towards one or the other. The first principle is to argue for equal treatment of the language groups from the point of view of the state. If the state houses more than one language group, then the ideal is to recognize all of them on a basis of equality. States like Switzerland, Belgium, South Africa, Canada or Spain aspire to realize such a principle (even if existing realities may often be imperfect approximations of that ideal). On this view, states could for instance grant all speakers alike the right to receive state services in their own language. Instruction might have to be offered in all the official languages in public schools. Street signs might all be rendered in those languages and so on. Different modalities exist for the realization of this principle. For example, we could divide the state into multiple territorial units and mandate one official language per territorial unit. Doing so instantiates a territoriality principle, according to which language rights depend on where one is located within the state (as advocated by Laponce (1987), Van Parijs (2011) and Bauböck in this collection). Or we could officially recognize all the official languages in all the units. This then instantiates a personality principle, according to which language rights track the persons wherever they find themselves in the state (as advocated by Réaume (2003) and Patten (2014, pp. 227–231)).

A second position argues for the idea that we should converge on one shared language. States may house more than one established language group, but the state’s recognition should only recognize one of those languages. We may for example choose the language that gives speakers access to the widest set of opportunities (see Barry 2001, Pogge 2003, Stilz 2009), or the language of the majority of the speakers, or the most prestigious language, or the language that is easiest to learn for the other speakers, perhaps because it is linguistically the least far removed from the other languages on average (see Ginsburgh and Weber 2011) and so on.

The particular principle of state recognition that is favoured, as well as the particular language(s) that will be singled out for state support, will depend on an underlying account of the goal of language, of what language is thought to be good for. Linguistic justice theorists usually ground their theories in one or more interests in language, which language recognition can then advance. Within the possible set of interests, there are two broad types, which we can term ‘identity’ interests and ‘non-identity’ interests.

A first position holds that policies should seek to accommodate people’s identity interests in language. Language policies can seek to recognize the identities associated with a specific language. For example, when language groups such as the Québécois are able to claim language rights, or when the EU holds an official multilingual language policy rather than organizing everything only in one language, such recognition is given in order to satisfy people’s identity interest in their own language. This position sees people’s identity interests in language as important enough for language policy to take them into account and to accord language rights to language groups. In
devising language policies, language communities should be treated as communities of identity. Scholars like Taylor (1994), Kymlicka (1995), Patten (2001) and Van Parrips (2011) have expounded this view. When referring to such arguments, we will call them ‘identity’ arguments in favor of recognition. Two such identity arguments stand out since they have become important within the field.

The most commonly referred to identity argument states that language recognition serves an interest in individual autonomy (or freedom). Autonomy, so the argument goes, requires the disposition of a set of options to choose from. Languages and cultures are option packages: they provide us with the options available to us and with the means to evaluate options. Languages and cultures are therefore ‘contexts of choice’. Versions of this argument have been put forward by liberal nationalists and liberal multiculturalists, and in basing a linguistic justice theory on the autonomy argument, scholars directly borrow from those antecedents. The argument has been endorsed by, among others, Taylor (1993, pp. 46–47), Kymlicka (1995, p. 83), Raz (1995) and Gans (2003).

This autonomy idea is based on the view that we perceive the world in the linguistic terms passed on to us by our family and people. As a result, we need access to our language (and our language tradition) to be full human beings, to receive a (first) position. Language groups share similar ways of perceiving the world and of perceiving the value of objects within that world. What Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz say of ‘encompassing groups’ (which often share a language) is also true of language groups on the autonomy argument: they share ‘implicit knowledge of how to do what, of tacit conventions regarding what is part of this or that enterprise and what is not, what is appropriate and what is not, what is valuable and what is not’ (Margalit and Raz 1995, p. 86). As a result, without knowledge of the language spoken in the society in which one lives, or when speaking a language which is too small to sustain a full context of choice, one does not have equal access to a set of choices.

This argument has a substantial philosophical pedigree. The idea on which it relies is that language provides people with the means to fully realize themselves. Why is this so? Because to fully realize themselves, people need a horizon of meaning, and this horizon is always (partly) linguistic. The language we speak in a sense discloses the world to us in a situated way. This idea has been cogently expressed by Gadamer, who has argued that to have a world we need to have a language (1975, p. 411). For Gadamer, and for people in the romantic tradition like Johann Gottlieb Herder and today Charles Taylor alike, language structures the horizon within which our experience of the world unfolds (1975, p. 145). Therefore, ‘language is the real mark of our finitude’, the limits of our language are the limits of our horizon (1976, p. 64). It is only through expressing a thought in our specific language that we are able to come to an understanding of something expressed in another language. Likewise, Herder has argued that if we lose the disposition to think in the language in
which we are brought up, we lose ourselves and also the world (Herder 1877, Vol. XVIII, p. 36).

Why should this language identity interest in autonomy be politically secured? The step from having an interest in my language as the context of my freedom and self-realization to state recognition of this language is predicated on the idea that states must take an interest in providing individuals with the necessary preconditions of realizing themselves as full human beings and of leading a good life. If it is taken for granted that the conditions of individual identity must be politically respected and secured, then we can conclude from the self-realization function of language that the state ought to take the identity and self-realization interest in language seriously.

A second identity interest that can be relied upon by language policy theorists is dignity. Rather than being grounded in a concern about the horizon-structuring role of language that was central to the social theory of Romanticism, the concern about linguistic dignity is older and goes back to the defence of European vernaculars in early modern Renaissance thought. According to this view, using someone’s language or affirming its status is a way of promoting that person or that group’s dignity. A language is a source of collective and personal self-respect and dignity.

According to the linguistic justice theorists who appeal to the dignity interest, people’s self-respect and dignity are often affected by the state of their language and by the esteem their language gets from others. Self-respect and dignity, in turn, are themselves very important goods. They provide us with a basis of self-confidence and a belief in our own worth, which are essential to live a full life.

