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**Conducted by
Sophia Moreau and Liam Murphy**

**Speaker: Frances Kamm, Rutgers University
Paper: Diversity and Excellence**



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Diversity and Excellence

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I. Introduction

1. Some Concepts of Diversity

Some (e.g., John Rawls) have thought that freedom results in diversity of views about the good life among people.ⁱ Such diversity is not necessarily seen as an intrinsic good. Indeed, Rawls attributes it to the “*burdens* of reason” with the implication that at least with respect to many things, there would be less diversity if we were better thinkers. Liberal respect for diversity (which is not the same as promotion of it) amounts to a certain type of neutrality by political institutions among the diverse views of a good life. It does not extend to a requirement for nonpolitical institutions and organizations to be neutral about the merits of such different views.

The current promotion of diversity in many societies is about somewhat different matters. Often it is about promoting diversity of “populations” of people in certain types of work, education, or cultural pursuits, where populations are

categorized by such markers as race, sex, sexual orientation, economic class, religion, etc. (and “intersections” of these). Promoting diversity is also often about diversity of goods understood as diverse worthwhile activities or personal characteristics. Since this involves deciding what activities or characteristics are good, it at least comes closer to dealing with the object of traditional liberal concern, namely conceptions of the good life. Diversity of goods also relates to the view (associated with Isaiah Berlin) that goods are irreducibly diverse,ⁱⁱ can be on a par value wise,ⁱⁱⁱ and constitute ways of flourishing that often cannot be combined within one life. There are at least two differences between the liberal political notion of diverse conceptions of the good life and the social/cultural notions of diverse good activities and characteristics: (1) In the social/cultural but not the political, there may be emphasis on standards for judging what is good and how good it is. These judgments may be about something’s (a) intrinsic goodness (or goodness as an end)^{iv} or (b) its instrumental goodness. (2) In the social/cultural but not the political, the diverse goods are thought to sometimes arise not from freedom but from unfreedom. That is, diverse goods may be due to limits set by biology, history, or the imposition of stereotypes according to which some people and not others should focus on achieving or having certain goods.

Openness to including diverse populations or goods in work, education, and cultural settings does not necessarily result in such diversity being present. This

may be because there is no one to take advantage of such inclusion (e.g., if there is in fact homogeneity of population or cultural goods in a particular setting). Hence, the absence of diversity does not necessarily indicate the presence of invidious discrimination leading to exclusion. However, even when there is no invidious reason for lack of diversity, absence of diversity may be regretted by those who think that diversity is itself an intrinsic meta-good. For example, there being no diversity of goods in a society is undesirable when there are a variety of goods and it is not best for only one type of good to be pursued by everyone (e.g., a medical education may be good but not every member of a population should pursue it).^v (This could be contrasted with it being best for all people to pursue good health, other things equal.) However, suppose that a diversity of goods being present in a society were itself an intrinsic meta-good. This would imply, for example, that it is better that different types of goods be instantiated rather than just one even if the total amount of good (independent of the possible good of diversity itself) would be the same with and without diversity of goods. If diversity of goods were a meta-good, this might even imply that it would be better that there be different types of goods instantiated rather than just one even if the total amount of good (independent of the good of diversity) were lower with diverse goods than without it. (This could happen if diverse lesser goods were substituted for a uniformly-present greater good). Nevertheless, even if diversity of *goods* were an intrinsic

good, diversity itself could not be an unconditional good. This is because it would not be intrinsically better if there were some bad pursuits to leaven only one type of good, and it would not necessarily be intrinsically better if there were a diversity of bads rather than one type of bad (holding constant the degree of badness of each type of bad).

2. Some Concepts of Excellence^{vi}

This essay is concerned with some routes by which diversity of populations and/or goods can be (or has been) brought about in contemporary society, and how these routes relate to the value of societal pursuits and characteristics—especially whether or not diversity has any negative impact on excellence, as is sometimes claimed. One approach to achieving societal diversity is enabling all people to achieve their potential when potential varies amongst people. However, “achieving one’s potential” may suggest long-term improvements in one’s abilities. Hence, it may be better to think of an “achieving one’s potential” approach to diversity as seeking to enable people to fully exercise the differing abilities they have at a particular temporal stage.^{vii} Since abilities vary widely, this approach does not emphasize assessing individuals and pursuits according to a standard of excellence that applies across widely varying abilities; it restricts assessment to people within a limited range of abilities. (For example, this approach may judge that a child is excellent at basketball relative to other children but this would not imply that a

professional athlete is excellent if she plays in the same way as the excellent child.^{viii})

By contrast, the approach to diversity and excellence on which this essay focuses involves judging and rating pursuits and characteristics according to a standard of excellence that applies across widely varying abilities, so that the professional athlete's performance is excellent and the child's is not. In this essay excellence will be understood as being, in part, about whether people excel at doing something but also about whether what they excel at is a good (rather than, for example, a worthless activity). I shall consider how some different possible routes to diversity of populations and goods bear on whether diversity is or is not a threat to excellence so understood.

My discussion focuses only on "some routes" to achieving diversity and does not aim for completeness. It aims to make clearer at a fairly abstract level how these ways of achieving diversity differ and the order in which one would expect to find them undertaken. It also aims to make clearer at a fairly abstract level possible relations between diversity and excellence. It is *not* at all an aim of this primarily conceptual discussion to decide how important it is to pursue either diversity or excellence.

Finally, there is the question of the locus of excellence. Especially in the case of education one might focus on (i) the excellence of past performance of candidates for admission to a course of study (henceforth, simply “course”) or alternatively on (ii) the excellence of the students in or produced by the course. Past performance can be a function not only of ability but of access to earlier quality education. For example, students may have great ability but come from poorly funded schools or have had to work part-time while in school. Holding ability constant, they can be judged to be less excellent candidates than students from better-funded schools or who didn’t have to work. This difference may be eliminated in future performance because if admitted to a program, students will have access to the educational infrastructure that could provide them with resources needed for them to excel.

My concern will be with excellence of the students in or produced by the course.^{ix} Similarly, I will be concerned with excellence in actual performance in a job. Hence, expected future performance as a result of being admitted or hired is the criterion for admission or hiring. It is possible that past performance is the best indicator of future performance, However, in the case of education it is currently thought that performance on standardized tests, not (reports of) past performance in school, is the best predictor of excellent performance in further education.^x What

is actually the best predictor of excellence in a course or job is an empirical question that I will not discuss.

In the case of education, another possible locus of excellence is the education provided itself, for example are there excellent teachers and courses. One claim about diversity of student and faculty populations is that the education provided to all students is more excellent when it exposes them to people from different backgrounds with new points of view (that may change as a result of education). A related possible locus of excellence is the profession or activity to which education is meant to lead. For example, excellent medical students might become excellent doctors and yet the profession of medicine might fail to be excellent in the sense that it doesn't adequately take care of all populations needing care. This is because these doctors don't practice in certain communities (e.g., in rural communities). If the excellence of medicine is at issue, some medical students who are more excellent than others qua students might not be as excellent as others qua means to the excellence of the profession. This is so if those others are willing to work in underserved communities without limiting the liberty of professionals to choose where they practice or without being provided with incentives for serving in certain areas (which are alternative strategies for achieving excellence of the profession). Though I will not focus on it, this possible

relation between population diversity in education and excellence of a profession (in the sense described) should be kept in mind.

