

AGAINST DIVERSITY: THE LIBERAL CASE AGAINST MULTICULTURALISM

Introduction: Is multiculturalism good for anyone?

“Multiculturalism has always been an embattled idea,” Salman Rushdie remarked recently, “but the battle has grown fiercer of late. In this, it is terrorism that is setting the agenda, goading us to respond: terrorism, whose goal it is to turn the differences between us into divisions and then to use those divisions as justifications. No question about it: it’s harder to celebrate polyculture when Belgian women are being persuaded by Belgians ‘of North African descent’ to blow themselves — and others — up.”¹

A decade ago Susan Okin asked whether multiculturalism was bad for women. After 9/11 and the war in Afghanistan, the London bombings, rioting in French immigrant ghettos and gang warfare on Australian beaches, we have begun to wonder whether multiculturalism is good for anyone and, most particularly, whether it is good for women, immigrants, people of color and others whom it is supposed to benefit. I shall argue that it is not—and, in particular, that “plural monoculturalism,” the doctrine that a good society ought to be a “salad bowl” where diverse groups maintaining their separate identities interact peacefully without coalescing, is especially hard on members of racial and ethnic minorities.

Multiculturalism is a moving target so our first task, in Chapter 1, will be to fix the target. Sometimes multiculturalism is understood innocuously as genetic diversity, so that a “multicultural” society is one that includes citizens of diverse ethnic origins. In quite a different sense, “multiculturalism” is the doctrine that we ought to understand and value diverse cultures on their own terms rather judging them by our own cultural standards. Finally, multiculturalism is identified with the plural monoculturalist “salad bowl” doctrine. It is multiculturalism understood in this last sense that I argue is bad for (almost) everyone.

This is not to say that genetic diversity is bad: culture does not track kinship. Indeed, plural monoculturalism is objectionable precisely because, when taken seriously, it implies that culture *should* track kinship so that within genetically heterogeneous societies, indigenous peoples, members of racial minorities, immigrants and their descendents, ought to maintain some degree of communal cohesion and cultural distinctiveness. As we shall see, all other things being equal, most members of ethnic minorities do not want to preserve their ancestral cultures within cohesive ethnic communities: ghettos and ethnic enclaves persist because members of ethnic minorities, particularly visible minorities, are effectively locked out of the larger society.

Plural monoculturalism, as I argue in Chapter 2, is bad for (almost) everyone because it restricts choice. All other things being equal, people are better off getting what they want. Circumstances that restrict people’s options and constrain their choices make

¹ Rushdie, S. “What this cultural debate needs is more dirt, less pure stupidity” *TimesOnline* December 10, 2005 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,1072-1918306,00.html>

it difficult or impossible for them to get what they want and so make them worse off. Where multiculturalism is taken seriously, members of ethnic subcultures are locked into unchosen affiliations and obliged to play assigned scripts, some of which are highly restrictive. “Diversity” looks good from the outside—if we are members of the dominant majority, we enjoy the rich mosaic. But if we are on the inside, particularly if we are members of visible racial or ethnic minority groups, the cultural practices that contribute to that pleasing mosaic lock us in and restrict our options.

In Chapter 3, I note that there is compelling reason to believe that all other things being equal most people do not want to live in a plural monoculturalist “salad bowl.” Ethnic and racial identities are *ascribed* that is, they are assigned at birth rather than chosen. Where multiculturalism is taken seriously ethnicity and race are, in addition, *socially salient* and *scripted*: in a multicultural society, we take them to predict, explain and prescribe behavior. Most people do not want others to predict or explain their behavior by reference to race and ethnicity or to be pressured into acting according to associated scripts. That why it is a truism that people “want to be treated as individuals” and not “put into boxes.” Consequently, all other things being equal, most people prefer not to live under the multiculturalist regime. The burden of proof is on multiculturalists to show that things are otherwise—and this they have not done.

Of course, all other things are almost never equal. Immigrants who are not fluent in the language of receiving countries and unfamiliar with the social practices cluster together for comfort and mutual support. Members of cohesive ethnic communities often find the costs of exit prohibitive. People of color face discrimination and exclusion from the larger society. In Chapter 4, I consider a range of cases in which individuals choose to live in ethnic enclaves. Their sincere avowals and choices when exit is feasible strongly suggest that for most the decision to live within these communities is a response to the difficulty of negotiating the mainstream culture, gross ongoing discrimination, exclusion for the larger society and high costs of exit rather than a reflection of their all-things-being-equal preferences.

Naturally different people want different things. Some immigrants and members of ethnic minorities want to assimilate to the dominant culture: the anecdotal evidence and empirical data cited in this chapter suggest that they are in the majority. Others do not, either because they have a taste for cultural preservation or because they benefit from setting up as “community leaders” or putting test cases against assimilationist policies. So adolescent girls like Lila and Alma Levy, the teenage daughters of a secular Jewish lawyer who challenged the French government’s headscarf ban, and Shabina Begum who campaigned, unsuccessfully, for the right wear full Islamic dress at her British state school achieved their 15 minutes of international fame by appealing to the supposed right of cultural self-affirmation.² If however our interest is in promoting “the greatest good for the greatest number” we ought to respect the desires of the assimilationist majority rather

² See, e.g. Schofield, H. “Jewish dad backs headscarf daughters.” BBC News October 1, 2003 for an interview with M. Lévy.

than the interests of self-proclaimed “community leaders” and adolescent girls intent on making countercultural fashion statements.

Communitarians will disagree with the suggestion that ethnic affiliations are simply constraints on individual choice. They hold that kinship networks, ethnic groups and other natural communities in which our character, values and desires are formed are not external constraints but essential components of who we are and argue that persistence of such organic communities enriches our lives and contributes to human flourishing.

The Communitarian picture is attractive so long as we assume that even if individuals do not choose their natural affiliations most prefer to remain in the communities within which they are embedded. In Chapter 5 we will see that this assumption is false. After the internationally notorious honor killing of Fadime Sahindal in Sweden, it was immigrant associations who complained that the government’s well-meaning attempts to respect the cohesiveness of ethnic communities and accommodate immigrants’ cultural practices ghettoized immigrants and deprived them of equal protection under the law. In Canada, largely because of protests by Canadian Muslim women, a proposal to establish civil courts for Muslims operating under Shari’a law, was unexpectedly scotched. When Paris burned, in spite of attempts to spin the riots as the beginnings of a separatist movement or Islamic jihad, residents of immigrant housing projects complained that they were effectively locked out of the mainstream by discrimination and geographic isolation, and that even after two or three generations they were not regarded as fully French.

Many native-born white Europeans and Americans prefer to keep black and brown people at a distance, within their own ethnic enclaves; even more perhaps want to preserve ethnic communities—Indian reservations and Amish settlements, Chinatowns and Little Italys—as specimens and tourist attractions. Most people who live in these communities however would prefer to join the mainstream. From European immigrant housing projects to American Indian reservations and Amish communities to urban ghettos most people who can get out do. Cultural preservationists jack up the costs of exit from these communities at the expense of members who wish to leave and assimilate precisely because they fear, with good reason, that if people can leave, they will and that as a consequence the community will disintegrate. Cultural preservation imposes constraints and burdens on most members of these communities in order to the few.

Unfazed, many multiculturalists, particularly in the US, hold that members of ethnic minorities who prefer to assimilate to the dominant culture should not get what they want. They suggest that the desire of minorities and immigrants to assimilate is a symptom of low self-esteem, a pathology responsible for all manner of self-destructive and anti-social behavior. Drawing on the literature of post-colonialism and identity politics, they suggest that the desire of members of these groups to shed their ethnic identities and assimilate to the dominant culture is a consequence of “internalizing” the values of the oppressor, in particular the oppressor’s assumption that they are inferior.

This is the conventional multiculturalist story: members of ethnic minorities who would, all other things being equal, prefer to retain their cultural distinctiveness, sell out in order to get the perks that come with joining the mainstream; “diverse” individuals who sincerely avow their desire to assimilate to the dominant culture have “internalized the values of the oppressor” and suffer from false consciousness and low self-esteem. Chapter 6, on authenticity, adaptive preference and the self-esteem movement, is a critique of this conventional wisdom.

In the aftermath of 9/11, critics on both the left and the right have been increasingly concerned about the alleged clash of civilizations, which they suggest makes a peaceable, cosmopolitan world order unfeasible and imposes costs on multi-ethnic societies. So on the left, as discussed in Chapter 7, David Goodhart worries that, as a consequence of mass immigration, European societies are becoming “too diverse” to sustain generous welfare states. Though Goodhart’s analysis is nuanced, sociobiology enthusiasts have picked up the ball and run with it. We cannot, so we are told, expect to have a peaceable nation state with a high level of social solidarity, along the lines of Scandinavian countries, if citizens are genetically diverse. Blondes will take care of blondes but, given the facts of human nature, people will not recognize obligations to people who do not look like them. Genetic diversity inevitably leads to conflict.

This is empirically false. Kinship is neither necessary nor sufficient for social solidarity. The bitterest “ethnic” conflicts occur between groups who are genetic kin: south Asian Hindus and Muslims, Slavic Muslims and Christians in the Balkans. Iraqi Arab Sunnis and Shiites. The deepest loyalties hold between people who, regardless of their ancestry or genetic make-up, share a language, a culture, a history and a commitment to common values. Multiculturalism seeks to impose culture, history and values on individuals in virtue of ancestry and genetic make-up—in effect, to make the sociobiological thesis true. It is bad for social solidarity and, more importantly, bad for individuals who want to be recognized for who they are—by their nationality and language, their history, experience and commitments, by their souls rather than their genes.

The alternative to multiculturalism is not exclusion—it is integration and assimilation: inclusion in the most serious sense. The current essay is a defense of the Old Time Religion—as old as Cynics like Diogenes, who proclaimed himself a citizen of the world, as old as the Gnostics who made the case that we were not our bodies, so that ancestry, kinship and ancestral culture were constraints on who we were as individuals and did us harm, and as old as Christianity which absorbed the Hellenistic ideal and, in response to Jewish notions of tribal loyalty, proclaimed that in Christ there was no male or female, Greek or Jew, slave or free. We are, all of us, citizens of the world—and the cosmos. This is the message of liberation.

Chapter 1

What is Multiculturalism?

“Multiculturalism” is, at the very least, ambiguous--and the tendency of many writers to conflate culture and race further muddles the discussion. When people affirm their commitment to multiculturalism, question its legitimacy or reject it they usually have one of the following three items in mind:

Multiculturalism as genetic diversity

Much of the time when people talk about multiculturalism they do not have culture in mind at all: their concern is biology. They understand a multicultural society as one that comprises citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds, where there are no genetic tests for citizenship, and where individuals are not excluded from full participation because of ancestry. Blood-and-soil racists who hold that societies should maintain racial purity reject multiculturalism understood in this way.

Most Americans rightly repudiate blood-and-soil racism. They do not see why it should be a good thing for any nation to be genetically homogeneous. There may not be anything particularly good about a society that is genetically diverse, where there are people with a variety of different skin tones, hair colors and textures, facial features and body types, but there is nothing particularly bad about it either. We certainly ought to reject policies and practices that exclude individuals from full social participation or relegate them to second-class status in virtue of ancestry, ethnic identity or appearance. All people of good will are, in this sense, multiculturalists.

Multiculturalism as cultural affirmation

Multiculturalism as it is often understood however has nothing to do with genetics but is rather a thesis about the value of diverse cultures. A society is multicultural in this sense if it is one where the customs, cuisines and artifacts of diverse cultures are available.

Multiculturalism understood in this way is usually identified with hybridity which is a good thing to the extent that it provides more variety and so more options for everyone. There is no reason to believe that the superficial aspects of Anglo culture are inherently superior and, indeed, compelling reason to believe that some features of that culture, e.g. cuisine, are inherently inferior. Indeed, the one component of Anglo culture that is, perhaps, superior to all comparable cultural products, the English language—“the only language that has a Thesaurus, or needs one”—is a monument to hybridity. In any case, when it comes to the harmless, superficial features of culture—food, costume, music and dance, language, entertainment and crafts—the more the better:

As Susan Okin famously argued however, it is quite another matter when it comes to some of the deep features of culture, including the role of women and practices that enforce that role. Jazz, curry and salsa dancing enrich culture; female genital mutilation, forced marriage and wife-beating do not. Nevertheless so long as we restrict ourselves to

what Stanley Fish has called “boutique multiculturalism” we can probably agree that absorbing features of diverse cultures is a good thing.³

Beyond the boutique however cultural affirmation is at best a mixed bag and cultural relativism, understood substantively as the doctrine that there are no universal or cross cultural standards against which the beliefs, practices and mores of diverse cultures can be assessed, the limiting case of cultural affirmation, is surely a thesis we ought to reject.

Most of us, when we are being honest and consistent, believe that cultural relativism is false. If there are no cross-cultural values or standards then illiteracy is as good as literacy, creation myths are as good as scientific cosmology and human sacrifice is just another cultural practice, on a par with Fourth of July fireworks or Mardi Gras. If literacy, education, scientific achievement, technical sophistication and political liberty are good things—and autocracy, corruption, militarism, tribalism, and racism are bad things, it follows that not all cultures are equal. Literate, cosmopolitan, technically advanced cultures that promote education and value liberty, equality and fraternity are better than illiterate tribal cultures where people eke out a bare living through hunting and gathering or primitive agriculture, wage war with competing clans periodically for land, slaves, beasts and wives, and keep women as chattel. Cultures that tolerate or support these latter practices are, by any reasonable standards, defective.

Defective cultures are like diseases or injuries. We don’t, or shouldn’t, pretend that a broken leg or case of the flu is a good thing to make injured or ill people feel better: we recognize that disease and injury make people worse off and aim to cure them. Pretending that all cultures are on a par does not help people who belong to cultures that make them badly off: the aim should be to cure them, not to pretend that there is no problem—to enable them to escape their cultures, modify them or dismantle them. Arguing that female genital mutilation, wife-beating or honor killing really aren’t that bad, or recommending cultural sensitivity and gradualism to eliminate these practices over time, doesn’t help women who are right now being mutilated, beaten and killed. Cultural relativism doesn’t do anyone any favors—least of all members of the defective cultures whom it is intended to benefit. It is hard to see why anyone with a serious interest in human rights or wellbeing would balk at the suggestion that some cultures are bad for the people who live in them or why the characterization of cultures as “defective” or the opening sentence of this paragraph should have shock value—as they do.

Cultural relativism however gains plausibility in part because we are inclined to identify cultures with habits and practices that are trivial, superficial or innocuous, such as costume, cuisine and language rather than the deep features of culture which are constitutive of serious cultural identity—the structure of the family, the roles assigned to men and women, the obligations imposed by kinship and group membership, the way in which outsiders are viewed and treated, religious convictions and ethical commitments, the value placed on various character traits and practices, assumptions about the value of

³ Fish, S. (1997) “Boutique Multiculturalism, or, Why Liberals are Incapable of Thinking About Hate Speech.” *Critical Inquiry* 23:2

education and the feasibility of social change, and a whole host of practices that manifest and enforce these fundamental features of the culture.

Identifying cultures with their innocuous, superficial accoutrements, we rehearse urban legends about missionaries forcing natives to wear pants in order to “civilize” them and vignettes like the iconic moment in *Bless Me, Ultima* where a child is humiliated on his first day at school when lunch boxes are opened and he has the only tortilla among a class full of white bread sandwiches. Surely, we believe, Western dress is not the mark of civilization and surely minorities should not be sent the message that white bread is superior to tortillas, kebobs or curries. And surely that is true. But the serious critique of cultural relativism is not motivated by naïve or bigoted views about the superiority of white Anglo diet or costume. Rather critics note that the deep features of some cultures are disadvantageous to individuals who live in them.

Cultural relativism however gains further plausibility from the tacit assumption that culture is inextricably linked to the genetic endowment of individual participants so that any suggestion that a culture is primitive, backward or inferior is tantamount to the claim that native members of that culture are genetically defective. Cultural relativism represents an attempt to repudiate that thesis—which enjoyed remarkable popularity among the educated public and academics concerned with the study of human culture as little as a century ago.

