# MULTICULTURAL CITIZENS

## THE PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICS OF IDENTITY

Edited by Chandran Kukathas

C.L. Ten
Barry Hindess
Ian McAllister
Richard Mulgan

Chandra Muzaffar
Ramesh Thakur
Geoffrey Brennan
William Maley

THE CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT STUDIES

Multiculturalism Research Program

## The Centre for Independent Studies

The Centre for Independent Studies in Australia and New Zealand is a non-profit independent economic and social research institute concerned with the principles underlying a free and open society. Much of the Centre's research is concerned with economics and in particular the role of the market and the price mechanism in registering individual preferences and allocating resources. Emphasis is placed on the potential role of voluntary processes in providing the services normally supplied by the compulsory methods of government.

An essential requirement for a healthy free society is that the development of ideas be unconstrained by fashion, orthodoxy or the 'politically possible' and that it takes place within society at large rather than being monopolised by the public sector or other dominant group. In encouraging competition in ideas, the Centre for Independent Studies:

- commissions and publishes research studies in a variety of formats
- sponsors conferences and seminars on topics of current and continuing public concern
- makes the results of its studies available to the general public.

The research work of the Centre is assisted by a Council of Advisers.

Membership of the Advisory Council includes:

Professor H.W. Arndt
Professor Ray Ball
Professor R.J. Blandy
Professor Geoffrey Brennan
Professor Lauchlan Chipman
Professor Kenneth Clements
Professor David Emanuel
Professor Ian Harper
Professor R.M. Hartwell
Professor Warren Hogan
Professor Wolfgang Kasper
Professor Kenneth Minogue
Professor R.R. Officer
Professor Ross Parish
Professor C.G.F. Simkin
Professor Peter Swan
Professor Geoffrey de Q. Walker

The Centre is financed by sales of publications, and by voluntary subscriptions and contributions from individuals, organisations and companies.

*Executive Director*
Greg Lindsay

*Editorial Director*
Michael James

Orders for publications and subscription enquiries should be addressed to:

The Centre for Independent Studies

PO Box 92, St Leonards, NSW 2065, AUSTRALIA
Telephone (02) 438 4377, Fax (02) 439 7310

Post Box 5776, Wellesley St, Auckland, NEW ZEALAND
Telephone (09) 307 0933, Fax (09) 307 0948

# MULTICULTURAL CITIZENS

THE CENTRE FOR
INDEPENDENT
STUDIES
1993

# MULTICULTURAL CITIZENS

## THE PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICS OF IDENTITY

Edited by Chandran Kukathas

CIS Readings 9

Multiculturalism Research Program

Published April 1993 by

The Centre for Independent Studies Limited

All Rights reserved.

Views expressed in the publications of the Centre for Independent Studies are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Centre's staff, Advisers, Trustees, Directors or officers.

National Library of Australia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data:

Multicultural citizens : the philosophy and politics of identity.

Bibliography.
Includes index.
ISBN 0 949769 86 X.

1. Pluralism (Social sciences). 2. Pluralism (Social sciences) – Australia. I. Kukathas, Chandran (1957– ). II. Multicultural Research Program. III. Centre for Independent Studies (Australia). (Series: CIS readings ; 9).

305.800994

© 1993 The Centre for Independent Studies Limited

Cover designed by Andrew Davies
Printed by Australian Print Group

## Contents

Acknowledgements *vii*

Introduction
THE QUESTION OF MULTICULTURALISM 1
**Chandran Kukathas**

**1** MULTICULTURALISM AND THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY 5
Introduction 7; Cultural Diversity and the Morality of Liberalism 8; Cultural Homogeneity 9; Cultural Diversity and Conceptions of the Good 12.
**C.L. Ten**

**2** THE IDEA OF A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY 17
Introduction 19; The Arguments for Homogeneity 20; Homogeneity Considered 22; The Idea of a Multicultural Society 25.
**Chandran Kukathas**

**3** MULTICULTURALISM AND CITIZENSHIP 31
Introduction 33; Citizenship 34; Cultural Pluralism 39.
**Barry Hindess**

**4** PUBLIC OPINION, MULTICULTURALISM, AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR IN AUSTRALIA 47
Introduction 49; The Origins of Multiculturalism 50; Types of Intergroup Relations 55; The Distribution of Public Opinion 62; Social Bases of Support 65; Multiculturalism and Political Behaviour 67; Conclusion 71; Appendix 73.
**Ian McAllister**

**5** MULTICULTURALISM: A NEW ZEALAND PERSPECTIVE 75
Introduction 77; Multiculturalism and the Nation State 77; Multiculturalism and Democracy 79; Ethnic Diversity on New Zealand 81; The Rights of Indigenous Peoples 84; Biculturalism *vs* Multiculturalism 86.
**Richard Mulgan**

**6** CULTURAL DIVERSITY: REFLECTIONS ON THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE 91

Introduction 93; Reasons for Malaysia's Success 94; Malaysia's Difficulties 98; Concluding Reflections 100.

**Chandra Muzaffar**

**7** FROM THE MOSAIC TO THE MELTING POT: CROSS-NATIONAL REFLECTIONS ON MULTICULTURALISM 103

Introduction 105; Meanings of Multiculturalism 106; The Rushdie Affair 107; Affirmative Action 113; From Expatriate to Immigrant 129; Multicultural Programs 132; Conclusions 139.

**Ramesh Thakur**

**8** MULTICULTURALISM AND THE IDEA OF AN AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY 143

Introduction 145; Can there be an Australian Identity? 146; Multiculturalism and Identity 151; Conclusion 157.

**Chandran Kukathas**

**9** THE BABY TRADE: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTION 159

Introduction 161; The Demographic Background 163; Barriers to Trade 164; The Defence of the Barriers 166; Culture, Identity and Multiculturalism 171.

**Geoffrey Brennan**

**10** MULTICULTURALISM, REFUGEES, AND DUTIES BEYOND BORDERS 175

Introduction 177; The Claims of Humanitarian Immigration 179; The Requirement of Non-Discrimination 184; Duties, Culture, and the Choice of Refugees 186; Bureaucratic Accountability 189.

**William Maley**

References 191

Index 199

## Acknowledgements

This volume is largely the product of a conference on multiculturalism held on 30 November 1991 at the Australian Defence Force Academy, and sponsored by the Centre for Independent Studies. I am grateful to the participants of the conference for their valuable contributions.

I am also grateful to Michael James and Andrew Davies for their editorial help in preparing this collection for publication, and to Greg Lindsay for supporting the project.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the generosity of Michael and David Darling, whose support has made possible this — and other — research and publication on questions of multiculturalism.

**Chandran Kukathas**

## Introduction

# The Question of Multiculturalism

Chandran Kukathas

'Multiculturalism' is a word that provokes strong feelings. It raises questions over which there are important disagreements — questions, ultimately, about how different people are to live together in a single polity. It raises general questions about the claims of indigenous peoples who are minorities within the wider community; about the rights and obligations of immigrants to a host society; about the extent to which cultural variety should be tolerated (or promoted) within a society; and about the importance of ideas of citizenship and national identity. And it also raises more particular questions about government policy dealing with issues ranging from education to the composition of the armed services.

That these questions are real and pressing is evident in the controversy that has been aroused in liberal democracies whenever the treatment of minority communities has become an issue. In Britain, for example, it was aroused most noticeably by the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1988), since it raised fundamental questions about the limits of toleration, as well as more immediate questions about how to deal with the problem of civil disobedience and conscientious violence. In the United States great controversy surrounded the publication of Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education* (1991), which attacked American universities' policies of affirmative action as not only ill-considered but illiberal. On the other hand, some proponents of multiculturalism call not simply for toleration of difference or affirmative action to improve the lot of disadvantaged minorities, but for encouraging the development of difference. The liberal understanding of toleration is too weak, it is held, because it tends to assume a certain homogeneity in the population, and looks to assimilate differences. The important thing, however, the argument goes, is to allow individuals to express and defend their identities which are rooted in their difference (Young, 1990). Yet others see this not as a solution to the problem of coexistence among diverse ways of life but as a recipe for cultural conflict.

Nonetheless, discussions of multiculturalism are often unsatisfactory because it is unclear what it is that people hold such strong views about. Many are vigorously in favour of, or implacably opposed to,

multiculturalism on principled grounds, or because they see it as unworkable or unpopular. Yet it often remains obscure what exactly is being defended or attacked. With these various points of view assuming so prominent a place in public discussion, as well as in academic scholarly inquiry, it is worth looking again at the question of multiculturalism.

This volume of essays has been prepared on the assumption that it is important to come to a better understanding of what multiculturalism might mean. It has its origin in a conference on multiculturalism sponsored by the Centre for Independent Studies and held at the Australian Defence Force Academy on 30 November 1991. The conference looked at three kinds of question. The first was a philosophical question about the moral foundations of ideas of multiculturalism. Here, paper-givers broached questions about the relations between multiculturalism and liberalism, about its implications for notions of citizenship, and its connection with ideas of national identity. The second kind of question it examined concerned the practical dimension of multicultural politics. Here it was asked how multiculturalism has been received in different parts of the world and to what extent (and then, why) it has prospered. Finally, the conference asked some practical questions about the implications of multiculturalism for the way in which we should address certain practical issues of public policy, such as the treatment of refugees, or the development of policy guidelines for international child-adoptions.

As one might expect from a conference concerned with so broad a theme, there were differences among the participants not only of approach but also of conclusion — though disagreement tended to be about the way in which multiculturalism should be understood or about specific matters of policy, rather than about whether multiculturalism was feasible or desirable. Multiculturalism, when taken to mean cultural diversity, is undoubtedly here to stay. Indeed, it is hard to find many societies in human history that have not been marked by significant cultural variety. Dispute about this matter is difficult to imagine. Multiculturalism as an official policy, however, is another matter, since this raises questions about whether a minimal cultural homogeneity should be fostered, and about what kinds of policies are best pursued if liberal-democratic values are to be upheld. It is on these latter issues that conference discussion tended to focus.

Most of the papers in this volume were presented for the first time at the CIS conference, though papers by Hindess and Kukathas ('Multiculturalism and the Idea of an Australian Identity') had originally

been read elsewhere. As is often the case with conference proceedings, it is difficult to find a concern or argument that is common to all papers. Yet if there is a single point of common emphasis in this volume, it is that ideas about multiculturalism are important because they bear significantly upon other ideals or values with which they may not always be compatible. The bearing of multicultural ideals and practices upon these values — be they citizenship, or national identity, or toleration, or social cohesion — is complex, and often subtle. Understanding how multiculturalism and other values relate to one another, and on occasion come into conflict, is important if we are to make judgments about questions of public policy, and about matters which determine the shape of the polity generally.

In the end, what this volume offers is a series of perspectives on different questions of multiculturalism. Its value will perhaps lie less in what it has to prescribe than in the understanding it offers of the nature and limits of multiculturalism. In this respect, one hopes that it will provide a useful guide to sober reflection on issues that seem likely to dominate political discussion well into the foreseeable future.

# Multiculturalism and the Value of Diversity

**C. L. Ten** is Reader in Philosophy at Monash University. Born in Malaysia, he completed his undergraduate studies in philosophy at the University of Singapore, where he later taught. He is the author of *Mill on Liberty* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980), and numerous articles on the thought of J.S. Mill. His most recent book is *Crime, Guilt, and Punishment* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1987). He contributed to K. Haakonssen (ed.), *Traditions of Liberalism: Essays on John Locke, Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill* (CIS, Sydney, 1988).

# Multiculturalism and the Value of Diversity*

C. L. Ten

## I. INTRODUCTION

In multicultural societies diversity is a fact of life. The important question is: what sorts of attitudes and policies should we adopt towards such cultural diversity? I suggest that we should celebrate, protect, and encourage it. But I shall not discuss the policies needed to sustain cultural diversity. Instead, I want to focus on the various reasons for valuing diversity.

First, we should look at cultural diversity from the perspective of our political morality, the morality which determines the relationships between different individuals and groups in society, and which therefore spells out the terms of social cooperation. But second, each of us, whether we conceive ourselves as distinct individuals or as inseparable members of various social groups, has views about what a desirable or worthwhile life should be, and we wish to lead our lives in accordance with the right values. We have conceptions of the good life, and it is from the perspective of discovering and satisfying these conceptions that we may also appreciate the value of cultural diversity.

Our political morality and our conceptions of the good are connected in this way: we need resources, liberties, and opportunities to pursue our conceptions of the good. We also need to sustain and develop our capacities for recognising, choosing, and living in accordance with correct values, and our political morality has a major contribution to make in helping or hindering us in the development of these capacities. So our political morality must include a theory of justice that dictates how social resources are to be distributed. Each person is to have a fair share of resources. Our political morality must also embody just decision-procedures for determining the policies, and shaping the institutions, that are to regulate our economic and social life. So, in broad terms, we know the scope of part of our political morality. The substance of our political morality is a matter of the most fundamental dispute in political philosophy. I wish to enter that debate in only one area, centring on the extent to which we should tolerate different ways of life, and the extent to which a society has to be built on shared ends or goals.

* This article is part of a project supported by a grant from the Australian Research Council.

## II. CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE MORALITY OF LIBERALISM

Liberalism is an attractive political morality. It recognises that individuals have different conceptions of a worthwhile life, and are capable of living in accordance with these conceptions. We show them respect, and act fairly towards them, when we allow or encourage them to take responsibility for their lives, instead of imposing our values on them. The state shows equal respect to its citizens when it does not coerce one individual to act in accordance with the choices and values of another individual. Equality of respect involves being neutral between different and incompatible conceptions of the good. Each may pursue his or her own values, using a fair share of social resources, and respecting the similar rights of others to lead different lives.

But so far we have treated individuals as if they were isolated units, when in fact of course they are members of social groups, and especially of cultural groups. People's personalities, characters, and values are affected by their experiences, and those with different cultures have different experiences. Culture provides a perspective from which to view the world, and to interpret events in it. We make choices as persons who have been shaped by our cultures and our historical experiences. Our culture helps us to map out the available options and to give significance to them. We in turn, by participating in a culture, help to change it by using elements of the culture as means of self-expression. These intimate links between persons and their cultures create a sense of identity and belonging. The links naturally extend to other members of the same cultural group, who are fellow participants in a process that stretches well beyond their biological lives. Members of a cultural group are provided with a sense of continuity and transcendence that is the basis of solidarity with other members of the group who are part of the same historical process. This sense of identity and solidarity is partly defined in terms of what is distinctive in the culture, and therefore in terms of what sets it apart from other cultures. In a multicultural society we have social groups marked out from one another by differences in language, food, family life, music and festivals, customs and beliefs, attitudes towards work and leisure, patterns of consumption and savings, and ways of life generally.

Respect for individuals involves tolerating those ways of life with which they identify and with which their well-being is closely bound

up. Quite apart from whether individuals themselves identify with their historical cultural community, it is a fact that others often identify them with a certain cultural group. For example, a Chinese, who is somewhat alienated from what is normally regarded as Chinese culture, would still be the object of racial taunts directed at all members of the group who are picked out in terms of certain physical attributes. It cannot therefore be a part of liberal individualism that it ignores people's membership of social groups. Whether from their own perspective, or from the perspective of external observers, individuals are often identified as members of certain groups, and a large part of their welfare is inseparable from the welfare of other members of those groups.

Liberalism acknowledges the central importance of a political community with a shared political morality. But a liberal society is not a comprehensive social community with very specific common ends and goals, and shared values pervading the whole of social life. It has many social and cultural communities which unite into one political community.

## III. CULTURAL HOMOGENEITY

If we reject the political morality of liberalism, and seek instead to extend the shared goals and values from the political level to the rest of social life, then we would be aiming at some sort of culturally homogeneous society. Such a society can come about by assimilating minority cultures into the dominant culture, or by blending different cultures into a new composite culture in which no previous single culture stands out. Neither version of the homogeneous society is attractive, and the cost of trying to create such a society from a multicultural society is unacceptably high.

### Cultural Assimilation

The policy of cultural assimilation requires that minority cultural groups give up that which they regard as crucial to their sense of identity and well-being. Those who refuse to be assimilated will be marginalised and turned into second-class citizens. Many of those who accept assimilation will still be faced with the prospect of a bitter struggle as they seek to internalise the values and adopt the way of life needed for success in a homogeneous society. They will try to alienate themselves from their previous culture around which so much of their former lives revolve. Friends and relatives, who are unable or unwilling to join the bandwagon, will be renounced: their speech, their

dress, their customs and beliefs, and sometimes even shared physical attributes, will be objects of shame and scorn. The young will have to be indoctrinated into the dominant culture. But in the end there will be enough resistance and non-conformity for the process of assimilation to fail without recourse to substantial force, and perhaps even despotic measures. Perhaps we begin with the voluntary repatriation of recalcitrant immigrant groups, and when that fails, as fail it surely will, can forcible repatriation be far away? Because of the strength and pervasiveness of many people's attachments to their culture, a policy of assimilation will breed deep resentment and divisiveness. It will be perceived as a policy of cultural imperialism, and it will not provide the basis for a unified society.

There is of course a place and a need for some assimilation. There is a unitary political culture which defines the framework within which diverse ways of life may flourish. Immigrant groups will have to acknowledge the shared political morality and live in accordance with it. The liberal political morality gives them the freedom to criticise that political morality itself, and to participate in reshaping it. But they have to do so by conforming to the relevant decision-procedures. Many migrants come from less tolerant societies, and will no doubt welcome this new tolerance. But they too have to pay a price for it. Toleration does not exempt their way of life, their culture, from open criticism and repudiation by others. So there will be some unavoidable pain to them in the process of political assimilation. But political assimilation is all the assimilation to which they should be subjected.

Many critics of multiculturalism in Australia attack some migrants, especially Asian migrants, for not accepting the Australian way of life, for rejecting the Australian identity. These critics assume that a policy of comprehensive assimilation is correct. But it is no part of a liberal political order that there should be comprehensive shared ends and values which identify our way of life. A crucial element of our social identity is a common political morality that tolerates different ways of life. Immigrants who want to pray to God in their own way, to build their mosques and temples, to perpetuate some of their cultural practices, do not thereby threaten our way of life. On the contrary, it is the intolerance of such cultural diversity that is the real enemy, and that can come from those with unpronounceable names, who speak in broken English with strange accents, as well as from those whose impeccable pedigrees do not exempt them from the crude bigotries of the worst forms of nationalism.

**Cultural Fusion**

The other route to a homogeneous society is by bringing about a new, common culture out of the diverse elements of existing cultures. It may be that over a long period of time a common culture will emerge through the blending of different cultures as they interact with one another in a free and open society. However, the more likely result is that each culture will change through interaction, but there will still be several different cultures, and not a single culture shared by all. If we try to create a common culture by artificial means, we will only succeed in producing something bland and lacking vitality. An artificially created cosmopolitan culture will very likely wipe out all those differences which give strength to particular cultures, and which are the objects of deep commitments.

The ability to tolerate differences is compatible with, and may even grow out, of particular attachments. It is in this light that we may concede that there is perhaps some truth in Herder's remark: 'The savage who loves himself, his wife and his child, and his tribe, can find room in his hut for a stranger: the saturated heart of the idle cosmopolitan is a home for no one . . .' (Berlin, 1965:41). Toleration does not require that you give up that which you cherish. It does not threaten your particular attachments, and you are not required to embrace or share the way of life that others have accepted.

The rejection of a homogeneous culture need not result in the separatism feared by so many critics of multiculturalism. In a liberal society, individuals belong to several social communities with overlapping memberships. For example, religion is often taken to be a central element of culture. But membership of religious groups cuts across that of ethnic groups. On the other hand, suppose we accept the less spiritual view of the Chinese restaurateur who claimed that the ability to appreciate Chinese food is the essence of being Chinese. Even so, one does not live by Chinese food alone. In liberal societies, people of diverse cultural backgrounds join together in various associations devoted to different interests: they are members of professional associations, political parties, football clubs, music societies. They develop interests and form friendships across the boundaries of their historical cultural groups. They may also have some common experiences in schools and other educational institutions, and in their places of work.

So from the perspective of our political morality, cultural diversity is not a threat to our way of life; it is a symbol and an expression of that way of life. As equal citizens in the same political community, we can take pride in such diversity.

## IV. CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND CONCEPTIONS OF THE GOOD

Let us now turn to the view of cultural diversity from the perspective of our conceptions of the good. John Stuart Mill argued that freedom and variety of situations are indispensable conditions for the growth of individuality (Ten, 1980:ch.5). His account of individuality was presented in the context of a culturally less diverse society. Nonetheless it provides a convenient starting point to appreciate the value of diversity. Mill was worried by the blind conformity to customs which have remained static and failed to adjust to changing circumstances. Whole cultures, as much as particular elements of a culture, can in this way become unresponsive to new developments. The presence of cultural diversity in a free society, where there is interaction between cultures, makes it less likely that cultures will remain in dogmatic slumber. In tolerating different cultures, we do not have to accept the view that each culture can only be judged by its own internal standard. But familiarity with other cultures increases the prospects of our transcending the limitations of our own cultures.