II. Some Routes to Diversity

1. First Route to Diversity: Different populations should be encouraged to pursue a recognized type of excellent performance.

(A). Imagine a purely hypothetical case in which (i) the reasonable standard of excellent performance in a worthwhile job or course requires doing X and (ii) a type of people A (e.g., men or White people) alone currently do X.^{xi} Suppose also that X is something good to do (e.g., writing well^{xii}). People of type A but not B (e.g., women or Black people) get the jobs or do the course in question because only they do X. Then there is no population diversity with respect to As and Bs in those who do this job or course.^{xiii}

The first route to promote population diversity in the job or course could be (and historically has often been) to encourage Bs to do X. If as many Bs as As succeed in excelling at X, in addition to whatever else is required to do well in the job/course, there may be no problem with population diversity (assuming for argument's sake that As and Bs are the only differentiated members of the total population). This is so if fairness is practiced and it implies (other things equal) that As and Bs equally deserve the opportunity to do that at which they equally

excel when they each equally want to do it.^{xiv} Notice that while an effort to create diversity of populations will require identifying people in terms of their population type (e.g., checking by sex or race to see who is doing the job), the individuals so identified need not identify in a psychological sense with their population type. Hence, at least as a conceptual matter, there need be no development of so-called “group-identity consciousness.” When Bs do that which only As have previously done, they like As may just think of themselves as people who excel at their job/course.

However, if X and other requirements for the job/course remain the same, population diversity does not seem to increase the diversity of goods exhibited in doing the job/course. Nor should it if doing X and other requirements are necessary and sufficient for excelling in the job/course. One possible response to this last point is that even if there are no additional goods exhibited in doing the job/course, there now being diversity of populations doing the job/course is itself a new (meta) good. For example, it might be said that it is intrinsically a good if different populations rather than just As excel at X. This could be because different types of people being capable of excelling in the same worthwhile job/course exemplifies commonality across different populations and this commonality is an intrinsic good. Or population diversity could be instrumentally good because, for example, diverse groups doing a job/course brings them into greater contact with each other

and this may lead to mutual understanding and peace (taken to be intrinsic goods).^{xv} Population diversity could also be instrumental to improving education by exposing students to those with different life experiences and points of view. It might also be said that the visible presence of Bs encourages future generations of Bs to engage in activities requiring X.^{xvi}

Taking diversity as related to these additional goods, in a sense, creates a “new job” (e.g., exhibit commonality, promote intergroup peace, serve as an educational resource, encourage future B applicants) in addition to doing the job/course that originally requires X, and at least some of these new jobs can only be done by Bs. (For example, if the aim is to further intergroup peace between As and Bs, at least some of the people interacting have to be Bs.)^{xvii} Of course, Bs who excel at the original job/course may not themselves be concerned with whether they do perform any of the new jobs (even if they have been selected to do the original job/course because of the new job they will also perform).^{xviii}

It is important when considering the relation of diversity to excellence not to confuse excelling at the new jobs, as worthwhile as they might be, with excelling in the original job/course since doing so would involve equivocating about the object whose excellence we are evaluating.^{xix} To avoid such equivocation, we must be clear about whether we are evaluating the execution of the new job or the execution of the original job/course.

Suppose diversity of populations provides additional goods (either intrinsic or instrumental). This suggests that it would also be good for As to be encouraged to engage in worthwhile activities at which only Bs have heretofore excelled (e.g., increase the number of men who excel at nursing). It also implies that single-race or -sex schools (e.g., all-Black or all-women colleges and single-race or -sex subgroups within a diverse school) lack a good that is provided by population diversity. A lack of concern about diversity in historically less prestigious professions or schools may indicate that emphasizing population diversity is only a means to get access to more prestigious professions or schools rather valued in its own right. Of course, even if population diversity were (or provided) a new good it might be only one type of good. Other goods (e.g., groups of people typically dominated being in a position of control) might be more important and achievable only if there is no population diversity in job/course, possibly justifying its absence. Achieving goods besides those associated with diversity might also justify creating organizations that focus on a particular ethnic identity (e.g., being Polish-American) and admit only those of that ethnicity even when this does not compensate for their being dominated elsewhere.

2. Second route to Diversity: Count excellence in “new jobs” in selecting for admission to course/job positions.

(A). Consider the structure of the discussion so far. In (1) we imagined that Bs as well as As come to do X and all else that is required for the original/job course so there is population diversity. However, it was then suggested that in this situation even if there was population diversity there was no further diversity of goods. To this the response was that population diversity involves other goods (either intrinsically or instrumentally). Providing these goods could be conceived of as new jobs, excellence in which is separate from the excellence in the original job/course.

This may give rise to the thought that achieving these new-job goods could be a further independent aim. However, it seems that it would be necessary to pursue these goods as an independent aim only when they didn't already arise as a side effect of population diversity at the original job/course. This might be because, contrary to the assumption in (1), population diversity hadn't been achieved, due to not as many (proportional to the group's size) Bs as As excel (or having an interest in excelling) at X along with other requirements for the original job. [This would reduce the degree to which population diversity involved the good of commonality (in achieving X).]

In any case, there are two ways to treat a possible new-job good arising from population diversity. One way takes it to be a good that could compensate for the absence of another good (such as maximally excellent performance of X). This

opens the door to compensating for a less excellent performance of X in Bs in order to fill some of the “new jobs” (described above) that only Bs can do. It will then become important to consider the worthwhileness of the new job vs. the old job/course in the abstract but also in the context of the primary aims of a particular institution (e.g. educational or business).^{xx}

Notice also that if someone excels at many new jobs, success at these jobs might be aggregated and so have even more weight against excellence at the original job/course. (This might happen if someone simultaneously excels at promoting intergroup peace, serving as an educational resource, and also encouraging future B applicants.) Furthermore, suppose excellence in a new job was a matter of success in attracting future Bs to the original job/course requiring X and this excellence could compensate for lesser excellence in the original job/course. If the degree of excellence of the future Bs who were attracted was also in part their expected excellence in the new job of attracting yet further future Bs, then there might be no point at which new Bs expected excellence was based solely on their excelling at the original job/course to the degree As do. This would create a problem if it was a primary goal to attract just such future Bs.^{xxi} Indeed, if at some point one is not attracting Bs who are simply excellent at the original job/course, it might not be a new excellence in Bs that they attract other Bs to the

job/course. This is because they won't be attracting those who are excellent in the original job/course (if that was a primary goal).^{xxii}

In deciding whether and how to weigh diversity-related goods against excellence in the original job/course, it is worth considering whether and how one would weigh goods other than diversity against excellence in performance of the original job/course. For example, suppose a B is more excellent at the original job than an A. However, in order for B to do the work they require that childcare be provided. Hence, it would be less costly to hire an A. If it is permissible to put the good of saving money ahead of excellence in the original job (and so hiring an A rather than a B), one might need an explanation for why it would be impermissible to put the good of excelling at a new job ahead of excellence in the original job. (In this particular case, the explanation might be that saving money is a goal internal to the running of a firm. By contrast the good of the new jobs seems like a (possible) social good external to the good of a firm unless, for example, the new jobs help a firm interface with the public thus increasing sales.^{xxiii})

An alternative to treating diversity as a good that could compensate for the absence of, or reduced, excellence in the original job/course is to treat filling the new jobs as a good that determines who is picked for the original job/course only "other things equal." This means that requiring that As and Bs equally excel at X would have lexical priority before giving any weight, for example, to other goods

to which population diversity contributes. On this view, these other goods could still serve as tie-breakers. That is, they would give one a reason to select B who excelled at the original job/course rather than A who performed equally well. However, it would also give one a reason to select a particular B person who excelled at one of the new jobs over another B who did not. For example, it could give one a reason to favor a B who performed the new job of showing that a married B could do a job requiring X rather than hire a different unmarried B.