We forget that, in the US, during the early years of the 20th Century, eugenics, the program of selective breeding to improve human stock suggested by Sir Francis Galton in *Human Genius* and elsewhere, was in vogue amongst public intellectuals in the US, including Oliver Wendell Holmes, who wrote the majority opinion in the 1927 Supreme Court decision upholding Virginia’s forced sterilization law, and prominent progressives like Margaret Sanger.⁴ The eugenics movement, as it figured in American popular culture during a period of mass immigration, also promoted notions about the relative fitness and social desirability of various ethnic groups—predictably attempting to provide scientific backing for the widespread sentiment that the most recent immigrant groups, Southern Europeans and Jews, were the least genetically fit and the most prone to criminality. Indeed, various authors, including Stephen Jay Gould have suggested that restrictions on immigration passed in the United States during the 1920s were motivated by the goals of eugenics, in particular, a desire to exclude “inferior” races from the national gene pool.⁵

We forget also that contemporary anthropologists’ sympathetic accounts of traditional societies are the result of a revolution in anthropology, a field of study that was born in sin. Before Franz Boas and his star pupil Margaret Mead transformed their discipline, anthropologists influenced by Social Darwinian notions and racist theories were wont to go about collecting bones and measuring the skulls of “primitive” people in hopes of producing what they took to be a properly scientific, biological explanation for

⁴ Bruinius, H. (2006) *Better for All: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and the Quest for Racial Purity*. Knopf.

⁵ “Eugenics,” *Wikipedia*. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenics>

the primitive character of their cultures. This research program was the supposed scientific basis for the ideology of colonialism. “Primitive” people, on this account, benefited from incorporation into superior cultures but only as a permanent servant class insofar as their genetic deficits rendered them incapable of full participation.

Anthropologists adopted cultural relativism as a methodology, if not as a substantive thesis, with the intention of repudiating this research program. Nevertheless, while Boas and his followers were keen to break the link between race and culture, ongoing attempts to show that cultures remote from the Western standard were better than they were cracked up to be suggest that however intent cultural relativists were to repudiate racist theories about the genetic origins of culture, some tacitly assumed that the character of a culture was, at least *prima facie* evidence, of the character of its native members. Racists held that traditional societies were primitive, hence that their members were genetically defective and so suitable subjects for colonization, enslavement or extermination. Cultural relativists, playing *modus tollens* to the racists’ *modus ponens*, argued that members of these societies were not genetically defective hence that their cultures could not be primitive or defective, and sought to make their case by showing that such cultures were as complex and sophisticated as supposedly more advanced cultures and, in many respects, kinder, gentler and more conducive to human flourishing.

Given the worry that bad behavior and cultural deficits were at least *prima facie* evidence of racial inferiority, the suggestion that some cultures were better than others and, in particular, that the cultures of colonized peoples deviated from the sunny picture suggested by Margaret Mead’s South Sea fantasies was, as Jared Diamond suggests, a dangerous idea. Diamond notes, for example, that the idea that tribal peoples often damage their environments and make war is dangerous:

Why is this idea dangerous? Because too many people today believe that a reason not to mistreat tribal people is that they are too nice or wise or peaceful to do those evil things, which only we evil citizens of state governments do. The idea is dangerous because, if you believe that that's the reason not to mistreat tribal peoples, then proof of the idea's truth would suggest that it's OK to mistreat them. In fact, the evidence seems to me overwhelming that the dangerous idea is true. But we should treat other people well because of ethical reasons, not because of naïve anthropological theories that will almost surely prove false.⁶

Of course there was no compelling reason to take the hypothesis that culture was biologically based seriously in the first place or to assume that we should take such behavior as justification for conquering or colonizing them. There are a variety of historical and geographical reasons why some cultures progress while others don’t, why some succeed and others fail, as Diamond suggested in *Guns, Germs and Steel* and elsewhere.⁷

⁶ http://www.edge.org/q2006/q06_print.html#diamond

⁷ Diamond, J. (1999) *Guns, Germs and Steel*. W. W. Norton & Co.

Nevertheless, the idea that some cultures are simply better than others and the notion that individuals would be better off jettisoning the beliefs and practices of their native cultures is so firmly associated with racist notions and the colonialist program, that we are reluctant to criticize cultural practices that are inconsistent with our most fundamental ethical commitments or to promote the assimilation of immigrants and indigenous minorities to dominant national cultures. This is perhaps what motivates cultural affirmation pushed to the limit of cultural relativism and, on the domestic front, supports multiculturalism understood as plural monoculturalism.

Multiculturalism as plural monoculturalism

Plural monoculturalism is the doctrine that individuals ought to remain faithful to their ancestral cultures and that a good society ought to be a “salad bowl” where diverse groups maintaining their separate identities interact peacefully without coalescing. It is the doctrine that that individuals, in the interests of “authenticity,” ought to maintain, reestablish, or invent, connections to their ancestral cultures, however remote, that the development and persistence of ethnic communities should be encouraged, and that individuals should identify—and be identified—with their ancestral cultures unto the second, third and nth generations. This is the version of multiculturalism that I shall argue, is bad for (almost) everyone.

Some of the consequences of plural monoculturalism have been disastrous. Consider policies forbidding transracial adoptions, promoted by the national Association of Black Social Workers in the interest of cultural preservation, described by black legal scholar Richard Thompson Ford:

The presumptions underlying race-matching policies are sharply articulated in a 1972 NABSW [National Association of Black Social Workers] resolution, which read in part, ‘Black children belong physically, and psychologically and culturally in black families in order that they receive the total sense of themselves and develop a sound projection of their future...black children in white homes are cut off from the healthy development of themselves as black people.’⁸

Citing a range of cases in which agencies operating according to the canons of multiculturalism sought to block transracial adoptions, against the express wishes of birth parents and without any serious consideration for what might reasonably be construed as the welfare of the children involved, Ford notes that the policy assumed “a racial and almost biological conception of cultural difference, something that one carries in the blood” and permanently relegated most black children put up for adoption to the foster care system.⁹

The only rationale for this program is what might be called Serious Cultural Genetics, the assumption that culture is, in some sense, genetically coded so that

⁸ Ford (2005), pp. 83

⁹ Ford (2005), p. 86

individuals, regardless of their desires or the cultures in which they are in fact embedded, are biologically bound to ancestral cultures which, Ford suggests, has its roots in German Romanticism. Serious Cultural Genetics is immune to empirical falsification but given its history, is a racist theory that most of us would actively repudiate.

Although it seems unlikely that most multiculturalists are serious blood and soil racists, many seem to believe that the doctrine of inherent cultural differences between members of different races is, at the very least, a good myth, which should be cultivated, and that even where appropriate cultural practices do not exist they ought to be invented. In this spirit, during the 1960s American sociologist Ron Karenga invented Kwanzaa to provide black Americans with an African cultural heritage. Along the same lines, Susan B. Anthony is supposed to have remarked that even if the state of primitive matriarchy postulated by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other early feminists were not an historical reality it was good to believe that such a state had existed because it “encouraged women.”

Needless to say, while some members of ethnic minorities—in particular members of the “helping professions” and individuals set up as “community leaders” who got funding for multicultural projects—supported plural monoculturalism and the myth of cultural genetics, the most enthusiastic promoters were, predictably, affluent, white Anglos. It was they who were keenest to set black and brown people straight about authentic blackness and brownness and they who were the most avid supporters of identity politics. They were the leading advocates of the salad bowl, the most enthusiastic consumers of ethnic cuisine and costume and the true believers in multiculturalism. Black schoolteachers and administrators might, with a nod and a wink, play the race card to get funding for dilapidated inner city schools but it was white folks who really *believed* in the importance of promoting cultural self-affirmation which, on the received view, was vital to the social good and to the interests of ethnic minorities in particular.

This is the version of multiculturalism that, whether based on racist assumptions about the genetic basis of culture or adopted as a good myth to “encourage” members of disadvantaged minorities, I shall argue is not good for anyone. The very idea that black children would be better off being kicked around in the foster care system than they would be in white adoptive homes, that immigrant women in Canada would benefit from access to Shari’a courts or that the preservation of ancestral cultures trumped individual rights and interests is the *reductio* of plural monoculturalism.

Chapter 2

Multiculturalism and wellbeing

To make the case that multiculturalism, by which I shall unless otherwise specified mean plural monoculturalism, is bad for people we need to have a rough and ready account of what is good for people. The core idea of the account that I assume is that all other things being equal, what is good for people is getting what they want, whatever it is, so that a policy, program or ideology that closes off people's options and significantly thwarts overall desire satisfaction is bad for people.

This account, the desire satisfaction theory of wellbeing, is controversial and spelling it out in such a way that it is plausible is a complex business. Most fundamentally, to accommodate our intuitions about what is good for people we have to understand "wanting" as *informed* preference—and cashing out the information requirement is not trivial. As Harsanyi, defending an informed preference account of welfare suggests, since the notion of preference has work to do in articulating our concepts of rational choice and the social good, it cannot be understood crudely in terms of either drives or actual choices.

[We have to] distinguish between a person's manifest preferences and his true preferences. His manifest preferences are his actual preferences as manifested by his observed behavior, including preferences possibly based on erroneous factual beliefs, or on careless logical analysis, or on strong emotions that at the moment greatly hinder rational choice. In contrast, a person's true preferences are the preferences he *would* have if he had all the relevant factual information, always reasoned with the greatest possible care and were in a state of mind most conducive to rational choice...social utility must be defined in terms of people's true preferences rather than in terms of their manifest preferences.¹⁰

Preference is inextricably linked to choice but, as Harsanyi argues, when it comes to giving a plausible account of welfare in terms of preference satisfaction our choices do not always represent what we prefer in the requisite sense. In addition, even given a suitable account of wellbeing as informed preference satisfaction, the question of adjudicating between conflicting wants poses questions about what policies or programs distribute preference satisfaction in the morally correct way. This too is a vexed question.

I assume that some version of utilitarianism, incorporating the informed preference account of wellbeing, is the correct ethical theory and that the doctrine that people are best understood as rational, self-interested choosers is as approximately-true of women, minorities, individuals who live in traditional societies and members of other disadvantaged groups as it is of well-off, white Anglo males in affluent societies. The difference is that disadvantaged individuals operate under much more restrictive budget constraints and are often short of information about even the very few viable options they have.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 55

However the argument against multiculturalism does not assume utilitarianism. It merely assumes the folk-psychological ethical intuition that all other things being equal people are better off getting what they want, so that a policy, program or ideology that closes off people's options and significantly thwarts overall desire satisfaction is bad for people. I suggest that multiculturalism has this result and that that is why it is bad for people.

Multiculturalists take issue with this claim for different reasons. Many reject it on empirical grounds. They assume that people *want* cultural diversity, in particular, that individuals who are identified with minority racial and ethnic groups want to maintain their cultural identity and practices, and, more generally, that people prefer to live in salad bowl societies where diverse cultures coexist, equally valued and honored, and where diverse cultural groups interact peaceably without coalescing. It is an empirical question whether most people want this—I argue that they do not.

Other multiculturalists, recognizing that not all members of minority groups or the dominant ethnic majority want the state of affairs multiculturalism prescribes, may appeal to the *ceteribus paribus* clause, noting that even if, all other things being equal, getting what you want is a good thing there are other values that may override individual desire satisfaction. Such multiculturalists, who are sympathetic to Communitarianism broadly construed, may suggest that individuals by their nature, are embedded in communities with which their identities are inextricably entwined so that their wellbeing depends on the preservation of these communities and their constitutive cultures. Identifying with one's ethnic community and affirming one's cultural identity is conducive to human flourishing and for this reason, even if individuals do not want it they *should* want it in the interests of their own wellbeing. I argue that even if we reject the idea that welfare is simply desire satisfaction, there is no reason to believe that multiculturalism is conducive to human flourishing and no reason why people *should* want it.

Multiculturalism, when taken seriously, closes off individuals' options and is a state of affairs that, *ceteris paribus*, few people want. In addition, I suggest that the interest some individuals have in preserving distinct cultural communities is overridden by the interests of members of those communities in securing for themselves a wider range of options for preference satisfaction. For most people, multiculturalism is attractive only to the extent that it is a fiction. Real multiculturalism imposes constraints on all who participate in it and so undermines their wellbeing.

To see how multiculturalism restricts individual options and thwarts desire satisfaction we need to consider the character of ethnic and racial status in a plural monoculturalist society. While there is nothing objectionable about the fictional or boutique version of multiculturalism in which individuals can sample diverse cultural artifacts and play at ethnicity, when multiculturalism is more than a hobby or a fiction, ethnic identity is *ascribed*, *socially salient* and *scripted* and is, for this reason, objectionable.

In the following discussion, I will use "ethnicity" in the way most Americans do, as the most generic term for a status typically ascribed to individuals in virtue of ancestry

and “race” to mean roughly “visible ethnicity.” An ethnic classification is a racial category on this account if the primary criterion for ascribing membership in the group is the possession of distinctive, visible characteristics that unambiguously mark ancestry. So, to be black in America is to belong to a race even if there are a number of individuals who “look white,” like the “octeroon” Homer Plessy whose Supreme Court case tested regulations mandating segregation, but are classified as black because of ancestral connections to a group whose members typically have visible characteristics that identify them as members of the group.

It would not be fudging to note that race and ethnicity are family resemblance terms. However for the purposes of this discussion, nothing hangs on precisifying these notions. There may be borderline cases of race: it seems likely that most individuals who are, for legal purposes, classified as native Americans could not be identified as “Indian” by any visible characteristics; there are also groups which, while not generally regarded as ethnic groups effectively are—for example Mormons. In addition, while I shall suggest that one of the objectionable features of ethnicity is that it is an ascribed status, occasionally individuals can, by adoption, marriage or other means acquire an ethnic identity. When Ian Miller, Tula’s WASPish fiancé in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* is baptized in the Greek Orthodox Church, Tula’s father congratulates him on having become not only Orthodox but also *Greek*.

In paradigm cases however individuals’ ethnic identity is determined by ancestry and the apparent exceptions in this respect prove the rule. Even if Ian becomes Greek enough for Tula’s father, he does not, given the way we ordinarily understand ethnic identity, literally become Greek—though we might say he had become Greek if he had immigrated to Greece, learnt the language, and taken Greek citizenship. Again, individuals may pass themselves off as members of ethnic groups to which they have no ancestral connection, either for fun or for profit, but once found out are generally regarded as imposters. So, long before the Ward Churchill affair, Elizabeth Stern, whose best-selling 1926 autobiography *I Am a Woman—And a Jew* was revealed as an “imposter” when her son disclosed in his autobiography, *Secret Family* that she was in fact of Welsh and German extraction and had acquired her ethnic identity as a foster child in a Jewish family.¹¹

¹¹ Stern, T. Noel. *Secret Family*. South Dartmouth, MA: T. Noel Stern, 1988. See Browder, L. “Imaginary Jews”: Elizabeth Stern’s Autobiography as Amnesia at http://www.has.vcu.edu/eng/symp/brow_txt.htm

Chapter 3

The Diversity Trap

Ethnicity is both *ascribed* and *immutable*. Our ethnic affiliations are assigned to us at birth and we cannot change them. Under the multiculturalist regime they are in addition *socially salient* and *scripted*. They engender expectations about our beliefs, preferences, character traits and behavior and, perhaps more significantly norms about what we ought to believe and prefer, what sorts of people we ought to be and how we ought to behave. Assuming Serious Cultural Genetics we may imagine that this is liberating and self-affirming: to affirm our ethnic identities and play out their associated scripts is, given this assumption, to be liberated from the external constraints of an alien culture so that we can affirm who we “really” are by race and blood, and “be ourselves.” If however we reject the view that culture is genetically determined and the doctrine that race imposes obligations on individuals or dictates life-scripts that are conducive to their welfare, then ethnicity understood in this way imposes constraints on individual preference satisfaction that undermine wellbeing.

Ethnicity as an ascribed status: locked in and locked out

The fact that we regard individuals who attempt to choose ethnic identities as imposters or, at best, fellow travelers, indicates that ethnicity, as we understand it, is an *ascribed* status. It is something you are born into rather than an achievement or choice. Typically in addition to being an ascribed status, ethnic identity is also an immutable characteristic: you cannot lose ethnic identity, opt out or even be kicked out. So Spinoza, cursed and formally excommunicated by the Jewish community in Holland, remains in most histories of philosophy a great Jewish philosopher, and Madelaine Albright, after discovering late in life that her grandparents were Jewish is puzzled about what, if anything, she should do about the fact that she is “not really Catholic” if, indeed, she wonders, it is a fact.