We do not therefore have to be sceptics about values, or to embrace cultural relativism, in order to appreciate the value of cultural diversity. From the Millian perspective, the recognition that there are correct and incorrect accounts of the good life goes hand in hand with the insistence that the best way to discover the objective truth is through the freedom to choose from a wide diversity of sources.

It may be objected that this Millian account detaches individuals too much from their own cultures, and treats them as atomistic, choosing agents, free to range over different cultures. I accept the intimate links between individuals and their cultures. But from this fact it does not follow that cultural diversity does not enlarge the choices of individuals, or that persons cannot choose in a manner that transcends the dictates of their cultures. For although individuals are anchored in particular attachments and commitments, they can still detach themselves from each attachment and commitment, review it, and revise or reject it. At each particular moment they will of course have many other specific attachments, not all of which can be revised or rejected at the same time.

But suppose now we have discovered what kinds of lives are desirable. Is there any reason for still valuing diversity?

Even if there is only one correct conception of the good, there may still be different ways in which that conception can be satisfied. For example, suppose that a worthwhile life must at least be a happy one. Happiness is an abstract goal, and individuals with different historical

experiences and different personalities will find their happiness in different activities. As Mill pointed out in his *Essay on Liberty*:

> If it were only that people have diversities of taste, that is reason enough for not attempting to shape them all after one model. But different persons also require different conditions for their spiritual development; and can no more exist in the same moral, than all the variety of plants can in the same physical, atmosphere and climate. The same things that help one person towards the cultivation of his higher nature are hindrances to another. The same mode of life is a healthy excitement to one, keeping all his faculties of action and enjoyment in their best order, while to another it is a distracting burthen, which suspends or crushes all internal life. Such are the differences between human beings in their sources of pleasure, their susceptibilities of pain, and the operation on them of different physical and moral agencies, that unless there is a corresponding diversity in their modes of life, they neither obtain their fair share of happiness, nor grow up to the mental, moral, and aesthetic stature of which their nature is capable. (Mill, 1954:125)

The sources of happiness are various, but so also are the ways in which people express their happiness, or any other goal of the good life. The variety of cultural expressions of what is valuable is in some respects similar to, and perhaps even an extension of, the variety in the rules of etiquette, or of rituals and ceremonies, in different cultures. Such surface variety is often compatible with the acceptance of the same deep values (Martin & Stent, 1990). For example, forms of greeting, expressions of friendship, courtesy, respect, politeness, and so on, differ radically from culture to culture, but they may all express the same fundamental values.

A further consideration is that, in some plausible accounts of the good life, it is a life that must be acknowledged by the person whose life it is, and it cannot be externally imposed through coercion or manipulation and indoctrination. If individual autonomy is a constitutive element of the good life, then the existence of cultural diversity is also valuable because it satisfies the conditions for the exercise of such autonomy. For the exercise of autonomy requires a number of options from which genuine choices may be made. To eliminate all alternatives once we have discovered the correct conception of the good is compatible with the authoritarian ideal of forcing each person to act in accordance with the correct values, but it is incompatible with the ideal of autonomy. Autonomous choices are of course not sufficient for the

realisation of the good life, nor is it the case that such choices always add to the value of what is chosen, no matter what the content may be. Rather, it is the case that autonomy is a constitutive element of the good life, a life that cannot be realised through certain kinds of choices.

So we need freedom and diversity both for the discovery of the good life, as well as for enabling us to lead the good life once it has been discovered. But the value of diversity goes even further. I have assumed that the good life is unitary, and that it can be lived by each person without any loss. However, there may be a plurality of lives that are valuable, and no single person can realise all of them. Consider the case of a young, multi-talented scholar who has to decide between a career as a logician and one as a historian. She is, as far as academic ability goes, equally good in both subjects, and she will find each career just as fulfilling as the other. But given a normal life-span, she would not be able to achieve excellence in both subjects, and must make a choice between them. Moreover, the two careers may be incompatible in another sense: the attributes of a good logician, when properly cultivated, will arrest the growth of the attributes of a good historian, and vice versa. A logician requires analytical skills and the ability to engage in highly abstract thought, while the historian needs practical wisdom and a capacity for understanding human motivations. The two sets of qualities of mind are not logically incompatible, but in fact they may not cohere in the life of any one person.

In developing his idea of a social union, Rawls gives the example of a group of gifted musicians, all of whom have the talents to play equally well every instrument (Rawls, 1987:34–8; 1972:section 79). But since it requires long training and practice to be good at each instrument, each musician cannot excel in many instruments. So each person has more potentialities than he or she can hope to realise. However, all the potentialities of each musician can still be realised in different lives if they coordinate their activities in an orchestra. An orchestra is, in Rawls' sense, a social union in which each member can take pleasure in the skills of all the other members. Similarly, Rawls believes that a society, regulated by his principles of justice which promote fruitful cooperation, can be regarded as 'a social union of social unions'.

Joseph Raz takes the argument for diverse forms of life even further in his defence of an autonomy-based account of toleration (Raz, 1987; Ten, 1987; Raz, 1986:chs.14–15). He believes that there are incompatible forms of life, each with its distinctive virtues, and any person who cultivates to the maximal degree the virtue required for one valuable kind of life will not be able to attain the virtues of the

other forms of life. Raz also maintains that the virtues of diverse forms of life are not only incompatible in the sense that they cannot all be realised to the highest degree by one person, but also in the sense that the cultivation of one virtue will, human nature being what it is, lead a person to be intolerant of other virtues. Autonomy requires an adequate range of morally acceptable options, and so diverse forms of life are needed to enable persons to be autonomous. But since the cultivation of the distinctive virtue of one form of life will generate intolerance of the virtues of other forms of life, we need a principle of toleration to regulate the conflicts which arise between different people, all of whom are autonomously pursuing valuable, though incompatible, forms of life. Raz's case for toleration, unlike the version of liberalism I outlined earlier, does not rest on the requirement that the state should be neutral between different conceptions of the good. Rather, it bases toleration on a perfectionist ideal of promoting a plurality of valuable forms of life.

I do not share Raz's belief that autonomous individuals, who cultivate the virtue of one form of life, will be intolerant of those who develop the distinctive virtues of other forms of life. If one recognises that others have virtues that one lacks, then this is likely to generate appreciation of their qualities rather than intolerance.

However, the general idea of a social union provides an illuminating basis for valuing diversity. Correct conceptions of the good may be such that they cannot all be realised in one life, or even in one culture. We cherish diversity because it enables different and incompatible values to be realised in the same society. A society that single-mindedly pursues one value to the exclusion of all others will be a poorer society, and will fail to provide its members with opportunities for the vicarious enjoyment of the diversity of human talents. All members will experience a loss; there will be a part of them that lies wasted and unfulfilled.

But attractive as the idea of social union is, there are limits to the extent to which it will account for the value of cultural diversity. Consider, first, the case of religious beliefs and practices that are important bases of multicultural diversity. Within a certain range, religious differences can indeed be regarded as complementary, reflecting the different historical backgrounds and experiences of different people. However, religious differences also centre on logically incompatible claims about God and the divinity of persons. This is particularly true if we include the differences between atheists and believers. But the point also applies to some of the differences between those who subscribe to different religions. No amount of

coordination will convert these incompatible beliefs, and the practices built on them, into a social union of complementary and mutually supportive social activities.

Consider also the diversity of sexual practices. The celibate priest or nun and the happily married heterosexual couple may well treat their different ways of life as both valuable. For them the world is a better place for having both ways of life rather than just one uniform practice. Certainly the priest or nun cannot wish for a world populated only by priests and nuns. On the other hand, we are aware of the strong hostility of religious groups towards, for example, homosexual acts. We may try to urge, on the analogy with rules of etiquette, that there is a common value at a deeper level which each kind of sexual activity exemplifies. For example, both heterosexual and homosexual acts are different ways of expressing the same cherished value of love and personal devotion. The argument cuts no ice with many religious people. For them a world without homosexuality would simply be a better world, and the added variety of homosexual practices is not the spice of life.

A liberal society must still tolerate minority religious and sexual practices that the majority deplores. The case for toleration, at least in these areas, cannot rest solely, or even predominantly, on the promotion of complementary conceptions of the good. We have to return to the liberal political morality and its theory of justice to defend the toleration of conduct of which we disapprove, but which is otherwise harmless.

Michael Sandel, one of liberalism's most persistent critics, asks rhetorically, 'Can a community of those who put justice first ever be more than a community of strangers?' (quoted in Richard Rorty, 1991:194). It is true that a liberal community is not a comprehensive community held together by specific shared ends at every level of social life. A liberal community is a political community and a series of smaller social communities, with overlapping memberships, interacting with one another in a free environment. All citizens can take pride in their political culture that treats them as equals. Each person will also belong to close-knit groups where justice may not be the first virtue, but where love and friendship prevail. Some such groups may make demands on their members that not all can accept. In a liberal society, they are free to leave, and to try to join other groups. Those whom the dominant groups will not embrace, or who themselves do not wish to be embraced, can still find a home in a liberal community, and justice will be their shield.

# The Idea of a Multicultural Society

**Chandran Kukathas** was educated in Kuala Lumpur and Canberra. He is now Senior Lecturer in Politics at University College, University of New South Wales, at the Australian Defence Force Academy. Previously a Lecturer the Departments of Philosophy and Political Science at the Australian National University, he is the author of a number of books in political theory, including *Hayek and Modern Liberalism* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989), and *Rawls: A Theory of Justice and Its Critics* (co-authored with Philip Pettit, Polity Press, Oxford, 1990). He is also director of the CIS Multiculturalism Research Program, and author of *The Fraternal Conceit: Individualist versus Collectivist Ideas of Community* (CIS, Sydney, 1991).

# The Idea of a Multicultural Society

Chandran Kukathas

## I. INTRODUCTION

Many people are wary of the idea of a multicultural society, as they are about cultural pluralism more generally. Such wariness is not peculiar to Australia, nor indeed to modern times. Although this century has seen the longing for cultural homogeneity taken to extremes in the name of racial purity, the ideology of National Socialism was not the first to proclaim such homogeneity to be desirable, if not ideal. It has been argued that the Ancient Athenians, living in a city-state that refused to recognise foreigners as citizens, bequeathed to all later generations 'an idealised portrait of fellow citizens, sharing a common descent, a common culture, and above all a common public purpose in war, [which] became central to the classical heritage of the western world' (McNeill, 1986:23). Disdain for the cultural outsider was no less detectable in the response of the Ch'ien Lung Emperor (1736–95) to King George III, when the emperor declared: 'The common distinction between Chinese and barbarian is most strict, and your Ambassador's request that barbarians shall be given full liberty to disseminate their religion is utterly unreasonable' (Ch'ien Lung, 1972:106). Even in the 19th-century United States the anti-slavery movement was strongly linked with American nativism and the Know-Nothings, who renounced all party allegiance and promised never to vote for any foreign-born or Roman Catholic candidate for office (Potter, 1976:248–61).

So frequent and persistent have been the calls for homogeneity that it seems surprising that anyone should ever have advanced anything else as an ideal. My first concern in this essay is to ask why such calls for homogeneity have been so prevalent, and whether there is good reason for placing such importance on this value. Here I wish to suggest that cultural homogeneity is neither as desirable nor as feasible as is often supposed. My second concern is to ask what this suggests about the idea of a multicultural society: what should a multicultural society look like. Here I shall argue that multiculturalism is best understood as one aspect of pluralism, and that what is most important is that in the defence of pluralism this one aspect not be allowed to dominate. In effect, I shall argue that what should be defended is pluralism rather than multiculturalism, for cultural pluralism is only one of the kinds of pluralism worth preserving.

## II. THE ARGUMENTS FOR HOMOGENEITY

Political theories envisaging any kind of cultural or societal pluralism have been conspicuous by their absence in the history of Western thought (McRae, 1979:676). Kenneth McRae has suggested that there have generally been three kinds of responses to cultural diversity. The first is group-centred or ethnocentric and favours notions of group superiority (whether the group be the polis, the nation or the race). The second denies the significance of cultural differences, and stresses the essential humanity of all peoples. The third views differences as regional or national and as explicable in terms of physical or environmental rather than cultural circumstances (McRae, 1979:685). These responses suggest why the most commonly proffered solutions to problems of cultural diversity have been either assimilation or exclusion. Assimilation could involve either absorption by the dominant culture of the minority, or melding of cultural characteristics. Exclusion could involve a denial to outsider groups of certain rights of membership, or physical expulsion from a geographic region, or extermination.

The reasons offered for such measures are varied, but may be reduced to the following sorts. First, there is the argument that ethnic or cultural attachments are irrational and archaic, and ought to be eradicated in the course of modernisation. On such a view, cultural loyalties carry no weight in the face of considerations affecting the wider society. The most striking statement of this view is perhaps that offered by Karl Marx, notably in his essay *On the Jewish Question*. Here he ridicules the views of those calling for the political emancipation of the Jews, arguing that the greater need is for the emancipation of the individual from Judaism and from religion in general. For as long as the Jew remains a Jew, he can 'only have a Jewish relationship to the state and treat it as alien to himself, for he opposes his own imaginary nationality to actual nationality, and his own imaginary law to actual law, fancies himself justified in separating himself from humanity, as a matter of principle takes no part in the movement of history, and waits on a destiny that has nothing in common with the destiny of mankind as a whole' (McLellan, 1984:40). There are echoes of this attitude in the announcement in 1974 by Brazil's minister of the interior that Brazilian Indians should all be 'emancipated' or freed from being Indians so that they could be 'integrated' into the society like all other Brazilians (Maybury-Lewis, 1984:223). Another related reason offered for looking to assimilate or exclude other cultures is that they stand in the way of the nation's wider interest in progress. So, for example, a common

argument advanced by those urging the rapid deculturation of the Brazilian Indians is that their way of life is an obstacle to development (Maybury-Lewis, 1984:223).

The second argument for assimilation or exclusion of other cultures is that peaceful co-existence is not a serious possibility. Prince von Bülow, Chancellor of Germany from 1900 to 1909, put it thus:

> If it were possible henceforward for members of different nationalities with different languages and customs, and an intellectual life of a different kind, to live side by side in one and the same State, without succumbing to the temptation of each trying to force his own nationality on the other, things on earth would look a good deal more peaceful. (quoted in Maybury-Lewis, 1984:220)

But it is not possible, he maintained: cultural contact would invariably mean cultural conflict. This view remains a part of conventional wisdom in many parts of the world. Within Australia, it is sometimes offered as a reason for placing particular controls on immigration (Blainey, 1984). In very different circumstances, the cultural conflict argument was put by the anti-slavery movement — and by Abraham Lincoln — for the resettlement in African colonies of manumitted slaves (Oates, 1978:115–16).

The third argument to note is that ethnic or cultural minorities are a danger to the state. It is often suggested, for example, that the weakness and instability of many African states is attributable to tribal loyalties, which hamper not only economic modernisation but also political stability. The need to overcome tribalism has often invoked as a reason for maintaining single-party states (Finer, 1970:521–4).

A fourth reason why assimilation or exclusion may be defended is that it may be feared that cultural pluralism will lead to the erosion of individual rights and freedoms. An interesting variant of this view was put in the 1830s by John Arthur Roebuck, writing as the paid spokesman for the French-Canadian cause in Britain in the years before the 1837 rebellions. As did Alexis de Tocqueville, Roebuck argued that the assimilation of the French in Canada was not only inevitable but desirable. The general argument he put was that if different ways of life are maintained within the state, the minorities would fare less well: the French-speaking peoples would find themselves economically subordinated and exploited. They would be less secure in their enjoyment of liberal rights and freedoms (Ajzenstat, 1984; Kymlicka, 1989:217 n.4).

Finally, there is the argument that a measure of homogeneity is important or valuable because it is important that political society be a form of association in which citizens are bound to one another as members of a single community, sharing certain values. One of the most notable exponents of this position was Rousseau, who put the view that the state should reflect the general will of the people, understood as individual and equal citizens. For this to be possible there had to be only one people in the state in the sense that all recognised a single 'civil religion' which thereby preserved social unity. 'Everything that destroys social unity is worthless; and all institutions that set man at odds with himself are worthless' (Rousseau, 1972:181). Indeed Rousseau goes further, writing:

> There is thus a profession of faith which is purely civil and of which it is the sovereign's function to determine the articles, not strictly as religious dogmas, but as sentiments of sociability, without which it is impossible to be either a good citizen or a loyal subject. Without being able to oblige anyone to believe these articles, the sovereign can banish from the state anyone who does not believe them; banish him not for impiety but as an antisocial being, as one unable sincerely to love law and justice, or to sacrifice, if need be, his life to his duty. If anyone, after having publicly acknowledged these same dogmas, behaves as if he did not believe in them, then let him be put to death, for he has committed the greatest crime, that of lying before the law. (Rousseau, 1972:186)

In saying this Rousseau was careful to insist that none of this was incompatible with religious pluralism. Indeed, it had to be one of the dogmas of a civil religion that there should be no intolerance. 'Intolerance is something which belongs to the religions we have rejected' (Rousseau, 1972:186). On the other hand, there could not be value pluralism — not when the citizens' beliefs affected the community: 'Subjects have no duty to account to the sovereign for their beliefs except when those beliefs are important to the community' (Rousseau, 1972:185).

## III. HOMOGENEITY CONSIDERED

However prevalent may have been the longing for homogeneity, or at least social unity, in political thinking, the fundamental point that must be recognised is that cultural diversity or pluralism has been the most notable feature of society in the history of human settlement. 'Margin-

ality and pluralism were and are the norm of civilised existence' (McNeill, 1986:6).

There are several reasons why this is the pattern revealed by history (McNeill, 1986:ch.1). The first has to do with the ubiquity of military conflict. Even among barbarians ethnic political unity was fragile because military conquests resulted in the mixing of peoples. But throughout history the military ventures of both nomadic and civilised peoples ensured a continual mingling of alien peoples. A second factor contributing to this mingling was trade, which developed further with greater specialisation and the division of labour (Hayek, 1988:ch.3). Third, disease, in its impact on health and mortality in urban centres had a profound demographic effect: the loss of populations and labour shortages meant that cities were forced to look outside for replacement — to immigrants, to guest workers, and to slaves. Finally, the rise of universalist religions such as Islam, Buddhism and Christianity served to further transform distant cultures with foreign ideas and foreign visitors (McNeill, 1986:ch.1).

The consequence of all this for modern societies is that although many nations may have their origins in some particular ethnic heritage, scarcely a handful are in any sense ethnically homogeneous (Smith, 1987). Equally few are culturally homogeneous inasmuch as most societies sustain a variety of religions, languages, and forms of customary life. Matters are further complicated by the fact that ethnic and cultural identities are not readily identifiable by looking to ascriptive characteristics. Identity is, to a considerable extent a matter of choice.

In a liberal democracy like the United States, for example, as Mary Waters has shown in her important study *Ethnic Options*, ethnic intermarriage among the white population has not eliminated ethnic allegiances but has rather expanded the range of ethnicities people may choose to adopt. Many people of mixed ancestry have no option but to choose which ethnicity to adopt since there is no 'natural' course to take (Waters, 1990). And in many cases people take options that serve their interests. This is also suggested by some earlier work on 'Context and Choice in Ethnic Allegiance' by Orlando Patterson. In examining the development of two similar groups of Chinese arriving in Guyana and Jamaica, Patterson found that in Jamaica, given the economic conditions, the best interests of the group were served by exclusive specialisation in the retail trade, and that success in this regard allowed for and reinforced a choice of ethnic consolidation based on cultural distinctiveness. In Guyana, however, economic and

social conditions encouraged the Chinese to pursue a wide range of occupations, and so synthetic creolisation and the abandonment of Chinese culture were the most rational courses of action (Patterson, 1975:347).

The fundamental point to be made here is that ethnicity and culture are not static but constantly changing in response to economic, social and political conditions. In looking at culturally pluralistic societies — that is to say, most societies — what we find are neither melting pots nor mosaics but ever-shifting kaleidoscopic patterns. In absolute terms, there are few if any stable cultural formations, since nearly all are affected not only by immigration and intermarriage but also by the trade in cultural products and information, and by the expansion of the world's largest industry: tourism.

If all this is the case, the idea of societies trying to preserve some sort of cultural homogeneity begins to look implausible. Human history and the nature of modern societies suggest that pluralism is the norm and that homogeneity is simply not feasible.

Even if homogeneity were feasible, however, this would not be to say that it is desirable, despite the arguments (discussed earlier) advanced in its favour. At least two kinds of arguments might be mounted against the pursuit of homogeneity, the first invoking the value of liberty and the second appealing to the importance of culture. The argument from liberty is that a measure of cultural homogeneity could only be bought at the cost of establishing a powerful (governmental) apparatus to enforce it (by compelling assimilation or ensuring the exclusion of outsiders). Individual liberty would be curtailed insofar as some options would be closed off to people, and to the extent that individuals are compelled to adopt particular ways or practices — say, in the way that Turks resident in Bulgaria under communist rule were forced to adopt Bulgarian names. The argument from the importance of culture is that the pursuit of homogeneity will almost invariably be at the expense of minorities who wish to preserve their culture. In some of these cases at least the destruction or the wearing down of the minority culture may be extremely harmful to individuals unwilling or unable to assimilate into the wider society (Kymlicka, 1989:ch.8). This is an argument made, for example, by Saunders Lewis, founder of the Welsh nationalist party, Plaid Cymru, who maintained that Welsh culture was destroyed by nationalism (Birch, 1989:33–4).