Of course, treating the (possible) goods gotten from performing a new job even merely as a tie-breaker could create a conflict between (i) increasing the overall goodness of an outcome (by adding the new-job goods) and (ii) taking seriously a possible right of each person to be judged only on the basis of their performance in the original job/course.^{xxiv} This could be an example of a common nonconsequentialist, rights-based objection to producing overall more valuable outcomes. Recall also that we earlier said [in discussing (1)] that a minimal condition of fairness implies (other things equal) that As and Bs equally deserve the opportunity to do that at which they equally excel when they each want to do it.^{xxv} Can one obviate the objection stemming from fairness by noting that As cannot perform the new jobs and so cannot equally excel at the combination of the original and new tasks, thus other things are not equal? In addition, if there are either individual or group rights to compensation or reparations for past injustices,

might these rights reinforce the weight of goods achieved by taking into account performing the new jobs?

Since in this essay, I am focusing on conceptual relations between diversity and excellence rather than diversity (or excellence) and fairness or rights, I will not consider these fairness and rights-related issues further. I just emphasize that excellence at the new jobs is different from excellence at the original job/course and the second route to diversity could lead to conflict between them.^{xxvi}

In any case, it is important to distinguish between not holding it in favor of a candidate (even as a tie-breaker) that they perform a new job and holding it *against* a candidate that they perform a new job. The latter policy could also militate against excellence. For example, holding it against a B that they, but not an A, perform a new job of attracting more Bs to a profession would also conflict with seeking excellence in the original job/course.^{xxvii}

B. So far in discussing the first and second routes to diversity, I have simplified in at least three ways. One way is by limiting the discussion to two types of populations, A and B (even if I were to vary what “A” and “B” refer to). There may be many more types of populations to consider at the same time for purposes of diversity. It is worth noting that in the United States, seeking diversity of populations followed complaints about affirmative action policies that sought to

compensate certain populations for past discrimination due to race or sex. Some considered affirmative action policies to involve “reverse discrimination” because they counted in one’s favor on an application that a someone was a Black person or a woman, seeming to reduce others’ chances for a job/course if they were a white person or a man.^{xxviii} Moving to a policy of promoting diversity as a value that would benefit everyone not just the groups previously discriminated against was thought to be an alternative. The policy of diversity was said to provide the benefit to everyone of, for example, interacting with, and thus learning about, people from different backgrounds with new points of view. It would also directly benefit other populations not associated with past discrimination (narrowly understood) such as those with lower incomes or from particular geographic regions if they were included because they excelled at more new jobs.^{xxix} However, the more population groups that must be included in seeking diversity (for the sake of its (possible) intrinsic or instrumental goods), the more groups there are to be measured for excellence in the original job/course. Suppose the goods attributed to diversity (in doing the new jobs discussed above) were allowed to compensate for reduced excellence in doing X in the original job/course. Then the greater the number of population groups that must be considered, the greater the possibility that those hired or admitted will have reduced excellence in doing X in the original job/course.

A second way in which I have simplified is by assuming all As who excel at X do so equally. But, of course, amongst those who excel at X, some As may do better than other As. If all that is wanted is to preserve excellence, then that is achieved even if the “maximally excellent” are not preferred over the “merely excellent.” If a candidate need only meet a threshold of excellence, this contrasts with (what I will call) a gradient system that prefers the more excellent over the less excellent. Requiring only a threshold of excellence in candidates suggests that it would be wrong to use “insufficient excellence” as grounds to eliminate for the job/course any B who did at least as well as the worst performing A who still excels at X. However, this policy could stand in the way of (i) picking the better excelling Bs over the less well excelling Bs or (ii) replacing any As who excel to a lesser degree with better excelling Bs (thereby increasing overall excellence by picking these Bs).

Seeking excellence will not by itself settle whether to adopt a threshold or gradient system; one could reject the gradient system without being accused of sacrificing excellence (as a threshold). Nevertheless, I believe the gradient system is what is being sought in emphasizing merit-based hiring or admissions and this does not seem unreasonable. Just as an individual who is already excellent at some endeavor (e.g., *cum laude*) can reasonably seek to become even more excellent (e.g., *summa*) so an organization or institution can have a reason to seek the more

excellent job/course candidates. Henceforth, I will assume the gradient understanding of a concern with excellence and whether it conflicts with diversity.

On this assumption, if diversity were only a tie breaker, a better policy concerned with excellence in the original job/course might seem to involve choosing those most excellent at X whether As or Bs, being sure to treat group membership as no more than a tie breaker in choosing between As and Bs at each level of excellence.^{xxx}

One possible problem with this procedure is that the most excellent performance of X may not be necessary for, and might even interfere with, best performance of the original job/course even if excelling to some degree at X is necessary.^{xxxi} For example, suppose X is typing well and one job candidate can type 100 words per minute (wpm) while another candidate can do only 80 wpm. The first candidate excels to a greater degree at X. However, only old typewriters are available at the job and they will not function well at a speed over 80 wpm. It is unnecessary and detrimental to prefer the best typist. This suggests that a better excellence-focused procedure should involve choosing the candidates who excel at X to the degree that is optimal for performing in the original job/course (even if not optimal per se), whether As or Bs, being sure to treat group membership as no more than a tie breaker between As and Bs at each level of excellence (in a gradient system) that is relevant to performing in the original job/course.

On the other hand, suppose population diversity could compensate for lesser degrees of excellence in the original job/course. Then it would be possible, for example, for Bs who score lower than the lowest excelling A to be chosen. In addition, the question could arise as to whether diversity could compensate differently at different degrees of excellence in a gradient system. For example, it might be that diversity could not compensate for not being at the excellence threshold but it could compensate for not being at a higher excellence level. On the other hand, one could be reluctant to allow diversity goods due to being a B to compensate at the highest excellence level if, in a forced choice situation, that led to not admitting an A who would be a genius in the original/job course. I shall not consider these complications further.