Ascribed characteristics impede desire satisfaction and, at least in Elizabeth Stern’s case, seem to have undermined what she felt was her authentic identity:

In his memoir, *Secret Family*, Thomas Stern tells his readers of his reaction upon learning, in 1925, of his mother Elizabeth Stern's forthcoming book, *I Am a Woman—And a Jew*, which has since become one of the classics of immigrant autobiography.

In our living room, I told Elizabeth, "I think you shouldn't publish that book! It isn't true. It twists our family. It makes us what we are not."

Elizabeth screamed, "I have to publish my book! It makes me what I want to be. It shows our family as I want people to see us."

Stern’s autobiography was a fiction. Born in Pittsburgh, the illegitimate child of a Welsh Baptist mother and a German Lutheran father, she claimed to have been born in Skedel, Poland and immigrated to the US with her parents as a child. It is not however

clear that Stern was motivated by an interest in exploiting a false identity for literary purposes or financial gain. Placed in a Jewish foster family when she was seven, where she remained until she was seventeen, Stern eventually married another illegitimate child who, like she, was raised in a Jewish foster family. Both claimed to be Jewish and her son, who records a childhood of “ethnic confusion” notes that the family “spent years moving between the Lutheran world of his natural grandfather, a prosperous merchant, to the home of his Welsh grandmother, to the Orthodox Jewish world of his foster grandparents.”¹²

The ascribed and immutable character of ethnic identity blocked Stern’s desire to adopt what she felt was her authentic identity and that, to the extent that we believe desire satisfaction is a good thing, undermined her wellbeing. It did not however prevent her or her husband from passing themselves off as Jews. If she had yearned after an alternative visible racial identity matters might have been considerably more difficult. While John Howard Griffith, covered in shoe polish, succeeded in passing as black while researching *Black Like Me* most individuals cannot effectively cross color lines. Most are not only blocked from choosing racial identities—they are blocked from choosing to *seem* like members of other races and from constructing plausible alternative autobiographies like the one Stern created for herself.

Now at this point one might wonder why anyone would *want* to create a fictitious biography and genealogy for herself. Why would anyone want to claim they were born in Skedel rather than Pittsburgh? From the perspective of the desire theory, for good or ill, this worry is irrelevant since on this account neither the content nor the origin of an individual’s preferences matters for his wellbeing, but only that they are satisfied. More importantly however the appeal of fictitious autobiography reveals a troubling feature about ethnic identity as an ascribed status and the rhetoric of authenticity surrounding it. Because ethnicity as a group *affiliation* requires ancestral ethnic origin, individuals who, for whatever reason wish to affiliate with an ethnic group for which they do not, by these standards, qualify are moved to construct fictitious histories to obtain or fake membership.

Most of us understand the appeal of group affiliation. We identify ourselves as fans of sports teams, join alumni associations and social clubs, and affiliate with diverse groups for a variety of reasons: because we admire their values, support their aims, find their corporate culture congenial or simply because we recognize the members as “our kind of people” and enjoy their company. There is no mystery about why Elizabeth Stern chose to pass herself off as Jewish. To mask her illegitimacy, which 80 years ago was stigmatized, she had an interest in identifying her foster family as her family of origin. More importantly perhaps the Levins, whom she claimed as her birth parents, had raised her: they *were* her family and, to the extent that they had a distinctive cultural identity and history, she shared that cultural identity and history. Even if she was compelled to fabricate the details to produce counterfeit qualifications for membership in that community, in an important sense her autobiography was authentic.

¹² Op. Cit.

Elizabeth Stern née Levin a.k.a Elizabeth Morgan writing under the pseudonym of Leah Morton wrote an autobiography that was, as reviewer Theodore Dalrymple notes of a more recent pseudonymous but explicitly fictional work, *Down the Road, Worlds Away*, “a fraud that was no fraud.”¹³ It was a work, which while falsifying details of the author’s biography was, in an important sense, true to the author’s experience but was nevertheless denounced as a fraud.

Like Stern’s fictionalized autobiography, *Down the Road, Worlds Away*, a collection of young adult short stories published pseudonymously under the name of Rahila Khan, is generally regarded a literary hoax. Published in 1986 by Virago Press, marketed as a collection of “twelve haunting stories about Asian girls and white boys...about the tangle of violence and tenderness...in all their lives” and lauded as a book that “seemed to fulfill one of Virago’s laudable objectives, that of publishing the work of a diverse group of contemporary feminist authors,” *Down the Road* was pulped soon after publication when Virago discovered that its pseudonymous author was in fact, the Rev. Toby Forward, a Church of England vicar.

Even though, apart from writing pseudonymously, Forward never attempted to pass himself off as either Asian or female, the details of his biography were in fact strikingly similar to the fictitious Miss Khan’s and so, as Theodore Dalrymple reviewing his work notes “the great advantage that... [he] enjoyed over his publishers and critics was that he knew what he was talking about and they didn’t.”

His critics probably assumed that, as a vicar of the national church in seemingly terminal decline, he was an otherworldly scion of the English country gentry in its last gasp, who could therefore be expected not to know much about anything, and was at best a figure of fun...

The Reverend Toby Forward, as it happens, is not the scion of privilege, even of privilege in decline; his biography in outline followed that of Rahila Khan’s very closely. He was born in Coventry in 1950, and did live for many years in the cities of the English Midlands. He did marry in 1971, did have two daughters, did start to write in 1986, and did live in Brighton at the time the book was published...

Both his parents, who were working class, left school when they were fourteen years old. They lived in slum areas of the unlovely cities of the Midlands, and he himself went to schools in which half the pupils were of Indian or Pakistani descent. His early life was lived in precisely the social environment depicted in *Down the Road, Worlds Away*: that is to say, in a society in which a nihilistic and entirely secular white working-class culture was thrown into involuntary contact with a besieged traditionalist Indian culture in which religion, particularly Islam, played a preponderant role.¹⁴

¹³ Dalrymple, T. “An Imaginary ‘Scandal’” *The New Criterion* Vol. 23, No. 9, May 2005

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Forward was not only, as Dalrymple notes in his review, able to enter empathetically into the lives of the British-Asian girls about whom he wrote. He was a participant in their culture and his fictions, which never purported to be autobiographical, were to that extent authentic. His authenticity and literary intent, were however challenged by Virago because they assumed that gender and ethnicity carried with them a wide range of psychological and social characteristics, an ethos and sensibility, that disqualified Toby Forward from writing “authentically,” even if fictionally, about the lives of working class British-Asian girls. That is to say, the editors at Virago and erstwhile favorable critics who did a volte face on discovering that Toby Forward was a white male, regarded ascribed gender and ethnic identities as *socially salient*.

Ethnicity as socially salient: why everyone wants to be an X

Where multiculturalism is more than a fiction ethnicity is socially salient, and this is a state of affairs that most people would prefer to avoid.

A property is socially salient within a community to the extent that members of the community take it to predict or explain beliefs, character traits, tastes or other socially significant psychological characteristics. Social salience is a matter of degree: it depends upon how many other characteristics it is thought to predict or explain, how important they are, how many members of the community believe it has this explanatory or predictive power and the degree of conviction with which they hold this belief...

The salience of a property does not arise from its visibility or noticability. Freckles are highly visible but wholly non-salient. In many communities, by contrast, some invisible ethnic origins, occupations and avocations are salient: people have notions of what Germans and Italians, lawyers, librarians and academics, stamp-collectors and soccer fans are like.

Finally, for some properties, which are salient to a given degree, the absence of these properties, or possession of other properties of the same category may be less salient or non-salient. People have notions about what used car salesmen are like; they don't generally have preconceived ideas about what veterinarians, geologists or copy-editors are like.¹⁵

The social salience of a property for an individual is not a matter of individual choice. Where a property is non-salient, individuals may choose the extent to which it figures as part of their social identity; where it is salient, individuals do not have that choice. Handedness is non-salient. There are nevertheless a number of lefties who make a big deal out of it and firms who produce lefty merchandise, including not only practical items like scissors and notebooks, but mugs, tee-shirts and bumper stickers proclaiming the virtues of left-handedness, to cater for them. Most left-handed individuals however do not make a hobby out of left-handedness and no one else notices or cares about their handedness. Where a property is socially salient, by contrast, individuals cannot choose

¹⁵ Baber, H. E. (2001). “Gender Conscious.” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 18(1)

the extent to which it figures as part of their social identity. If you have that property others will take it to be an important feature of your identity whether *you* think so or not.

Properties that are more socially salient dominate properties that are less socially salient. Individuals will be taken to have more in common with others who share those properties than they do with people with whom they share less salient properties, regardless of whether these are the characteristics which are most important to them. The hierarchy of social salience in any given context functions like a hierarchy of sort rules. If I have a spreadsheet on which I keep grade records for different sections I can sort on different data depending on my interests: if my primary concern is to keep sections separate I will sort first by section and then by alphabetical order; if my objective is to identify the best students, who will be offered jobs as tutors for the Logic Center, or to see how my grade distribution looks, my first sort will be by grade. In the same way, the most socially salient properties are those we invoke for the first sort.

Everyone has a wide range of personal characteristics, commitments, values, loyalties and social affiliations, some of which are more important to him than others. But social sorting rules may not reflect the relative importance an individual places on the various groups to which he belongs. My profession may be more important to me, and have more to do with my attitudes, commitments and interests, than my sex but in contexts where being female is more salient than being an academic, the first sort will be by gender. After Thanksgiving dinner I will go to the kitchen to clean up and chat with women who are doctors, housewives, secretaries and stockbrokers while the menfolk, who are bricklayers, lawyers, salesmen and also academics like myself talk politics in the living room while watching football.

Even where our characteristics are chosen and our affiliations are voluntary, and indeed even where they are highly valued, we rarely if ever want them to be socially salient: no one wants to be a “typical lawyer” or a “typical middle class suburbanite,” and no one wants others to make assumptions about his character, tastes, interests, abilities, commitments and beliefs, or to explain his behavior, on the basis of such socially salient characteristics. Where socially salient characteristics are ascribed, immutable and visible, so much the worse: no one, but no one, wants to hear “just like a women” or to deal with remarks about his “natural sense of rhythm.” This is how clichés about the importance of “treating people as individuals” and “not putting them in boxes” cash out: we do not want our personal characteristics, particularly ascribed and immutable characteristics, to be socially salient. We do not want to have to fight our way out of boxes.

Almost everyone has known, at some time or other, what it is like to fight his way out of a box. If you are identified with any socially salient group, whether as a member of a racial or ethnic minority, a political liberal amongst conservatives, a woman in most social settings, a Christian in Academia or an atheist anywhere else, if you are old or very young, disabled or just physically unprepossessing, you face a swarm of tacit assumptions about your intelligence and abilities, your beliefs, moral commitments and interests, your lifestyle and character, that you have to fight your way through in order to be seen for who you are and taken seriously. And sometimes no amount of effort will get you through.

Multiculturalism, when it is more than a fiction or entertainment, puts people whose racial or other ethnic characteristics are socially salient into boxes and imposes on them the burden of fighting their way out to establish their individuality. What is bad about minority status in a seriously multicultural context is not only, or primarily, that it is some cases associated with undesirable characteristics but the mere fact that it is socially salient. Indeed, even when the characteristics associated with an ascribed identity are socially valued all other things being equally most people still want out of the box.

The characteristics associated with some ethnic identities are quite often highly valued. In the US, for example, all the characteristics conventionally associated with being Asian or of Asian descent—intelligence, education, ambition, self-discipline, diligence, industriousness and good citizenship—are highly valued by Americans. Likewise, remembering Elizabeth Stern's affirmation of her identity as "a woman—and a Jew," the characteristics associated with being female and being Jewish, which overlap the characteristics associated with being Asian, are largely positive. Yet readers still wonder why Stern would attempt to pass herself off as Jewish because, particularly in the early years of the 20th century when she was writing, Jewish identity was salient. They are puzzled because the salience of ascribed identities as such, whether they are associated with desirable or undesirable characteristics, is in and of itself undesirable. In Stern's case there were overriding considerations that induced her to assume this identity. All things being equal however most people would rather not be saddled with socially salient ethnic identities.

The advantage of being a member of the mainstream culture in any given social context is the privilege of possessing an ascribed identity that is non-salient. Outside of contexts in which political correctness marks or enhances the salience of all social categories, including not only sex and ethnicity but sexual orientation, age and disability, one of the privileges white, Anglo males enjoy in the US—indeed, arguably the chief privilege—is the advantage of an identity that is non-salient. Whiteness is non-salient and, in effect, transparent: it is the absence of any salient ascribed identity and that, for most of us, is a consummation devoutly to be wished because we do not want to be put in boxes.

In the US white privilege is a function of the asymmetry of social salience: because whiteness is non-salient and transparent whites can be seen for who they are without making any special efforts. Where whites are a privileged *minority* or appear only as wealthy tourists, whiteness is salient and is a positive advantage, albeit a mixed blessing: waiters, shop assistants and cab drivers will be accommodating and often embarrassingly servile but children will stare and market stall keepers will charge them 20 times the going rate for souvenirs. Where whites are a privileged *majority* the advantages of being white are quite different and consist primarily in the benefits that come from the *absence* of a visible, socially salient ethnic identity. So, most of the items on Peggy McIntosh's entertaining list of white privileges are advantages whites enjoy in virtue of the non-salience of whiteness:

I can swear, or dress in second-hand clothes or not answer letters without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the

illiteracy of my race, I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial, I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race, I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group... If a traffic cop pulls me over, or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race... I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my race will not work against me, if my day, week, or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtone's.¹⁶

Multiculturalism enhances the salience of ascribed, immutable ethnic identities and that is some thing most of us do not want. We do not want to be spokesmen for our race or to have our personal idiosyncracies interpreted as racial characteristics. If we swear or dress in second-hand clothes we would prefer others to put that down to personal crudity and slovenliness, and blame us, rather than to have them explain our behavior as typical for members of our ethnic group—even if they, on that account, excuse us.

Multiculturalism is attractive as a fiction viewed from a comfortable aesthetic distance, but it is not something in which most of us care to participate, because we want our ascribed identities to be transparent. We all like to classify, to rehearse stereotypes rooted in race, ethnicity, nationality, class and gender, to put people in boxes, but no one wants to be classified or boxed in himself. We want to be outside the system, asserting our peculiarities, our distinctive personalities, which cannot (we like to think) be captured by any classificatory scheme—our individuality. So Paul Fussell in his pop sociological *Class: A Guide Through the American Status System*, after dividing Americans into nine social classes and chronicling their folkways, provides readers with an escape route: in addition to the bulk of Americans in the system, he suggests, there are individuals whom he calls X's and who, he claims, do not fit into the classificatory scheme at all.¹⁷ It is likely that virtually all of Fussell's readers smugly identified themselves as X's.

Ceteris paribus, everybody wants to be an X. Some members of disadvantaged groups indeed want to opt out or enter the mainstream because they want the increased prestige that attaches to membership in the ethnic majority: prestige, like money, is a bargaining chip that facilitates desire satisfaction, so people naturally prefer to have as much prestige and money as possible. You can't be too rich or too thin. Most, however, want to assimilate to mainstream cultural groups simply because mainstream group affiliations are generic and non-salient. Being saddled with immutable socially salient characteristics is bad for most people because it is something that most people do not like.

All other things are not always equal however and some people, indeed, may take on socially salient characteristics voluntarily in the way that Elizabeth Stern did or use them to their advantage. Adolescents questing for identity may, whether black or white,

¹⁶ <http://www.anarchistblackcross.org/org/wp/peggy.html>

¹⁷ Fussell, P. (1983) *Class: A Guide Through the American Status System*. Summit Books

opt into hip-hop culture or—much to their regret in later life—get tattoos. White settlers buy white privilege in colonial or post-colonial societies at the cost of embarrassing visibility. Academics and “community leaders” capitalize on their minority status, whether real or (as in Ward Churchill’s case) imagined, to get grants, jobs and lecture fees. Some individuals who are stuck with immutable, visible socially salient characteristics simply decide that since they cannot disassociate themselves from salient group identities they may as well capitalize on them. All other things being equal, however, most people do not like being boxed in and multiculturalism, which promotes the social salience of racial and other ethnic identities, is to this extent contrary to their interests.