Moreover, in the light of historical experience, the arguments in favour of homogeneity do not seem especially compelling. The

argument that cultural pluralism will lead to instability and violent conflict between cultures and ethnic communities appears to have some merit when one notes the numerous instances of such conflict. Yet on the other hand, the attempt to reorganise the world along national criteria has also led to violent conflict rather than the reign of peace, often at the expense of the most innocent and vulnerable (Kedourie, 1971:135–6). In part the emergence of such conflict simply reflects the heterogeneity of apparently homogeneous groups. For example, in the former Indian state of Madras, cleavages within the Telugu-speaking population were not very important. Yet as soon as a Telugu-speaking state was carved out of Madras, competing Telugu subgroups quickly emerged as political entities (Horowitz, 1985:66–7). Moves toward an imagined homogeneity do not mean a move away from conflict.

The argument that ethnic or cultural minorities are a danger to the state also seems unpersuasive, despite the claims of the states in question. As Maybury-Lewis observes, it is hard to see how the Miskito Indians of Nicaragua, or the Indians who form 1 per cent of the Brazilian population, really pose a threat to the state (Maybury-Lewis, 1984:223). There is little doubt, however, that the state has posed a considerable threat to such minorities.

Even the argument, advanced by Roebuck in his advocacy of assimilation for French-Canadians, that cultural pluralism would lead to the erosion of rights and freedoms is in the end not quite convincing. Provided cultural membership is not coerced, individuals often prefer to exercise the freedom of association upon which cultural pluralism rests. And there is no reason why those who are members of minority cultures should necessarily enjoy fewer rights or freedoms — although in some cases they may. What is more likely is that, as members of a cultural minority they will enjoy less political power. This is a point to which we will have to return.

The argument against cultural pluralism which has to be taken most seriously, however, is the argument put by Rousseau and those whom he inspired. This is the argument that a certain measure of homogeneity is necessary for the preservation of a political community. To answer this challenge, however, we need to look more generally at the arguments for cultural pluralism and to draw out the implications for the nature of a multicultural society.

## IV. THE IDEA OF A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

It would seem, then, that the question of whether a society should be culturally pluralistic or multicultural is not really an issue: modern

societies, for the most part, simply are multicultural. The important question that does raise significant issues is this: what kinds of institutions should govern a multicultural society?

The answer to this question, I suggest, depends upon the answer to the question of what kinds of institutions should govern pluralist societies generally. Multiculturalism or cultural pluralism is, in the end, one kind of pluralism. So we should begin by asking what exactly is pluralism.

There are many respects, as Amelie Rorty (1991) has suggested, in which a society might be pluralistic. First, it might exhibit the cultural pluralism of the kind discussed here. Second, it might exhibit a demographic pluralism inasmuch as human activities are importantly shaped by such factors as age, gender, social role (eldest son, spouse) or geographical (urban or rural) location. Third, in most societies there is usually a pluralism of interests insofar as there are differences of ends (and power to pursue them) among a variety of occupations or professions (farmers and soldiers) or classes (the poor) or institutions (churches and armies). Fourth, a society may be characterised by political pluralism if there are opportunities for groups that share distinct moral views about what would be good for the polity to influence the shape of that polity. Fifth, there might be an element of psychological pluralism in a society if individuals are sufficiently diverse in nature that they possess different temperaments, skills and traits. Sixth, there might be intellectual or scientific pluralism if the society harbours a variety of explanatory systems. Finally, a society might be pluralistic because within it there are distinct and competing moral values or principles.

What kinds of institutions are appropriate if societies are pluralistic in some or all of these ways? If we assume that the pursuit of homogeneity is out of the question, for reasons discussed earlier, then two main alternative paths might be taken. The first alternative looks to give explicit political recognition to the different pluralist elements within society, regarding them all as deserving of representation or the opportunity to participate in the processes of governance. The second alternative does not explicitly recognise these elements as legitimate participants in the political process but rather views individuals, with particular rights and freedoms, as the primary actors in the public realm. My concern now is to argue for the second approach, placing much less emphasis on bringing the plurality of interests in society into the public domain as political actors. The implication of this view for multiculturalism is the rejection of interest-group pluralism

of the sort advocated, for example, by D.L. Jayasuriya (1991).

Let me begin by considering some of the reasons why the first alternative might be attractive, before turning to offer arguments for rejecting it. First, it seems to emphasise inclusiveness — other interests or values or approaches are not excluded but brought into public discourse. Second, and relatedly, this approach emphasises the value of participation by the different elements of society in the shaping of that society. This is of especial importance to those who see great value in collective self-government. Third, this approach seems to give greater weight to minority interests, and especially their interest in self-determination. Fourth, it has been argued that institutions which allow minority groups 'to participate fully and exercise their rights in the broad public domain' would facilitate social integration and 'encourag[e] a "civic religion"'; indeed it would 'facilitate the processes of nation building through a shared sense of a common destiny' (Jayasuriya, 1991:26). Finally, it has been argued that, while the polity 'requires' both psychological and moral pluralism, it cannot simply be left to chance for these to reproduce themselves. Thus Amelie Rorty (1991:16–17) avers that some kind of intervention is needed through a 'sound system of education' to ensure some kind of balance or 'equilibrium' of pluralist elements. It cannot be left to the institutions of the private sphere (such as the family) to ensure the preservation of such values, so we need 'central educative and formative' institutions combined with mechanisms to 'coordinate benefits to each group in a system of dynamic equilibrium'.

The view I wish to develop in opposition to the group-participation approach resists according a specific place or role to the pluralist elements of society. Political institutions should, as far as possible, serve to allow these different elements to flourish but should not be in the business of enabling these elements or interests to shape society. This is not to say that political institutions should suppress particular interests; nor is it to deny that the nature of society will inevitably be shaped in some way by the interests and values of its different components. It is simply to maintain that the role of political institutions should be neutral, as far as possible, as to how this happens. And I would suggest that the best prospect for this happening is for institutions to be designed, not to deal with the plurality of interests and values in society as they are manifested in particular groups or representatives, but rather to uphold particular individual rights and freedoms regardless of the particular interests or affiliations of the individuals.

To make this position a little clearer it might help to draw an analogy between my view and the view advanced by J.N. Figgis in respect of religious pluralism. Figgis maintained that if one accepted religious and political pluralism, then the best kind of state had to be a secular state — a tolerant secular state which allowed religious groups to exist and order their own affairs without interference. But at the same time, these groups could not try to force upon the society religious values or practices which had their origins in their own particular religious convictions. In *Churches in the Modern State* he wrote:

> We cannot claim liberty for ourselves, while at the same time proposing to deny it to others. If we are to cry 'hands off' to the civil power in regard to such matters as marriage, doctrine, ritual, or the conditions of communion inside the Church — and it is the necessary condition of a free religious society that it should regulate these matters — then we must give up attempting to dictate the policy of the State in regard to the whole mass of its citizens. (Quoted in Nicholls, 1975:104)

For Figgis, 'when judging political questions we should do so as citizens, and not as churchmen' (Nicholls, 1975:104). In this regard, he made a very clear distinction between the public and the private domains of social life.

The point I want to make about pluralism more generally, and about cultural pluralism in particular, is very much Figgis's point. People from particular religious or cultural or intellectual or moral backgrounds should have every right and the freedom to speak or to play a role in public affairs. But they enjoy these rights and freedoms as individual citizens, rather than as members or representatives of particular groups. Of course, they would also have the right to become involved in matters that affect the interests of (one or more of) the groups to which they belong. In some cases (though not always!) their opinions may have to be accorded greater respect because they are dealing with matters with which they are more familiar. In other cases individuals may be moved to act to change the rules of the social game because those rules treat particular kinds of persons unjustly, and as the ones directly harmed they are in the best position to know this. But in the end these opinions must be seen as having been advanced by individuals, and political institutions should protect not the right of some interest to be advanced or to influence the shape of society but the right of individuals, separately or

in concert with others, to defend their interests or their political views.

In considering the case of multiculturalism or cultural pluralism, then, the view I am advancing is that there is no call for any particular cultural community to be given explicit recognition and to play a special role in public affairs; nor is there a call for all cultural communities to be granted explicit recognition. In short, there is no need for a policy on multiculturalism, any more than there is a need for a policy on religious pluralism.

Yet granted that this is one way of viewing the matter, what reasons might be advanced for adopting this point of view? There are two main reasons I have to advance. The first is that, if our concern in a multicultural society is to preserve cultural pluralism, this is best done by institutions that protect individual rights and freedoms rather than interests. The reason for making this claim is that, as I argued earlier, culture (and ethnicity) are not static but constantly changing in response to economic, social and political conditions. If cultural formations are unstable in this way, then to try to entrench them is to try to stifle pluralism by preserving the existing structure (or perhaps some preferred structure) of interest and power. It presumes that members of particular groups will always see their interests in terms of the interests of those groups, or suggests that individuals may not (that is, should not be allowed to) reconstitute into quite different kinds of groups. In the end, this approach provides the greatest advantage to the dominant elites or majorities within such groups (Kukathas, 1992).

The second reason for adopting this point of view which emphasises that, while we may regard ourselves as members of some particular culture in private, we should see ourselves as, and have only the rights of, citizens in public, is that putting ethnicity and culture into the public realm is not in the interests of particular cultural communities. Once the distinction between the public and the private realm is broken down it will become more difficult for some cultural minorities to preserve what is distinctive and perhaps valued in their societies. If certain cultural values or issues are not kept in the private realm but raised as matters of public concern, then it is always the case that some cultural minorities will lose the argument in the public forum, with the effect of forcing them to modify their own practices rather than changing those of the wider society. As Figgis suggested, those who want the civil power to keep its hands off such matters as marriage and other doctrines within their religions are best served by seeking to keep these matters within the private realm rather than seeking to shape a position for all society on these matters. (This point is reinforced by an

observation made, during the conference at which this paper was read, by Margaret Valladian, director of the Aboriginal and Cultural Institute. She pointed out that despite numerous difficulties, many Aboriginal communities had been quite successful in preserving their language and elements of their culture until they were offered the opportunity of doing so through the resources of public education. Once this task was taken out of the Aboriginal family and placed in the public realm, these aspects of their cultural inheritance were dissipated.)

In the end, I would suggest that in trying to preserve pluralism we are best served by trying to preserve norms of tolerance and respect for individual freedoms rather than by attempts to shape society in accordance with the interests of existing groups. And I would conclude that this, perhaps, gives us the answer to the worry raised by Rousseau: that a certain measure of homogeneity may be necessary to sustain a political community. A society in my view would be sufficiently homogeneous if it was able to sustain a commitment to preserve norms of individual freedom and tolerance. If society needs a 'civil religion' reducible to a few dogmas, as Rousseau suggested, these commitments would be dogma enough.

# Multiculturalism and Citizenship

**Barry Hindess** is Professor of Political Science in the Research School of the Social Sciences at the Australian National University. Formerly Professor of Sociology at the University of Liverpool, he is the author of numerous articles in social and political theory. His books include *Philosophy and Methodology in the Social Sciences* (Brighton, Harvester, 1977), *Parliamentary Democracy and Socialist Politics* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1983) and *Politics and Class Analysis* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1987).

# Multiculturalism and Citizenship

Barry Hindess

## I. INTRODUCTION

Many commentators have noted that the public discourse of liberal democracy combines elements that stress homogeneity with others that stress diversity. The image of the virtuous republic, in which the citizen is regarded as accountable to the community, co-exists with the image of the liberal state that respects the rights of individuals to pursue their different understandings of the good life. The idea of a dominant national culture, to which immigrants should be assimilated, coexists with a celebration of cultural diversity. In the United States, for example, we find the image of the 'melting pot', but we also find the Statue of Liberty — described in the verse attached to its base as 'Mother of Exiles', that is, as offering a home for those whose roots are in numerous other communities (Richardson, 1988). Similar, if less evocative, images can be found in the public discourse of Australia and other nations of immigrants. The more or less peaceful coexistence of distinct and opposed principles in the public life of the community requires that the dominant understanding of each should take account of the requirements of the other: the demands of republican virtue are considerably relaxed, while liberty is always kept within limits, some of which relate to what are thought to be the interests of the community as a whole.

In many respects the relationship between ideas of citizenship and of multiculturalism could be seen as falling into this pattern, with the latter representing an acknowledgment of cultural diversity that goes somewhat beyond the stricter understandings of the former. However, multiculturalism has also been understood in a stronger sense. There have been numerous attempts to define the term, but one of the most revealing appears in the glossary to a report of the Standing Committee on Multiculturalism of the Canadian Parliament. Multiculturalism is described as:

> Recognition of the diverse cultures of a plural society based on three principles: we all have an ethnic origin (equality); all our cultures deserve respect (dignity); and cultural pluralism needs official support. (Multiculturalism, 1987:87)

There are two rather different issues to notice here. One is that the three principles taken together strongly suggest that the cultures

deserving of respect and of public support can be identified in terms of their ethnic origin. This is certainly how multiculturalism has normally been understood. But it is far from clear why cultural diversity should be identified with ethnic diversity in this way. The other issue is that of public support for minority cultures. Within limits, recognition of the presence of diverse cultures poses no great problem for the relaxed understandings of citizenship characteristic of liberal-democratic discourse. The active promotion of cultural pluralism by public authorities is, or is often thought to be, another matter entirely. It is a comparatively recent development, dating in most Western societies from the 1960s or later. It is also highly contentious, in part because public support for minority cultures has sometimes been thought to conflict with the view that citizens should be treated as equals.

To see why there is a problem here, and why it is a political problem now, the first part of this paper considers two distinct but related histories. One concerns the concept of citizenship, and the other concerns the character of state societies and of cities within them. The second and final part examines relationships between multiculturalism and contemporary Western views of citizenship. Multiculturalism is indeed difficult to reconcile with many of the ways in which citizenship is commonly understood. I argue that our understanding of citizenship should be modified to take account of the inescapable cultural pluralism of most societies in the world today. I conclude by offering a qualified defence of multiculturalism in terms of a pluralist account of citizenship.

## II. CITIZENSHIP

In the tradition of Western political thought, citizenship has normally been identified with the status of an independent member of a community that is self-governing in two rather different respects. First, in relation to outsiders, the community is free to determine its own laws and its own government. In particular, then, its identity as a political unit is not determined primarily by the fact of its subordination to some particular ruler — as was the case, for example, for most of the important political units of feudal Europe and for many imperial possessions throughout history. Second, with regard to its own membership, the community is a republic, in which any governing minority should be seen as answerable to the community as a whole. To say that members of such a community are independent is to say that they are not dependent on others for their legal standing as

members of the community: they are not, for example, chattels, indentured servants or minors.

Only a minority of the world's population have ever been citizens in this sense. Most have not belonged to communities of the relevant kind, or they have belonged to such communities, but not as independent members. The history of the concept of citizenship is first, the history of the idea of a self-governing community, and secondly, the history of understandings of dependent and independent statuses within particular communities of that kind. The latter is what most concerns us here.

For present purposes these understandings of citizenship can be approached from three rather different perspectives. These concern, first, the obligations and the rights of citizens; second, the exclusive character of citizenship; and third, the peculiar egalitarianism of contemporary Western views of citizenship.

**Rights and Obligations**

First, there are questions to do with the rights and obligations involved in the status of citizenship, and with the attributes required of persons if they are to be the subjects of those rights and obligations. The most important issues here concern the role of citizens in the government of the community and the status of rights in relation to government. In its strongest form, the republican tradition of political thought maintains that the community should be governed and defended by the collective activity of its citizens. From this point of view each citizen is an officer of the community, and the personal attributes and qualities of individual citizens may therefore be regarded as matters of legitimate concern for the community as a whole. Machiavelli's *Commentaries*, for example, suggest that the liberty of individual citizens is crucially dependent on the liberty of their community, and also that the latter in turn requires the maintenance of appropriate virtues amongst the citizenry (Skinner, 1984). The possession of courage, integrity, moral sensitivity and practical intelligence is an obligation of citizenship.

Where the commitment to active citizen participation in government is relaxed, we also find some relaxation of the insistence on citizen virtue. Republicanism in the strong participatory sense just noted has normally been associated with the small city states of ancient Greece and of early modern Europe. Larger communities have usually been thought to require governments of other kinds, depending for the most part on the consent of citizens rather than on their active involvement — except perhaps on an intermittent basis. The *Federal-*

*ist Papers*, for example, argue that government in the modern world should be representative or indirect for two reasons. The one that concerns us at this point is a matter of size: a nation small enough to be governed directly by its citizens would not be large enough to defend itself against powerful states. A republic able to defend its independence must therefore also be one in which the great majority of citizens can play little direct part in government. Since, on this view, citizens would not normally be officers of the community the virtues that could reasonably be required of them must be correspondingly less demanding. In effect, the problem of ensuring that citizens are virtuous is reconceptualised as a matter of institutions rather than a matter of persons.

However, even where citizens are not called upon to play an active part in the government of their community they are generally expected to participate at some level in a common culture. The community of citizens is also thought to be a moral community in which a minimum of shared values helps sustain, and is in turn sustained by, the life of what is often called civil society — a sphere of social interaction, not directly controlled by government, in which citizens engage with others and discuss matters of general concern.

On the matter of rights, the requirement that citizens play their part in the life of the community would seem to imply a corresponding responsibility on the part of the community to ensure that its citizens are not prevented from so doing. This is a matter of political and civil liberties, at least in the first instance: the freedom to air one's views in public discussion and to initiate legal proceedings. But it has sometimes also been thought to involve economic support. It is in such terms, for example, that the Athenians justified payment of citizens from the poorer classes for the performance of public services. A related view forms part of Rousseau's insistence that equality

> should not be taken to imply that degrees of power and wealth should be absolutely the same for all, but rather that power shall stop short of violence and never be exercised except by virtue of authority and law, and, where wealth is concerned, that no citizen be rich enough to buy another, and none so poor as to be forced to sell himself. (Rousseau, 1968:96)

Even if they play no active part in government, citizens are still expected to participate in the life of civil society — and influential traditions of social-policy analysis have argued that government has an obligation to ensure that citizens have the wherewithal to do so. On

the one hand, following Marshall, this is now regarded as a matter of the social rights of citizenship (Marshall, 1950; Barbalet, 1988; Turner, 1986). On the other hand, community action to prevent the emergence of a disaffected underclass is often regarded as a matter of elementary prudence (Dahrendorf, 1988).

Finally, the rights of citizens (and others) have often been understood in a rather different sense as securing their standing as independent persons. If their independence is to have any real force then such rights cannot be subordinated to the will of the community as it might be expressed at any particular point in time. The Roman doctrine of the rule of laws (rather than of men) and the early modern doctrine of natural rights both carry this implication. Such views of the rights of citizens imply a correspondingly relaxed understanding of the requirements of virtue: citizens have rights irrespective of whether their fellow citizens see them as virtuous. This point brings us to the second, and more important, argument of the *Federalist Papers* in favour of representative government. Such a form of government would be democratic (in the sense that the people rule) but it would also provide the benefits of constitutionalism. In effect, the tensions between competing governmental powers would defend the rights of citizens against any capricious will of the majority.

**Exclusiveness**

The second perspective from which the understanding of citizenship can be approached concerns its exclusive character. The qualities required of persons if they are to be regarded as bearers of the rights and obligations considered above are hardly sufficient to distinguish the citizens of any given community from non-citizens, some of whom might also possess the requisite qualities. Likewise, an important part of the common culture of the citizens and many of their shared values will also be shared by at least some outsiders; and much of what they do not share could be acquired by them without too much difficulty. The qualities required of Athenian citizens, for example, were often thought to be present in members of other Greek communities, and sometimes even among non-Greeks.

Following the Enlightenment, the qualities required of citizens have frequently been understood in universalistic terms — that is, they have been regarded as qualities that are possessed or may be acquired by any normal human individual. However, since communities of citizens invariably inhabit a world of numerous autonomous political units, to be a citizen is always to be a member of one community

amongst others. The community to which a citizen belongs will be a community of citizens (and others), but it will also be identified as a community in other ways. Athenian citizens, for example, had to be sons of Athenian citizens (and of Athenian mothers from the middle of the fifth century), although this requirement was relaxed in the closing stages of the Peloponnesian War. Notions of descent (and the apparently more respectable surrogate notion of a distinctive national culture that cannot readily be acquired by persons who are not born into it) have always played an important part in the way citizenship has been understood within particular communities. In the modern period, such notions have generally coexisted in uneasy relationship with other principles of inclusion and exclusion. Germany, Israel and Japan are examples of Western democracies in which citizenship is restricted primarily in terms of descent. Elsewhere the legal requirements of citizenship are usually less restrictive, although the implicit or explicit identification of the national community in terms of descent remains a common feature of public discussion of the issue.