Many contemporary political philosophers have emphasized the importance of self-respect and dignity to theories of justice. Rawls, for example, has attached great value to the importance of self-respect, which he sees as ‘perhaps the most important primary good’ (1999, p. 386). He also argues that ‘self-respect depends upon and is encouraged by certain public features of basic social institutions’, and he argues that this social base of self-respect is among the most essential primary goods (1999, p. 319). Talking about the social bases of self-respect, he says:

> these bases are those aspects of basic institutions normally essential if citizens are to have a lively sense of their own worth as persons and to be able to develop and exercise their moral powers and to advance their aims and ends with self-confidence. (1996, pp. 308–309)

On the linguistic dignity view, one such ‘aspect of basic institutions’ essential to believing in one’s own worth and to having self-confidence is equal recognition of one’s language. If there are several language groups in a given state, all of which are recognized but unequally so, then this is felt as a direct
assault on the dignity of the lesser-recognized languages. If a language is not equally respected, then the dignity and self-respect of its members are negatively affected. As Van Parijs, who grounds his theory of linguistic justice in the importance of ‘equal dignity’ or ‘parity of esteem’, puts it:

[i]n a situation in which people’s collective identities are closely linked to their native language, there arises a major threat to the recognition of an equal status to all as soon as the native language of some is given what is unquestionably a superior function. (Van Parijs 2011, pp. 3–4)

So people’s self-respect and dignity are often affected by the esteem their language gets from others or from the state. We might then justify different language policies by appealing to the importance of language recognition for individuals’ dignity.

But languages are not only bearers of identity, they can also serve interests not related to identity. For example, sharing a language helps people to understand each other better. Language is then an instrument of communication rather than of identity. So language can also further non-identity-related interests. And theories of linguistic justice can therefore be based on the idea that we should above all promote these non-identity interests. What are these non-identity interests? The three most important non-identity interests that tend to be relied upon in formulating theories of linguistic justice are efficiency, democracy and equality of opportunity, which we discuss in turn.

The ideal of efficiency is to produce what we value using as few resources as possible. Every time we manage to produce the same amount of goods using fewer resources, we get efficiency improvements. There are costs that are intrinsically necessary for the production of certain goods, the production costs, but others can, in theory, be eliminated or reduced. Transaction costs are among those avoidable costs. Language barriers represent obstacles to trade, just like geographical distance imposes costs on exchange of material goods (Barro 1996, pp. 31–32, Grin 2006). By making communication impossible or more costly, language diversity can prevent mutually beneficial deals to be closed. One conclusion can then be to invest in reducing transaction costs. Just like we would invest in ways to reduce transportation costs, we will have to invest in interpreters, translators and other ways to enable communication when confronted by linguistic plurality. Note that those extra costs do not improve the communication and the potential transactions; they only make it possible. A language shared by all actors involved in the production and exchange of goods represents a major improvement in efficiency due to the transaction costs that are reduced or eliminated. So it is also possible to conclude that the best way to reduce the costs of linguistic diversity is to eliminate the diversity and ask all to converge on one shared language. For example, Huntington, reacting against the rise of Spanish in the United States, has
declared that ‘[w]ithout a common language, communication becomes difficult if not impossible’ (2004, p. 159).

The second important non-identity interest is democracy. Language plays a role in the realization of the political value of democracy. For example, citizens need to understand the language in which the laws are written and stated publicly, and the ideal of a deliberative democracy is easier to realize when citizens speak the same language. Some theorists of linguistic justice have therefore argued that a central pillar of a successful theory of linguistic justice is the extent to which it realizes the democratic interest in language. For example, Daniel Weinstock, who combines the democracy argument with the efficiency argument, has argued that ‘the most attractive language policy is one that goes no further in its imposition of the language of the majority than what is required in order for the state to be able to communicate effectively with its citizens’ (Weinstock 2003, p. 267).

In most cases, it will advantage the language of the majority. But it will do so for pragmatic reasons to do with the organization of a functioning democracy, rather than because the majority linguistic community in question is seen as bearing “intrinsic” value, or (…) because the defense of the language of the majority is uniquely just (…) (Weinstock 2003, p. 269)

Likewise, Barry has said that

[p]olitical communities are bound to be linguistic communities, because politics is (in some sense) linguistically constructed. We can negotiate across language barriers but we cannot deliberate together about the way in which our common life is to be conducted unless we share a language. (Barry 2001, p. 227)

Therefore, ‘democratic states that still have an open future [with regard to the possible development of distinct linguistic communities] have every reason for pursuing the course that leads to a linguistically homogeneous polity’ (p. 228).

The third non-identity interest is equality of opportunity. Thomas Pogge has spoken out against the possible dangers that come along with introducing bilingual English/Spanish forms of education in the US. Pogge’s worry is that the Hispanic claim for the recognition and introduction of Spanish into the public educational system might be motivated more by a concern about the interests of the Hispanics as a group rather than about the interests of the children themselves. He argues that the equality of opportunity interest of Hispanic children overrides the group interest in getting official recognition of Spanish on American soil. As a result, he calls for an English-First principle, which he defines as:

the most important linguistic competence for children now growing up in the US is the ability to communicate in English; and the language of instruction in public schools in the US should therefore be chosen by reference to the goal of effectively helping pupils develop fluency in English. (Pogge 2003, pp. 118–119)
This egalitarian reason for engaging in language politics and for possibly rejecting claims for language rights by linguistic minorities is also one of the basic arguments of Barry, who emphatically endorses equality of opportunity as an argument against the multiculturalist case (2001, pp. 103–109). While he, for instance, does not rule out the possibility of ensuring that Welsh is ‘available to be taught in the schools’, he does warn against excessive attention to Welsh (and especially against compulsory education in Welsh), since it would come at the expense of the equality of opportunity of Welsh children (2001, pp. 105–106).