Ethnicity as scripted: the tyranny of authenticity

Multiculturalism however does even worse. In addition to promulgating doctrines about what members of various ethnic minorities are like, it promotes normative claims about what they *ought* to be like in the name of “authenticity.” It prescribes behavior and confers entitlement: outsiders cannot get in and insiders cannot get out.

Elizabeth Stern was outed as an “imposter” and the Rev. Toby Forward was asked by Virago Press to return his advance and pay the costs of printing for what his editors regarded as a distasteful hoax.¹⁸ Because ascribed ethnic and gender were taken as necessary qualifications not only for group affiliation, but for literary authenticity, both were excluded from roles that they were otherwise well-qualified to play. Under the auspices of multiculturalism, members of traditionally disadvantaged groups exclude white males and claim special sensibilities that members of the privileged majority “wouldn’t understand”—largely, one suspects, in retaliation for their exclusion from the mainstream.

That response is understandable and, after a fashion, fair to the extent that turnabout is fair play. No one charged political correctness when students at Gallaudet University, America’s oldest and most prestigious institution of higher education for the deaf, demanded a deaf president and even if some conservatives claim to believe that affirmative action privileges women and blacks, no white Anglo male would seriously want to trade places with them.¹⁹ Most people recognize that identity politics notwithstanding, women and minorities, like the deaf, are socially crippled and that cultural affirmation is, at best, partial compensation for serious social impediments.

Being locked out of minority ethnic status is, however, a trivial inconvenience compared to the disadvantages of being locked in. And currently for minorities the lock-in is enforced not only by the majority community’s exclusionary practices but also by what Ford calls the “difference discourse” of multiculturalism:

¹⁸ Dalyrymple (2005)

¹⁹ For a discussion the the protest movement by Gallaudet students which resulted in the appointment of a deaf president in 1988 and useful links concerning deaf culture, see the *Wikipedia* article, “Gallaudet University” at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallaudet_College

Because difference discourse often establishes lists and canonical accounts of group identity, it tends to favor traditional behavior over behavior that is novel or transgressive within the group...In this respect, rights-to-difference include proscriptions and mandates, not only for those who would assert them and their contemporaries but also for future generations...Every racial group (with the telling exception of whites) has a derogatory term for people who fail to exhibit their assigned racial culture: there are African American ‘Oreos,’ Latino ‘Coconuts,’ Asian-American ‘Bananas’ and Native-American (you guessed it) ‘Apples.’²⁰

Decades ago sociologist David Riesman noted the plight of individuals who were “marginally marginal”—middle class blacks who “talked proper,” “mannish” career women and others who were doubly disadvantaged by being saddled with membership in socially salient disadvantaged groups and either unwilling or unable to play, what Anthony Appiah calls, the “scripts” associated with group membership.²¹

Even in the 1950s when Riesman was writing, before multiculturalism, marginally marginal individuals faced social opprobrium and were regularly trapped in double binds. During that period, when the feminine mystique was in flower, women were “marginalized” to the extent that they were de facto excluded from public life and the professions, and locked into suburban domesticity or, if unmarried, into a narrow range of women’s occupations. While this marginalization was not as oppressive as many contemporary feminists seem to imagine—there are worse things than being a middle class suburban housewife—marginally marginal females who could not or would not play their prescribed “feminine role” were trashed. As Betty Friedan noted, the behavior and aspirations of such women were construed in the categories of psychological pathology, as maladjustment, neurosis, self-hatred or penis envy.²²

In the wake of Friedan’s expose of the feminine mystique, the second wave of feminism effectively dismantled the pop-psychological theories that defined marginally marginal women as neurotic or psychologically defective. But, remarkably, these psychological theories were refurbished and recycled by multiculturalists to beat up on marginally marginal Oreos, Coconuts, Bananas and Apples, individuals who were said to be black, brown, yellow or red on the outside but white on the inside and who were therefore held to be self-hating and inauthentic.

Like women, damned if they were suitably feminine but doubly damned if they weren’t, minorities under the multicultural regime were caught in double binds because the scripts for members of racial and ethnic minorities quite often rehearsed racist stereotypes and prescribed behavior that was, in the larger social context, unacceptable. Naïve members of racial and ethnic minorities regularly fell into traps by innocently

²⁰ Ford (2005), pp. 78-79, 87.

²¹ Vide, e.g. Riesman, D. (1954) *Individualism Reconsidered*. Free Press.

²² See, of course, Friedan, B. (1961) *The Feminine Mystique*. W. W. Norton & Company.

following advice that they were not supposed to take seriously. At “diversity workshops” minorities were encouraged to wear “ethnic” costume and supervisors were urged to be “sensitive” to their non-Western conceptions of time. Black employees who showed up late the next day wearing dashikis were reprimanded and sent home to change.

A few socially adroit individuals were able to capitalize on multiculturalism by playing both sides of the net, acting stylized versions of their ethnic scripts without deviating from the fundamental social requirements of mainstream society. For most however multiculturalism, to the extent that it was taken seriously, imposed additional social burdens and constraints. Ethnic minority roles were tightly scripted and imposed requirements on minorities that were more stringent than the relatively loose requirements for generic good citizenship. Even where ethnic roles were self-affirming and socially valued, they imposed norms and demands on individuals who, in virtue of unchosen, immutable characteristics, were expected to act their assigned scripts. Anthony Appiah observes:

An African-American after the Black Power movement takes the old script of self-hatred, the script in which he or she is a nigger, and works, in community, to construct a series of positive black life scripts... What demanding respect for people *as blacks* or *as gays* requires is that there be some scripts that go with being an African-American or having same-sex desires: there will be expectations to be met; demands will be made. It is at this point that someone who takes autonomy seriously will want to ask whether we have not replaced one kind of tyranny with another. If I had to choose between Uncle Tom and Black Power, I would, of course, choose the latter. But I would like not to have to choose.²³

The remarkable novelty of multicultural scripting was that it purported to benefit the very individuals whose ethnic identities were scripted and that it was promoted by “community leaders” who claimed to have the interests of their constituents at heart rather than members of the privileged majority, aiming to keep minorities in their place.

While this was a new story for ethnic minorities, it was a very old one for women. For over 200 years feminists, in the interests of helping women gain entrée to socially desirable male preserves, vacillated between arguing that women were like men and so their presence would make no difference, and arguing that they were unlike men so that their presence would make a difference for the better, if only by introducing a needed element of “diversity.” Should women get the vote? Yes, because they were as intelligent, rational and capable of exercising political judgment as men—and, Yes, because, being kinder, gentler and more conscientious than men, they would clean up political corruption and end war. Would it be desirable to have women in management positions? Yes, because they were as capable of doing the job as men—and, Yes because they had different “management styles” that would be good for business.

²³ Appiah, K. A. (1996) “Race, Culture, Identity” in *Color Conscious* K. Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutman, eds. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 98-99.

The difference strategy was generally characterized as “radical” because it struck at what was taken to be the root of sexism: the idea that “women’s way of knowing” and operating was inherently defective, an assumption “radical” feminists claimed liberals, intent on getting women the chance to be guys, not only overlooked but tacitly accepted. Why would a woman want to be a guy unless she bought into the sexist notion that guyhood was superior, “radicals” asked? Radical multiculturalists and advocates of the politics of difference put similar questions to members of ethnic minorities who aimed at integration and assimilation: why integrate so that you can hang with white Anglos? What’s so great about them? Why would you want to be accepted by them or be like them?

The answer, I have suggested, is that white Anglo guyhood is the most desirable identity because, in most American contexts, it is the least salient. Integration and assimilation liberate individuals from the burdens and constraints of identities that are salient and tightly scripted.

Arguably, “radicalism” is a safe, accommodationist strategy. Radicals struck a Faustian bargain with sexists and bigots: we will accept *la difference* if you accept us as separate but equal; we will play gender and ethnic scripts if they are refurbished and improved. Radicals however did not understand the nature of white male privilege and overlooked the asymmetry of social salience. They assumed that there was a white, Anglo male script on a par with all others but arbitrarily privileged because it was the script associated with individuals who were in a position of power. They refused to recognize that white, Anglo, male identity, unlike other ethnic identities, was non-salient, and that it was not differently scripted so much as it was less tightly scripted than the identities associated with less privileged groups.

Because white, Anglo males were privileged they were able to buy their way out of socially salient identities and tight scripting. In spite of peripheral attempts to promote a men’s movement focused on bonding rituals and drumming, white males are rarely, if ever, pressed to manifest authenticity. Whether under the old regime or the new multiculturalist dispensation, it is members of disadvantaged groups—women and minorities—who are stuck with tightly scripted role obligations. And, whether they are imposed by members of the privileged elite in the interests of keeping disadvantaged minorities in their place or by multiculturalists intent on promoting ethnic self-affirmation and punishing Oreos, Coconuts, Bananas and Apples, they impose a burden on members of ethnic minorities.

When multiculturalism is taken seriously it burdens and constrains the very people who are its intended beneficiaries.

Chapter 4

What people want

The argument against multiculturalism so far trades on a controversial but plausible empirical premise, viz. that most members minority groups would prefer to assimilate to the dominant majority culture. Until recently almost all popular discussions of multiculturalism simply assumed that while assimilation was in the majority's interests, minorities preferred to preserve their own distinctive cultures. Liberal multiculturalists argued for cultural diversity in the interests of accommodating minorities' supposed desire to preserve their distinctiveness. Conservatives, in particular when they argued for exclusionary policies and restrictions on immigration, assumed that most members of ethnic minority groups either could not or would not assimilate.

So, in this vein, when young men of North African descent took to burning cars in French immigrant suburbs conservatives tried to spin their activities as an expression of radical Islamic sentiment. There was however no evidence that the youths rioting in the streets of immigrant suburbs were on jihad. In interviews with immigrants, their children and their grandchildren, none complained about the decadence of French culture or expressed an interest in reestablishing the Caliphate. They complained that, in spite of officially colorblind policies, they faced ongoing discrimination and that even after 2 or 3 generations they were not regarded as fully French. This is typical:

Some groups do advocate cultural separation for Muslims - but they do not speak for many. Far more common is the attitude of Nour-eddine Skiker, a youth worker near Paris: "I feel completely French. I will do everything for this country, which is mine." Mr Skiker's Moroccan origins mean a lot to him. But, like many youths in the suburbs, he sees no contradiction between being French and having foreign roots. The main problem is that many French people do, says writer Nadir Dendoune.

"How am I supposed to feel French when people always describe me as a Frenchman of Algerian origin? I was born here. I am French. How many generations does it take to stop mentioning my origin?" And crucially, the suburbs are full of people desperate to integrate into the wider society. "I do not know a single youth in my estate who does not want to leave," Mr Dendoune says.

Immigrants have been housed in estates around French cities. France's Muslim ghettos, in short, are not hotbeds of separatism. Neither do they represent a clear challenge to secularism - a doctrine all national Muslim groups profess to support. "We have no problem with secularism," says Lhaj Thami Breze, president of the Union of Islamic Organisations of France (UOIF). He argues that by establishing state neutrality in religious matters, the doctrine allows all religions to blossom. Islam has adapted to local laws - from Indonesia to Senegal - and is adapting to France, says Azzedine Gaci, who heads the regional Muslim council in Lyon.

This is not just the leaders' view. A 2004 poll suggested that 68% of French Muslims regarded the separation of religion and state as "important", and 93% felt the same about republican values.²⁴

Until recently, when the media began paying attention to people of color with stature as "public intellectuals" like Amartya Sen, Salman Rushdie, Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Anthony Appiah who expressed reservations about multiculturalist assumptions, accounts of the plight of immigrants and ethnic minorities were highly selective. Journalists eagerly reported the views of the Arab "street" and ignoring educated, urban individuals in non-Western societies who they regarded as inauthentic or atypical. Multiculturalists intent on giving "voice" to immigrants and other members of minority groups in the Global North ignored the voice of the majority in order to showcase the views of individuals whom they regarded as authentic representatives of their respective "communities"—in particular, the least educated and the most disaffected and the self-appointed "community leaders" who articulated their views.

In this vein, shortly after Brits were shocked to discover that the London bombings were carried out by native-born citizens with shocking Northern accents, the press revealed that almost one third of Muslims in the UK regarded British culture as "decadent." The press did not seem to think it worthwhile to note that more than two thirds of British Muslims did not regard British culture as decadent, or that among Muslims, males were twice as likely as females to regard British culture as decadent; they did not think it worthwhile either to provide data about the percentage of British *non-Muslims* who regarded British culture as decadent.

Reporting on the controversy over the ban on Muslim headgear in the public schools, *bien-pensants* featured protesters, including the Lévy girls and a few other teenagers intent on making countercultural fashion statements, but did not note that most Muslims did not protest or that many Muslim women favored the ban. Outside of France Samira Bellil's account of growing up in immigrant housing projects, *Dans l'enfer des tournantes* (the pure hell of gang-rape) was not translated and got little attention, and the protest movement, *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* (neither whores nor submissives) was ignored. No one noticed, or wanted to notice, the fact that some immigrants, and the majority of their children, in particular women, did not like their ancestral cultures and wanted out.

The idea that members of ethnic minorities might want out was one that multiculturalists found deeply disturbing. The assigned scripts for members of ethnic minorities prohibited behavior deemed to be "inauthentic," "passing" and even serious critiques of the minority culture. So, in her reflections on critics' response to the reissue of Nella Larsen's 1929 novel *Passing*, Margo Jefferson noted that "a certain taint" clung to Larsen's reputation:

Larsen is accused by some white and black critics of literary passing, thanks to a prose style that draws little from black ritual, folklore or vernacular.

²⁴ "Ghettos shackle French Muslims" in BBC News, Monday, October 31, 2005.

Nor do her characters speak in black vernacular; like many privileged African-Americans, they speak mostly standard English, tossing in bits of black slang.²⁵

As Jefferson suggests, privileged insiders enforce no-exit rules that prohibit disaffiliation from disadvantaged minority groups: “culture’s power brokers are often most at ease when outsiders do and say nothing that might allow them to be mistaken for insiders.”²⁶ Moreover when it comes to no-exit rules there is an asymmetry: while passing “up” is condemned, passing “down” is represented as meritorious. We applaud Eppie’s decision to stay with Silas Marner because she “was not raised to be a lady” but when Pinky, in the eponymous 1949 film, who has been passing as white while at a Northern nursing school, announces her intention to return to the North and marry a young white doctor, we know she will have to be punished. And punished she is, bullied into doing suitable nigger jobs, nursing an elderly white lady and working as a washerwoman alongside her black grandmother, finally redeeming herself by rejecting her white suitor and deciding to stay in the South to “help her people” by establishing a clinic and nursery school.

Remarkably, multiculturalists accepted and promoted this asymmetry. Middle class whites were applauded when they dabbled in minority cultures, including white working class culture, or went native, but members of less privileged groups were denounced as inauthentic, disloyal or psychologically damaged if they adopted the folkways of the privileged majority. While multiculturalists were vocal in condemning the faults and foibles of white, middle class American culture, criticism of other groups’ cultural practices, whether by outsiders or insiders, was taboo. Conservatives who were quick to notice this asymmetry and to take note of the patronizing sentimentality that motivated multiculturalist’s prohibition on “blaming the victim,” lampooned the silliness of “boutique multiculturalism” and condemned what they took to be a double standard, privileging women and minorities over white males.

But the double standard did not privilege women and minorities. Rather it locked in the asymmetry of social constraint: members of the privileged majority could roundly condemn conventional white middle class culture, reject practices they found personally distasteful and opt out; members of disadvantaged groups could not, without being accused of disloyalty or inauthenticity, critique their ascribed cultures, reject practices associated with these cultures which they disliked or which were alien to them as individuals, or opt out.