A third way in which I have simplified is by assuming that As are judged only by how they do the original job/course and not by doing “new jobs” other than those related to diversity. For example, suppose a new job concerned showing support for one political platform and performing this new job was more than a tie breaker. Then an A who was less excellent in the original job/course than another A or B but who performed the new job that the others did not might be selected for the original job. This too would create a conflict with excellence in the original job/course.

3. Third route to diversity: Generally reevaluate what is or is not necessary and valuable in the context of the original job/course.

A. Suppose (hypothetically) that some but fewer Bs (in proportion to their population size) than As can excel (or have an interest in excelling) at X. Suppose also that there is no focus on “new jobs” that only Bs can perform that get attached to the original activity (as described above). The focus is just on the original activity in which there was an attempt to create population diversity. Then there will not be much population diversity in the activities requiring X.

That some Bs excel at X might make it harder for other Bs to claim that X is emphasized only because As excel at it. In addition, the flip side of being pleased that some Bs excel at X can be disappointment that more Bs do not excel at X because X is (it is assumed) worthwhile. If there is also disappointment that more As do not excel at X [in addition to (proportionally) even fewer Bs], this might indicate that the worth of excelling at X is being held constant and does not change based on who or how many have the capacity for, or interest in, excelling at X. I say “might” because it could still be that X came to be considered valuable to begin with only because at least some As excelled at it.^{xxxii} If this were so, trying to get Bs to also excel at X might be a way of further reinforcing the value of what As value and at which only they have excelled.^{xxxiii}

The third route to further increasing population diversity could be (and historically may have been) to investigate the standard that requires doing X to see (a) whether X (done to any degree) is really a good either intrinsically or instrumentally (e.g., if X were writing straight up rather than with a slant, is that really a good?) or (b) whether X is a good but not relevant in the context (e.g., being musical is a good but is it relevant to an engineering job?).^{xxxiv} Here the attempt to achieve population diversity in an activity could move us from the first standard, that requires excelling at X, to a more activity- or context-relevant standard of excellence that doesn't require excelling at X at all. We can imagine that this new standard requires everything else the old standard required and call the remaining required items Y.

This third route to population diversity attempts to eliminate requirements that are truly irrelevant to excelling at a worthwhile job/course. It should be distinguished from eliminating requirements merely in order to achieve the outcome in which As and Bs can be judged equally good at the original job/course.^{xxxv}

The third route to population diversity may be reversed if there is an attempt to achieve population diversity by counting job-irrelevant goods exhibited only by Bs (e.g., being a good soprano) when selecting among candidates equally good at Y or to compensate for a lower score on Y.^{xxxvi} Considering such irrelevant goods

may be a more problematic way to increase population diversity in a job/course even though it also increases the types of goods exhibited by those selected. Indeed, it is just a version of the excelling at “new jobs” approach discussed in Section (1).^{xxxvii}

B. A problem raised by no longer requiring X based on its (reevaluated) irrelevance to performance of the original job/course is that X could be intrinsically irrelevant and yet instrumentally relevant. For example, suppose that sometimes X is not about doing something but about having a certain characteristic such as being racially Black or White. Suppose further that the general public lacks confidence in Black people and this is all that interferes with Black people having as many clients as White people in a salesperson’s job. White race need not be an intrinsic good in the context of selling things and yet given the prejudice of the general public, it could have a positive effect on sales (which is the original job). In this sense white race is a relevant instrumental good to performance in the original job. Similarly, suppose Black people lack confidence in white physicians. Then even if being Black is not intrinsically relevant to job performance as a doctor, being a Black doctor could be instrumentally relevant to job performance in some contexts. These cases suggest that it may be hard to justify identifying black race as sometimes a context-relevant good without identifying white race as sometimes a context-relevant good as well. Perhaps morally distinguishing the salesman case

from the doctor case depends on it being unreasonable for members of the public to lack confidence based on race in the first case but not unreasonable for them to lack such confidence in the second case?

4. Fourth route to diversity: Recognize new goods in the context of the original job/course.

A. Suppose (hypothetically) that even when X is justifiably eliminated as a requirement for the original job/course, still not as many Bs (proportional to population size) as As meet (or have an interest in meeting) the new standard requiring only Y. A third route to promoting population diversity could be (and historically may have been) to show that Bs excel at context-relevant goods not included in Y. Call these goods, whose relevance to the original job/course had been ignored, Z. For example, suppose (hypothetically) that it had not been recognized that police work benefits from good mediators as well as good fighters. In an educational context, Z might include focusing on new topics or new approaches to traditional topics.^{xxxviii} (I will assume these new goods are not merely instrumental for dealing with public responses or prejudices.)

At this point, finding Z to be a context-relevant good introduces more diversity of goods to be considered in judging excellence of performance in the original job/course. This is in addition to consideration of Z having the effect of

diversifying populations doing the original job/course. If Z is a genuine context-relevant good previously ignored, we should applaud that it has been discovered and regret the state of affairs in which it had not been discovered. This includes the state of affairs in which the first route to population diversity had been a complete success. That is, if Z is really a relevant good equal to or on a par with previously recognized ones, its inclusion should be welcomed even had all Bs excelled at and desired to do X (and Y). (I am here assuming that discovery of new equal or on-a-par goods takes precedence over possible efficiency that might result from focusing on a more limited set of goods.) By contrast, suppose that Bs excelling at Y (which by hypothesis will not occur) were reasonably preferred to their excelling at Z; that raises some doubt that Z really is a good equal to or on a par with earlier ones like Y (putting aside considerations of efficiency that might result from focusing on fewer goods).

However, once Z is recognized as a context-relevant good equal to or on a par with Y, it is possible that some As will also excel at it. Hence, even if there are now new equal (or on a par) ways to be excellent at the original job/course, there is still one standard applied to judge both As and Bs: See if they excel at any of the different equal (or on a par) worthwhile ways of doing the original job. Furthermore, if As turn out to be even better (to a degree relevant to the job/course) at Z than Bs are and population diversity is at most a tie-breaker so as

not to reduce (relevant) excellence, population diversity could decrease with the increase in diversity of goods. In addition, there could be a conflict between diversity of equal (or on a par) context-relevant goods and population diversity even if only Bs could do Z. This is because population A but not B may excel at a greater diversity of other newly discovered context-relevant goods besides Z. For example, suppose five members of population B could alone excel at new context-relevant good Z if they were introduced into a workforce. But they would take the place of five members of population A who are the only ones who could excel at five different, new context-relevant goods if they were introduced into the workforce. One (but not the only) way to create most diversity of goods would be to hire at least four As and one B. By contrast, equalizing the population of As and Bs would increase population diversity but reduce diversity of goods.