So we have a series of identity-based interests in language that can be served by language policy, with autonomy and dignity as the most important ones. And we have several non-identity interests, with efficiency, democracy and equality of opportunity as the most important ones.

There is an important relationship between these interests on which language policies can be grounded, and the principles of recognition that are selected. For example, if one believes that autonomy is all that matters, then that policy will be favoured that makes sure to distribute the language recognition in such a way that each group has a secure linguistic context. If instead one believes that all that matters is being able to communicate with an as wide as possible group of people globally, thereby endorsing the non-identity argument in communication, then we should also converge on one shared global language, either as a shared native language or as a shared lingua franca. That language could in principle be any language, but it might make sense to choose Chinese (Mandarin), which still outrivals Hindi and English, in terms of number of both native and non-native speakers. Or one might opt for Esperanto, which can be defended for its ease of acquisition. Or it could be English, which Van Parijs argues we should adopt a global lingua franca.

In fact, if a language group shares a state or territory with a larger language group, then all else being equal, on the non-identity view, we should try to induce the speakers of the smaller language to get to know the larger language. Doing so will benefit non-identity-related functions of language such as efficiency, communication, equality of opportunity, stability. Of course, it depends on the selected non-identity reasons: it might be that one selects ‘linguistic diversity’ as a non-identity interest and then the goal can be to recognize multiple languages. But in general that is not what happens: the non-identity interests that are selected are usually majority language or single language favouring interests. The identity view, in contrast, will generally strive to grant similar official status, rights and recognition to both language groups.

Nothing prevents, however, compromise positions between the identity and the non-identity-related functions of language. This is what makes theorists like Patten call the ensuing theory ‘hybrid’ (Patten 2003, p. 386). We shall see in part two of this introduction that Van Parijs is such a hybrid theorist.

Yet, a number of scholars in the linguistic justice field have taken the view that language policies should only seek to satisfy non-identity interests. People
may have an identity interest in language, but, this view stipulates, we should abstain from using public policy measures to accommodate it (especially in cases where it would conflict with the non-identity interests in language). Instead we should regulate language(s) in such a way that the non-identity-related goals are realized. This is what drives the views of, among others, Barry (2001), Pogge (2003) and Weinstock (2003).

Other positions are imaginable: in principle, one might take the view that non-identity reasons do not matter and that we should only care about identity interests. One might also take the view that both non-identity and identity interests matter, but that, in cases of conflict, we should prioritize one of both interests. It is also possible to distinguish the non-identity interests more precisely and then design a priority principle that assigns greater importance to some non-identity interests above others. The same can be done with regard to the identity interests.

No matter what the particular mix of identity and non-identity arguments, however, it is clear that practically all arguments for or against language recognition advanced in this debate situate themselves somewhere on the identity/non-identity axis. All arguments appeal, that is, to the importance of language for individuals and states, whether that importance serves identity or other interests. Language is supposed to be good or important for something else; it is not defended as a good in itself. So the distinction between non-identity and identity approaches to language policy is not equivalent to the distinction between instrumental approaches, which take language to be valuable for something else (whether dignity, equality or some other good), and intrinsic approaches. The intrinsic approach, defended for example by Rockefeller (1994, p. 94) and Musschenga (1998) claims that cultures (or languages) are morally valuable in themselves, independent of the value their members attach to them. This intrinsic argument stands opposed to instrumental accounts, which consider only the individual to be the bearer of rights.

The vast majority of existing political philosophies of linguistic justice, however, do not rest on the idea of intrinsic value, including Van Parijs’s theory. Most theorists take only individuals to be the bearers of rights. The upshot of this is that languages and cultures matter only insofar as they are desired by individuals. In fact, both the non-identity and the identity views we just discussed present distinctive accounts of what it means for individuals to have a language, and thereby already assume that languages are there for the benefit of their speakers.

Section 2

In *Linguistic Justice for Europe and for the World*, Philippe van Parijs builds his theory on two main pillars. The first is a justification of the promotion of English as the emerging global lingua franca. The second is a justification of the
territoriality principle, as a means of realizing equal respect for all speakers. Three principles of linguistic justice – cooperative justice as equal ratio of costs and benefits, distributive justice as equality of opportunity and equal respect as parity of esteem – provide the justifications for these two pillars, and offer normative grounds to settle specific disputes regarding the legitimate limits within which these two objectives can be pursued. These three principles generate a compromise between the promotion of non-identity-based interests through the creation of a lingua franca and the promotion of the identity-based interest in esteem through the territorial protection of minority languages at the local level. Indeed both the identity and the non-identity functions of language are for Van Parijs normatively important, and it is the fact that he works out a compromise between them in the defence of the lingua franca and of territoriality that justifies calling Van Parijs a ‘hybrid’ theorist of linguistic justice.

The universality of linguistic disputes, and the need to come up with a normative discourse to take principled positions in the settlement of these disputes, prompted the writing of a book that is made more necessary as we move forward due to three global phenomena. First, democratization is happening in multilingual countries facing the challenge of bringing together many demoi; second, globalization makes interaction and communication across linguistic borders more likely and more necessary than ever before; third, international migration increases the level of linguistic diversity in most countries and regions of the world. What a just world needs is, in a nutshell and as mentioned, a global lingua franca and a territory offered to each language community able and willing to bear the costs associated with it. Now let’s discuss the normative grounds for these two controversial propositions in turn.

The most controversial argument is presented in the first chapter of the book: not only should we celebrate the ‘natural’ emergence of EGLF, we should also accelerate and promote its spread. Van Parijs, offering more than classic pragmatic and efficiency reasons, morally justifies the promotion of a global lingua franca based on two non-identity reasons. First, sharing a global language may create a justificatory community that will trigger an ethical contagion, a viral awareness of the morally unacceptable conditions some individuals live in. This will happen following a multiplication of encounters in which, in one way or another, citizens of wealthy states will be asked to provide justification for their favorable relative condition. Second, sharing a lingua franca will make it politically feasible to act upon this awareness of immoral global inequalities. A global lingua franca will provide the means to deliberate and mobilize across borders, will contribute to the creation of a global demos.