Given this doctrine, the assumption by the naïve majority of multiculturalists that members of ethnic minorities preferred to preserve their ancestral cultures was unfalsifiable. Any members of ethnic minorities who felt otherwise were either ignored or written off. Treated fairly as an empirical claim the suggestion that all or most members of ethnic minorities want to preserve their ancestral cultures within the integrity of distinct ethnic communities is clearly false. In the US every cohort of immigrants has

²⁵ Jefferson, Margo. “On Writers and Writing: Authentic American.” NYTimes February 18, 2001

²⁶ Jefferson (2001)

followed the same pattern: a bilingual first generation, an assimilated second generation with an imperfect or minimal knowledge of the ancestral language and a monoglot English-speaking third generation, intermarried and indistinguishable from the general population. When assimilation is feasible for immigrants and their descendants, most chose to join the dominant culture.

Preference is not simply choice but, in these cases there is no reason to believe that the choice of many immigrants, most of their children and all of their grandchildren to assimilate to the dominant culture do not faithfully represent their *ceteris paribus* preferences and, indeed, there is some reason to believe that the choice of some immigrants and a few of their children to live in ethnic enclaves may *not* represent their *ceteris paribus* preferences. All other things being equal, an immigrant might prefer to join the mainstream but all things are not equal. The costs and risks of life outside the immigrant community are high—much higher than they are for native-born citizens. Outside the language is difficult and the customs are unfamiliar; outside there is no social network or family circle and the natives are not particularly friendly. If all things were equal, if he were equally fluent in his native language and the language of the larger society, if he were equally comfortable and socially connected inside and outside his ethnic enclave and if he weren't marked as an outsider by accent or appearance he might prefer to join the mainstream. But all things aren't equal and so we cannot infer from the choices of some immigrants and their children to stay within ethnic enclaves that they have an interest in preserving ancestral cultures rather than a desire to operate under conditions where they are fluent in the language, familiar with the customs and socially connected.

Many multiculturalists and conservative nativists see the cohesion of some immigrant communities, in particular largely Muslim immigrant communities in European countries, as evidence of a desire to maintain distinct cultures because they do not realize that for most members of the first generation and for many members of subsequent generations who are visibly marked as the children of immigrants, assimilation is not feasible. They underestimate the difficulty immigrants have in learning new languages and negotiating alien social environments, the costs of exit from ethnic enclaves, the extent of ongoing discrimination against people of color and the extent to which well-intentioned government policies exacerbate intergenerational conflict and make it difficult for minorities to join the mainstream.

When European countries, coping with mass immigration from Africa and the Middle East built projects in remote suburbs to house newcomers they effectively segregated them from native populations. When the Swedish government in the interests of accommodating immigrant cultural practices waived or modified laws that applied to native-born citizens for immigrants, it effectively thwarted the desires of those who wished to assimilate. When the French government, committed to assimilation, refused to adopt policies to counteract ongoing discrimination, it made it more difficult for immigrants to assimilate. It has only been recently, since 9/11 and increased public awareness of the extent to which the persistence of ethnic enclaves thwart the legitimate interests of immigrants and minorities, that these policies have been subjected to scrutiny. And it has only been since then that members of dominant cultures have become aware

that it is precisely immigrants and minorities who regard policies that promote community cohesion and cultural preservation as objectionable.

Consider the internationally notorious case of Fadime Sahindal, the daughter of Kurdish immigrants and victim of an “honor killing” in Sweden. After her death it was members of immigrant minorities who were most critical of government policies intended to accommodate immigrants, which they charged, denied them equal protection under the law:

"The message this should send to Swedish people, especially the Social Democrats who have been in power for 40 years, is that the system isn't working," said Dilsa Demirbag-Sten, a former government advisor on integration affairs whose Kurdish family came to Sweden from eastern Turkey when she was 7. She accuses authorities of arrogance in their view that certain rights and freedoms accorded Nordic residents, such as gender equality and protection from forced marriage, are not necessarily applicable to immigrants... Swedish law allows girls from immigrant families to marry as young as 15, while marriage for Swedish citizens is permitted only at 18 or older. That de facto bow to immigrant cultural practice is expected to be legislated out of existence as momentum gathers in a national campaign to prevent forced marriage.²⁷

It was immigrants and minorities who objected most strenuously to policies and that promoted the cohesion of ethnic groups and effectively segregated them from the native population:

"There are places just outside of Stockholm where the entire population is foreign. These people aren't living in Sweden at all," said Keya Izol, head of the Federation of Kurdish Associations in Sweden, referring to towns and suburbs such as Botkyrka, a 30-minute drive from central Stockholm... "It is a mistake to have too many people from the same town or village or clan together," Izol added. "It is the habit of exiles to want to protect their way of life, and in such places they hear no Swedish, they see no Swedish television and they have no jobs that bring them in contact with Swedish people."²⁸

Not everyone wants the same thing and, arguably, the fundamental problem of ethics is precisely adjudicating between the desires of individuals with conflicting interests. Danish Justice Minister Erling Olsen notes that in Scandinavian countries experiencing the social pressures of recent mass immigration: “We have been too slow to integrate the older generation and too fast in integrating the younger one’s.”²⁹ As a consequence members of the first generation, locked out of the mainstream and without a stake in the larger society, clamor for cultural preservation:

²⁷ Williams, Carol J. “The Price of Freedom, in Blood” *Los Angeles Times* (March 7 2002)

²⁸ Williams (2002)

²⁹ Williams (2002)

"People who come to such a level of despair that they can kill must feel cornered in this society," said Annick Sjogren, a sociologist directing an integration program in Botkyrka, where more than 80% of the 30,000 residents are immigrants and refugees. "They aren't used to women being equal to men or nakedness being taken as natural instead of sexual or the idea that you can choose your own partner. They get scared and become defensive and much more fundamentalist than they would be at home."

Different people want different things and there will always be people who want to "protect their way of life" or live within cohesive minority communities, in particular those who are effectively excluded from participation in the larger society. There is no reason however why the desires of individuals who, for whatever reason, want to maintain cultural distinctiveness should be privileged over the desires of individuals who want to assimilate and there are compelling reasons why the desires of individuals who want to join the dominant culture should be accommodated.

First, as a matter of empirical fact, there are simply many more of them. Most people do not want to be locked into ghettos or "put in boxes." They do not want to be stuck with ascribed ethnic affiliations that are socially salient and scripted and, when they are not being coached, bribed or bullied by advocates of cultural diversity, they say so. Secondly, it seems highly likely that even more would profess a desire to assimilate if it were feasible and the costs of exit from their ethnic communities were not prohibitive. Ethnic "imposters," like Elizabeth Stern, are newsworthy because they are rare. *Ceteris paribus*, most individuals prefer to disassociate themselves from socially salient, scripted identities and join the mainstream.

This, then, is the most compelling reason to reject multiculturalism: most people don't want it.

Chapter 5

A communitarian alternative: the millet system

Multiculturalists not only ignore the desire of many minorities and immigrants to assimilate to the majority culture and join the mainstream. They fail to recognize that the preference of some to remain within segregated, cohesive ethnic communities might not be an expression of the desire to preserve ancestral cultures so much as the desire to avoid the salience and tight scripting associated with their ascribed identities by the majority culture. For individuals who are associated with ascribed identities either because of visible racial characteristics or because they are unfamiliar with the language and social practices of the majority culture, retreating to an ethnic enclave can be the only way of escaping the salience of an ascribed identity and the scripting associated with it. Salience and scripting are context dependent: within homogeneous ethnic enclaves, the ethnic identities of individuals who are tagged as Other and boxed in by the larger society becomes transparent and less tightly-scripted.

This phenomenon is familiar to women who have gone to single-sex schools, been Girl Scouts or participated in women's organizations. In all-female groups, women get to be guys—and that is a heady, liberating experience. In single-sex schools, girls fill the ecological niches which, until recently, were reserved for boys—as student government leaders, jocks and nerds, class clowns and loudmouths. While there are settings in which the preponderance of women pump up femininity—one thinks of therapy groups or Oprah audiences—the appeal of many all-female settings is precisely that they liberate women from femininity and from the all the expectations and constraints associated with being female. So, for example, Margaret Rossiter in her history, *Women Scientists in America*, notes that in spite of the popular perception that women's colleges had weak or non-existent science programs, in 1940, the ending date of her first volume, most American women in the sciences were “either students or grandstudents” of a group of women scientists who had taught at the Seven Sisters around the turn of the 20th Century. These women's colleges freed women from the female script imposed by the larger society during the period and enabled them to enter professions that were strongly identified as male preserves.

Arguably, the liberation of women from conventional expectations and role obligations in all-female settings has little to do with sexuality as such. Many individuals whose ascribed identities are salient and scripted enjoy retreating, at least occasionally, to homogeneous group sub-cultures where they can, at least temporarily, shed their Otherness and escape their scripts. Deaf people who, within the larger society are assigned the handicapped script, participate in deaf community organizations and events where they can escape the handicapped role assigned to them by hearing people. Midgets and dwarves join the Little People of America. It seems likely that almost everyone who is saddled with a visible, salient, scripted identity has at some time enjoyed the sense of liberation that comes from participating in a group where he is “normal” and does not have to fight his way out of the box.

Now it is possible to maintain a multicultural society while accommodating the

desire of ethnically diverse individuals to live and work in settings where they can maintain distinctive cultural practices and where their ethnic identities are not salient by maintaining a system of semi-autonomous ethnic enclaves. Historically, the paradigm and perhaps most successful version of such an arrangement was the Ottoman millet system. The Ottoman Turks, faced with the puzzle of dealing with Christian and Jewish minorities within their territories who, by Islamic law enjoyed an inferior but protected status as *dhimmi* and could not be forced to convert to the state religion, established a system of autonomous communities or *millets* for Jews, Greeks, Armenians and other smaller non-Muslim minorities within their empire. Because these groups were spread throughout Ottoman territory and figured prominently in most major cities, territorial autonomy was not feasible so community membership under the millet system was, of necessity, a matter of personal status.

Ethnic groups, clustered in homogenous villages and urban neighborhoods, enjoyed considerable autonomy. Each millet, comprised of individuals who lived and worked in an archipelago of these enclaves, was supervised by a leader, typically a religious patriarch, who reported directly to the Ottoman Sultan. The millets set their own laws, collected and distributed their own taxes, and maintained their own courts. Although the millet system was abolished by Attaturk, since in the secular nation state he envisaged the rationale for maintaining it disappeared, its legacy, in congeries of unassimilated, balkanized ethnic groups in the Balkans and other former territories of the Ottoman empire persists. Posed with the problem of accommodating a variety of culturally distinct ethnic minorities, a number of countries elsewhere, whether informally or formally through systems of “personal law” for members of various religious/ethnic groups, maintain comparable arrangements.

In the aftermath of the London bombings and French riots, some critics of multiculturalism were quick to note that European countries in which there were growing communities of Muslim immigrants were in effect sponsoring millet systems. In France, housing projects in immigrant suburbs enjoyed an unofficial semi-autonomous status: police tolerated chronic low-level violence, drug-dealing and gang-rape, and generally kept out. Not surprisingly, when one resident was asked whether he regarded himself as Algerian or French he responded that he did not consider himself either—he belonged, he said, to his cité.

Nevertheless, the millet system as such is not necessarily undesirable and may in fact be the most satisfactory arrangement for some authentically multicultural societies. Under the millet system, minorities live and work in ethnic enclaves where they can maintain distinct cultures. There is no reason in principle why the primary cultural unit in which individuals do their business should be the nation state, defined by territorial integrity, rather than some non-territorial community defined by the religious commitments, ethnic character or other characteristics of its members. Indeed, the internet and other technological advances would make it much easier to run a millet system now than it was for the Ottoman Turks.

In America, as well as European countries that have experienced mass immigration, a millet system of sorts is a reality on the ground. Most major cities boast

Chinatowns and Little Italys as well as ethnic neighborhoods populated by blacks and more recent immigrants, and in older cities in particular ethnic organizations are active. In rural areas there are Indian reservations for Native Americans whose status is in many respects comparable to that of ethnic minorities under the Ottoman regime and communities of Amish, a semi-official millet, who are exempted from some state regulations and left largely to police themselves.³⁰ And then there is the Mafia.

There are however practical considerations that militate against the millet system. First, of all it is not clear that it is a viable arrangement in modern, Western societies where it is not feasible for most educated middle class people, even with good internet access, to conduct their business from within ethnic enclaves. Secondly many, if not most, people do not want to live in ethnic enclaves and the policies needed to maintain these enclaves for individuals who want to live in them make exit difficult or impossible for those who want out.

The millet system works best for individuals who are happy to live in the ancestral village and work the family farm or help with the family business. It does not serve the interests of most middle class professionals who need to go to university and continue on through graduate and professional programs, who will spend their professional lives working for large firms or other organizations and need to be geographically mobile to pursue their careers. We may be enchanted by visions from the Arabian Nights, of cities that include the Street of the Carpet-Weavers, the Street of the Potters and the old Jewish Quarter or charmed by Amish communities exhibiting their traditional farms, crafts and produce for tourist consumption but most of us would not want to live there. To get the quality of education, the professional opportunities and the range of activities we want and expect, we cannot be restricted to these ethnic enclaves.

Moreover ethnic enclaves more often than not become what economist William Easterly, writing on global development, calls “poverty traps”—vicious circles that lock nations, regions and neighborhoods, ethnic groups and families into poverty.³¹ In the affluent US, remarkably, there are regions—in Eastern Kentucky, the Mississippi Delta and perhaps even more surprisingly in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and elsewhere in the West—with poverty rates above 35%. These areas, Easterly suggests, stay poor because human capital investments don’t pay off for individuals who live there.

Suppose a country starts out poor, with everyone having low skills. Ms. X is deciding whether to make the sacrifices necessary to get trained as a doctor. If she gets a medical education, she will have to forgo working at an unskilled job that she could get immediately. She will not be able to support her aged parents or her

³⁰ See, e.g. Nadya Labi. “The Gentle People.” *Legal Affairs* January/February 2005. “The Amish,” she writes, “want to be left alone by the state—and to a remarkable extent, they are. They don’t fight America’s wars or, for the most part, contribute to Social Security. In 1972, noting their “excellent record as law-abiding and generally self-sufficient members of society,” the Supreme Court allowed the Amish to take their children out of school after eighth grade.”

³¹ Easterly, W (2002) *The Elusive Quest for Growth*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. See especially Ch 8 “Tales of Increasing Returns: Leaks, Matches and Traps” pp. 145-169.

young siblings for the duration of her medical training. But after she becomes a highly skilled physician, she can earn more. She will be able to support her parents and siblings even better after a few years of privation. But how much will her earnings increase after she becomes a doctor?

We are back to where we were before. How much her earnings increase depends on how successful she is at matching up with other skilled workers—say nurses, pharmacists, and bookkeepers. The likelihood of a profitable match depends on how much education everyone else is getting. Her problem after getting skilled is going to be to find other people of comparable skill... This is her bottom line: go to school if average nationwide skills are already high; don't go to school if average nationwide skills are low. Her decision rule is sensible for her but disastrous for the nation. The nation with low average skill is going to be stuck with low average skill because no single individual is going to find it worthwhile to go to school.³²

The picture is not, of course, quite as bleak as Easterly's a priori economic analysis suggests. Some individuals in poor countries do break out of poverty traps—in most cases, however, by immigrating to wealthier countries. The brain drain, however, only exacerbates the vicious circle that Easterly describes.

Comparable vicious circles, as Easterly notes, operate at every level of aggregation. Ambitious individuals leave small towns for the big city, Indians who do not want to spend their lives selling beads or working in casinos leave the reservation, and successful restaurateurs move out of the ethnic neighborhoods where they do business to the suburbs. It is striking to note that immigrants virtually never improve the poor city neighborhoods where they first land: they move out to make way for successive waves of poor immigrants. These neighborhoods only become gentrified when middle-class non-immigrant outsiders move in. Where the costs of exit are not prohibitive, those who can get out, do.

The costs of exit

Now in one respect, the brain drain phenomenon is counter intuitive. If the labor market were perfectly efficient we should expect individuals with education and training to migrate to areas where their skills were in short supply rather than places where they face stiff competition. Even more so, we would expect native sons and daughters, trained as doctors or nurses, educators or engineers, to return to the village or reservation, the neighborhood or ethnic community, after they are qualified because in addition to the absence of professional competition, they could enjoy the proximity of family and childhood friends and perhaps even, like Pinky, the moral gratification of "helping their people."