B. So far, the discussion simplified by assuming that there is a single degree of goodness present in traditional goods and that the new goods must also have that degree of goodness so that they are equal to (or on a par with) the traditional goods. But among traditional goods relevant to a job/course some may already be better than others so that some traditional goods are not equal to (or on a par with) other traditional goods. This may suggest that it would be wrong to reject a new type of activity or characteristic introduced by Bs that was relevant to the job/course and is at least as good as the worst type of activity or characteristic that

is already recognized as a relevant good when As do it. However, this policy could stand in the way of picking better new goods (to a degree relevant to the job/course) provided by some Bs over lesser new goods provided by other Bs. It could also stand in the way of allowing such better goods introduced by some Bs to take precedence over or replace lesser goods provided by some As thus increasing overall excellence in doing the original job/course. If diversity of population were only a tie breaker, a better policy concerned with excellence would be: Choose the most excellent job/course relevant goods (new or old), whether due to As or Bs, treating population group membership as no more than a tie breaker in choosing between equal (or on a par) job/course relevant goods due to As and Bs. However, if population diversity could compensate for lesser degrees of excellence in job/course relevant goods, then it would be possible for goods brought by Bs that score lower than the lowest goods brought by As to take precedence when selecting people for a job/course.

Finally, note that the fourth route to diversity of goods in an original job/course involves recognizing a diverse set of pursuits or characteristics that are goods independent of whether Bs (or As) excels at them. This is so even if it is Bs excelling at a particular good that first occasions awareness of a new context-relevant good.^{xxxix} It has also been assumed that the judgment that Z and Y are context-relevant goods (and X is not) is made from a point of view that can

appreciate all objective goods. This is to avoid diversity of goods depending on a form of relativism according to which, for example, doing Y but not Z is good relative to As' perspective, doing Z but not Y is good relative to Bs' perspective. and neither perspective is objectively preferable. In particular, I am assuming that from an objective, nonrelativist view, those who excel at fighting in police work can also reasonably appreciate that mediation sometimes has equal merit in police work and those who excel at mediation can also reasonably appreciate that fighting sometimes has equal merit in police work.

5. Fifth route to diversity: Assume that what is a good and what constitutes excelling at the good depends upon population group.

Suppose (hypothetically) there is no (original) job/course-relevant good of type Z at which group B excels (or is interested in excelling) that is objectively recognized as equal to or on a par with (original) job/course-relevant goods of type Y at whose performance only As excel. It might be suggested that the following is a fifth route to combining (i) population diversity with (ii) excelling at a diversity of equally (or on a par) (original) job/course-relevant goods: Simply identify some activity or characteristic at which Bs excel and treat it as being as good as those things that were identified as good regardless of which population excels at them. This would introduce a conceptually different way of judging the worthwhileness of pursuits or characteristics; things would not always be judged good

independently of the population that excelled at them. This way of *deciding* that something is an objective good (or as objectively good as something else) simply *because* it is something at which group B excels is different from coming to *recognize* that something is an objective good after being acquainted with it in group B which excels at it. ^{xl}

Despite its declared aim, this fifth route to diversity does not succeed in identifying diverse equal or on a par goods with which to combine population diversity. It does not seem that something can become a good, whether context-relevant or context-independent, either in itself or instrumentally just because some population (whether A or B) excels at it. It also does not seem that something can become as good as something else (rather than merely good) just because some population excels at it. Arguably this is true both of an activity per se and what the activity produces.

In the discussion of the fifth route, it may be useful to distinguish an activity and what the activity produces for the following reason. It might be suggested that an activity can be good (in at least one respect) if it is an expression of “one’s nature.” Therefore, some activity could be good (in at least one respect) because it is done by Bs if and because it is an expression of Bs’ nature. The same activity could fail to be good if done by As if and because it isn’t an expression of As’ nature.^{xli} One problem with this view is its implication that if it is a person’s nature

to be a rapist (e.g., hypothetically they have an extra chromosome that makes them desire to rape), their being a rapist could be (in at least one respect) good because it is an expression of their nature. This does not seem true. It is not necessarily a good thing (even in one respect) to express one's nature if one's nature is bad. In addition, there is a distinction between (i) it being good (in at least one respect) to express one's nature (which is an activity) and (ii) what one expresses (the product of the activity) being good. For example, perhaps it is good for one to engage in painting if and because one has a natural urge (that others lack) to paint and yet the painting one produces may not be good. Whether the product is good is not a function of whether whoever produces it expresses his nature in producing it. In what follows I will focus on whether someone's engaging in an activity is a good and how good it is by considering whether the product of the activity is good and how good it is.

Consider some particular problems with the purported fifth way of diversifying populations that also excel at producing a diversity of equal or on a par goods. I will use cases involving production of (arguably) greater versus lesser goods (rather than goods versus items of no worth). As background, suppose a job/course requires composing music and that one would justifiably be happy to find that both Bs and As excel at producing Mozart-like compositions rather than at producing Salieri-like compositions because Mozart's music is (objectively) a

greater good (not merely a different type of good) than Salieri's.^{xlii} Suppose one would also justifiably think that as a composer A had declined if they no longer excelled at composing like Mozart (in the sense of producing Mozart-like compositions) but only excelled at composing like Salieri (in the sense of producing Salieri-like compositions).

From these suppositions, it seems we should be able to deduce that if (hypothetically) Bs can only compose like Salieri, Bs composing cannot be as good as As composing like Mozart (in the sense of the quality of their compositions). By contrast, suppose we decide that Bs composing like Salieri is as good as As composing like Mozart merely because it is Bs (rather than As) who do it and this is (by hypothesis) the only way Bs can compose. This implies that we cannot tell whether a composition is excellent until we know whether A or B composed it. Indeed, it seems that if new historical research discovered that Salieri was actually a B (e.g., a woman) while Mozart was an A, it would have been wrong all along to hold that Salieri's music is inferior to Mozart's music. We shall also have to hold that Bs composing like Salieri is better than As composing like Salieri. If not, we shall have to withdraw the assumption that As decline when they change from composing like Mozart to composing like Salieri. If Bs composing like Salieri is as good as As composing like Mozart, it is not clear why it could be reasonable for someone concerned with musical excellence to hope that Bs could change from

Salieri-like composing to Mozart-like composing or to think that something good had happened if Bs came to compose like Mozart rather than like Salieri.

Alternatively, suppose Bs would justifiably be thought to improve in coming to compose like Mozart rather than like Salieri. Then if Bs composing like Salieri were already as good as As composing like Mozart, it seems Bs composing like Mozart would have to be better than As composing like Mozart. This too is an implausible result. (Below I will consider a possible way of dealing with the last issue.)

If these are implications of the proposed fifth route to introducing diversity of populations and equal (or on a par) goods, the route seems somewhat like stereotyping virtues according to population type. That is, Salieri-like composing (given its product) is a virtue for group B but not for group A. This would be in part analogous to a particular gender system assigning different virtues to women (e.g., modesty) from those assigned to men (e.g., assertiveness). One possible difference between gender-stereotypical virtues and the proposed fifth route to producing diversity of equal (or on a par) goods among As and Bs is that it could be acceptable for Bs to compose like Mozart (though by hypothesis they can't) even if not better than if they compose like Salieri. By contrast, in the gender system described it would not be acceptable (virtuous) for a man to be modest nor for a woman to be assertive even if each gender were in fact capable of being either

modest or assertive. A second possible difference is that some traditional gender systems involve a hierarchy of virtues, with the superior virtues (for the most part) pertaining to men. By contrast, according to the proposed fifth route to diversity, there is no hierarchy of excellence when A composes like Mozart and B composes like Salieri.