This common demos, in turn, is a precondition for the effective pursuit of justice, and this fact provides the second fundamental reason why people committed to egalitarian global justice should not only welcome the spread of English as a lingua franca but should see it as their duty to contribute to this spread in Europe and throughout the world. (Van Parijs 2011, p. 31)
Why only English? For efficiency reasons: a single lingua franca is more efficient than many, reducing the costs of learning while maximizing potential communication. Another reason is that EGLF is already in the making. English is the language spoken by the largest number of speakers, and it is the language being learned by the most people. Van Parijs identifies two micro-mechanisms – probability driven language learning and maximin language use – that not only offer an elegant explanation of the rise of English globally, they also offer reasons to expect and predict that the process will lead to the first truly global lingua franca in human history.

First, the probability of learning a language and the level of proficiency people will reach is related to the probability of speaking the language. We can explain this fact by individual motivation: a more useful language will motivate more people to learn it. We can also explain it by opportunities, since having more opportunities to use a language is also more opportunities to practice and acquire language skills. More people speaking English then means more motivation to learn it and more occasions to practice and improve our language skills.

Second, the maximin language use micro-mechanism describes a tendency we have in multilingual groups to use the language that will exclude as few people as possible. We tend to have discussions in the language known best by the conversation participant who knows it least well. When a Mandarin speaker, a Hungarian speaker and an English speaker meet, the level of English of the Mandarin and the Hungarian speakers (who know it less well than the English speaker) is very likely to be higher than the level of any other language that might be shared in some measure between them. The maximin mechanism is indeed bound to favor English in many conversations involving multilingual speakers and that is true whether or not English native speakers participate in the conversation. For example, English is also likely to be the maximin language if the English native speaker is replaced by, say, a speaker of Arabic.

These two mechanisms then combine and compound their effects, multiplying the situations in which English is used between multilingual speakers and then offering more motivation and more opportunities to learn English. A dynamic process is under way and whether we like it or not, English is becoming a global lingua franca. Van Parijs wants this process to unfold as rapid as possible, but the main normative reason to accelerate the dissemination of English as quickly as possible will be presented in the section on distributive justice.

So Van Parijs believes that, for global justice reasons, English should be promoted as the world’s sole lingua franca. However, Van Parijs understands that that cannot be the full story. More specifically, no matter how just it is, the process of creation and the maintenance of the global lingua franca may also bring with it a number of injustices. Van Parijs identifies three potential sources of injustices – unfair distribution of costs and benefits, unequal opportunities and disparity of esteem – related to three dimensions of language –
language as collective goods, as productive skills and as sources of esteem. We will discuss these three injustices and their underlying linguistic dimensions in turn.

Firstly, if we see languages as collective goods, the distribution of the costs and benefits of the creation of the lingua franca seems unfair. The cooperative venture necessary to produce a lingua franca enabling global communication will require from non-anglophones to invest important resources (10,000 h on approximation). Learning English will of course provide benefits to learners, but it will also provide substantial benefits to native Anglophones. When someone learns a new language, it offers this person a vast number of new speech partners, but it also provides the latter with a new potential speaker. The problem is that all the costs of the creation of this collective good are borne by non-anglophones who have to invest in learning English. If every English speaker benefits from the learning of non-anglophones and if only the latter are bearing the costs of the creation of this communication good, the situation is unfair.

Van Parijs proposes to equalize the cost-benefits ratio, asking people to bear costs proportional to the benefits they receive from the creation of the lingua franca. Details aside, it would amount to a considerable contribution from Anglophone nations to others learning English. Since there are no chances of persuading English-speaking nations to accept a tax aimed at subsidizing English learning around the globe, and since such a tax cannot be imposed by force, Van Parijs proposes an interesting alternative: retaliatory free riding. If English countries free ride on the creation of a lingua franca, on the creation of a common good from which they benefit, others should feel free and morally legitimate to free ride in other domains. How? Van Parijs says: Poach the web! Take whatever available from the web and enjoy it without any consideration for intellectual property rights. Poaching the web could suffice to balance the distribution of costs and benefits in the spread of EGLF within fair proportions for every linguistic community.

The second source of injustice is inequality of opportunity, grounded in the fact that languages are productive skills. From a distributive justice perspective, the creation of a lingua franca will create deep inequalities of opportunities first between native speakers and ‘new speakers’ of English, and second between all English speakers and those unfortunate who would not master it. There are unequal opportunities to language, but also, and more importantly, unequal opportunities through language. Individuals would not have the same opportunities to speak the language of their choice, but they also would not have the same opportunities offered by the language they are most comfortable in.

Van Parijs identifies four forms of such unequal opportunities: language-related jobs, linguistic requirements for other jobs, media-amplified audience and face-to-face interactions. First, native speakers will be highly demanded around the globe to fill language-related jobs requiring a native knowledge of
English. An increase in demand for English will amount to an expansion of job opportunities for English native speakers, especially in a globalizing labor market. Second, English will become an asset in many types of jobs not language related. All these jobs will be offered primordially to individuals with a high proficiency in English, favoring once again native Anglophones. Third, more English speakers will mean a wider reach for Anglophone media and more people having access to products made available through these media. Anyone offering services or goods available through Anglophone media, either singing, writing, acting, offering formations or conferences will necessarily benefit from more ‘customers’. Finally, leaving the increase in working and lucrative opportunities aside, we must also mention that every time English will be used as lingua franca among speakers of different languages, those with native skills will be advantaged. They will be more interesting, clearer, funnier, more comfortable than their counterparts having English as a second language and will tend to reap benefits from this competitive advantage.