But they don't. And so, in order to keep ethnic enclaves from withering away and, in particular, in order to keep young people and talented individuals who have attractive prospects elsewhere from leaving, such communities must impose exit costs on their

³² Easterly (2002), pp. 159-60.

members.

It is easy to see why most who can get out do. First of all, as Easterly notes, pursuing one's profession requires "matches" with other educated individuals who have complementary professional skills. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, most people have a taste for choice as such which few small communities and ethnic enclaves can provide. Big box stores boom while Mom and Pop businesses fail because, even apart from the lower prices they offer, they provide consumers with a wider range of choices. Megachurches grow while small congregations stagnate for much the same reason: they provide consumers with a wider range of programs, services, opportunities for volunteer work and other religious products.³³ Many people want the option of occasional retreat to small, homogeneous groups—that is itself yet another choice—but most also want the option of non-participation and relatively few, all other things being equal, want to be locked into such groups permanently. That is, they do not want to live under the millet system.

Because, like remote villages, ethnic enclaves do not offer the professional opportunities that provide incentives for individuals to pursue education and training or the choices and amenities that would induce ambitious, educated individuals to stay, they become poverty traps. Accustomed to thinking of poverty as an urban phenomena with, perhaps, outlying poverty areas in Appalachia and the Deep South we may be surprised to see large regions of poverty on Easterly's map in Arizona and New Mexico, Montana and the Dakotas until we remember that these are remote rural areas where the archipelago of Indian reservations that comprise the Native American millet are clustered. People like to visit these places but almost no one wants to live there.

Even though the persistence of such ethnic enclaves has entertainment value for tourists, policies that protect and promote the persistence of these communities constrain their members and may make the cost of exit prohibitive. So, for example, Janet Halley notes "culture constrains." Responding to Will Kymlicka she points out that that policies which make it possible for members of indigenous minorities to maintain the cultural integrity of their communities sets back the interests of individuals who want out.

Culture constrains. Sure, it may liberate, too. But efforts to justify cultural rights are characteristically defective to the extent that they insist on a sunny liberation story while suppressing a grimmer constraint story...Kymlicka's example of an unproblematic, because unintentional, restriction on group member rights in a native tribe that holds land in common. As Kymlicka notes, the tribe's ultimate purpose is to "provide protection against the economic and political power of the larger society to buy out or expropriate indigenous land."³ This purpose is extremely important: as the Dawes Act experiment demonstrated, converting reservation land to individual Indian ownership allowed white buyers and lessors to make confiscatory deals and then to move into the midst of Indian tribes, diversifying the cultural milieu in a way that was, and continues to be,

³³ Jane Lampman. "Megachurches' way of worship is on the rise." *The Christian Science Monitor* February 6, 2006 at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0206/p13s01-lire.htm>

devastating for tribal cultural continuity.⁴ What happens when, in contrast, land is held in common? According to Kymlicka, tribe members "have less ability to borrow money, since they have less alienable property to use as collateral." This consequence, he says, is a mere "by-product," which "does not place the group over and above the individual."

But the implications of tribal common land are much more complex. Typically it will mean that most tribe members are left not with less alienable property, but with none. Economically, this means not merely difficulty in finding collateral, but complete abstention from the surrounding market economy. And at this point Kymlicka's failure to take note of culture's constraints becomes visible: he has not mentioned the "purpose" of promoting cultural interdependence and cohesion by blocking--for people with acute material needs--the exit marked "sell or lease your land and move away from the tribe."³⁴

Exit from Amish communities, which in the Eastern United States, have tourist appeal similar to that of Indian reservations in the West can be even more difficult. Nadya Labi in *Legal Affairs* writes:

To the hordes of tourists who travel to Pennsylvania Dutch country each year to go to quilting bees and shop for crafts, the Gentle People, as the Amish are known, represent innocence. They are a people apart, removed in place and arrested in time. They reject the corruptions of modernity—the cars that have splintered American communities and the televisions that have riveted the country's youth. The Amish way of life is grounded in agriculture, hard work, and community. Its deliberate simplicity takes the form of horse-drawn buggies, clothes that could have come from a Vermeer painting, and a native German dialect infused with English words... The Amish want to be left alone by the state—and to a remarkable extent, they are. They don't fight America's wars or, for the most part, contribute to Social Security. In 1972, noting their "excellent record as law-abiding and generally self-sufficient members of society," the Supreme Court allowed the Amish to take their children out of school after eighth grade.³⁵

Without secondary education or marketable skills, the prospects of Amish who wish to leave their communities in the outside world are grim. Moreover, once individuals formally join the church, through baptism in their late teens, defection entails shunning—by the entire community including the defector's immediate family. It is hardly surprising that the majority of Amish remain within their communities: what is surprising is that a significant minority, in some communities as many as 37%, leave.³⁶

³⁴ Halley, J. (1999) "Culture Constrains." *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women*. Joshua Cohen and Matthew Howard, eds. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

³⁵ Labi 2005

³⁶ Thosmas J. Meyers. "The Old Order Amish: To Remain in the Faith or to Leave." *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 1993.

Life within traditional Amish communities is, under the best of conditions, tough, monotonous and constrained. Moreover when things go awry the community closes ranks to resist interference by the "English" as they did in a number of cases where children were abused and sexually molested, by fathers and other family members. For their part, social workers and police, respecting the autonomy of the Amish millet, were reluctant to interfere:

Anna, who is the eighth of nine children... was often in trouble. Her father was in poor health, because he refused to take insulin for his diabetes, but he knew how to give a good beating. Sometimes he used the strap, a foot-long piece of rubber common in Amish homes; at other times, he took Anna "to the woodpile" and hit her with a piece of wood.

When Anna turned 11, she told me, her 19-year-old brother began molesting her, stopping just short of intercourse. When he moved away, another 17-year-old brother started raping her... Anna wanted help, but she didn't think she would get it from her church. So she began dropping hints about the abuse to English neighbors. When they didn't pick up on her cues, she got bolder. In 2001, while cleaning house for her family's landlord, Anna used the phone to call a battered women's shelter in Mt. Vernon, Ohio. The counselors on the other end of the line didn't take her seriously. But after a month of calls, the shelter alerted Children and Family Services Division of Knox County.

When a social worker visited Anna's home, Anna told her about the sexual abuse. She also reported that her parents were moving the family to Pennsylvania. Laurie Roberts, one of the social workers on Anna's case in Ohio, said she was taught in training that sexual abuse among the Amish is pervasive, and seldom reported. (The problem is significant enough that the counties near Knox publish a pamphlet to educate the Amish about sexual abuse.) Yet the county left Anna in her home... Anna tried to run away. But when her parents figured out where she was and called the woman who was sheltering her, Anna was sent home. Fannie began locking Anna in her room. The family moved to Tione'sta, Pa., where Fannie tried to get her daughter declared mentally ill. She took Anna to a doctor who found that Anna's eardrum had collapsed from blows to her head and seemed doubtful that the damage had been caused by buggy accidents as he'd been told. Fannie next tried a massage therapist, Barbara Burke. Noticing scars on Anna's legs, Burke called Children and Youth Services in Clarion County. On a later visit, Burke massaged Anna's father while CYS secretly interviewed Anna in the basement. The agency later visited Anna at her home. But it didn't take her into protective custody. (CYS declined to comment.)

When Fannie found out about the CYS visit, she and Anna went with 13 other kids to the home of John Yoder, an Amish dentist... Yoder shot some novocaine into her upper gum. She shook her head and told him that two of her lower teeth had cavities. He shot the lower gum, and asked Fannie which teeth should go. Anna's mother answered, "Take them all," and Yoder pulled—along the upper gum, along the lower gum, until every tooth was gone. "After he had pulled

the last tooth," Anna remembered, "my mom looked at me and said, 'I guess you won't be talking anymore.' "³⁷

Like Fadime Sahindal, a victim of honor killing in Sweden, Anna discovered that she could not count on authorities outside of her community to protect her. Eager to respect the cultural practices of her community and the autonomy of the millet, they were reluctant to interfere.

Anna's case, like Fadime's, is extraordinary. Most Kurdish immigrant fathers do not murder their daughters and most Amish mothers do not punish their children by having all their teeth taken out. Nevertheless policies in Sweden and the US intended to respect cultural practices and group rights undermine the rights of individuals, deprive them of protection under the law and make it difficult for them to extricate themselves from cultural enclaves.

The rationale for the Yoder decision cited by Labi, which affirmed the right of the Amish to remove their children from school after 8th grade in virtue of their communal self-sufficiency and good behavior, subordinates individual interests to community autonomy. The court, in effect, declared that since the Amish did not cause trouble or cost the taxpayer money they could do as they pleased. This sets a double standard not only for practices but also for principles concerning the rights of individuals. The state passes laws and imposes regulations on members of the larger community in order to protect individual rights. The state establishes a school leaving age to support the interests of children in achieving a level of education that will enrich their lives as adults and provide them with a reasonable range of career options—not merely to see to it that they won't be disruptive or burden the taxpayer. By contrast, when it comes to members of formal or informal millets, the state adopts a hands-off policy so long as the activities of their citizens do not have any adverse effect on the larger community.

It is this double standard with respect to individual rights that immigrant associations in Sweden and groups like *Ni Putes ni Soumises* in France complained about. Short of honor killing or street riots, the authorities tolerated practices that set back the interests of minorities: group sovereignty trumped individual rights. Indeed it is not the relatively rare, striking cases of abuse that make the case against such millet systems but the lesser lives to which the system relegated them as a matter of course. Children of 15 could be and often were married off to relatives old enough to be their fathers or grandfathers. Immigrants lived in housing projects run by gangs of thugs who were allowed to engage in constant low-level violence so long as it didn't spill over. Liberal governments protected the rights and liberties of white, native-born citizens but adopted a policy of containment when it came to immigrants and people of color.

Once again there is a compelling argument against the millet system: most people don't want it. It is hard to see why the desires of relatively few individuals who benefit from the system—should trump the preferences of the majority who want out.

³⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 6

Authenticity, adaptive preference and the self-esteem movement

Should people get what they want? Prima facie, the answer is obvious: of course they should insofar as satisfying their wants does not thwart the desire-satisfaction of others. Where not everyone can get what he wants, the aim should be, crudely, to achieve the greatest desire-satisfaction for the greatest number.

Critics of utilitarianism, like Martha Nussbaum, however suggest that desire satisfaction should not be taken as the criterion for wellbeing. They worry that the desires of some individuals have been “deformed” by “adaptive preference” and argue that the satisfaction of such deformed desires is not conducive to wellbeing. Thus Nussbaum, in *Women and Human Development* and elsewhere tells the stories of poor women in developing countries who have scaled down their aspirations in response to deprived life circumstances. She argues that satisfying their “deformed” preferences would not contribute to their wellbeing and, indeed, that consciousness-raising is in order.

Nussbaum notes that when the women whose stories she tells are made aware that they have political rights, when they are empowered by participation in women’s coops and come to see that they can change their lives, their preferences change: they recognize that they are better off, enjoy their newfound empowerment, change their lives for the better and affirm that they would not go back to the lives they had lived. And, she notes, by any reasonable criteria for human flourishing they are better off.

In the same spirit, some multiculturalists suggest that the desire of minorities and immigrants to assimilate to the dominant culture is deformed. Drawing on the literature of post-colonialism and identity politics, they suggest that the desire of members of these groups to shed their ethnic identities and assimilate to the dominant culture is a consequence of “internalizing” the values of the oppressor, in particular the oppressor’s assumption that they are inferior. Individuals who buy into the values of the oppressor, so the story runs, suffer from low self-esteem which, on the received view, causes dysfunctional and anti-social behavior. Consciousness-raising is in order to boost self-esteem by promoting racial pride, identification with one’s ethnic community and cultural self-affirmation.

In the US, where the dogmas of the self-esteem movement have become embedded in popular culture, this has been the received view for decades. Consider M. Dendoune’s remark--“How am I supposed to feel French when people always describe me as a Frenchman of Algerian origin? I was born here. I am French. How many generations does it take to stop mentioning my origin?” Imagine how we would react if a black American declared: “How am I supposed to feel American when people always describe me as African-American? I was born here. I am American. How many generations does it take to stop mentioning my ancestry?” The script for black Americans, which prescribes racial pride and affirmation of one’s African heritage, is so firmly entrenched that most Americans would be at least mildly shocked and many would regard such a remark as a symptom of psychological disorder. And yet the only

difference is that most black Americans' ancestral African connections are far more remote than M. Dendoune's.

Americans have trained themselves, in the interests of political correctness, to acknowledge blacks' African ancestry. By contrast, M. Dendoune's compatriots stretch to call him a Frenchman—even a Frenchman of Algerian origin: when they are not careful to be politically correct they refer to him as an *arabian*. M. Dendoune's sentiments are transparent and easy to understand: he doesn't want to be put in a box, particularly one that doesn't fit. He doesn't want to be identified with a culture that is in fact alien to him because of the color of his skin. The desire of some black Americans, like Alex Haley whose TV mini-series *Roots* set the agenda for 30 years of racial self-affirmation, to be identified with alien African cultures because of the color of their skins is more difficult to understand. Nevertheless, by the 1970s the script was firmly established: even if blacks did not feel any connection to the West African cultures from which some (but rarely all) of their ancestors had come 200 or more years earlier, they *should*; even if they did not want to be identified with these ancestral cultures, it was all but universally assumed that they *should*. If they did not want to be so identified then their wants were deformed and satisfying such deformed wants, on the received view, would not be conducive to their wellbeing.

This motivation for this view is puzzling until we recognize that in the US multiculturalism, especially as it pertained to black Americans, was inextricably linked to the self-esteem movement. The fundamental thesis of the movement was the doctrine that members of disadvantaged minorities behaved badly because, as a consequence of racism, they suffered from low self-esteem. Rejection of one's ethnic roots was a manifestation of low self-esteem. To boost the self-esteem of minorities it was crucial to instill ethnic pride.

The appeal of this doctrine during the 1960s when it was popularized, was not difficult to understand. Since the 1954 Supreme Court ruling, *Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education* prohibiting racial segregation in the public schools, Jim Crow laws had been struck down and bogus "literacy tests" which disenfranchised blacks in the South had been declared illegal; the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s prohibited racial discrimination and, at least nominally, the goals of the Civil Rights Movement had been achieved. White Americans were however flabbergasted to discover that after 10 years of the Civil Rights Movement—following over 200 years of slavery, segregation, oppression and disenfranchisement—black Americans were still in the aggregate poorer, less educated and more likely to engage in antisocial behavior than white Americans. White Americans of good will were terrified that the persistence of social, economic and educational inequality showed that blacks were genetically inferior: even in *Mississippi* public toilets were integrated—so why weren't all those black people doctors and corporate executives? The doctrines of the self-esteem movement purported to provide a psychological explanation that did not reflect adversely on the character or native ability of blacks.

Psychology was in vogue and for almost two decades had provided explanations and, advocates hoped, cures for socially unacceptable behavior. So, during the heyday of

the feminine mystique, women dissatisfied with suburban domesticity, were diagnosed with penis envy and a variety of other psychological pathologies; juvenile delinquents were tagged as “emotionally disturbed” and sent into therapy; and gay men and women were classified as mentally ill. Psychology was, in the popular view, “scientific” and provided kinder, gentler solutions to social problems than religious moralism: under the psychological regime, deviants would receive therapy and, if necessary, medication rather than blame or punishment. Perhaps more importantly, psychological accounts were more palatable than economic explanations which suggested remedial measures that most white Americans found unpalatable—like the strict enforcement of equal opportunity regulations, affirmative action, school bussing and other efforts to dismantle the system of white privilege that persisted in spite of formal equality under the law.

Self-esteem, as promoters understood it, was not only, or primarily a matter of feeling good about one’s choices or achievements but a matter of taking pride in ascribed characteristics and affiliations, in particular racial identity. Here they drew on the work of revolutionary writer and activist Frantz Fanon, filtered through the literature on identity politics and the rhetoric of the Black Power movement. Fanon, trained as a psychiatrist, argued that colonized people, internalizing the racist categories inherent in the language and culture of their oppressors, suffered from inferiority complexes. Racism depleted self-esteem. However, whereas Fanon had argued for violent revolution as a means by which colonized people could recover self-esteem, the movement his work inspired sought to promote self-esteem in order to avoid violence and other forms of socially disruptive behavior.

