

Linguistic Justice Against Domination

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Linguistic Domination: a moral problem?

- This phenomenon has been investigated primarily by sociologists, and especially **sociolinguists** (Bourdieu, Goffman...).
 - How are the linguistic choices of people formed? How do relations of power function in understanding those choices?

HOWEVER → No one has directly addressed the moral dimension of whether or not linguistic domination is something morally blameworthy.

The fundamental question I address is:

what is morally wrong with linguistic domination?



An issue of justice

Justice is about distributing the benefits and burdens (resources, rights, duties or power) of living together in a fair way.

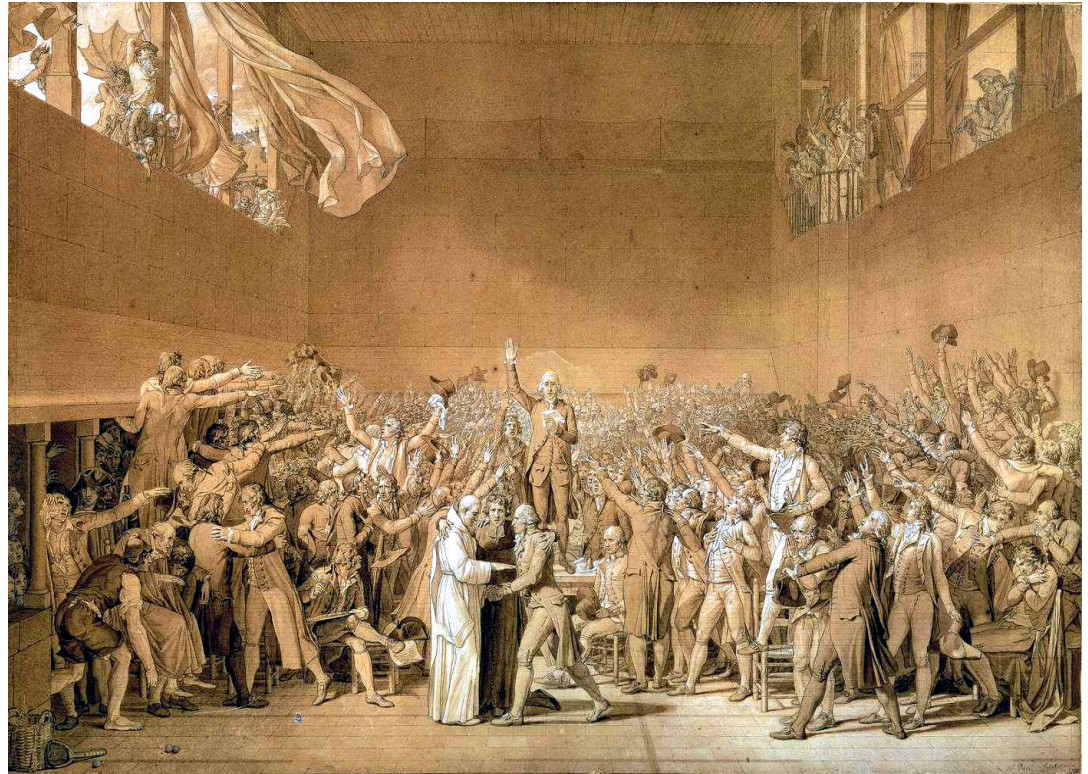
Linguistic justice is about distributing the values that we can derive from language (effective communication, efficiency, economic opportunities, individual dignity, autonomy...) in a just way.



Republicanism

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The republican tradition of thought deals with the question of **freedom as non-domination** (*persons or groups experience domination when they are dependent on a relationship in which a third person or group is able to uncontrolledly intervene over them and their basic liberties without their consent or without taking into consideration their legitimate preferences*).



Republicanism is an old tradition of thought centred round ideals of political liberty, self-government, citizenship, equality and virtue.