After assessing different alternatives, including modification of language regimes, transfers on the basis of unequal linguistic capital or unequal capital taken generally, Van Parijs concludes that the best way to deal with these inequalities in opportunities is by ‘accelerating the dissemination of the lingua franca beyond the elite of each country’ (Van Parijs 2011, p. 116). Those competitive advantages enjoyed by native speakers of English will tend to diminish as the whole world population becomes more fluent in English. In addition to classic ways of transmitting specific skills like inclusion of English to school curricula, Van Parijs proposes a way to disseminate English that is as surprising as it is cheap: Ban dubbing! Presenting data showing a higher proficiency in English in countries in which foreign movies are subtitled but not dubbed, he argues in favor of a ban on dubbing. Cultural products offered in English will contribute to increase contacts with English globally, at very low costs making it, unlike education, an affordable solution for every nation around the globe.

The third source of injustice is of an identitarian form, grounded in the link between language and esteem. Both inequalities of opportunities and unequal distribution of costs and benefits can be reduced by accelerating the spread of English. They are transitory problems that would disappear as more people learn English. A third source of concern seems, however, to become more acute with such a rapid spread of EGLF: a disparity of esteem felt by speakers of other languages. If we view languages as identity markers, accelerating the spread of English and granting it a lingua franca status would create injustices in terms of unequal respect and recognition of languages and language communities. By granting a special, global and superior status to English, speakers of other languages might feel depreciated linguistically, might feel threatened by this supercentral language, and might resent the fact of having to bow to Anglophones by speaking their language in a more or less clumsy way in a growing number of social contexts. The emergence of asymmetric linguistic practices, in which the same language is systematically chosen in multilingual
contexts, could be used as a prima facie indication of the presence of such injustices. This sensitive issue is taken seriously by Van Parijs who devotes two chapters, including the longest one of the book, to the just way to deal with this injustice as disparity of esteem suffered by ‘minority’ speakers. It is with this argument that Van Parijs invokes an identity interest in language as a basis for language policy: this argument will ground the second language policy pillar of the book: the defence of linguistic territoriality.

A common way to deal with linguistic diversity at institutional level in multilingual states has been to grant every national language, or a subset of languages, the same public status and offer them equal recognition. Each language is affirmed as having official or equal status, can be used in institutions, and is present in official publications and in important communication between the State and the people. Unfortunately, such a solution is becoming impractical and too expensive for political entities like the EU, and things get more complicated each time we add new official languages. The reason why we need a better way to express equal respect for every language community is not the costs, but rather the lack of a legitimate rationale to justify bearing those costs. The pragmatic rationale behind such policies, namely that each citizen needs to understand the decisions made by the institutions and must be able to express their opinions and be understood by the institutions, is becoming weaker as EGLF spreads. If the use of every official language is not necessary for the institutions to work efficiently internally, and for the population to have easy access to the institutions, we are left with a symbolic recognition of each language community as the sole justification for the heavy sums invested in translation of documents and website and the multidirectional interpretation of debates. The rationale seems too weak to support such costly symbolic recognitions. Language communities should recognize that these resources could be put to better use, and if they do not, they should be free to demand that their vernacular language be used on a par with English as working language inside the institutions, as long as they are ready to bear the costs of this expensive preference.

We need a way to express equal recognition and equal respect for language communities sharing institutions. We need something more than mere symbolic recognition, and we need solutions more practical than granting equal status to all languages or to a sample of them, or making the learning of many or all official languages mandatory. Granting symbolic minority rights to every linguistic community is the wrong way to go. The solution proposed by Van Parijs to ensure linguistic justice as parity of esteem is rather: Make every tongue a Queen!

The proposition is to grant a right to every language community to impose its language in public education and in public communication applying territorial separation and ensuring that each language is dominant on a given territory. There are two important aspects to this proposition. First, the regime...
must be coercive; second, it must apply to a territory and not to categories of speakers.

Presenting a territorial application of a coercive linguistic regime, Van Parijs shows how it is superior to a non-territorial or categorical regime by guaranteeing that the bowing will be reciprocal between language communities and would not be unilateral. Ascribing linguistic rights to individuals on the basis of their ‘linguistic category’ does not ensure that speakers of dominant languages bow to dominated languages in some contexts. Parity of esteem is then better served by a territorial regime than by a personal or categorical regime. Every individual settling on the territory is expected to gain proficiency in the vernacular language, to bow to the vernacular speakers in some contexts. Of course, the state will have to guarantee an easy access to resources in order to facilitate linguistic integration, and some temporary linguistic facilities might be necessary during the transition to the coercive regime. Those measures are made necessary in order to respect equal opportunities for all.

Van Parijs then argues that a coercive regime is superior to an accommodation regime where the state practices a politics of indifference towards the maintenance of language diversity and simply tries to accommodate citizens’ linguistic preferences as long as these impose reasonable costs. The coercive aspect of the proposition is necessary to counter the ‘kindness-driven agony’ of weaker languages. A strong mechanism threatening weaker languages is the fact that people are nice to each other. They will not refuse an interaction on the basis that it would be happening in ‘the wrong language’. If they master the language they are addressed in, even if this language is dominant and a threat to their vernacular language, and even if they have ‘the right’ to an interaction in their vernacular language, they will act nicely and switch to their second language. These noble dispositions add to linguistic agony of dominated languages by reducing the necessity to speak the local language for people settling on the territory and by making it likely that, in time, a more dominant immigrant language takes over territory previously predominantly inhabited by speakers of a smaller, local language. Reducing the opportunities to speak the vernacular language amounts to a reduction in the motivation to learn it and to fewer opportunities to practice it, and therefore to more pressure on dominated languages.