A third possible contrast is that gender systems could be normative from the bottom up; that is, the ideals for each sex need not be based on empirical facts true of them prior to conformity to the norms. (In reality, the system might make normative what is statistically true about the distribution of traits prior to conformity to the norms.) By contrast, the proposed fifth route to diversity that aims to produce a diversity of equal (or on a par) goods among As and Bs is based on the (assumed for argument's sake) empirical fact that Bs can only compose like Salieri.^{xliii} This is what is supposed to help make it be as good when they produce Salieri-like compositions as when As produce Mozart-like compositions, but since As can (by assumption) compose like Mozart, it doesn't become as good when they compose like Salieri. This suggests that in the fifth route one is judged according to the best of which one's population group is (hypothetically) capable. As such, the fifth route to diversity may have much in common with the type of diversity (mentioned in the Introduction) that calls for enabling all people to exercise to the full their different abilities. It does not use a standard of excellence

that applies across widely varying abilities (e.g., like one that would imply that the professional athlete is better than the child at playing sports). Instead, it restricts assessment to people within a delimited range of abilities (e.g., like one that applies only to children).

Above we mentioned a supposedly odd implication of Bs' Salieri-like composing being as good as As' Mozart-like composing: If Bs, counterfactually, became able to compose like Mozart, how could they thereby improve, rather than merely change, and if they improved, wouldn't Bs composing like Mozart have to be better than As composing like Mozart since their composing like Salieri was already as good as As composing like Mozart? Here is a possible response to the last query: Suppose As being capable of composing like Mozart makes it inferior for them to compose like Salieri. Then if Bs became able to compose like Mozart, they would also be judged by the best they could do. At the very least, their composing like Salieri would be judged inferior once their new abilities to compose like Mozart were in place. Given the new standard applied to them, Bs now composing like Mozart would not be better than As composing like Mozart in the same exact way. This is so even if their composing like Salieri when that was all they could do was (according to the fifth route) as good as As composing like Mozart and even if the switch from only Salieri-capacity to Mozart-capacity were a mere change not an improvement.^{xliv}

This attempt to deal with an odd implication reinforces the conclusion that the fifth route to diversity has much in common with the type of diversity that calls for enabling all people to exercise to the full their different abilities, not using a standard of excellence that applies across widely varying abilities. Those capable of more than Salieri-like composing are judged inferior when they only compose like Salieri but those who can only compose like Salieri are not judged inferior to Mozart-like composers.

Even using a standard of excellence that applies across widely varying abilities, it is true that if Bs can only compose like Salieri, both As and Bs could be equally excellent at being the best they can be at the activity of composing (i.e., exercising to the full their abilities for composing). However, suppose it is the products of composition we are judging. Then it would be an equivocation on the object whose excellence we are judging to think that exercising to the full their abilities for composing implies they could be equally (or on a par) excellent composers in terms of their products as judged by a cross-ability standard of excellence. And it is the cross-ability standard with which we are here concerned (as noted in the Introduction).

Consider some other problematic implications of adopting the fifth approach to achieving diversity of goods and populations. To begin with we might have worried about Bs not composing like Mozart when As do because we attribute it to

poor education and lack of encouragement for Bs by contrast to As. This could indeed be the reason why Bs don't compose like Mozart, but this is consistent (hypothetically) with Bs instead developing another musical good that is correctly judged to be on a par with Mozart-like composing regardless of who does it (e.g., Beethoven-like composing). This on-a-par good might (suppose hypothetically) be developed without good education and encouragement, a product of pure genius. But suppose we equalize good education and encouragement and (hypothetically) Bs' compositions are still like Salieri's rather than Mozart's or Beethoven's. Suppose we then say that Bs excelling at composing like Salieri is as good as As excelling at composing like Mozart or Beethoven (in terms of compositions produced) merely because composing like Salieri is all that Bs can excel at. This would not only require us to withdraw our original concern that Salieri-like composing was due to bad conditions (such as lack of education and encouragement). It would also make it hard to conclude that lack of education and encouragement are bad conditions (even if they are) on the ground that they produce *inferior* things like Bs' Salieri-like compositions. This is because Bs' Salieri-like composition would no longer be considered an inferior thing. Suppose providing the education and encouragement to both As and Bs led some but not all Bs who had composed like Salieri to compose like Mozart. Justifiably concluding that this was an improvement in some would require altering one's view that the

Bs who remained Salieri-like composers were equally excellent composers. One might, for example, face a conflict between retaining pride in the majority of Bs who compose like Salieri and applauding a change in a few Bs that made them compose like Mozart.

Notice that “arranging” values so that Bs’ Salieri-composing is as good as As’ Mozart-composing is different from simply “changing values” for all groups. Such a change in values would imply that any group’s Salieri-composing is as good as their Mozart-composing, no one goes into decline in moving from Mozart-like composing to Salieri-like composing, and no one improves in switching in the other direction. As noted earlier, changing the way we decide on the value of pursuits or characteristics only for Bs can seem like stereotyping virtues according to population. Changing values for everyone does not have that defect since it holds everyone to the same standard, but it has the defect of not distinguishing between excellence and its absence in products of an activity. It can conceal a decline in excellence even when As and Bs are held to the same standard.

III. Conclusion

Using hypothetical cases, I have discussed five possible routes to (i) diversity of populations excelling (in a gradient versus mere threshold sense) at goods and (ii) diversity of equal or on a par goods. The first route involved

encouraging diverse populations to meet traditional requirements for excellent performance of a particular job/course. The second route involved weighing goods of diversity against traditional excellence in a particular job/course. The third route involved removing traditional requirements irrelevant to excellent performance of an original job/course. The fourth route involved recognizing new goods relevant to excellent performance of an original job/course that are equal to or on a par with already recognized goods regardless of which populations excel at the new goods. The fifth route involved recognizing activities and their products as excellent only because they arise from a certain population. I was most critical of the fifth route and, in general, of equivocating about the object whose excellence is being judged especially when tradeoffs are suggested. I didn't find that the first, third, or fourth route conflicted with excellence (even in a gradient sense). I also distinguished (i) a threshold sense of excellence from a gradient sense and (ii) a compensating use of factors other than excellence in an original/job course from a tie-breaking use.

This discussion leaves it open whether there could be (1) good consequences of treating lesser goods as on a par with greater goods and downplaying excellence (e.g., possibly equal self-esteem among people with unequal capacities) or (2) bad consequences of focusing on excellence (e.g., social antagonism between those who can and cannot achieve it^{xlv}). In addition, it was noted that aiming at population diversity in a pursuit, even if such diversity is considered an additional

good on its own, may violate fairness and rights (e.g., to have or not to have one's race or sex taken into account). This discussion was not meant to deal with these other important issues.^{xlvi}

ⁱ See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

ⁱⁱ See, for example, Isaiah Berlin's *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

ⁱⁱⁱ To be on a par is not the same as being equal. If a good of type M were equal to a good of type N, a slight improvement in good M would make it better than good N. But if M were on a par with N, this need not be true (it is said by defenders of the parity relation). For example, suppose the good of Bach's music were equal to the good of Beethoven's music. Further, suppose we discover some compositions by Bach that slightly increase our correct estimation of the good of his music. This would imply that the good of Bach's music is greater than the good of Beethoven's music. That this needn't be so is a reason to think (some say) that Bach and Beethoven's original corpus were not equally good but rather on a par and that they can continue to be on a par despite the slight upward change in the estimation of Bach's goodness. See Ruth Chang's "Hard Choices," *The Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 3(1), 2017: 1-21.