To this end, members of disadvantaged groups were urged to be proud of their racial and ethnic identities. Members of any disadvantaged group who failed to act their assigned scripts, on this account, suffered from low self-esteem: assimilating, “passing” or even simply ignoring race and ethnicity were deemed dysfunctional and self-destructive. Blacks who straightened their hair, spoke Standard English or “acted white” were diagnosed as victims of inauthenticity and “false consciousness”—identification with the oppressor—not only by black radicals, but also by whites, who wanted blacks to be Other. So self-esteem advocates promoted ethnic self-identification, encouraged children to be proud of their ethnic heritage and rewarded self-appointed “community leaders” promoting ethnic and racial identity projects with publicity and grants.

Of course, the privileged elite have always enjoyed seeing members of less privileged groups set up as specimens acting in character. From carnival freak shows to ethnic tourist districts to Leonard and Felicia’s radical chic cocktail parties, the visibly Other have always been a source of entertainment. According to the new politically correct doctrine however the principle beneficiaries of visibility and distinctiveness were the Others themselves: acting their ethnic “scripts” was, on the received view, essential to self-affirmation, mental health and the good life for members of disadvantaged groups as well as good citizenship.

Naturally, black authenticity as whites understood it was only a shade off of sheer stereotype. White multiculturalists were convinced that the authentic representatives of the black community were young lower-class males who “acted black” rather than the

likes of Rosa Parks or Martin Luther King, and that it was urban street gangs rather than civil rights organizations that were at the forefront of the struggle against racism and oppression. So, as privileged white undergraduates during the late '60s we contributed when the Black Panthers came to campus soliciting support for what they claimed was a free breakfast program for malnourished ghetto children and were thrilled when gang members gave us the clenched fist salute. We knew the Black Panthers' Breakfast Program was a sham but were delighted, as we thought of it, to support warriors on the front lines of the Revolution.

Meanwhile, among politicians, pundits, social critics and K-12 educators it was becoming a commonplace that self-hatred was the source of academic failure and antisocial behavior. The Moynihan Report of 1965 had made the case that "black matriarchy," by undermining the self-esteem of black men, was at the root of a variety of social ills.³⁸ Unmanned by castrating black females, the story went, young black males asserted their masculinity by cultivating machismo and sticking up convenience stores. The solution, welcomed by liberals and conservatives alike, was to pull funding from black women and children in order to force them into dependence on black men, whose self-esteem—so the story went—would be boosted by female subservience.

The Moynihan Report in addition suggested paying black males \$10,000 a year, a very decent wage in 1965, to work as kindergarten teachers in ghetto schools in order to provide "positive role models" for black boys. The role model doctrine was a central feature of the self-esteem movement. The view was that it was good for children to have heroes to show them what was possible and encourage them to aim high—but that heroes were effective in this regard only if they were of the same sex and race as their admirers. Otherwise, according to the role model doctrine, children could not "identify" with them. Since "identity" on the multiculturalist account was essentially gendered, racial and ethnic, black boys needed black men as role models.

No one, of course, worried about black girls. They were not likely to engage in violence—at least not outside the home—and most were not, in any case, big enough or strong enough to do real damage. It was the young males who had to be mollified and domesticated and the Moynihan program, like the Promise Keepers' agenda that was briefly fashionable 20 years later, proposed sacrificing women to men in exchange for civilized behavior in the public square. In return for behaving themselves in public, men got to boss around their women at home.

In addition to their program for reconstructing the patriarchal family to protect fragile male egos, self-esteem advocates promoted cultural self-affirmation. Linguists were recruited to make the case that Black English was an authentic language with its own grammar and vocabulary.³⁹ History teachers contrived fantasies representing Africa

³⁸ Moynihan, D. P. (1965) "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action." Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor, March 1965.

³⁹ In fairness, Black English is an authentic dialect with characteristic grammatical structures and is, in fact, continuing to diverge from Standard American English, though most linguists do not believe that its characteristic grammatical forms have their roots in the languages of West Africa. See, e.g. McWhorter, J. (2003) *The Power of Babel: A Natural History of Language*. Harpers Perennial.

as the cradle of civilization. No one shied away from admitting that before being colonized and incorporated into the Roman world inhabitants of the British Isles were brutal, illiterate barbarians or worried about Anglo-Saxon self-hatred because no one suspected that their descendents were genetically defective or worried that without special pleading they would take to sticking up Seven-Elevens. Blacks, however, were thought to require more careful treatment.

And so the outlines of the multiculturalist program emerged. Race and ethnic origin—ascribed and immutable characteristics—were essential features of individuals’ identities which individuals who manifested healthy self-esteem affirmed. Repudiating one’s race or ethnicity was a source of self-destructive, anti-social behavior. In a properly multicultural society all cultural traditions would be honored and all individuals would take pride in their racial and ethnic identities. The self-esteem of members of disadvantaged groups in particular was to be promoted by the promulgation of good myths elaborating on the virtues of their ancestral cultures and providing “role models” for them from amongst people of the same color.

The fundamental doctrines of the self-esteem movement concerning the importance of self-esteem, role models and ethnic pride are so deeply embedded in popular culture that to most of us they seem commonsensical and innocuous. However there are two reasons why we should reject them.

First of all, they are false. These were the doctrines that leaders of the self-esteem movement, commissioned by the State of California in 1986 as a Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal Social Responsibility, attempted to prove. Members of the Task Force set out to establish that low self-esteem was responsible for all manner of social pathologies, including academic failure, teenage pregnancy and street crime. Remarkably, in spite of the Task Force’s preconceived notions and agenda their report, *The Social Importance of Self-Esteem*, failed to find any significant connection between low self-esteem and any of the pathologies they studied. As Neil Smelser noted in his introduction, “One of the disappointing aspects of every chapter in this volume...is how low the association between self-esteem and its consequences are in research to date.”⁴⁰

Indeed data suggest that promoting “global self-esteem,” the general sense of pride in oneself not grounded in any skill or achievement, was counterproductive. In a report for the Center for Equal Opportunity summarizing this data, Nina H. Shokraii notes:

When psychologists Harold W. Stevenson and James W. Stigler tested the academic skills of elementary school students in Japan, Taiwan, China, and the United States, the Asian students easily outperformed their American counterparts. That came as no surprise. But when the same students were asked how they felt about their subject skills, the Americans exhibited a significantly higher self-evaluation of their academic prowess. In other words, they combined a

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 15.

lousy performance with a high sense of self-esteem. As Stevenson and Stigler point out, Asian schools teach their students to indulge in self-congratulation only after they have paid their dues, through years of learning and hard work. While educators in most countries frown upon pride -- one manifestation of a high self-esteem -- American teachers actually encourage it as a positive personality trait.⁴¹

In addition to impeding academic performance by diminishing incentives for achievement, Shokraii suggests also that boosting self-esteem does not promote good citizenship either:

Those who think low self-esteem is the cause of high crime rates among blacks are also wrong. According to a recent study by psychologists Roy Baumeister, Joseph Boden, and Laura Smart, "first, [this notion] does not fit the transient shifts in the crime rate among African Americans, which is now reaching its highest levels as slavery recedes farther and farther into the background. Second, self-esteem levels among African Americans are now equal to, or higher than, the self-esteem levels of whites. Third, it is far from certain that slaves had a low self-esteem." A study by Jennifer Crocker and Brenda Major of the State University of New York at Buffalo, similarly refuted the psychological theories that claim members of stigmatized groups (blacks, for example) should possess low global self-esteem. They argued that stigmatized individuals are not simply "passive victims but are frequently able to actively protect their self-esteem from prejudice and discrimination."

Ironically, adolescent African-American males living in impoverished neighborhoods are more likely to turn violent if schools bombard them with unearned praise. Baumeister, Boden, and Smart found that when high self-esteem is challenged by others' negative views, egotism is threatened. People will react in one of two ways. They either lower their self-appraisal and withdraw, or they maintain their self-appraisal and manifest negative emotions toward the source of the ego threat. This response can easily become violent in individuals who place high emphasis on their self-appraisal.⁴²

Undeterred by the results of such studies, educators, members of the "helping professions" and community leaders continued to promote multiculturalism and ethnic pride without any results to show. Cultural affirmation and self-esteem did not boost math scores or discourage antisocial behavior. Bilingual education did not improve Hispanic children's academic achievement or encourage them to stay in school. The traditional patriarchal family and female subservience did not tame young lower class males. Indeed, as subsequent developments showed, it seemed to have the opposite effect: youths in Arab immigrant ghettos, whose women were as subservient as Moynahan or any other neo-Freudian social reformer could wish, were as violent,

⁴¹ Shokraii, N. "The Self-Esteem Fraud: Why Feel-Good Education Does Not Lead to Academic Success" Report of the Center for Equal Opportunity. <http://www.ceousa.org/READ/self.html>

⁴² Ibid.

directionless and anti-social as young black men in American slums. Yob culture and thuggery among the lower classes, it turned out, were universal, had nothing to do with ethnic identity and could not be fixed by playing identity politics or sacrificing virgins.

In the US, self-esteem and ethnic self-affirmation programs were both wasteful and unproductive. Even more importantly, dumping money into cultural affirmation projects let people off the hook: such projects were the socially acceptable alternative to politically unpopular programs that were proven to be effective in benefiting minorities: affirmative action, integrated housing and school bussing.⁴³ Perhaps that is why 20 years after the California Task Force's report, in the absence of any evidence for redeeming social value for purposes other than entertainment, it remains popular.

The second and perhaps more important reason however to reject the multiculturalist ethnic self-affirmation program was that it enhanced the salience of ascribed characteristics, imposed scripts on members of ethnic minorities--in many cases fictional scripts that were alien to their experience--in virtue of ascribed characteristics and treated the natural and all but universal desire of people "not to be put boxes" as a pathology.

People do not want to be saddled with cultures and histories, particularly cultures and histories that are alien to who they are as individuals, because of their physical appearance or ancestry. They do not want to be underestimated, rejected or excluded because of their race or ethnic origin, but even more importantly they do not want to be specially sought out, judged by different standards, encouraged to act according to set scripts or excused from ordinary requirements of civility because of their race or ethnic origin. They want to be judged as individuals by "the content of their character and not the color of their skin." By the late 20th century however such sentiments were regarded as at best naïve and had become unacceptable in polite company: "assimilation" was a dirty word and even "integration" was suspect

Nevertheless, in the US multiculturalism remained relatively innocuous because no one took it seriously. Americans enjoyed ethnic restaurants and street festivals and all claimed to be a little bit Irish on St. Patrick's Day. Genealogy became a fad: the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of European immigrants searched the records at Ellis Island for information about ancestors who had passed through a century earlier and black Americans whose ancestors had arrived two or three hundred years earlier set out for Africa in search of Kunte Kinte. Moreover because members of invisible minorities, descendents of European immigrants, could choose to be as ethnic as they wished—to dress in costume for ethnic festivals or put ethnicity on the back burner—Americans were inclined to regard cultural affirmation as a matter of choice and so as an innocuous entertainment.

⁴³ See, e.g. Alan Finder "As Test Scores Jump, Raleigh Credits Integration by Income" (New York Times, September 25, 2005 at <http://www.udel.edu/anthro/ackerman/raleigh.pdf> for information about the strikingly beneficial effects of school bussing for racial and ethnic minorities. For information about the benefits of integrated housing see the Fund for An Open Society at <http://www.opensoc.org/>

[C]ertainly in the USA there is a great deal of talk (at the very least talk) about ethnic and cultural pluralism. In Alba's survey (1990: 79) 'Discussing your ethnic background with someone else' was the second most frequently cited 'ethnic experience', after eating ethnic cuisine. Nevertheless symbolic ethnicity has very little practical impact in the everyday world of the middle-class white American suburbanites who espouse it. For such Americans 'ethnic' identity is highly flexible, and largely a matter of choice: evidence reported by Waters (1990: 40) shows the extent to which informants changed their ethnic identification between interviews a year apart. Within certain limits, says Alba, 'whites are largely free to identify themselves as they will and to make these identities as important as they like' (1990: 295). This is manifestly not true of other Americans: 'the ways in which ethnicity is flexible and symbolic and voluntary for white middle-class Americans are the very ways in which it is not so for non-white and Hispanic Americans' (Waters 1990: 156)⁴⁴

When multiculturalism is taken seriously, it is not a harmless entertainment. Even in the US, ethnicity it is not a matter of choice for individuals who are black or brown and, where multiculturalism is more than a fantasy, it is not a matter of choice for "invisible" minorities either: in the absence of visible racial differences, individuals still cannot choose whether to be Sunnis or Shiites, Serbs, Croats or Bosnians, Irish Catholics or Protestants. Some individuals may indeed have a taste for ethnicity but others do not and when ethnicity is taken seriously it is difficult or impossible to opt out: accommodating the interests of individuals who have a stake in cultural diversity sets back the interests of those who want to shed their ethnic identities and the restrictive scripts associated with them.

There is no reason why people should *want* to play these scripts or to affirm their ethnic identity. The doctrines of the self-esteem movement are false: there is no empirical evidence that individuals who resist playing their ethnic scripts or otherwise fail to exhibit ethnic pride are prone to self-destructive or anti-social behavior. Apart from these doctrines there is no reason to imagine that pride in one's race or ancestry is any more desirable than pride in one's telephone number, astrological sign or old school tie. There is no more reason to believe that black women who straighten their hair or bleach their skin are any more in need of consciousness raising or correction than white women who bleach their hair and bake in tanning salons, or anyone who diets or buys cosmetic surgery, or any mezzo or baritone who, with the collaboration of their voice teacher, works in vain to become a soprano or tenor.

There is no reason why the desires of individuals who have a taste for ethnic self-affirmation should be privileged or why policies that accommodate their tastes should be adopted, particularly if they impose burdens on others and set back their interests.

⁴⁴ Grillo, R. D. *Pluralism and the Politics of Difference - State, Culture, and Ethnicity in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. Oxford Scholarship Online. Oxford University Press., p. 226

Chapter 7

Too Diverse?

Multiculturalism, is nevertheless a response to a legitimate concern: the worry that the only viable alternative to plural monoculturalism is exclusion. Immigrants do not become enculturated immediately and some members of the first generation never do. If the choice were between accommodating culturally distinct ethnic communities and closing the borders, we should certainly prefer accommodating culturally distinct ethnic communities. Members of dominant ethnic groups discriminate against ethnic minorities and if, as Appiah suggests, the choice were between Black Power and Uncle Tom we should certainly prefer Black Power.

Even though these are choices that, Appiah argues, we do not have to make, ethnic diversity is, nevertheless, problematic. In his 2004 article in *The Prospect*, David Goodhart speculated that there was a trade-off between ethnic diversity and social solidarity. Noting that Scandinavian countries, with the strongest welfare states were among the least ethnically diverse nations in the developed world while America, with a minority population he reckoned at 30% was the least committed to social programs identified with the welfare state he suggested that progressives faced a dilemma: liberal immigration policies, by increasing cultural diversity and “thinning out” the national culture would inevitably undermine the social solidarity. “And therein,” Goodhart writes, “lies one of the central dilemmas of political life”:

[S]haring and solidarity can conflict with diversity. This is an especially acute dilemma for progressives who want plenty of both solidarity (high social cohesion and generous welfare paid out of a progressive tax system) and diversity (equal respect for a wide range of peoples, values and ways of life). The tension between the two values is a reminder that serious politics is about trade-offs...It was the Conservative politician David Willetts who drew my attention to the "progressive dilemma". Speaking at a roundtable on welfare reform, he said: "The basis on which you can extract large sums of money in tax and pay it out in benefits is that most people think the recipients are people like themselves, facing difficulties that they themselves could face. If values become more diverse, if lifestyles become more differentiated, then it becomes more difficult to sustain the legitimacy of a universal risk-pooling welfare state. People ask: 'Why should I pay for them when they are doing things that I wouldn't do?' This is America versus Sweden. You can have a Swedish welfare state provided that you are a homogeneous society with intensely shared values. In the United States you have a very diverse, individualistic society where people feel fewer obligations to fellow citizens.