**Egalitarianism**

Perhaps the feature that most distinguishes the understandings of citizenship that have developed in the modern West from those that are best known from classical antiquity and the early modern period is their radical egalitarianism. Rousseau's account of equality has already been noted. He views it, not as a matter of abolishing differences of wealth and power between citizens, but rather as keeping such differences within tolerable limits. However, what is at issue here is not that sense of equality, which can also be found in some writings of the classical period. Rather it concerns three striking respects in which the egalitarianism of contemporary accounts of citizenship distinguishes them from their earlier counterparts. Citizenship in Athens and in Rome was a matter of a limited set of statuses within a larger and highly differentiated network of statuses. First, citizens were divided (largely according to wealth, at least in the first instance) into legally defined classes with distinct rights and obligations. Second, most members of the community could not be citizens, if only because they were not legally regarded as independent persons. Third, even if we leave to one side inhabitants of subject territories, numerous independent persons were subject to the laws of the community but did not possess the political rights of citizens. Metics in Athens, for example, were personally free non-citizens who were nevertheless subject to taxation and liable for military service.

With some qualifications, the most influential of contemporary Western understandings of citizenship have been egalitarian in all three respects. First, citizens are not divided into legally defined classes or estates. Indeed, since the Enlightenment it has been difficult to mount an intellectually respectable case for any such division between citizens — although sterling efforts were once made to defend property qualifications for the franchise. If we are to believe the authors of the *Federalist Papers*, representative government offers all the benefits of constitutionalism without the need for competition between estates. Second, almost all members of the community are legally regarded as independent persons, and therefore as citizens (children now being the only significant exceptions). The third issue is more problematic. Although there are significant alien minorities in all societies, the predominant Western view seems to be that all permanent residents should normally have the status of citizen. Even those who would restrict citizenship on grounds of descent tend to be egalitarian in this respect. The assumption is that non-citizens may be present in the community but only on a temporary basis. They would normally be expected to move on, or else, if they were eligible, to become citizens.

## III. CULTURAL PLURALISM

This egalitarian understanding of citizenship, together with the view that all citizens should share to some degree in a common culture, suggest that citizenship is now considered in the West against the background of a conception of community in which the unity of a self-governing polity is expected to correspond to the unity of a national culture. Exceptions, such as Belgium, Canada and the United Kingdom, are regarded as anomalous and also, for precisely that reason, as potentially unstable.

I have stressed this aspect of contemporary Western understandings of citizenship partly in order to make explicit what is often taken for granted. But my more serious concern is to bring out the peculiarity of this assumption of cultural homogeneity. In fact, the experience of cultural diversity has been the normal human condition throughout recorded history (McNeill, 1986). Wherever there have been states (and this includes all societies in which there have been citizens) they have coexisted with other states or with non-state societies beyond their borders, political boundaries have been disputed and subject to change, and those boundaries have always been permeable to a greater or lesser degree. States have always had to live with culturally diverse populations, including significant groups of foreign descent.

The populations of cities have usually been more diverse than those of the larger political units within which they have been located. One reason for this is that, until recently, cities throughout the world have been more than usually unhealthy places in which to live: they have been able to maintain their populations only by sucking in people from outside. Another reason, and one that remains significant, is that cities are centres of administration, of trade, and sometimes of diplomacy — all of which attract residents from elsewhere.

The perception of cultural difference is often, of course, a matter of perspective. Much of the diversity that Americans or Australians regard as an important feature of their own societies might also be subsumed within a broader notion of a common culture. However that may be, the modern experience of cultural diversity poses a problem for all Western (and non-Western) societies. First, the discourse of citizenship normally presupposes a common culture which functions both to sustain citizens' life together and to distinguish them from citizens of other communities. Second, however that common culture might be identified, the community will invariably contain a significant minority who do not share it. The idea that the political community consists, or should normally consist, of those who share a common culture is an illusion. To the extent that that illusion seriously informs political discussion it can also be a dangerous one.

**Cultural Pluralism and Citizenship in the West**

It is important to be clear about the nature of the difficulty here. First, the disjunction between the presumed cultural unity of its citizens and the multicultural reality of a society appears to pose a problem largely as a consequence of the peculiarly egalitarian character of the contemporary Western view of citizenship, with its sources in Enlightenment ideas of natural human equality on the one hand and in the variously idealised Enlightenment and Romantic accounts of the political communities of Athens and Rome on the other.

Second, the cultural and ethnic pluralism of national populations in the West is a consequence of the incorporation of distinct societies in a relatively open regime of trade and communication. The pluralism of populations in contemporary societies cannot be explained simply as a legacy of the mingling of populations resulting from wars and empires; and it has become increasingly clear that it should not be expected to disappear even if the age of empires and of wars were to recede into the past. The fact that the pluralism of populations has shown no signs of withering away during the long post-war peace

(even in those societies that do not regard themselves as nations of immigrants) is largely responsible for the gradual development of multiculturalism in Western Europe, both as a set of governmental practices and as a pressing political issue. Cultural pluralism cannot be eradicated through education, stricter control of borders and removal of unwanted persons — at least not in a liberal society where even illegal immigrants have rights.

Since the measures required to eradicate cultural pluralism in our societies would be politically unacceptable (and economically disastrous), these points suggest that we should reconsider our understanding of citizenship. Before moving on to the issue of multiculturalism proper, it may be worth noting that while the greater part of the population in most Western societies will continue to be citizens (in contrast, say, to the situation in the Gulf Emirates), there will be significant minorities who are not — and many of the latter will be present illegally. In any liberal society even members of this last group will have rights. Some of them will also fall ill, or suffer from accidents or unemployment, and some will have children: all of which generate demands on the public services provided by the host community.

For the foreseeable future, then, all Western communities will continue to be composed of both citizens and persons of several other statuses. In this respect, Marshall's well known account of the development of citizenship must be regarded as seriously incomplete. Marshall maintains that, having developed separately over the last few centuries, the civil, political and social aspects of citizenship finally came together around the middle of the 20th century in the welfare states of Britain and other Western societies. The argument is that what Marshall calls the social rights of citizenship — concerning the provision of education, health, income support and other welfare services — may have been the last to be developed, but they finally provided the conditions in which all citizens could be assured of their capacity to participate to the full in the life of their community.

There are problems enough with this account of the situation in which citizens now find themselves (Hindess, 1992; Pateman, 1989) but the point to be noted here is that what Marshall presents as aspects of citizenship should be seen as elements of a broader system of differentiation in which the condition of a privileged majority is distinguished from that of various not so privileged minorities. It is misleading to present the civil, political and social rights (as Marshall calls them) that have emerged in Western societies as if they were just

so many expressions of the one coherent ideal. The point is not only that they have their own histories (which Marshall of course acknowledges), but also that they have different sources and serve different social purposes. With some striking exceptions, for example, courts have insisted on the necessity of due process in cases concerning individuals who are neither citizens nor even legal immigrants — much to the annoyance of immigration officials and police. This most important of civil rights should not be regarded as if it were primarily an attribute of citizenship. Or again, many of Marshall's social rights are normally made available to members of some categories of non-citizen in most Western societies. Here too, it is misleading to present these 'rights' as if they should be regarded primarily as attributes of citizenship.

Now consider the question of multiculturalism. I noted earlier that what is contentious is not the recognition of cultural diversity but rather the question of whether and in what respects it is legitimate to provide public support for minority cultures. In fact, there are two rather different issues here. One concerns the promotion of cultural diversity amongst citizens; the other concerns the status of, and the treatment accorded to, other long-term residents. In practice, however, the first of these issues is the decisive one: a liberal-democratic polity that chooses not to promote cultural diversity amongst its citizens — and those other long-term residents who are treated in much the same way as citizens for most purposes of public policy — is hardly likely to support minority cultures among other residents. (Consider the treatment of Korean and other cultural minorities in Japan, or the treatment of native peoples in societies dominated by immigrants and their descendants.)

Why should the promotion of cultural diversity among citizens be contentious? One reason is that support for minority cultures appears to involve the unequal treatment of citizens. I return to that issue in a moment. Other reasons are suggested by the observation that the single most important fact about ethnic groups in New York city 'is that they are also interest groups' (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963:17), and also by the argument that a policy of cultural pluralism will receive significant political support only if there is also structural pluralism — that is, if ethnic/cultural communities are represented as interest groups (Martin, 1981:141–53). The question then becomes: why should the active promotion of interest groups representing cultural and ethnic minorities be regarded as problematic?

To pose the issue in these terms is also to suggest two of the most

influential grounds on which multiculturalism has in fact been resisted. One involves an hostility to the minority groups thought likely to benefit from multiculturalism — or rather, a hostility to their effective presence within the host community. What is at stake according to this rejection of multiculturalism is the defence of the community of citizens against what are regarded as alien intrusions. Such claims rest on understandings of community, and of citizenship as the normal form of membership of the community, that have powerful support in all Western societies.

The second and intellectually more respectable grounds for rejecting multiculturalism appeals strongly to the republicanism of contemporary Western understandings of political community. It involves the claim that it is wrong for government to promote the development of sectional interest groups of whatever kind, if only because such differential treatment of citizens by public authorities encourages the pursuit of those sectional interests to the detriment of the community as a whole. In effect, it amounts to a corruption of the polity through the promotion of faction.

A considerable literature has been devoted to the question of the proper relation between government and interest groups, and I cannot hope to do justice to it here. Let me just say that it seems to me mistaken for a reason which might seem to be largely pragmatic, but which also rests on an appeal to the liberal virtue of accommodation, which some, like Charles Larmore (1987), argue is the core of liberal political thinking. I begin by noting that the existence of sectional interests in liberal societies is not itself a consequence of public policy, although there may well be interest groups that are largely parasitic on publicly funded agencies. If there are groups in a society, many of whose members regard themselves as particularly disadvantaged (or as particularly advantaged) as a consequence of their membership of such groups, they will make demands of government in defence of their interests, or else behave in such a way as to pose social problems of various kinds.

The choice, in other words, is about how government should relate to such sectional interests. It is not about whether they should be allowed to exist, since, in a liberal polity, the option of suppression will not be available. I suggest that, rather than just allowing their discontent (or defence of their advantages) to manifest itself in other ways, it is generally preferable for government to recognise such interests and attempt to promote their mutual accommodation. Such efforts at accommodation would inevitably sustain at least some of the

differences that separate the interest groups in question. They will also involve negotiation, which in some cases will require public support of organisations capable of negotiating with others.

There remains, finally, a different kind of reason why support for minority cultures might be opposed: that it appears to involve the unequal treatment of citizens. It is one thing, the argument might go, to provide members of minority groups with, say, language classes, wheel-chair access to public places, and other kinds of assistance in order that they may participate on something like equal terms in the majority community. It is another thing entirely to provide members of particular minorities with additional support to pursue their culturally distinctive version of the good.

In fact, multiculturalism would seem to conflict first with the contemporary, egalitarian understanding of citizenship according to which there should be no legally privileged estates, and second with the liberal view that all individuals equally should be free, within limits, to pursue their various understandings of the good life. The objection in both cases turns on the understanding of minority. If it is understood in an exclusive sense, such that public support of the relevant kind would be provided to members of particular minorities only and not to others, then multiculturalism does indeed conflict with an egalitarian view of the proper relation between government and citizen.

**Multiculturalism and Associational Pluralism**

There is, however, another possibility, which is to treat the field of eligible minorities as potentially open-ended, so that any citizen could be a member of one or more of them. In fact, the idea that citizenship should be understood in this way is implicit in the associational pluralism advocated by Figgis and, at least for a time, by Cole and Laski (Hirst, 1989). This pluralism shares the liberal view that, as far as reasonably possible, individuals should be free to pursue their various understandings of the good life. However, it disputes the atomistic conception of relations between citizen and state that liberals derive from that view; but not, it should be stressed, on communitarian grounds.

Where the communitarian critics of liberal atomism share — at least as a normative ideal — the misleading identification of political and cultural unities noted above, the pluralist standpoint is a celebration of diversity. Briefly, the argument is that most individual purposes can be pursued effectively only in association with other individuals — and that within any reasonably large community there will be a

plurality of purposes that individuals might reasonably wish to pursue. A desirable polity, on this view, would be one that actively promoted the development of associations, precisely so that individuals would be free to pursue their version of the good. The state would, of course, regulate the behaviour of associations, but it would also recognise their autonomy and right to develop in accordance with their own internal decision procedures.

Associational pluralism is not without its problems, but it does seem to offer an egalitarian account of citizenship that would not rule out the provision of public support for minority cultures. It is not, however, entirely consistent with multiculturalism as this is understood, for example, in the Canadian report quoted at the beginning of this article. The cultures treated in multiculturalist discourse as deserving of respect and public support are restricted to those that can be identified in terms of their ethnic origin. In that respect, multiculturalism is essentially backward-looking: it aims to preserve a heritage of cultural differences that have been given by a certain kind of history.

It is this aspect of multiculturalism that appears most problematic from the standpoint of associational pluralism. The primary concern of the latter is to enhance the capacities of individuals — and therefore of the associations to which they might choose to belong — to pursue their common purposes. It is not to preserve cultural relics from the past. In these terms, while it might be legitimate in some cases to provide public support for cultures identified primarily in terms of ethnic origin, there can be no justification for restricting the range of eligible cultures in that way. Associations of Bhuddists or Gays should be regarded, at least in principle, as no less deserving of support than associations of Italians or Vietnamese. If there is a case to be made for multiculturalism in the societies of the modern West, it is a case that would submerge it within a broader program of support for cultural diversity.

# Public Opinion, Multiculturalism, and Political Behaviour in Australia

**Ian McAllister** is Professor in the Department of Politics, University College, University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy. He obtained his doctorate from the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, and has written extensively on British politics and the politics of Northern Ireland. Since coming to Australia he has also written on topics in Australian politics, and in particular on multiculturalism. His books include *The Northern Ireland Social Democratic and Labour Party: Political Opposition in a Divided Society* (Macmillan, London, 1977); (with Richard Rose) *The Loyalties of Voters: A Lifetime Learning Model* (Sage Publications, London, 1990), and *Political Behaviour: Citizens, Parties and Elites in Australia* (Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1992).

# Public Opinion, Multiculturalism, and Political Behaviour in Australia

Ian McAllister*

## I. INTRODUCTION

As a society based on large-scale immigration, the most consistent modern image of Australia is of cultural and ethnic diversity. With more than one in five of its population having been born overseas, Australia has more foreign-born citizens than any advanced industrial society with the possible exception of Israel (Lewin-Epstein & Semyonov, 1985). In the past two decades, this diversity has gained explicit government recognition through the concept of multiculturalism. This increasing interest in and commitment to the benefits of cultural and ethnic diversity has been part of a worldwide resurgence in racial and ethnic identity, characteristics that the functionalist, Marxist and modernisation theories of the 1950s and 1960s supposed would disappear as a result of technological and industrial change (van der Berghe, 1981; Esman, 1977). In Australia, as in so many other countries, these predictions have proved to be ill-founded.

From the early 1970s, political elites in Australia became increasingly more receptive to the idea of cultural diversity. Rather than being a disadvantage, as was the prevailing view in the early postwar years, diversity has been seen as an advantage — socially, economically, and culturally. In turn, this new approach has been popularised in the concept of multiculturalism, a term originally borrowed from Canada (Berry et al., 1977). Multiculturalism has thus been viewed as a means of obviating the potential for racial and ethnic conflict in Australian society — a potential that became all too clear in many societies in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

There are, however, two problems in promoting multiculturalism in Australian society and gaining widespread popular acceptance for it. First, multiculturalism is diametrically opposite to the assimilationist

---

* The 1988–89 Issues in Multicultural Australia Survey was designed by Roger Jones and Ian McAllister and conducted by AGB-McNair and Reark Research on behalf of the Office of Multicultural Affairs. The data are available from the Social Science Data Archive at the Australian National University. Neither the original collectors of the data nor the sponsoring agency are responsible for the analyses or interpretations presented herein. My thanks to participants in the conference for their constructive comments; the usual disclaimer applies.

policies followed by governments of all political persuasions in the immediate postwar years. While political elites are necessarily pragmatic in their political views, opinion change at the level of the ordinary citizen is both slower and less predictable (Higley, Deacon & Smart, 1979; Putnam, 1976). Political elites may be committed to multiculturalism, but it is by no means clear whether the mass of citizens echo this commitment. A major policy without a secure popular base represents a potential threat to the stability of the political system.

The second problem in gaining widespread acceptance for multiculturalism is that the meaning of the term, particularly as it is used and articulated at the popular level, is surrounded by ambiguity.[1] At one level, it is used as a simple descriptor for a society that contains a variety of ethnic and racial groups. Used in this context, it has few political implications. At another level, however, it means guaranteeing equal representation and opportunity regardless of ethnic or racial background — a definition that has distinct policy implications for government activity across a wide range of areas.

This essay focuses on the popular conception of multiculturalism to answer three questions. First, how do Australians view multiculturalism and what do they associate with it? Second, what popular support exists for multiculturalism and how does this support vary between different social groups within the society? Third, what are the consequences of these opinions for political behaviour, as reflected in patterns of party support? The data used in the paper are based on a major national opinion survey collected in 1988 that was designed, inter alia, to ascertain public opinion towards multiculturalism. Full details of the survey and the methods used are provided in the Appendix.

## II. THE ORIGINS OF MULTICULTURALISM

The origins of the contemporary policy of multiculturalism can be traced to the decision to permit non-white settlement in Australia. In theory, this decision was taken in 1958 when the dictation test was removed, the waiting period for those seeking to transfer from temporary to permanent status was reduced from 15 to five years, and agreement was reached whereby the entry of 'well-qualified people

1. There is no survey evidence on how many Australians have actually heard of the term multiculturalism, although Canadian evidence suggests that up to 20 per cent of Canadian citizens in the early 1980s had not heard of it (Moodley, 1983:320).

wishing to settle in Australia' — a euphemism for non-whites — was to be 'considered' (Martin, 1978:30). In practice, however, few non-whites took up this opportunity until the late 1970s, when Australia began to accept increasing numbers of south-east Asian refugees fleeing from the political turmoil that followed the end of the Vietnam War (Viviani, 1984).

The postwar immigration of non-English speaking settlers had, however, already begun to force a change in attitudes towards immigrants well before the onset of large-scale Asian immigration. The settlement policies of the 1950s and 1960s were based on an assimilationist policy, whereby non-English speaking immigrants were expected to learn English and conform to the cultural norms and values of their adopted country. This manifested itself in such policies as language tests for citizenship (and hence the right to vote and stand for elective office) and an unwillingness to recognise overseas qualifications unless obtained in the British Isles or Northern Europe (Kunz, 1975). Perhaps the best example of the policy of assimilation was the introduction of the 'Good Neighbour' movement in 1950, which was intended to help migrants adjust to Australian life through widening their contacts with the English-speaking population (Jupp, 1966:9).

In the late 1960s, various strains had developed in this approach to immigration. One indicator was the large number of migrants returning to their homelands, dissatisfied with their experiences of Australian life. One of the first major criticisms of the assimilationist policy was presented by Jerzy Zubryzcki who argued in favour of a 'modest commitment to cultural diversity through the maintenance of immigrant languages and the development of studies in European culture' (Martin, 1978:55). This theme was picked up by the Whitlam Labor government and in 1973 the Minister for Immigration, A.J. Grassby, produced the first comprehensive statement of government policy towards immigrants entitled 'A Multicultural Society for the Future'.

The adoption of the term 'multiculturalism' had much to do with the Canadian experience of cultural diversity. The idea of encouraging cultural pluralism had emerged in Canada in the 1930s where it had become associated with the catchword 'mosaic'.[2] However, it was not until the early 1970s that the term 'multiculturalism' was brought into use, stimulated in part by the desire of ethnic groups to gain the same rights and recognition that had been won by French-speaking Canadians (Bullivant, 1980). In 1971 the Canadian government announced the first

2. One of the most famous works on cultural pluralism of the 1960s and 1970s used this word and was written by a Canadian: see Porter, 1965.

comprehensive policy towards cultural diversity, which it called 'a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework' (Berry, 1977:2), and this was the model and terminology adopted in Australia.

Since the Australian government's 1973 statement on multiculturalism, a variety of government organisations and interest groups have popularised the concept of a multicultural society, and a range of policy initiatives have been introduced to promote it. In 1977 the Ethnic Affairs Council adopted a formal statement that advocated a multicultural society based on a diversity of ethnic groups and cultural identities, while recognising the importance of a common core of institutions, rights and obligations. It also made extensive recommendations on how to ensure equality of opportunity in the labour market, and equal access to government services and resources (Graetz & McAllister, 1988:80).

The government responded to these demands by establishing several organisations. In 1979 the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) was created to sponsor research on various aspects of immigration and ethnicity and to improve community relations. However, relations between AIMA and the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA), which regarded the smaller body as an unwanted and unnecessary rival in shaping government policy, were never harmonious. Following a review of AIMA headed by a former shadow immigration minister, Dr Moss Cass, AIMA was abolished in 1986 (Patience, 1989).

AIMA's functions were split between a new Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), to which was allocated community education and community relations, and the Bureau of Immigration Research (BIR), which absorbed a small research unit within DIEA and was responsible for policy advice on immigration issues. OMA was placed within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; this simultaneously demonstrated Labor's commitment to multiculturalism while effectively protecting it from rival government departments. The establishment of BIR outside the public service was, like AIMA, an attempt to depoliticise the whole issue of immigration (McAllister, 1993).