^{iv} Things that are extrinsically good in virtue of their external relations could still be good as ends. For example, that a painting belonged to Degas could make that painting more valuable in its own right in virtue of its relation to him. Nevertheless, I will most often use "intrinsically good" to designate things valuable in their own right.

^v Possibly there could be variety in the meta-good of diversity and some might think it better in itself that there be diverse forms of diversity. I will ignore this complication.

^{vi} More will be said about this in a later section.

^{vii} Michael Otsuka suggested this point.

^{viii} This approach gives rise to such locutions as "excellent for a woman painter" (as opposed to "excellent for a painter.") It might also distinguish "excellent for a painter" from "excellent for one who pursues the arts" (suggesting that painting is an inferior art form). Notice that someone's being an excellent painter in virtue of being a woman (e.g., because only a woman could have had the insight to paint in that excellent way) is different from someone's being excellent "for a woman painter."

^{ix} Judging such excellence in a course is usually done by grades. This is compromised if there is grade inflation or the use of grading systems that, for example, do not allow for an A- (or B-) grade but jump from B+ to A (or C+ to B). (The latter grading system is problematic if it is used in the following way: Suppose someone's grade is above a B+ by enough to have justified an A- (were there such a grade). On account of this, someone is given an inflationary A. The system could also be problematically deflationary if used in the

following way: Suppose someone's grade is above a B+ but closer to a B+ than to an A. Given that there is no A- grade to which the grade is closest, the student is given a B+. Still, in the absence of an A-, it is more accurate to give the B+ than an A. Those who introduced this system may have believed professors would be unwilling to deflate even when this is more accurate than inflating. If so, they were probably aiming for grade inflation.)

^x This was the conclusion of a committee at the University of California. On this see [Opinion | Bring Back the SAT, California - The New York Times](#) 7/6/26

^{xi} Most of the cases discussed in this paper are hypothetical. In part, this is because using hypothetical cases can be, I think, an aid to freedom of thought and objectivity.

^{xii} The content of "X" may vary in different cases to be discussed.

^{xiii} Some might refer to this as Bs being "underrepresented" in the job or course requiring X. But use of the term *underrepresented* implies that it is known that a higher level of representation must be appropriate (e.g., in proportion to Bs part of the total population). I will not begin by assuming that some higher level of representation for Bs in various pursuits is appropriate. Instead, I will accept that appropriate representation could just be whatever representation is a side effect of the absence of unjustified impediments to the presence of Bs in various pursuits.

^{xiv} Note that this minimal condition of fairness is separate from consideration of excellence. Violating the minimal condition of fairness is compatible with achieving excellence (or equal excellence) if Bs are only chosen when there are no excellent (or equally excellent) As. I discuss degrees of excellence in section II.2.(B). I describe the condition of minimal fairness as holding "other things equal" (or *pro tanto*) since special rights or exceptional goods might override the condition. I discuss this further in Section II.2.(A).

^{xv} It may also lead (or should lead) to increased hostility once one becomes better acquainted with others' practices and views. What will occur is an empirical question. What should occur is a normative question.

^{xvi} The latter is sometimes referred to as Bs being "role models" for other Bs. However, if one's sex or race should not limit what one may do, then there is no "sex role" or "race role" for which to be a model. Nevertheless, there are educational or job-related roles, and showing that being a B is consistent with occupying those roles is a way to be a model for engaging in the course or job roles.

^{xvii} Kacper Kowalczyk suggested that considering what the new jobs are can provide a principled answer to why certain population groups are chosen for diversification. That is, if the new job is furthering intergroup peace, then the groups to diversify are those currently at war. If the job is to encourage by example more Blacks to become doctors, then diversity in medical school along that racial category could be needed. However, this still does not provide the principled explanation for wanting to pursue peace (though it may seem obvious) or encourage more Blacks (rather than another racial group) to become doctors. (The latter goal might have to do with improving care for Black patients if Black doctors are more likely to serve them.) Some have suggested that the principle behind picking population groups is that institutions should have

members who “look like America.” This, however, might be interpreted to endorse what was once said by a Senator of a candidate for the Supreme Court: “Even if he were mediocre, there are a lot of mediocre judges...and people. They are entitled to a little representation, aren’t they, and a little chance?” See Jonah Goldberg’s “The Right to be Mediocre”, *The National Review* (June 1, 2009):

<https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/right-be-mediocre-jonah-goldberg/>

^{xviii} It is possible that there are also bads associated with seeking diversity (having nothing to do with reduced excellence). For example, some think it leads people to focus too much on the way they differ from others by race or gender or to identify solely on grounds of common race or gender. This is by contrast to thinking of themselves primarily in terms of shared humanity (even if others do not think of them in this way) or as differentiated by, for example, intellectual or economic interests. Since this essay is concerned with possible conflict between seeking excellence in a job/course and seeking diversity, and one wouldn’t seek diversity for the sake of its (supposed) bad properties, I will just consider some of its (supposed) good properties.

^{xix} It is not at all an aim of this discussion to decide (rather than assume for the sake of argument) whether the new jobs are or are not worthwhile

^{xx} It is not an aim of this discussion to determine the relative worthwhileness of doing the new jobs and doing the old jobs/courses.

^{xxi} It might be suggested that an analogue to this “compensating approach” to diversity and excellence is money and excellence. For example, suppose a rich parent will donate a fortune only to a university that admits their child who would not otherwise be admitted. The child does not quite meet the standard of excellence for being a student but he is, in a sense, excellent in the other worthwhile job of increasing funds available for scholarships to many deserving students. The analogy would break down if (i) the scholarships are distributed simply on the basis of expected excellence in being a student, not the likelihood of further increasing scholarship donations but (ii) diversity was used to sustain further diversity of students rather than to next select only for expected excellence in being a student.

^{xxii} It might be suggested that counting excellence at the new job need only be done once. For example, it need only count once in favor of being a professor at a university that one is a B. This would be enough to make it clear to Bs that the university is open to Bs and those who can be excellent merely at the original job should feel free to apply. The problem is that the first B might be seen as a token appointment rather than a sign of openness. It would be more effective at conveying the message of openness so that Bs are not reluctant to apply (and consistent with excellence at the original job) to advertise that there is a strict non discriminatory hiring policy. Eliminating any indication of whether the candidate is an A or B from applications would further this goal. However, this is probably impossible if interviews and personal essays are and should be part of the application process. The latter are permitted even by the Supreme Court’s decision in *Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*.

^{xxiii} For more on this see discussion of the third route to diversity.