While Goodhart's essay was nuanced, the sociobiological thesis that some assumed it was intended to convey is false. Genetic kinship is neither necessary nor sufficient for social solidarity. As Goodhart himself notes, “The first clips of mourning Swedes after the murder of the foreign minister Anna Lindh were of crying immigrants expressing their sorrow in perfect Swedish.” Biology is not destiny. There is no doubt

that white Englishmen feel a much greater kinship with black Englishmen of West Indian extraction and, one suspects, even recent South Asian immigrants, than they do with white Frenchmen.

In addition, Goodhart's suggestion that American resistance to income transfers and the social programs associated with the welfare state is a consequence of ethnic diversity is questionable. The ideologies of self-reliance, the Protestant work ethic and rugged individualism predate mass immigration and are bred in the bone. Moreover American identity is thick and goes beyond an abstract sense of shared political commitments. Every American is obsessed with a shared history and identifies with it. Every American can identify the Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria and the Mayflower; every American, imbibes a rich mythos involving Pilgrims and pioneers, cowboys and Indians, Africans enduring the Middle Passage, Irish fleeing the Potato Famine and immigrants sighting the Statue of Liberty on their way to Ellis Island. The history of successive waves of immigrants is a part of the grand story that every American schoolchild absorbs.

Nevertheless, sociobiological conjecture aside, people do hesitate to enter into risk-pooling schemes that they believe are likely to benefit individuals who are culturally alien and either unwilling or unable to buy in to shared values and a shared culture. A century ago, during mass immigration from European countries, Americans gave generously to support schools, settlement houses and other programs that benefited immigrants under the rubric of "Americanization." Even if anti-immigrant sentiment bubbled under the surface, the melting pot was official ideology: Americans assumed that immigrants could, should and would become Americans—indeed as Teddy Roosevelt famously proclaimed, unhyphenated Americans. Goodhart seems correct in suggesting that where the native population assume that immigrants or minorities cannot be absorbed or actively reject the fundamental values of the dominant culture, social solidarity suffers. Where they assume however that immigrants and minorities can and will assimilate they work and give to promote integration.

Goodhart is also correct in suggesting that "absorbing outsiders into a community that it worthy of the name takes time"—and effort. Oddly, considering his worries about the difficulties of promoting support for a welfare state in America he cites "the old US melting pot" as a model for integrating immigrants:

Immigrants who plan to stay should be encouraged to become Britons as far as that is compatible with holding on to some core aspects of their own culture. In return for learning the language, getting a job and paying taxes, and abiding by the laws and norms of the host society, immigrants must be given a stake in the system and incentives to become good citizens... Immigrants from the same place are bound to want to congregate together, but policy should try to prevent that consolidating into segregation across all the main areas of life: residence, school, workplace, church. In any case, the laissez faire approach of the postwar period in which ethnic minority citizens were not encouraged to join the common culture (although many did) should be buried. Citizenship ceremonies, language lessons and the mentoring of new citizens should help to create a British version of the old US melting pot.

The American melting pot did melt, evidenced strikingly by the fact that Goodhart puts the minority population of the United States at 30% as distinct from the 70% he characterizes as “non-Hispanic whites.” A century ago, the grandparents and great-grandparents of many members of that 70% were themselves classified as minorities and native-born Americans (whose grandparents and great-grandparents had immigrated a century earlier) worried about the ability of the United States to absorb mass immigration.

No one seriously advocates completely open borders. Short of that however there is no reason to believe that reasonably generous immigration policies will undermine the shared culture of the United States or of other countries that receive immigrants—so long as such nations reject multiculturalism and commit to proactive policies encouraging assimilation.

Such policies need not be and, arguably, should not be colorblind. Racial discrimination, against both immigrants and native-born members of visible minorities is a fact of life and, as we have seen in the aftermath of the riots in French immigrant suburbs, denial will not make it go away. Without intentional efforts to disperse immigrant populations, immigrants will cluster and form ghettos—because they lack the language skills, coping strategies and personal contacts to operate effectively in the larger society. Without proactive policies to ameliorate ongoing discrimination in employment, housing and access to credit including, arguably, affirmative action, discrimination will persist. The pervasiveness of discrimination, social exclusion and a variety of policies and practices that lock out immigrants and members of visible minorities, as well as their sincere avowals, suggest that most members of these groups would prefer to assimilate to the larger culture.

The problem is that not *all* do, and accommodating the preferences of individuals who, for whatever reason, have a taste for cultural preservation often sets back the interests of those who want out. Cultural preservationists on Indian reservations and in Amish communities have an interest in keeping the costs of exit high: maintaining communal ownership of property, preventing children from getting a secondary education, and adopting other policies that make exit difficult set back the interests of members of the community who would, all other things being equal, prefer to leave. Accommodating the cultural practices of immigrant groups, including the forced marriage of minors, makes it difficult for members of those groups to resist family pressure and can turn deadly.

Less obviously however practices that do not directly impose upon minorities and immigrants who want out harm them indirectly by enhancing the social salience of their ethnic affiliation. Consider controversies about the right of French schoolgirls to wear the hijab and, more recently, the right of adult women in Holland to appear in public fully veiled. Opponents of restrictions on these practices have argued that imposing regulations that would prohibit Muslim women from veiling would “marginalize” them and contribute to the social exclusion of all Muslims. Arguably, however, the visibility of veiled women in the public square contributes to the salience of ethnic identity and so

“marginalizes” all individuals who are identified as members of traditionally Muslim ethnic groups by appearance or name.

It is an empirical question whether the visibility of veiled women decreases marginalization by making Muslim headgear an acceptable option or increases it by enhancing the salience of ethnic identity. Which way it goes depends upon the extent to which, in a given social context, veiled women and the cultural distinctness the practice of veiling suggests, are regarded as paradigmatic of traditional Muslim ethnic groups.

In general, the extent to which cultural maximizers, individuals who maximize the salience of their group affiliation, set back the interests of cultural minimizers who want their group identity to be non-salient, depends upon the extent to which cultural maximizers are taken to be paradigmatic of the group. New Yorkers pay no attention to ultra-maximizing Hasidic Jews who appear on the streets and in the subways in highly distinctive costumes advertising their group identity and do not regard them as representative of Jews generally. They recognize Hasidic Jews as members of a self-contained community like the Amish, who do not recruit and have no interest in expanding their domain. They are not perceived as representative: no one imagines that they are paradigmatic Jews any more than they believe that the Amish are paradigmatic Christians—or even paradigmatic Anabaptists. Consequently, their visible distinctiveness does not enhance the salience of group identity or impose a burden on culturally minimizing co-religionists.

By contrast, the visibility of Fundamentalists Christians reflects upon all Christians because they are popularly regarded as paradigmatic. Perhaps more to the point, against the backdrop of racial stereotyping, black cultural maximizers enhance the salience of black identity to the extent that they exhibit a range of characteristics and practices that many Americans regard as paradigmatically black. It does not matter whether these characteristics and behaviors are positive, negative or neutral: whether culturally maximizing blacks play the wise, beloved black mammy or the ghetto youth, within the American context, they contribute to the salience of black identity and set back the interests of cultural minimizers who want their visible racial identity to be non-salient.

Similarly, in France, the visibility of cultural maximizers, in this case schoolgirls wearing Muslim headscarves, enhanced the social salience of ethnic identity and not only set back the French government’s official assimilationist policy but also added to the burden on all French citizens of visible North African or Middle Eastern origin who carried a socially salient ethnic identity.

No man or woman is an island and practices that do not directly harm others may cause significant damage indirectly by perpetuating or enhancing the salience of immutable, visible ethnic identities. It is an open, empirical question whether the public presence of veiled women in France or other European countries with large immigrant populations would have this result. Would Europeans come to regard veiled women in the way that New Yorkers regard Hasidic Jews, as individuals with peculiar views, who are neither representative of their co-religionists nor of their ethnic group, or would the

visibility of veiled women exacerbate their inclination to assume that all brown people were Muslims and members of an unassimilable, culturally distinct ethnic community?

The latter possibility cannot be dismissed. Cultural diversity is not free: there is a conflict of interests between members of ethnic minorities who, for whatever reason, visibly affirm their ethnic identity and those who prefer their ethnic identity to be transparent. The conflict is especially sharp where ethnic identity is visibly marked so that individuals can neither opt out nor “pass.” It seems likely that most members of visible ethnic minorities would prefer their ethnic identities to be non-salient. If many are not integrated within the larger society, it is unlikely that that represents a *ceteris paribus* preference on their part so much as a response to exclusionary practices by the indigenous majority.

Nevertheless, granting that plural monoculturalism both undermines social solidarity and, as I have suggested sets back the interests of members of ethnic minorities who want to assimilate to the dominant culture, questions of how to adjudicate between the interests of individuals who want to preserve their cultural distinctiveness and those who want out and how to facilitate and encourage integration without violating individual rights remains. If I were an *arabienne* in France I would not want schoolgirls in hajibs and veiled women sending the message that I, even though I did not wear a Muslim veil, was not merely an olive-skinned Frenchwoman but a member of a distinct cultural group. It is not however clear that the state would be justified in imposing a dress code on its citizens to accommodate that desire.

A Dangerous Idea

The integrationist views, which I have defended here, suffer guilt by association with conservative politics and exclusionary policies. Until recently most attacks on plural monoculturalism came from the Right. Literature rehearsing the arguments I have developed here, in favor of assimilation and individual choice, almost invariably carried conservative punchlines: “And that is why we should restrict immigration” or even more frequently, “And that is why we should reject ‘reverse discrimination.’” Indeed, conservatives appealed to Americans’ distaste for plural monoculturalism to promote their agendas: lampooning “political correctness,” the self-esteem movement and the silly excesses of multiculturalism, they persuaded the American public that liberal policies intended to benefit immigrants and other minorities would inevitably lead to Balkanization.

Google “multiculturalism America” and conservative screeds rehearsing these themes pop out as fast as your processor and internet connection can pull up the screen. At this writing, the lead article turns out to be rant from *Frontpage Magazine* explaining “How Multiculturalism Took Over America” which declares “The first principle of multiculturalism is the equality of all cultures,” and moves quickly to derive corollaries concerning the worthlessness of the Western Tradition and the commitment of multiculturalists to dismantling it. In support of these claims the author cites an innocuous remark by Henry Louis Gates recommending the study of non-Western

cultures.⁴⁵ Following a harmless site geared to elementary school students, a slick item by Roger Kimball, from *The New Criterion*, on “Institutionalizing Our Demise” occupies the Number 3 slot. After a long description of the Star Spangled Banner show at Fort McHenry, Kimball notes, with dismay that “while 90 percent of Ivy League students could identify Rosa Parks, only 25 percent could identify the author of the words “government of the people, by the people, for the people (Yes, it’s the Gettysburg Address)” and predictably, after a ritual swat at affirmative action, goes on to deplore at length the disintegration of Anglo-Protestant American identity.⁴⁶

Following Kimball and rehearsing the perennial theme that “This latest wave of immigration is different,” Maria Hsia Chang, in a snit reminiscent of Henry James’ horror at discovering a century earlier that “New York was full of Italians and Jews,” suggests that hordes of unintegrated and unassimilable Hispanics, out-breeding their competition, are poised to establish an independent state of Aztlan comprising California, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico and portions of Nevada, Utah, and Colorado.⁴⁷ One did not have the heart to open the next document, “Multiculturalism and the No-Think Nation” which began “Multiculturalism teaches that all cultures are equal with the exception of traditional American culture, which is a racist, sexist, homophobic,...

It should hardly be surprising that most political liberals, who favored social programs to benefit minorities and immigrants, supported generous immigration policies and did not wish to associate themselves with the sentiments expressed in this literature, were reluctant to criticize multiculturalism of any variety. If the choice were between the Jingoist Bigot and the Plural Monoculturalist I would of course choose the latter—but I would like not to have to choose.

Until recently it was very difficult for political liberals to criticize multiculturalism without being accused of aiding and abetting the enemy or breaking the solidarity of the oppressed. In some respects, it was only the publication of Susan Okin’s essay, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* and subsequent world events that made it feasible to join in a liberal critique of multiculturalism. Okin spilled the open secret that oppressed groups were more oppressive to women than privileged groups and that even if women had not achieved equality in liberal societies rooted in the Enlightenment, they were much worse off in illiberal ones. Okin’s essay signaled the end of the liberal taboo on criticizing the practices of non-Western cultures and subsequent world events made it impossible to ignore the glaring truth that people who were badly off behaved badly.

⁴⁵ Auster, L. (2004) “How Multiculturalism Took Over America.” *Frontpage* July 9, 2004 at <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=14164>

⁴⁶ Kimball, R. (2004). “Institutionalizing our demise: America vs. multiculturalism.” *The New Criterion* at <http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/22/june04/america.htm>

⁴⁷ Chang, M. H. (1999) “Multiculturalism, Immigration and Aztlan.” Presented at the Second Alliance for Stabilizing America’s Population Action Conference, Breckenridge, C), August 6, 1999 at <http://www.diversityalliance.org/docs/Chang-aztlan.html>

These are, indeed, all dangerous ideas that conservatives have seized upon for generations to make the case for colonialism, support racist theories, and justify treating people who are badly off badly. It has however become impossible to ignore the fact that denying these ideas is even more dangerous. As Halley notes, “culture constrains.” It also oppresses and kills—and well-meaning attempts to accommodate cultural differences do no favors to individuals who are oppressed by their cultures.

This poses hard, and perhaps insoluble questions about how liberal nations and international agencies ought to deal with sovereign states whose governments permit or perpetrate human rights violations.⁴⁸ There are also however easier questions concerning how liberal, democratic nations ought to deal with diverse cultural groups within their territories, where national sovereignty is not an issue and the state is entitled to intervene in their affairs.

Should European countries with large immigrant populations accommodate their cultural practices by exempting their members from laws and regulations intended to protect vulnerable individuals from coercion and harm? Should liberal states de jure or de facto grant illiberal cultures within their borders virtual autonomy and allow them to run their own affairs so long as they do not bother members of the larger community? Should the French police have allowed gangs of thugs free rein within their housing projects so long as they confined their violence, rape and drug-dealing to their own turf? Should the US government and its agents exempt the Amish from compulsory education beyond 8th grade and turn a blind eye to practices that impose hardships and set back the interests of children because the Amish do not impose a burden on the tax payer or cause trouble in the larger community, and because they are a desirable tourist attraction?

Finally, even where the distinctive practices of diverse cultural groups are not inherently objectionable, the question of whether cultural diversity as such should be encouraged, tolerated or discouraged, which has been the primary focus of this essay, is still on the table. Should multiethnic societies encourage and facilitate the assimilation of immigrants and other ethnic minorities or should they adopt a salad bowl model that, minimally, imposes scripts on members of ethnic minorities and in a significant range of cases ramps up the cost of exit from immigrant communities and ethnic enclaves?

It is worth rehearsing some truisms, which at least, have the virtue of being true. Culture is not genetically coded. If you are born, raised and educated in a country, speak the language and follow the customs, you are part of that culture and there is no reason why you should identify, or be identified, with an ancestral culture of which you know nothing. Immigrants do not become fluent and enculturated as soon as they arrive in a country, but most do become fluent and enculturated eventually, and their children

⁴⁸ Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban in “Anthropologists, Cultural Relativism and Universal Rights” (*Chronical of Higher Education* June 9, 1995) notes: “Anthropologists generally have not spoken out, for example, against the practice in many cultures of female circumcision, which critics call a mutilation of women. They have been unwilling to pass judgment on such forms of culturally based homicide as the killing of infants or the aged. Some have withheld judgment on acts of communal violence, such as clashes between Hindus and Muslims in India or Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda, perhaps because the animosities between those groups are of long standing.”

invariably do. We should not expect or demand that immigrants become indistinguishable from natives but we should recognize that most want to be part of the countries where they have chosen to live and want their children to belong. We should be generous in welcoming immigrants and provide every resource that we can afford to help them assimilate. We should accommodate cultural differences as a temporary consequence of generous immigration policies so long as they do not violate the rights of members of immigrant groups, but we should not promote them and certainly not attempt to impose them on subsequent generations. And, of course, we should judge people by the content of their character and not the color of their skins.

I have argued that we should reject the salad bowl in favor of the melting pot and discourage practices that promote cultural diversity, because such practices render ascribed, immutable identities salient, impose scripts on members of minority groups and restrict individual choice.