The territorial coercive regime contributes to make proficiency in the local language necessary for every individual settling on the territory, and it is made just by the reciprocal expectations it creates: just as anyone settling on the territory of our language community is expected to learn the vernacular language, we are expected to learn the local vernacular language if we choose to settle in a different language community. If every language community can enjoy a territory on which they are sovereign, we can expect parity of esteem to be attained. A democratic process should determine what communities are to be organized under a territorial coercive regime, local populations being free
to decide if the benefits of parity of esteem offset the costs of linguistic integration of allophones and the expectable decreased prosperity due to a net loss in human capital. The borders of these democratic consultations should be drawn in a way that favors small linguistic communities. What parity of esteem requires a right for each language community to implement a territorial linguistic regime to protect itself if the community so desires.

So far we have discussed Van Parijs’s invocation of two normative language policy pillars – English as the lingua franca, and linguistic territoriality – and the justifications he gives for them: non-identity justifications of global justice, fair cooperation and distributive justice for the lingua franca argument, the parity of esteem justification for linguistic territoriality. Van Parijs ends the book with one other concern that is often discussed in linguistic justice theory: the value of linguistic diversity. Would the creation of a lingua franca and the territorial regime protect enough or too much of the linguistic diversity as we know it?

Van Parijs claims that there is no guarantee that linguistic diversity, as we know it, will be protected. First, not every language spoken will meet the conditions to become a queen on a territory, and second of all not every language community will be willing to bear the costs that comes with the implementation of a territorial regime. We can even expect a reduction of some form of diversity following the spread of lingua franca and the implementation of a territorial linguistic regime.

First, the territorial linguistic regime will impose some pressure on local linguistic diversity. Diversity can be approached at the local level or at the inter-local level. Local diversity refers to the heterogeneity in a given area, whereas inter-local diversity refers to the distinctive composition of different areas. These two levels of diversity are bound to be in tension. Maximum local diversity is obtained when, for example, each language is spoken in every area; maximum inter-local diversity is obtained when the language spoken in an area cannot be found in any other, that is, when each area is unique. If the number of languages spoken in every area increases, this will contribute to local diversity but will reduce inter-local diversity.

Parity of esteem will justify territorial linguistic regimes that will promote inter-local diversity at the expense of some local diversity. It will increase the number of contexts in which the official language will have to be known and spoken. Even provided that multicultural rights guarantee the freedom to speak minority languages and some forms of linguistic accommodations compatible with the dominance of the local language, we can expect a reduction in the opportunities to speak other languages than the official language.

We can also expect a reduction of diversity following the creation of a global lingua franca. In a world where speakers often have competence in many languages, we cannot ascribe speakers to only one language community when quantifying diversity. One way to approach diversity is then to look at the non-coincidence of language repertoires. The spreading of a global lingua
franca will definitely have an impact on diversity so understood since a common language will then be part of a vast number of speaker’s language repertoire.

Is this loss of diversity morally problematic? Van Parijs does not think so. Linguistic diversity is, we must face it, a formidable obstacle to mutual understanding. More diversity means less speech partners and more difficulty to access information. We might think that we dispose of strong arguments in favor of linguistic diversity to offset this problem, but according to Van Parijs we do not. Many arguments have been put forward to argue in favor of the value of languages or linguistic diversity, ranging from languages being sources of knowledge for linguists and a source of revenue for translators, interpreters and many others; over the idea that their lexicon, syntax, morphology tell us about the history of the people who spoke them; to the ideas they are repositories of local and ancestral knowledge, offer a unique world view, contribute to cultural diversity and maintain diverse options and opportunities available for individuals.

None of these arguments are very promising if we want to justify the protection or the maximization of linguistic diversity. The last one is worthy of some consideration, since it appeals to the contribution of linguistic diversity to the enrichment of individuals’ options in leading their lives. However, if linguistic diversity helps protect some cultural specificity, it also makes these different options inaccessible to those who do not master the language. We can then conclude with Van Parijs ‘that no more and no less linguistic diversity is justified than what would be preserved by the territorial regime required on grounds of parity of esteem’ (Van Parijs 2011, p. 193).

The final question of the book is of fundamental importance for the prospects of global distributive justice: would such a level of linguistic diversity represent an obstacle to global justice? A number of studies highlighted a negative correlation between linguistic diversity and different variables related to solidarity. Some explanations have been proposed. Linguistic diversity would create a difficulty of identification between segments of the society, namely the worst offs when they are members of a different linguistic community; it might also make communication less efficient, an obstacle to mobilization and to the diffusion of justice claims across linguistic frontiers.

The territorial regime will contribute to redistributive policies and solidarity on a local level, offering to every member of society a common language serving both as an equalizer of economic opportunities and as a part of a common identity and as a mean to the creation of a demos. Unfortunately, such a regime creates obstacles to solidarity at the inter-local level. Adding to the problems of communication and identification the fact that administrative borders tend to coincide with linguistic borders, and we are faced with three potential sources of difficulty for global institutions of justice. This clash between the results of parity of esteem and the pursuit of global distributive justice is ‘unavoidable. (Van Parijs 2011, p. 203). We can still hope, with Van
Parijs, that the pacification of cultural and linguistic tension through the implementation of the territorial regime, and the creation of a global demos with the emergence of a lingua franca, will both contribute to a stable and satisfactory trade-off between linguistic justice as parity of esteem and global economic equality as real freedom for all.

Note that, with this argument, Van Parijs rejects the case for linguistic diversity on two grounds we discussed before: he rejects the idea that linguistic diversity has intrinsic value; and he rejects the idea that it should be pursued for non-identity-based purposes. Diversity has no intrinsic value since for Van Parijs language only ought to be protected or recognized when their speakers demand such protection; language has no value in and of itself apart from the value it has for its speakers. And he rejects the idea that linguistic diversity is desirable for non-identity reasons: only when speakers claim language recognition for dignity reasons is a particular language worthy of (territorial) protection.

Section 3

Above we have shown how Van Parijs’s normative proposals rest on two major pillars: the defence of EGLF, and the defence of the territoriality regime. The contributions to this volume reflect this double recommendation and focus on either or both pillars. First, a number of contributors (Sue Wright, Stephen May, Denise Réaume and David Robichaud) focus on the defence of English for non-identity purposes, such as enabling global democracy and global justice.