The most recent government policy on multiculturalism is the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, which was launched in 1989. The agenda defines multiculturalism in terms of three dimensions (Office of Multicultural Affairs, 1989:3):

- cultural identity: the right of all Australians, within carefully defined limits, to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion;

- social justice: the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, including the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth; and
- economic efficiency: the need to maintain, develop, and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background.

To develop the Agenda, the government has allocated nearly $90 million over the 1989–94 period; most is being spent on community-relations programs, schemes to improve access and equity within government programs, and English language training.

Although the formal government definition of multiculturalism has changed several times since 1973, and there have also been informal changes in emphasis, successive governments have reaffirmed their commitment to the main principles of the policy. However, while immigration and multiculturalism have surfaced as political issues, they have rarely become party political issues. Both major parties agree informally that these issues should not be raised in party political debate. For example, in March 1984 Geoffrey Blainey delivered a speech criticising the high levels of Asian immigration and what he saw as the difficulties in assimilating them. Despite some support from the shadow minister of immigration and ethnic affairs, Michael Hodgman, by the end of May 1984 the party leaders had ensured that the debate was halted (Patience, 1989:421).

Why have the major political parties agreed not to place multiculturalism on their political agendas? Three explanations account for this decision. First, there is party survival. Political parties seek to restrict interparty conflict to the economic dimension and exclude issues that threaten intraparty unity. Thus, parties ranged on a collectivist–free market dimension avoid moral issues such as abortion, drugs or the racial content of their societies on the grounds that they have the potential to divide their supporters and destroy their social bases of support (McAllister, 1992:201ff). On the rare occasions when issues such as abortion or capital punishment are debated within legislatures, they are invariably treated as non-partisan and votes are cast according to conscience, not party discipline, thereby neutralising their potential to divide party supporters.[3]

Second, political elites have an overarching concern for regime

3. A rare exception to this is the abortion debate in the United States, which has taken on the pattern of a partisan conflict. However, the debate has revealed considerable divisions within both major parties.

survival and place only those issues on the political agenda which they feel will not threaten the basic 'rules of the game' (Higley, Deacon & Smart, 1979). As a fundamental issue that deals with the content and direction of society, multiculturalism is often interpreted as being potentially divisive. The prospect of such a fundamental issue becoming a major topic of partisan political conflict is therefore something that Australian political elites would go to considerable lengths to avoid. This also applies to such issues as the territorial boundaries of the state or the institutional form of the government, which are rarely debated by elites and only then with great circumspection (Putnam, 1976).[4]

The final explanation for parties not placing multiculturalism on the political agenda is what Gans (1968) has called the 'equality revolution'. In Gans' view, the state has legislated increasingly to preserve political and social equality starting with basic political rights such as the right to vote and to stand for election and progressing to equal opportunity rights in the labour market. The net result of this revolution has been an extension of fundamental rights to cover ever-widening activities, behaviours and social groups (Marshall, 1964). As a concept which encompasses a substantial minority of the population, multiculturalism is seen as the next logical stage in broadening fundamental citizen rights, and this is reflected in the government's policies on access and equity. For part of a political elite to oppose it, and therefore make it a partisan issue, would be interpreted as contrary to the trend towards securing and extending individual rights in advanced industrial society.

The political interest that elites have in restricting conflict to a narrow range of non-divisive issues means that the issue of multiculturalism is rarely, if ever, debated either within or between the major political parties. Indeed, the conservative views of voters on these issues means that elites would be severely circumscribed in their policy-making if such debate did take place (see McAllister, 1991). More serious, however, is the degree to which ordinary individuals are limited in their ability to develop coherent opinions and perceptions of multiculturalism. In the absence of informed elite debate, public opinion on those issues is 'soft', lacking over time consistency and coherence (Goot, 1991). This question is examined in more detail in the fifth section.

---

4. The 1992 debate on the Australian flag and republicanism also follows this pattern. Despite a strong stand from the Labor prime minister, Paul Keating, almost all other parliamentarians have avoided the issue.

## III. TYPES OF INTERGROUP RELATIONS

A society can respond to cultural diversity in a variety of ways. One approach is to ensure that minority cultural groups assimilate into the culture of the majority. A second approach is to promote cultural pluralism, so that minorities can retain their own cultures so long as they maintain an overall loyalty to the society as a whole. These options are, of course, not mutually exclusive. In terms of policy, government can foster both assimilation and diversity simultaneously in the different areas within its sphere of control. The basic approach to intergroup relations can be conceptualised in terms of the values held by individuals about the problem, values being defined as fundamental, often subconscious, preferences for particular personal and social goals (McAllister, 1992:98).

The two questions that define the direction that intergroup relations can take within a culturally diverse society are outlined in Figure 1 (Berry, 1977). The first question is whether or not there is a desire to retain independent group cultures, so that particular groups will have a degree of cultural autonomy. Some cultural groups may simply wish to assimilate, while others will have a strong commitment to maintaining their cultural heritage. The second question, whether or not there is a desire to maintain intergroup relations between the majority and minority cultures, concerns the broader goals and aims of the society. In advanced industrial society, maintaining intergroup relations is usually seen as crucial for regime stability; in technologically less advanced societies, intergroup relations may be a less important component of stability.

**Figure 1**
**A typology of intergroup relations**

| | | Retain group culture? | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Yes** | **No** |
| Maintain group relations? | **Yes** | Multiculturalism | Assimilation |
| | **No** | Segregation | Deculturation |

Cross-tabulating these two questions results in the four approaches to intergroup relations defined in the typology in Figure 1. A positive commitment to maintaining intergroup relations and retaining group cultures results in multiculturalism, the current approach to intergroup relations being followed in, for example, Australia and

Canada. Maintaining intergroup relations but having no interest in retaining group cultures results in assimilation. Assimilation is defined as 'a process of interpretation and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common culture' (Lal, 1983:159). Perhaps the best known version of this approach is the 'straight line' theory of Gans (1975; see also Gordon, 1975), whereby ethnic groups are systematically absorbed into the host society until all remnants of their distinctive identity are lost.

Segregation, as employed in South Africa and, to a lesser extent, in post-communist Yugoslavia, is a consequence of viewing independent group cultures as taking precedence over intergroup relations. There is therefore minimal contact between the various cultures within the society. In some approaches, this can result in complete segregation, but more frequently it is conceived as occurring within the occupational structure, with certain ethnic groups occupying specific higher status positions within the occupational hierarchy (Hechter, 1978). The fourth and final approach is deculturation, when both options are seen as being of little value and the cultural component within the society is reduced progressively.

The 1988 Issues in Multicultural Australia Survey operationalised these options by including a battery of questions[5] which asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed with particular statements relating to intergroup relations. To ascertain if individuals held a structured pattern of beliefs about intergroup relations, the responses to the questions were factor analysed, a statistical technique that identifies the existence of an underlying structure by correlating the items in question (Kim & Mueller, 1978). The questions used in the analysis, together with the proportion of respondents who said that they agreed strongly with them and the respective factor loadings, are shown in Table 1.

Whatever the conceptual or theoretical complexity of the four approaches to intergroup relations outlined in Figure 1, public opinion views them as a dichotomy: assimilation represents one

5. Only seven questions are used in Table 1. The eighth question was 'Australia would be a better place if members of ethnic groups kept their own way of life'. This is ambiguous — it could be interpreted as support for either multiculturalism or segregation — and as a consequence cross-loaded between the two factors in Table 1. For that reason it was excluded from the final analyses.

**Table 1**
**The structure of values about intergroup relations**

| | % 'agree very much' | Factor loadings[a] I | Factor loadings[a] II |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Assimilation** | | | |
| 1. People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like other Australians (assimilation). | 34 | .74 | –.06 |
| 2. If members of ethnic groups want to keep their own culture, they should keep it to themselves (segregation). | 29 | .74 | –.05 |
| 3. Having lots of different cultural groups in Australia causes lots of problems (deculturation). | 37 | .67 | –.15 |
| 4. A person who doesn't speak English has no right to expect to get ahead in Australia (assimilation). | 25 | .67 | –.14 |
| **Multiculturalism** | | | |
| 5. It's important that we make use of the skills and education of all immigrants. | 73 | –.09 | .77 |
| 6. No matter whether Australians were born here or come from overseas they should all be given equal opportunities. | 81 | –.12 | .75 |
| 7. So long as a person is committed to Australia it doesn't matter what ethnic background they have. | 62 | –.10 | .72 |
| Eigenvalues | | 2.4 | 1.3 |
| Per cent variance explained | | 34 | 19 |

[a] Varimax rotated factor loadings from a principal components factor analysis with unities in the main diagonal. No other eigenvalue had a value greater than one. The exact question was: 'Please tell me if you agree very much, agree a little, disagree a little, or disagree very much with the following statements.'

Source: 1988 Issues in Multicultural Australia Survey, general population sample (n = 1552).

approach, multiculturalism another. The pattern of factor loadings shows that there is a clear and distinct structure between them; the four items measuring assimilation, segregation and deculturation (which, for simplicity, are all included under the single term assimilation) all load strongly on the first factor. The three items measuring support for multiculturalism all load clearly on the second factor. There are also consistent proportions of individuals who support each group of questions, around a quarter to one-third on the assimilation items, and between six and eight out of ten respondents on the multiculturalism items.

Public opinion, then, views intergroup relations in terms of two dimensions, assimilation and multiculturalism, which are largely independent and distinct from one another. These two factors are therefore not simply representing the opposite ends of a single attitudinal dimension, as a casual observer might have predicted.[6] By implication, it would be possible to identify individuals who support multiculturalism, and at the same time endorse assimilation: the two are not mutually exclusive categories in the eyes of public opinion.

The values that individuals hold — their fundamental, unchanging beliefs about personal and social goals — determine patterns of individual behaviour. The next stage of the analysis is to bring these values closer to the behaviours that they help to shape by investigating what consequences individuals predict will result from multiculturalism, and by analysing their opinions on government programs relating to multiculturalism. Individual perceptions of the consequences of multiculturalism were again operationalised in terms of a series of questions[7] and, once again, a factor analysis indicates the presence of two underlying dimensions, one favourable to multiculturalism, the other unfavourable (Table 2).

Within each dimension, Table 2 indicates that popular support for the particular measure in question varies. Within the positive factor, nearly two-thirds of respondents support the statement that multiculturalism 'provides a greater variety of food, music and dance', while only one quarter support the statement that it 'provides a fair go for all

---

6. The correlation between the two scales is –.27.

7. Once again, the battery contained more items than were included in the final analysis. Two items — 'multiculturalism is the basis of Australia's immigration policy' and 'multiculturalism is a fact of life in Australia today' — were clearly ambiguous and cross-loaded between the factors. They were excluded from the final factor analysis.

**Table 2**
**The perceived consequences of multiculturalism**

| | % 'strongly agree' | Factor loadings[a] I | II |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Positive** | | | |
| Multiculturalism . . . | | | |
| 1. Is necessary if people from different cultures are to live in harmony. | 40 | .77 | –.10 |
| 2. Helps tourism and trade with other countries. | 43 | .76 | –.09 |
| 3. Promotes a fair go for all members of the community. | 25 | .70 | –.25 |
| 4. Provides a greater variety of food, music and dance. | 63 | .57 | –.13 |
| **Negative** | | | |
| 5. Deprives Australians of jobs. | 19 | –.15 | .79 |
| 6. Means that migrants get too much help from the government. | 24 | –.34 | .77 |
| 7. Undermines loyalty to Australia. | 17 | –.27 | .68 |
| 8. Creates suburbs with high concentrations of ethnic groups. | 55 | .03 | .61 |
| Eigenvalues | | 3.1 | 1.2 |
| Per cent variance explained | | 39 | 15 |

a Varimax rotated factor loadings from a principal components factor analysis with unities in the main diagonal. No other eigenvalue had a value greater than one. The exact question was: 'There has been a lot of talk about multiculturalism lately, and people have different views of what it means. I'd like you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with some of these views. There are no right or wrong answers, all we want is your opinion?'

Source: as for Table 1.

members of the community'. Similarly, there is majority support within the negative factor for the proposition that multiculturalism leads to high urban concentrations among ethnic groups, but little support for the view that it 'undermines loyalty to Australia'. Despite the existence of two distinct factors, they are, however, closely related with a correlation of –.44, and for that reason they are combined to form a single measure of popular opinion on the consequences of multiculturalism.[8]

Finally, it remains to determine the structure of opinion on the policies that governments develop towards multiculturalism. Again, a battery of questions[9] was included in the survey to analyse opinions towards government policies. The factor analysis in Table 3 identified two underlying dimensions, one dealing with cultural and social policies, the other with English-language policies. An average of 17 per cent of respondents said that they 'strongly approved' of the government supporting cultural and social policies, compared to an average of 50 per cent who approved of government support for English-language policies. Once again, however, these two dimensions of opinion on government policies are moderately associated ($r = .49$) and for that reason they are combined in the remainder of the analyses to form a single measure of popular support for government policies on multiculturalism.

Popular opinion on multiculturalism can therefore be disaggregated into three separate components. First, there is the value component, reflected here in the values that individuals hold towards intergroup relations, which can be defined in terms of assimilation and multiculturalism. Second, there is a societal component, which measures what opinions individuals hold about the consequences of multiculturalism for the society at large. Third, there is a policy component which is concerned with opinions about government support for particular policies linked to multiculturalism. It is also possible to add a fourth component — the behavioural consequences of these opinions — and this will be examined in more detail in relation to political behaviour in the fifth section.

---

8. The fact that the second factor has a relatively small eigenvalue of 1.2 is also an indication that there is not a strong distinction between the two factors.

9. One item was excluded from the analysis — 'Providing information leaflets about government services in languages other than English' — for the reasons already noted.

**Table 3**
**The structure of opinion on multicultural policies**

| | % 'strongly approve' | Factor loadings[a] I | II |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Cultural and social policies** | | | |
| 1. Providing money to ethnic organisations to teach their languages and cultures to their young people. | 13 | .79 | .16 |
| 2. Providing money to ethnic organisations for music, dance and other cultural activities. | 10 | .76 | .21 |
| 3. Providing nursing homes specially for aged immigrants speaking the same language. | 15 | .72 | .17 |
| 4. Radio and television shows in languages other than English. | 23 | .71 | .22 |
| 5. Teaching in schools the languages of our major cultural groups in Australia. | 25 | .65 | .18 |
| **English language policies** | | | |
| 6. Centres where immigrants can learn English and receive information about government programs and services. | 46 | .19 | .82 |
| 7. Providing intensive English courses for immigrants' children. | 60 | .08 | .78 |
| 8. Providing intensive English courses for adult immigrants at work. | 41 | .28 | .71 |
| 9. Providing interpreters in hospitals and the courts to help people who don't speak English very well. | 51 | .29 | .69 |
| Eigenvalues | | 4.0 | 1.3 |
| Per cent variance explained | | 44 | 15 |

a Varimax rotated factor loadings from a principal components factor analysis with unities in the main diagonal. No other eigenvalue had a value greater than one. The exact question was: 'People have differing opinions about what steps the government should take to help the different ethnic groups in Australia. Please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of the government helping in the following ways?'

Source: as for Table 1.

## IV. THE DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC OPINION

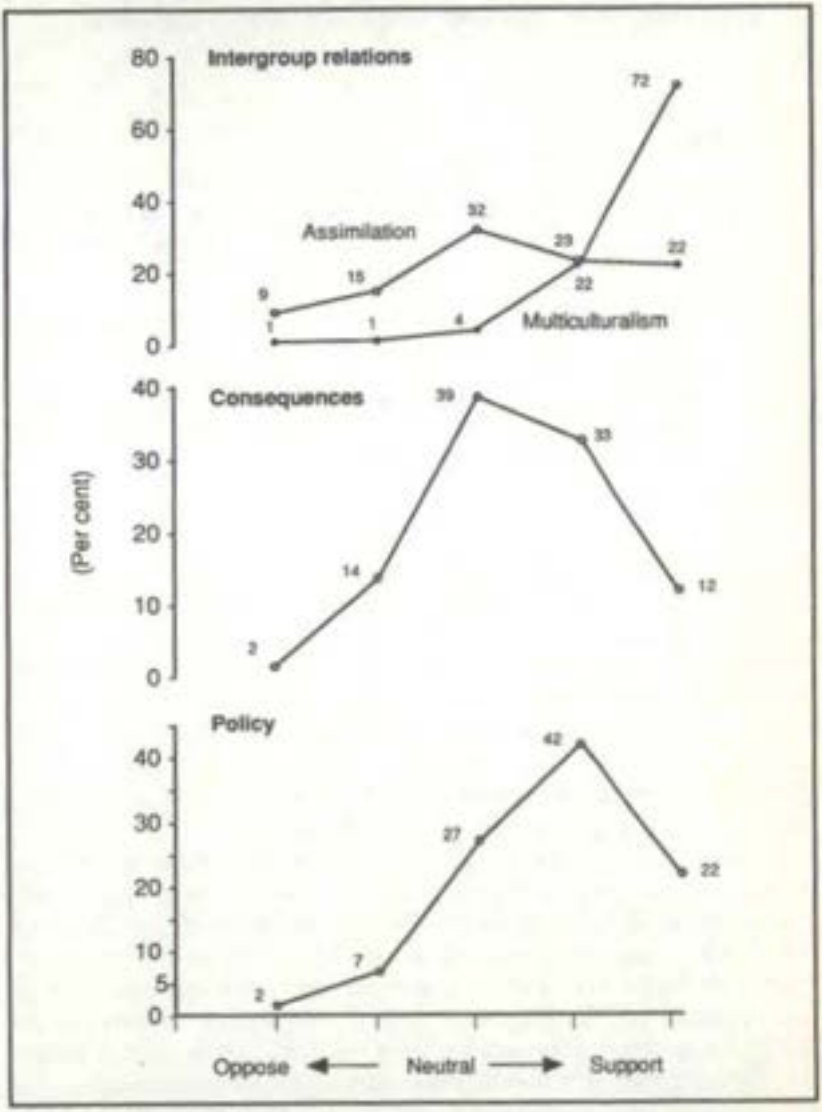
Public opinion may take a variety of forms on particular issues, each of them having particular political consequences (McAllister, 1992:79–80). An opinion that records a vast majority in favour of it and a small minority in opposition has few political consequences, since political parties have little incentive to politicise the issue. These opinions are usually called 'valence issues', since they produce unity rather than division (Stokes, 1966:170–1). Another common form that public opinion takes is the normal distribution, which approximates to a bell shape. In this case, since voters are most numerous in the middle ground, parties seeking to maximise their election prospects have an incentive to moderate conflict on the issue and attract potential supporters who have no clear views.

The distribution of opinion on the four aspects of intergroup relations identified in Tables 1–3 suggests that whereas multiculturalism resembles a valence issue, the other three more closely follow a normal distribution, albeit with a bias towards support rather than opposition (Figure 2). No fewer than 72 per cent of the respondents in the 1988 survey fall into the category of strongest support; overall only 2 per cent say that they oppose multiculturalism. There is, then, little reason or incentive for parties or politicians to attack the basic principle of multiculturalism, since it attracts overwhelming support across the population. There is, however, more support for assimilation which, as we saw in Table 1 is seen by public opinion as distinct from multiculturalism. Indeed, more respondents support assimilation (45 per cent) than oppose it (24 per cent).

The distribution of opinion on the social consequences of multiculturalism indicates that it attracts more popular support than opposition, but that it resembles a normal distribution. In the case of the policy aspects of multiculturalism, nearly two thirds of the respondents support it, and it is halfway between a valence issue and a normal distribution. Overall, what these results indicate is that, *pace* assimilation, there is overwhelming popular support for multiculturalism as a principle, and strong support for it in terms of its consequences for the society and for government policy towards implementing multiculturalism.

At one level, these results are contradictory: ordinary citizens simultaneously endorse multiculturalism yet exhibit significant support for assimilation. Moreover, studies of public opinion show that a majority of the population are opposed to the current high level of immigration (Goot, 1991; McAllister, 1993). At another level, these results are explicable in the context of which issues are debated by

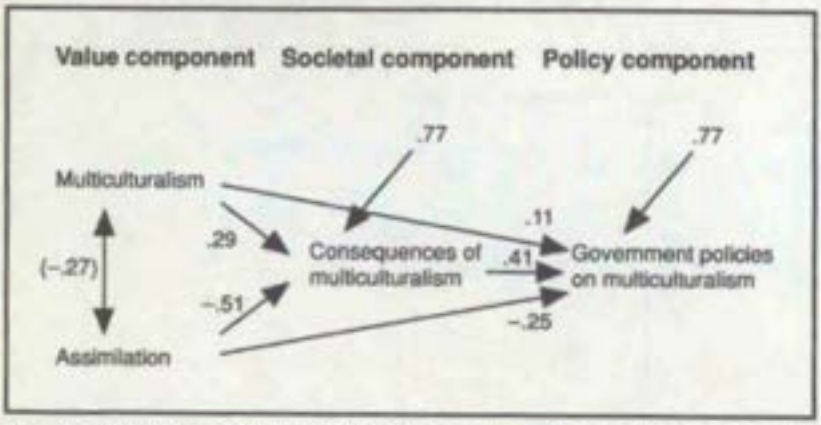
**Figure 2**
**The distribution of public opinion on values about intergroup relations, the societal consequences of multiculturalism, and government policies on multiculturalism.**




See text and appendix for details.