^{xxiv} This assumes that it would not be reasonable to redescribe an aim of the original job as, for example, providing evidence of shared capacities in diverse populations or as furthering inter-group peace.

^{xxv} I distinguish rights considerations from fairness considerations. This is because one might unfairly accord one person their right while not according others their identical right. According a right might or might not take precedence over fairness.

^{xxvi} However, there is another possible excellence-related issue with using population (or other) group markers as a tie-breaker. That is the effect on future potential applicants. That is, future members of the group that consistently loses the tie may lose the incentive to become excellent at the original job/course (expecting to also lose in a tie). This will not affect overall excellence in the original job/course to the extent that this is balanced by (an equal number of) future members of the group that consistently wins the tie having an incentive to become excellent at the original job/course.

^{xxvii} Some have claimed that less excellent white male officers have been promoted in the military over more excellent Black or women officers for such reasons. See “Secret Vetting and Blocked Promotions: Inside Hegseth’s War on Diversity,” *NYTimes*, June 20, 2026

^{xxviii} I say “seeming to reduce” because if one increased the number of positions in jobs/courses in order to produce population diversity, there need be no reduction in the number of positions occupied by As.

^{xxix} This might (and even has) come to include attending to political views of an incoming student body (e.g., making sure there are more conservatives when there were usually mostly liberals).

^{xxx} It would be unfair (other things equal) to use the threshold system for As and the gradient system for Bs (or vice versa). The claim that women or Black people have had to be better than men or White people to get the same positions implies that one system is not being applied to everyone.

^{xxxi} I owe this point to Minsoo Cho.

^{xxxii} I owe this point to Rutger van Oeveren.

^{xxxiii} Here is a possible analogy: engaging in a certain sport which men have engaged in might come to be encouraged for women as a way of admitting them to something thought to be valuable. This may reinforce the idea that this way of doing sport is what is valuable rather than doing a different sport not favored by men.

^{xxxiv} In earlier work on the allocation of scarce medical resources, I introduced the term “irrelevant goods” to indicate that sometimes our being able to produce more health-related good by giving the resource to one candidate rather than another should not bear on our deciding whom to help. For example, that one person would live one healthy day longer than another person could be irrelevant in deciding how to allocate a life-saving scarce health resource offering either person at least five more years of life. (See my *Morality, Mortality*, vol 1 (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1993). In the current discussion, the decision is about who should be educated or employed but the good that is irrelevant is something that is irrelevant to doing well (to any degree) in a particular realm of education or work. That is, the current issue concerning an “irrelevant

good” is not whether a slight difference in excellence in a realm of education or work is irrelevant. The issue is whether some non-education/non-work related good is irrelevant in selecting candidates.

^{xxxv} For an argument (which may or may not be sound) that this occurred in the U.S. military see Brett Stephens, “DEI Will Not Be Missed,” *New York Times*, January 28, 2025. In evaluating such an argument, it should be kept in mind that sometimes standards that require less of everyone merely eliminate requirements that are not crucial to context-relevant excellent performance for anyone.

^{xxxvi} The same could be true of counting certain job/course irrelevant bads against a candidate (e.g., that they don’t vote in elections or give enough to charity).

^{xxxvii} A danger to be aware of in using non work-related characteristics as a way to produce diversity in a job/course is that it might be done because judging Bs only by their Y-performance would threaten some social interest in Bs doing other things that could interfere with their Y-performance. For example, this could happen if being judged for a job only by whether one excels at Y would make it impossible for Bs to also do domestic work that there is a social interest in Bs but not As doing. By extension, there is a danger that if Bs excel at Y by failing to do the non-work related task, the non-work/course related failure (perceived as a bad) will be held against their selection for a job/course. These are possible dangers of emphasizing so-called “work-life balance” (aside from the fact that work is a part of life).

^{xxxviii} Sometimes it can be unclear whether adding new approaches expands the scope of the original job, creates a subfield in it, or creates a new discipline entirely. For example, suppose B philosophers focus on new, not traditional, topics in metaphysics. They will still not be doing traditional metaphysics any more than they have ever done and so it would be wrong to say that Bs have been discovered doing work that it was thought only As could do. It might also be wrong to say Bs were “underrepresented” in areas dealing with traditional metaphysics if, in the absence of unjustified impediments to doing the traditional topics, they choose not to do them. In addition, some traditional practitioners may present arguments against expanding the boundaries of metaphysics to include the new topics, seeing expansion as merely a way to be able to say that Bs too excel at metaphysics. To defend their taking this view, they would also have to agree that had only As worked on the new topics, in doing so As would not be doing metaphysics but a new (and perhaps worthwhile) field of study.

^{xxxix} This might be what occurred when quilting was recognized as a “high art” form only once the quilts of Gee’s Bend African-American women were discovered.

^{xl} Notice that judging that something is good when one group does it but not when some other group does it is a type of relativism. That is, something’s goodness is relative to the group that does it. But this is consistent with something being *non-relatively judged* to be good when one group does it but not when another group does it. That is, it is judged good from all viewpoints, and in that sense it is seen as objectively good, when something is done by one group but not when it is done by another group.

^{xli} This possibility was suggested by Frederick Choo.

^{xlii} I will use Mozart and the so-called “god of mediocrity” (Salieri) as described in Peter Shaffer’s play *Amadeus* as my (perhaps hypothetical) case.

^{xliii} However, there could be a gender system based on the empirical belief that men are not capable of women’s virtues and women are not capable of men’s virtues [the way Bs (by hypothesis) cannot compose like Mozart]. Normatively endorsing the distinct virtues by sex could then be a way of reconciling people to the empirical facts of difference in capacities so that they don’t expect of themselves what they are not capable of. Yet it could also be normative in recognizing that people might (but should not) fail to achieve the virtues of which they are empirically capable (as As might fail to rise above composing like Salieri through lack of attention when composing.)

^{xliv} Kacper Kowalczyk has suggested another way to try to deal with the odd implication. That is, if Bs composing like Salieri were only on a par with As composing like Mozart (rather than “as” good in the sense of “equally” good), then Bs coming to compose like Mozart need not mean that they are better at composing like Mozart than As are. That is, parity between Bs composing like Mozart and As composing like Mozart could still exist if there was only a small improvement in Bs coming to compose like Mozart from first composing like Salieri. (See endnote iii on parity.) A response to this proposal is that the supposed parity between As and Bs (that held when they were respectively Mozart-like and Salieri-like composers) would be upset if the improvement from Bs composing like Salieri to their composing like Mozart was large, as would seem to be the case. If there had previously been parity, the large improvement in Bs who came to compose like Mozart would still implausibly imply that they were then better than As who composed (in the same exact way) like Mozart.

^{xlvi} Perhaps concerns about self-esteem should be dealt with by helping people to focus less on themselves and more on appreciating excellence wherever it occurs. The antagonism also may not be due to recognizing differences in capacities for excellence but to the way other social goods (e.g. income) vary excessively in accord with excellence.

^{xlvii} I am grateful for comments on an earlier draft of this essay to David Schmitz and to members of the Rutgers Philosophy Department Value Theory Discussion Group (some of whose members have been cited in previous endnotes).