To begin with, Sue Wright’s paper ‘What is a Language?’ invokes some of the recent research in sociolinguistics on English as a Lingua Franca, ‘languaging’ and superdiversity to criticize Van Parijs’s defence of English. She makes a distinction between two ways of understanding English as a Lingua Franca, and supports the second. On the first, English as a Lingua Franca is understood as a language system. On the second, it is understood as a practice, according to which negotiation of meaning and recalibration in response to interlocutors is important. She argues that this alternative understanding of English as a lingua franca makes Van Parijs’s attribution of distributive and cooperative injustice to the use of English as a lingua franca less convincing. Since English is used in new ways, native speaker norms do not necessarily prevail on this view, and the opposition is rather between those who do and those who do not master the practice understanding of language.

She also points to the existence of superdiversity within states to point out that there is no reason to think that the language used will be the territorially supported language, nor that it should be. Instead, speakers will employ flexibility and dialogical strategies of negotiation to find mutual ground. This will often involve a form of English as a lingua franca and other languages depending on the first languages of the speakers.
Like Wright, Stephen May also brings sociolinguistics to the table. He regrets that Van Parijs does not more clearly engage with the work on language and identity that has been going on in sociolinguistics. This shows for example, says May, in Van Parijs’s purely communicative understanding of language, which neglects identity-based dimensions.

It is also at work in Van Parijs’s understanding of a diglossia composed of English for wider communication and a local language. Sociolinguistic research has shown that in diglossic situations, the local language is inevitably seen as delimited and unhelpful, both by its speakers and by others. The result is that the local language tends to dwindle: in the real world, the notion of stable diglossia is a fiction.

Another area of research in sociolinguistics that Van Parijs ignores is the multiplicity of English. May criticizes Van Parijs for working with a monolithic and hegemonic view of English. Rather than just being one thing, there are various Englishes, such as Indian English or Malay English. And it is in fact only the high-status forms of English that may bring upward mobility for speakers. This is another reason why diglossia entrenches rather than reduces existing hierarchies. Since it is the existing elite that profits from English, Van Parijs’s distributive justice case for English is flawed.

May also criticizes the territoriality principle, because it only caters to national minorities who have some territorial majority, thereby neglecting immigrant languages or languages without such a territorial dominance like Occitan, Breton and Frisian.

Whereas Sue Wright and Stephen May work out sociolinguistically inspired critiques of the defence of English, Denise Réaume and David Robichaud tackle the normative, politico-philosophical argument that Van Parijs articulates. In ‘Lingua Franca Fever: Skeptical Remarks’, Denise Réaume takes issue with three steps in Van Parijs’s argument: the reasons for the emergence of English as a lingua franca, the reasons for supporting English, and the case for territoriality. Regarding the first, she argues that pre-existing conditions of power inequality are responsible for the coming-about of English as a lingua franca: the dominance of English stems from the economic, political and cultural power of, first, the British Empire and later the American Empire. Van Parijs may be right about the importance of probability-sensitive learning and the maximin rule, but the reason why these favour English is simply the result of the power that the English-speaking nations have exercised over the world. This casts the unfairness in a new light. If an unfair situation might not exist if not for unjust power relations, then treating it as inevitable will make its emergence a foregone conclusion. It is not clear that we should then just proceed and compensate as much as possible for the unfairness.

Réaume also challenges the two normative arguments for English: democracy and equality. The democracy argument states that a true deliberative democracy requires one shared language. But Réaume argues that this is too demanding. Instead it suffices if a relatively small minority in each language
group is bilingual or multilingual. They could then translate political arguments between language groups. The egalitarian argument states that ensuring everyone speaks English is the best way to prevent a situation whereby only economically advantaged parents can get their children language training. But Réaume argues that advocating English as a means of reaching equality is not going to help because advantaged parents will then ensure that their children simply know English better by sending them to the best schools and so on. So the only thing that would help is to ensure that everyone speaks English just about as well as native speakers do, which is a very ambitious goal. Moreover, since the vast majority of people still live in their own language group, it seems overkill to give everyone lingua franca knowledge.

Finally, she argues that the territorial solution for languages is misguided because it uses local dominance to make up for the fact that another language has the upper hand in all inter-group interactions. We cannot solve the problem of unequal transnational status by giving each group equal national status. The central asymmetry between native speakers of English and others remains.

David Robichaud zooms in on Van Parijs’s argument about the cooperative injustice of English. Van Parijs’s second of the three sources of injustice ensuing from the lingua franca that he discusses in the book (apart from distributive injustice and esteem injustice). Van Parijs understands the cooperative injustice of English in the following way: all non-native speakers of English will learn English as a second language but the native speakers of English do not have to learn a second language. As a result, the non-natives do all the work and the native speakers free ride upon the efforts of the others.

Robichaud sets out to show, however, that the benefits that accrue to the native speakers of English cannot be seen as resulting from freeriding. In his view, cooperative benefits result from an agreement to cooperate. Free riders are people who agree to cooperate but then back down and act contrary to the agreement in the interest of their private concerns. The agreement is crucial. Without it, we could force unsuspecting others into cooperation and accuse them of injustice if they refuse to do so. So there is no a priori duty to cooperate.

Robichaud does not argue that people need to explicitly agree to the cooperation. It would be sufficient to be able to show that a situation without cooperation, where each party strives for his self-interest, would be disadvantageous for them, such that cooperation improves the situation of all. So showing that Anglophones benefit from the world learning English is not enough to conclude that there is cooperation to which Anglophones have a duty to contribute. We would need to show that everyone cooperated in a way that transcends their non-cooperative self-interest. If it is rationally advantageous for the non-native speakers to learn English, as is suggested by Van Parijs since he believes the spread of English is irreversible, then, since no compensation is needed by the native speakers to make it rationally advantageous – it already
is advantageous for them in the absence of cooperative agreement – the native speakers are not freeriding.