Source: as for Table 1.

**Figure 3**
**Path model showing the factors influencing support for government policies on multiculturalism**




Figures are standardised regression coefficients, except for the path between multiculturalism and assimilation, which is a correlation coefficient. See text for details of the construction and composition of the scales.

Source: as for Table 1.

political elites and which are not. Multiculturalism is not debated by political elites and has widespread acceptance among elite members, whatever their political persuasion; indeed, at no time since the early 1970s has the policy ever been debated by elites. It is not surprising, therefore, that citizens follow this lead. Assimilation, however, was elite policy in the 1960s and before, and immigration, though not on the political agenda, has surfaced periodically as an issue. Since voters take their political cues from the information and arguments that filter through to them, elite opinion towards these issues largely explain the patterns of public opinion apparent in Figure 2.

There is an implicit causal sequence between these values and opinions, with values representing long-term, enduring views, which influence the short and medium-term beliefs that individuals hold; these attitudes, in turn, have certain behavioural consequences. We would predict, then, that attitudes towards government policies would be more likely to be influenced by views about the consequences of multiculturalism for society than by the values that individuals hold. In turn, opinions about the consequences of multiculturalism should be firmly fixed within the values that individuals hold. These predictions are confirmed by the path model in Figure 3, which measures the relationship between these

variables, estimated within the hypothesised causal sequence.

Judged by the size of the coefficients, opinions about the consequences of multiculturalism are nearly twice as important as assimilation in predicting the policy component (standardised coefficient of .41, as against –.24 for assimilation) and more than three times as important as multiculturalism. In turn, the societal component is firmly based in values, more so in assimilation than in multiculturalism. Indeed, judged overall, assimilation is about twice as important as multiculturalism in determining the opinions that individuals hold, which in turn is mainly a reflection of its greater divisiveness within Australian society. As hypothesised, policies on multiculturalism are most influenced by opinions about the societal consequences of multiculturalism.

## V. SOCIAL BASES OF SUPPORT

The consensual approach of political elites to the issue of multiculturalism and ethnic identity in Australian society and the consequently high levels of popular support for them, suggest that there should be few differences in the social groups that support them. In other words, they should have little relationship to the social structure of Australian society. An alternative hypothesis is that although these issues have not been party politicised, there has been debate about them involving interest groups and the mass media; this debate should lead individuals to form a diversity of opinions, as well as leading to differences in support for multiculturalism among particular social groups. Moreover, the transition from assimilationist policies to multiculturalism suggests some degree of generational differences in support.

Table 4 addresses the question of which social groups are more likely to endorse these attitudes than others, using ordinary least squares regression techniques to predict support for these attitudes from two groups of variables, broadly defined as ascribed and attained characteristics. The figures in the table are standardised regression coefficients, which show the relative weight of a particular variable in predicting the attitude in question. For example, in the first equation (predicting assimilation) higher education is about twice as important as being from a non-English speaking (NES) country in predicting support for assimilation (coefficients of –.20 and –.10, respectively).[10]

10. Since the coefficients are negative, support for assimilation is therefore more likely among those lacking higher education and those who are not NESB, in practice Australian born.

**Table 4**
**The social bases of attitudes towards multiculturalism[a]**

(Standardised regression coefficients)

| (All zero to one unless otherwise stated) | Assimilation | Multiculturalism | Consequences of multiculturalism | Multicultural policy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ascribed characteristics** | | | | |
| Gender (male = 1) | .07** | .02 | –.06* | –.07* |
| Age (years) | .18** | .04 | –.03 | –.10** |
| ESB | –.02 | .09** | .07** | .09** |
| NESB | –.10** | .15** | .30** | .24** |
| **Socioeconomic status** | | | | |
| Schooling (years) | .00 | –.04 | .02 | .01 |
| Higher education | –.20** | .05 | .18** | .16** |
| Non-manual worker | –.18** | .12** | .10** | .08** |
| Family income ($100s per week) | –.03 | .12** | .04 | –.04 |
| Variance explained | .14 | .06 | .14 | .10 |

** p<.01, * <.05, both two-tailed.

a Ordinary least squares regression showing standardised regression coefficients predicting the probability of support for the four attitude scales. See text and Appendix for details of the construction and composition of scales.

Source: as for Table 1.

In general, women and younger people are more likely to support the policies and consequences of multiculturalism, and to oppose assimilationist views. There is also a strong effect for birthplace, as we would expect; indeed, in all but one of the models, being NESB is the most important predictor overall. Higher socioeconomic status, reflected in higher education, working in a non-manual occupation, and possessing a higher family income, all promote attitudes which are favourable to multiculturalism. The individual's level of schooling has no significant impact; all of the educational effect is taken up by whether or not the person has gained a higher education.

These results indicate that the social groups which support multiculturalism are not likely to be the ones which support assimilation; for example, of the eight explanatory variables, in all but one case

the sign is reversed between the two equations. There is also considerable consistency in the social support that is given to the three pro-multicultural attitudes, despite their differing levels of general support within the population. The extent to which these attitudes are fixed within the social structure should not, however, be over-emphasised: the percentage of the variance explained by each model does not exceed 14 per cent, suggesting that 86 per cent of the variance remains unexplained, and in one equation, predicting multiculturalism itself, the proportion of the variance explained drops to 6 per cent.

The findings confirm the generational influence on attitudes, reflected in age. Older respondents, who grew up in the 1950s or before when the assimilation of immigrants was government policy, remain more supportive of it, as well as more likely to oppose multicultural policies. They are not, however, either more or less likely to support the principle of multiculturalism. The relationship between socioeconomic status and assimilation/multiculturalism gives some support to economic theories of ethnic conflict. In general, these theories see ethnic conflict as more likely to occur among groups that possess the fewest resources within the society; in practice, ethnicity or race become surrogates for conflicts over economic power (Banton, 1983; Gordon, 1975).

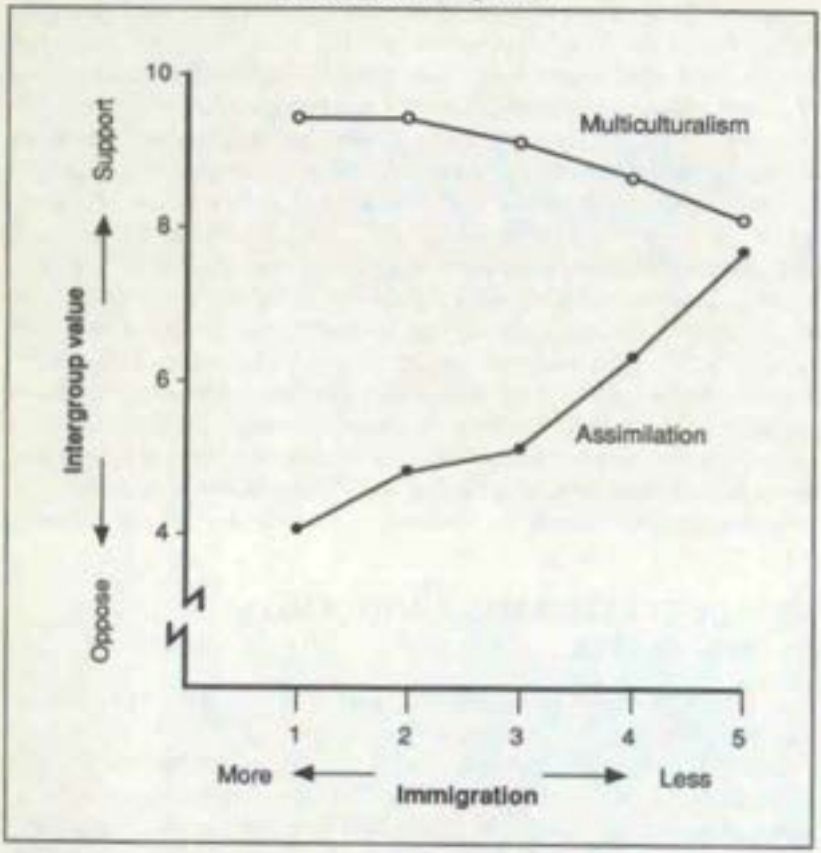
## VI. MULTICULTURALISM AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

How far voters are motivated in their political behaviour by the opinions that they hold has generated considerable controversy. *The American Voter* study (Campbell et al., 1960) argued that voters were ill-equipped to take decisions based on their opinions because in most important respects they lacked the necessary information processing skills. However, in *The Responsible Electorate*, V.O. Key (1966) challenged this interpretation and argued that voters responded to whatever choices and alternatives were placed before them, much in the same way as an echo chamber operates. If voters did not make judgments on issues, Key argued that this was because they were not presented with proper options: the fault lay with the party system and with party elites, not with the electorate.

Although much of this debate has been concerned with question wordings in the different surveys and other complex methodological issues, there is some evidence from the research that issues have increased in importance in the United States, Britain and some other advanced industrial democracies (Nie, Verba & Petrocik, 1976; Rose &

**Figure 4**

**Levels of support for multiculturalism and assimilation by levels of immigration**




The immigration question was: 'Please tell me if you think that the government should accept more or less migrants into Australia? Should the government . . . accept a lot more / accept some more / stay about the same / accept some less / accept a lot less?'

Source: as for Table 1.

McAllister, 1990). This trend, it is argued, has been a consequence of the political turbulence of the 1960s which was caused by, among other things, the conflict over the Vietnam War. In other words, greater discussion of issues at the elite level has enhanced popular awareness of them. This has been demonstrated by Pomper (1972), who found that political issues were most important in determining the vote in the 1964 United States presidential election. He attributed this finding to

the polarised presidential contest between Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater, which stimulated voters' awareness of the issues.

The consensus within the Australian political elite not to make ethnic issues in general and multiculturalism in particular a partisan issue should mean that these issues have few consequences for political behaviour. Since voters are neither educated by elites into the various arguments nor presented with firm choices based on these arguments, they should have little information or knowledge on which to make objective decisions. According to Key's analogy of the echo chamber, since elites are not communicating information to the voters, voters will not return an echo.

There are, however, two potential caveats to this interpretation of the weak influence of ethnic issues on political behaviour. First, as was noted in the previous section, although parties have not placed multiculturalism on their political agendas, interest groups and the mass media have raised them periodically, arguing for and against and questioning the assumptions upon which government policy is based. In some respects at least, this will have provided the electorate with basic information about the arguments and enabled them to link these opinions with other political views. Second, even though an issue is not debated within the realm of party politics, other related issues that are debated may have some indirect bearing on its level of politicisation. Although immigration is also not on the elite agenda, it is an emotive issue for many individuals and it has surfaced periodically, though briefly, in party politics (McAllister, 1993). As a result, we might presume that it has had some influence on opinions about multiculturalism.

Based on the relationship between attitudes towards immigration and intergroup values, values should provide an important predictor of individual attitudes towards immigration. This is confirmed by Figure 4, which shows the level of support for the two values by opinions on the desired level of immigrants permitted to enter Australia. However, only assimilation is important in discriminating between opinions on immigration, and its influence is largely restricted to those who favour more immigration or who opt for the current level of immigration. The data suggest, then, that there is only a modest linkage between views about the level of immigration and multiculturalism, but that there is a more significant linkage with attitudes for and against assimilation.[11]

11. This is confirmed by correlations, which produce an $r$ of $-.30$ between reduce immigration and multiculturalism, and an $r$ of $.44$ between immigration and assimilation.

**Table 5**
**Attitudes to multiculturalism, immigration and party support[a]**

| | Labor | | Lib-Nat | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Est | (SE) | Est | (SE) |
| **Intergroup relations** | | | | |
| Assimilation | .02 | (.04) | –.02 | (.02) |
| Multiculturalism | –.10* | (.04) | .10* | (.04) |
| **Consequences of multiculturalism** | .24* | (.03) | –.24* | (.04) |
| **Government policies on multiculturalism** | .08* | (.04) | –.08* | (.04) |
| **Reduce immigration** | .14* | (.06) | –.14* | (.03) |
| Intercept | 4.17 | | 5.83 | |
| SE | .33 | | .33 | |
| Chi-squared | 890.6 | (882) | 1053.4 | (1048) |

** Coefficient more than twice the standard error.

a Logistic regression analyses showing parameter estimates and standard errors predicting party support (N = 1,054).

Source: as for Table 1.

Based on the modest relationship between immigration and values concerning intergroup relations, as well as the lack of party political debate on the issues, public opinion on multiculturalism and immigration should have few consequences for party support. This hypothesis is generally supported by the results in Table 5, which shows parameter estimates and standard errors from a logistic regression analysis using the five attitude scales to predict partisanship.[12] Two points are apparent from the table.[13] First, there is a consistent measure of partisanship evident in the patterns of support. In every case, the signs of the independent variables are reversed in the two equations. Moreover, contrary to expectations, four of the five variables — the exception is assimilation — are statistically significant predictors of party support.

The second point is that, contrary to expectations, Labor supporters are more likely to oppose multiculturalism: in other words, they are

12. The survey included a question on partisanship but not vote. There were too few Australian Democrat partisans (n = 47) to permit reliable analysis.

13. The models were also estimated controlling for social structure, using the variables defined in Table 4. The addition of these variables made little difference to the results presented, and for parsimony they are excluded from the final analysis.

at odds with the policies of their own party, devised by the Whitlam Labor Government and supported by the post-1983 Hawke and Keating Labor Governments. They are, however, significantly more likely to endorse the positive societal consequences of multiculturalism — an apparently contradictory opinion. The explanation for this contradiction rests in the interpretation of multiculturalism. Whereas the more practical aspects of multiculturalism — the societal component, expressed in positive aspects such as tourism and trade and negative aspects such as urban ethnic concentration — are more easily linked to party political positions, the more enduring values about intergroup relations are not. Labor partisans can therefore oppose multiculturalism and at the same time support its social consequences.

The major conclusion is that attitudes towards multiculturalism have comparatively weak links to party politics. In addition, Labor partisans adopt an apparently contradictory stance on multiculturalism. Both of these findings are a logical consequence of the lack of party debate on the issue. Since the major political parties have an informal consensus not to raise these issues in political debate, voters gain little information or cues about the respective party positions; in Key's terms, the echo that is returned is distinctly muted and confused.

## VII. CONCLUSION

As it is used in everyday language, multiculturalism is a vague concept. At one level, it denotes a certain relationship between racial and ethnic groups within a society, while at another level, it implies a set of policy prescriptions. As Moodley (1983:320) puts it, the term 'encompasses a range of notions of heritage, cultural diversity, recreation and entertainment activities, cultural centres, and an entire way of life with fundamental institutional structures'. Given the ambiguity concerning the exact meaning of multiculturalism, it is perhaps not surprising that there is considerable popular confusion about its meaning and consequences.

This paper has argued that political elites place on the political agenda only those issues that they feel will not threaten party survival or undermine regime stability. Ethnic issues fail on both of these counts: not only are they as likely to divide party supporters and undermine the parties' social bases, potentially they represent a serious risk to the survival of the regime. It is therefore hardly surprising that the issue has never been formally debated within party politics. To all intents and purposes, there is an elite consensus to ensure that

multiculturalism and related ethnic issues do not reach the political agenda. At the electoral level, this consensus has worked well. The handful of minor parties and candidates that have contested State and federal elections on anti-immigration and anti-multicultural platforms have received derisory votes.[14]

Several examples exist of party elites avoiding debate on the issue. After Geoffrey Blainey raised the issue of Asian immigration in 1984, Michael Hodgman was removed from the shadow immigration portfolio when it appeared he would take up the issues raised by Blainey. Similarly, when it looked as if Stewart West, then immigration minister, would also enter the debate in opposition to Blainey, he was replaced by Chris Hurford (Jupp, 1988:176). Similar elite moves to stifle conflict followed the publication of the 1988 Report of the Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies, chaired by Dr Stephen Fitzgerald. In their formal policy pronouncements, parties have similarly avoided generating controversy on the issue since multiculturalism became formal government policy in 1973 (McAllister & Moore, 1991a).

A major consequence of this lack of elite debate about multiculturalism is that the electorate has little coherent and structured opinion on the issue. Since the issue is raised only within the mass media and by concerned individuals and interest groups, voters do not receive any summary of the arguments. Instead, multiculturalism represents a valence issue within public opinion, receiving overwhelming popular support but without any clear popular understanding of what the term implies. The only opposition to the concept is incorporated within the notion of assimilation, which although largely independent from multiculturalism within the popular mind, implies a set of policies that are diametrically opposed to multiculturalism. Another finding is that multiculturalism has relatively few implications for political behaviour in Australia. Elections have not been won or lost on multiculturalism; nor do they look like being won or lost on the issue in the future.

---

14. For example, in the 1990 federal election, Australians Against Further Immigration contested one House of Representatives seat and entered two candidates in Victoria for the Senate. The House of Representatives candidate (standing against Andrew Peacock in Kooyong) received 1.24 per cent of the first preference vote, while the two Senate candidates gained 0.16 per cent and 0.01 per cent of the vote, respectively.

## Appendix: Data and Methods

The data are the 1988–89 Issues in Multicultural Australia Survey. The survey was a random sample of individuals aged 15 years and over within four populations: the general population (n=1552); persons born in non-English speaking countries (n=986); recently arrived immigrants (n=1141); and the second generation (n=823). Full details of the sample and weighting procedures can be found in Social Science Data Archives (1989:1–7). The analyses reported here use the general population and NESB samples. In addition, the partisanship analyses reported in Table 5 and Figure 3 are restricted to those who are eligible to vote.

The scales identified in the factor analyses in Tables 1 to 3 were constructed by first scoring missing values to the mean of each item, dividing each item by its standard deviation (to ensure that no single item dominated the scale), and then summing the items respecting signs. The scales were then transformed into zero to 10 scales. In Figure 2, these scales are recoded to five categories in order to replicate the coding of the original items from which they were formed.

Table 4 relies on multiple regression analysis, which assumes that the relationships between the variables are linear and additive (Hanushek & Jackson, 1977). All variables are scored either zero or one unless otherwise noted. Since both sets of results report only standardised coefficients, means are not shown. Table 5 presents logistic regression estimates. This method is used instead of OLS regression because the dependent variables are dichotomous. These analyses are restricted to respondents who reported that they were registered to vote. The independent variables are the same as those used in previous analyses, except that immigration is scored on a five-point scale.

# Multiculturalism:
# A New Zealand Perspective

**Richard Mulgan** was formerly Professor of Political Studies at the University of Auckland and Professor of Classics at the University of Otago. He has written extensively on Greek political theory. More recently he has turned his attention to New Zealand politics, and to questions of biculturalism. His books include *Aristotle's Political Theory* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977) and *Maori, Pakeha and Democracy* (Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1989).

# Multiculturalism: A New Zealand Perspective

Richard Mulgan

## I. INTRODUCTION

In this essay I use the example of New Zealand to illustrate the point that issues of multiculturalism and related concepts such as ethnicity and national identity are not local to one country but worldwide, arising out of what is increasingly an international *lingua franca* of political theory. The particular form in which these issues appear may be unique to each country. However, though the particular constellation of ethnic and cultural conflict varies from country to country, the general issues to which these conflicts give rise and the general language that we use to describe them and deal with them are universal. It is important that each country realises the extent to which its problems are shared with others. By very definition, issues of ethnicity, culture and identity arouse an intensity of self-centred emotion. There is a danger, particularly evident in my own country, which has recently been obsessed with these issues, to see our own situation as unique and to assume that one must find a solution to it which is 'indigenous', if I may use a word that is highly tendentious in this context. Indeed those such as myself, who have tried to place the arguments in an international context, may become the objects of resentment. We may be seen, in some sense, as attempting to defuse or explain away a local conflict and to belittle the genuine grievances that give rise to it. Nonetheless, there can be no escape from the fact that much of the language of debate is not indigenous but international in origin. It requires an analysis which is similarly international in focus, though not overlooking factors of local variation where they are relevant.

## II. MULTICULTURALISM AND THE NATION STATE

I begin with two general points about the movement for multiculturalism. The first is that multiculturalism, the need to give political recognition to ethnic diversity, is but one aspect of a general tension between the values of culture and ethnicity, and the principles of liberal democracy as practised within sovereign states. Cultural values tend to be collective and particularistic: they emphasise the values of

the group seen as unique. Democratic values tend to be individualistic and universal, based on legalistic principles such as universal human rights. It is trite, but true, that the end of the cold war has revealed, more starkly than ever, the potential for conflict between, on the one hand, social units based upon ethnicity and cultural boundaries, and on the other hand, sovereign states based upon liberal-democratic principles. For over a century, Western political thought has held out the possibility of marrying these two sets of values through the sovereign nation state, a political unit in which each ethnic group or nation would find self-determination and each citizen would achieve equal rights. This became the ideal first of European peoples, then of non-European peoples colonised by them. It became internationally validated in the official ideology of the United Nations. But nationalism, though it had some successes, holds out, or appears to hold out, an almost impossible goal. Its ideal is a political community that recognises the legitimate authority of the sovereign power of the state within particular territorial boundaries, which boundaries also define a particular people, ethnic group and culture. It is extremely difficult to name any state that contains one and only one culture. Given that the number of internationally recognised sovereign states is nearly 200 we must accept the failure of the culturally homogeneous nation state as a utopian ideal. Moreover, like most utopian ideals in the history of political thought, it is one that has the capacity to provoke evil and violence.