Cécile Laborde (2013)



My general republican argument

- I. **Freedom as non-domination** is the maximal aspiration of republican justice.
- II. **Domination is morally wrong because it imperils the opportunity to live a dignified life.**
- III. **Persons or groups experience domination** either when they are dissuaded and/or 'deprived of the ability to form *their* own perspective (*they* are indoctrinated, manipulated, socialized into submissive roles)' (Laborde 2008) or, even possessing this capacity, they are dependent on a social relationship in which some other person or group or political institution exercises uncontrolled interference over their basic liberties (Pettit 2012).



- IV. It is a **basic liberty** both to (a) privately speak one's own language and (b) to publicly speak one's own language if this is shared by a long-settled community of speakers living in a concrete territory.
- V. Therefore, there is *linguistic domination* whenever a person or group are either **dissuaded and/or deprived of the ability to form *their* own perspective over their language use** or, even possessing the capacity, they are dependent on a social relationship in which some other person, group or political institution **exercises uncontrolled interference over their linguistic status, conditions and use.**



So, assuming that linguistic domination takes place when one of the language groups (the vulnerable or minority ones) structurally needs to adapt linguistically to another group, I need to justify...

STEPS II AND IV



STEP II: Linguistic domination and dignity

Dignity is a key concept for both republicanism and part of the linguistic justice literature.

- **Linguistic justice:** philosophers stand for the constitutive value of language as a defence of an equal status for languages in order to give the same respect/dignity to their speakers ('The status accorded to a language is often seen as a sign of status accorded to its speakers' [De Schutter 2018]).
- **Republicanism:** the key point with dignity in the republican thought is this 'can walk tall, and look others in the eye' wielded by Philip Pettit (2012). For republicans, only the free citizen who is not under the mastery or dependence of third parties (non-dominated), is able to live a dignified life.

Our personal self-respect ('to keep our head up before the others') might be dependent on the recognition that our language receives from one's political institutions and co-citizens.

*What make people able to walk tall and look their co-citizens in the eye is the enjoyment of resources and 'security in the exercise of your **basic liberties**' (Pettit 2012) against the evil of domination*



**Domination is morally wrong because it imperils
the opportunity to live a dignified life as a free
citizen**

***What is morally wrong with linguistic
domination?***

*If language (or language use) is a basic
liberty...linguistic domination undermines the
value of individual equal dignity*

**9 BUT...could we consider language as a basic
liberty?**



Step IV: Is language (use) a basic liberty?

Basic liberties are those necessary to be minimally able to autonomously develop our own lives as adults (for example, freedom of speech) and, for republicans, the ones that make it possible for citizens to be free and to lead a dignified life (whatever this life is).

The right question: Is language use (*of one's own language*) a basic liberty?

Yes. We are speaking beings or language animals (Taylor 2016). Language is a fundamental tool for life.

It is a basic liberty to privately speak one's own language ('tolerance-oriented language rights' [Kloss 1977])



But...is it a basic liberty to *publicly* speak one's 'own' language?

Generally speaking, NO.



*It is a **basic liberty** to publicly speak one's own language if this is shared by a long-settled community of speakers living in a concrete territory.*



Why a long-settled community of speakers living in a concrete territory?

Alan Patten (2006), and I agree, offers two reasons:

- *Democracy*
- *Reasonable limited partiality of members of the receiving society regarding their language and culture*



What is morally wrong with linguistic domination?

What is **wrong with linguistic domination** is that it restricts people's freedom **over a basic liberty** (the basic liberty to both *privately* speak one's own language and/or to *publicly* speak one's own language if this is shared by a long-settled community of speakers living in a concrete territory), attacking the very central value of equal individual dignity.

MOREOVER! We can deduce that, for republican justice...

...individuals should be free from domination over their basic liberty of using their own languages (as a moral principle) if we want to attain a linguistically just society with free and equally dignified citizens.



HOW could this principle be institutionally translated?

Multilingualism as a desirable possibility to struggle linguistic domination



Moltes gràcies

Danke

Dank u well

Thank you



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