So far we focused on Van Parijs’s arguments for supporting English as the global lingua franca and remedying the injustices that occur in its wake. Now, we move on to the second normative pillar of Van Parijs’s theory: his advocacy of the territoriality regime. In Van Parijs’s view, language groups are allowed to ‘grab a territory’ on which their language can become the sole language of public institutions. He defends this regime on the basis of the normative importance of the identity interest in dignity, or esteem, which should be equally provided. Anna Stilz, Jean Laponce, Daniel Weinstock and Rainer Bauböck raise questions in this regard.

In her paper entitled ‘Language, Dignity and Territory’, Anna Stilz zooms in on Van Parijs’s argument for invoking equality of dignity as an injustice that English inflicts upon the non-English world. Van Parijs claims that to systematically expect native speakers of another language to address English native speakers in English can legitimately be understood by the former as an insult. Stilz claims though since the choice for English is essentially driven by the possibility to have an as large as possible group of people to communicate with, we cannot assume that linguistic superiority is involved when native speakers of English communicate with others. It may be the case that people come to feel the use of English by the native speakers as disrespectful. But a feeling of disrespect does not necessarily ground reasonable claims: people may have feelings of disrespect about all sorts of practices that are not objectionable. To distinguish between unreasonable and reasonable claims, Stilz proposes a general criterion: it is reasonable to feel insulted by the choice of a social standard only where background power inequalities between groups have caused the particular shape of the social standard. The problem with English is then not that it is a standard perceived as insulting but that it is a standard that has emerged because a powerful group – the Anglophone countries – have imposed their will through superior power means. So with this background, power inequality criterion Stilz distinguishes reasonable from unreasonable claims to equal dignity and thus provides one way of substantiating Van Parijs’s equal dignity claim.

She then goes on to argue that the linguistic territoriality principle as defended by Van Parijs is not a good way to realize the equal linguistic dignity claim because minorities might end up trapped within the linguistic territories. Instead, she proposes a least cost model for language policy, which starts from a multilingual policy but accepts that states have reason to impose some rationalization in a common language where that rationalization serves compelling public purposes such as economic opportunity or democratic participation. This can for example lead to a policy where a common language is promoted alongside policies that express the equal standing of the diverse linguistic minorities.

Van Parijs often speaks with respect of Jean Laponce, the inventor of what Van Parijs has termed the ‘Laponce mechanism’. The mechanism is based on
the insight of Laponce that ‘the nicer people are with one another, the nastier languages are’, which leads to assimilation pressures from dominant to weaker languages. This Laponce mechanism is for Van Parijs a central reason for endorsing the territoriality regime, as Laponce himself has done before. In his response to Van Parijs in this volume, Laponce by and large agrees with Van Parijs’s invocation of his theory to ground territoriality, be it with several caveats.

Laponce agrees with Van Parijs that aiding the case of English is desirable. But because many do not speak English as a first language in the world, and because the level of one’s knowledge of English matters for social stratification, he argues that English is not advantageous to all. With Van Parijs, Laponce also agrees that a minority language is best protected by coercive territorial authorities. But he differs with Van Parijs on territoriality in two ways. First he makes the language protection dependent on the condition that the authorities of the language community are of ‘good international citizenship’. And second, he argues that referenda rather than ‘objective’ censuses should be used to solve or at least reduce intra-territorial language conflicts, such that some parts of the territory would be allowed to split from the rest of the territory if it votes differently. Finally, Laponce argues that language protection is to be grounded in the right to self-determination, rather than in Van Parijs’s preferred parity of esteem.

In ‘Can Parity of Self-Esteem Serve as the Basis of the Principle of Linguistic Territoriality?’, Daniel Weinstock takes issue with Van Parijs’s justification of the territoriality principle. He first argues that the parity of esteem argument cannot ground the coercive nature of the principle. To show the injustice of a situation, it does not suffice to point to feelings of lack of esteem. One would need to be able to show that a particular institutional setting is responsible for the lack of esteem. Moreover, many instances of assimilation pressure do not result from lack of esteem but from ‘mere numbers’: in mere numbers cases, the assimilation pressure ensues from the simple fact that one of the languages has the greatest number of speakers. While Weinstock thus questions the parity of esteem grounding, he still allows for instantiations of a liberal territoriality principle. Like Laponce, however, he argues that the territoriality principle can better be grounded in the value of democracy and self-determination: just like a group can decide to invest more or less in public services like libraries, it could decide to invest in language protection, provided liberal-democratic limits are respected.

Secondly, he argues that even the coercive version of the territoriality principle proposed by Van Parijs cannot influence language use in such a way that the language that benefits from the principle will no longer be assimilated by another language. Much more illiberal measures would be needed for that, such as initiatives to prevent native speakers from vulnerable languages from accessing stronger languages through the educational system.
In ‘The political value of languages’, Rainer Bauböck argues that parity of esteem fails as a justification for a coercive principle of territoriality. It fails because it cannot itself generate a criterion for deciding which languages will be protected by the principle and which will not be. We need such a criterion because there are many more languages than territories. But the parity of esteem argument cannot provide such a criterion because any language group can claim equal esteem.

Like Laponce and Weinstock, Bauböck instead argues that the (coercive) territoriality principle can be directly grounded in the value of self-government and democracy. Language is not only of value for individuals but also for collectives, because it provides territorial groups with boundaries and enables them to develop a shared public sphere. Bauböck’s justification of territoriality then lies in the role of linguistic territoriality in securing self-government. The only test we can have for the legitimacy of language laws consists in verifying that those laws result from the legitimate exercise of self-government.

The structure of this collection is as follows: this introduction is followed by the eight critical responses mentioned above – the first four focusing on the proposal for English as a lingua franca, the latter four focusing on the proposal of the territoriality regime. The collection concludes with a lengthy reply by Van Parijs to the eight responses to his work.

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