The question of national boundaries, in the sense of where the boundaries between sovereign states are to be drawn, is perhaps beyond the immediate scope of our chosen topic. Multiculturalism takes the political community and its boundaries as given and then considers the existence of many cultures within the political community with those boundaries. But it is worth remembering that political boundaries themselves are theoretically precarious, because they are not readily derivable from any clear principle. They do not, as we have suggested, readily follow, nor can they readily be made to follow, any unambiguous ethnic boundaries. Nor, it should be remembered, can they be derived from any clear liberal-democratic principle. Democracy takes the particular 'people' for granted. As the history of Ireland, for instance, most neatly reveals, there is no unambiguously democratic way of deciding the issue of boundaries. One of the broader issues raised by a discussion such as this is the general effect of policies of multiculturalism, and of other policies that give political prominence to cultural differences and ethnic diversity within the state, on the

viability of the nation state itself. As political scientists are increasingly recognising, the nation state is of decreasing importance as a source and focus of political power. The internationalisation of politics, particularly the internationalisation of economic imperatives, has severely weakened the capacity of sovereign states to take independent action. At the same time, centrifugal forces within the state, including ethnic forces, are weakening allegiance to the state. This has an effect on the agenda of national politics. If the authority of the sovereign state is in doubt, so too is its capacity to deliver benefits for its citizens, particularly those benefits that involve significant redistribution or expenditure on shared institutions and services. This is of obvious concern to social democrats who have looked to the state as an agent of reform and redistribution based on a shared sense of community and citizenship. The recent erosion of support in modern democracies for social democratic policies and the welfare state is often attributed to the apparent economic failure of Keynesianism and the internationalisation of economic activity. But the ethnic revival, of which multiculturalism and other related concepts are a part, may also be a powerful factor in this process.

## III. MULTICULTURALISM AND DEMOCRACY

The second general point is that multiculturalism is an offshoot of democratic principles. Multiculturalism is the policy that minority cultures should be recognised and protected within the framework of the modern democratic state. It is essentially a policy on the part of governments rather than simply a description of the existence of several cultures. Its ethical origins lie in democratic concern for equality and the need to prevent minorities from being swamped by majorities. Multiculturalism thus arises out of the experience of minorities who find themselves disadvantaged. It is a species of the general policy of affirmative action whereby groups who are disadvantaged may seek positive discrimination in their favour as a means of achieving equality with other groups. If members of a particular ethnic group are seen to be disproportionately underpaid, unemployed, or prone to sickness, then an explanation is found in terms of the destruction of their cultural values and social support, that is, the destruction of their ethnic identity. In New Zealand, for instance, the main government policy towards the Maori minority was for many years a policy of assimilation, an assumption that Maori would join the mainstream, Western-style society and achieve equally within it. However, this did not eventuate. Maori underachievement was

masked by the postwar boom but became increasingly evident as the boom diminished. Explanation for the failure was sought in theories of cultural alienation and dislocation.

The government is therefore called on to protect the minority culture as a means of reducing and eventually eliminating social disadvantage. Without such disadvantage, it is implied, there would be no need for the policy. Conversely, for ethnic groups who are relatively successful in terms of generally recognised goals and values, multiculturalism is less of an issue. Groups such as the New Zealand Dutch or Chinese may wish to preserve certain unique cultural traditions. But they usually have the resources to do this unaided. At the same time, if they wish to be assimilated into the majority culture then, in a sense, that is their choice. It is not seen as a form of illegitimate subordination because it is not accompanied by socio-economic disadvantage.

This disadvantage, it should be noted, is usually defined in terms of the generally valued goals of society even if these goals are Western in orientation and the culture of those disadvantaged is non-Western, at least in origin. From time to time, Maori advocates who reject Western values have also rejected Western criteria of success, such as being employed and earning a good income. But, on the whole, such material disadvantage is recognised as a disadvantage for Maori as well as for those of European origin.

The implication appears to be that the fundamental injustice done to non-Western ethnic minorities is not so much their own cultural deprivation as their lack of achievement in Western terms. That is, cultural deprivation is not so much an evil in itself as a means towards another evil. This does not mean that value is not placed in the culture itself for its own sake. But the clinching argument is the fact of socio-economic disadvantage. The link between the two is that lack of cultural identity leads to lack of self esteem and therefore lack of educational achievement and lack of access to other types of socio-economic status and success. The precise remedies are matters of dispute. Some ethnic elites put all the emphasis on cultural restoration. Others, however, argue that this drive for cultural recovery should not be at the expense of achievement and training within the skills needed to succeed in Western-style society. They accuse members of the ethnic elites of ignoring the value they have themselves derived from Western education and of trying to impose a romantic view of their original culture that will in fact operate as a barrier to the advancement of other less advantaged members of this group. The arguments based

on motivation and self-esteem seem relatively well-founded. What may be more contentious is how such self-esteem is to be built, whether it should be in the school at the expense of other types of learning, or whether it should be largely extracurricular. These are questions for educationalists and other social researchers and need not be pursued further at this point.

## IV. ETHNIC DIVERSITY ON NEW ZEALAND

I now turn to look at the particular nature of ethnic diversity in New Zealand. Though the general essence of multiculturalism is the same worldwide — the requirement for protection of minority cultures — the particular forms it takes vary depending on the cultural and ethnic composition of particular communities. In the first place, the number of minority cultures may differ — they may be a large number, such as in Australia or Canada or the United States. Or there may be effectively only two or three which matter, such as in Malaysia or Fiji, where the issue is very much the balance between a few clearly identifiable and well established cultures. Second, the ethnic minorities may vary according to their historical relationship with the dominant culture. Some minorities are recent immigrants and face the need to work out a relationship with a dominant culture that is of long standing in that country (such as Hispanics in North America or Asians in Australasia). Other minorities may be coeval with the dominant culture, like the French in Canada. Yet other minority cultures may predate the dominant culture, for instance, the so-called 'indigenous' minorities in countries dominated by colonial settlers and their descendants. These types of minority face different pressures and their situations may require different treatment. In particular, as I will be arguing, there is a difference between the situation and needs of so-called indigenous people and other minorities. This makes for complications in those societies such as Australia and New Zealand, as well as the US and Canada, where there are both indigenous and migrant minorities. Policies of multiculturalism may face difficulties because they prescribe a similar treatment for minorities of different types with different problems. The particular interest of New Zealand in this group of ex-colonial countries is that its most significant minority both historically and numerically is the indigenous people, the Maori (Pearson, 1991). Other countries have indigenous peoples and indigenous movements; but the most salient ethnic minorities are migrant, not indigenous. In New Zealand, it is the other way round: the indigenous minority is salient and the migrant minorities peripheral. This is the result of a

**Table 1**

**Ethnic origins of New Zealand's population (1991 Census)**

| One ethnic group | Total | Per cent |
|---|---|---|
| New Zealand European | 2 658 738 | 79.46 |
| New Zealand Maori | 323 493 | 9.67 |
| Samoan | 68 565 | 2.05 |
| Chinese | 37 689 | 1.13 |
| Indian | 26 979 | 0.81 |
| Cook Island Maori | 26 925 | 0.80 |
| Tongan | 18 264 | 0.55 |
| Niuean | 9 429 | 0.28 |
| Tokelauan | 2 802 | 0.08 |
| Fijian | 2 760 | 0.08 |
| Other Pacific | 1 413 | 0.04 |
| Other single ethnic groups | 25 926 | 0.77 |
| **Total one ethnic group** | **3 202 983** | **95.73** |
| **Two or more ethnic groups** | **Total** | **Per cent** |
| New Zealand European with Maori | 93 987 | 2.81 |
| New Zealand European with Pacific Island | 16 602 | 0.49 |
| New Zealand Maori with Pacific Island | 9 075 | 0.27 |
| Other combinations of two or more ethnic groups | 23 169 | 0.69 |
| **Total two or more ethnic groups** | **142 833** | **4.27** |
| **Not specified** | **28 113** | |
| **Total population** | **3 373 929** | **100.00** |

Source: *1991 New Zealand Census of Population and dwellings – National Summary*, Department of Statistics, 1992.

Percentiles shown exclude those not specifying ethnicity.

All percentiles are rounded to two decimal places.

number of factors: the size of the Maori population at the time of colonisation and their level of agricultural cultivation, plus a concentration, until very recently, on encouraging settlers from one source only, the British Isles. Maori make up roughly 10 per cent of the population (the percentages vary with the question asked) while the great bulk of the population are 'Pakeha' of European origin (see Table 1).

There are other Polynesian groups, principally Samoans and Tongans, who suffer social and economic disadvantages similar to those faced by the Maori and who have also been the target of ethnic-equity policies. In addition, a few European communities have kept

their identity, particularly 'Dalmatians' or Yugoslavs and the Dutch who maintain certain cultural traditions and annual festivities but who have not looked to the state for policies of protection or of equity. There are also long-standing Asian minorities, Chinese and Indians, who have largely kept to themselves. In recent years they have been joined by considerable numbers of Asian immigrants, Vietnamese, Cambodians and, particularly, Hong Kong Chinese as well as Fiji-Indians.

But, in spite of these not insignificant migrant groups, the main ethnic division in New Zealand and the main source of ethnic attention has been that between the pre-colonial Maori people and the European settlers, largely British in origin, and their descendants, the so-called 'Pakeha'. European control of New Zealand derives from the Treaty of Waitangi of 1840. Under the treaty, the Maori tribes accepted the sovereignty of Queen Victoria in return for protection of their chieftainship and control over lands, fisheries and forests. They were also guaranteed the rights and privileges of British subjects. The context in which this treaty was signed was one in which the Maori tribes retained effective ownership and control over large parts of the country. British settlement was confined to a number of ports and the more immediately habitable land nearby. The agreement was seen as an arrangement of mutual advantage whereby the Maori achieved some guarantee of protection from international invasion and some assurance that the behaviour of the British settlers in the settlers' enclaves would be properly controlled. The British gained control of the process of land sales and kept the French out. But the balance did not last. The pressure of numbers from the settlers, and their conviction that land was there to be developed and that European civilisation had benefits for the Maori that the Maori were fully capable of adopting, led inexorably to eventual extension of sovereignty over the whole country and the loss of Maori independence. The Treaty of Waitangi was declared a 'legal nullity' and an official doctrine of assimilation was imposed. The future for all New Zealanders was to be part of a single people in a single nation.

This future, as already indicated, did not eventuate. Maori disadvantage, in terms of the indicators of social and economic success, stubbornly remained. Maori leaders were therefore receptive to the ideas of cultural assertiveness that accompanied the worldwide ethnic revival. Their plight was similar to many other groups who appeared to have been forced to exchange their cultural heritage for a position of social inferiority. Opposition to racial discrimination, to the

prejudice of white against black, as expressed particularly in the black civil-rights movements in the US, was picked up and rearticulated in New Zealand.

## V. THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Maori leaders were also receptive to the analysis and objectives of the international indigenous people's movement. This movement began in North America but Maori (and Australian Aboriginal) intellectuals were involved at an early stage. The indigenous peoples' movement was a combination of the assumptions of the ethnic revival, with its move to protect cultural minorities, and the principles of the anti-colonial movement. The agenda of indigenous peoples was not simply to maintain cultural independence within the sovereign state and to resist assimilation into the majority culture. They also challenged the legitimacy of that state and that majority culture. They found an affinity with other peoples who had been colonised, most of whom had been able to throw off the political yoke (if not the economic yoke) of colonialism by gaining political independence and the right of self-determination within their own lands. Indigenous peoples suffered the misfortune that the colonising powers had not just brought a colonial administrative class who could be repatriated. They had also brought settlers who had come to stay. Moreover, the settlers and their descendants now outnumbered the original inhabitants and their descendants. The democratic principles of 'one person, one vote' majority rule therefore could not be turned against the European settlers, as they were, for example, in southern Africa.

To the normal requirements of cultural independence, such as language, religion, cultural practices and so on, the indigenous peoples added two further rights which if fully implemented would require the creation of a new political unit — land and self-determination. The paradox of the indigenous peoples' movement, the frequent cause of misunderstanding, is that they appear to claim what they admit themselves to be impossible. As colonised peoples they claim what all other colonised peoples have claimed, namely self-determination in their own territory. Yet by their very plight, as minorities within sovereign political communities from which there is no effective escape into separatism, these ideals are unattainable. There is therefore continuous tension between their claim for self-determination and the necessary refusal of central authorities to allow such a degree of independence. Governments may be willing to allow something short of full self-determination, such as relative autonomy,

local self-government and so on. But in terms of the language of international jurisprudence in which the debate is largely conducted, they cannot admit the right of self-determination without ceding their own authority (Mulgan, 1989a).

If the claims of indigenous peoples threaten the legitimacy of the state, they also threaten the legitimacy of democratic principles, particularly the principle of equal citizenship and one person one vote. That indigenous peoples should mistrust democracy is understandable. In many cases the principles of equality and majoritarianism have been used against them and they have little reason to see the regimes that support these principles as benevolent. There could be some sympathy for constitutional attempts to incorporate the principle of indigenousness ahead of democratic equality, as in Fiji.

In these two respects, then, the claims of indigenous minorities may impose a challenge that is not posed by normal claims of multiculturalism. The latter merely assert the right of each member of society to the same degree, an equal degree, of cultural identity. Indigenous peoples, on the other hand, reject the legitimacy of the state. They also see no reason to accept equal citizenship with the illegitimate invader. These issues have been the subject of considerable political debate within New Zealand in the last ten years also. Maori demands, particularly those of Maori so called 'radicals', have been seeking to reassert their lost independence in a way that, if taken literally, threatens the status and rights of other New Zealanders. For instance, Maori nationalists have sought to reassert the Maori autonomy guaranteed by the Treaty of Waitangi in a way that would recover their former lands and political institutions. There have been demands for a separate legal system dealing with all disputes concerning Maori according to Maori traditions and values. Constitutionally, the Maori Council (a statutory body representing Maori interests) has recommended the establishment of an upper house or Senate with equal Maori and non-Maori representation. This would be the supreme decision making body; 'one people, one vote' is said to be a fairer, less loaded principle than 'one person, one vote'.

In many cases, however, the rhetoric of the demands has been more disturbing than the actual claims being made. Most Maori leaders, particularly the so-called 'moderates', have been seeking ways in which Maori grievances about land and about cultural destruction could be met within a framework that protected principles of equal citizenship. The Waitangi Tribunal, which was set up to examine grievances arising out of breaches of the Treaty, has developed a new

and subtle Treaty jurisprudence based on 'principles' of the Treaty rather than the literal meaning of the Treaty as understood by the signatories in 1840. The Treaty is being reinterpreted as a living constitutional document in ways very similar to those used by the US Supreme Court with the US Constitution. The Tribunal accepts the legitimacy of the present constitution and the rights of all private property holders. All that is at stake is the possibility of restoration of Crown properties or state compensation for past injustice. Furthermore, the recommended levels of restitution and compensation are set not in terms of the ongoing value of the property but in terms of the present and future need of Maoris. The implicit principles are those of democratic equality and affirmative action. If there were no disadvantage there would be no claim. Where favoured treatment is sought it is in terms of appropriate action to remedy an inequality.

Again, most Maoris would accept the principle of 'one person one vote' and would simply be looking for proportionate equality within the existing system. When the principle of indigenous supremacy was proclaimed by the Rabuka coups in Fiji, a few extreme Maori radicals supported what they saw as a proper reassertion of ancestral indigenous rights. But most distanced themselves from it, and were clearly not happy about supporting a set of principles that deprived other Fijians, particularly the Fiji-Indians, of their democratic rights and treated them as second-class citizens.

## VI. BICULTURALISM VS MULTICULTURALISM

In this sense the treatment being sought by and for Maoris may be seen as essentially the same as that sought under normal principles of multiculturalism. It comes within the general principles of democracy and human rights recognised by a sovereign state itself recognised as legitimate. But even if the principles being applied to Maori are those that are common to other forms of multiculturalism, it is still true that Maori are being treated differently from other ethnic minorities in New Zealand. Maori are being singled out as particularly deserving of recognition and their culture as particularly in need of protection. They are seen as warranting a degree of recognition and protection, albeit within the framework of the democratic state, that is not accorded to other minority cultures. This appears, for instance, in the concentration on the Treaty as a bilateral partnership between the Maori and the British crown that is now classed as a partnership between the Maori and the Pakeha peoples. This is why many New Zealanders, both Maori and Pakeha, adopted the term 'biculturalism' as a contrast to

'multiculturalism' (Sharp, 1990:205–15), to signal the fact that there were two cultures and peoples of particular importance, the Pakeha and the Maori, and, by implication, that there was one minority of particular importance. Maori opinion, and much Pakeha opinion, would still insist that the Maori are different from other ethnic minorities. The difference is based partly on their greater salience but also on the fact of their originality. This originality is taken to justify a degree of recognition that is not necessarily to be given to other cultural minorities, advantaged or disadvantaged.

Does this involve giving excessive weight to originality and compromising the equal rights of other citizens? Or can it be accommodated within the general framework of equal democratic rights? Two arguments may be given to justify the special recognition of Maori within a democratic framework. In the first place, all countries that practice democratic equality and supposedly offer protection to all people and therefore all cultures nonetheless have certain cultural traditions that predominate in their public institutions — British culture in Britain, French in France and so on. No one suggests that all democracies should recognise all languages as official languages or should not entrench the language and customs of their predominant people and traditions. Political communities cannot survive without historical traditions and should therefore be expected to reflect and reinforce these traditions. It therefore seems justifiable that the public practices of a community can be conducted in the culture or cultures that have, as it were, historical pride of place in that community. Other cultures can be guaranteed the right of survival and protection without necessarily being given the right of full public incorporation.

This degree of cultural discrimination may gain justification if the members of the other excluded cultures still retain close cultural links with their home country. The culture of the Maori people is more closely related to the history and cultural identity of New Zealand than is that of other migrant groups. Other Polynesians, for instance, have their identity firmly based elsewhere, in Samoa, Tonga and so on. They at least have a home that they still recognise and to which they may still go, if only temporarily (as was well demonstrated recently by the Western Samoan rugby team). For the Maori there is no other home than New Zealand and there is therefore a not unreasonable expectation that this home and its institutions should reflect that fact for them. For this reason, a policy of biculturalism may be justifiable on the ground that the public institutions of the country should reflect not

only the dominant Pakeha culture but also that of the Maori, in matters such as names, languages, symbols and so on.

A second reason for giving preferential treatment to the problems of the Maori minority in comparison with others depends on their being more severely disadvantaged than others. Though one may dispute some of the actual claims made by and on behalf of indigenous peoples, they do face unique difficulties. Indigenous peoples are dispossessed in what is historically their own country. If they are to retain a sense of cultural identity they must inevitably retain a sense and historical awareness of this dispossession. Indeed this is the prime event in their cultural history. They are then faced with the problem of coming to terms with this dominant culture and succeeding within the goals that this culture prescribes. They are psychologically in a very different and more difficult situation than those who have come, or those whose ancestors came, from somewhere else and of their own accord, in pursuit of what the new country had to offer. The promise may not always be forthcoming but at least in most cases the need to live in the new country is one that was chosen. There are possibly some exceptions in the case of forced migration, such as the American blacks originally imported as slaves or the indentured Indian labourers in Fiji and elsewhere. But, on the whole, migrant groups do not suffer the dispossession of the conquered.

Biculturalism is therefore justifiable as a policy or set of policies to incorporate Maori as an integral part of the public culture of New Zealand and to recognise the particular difficulties faced by the Maori as descendants of a conquered people. However, the concept of biculturalism is not free of difficulty. Preferring biculturalism to multiculturalism does have the effect of marginalising the interests and concerns of other minorities. This point is frequently made by Pakeha wishing to pursue assimilationist goals. If special recognition should be given to the Maori, its language its culture, then why should not the same recognition be due to Islanders, Chinese, Indians, Yugoslavs and so on? Special recognition is thus reduced to absurdity. This has been a favourite rhetorical tactic of those resisting Maori claims. Multiculturalism becomes a doctrine that could be used to deny the Maori any special position and was effectively used not so much to claim protection for many minorities but rather, more often, to deny protection for any. It is one reason why multiculturalism became suspect among Maori and liberal Pakeha (Mulgan, 1989b:7–10).

However, this resistance to multiculturalism and concentration on the relationship between Maori and Pakeha also becomes a source of

genuine resentment for the other minorities. In particular, there is the implication that those who are neither Maori nor Pakeha are somehow legitimately excluded from the public life of the community. This brings real problems of allegiance and commitment to the political community itself and to the rights and duties expected of citizens. Those who are guaranteed no more than the right to go their own way and are not allowed to be publicly incorporated, may be forgiven for feeling distant from the political community and resistant to claims it may make upon them. This is particularly true at a time when the government is encouraging large-scale immigration from Asia. It is not surprising that one of the most potent conflicts on ethnic lines emerging in New Zealand is between Maori and Asians. One of New Zealand's leading Maori intellectuals, Dr Ranginui Walker, has recently attacked the government's immigration program on the ground that it is bringing people to New Zealand who have no commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. This is true. Most Chinese immigrants, for instance, do not have the same historical experience of colonialism as either Europeans or Polynesians. New migrants from Britain or Holland, say, may personally have no experience of living in a colonial or post-colonial society. Nonetheless, through membership of a people and culture that was involved in colonial conquest, they may be sympathetic to the enterprise of extirpating the wrongs of a colonial past and of building a post-colonial future. Immigrants who do not share this history will naturally be uninterested in this enterprise.

Not only is this a potential source of racial conflict but it brings up the wider theme of the potential conflict between ethnic diversity and the social-democratic state with which we began. The encouragement of cultural diversity within the state may weaken the state's hold on the allegiance of citizens. The social-democratic state, the state which takes an active role in income redistribution and the provision of shared welfare services, depends on a citizenry that has a relatively high degree of mutual sympathy and solidarity. It is not coincidental that the highest degree of commitment to the welfare state has been in countries such as Scandinavia or postwar Britain, noted for a high degree of social cohesion and cultural homogeneity. Conversely, any diminution of this sense of unity, for instance through the encouragement of ethnic diversity, may be expected to undermine support for the more extensive state. New Zealand, for instance, was once noted for its cultural homogeneity as well as its commitment to state welfare. Cultural homogeneity, however, is now denounced as an ideological cloak for the policy of assimilation and

the cultural destruction of the Maori. Similarly, the belief that we are all New Zealanders or all one people is denounced as racist. At the same time, governments from both major parties have begun to roll back the welfare state.

Though the Maori have been major beneficiaries of state welfare, many Maori leaders are putting their faith in greater economic independence from the state (Fleras, 1991). They seek to use claims under the Waitangi Tribunal to gain economic resources that they can then control for themselves. Given the genuinely demoralising effects of state dependence on aboriginal peoples in other countries such as North America and Australia, this may be a sensible strategy. In addition, other minorities, as we have seen, have been discouraged by the official policy of biculturalism from having any strong sense of identity with the political community. This must also weaken their sense of common citizenship. In the last decade New Zealand has surprised the world by its rapid conversion to the ideology of the free market and its abandonment of what was once seen as a strong tradition of state economic management and state welfare. It is one of the arguments of this paper that the worldwide movement in favour of ethnic diversity within states, represented, for instance, by policies of multiculturalism, has been part of the worldwide disillusionment with social democracy and with the state generally. In New Zealand's case, the particular form taken by the movement for ethnic diversity, a movement for independence on the part of the aboriginal Maoris and relative public neglect of the claims of other minorities, may be seen as particularly corrosive of allegiance to shared public institutions. This may, in turn, be part of the reason for the particular strength of the market-liberal reaction in our country. But this can only be speculation.

# Cultural Diversity: Reflections on the Malaysian Experience

**Dr Chandra Muzaffar** is a political scientist and author who was, until 1992, President of Aliran — a Malaysian social movement whose aim is 'to raise social consciousness and encourage social action that will lead to social justice'. He is actively involved in human-rights work and inter-faith dialogues at the international level. His books include *Challenges and Choices in Malaysian Politics and Society* (Aliran, Penang, 1989), and *Issues of the Mahathir Years* (Aliran, Penang, 1988).

# Cultural Diversity: Reflections on the Malaysian Experience

Chandra Muzaffar

## I. INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is, without any doubt, one of the most multicultural societies in the world. It is characterised by several ethnic dichotomies.

- The indigenous/non-indigenous dichotomy. The indigenous population is about 58 per cent of the total. Both the indigenous and the non-indigenous populations consist of different sub-communities. The biggest minority is the Chinese minority — 32 per cent of the total population — and the Indian community comprises a further 9 per cent.
- The Muslim/non-Muslim dichotomy. This coincides to some extent with the indigenous/non-indigenous dichotomy. The Muslim population constitutes about 55 per cent of the total population. The non-Muslim segment again is made up of numerous religious communities: Buddhists, Confucianists, Taoists, Hindus, Christians, Animists and so on.
- The Malay/non-Malay dichotomy. Here again there is a slight difference with the Muslim/Non-Muslim and the indigenous/non-indigenous dichotomies. The Malay population makes up about 52 per cent of the total population, with the remaining 48 per cent Non-Malays. Once again, it is clear that there is a very wide variety of communities.
- Significantly, all these dichotomies coincide with economic and geographical dichotomies to some degree. The indigenous population is to a great extent a rural (and agricultural) population. Moreover, one can even argue that there are more poor people amongst the indigenous communities than amongst the non-indigenous communities; but there are also very poor people amongst the non-indigenous communities.

The two questions that I would like to discuss here relate to this very diverse society. First, after 34 years of political independence, Malaysia has indisputably done better than many other ethnically divided societies. It has had only one major riot since independence. One cannot easily compare multi-ethnic societies because there are invariably differences in texture; but nonetheless the contrast with Sri Lanka,

for example, is striking. Sri Lanka has a population of about 17 million, which is not very different from Malaysia's. There is also a certain degree of diversity in Sri Lanka, which has a large Tamil minority. Yet Sri Lanka, unlike Malaysia, has had continuous ethnic problems and major breakdowns; indeed, it now suffers continuous ethnic violence. Alternatively, one might compare Malaysia to the Lebanon. The first series of riots in Lebanon began around the same time as Malaysia's in 1969 (when about 300 Malaysians were killed). Or compare Malaysia to Northern Ireland, where the present round of violence also began in 1969; and the Irish problem, which is long standing, has not been resolved. But Malaysia has somehow managed to come out of its difficulties, and has enjoyed a certain degree of success in managing its multi-ethnic society. I would like to probe that to see what sorts of lessons Malaysia can offer to culturally diverse societies elsewhere.

The second question that I would like to probe is this: in spite of this apparent harmony in Malaysia or at least the absence of major ethnic breakdowns, ethnic uneasiness undoubtedly exists in Malaysia. I would not use phrases like 'ethnic tension', which refer to difficulties that erupt from time to time. My concern is rather that there is a general ethnic uneasiness in the country, which suggests that there are very serious problems; and I would like to probe these too. Why do we have this ethnic uneasiness? Why is it that I would be very reluctant to hold up Malaysia as a model of a successful multicultural society? Now these are two things that I would like to probe.

## II. REASONS FOR MALAYSIA'S SUCCESS

Why has Malaysia enjoyed this relative success? I would like to suggest five major reasons.

### The Economy

The first reason is the economy. The Malaysian economy has worked fairly well and that has helped to keep the communities together. Otherwise it would not have been possible to undertake what has undoubtedly been one of the world's most far-reaching affirmative action programs without disrupting and destroying the economy. Affirmative action has been pursued by the Malaysian government since 1957. Special protection for the indigenous communities extends into various areas, including education, the public services, licences and businesses, and land. This has been accomplished partly because we have had an expanding economy, which has experienced magnificent growth rates for a very long time. Over the last three and a half

decades, for instance, we have maintained an average growth rate of about 7.5 per cent. We have also been lucky in another respect: we have had a very good natural-resource base. If we were producing tea for the world market, our situation may have been different. But we happened to be producing rubber and tin at a time when these were needed in the world market. In the mid–1970s, when the prices of both rubber and tin began to decline, we discovered oil and became one of the major oil producers in South-East Asia. So we have been lucky in that sense. But we have had more than just luck; we have also had good economic management. We did not go for a centralised command economy, which has turned out to be a disaster for so many Third World countries. Instead, we chose what has come to be called a 'mixed economy'. Growth with equity, encouraging free-market forces but at the same time making sure that the state plays the role in achieving the goals of distributive justice in both economic and social terms; a massive rural-development program that helped the indigenous communities; education and health services; and so on. So while we had growth, it was possible to take care of the legitimate needs and wants of the non-indigenous communities and at the same time provide for the indigenous communities. This was possible only because the economy was expanding.

**The Politics of Accommodation**

The second factor in Malaysia's success has been the politics of accommodation, which the ruling coalition has pursued since 1957. In fact, it goes back to 1948 when the British were still in Malaysia. This is a very complex point that needs some explanation. Malaysia evolved from a Malay polity. It has a Malay political background in the sense that there were Malay Sultans, a Malay community, a Malay society. Before the British period there was in a sense a Malay nation, even if not a single nation state. There were, in fact, a number of Malay kingdoms and that is the important historical background of the country.

The emergence of Malaysia's present huge non-indigenous population is largely a product of colonialism. In many post-colonial societies that became multi-ethnic under the pressure of colonialism, the accommodation of the non-indigenous elements in the political structure has been a very serious problem. But in Malaysia we managed to overcome that problem to some extent. There was, it seems to me, a very liberal accommodation of the non-indigenous elements from 1948 onwards through a grant of citizenship that is

almost unparalleled and unprecedented. More than two million Chinese and Indians — and at that time many of them were first-generation migrants — were accommodated within the political system on very generous terms. That, to my mind, is a very, very important factor, because it meant that the Malay nation through its elite was transforming itself from a nation into a community among communities. This is something that, unfortunately, many non-Malay analysts ignore. Political accommodation is something that very few indigenous elites have undertaken, whether in Asia or elsewhere.

Now this, I think, is something that helped to reduce ethnic tensions. The non-indigenous communities had a political role, which meant that their economic position, their cultural rights, and so on, were safeguarded in a political structure in which they had a direct part to play. In 1959, for instance, when the first parliamentary elections occurred, something like a third of the seats contested were actually non-Malay majority seats; and almost a third of the members of the cabinet came from the non-indigenous communities. This has increased slowly over time; though in the last ten years or so it has stagnated.

Political accommodation has been a very important factor explaining the apparent ethnic harmony that reigns in Malaysia. The political structure itself was transformed as a result of this accommodation because the indigenous Malay leadership felt that it was in their interest. This accommodative attitude has several reasons. It may have had something to do with the desire for independence itself because the British made it very clear that unless an attempt was made to work out a viable relationship between the communities they would not give independence to the country. It also had something to do with the way in which the elites from the different communities understood each other. They shared a similar background and were able to work with one another; and the pre-independence elections all resulted in huge victories for the ruling coalition that the first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, had evolved. That gave them a sense of confidence that they could rule, that they could administer, that they were not threatened.

Another factor was the socio-economic background of the dominant element within the Malay elite. This argument, which I have made in various places, is sometimes received with tremendous hostility because it is a very reactionary argument. If the group that led the independence movement in Malaysia from the Malay community — that is, the indigenous community — had come from one of the other

socio-economic classes; if they had not been aristocrats; if they had not been administrators who were right at the apex of Malay society; if they had been, let us say, businesspeople or professionals, they would have seen the accommodation of the non-indigenous communities as undesirable, especially since the non-indigenous communities were economically stronger. They had more business people, they had more professionals, they had a middle class. The Malay community did not have a middle class — which would have viewed the accommodation of a non-Malay middle class through citizenship and political rights as a threat to their position. But aristocrats do not see the accommodation of businesspeople and professionals as a threat to their position. They could afford to be generous and magnanimous. It is, I think, a very important factor that the group that led the independence movement came from an 'administocratic' background (a term that I coined many years ago to describe this combination of aristocrats and administrators). They were very accommodative towards the non-indigenous people.

**Cultural Diversity**

A third factor explaining the apparent harmony in the country is the sort of cultural diversity that exists at the street level. Even though there is an official cultural policy that refers to an indigenous culture with Islam as its guideline, there is tremendous cultural diversity in the country. Various languages are used, though Malay is the sole official and national language. Other languages are in fact recognised in national educational policy. Chinese and Tamil primary schools are part of the national education system, and it is possible to study both these languages up to university level. There is also great linguistic diversity. Many non-Malay languages, including English, are used very widely; for example, Chinese businesses often use Chinese signboards. There has been no attempt to get rid of these things, though once in a while certain shrill voices are heard demanding a more nationalistic cultural policy. But on the whole the ruling elite has pursued a middle-of-the-road cultural policy.

**Democratic Dissent**

A fourth factor which would explain this apparent harmony is the scope that has existed since independence for democratic dissent. In a multi-ethnic society dissent is bound to be linked to ethnic issues. If there had been space for democratic dissent right from the beginning, the political situation might have been somewhat different; but

Malaysia has always maintained some sort of democratic space at least since independence. Both the major opposition forces in Malaysia are ethnic parties and they articulate the grievances of their respective communities; and this airing of grievances helps legitimise the political system and so helps maintain an ethnically diverse society on an even keel. We have what I have often described as a fettered democracy: a democracy that is shackled but nevertheless offers space and scope for the articulation of ethnic grievances.

**The Inescapable Multicultural Reality**

The fifth and final factor concerns a reality of which all Malaysians are aware. Their everyday lives suggest to them that they cannot run away from the reality of a multicultural society. This reality is very different from multiculturalism in Australia. Malaysia, as I demonstrated at the start of this essay, is multi-ethnic at every level. When 5 per cent, or even 10 per cent, of the population does not fit into the homogeneous pattern of the society it is different. In Malaysia, multiculturalism is the reality that we are reminded of almost every day, and this has a tremendous impact on the political culture of Malaysia. Every community is aware of its limits, of the fact that there are certain things that one cannot do. Malays would not want a political system that is entirely Malay because they know it is just not on — there would be trouble. The Chinese and the Indians and all the other minorities also know that they cannot have a totally non-Malay political system or economic system; aspirations have to be limited. The psychology that has emerged in Malaysia to cope with this reality is very similar to the way in which the Japanese, especially residents of Tokyo, view earthquakes. Just as the Japanese fear earthquakes, so Malaysians fear ethnic-quakes. To avoid triggering an ethnic-quake, everyone holds back in public discussions and public articulation of grievances. It is a disadvantage, of course, that certain things do not get articulated at all; but there are also advantages. It creates a culture in which people are a little more tolerant of one another's position and know that they must be mindful of certain things all the while.

## III. MALAYSIA'S DIFFICULTIES

In spite of its success, Malaysia's multi-ethnic society is uneasy. What has given rise to this uneasiness? One way of examining the problem, which raises very complex issues, is to look at the specific grievances and at some of the prejudices that the different communities have, and how this affects ethnic ties.

The Malay community is the most important of the indigenous communities. The Malays as a whole — I am generalising here but I think there is some legitimacy in what I say — greatly fear that in spite of everything, in spite of their political pre-eminence, in spite of the fact that they have managed to retain their indigenous position within the Malaysian polity, a community that is economically weaker (under a capitalist system) may lose out in the long run. Indeed, with the tremendous emphasis upon capitalist growth and development in the last few years, they fear is that since many indigenous people are still poor, and since Malay representation in commerce, industry, and the professions has not yet achieved its target, they really will lose out.

Malays also feel that the other communities — and especially the Chinese community — somehow do not want to integrate completely into Malaysian society, since they insist on keeping their culture distinct and their language separate from the national language, the national education system and so on. These grievances and fears are articulated. And since the Chinese are seen as economically stronger, Malays feel that if they are not careful they could be swamped.

The great grievance of the Chinese about the present political system is that it gives pre-eminence to the Malay community, and this pre-eminence is not going to change. This means that, politically, the Chinese will always be a second-class community. In the economy, the powerful affirmative action program may go on for ever, since it has been initiated by the majority indigenous community on its own behalf (most such programs are initiated by the dominant community on behalf of the aggrieved one). The non-indigenous communities wonder what this means in the long run, for their children and grandchildren. As well, many non-Malays — non-indigenous people — fear that, even if they tried to integrate (many of them are fluent in the Malay language, for instance) they would still not be accepted as truly Malaysian. In other words, there would not be total, emotional and psychological acceptance of the non-indigenous people.

Are these fears entirely justified? In the case of the Malay community, if their fear of competition had been expressed 20 years ago it might have had some basis, since at that time the Malay community was really very weak. But since then, although they have not achieved certain targets, the economic position of the Malay community as a whole and of other indigenous groups has improved tremendously. They have a stake in commerce, in industry and in the professions. This is true in both absolute and percentage terms. To take just one example, in 1970 Malays constituted 5 per cent of the total

number of lawyers; today they comprise 28 per cent of the total. Similar improvements have occurred in other areas too; and besides, when all is said and done, the political structure is capable of addressing the grievances of the Malay community and of the other indigenous communities.

As for the non-Malays and their fear of second-class citizenship, the most important point to make is that while this fear cannot be dismissed lightly, from the very start all the Malay leaders, including prime ministers and other important ministers, have consistently maintained that the affirmative action program is based upon socio-economic considerations and nothing else. Once the socio-economic situation changes, they do not want those handicaps in the economy because they see them as a slur upon the community. This has been repeated over and over again by Malay leaders: what they want is justice for everyone, but in the interim they are forced into a situation where they have to provide some sort of protection to the Malay community and the other indigenous communities. This was repeated as recently as November 1990 by the Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir, in the presence of the delegates of his own ruling party. Of course one can argue that in spite of all this assurance things could be different; and this is what I would like to explore in the last part of this essay.

## IV. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Things could be different if two things happen in our political and economic system. First, if there is an intense political struggle for political power within or between the major communities, I can see political elites using ethnic issues to mobilise support. It has happened in other places. In India, for example, very extreme positions have been adopted — religious positions, for instance — even though there is no commitment to religion as such. It is done because it brings votes. Much the same thing happens in Malaysia when positions are adopted in the search for electoral support. In a competitive electoral system the temptation is there all the time. So there is the danger that, in spite of all the assurances and all the limitations and constraints that people recognise in the political system, things could get out of hand because of political competition.

The second point is that although the economy has been doing well, there is no guarantee it will continue to do well. And there are fundamental weaknesses in the Malaysian economy. Its industrialisation program, for instance, is driven by an international export market, not by the domestic market, which makes it very different from those

of South Korea and Taiwan. Whether it will succeed in the long run we do not know, though at the moment it seems to be doing well. Yet if the economy does not do well then ethnic problems may well become more serious in the country.

These are the two types of situations that threaten inter-ethnic peace in Malaysia. But there is also a long term trend that may pose a threat to ethnic harmony in Malaysia. Over the decades there has been a change in the attitudes that people have towards one another. In the final analysis, this is the most important thing — how people relate to one another at the street level. I have seen a change taking place, partly as a result of modernisation and industrialisation. Some of the values and virtues that have helped multi-ethnic Malaysia all along can still be found amongst all communities where people care for one another, where there is a feeling of openness. One can go to a village made up of one community, and get help from those people, and yet find that, in another district where nearly everyone comes from another community, people are still open, kind, and gracious. But these values are slowly being eroded as we industrialise and modernise. I am not saying that these are things that we should not do; but these are things that we should reflect upon, for they affect the texture, the colouring, and ultimately the prospects, of a multi-ethnic society.

# From the Mosaic to the Melting Pot: Cross-National Reflections on Multiculturalism

**Ramesh Thakur** is Professor of International Studies and Director of Asian Studies at the University of Otago. He has written on many topics ranging from Indian politics to New Zealand defence policy and international peace-keeping. His books include *In Defence of New Zealand: Foreign Policy Choices in the Nuclear Age* (Westview, London, 1984), *International Peacekeeping in Lebanon: United Nations Authority and Multinational Force* (Westview, Boulder, 1987), and *Soviet Relations with India and Vietnam* (co-authored with Carl Thayer, Macmillan, London, 1992).

# From the Mosaic to the Melting Pot: Cross-National Reflections on Multiculturalism

Ramesh Thakur

## I. INTRODUCTION

A discussion of multiculturalism can be guided by intellectual engagement, emotional commitment or political correctness. Since my comments in this essay are essentially a series of personal reflections, I would like to begin with a few personal sketches.

Multiculturalism came on the agenda of public policy in Western societies in the 1970s. I left India in 1971, and have lived since then in Canada, Fiji and New Zealand. I was born into Brahminical elegance in India: as they say in India, top caste, top class, top family, top school and, inevitably, top university. As I was already an adult when I left India, my individual identity had a fundamentally social definition. Arrived in Canada in 1971, my youthful vitality absorbed the shocks of traversing the vast distances across cultures and becoming a highly visible minority in a country dedicated to preserving a multicultural identity. The mosaic ethic was constantly cited to differentiate Canada from the assimilationist society to the south. From Canada I moved for two years to a teaching post in Fiji, which had its own distinctive approach to the appropriate balance between the two major constituent cultures. In 1980, finally, I moved once more to the University of Otago in New Zealand, where I remain.

I met and married an Australian fellow-student in Canada, so Australia is my nation-in-law. We have two children, one born in Canada, the second in Fiji. The four members of my family have been born in four different countries. So we live in a fifth in order to ensure that there is a level playing field of emotional identification for the family as a whole. My family then is the quintessential modern Commonwealth family. My views on multiculturalism have been determined by the range and diversity of my family identities. For example, we simply did not fit into any of the several well-defined categories in Fiji: Fiji-Fijians, Fiji-Indians, Europeans, expatriates. This had an omnipresent influence on our lifestyles, and was one factor in the decision to seek an early exit from the University of the South Pacific.

## II. MEANINGS OF MULTICULTURALISM

The statement that 'Country X is a multicultural society' can be both descriptive and evaluative. The accuracy of the description can be checked empirically without too much difficulty, for it is a straightforward task of investigating the demographic composition (ethnic, linguistic, religious) of a country's population mix. In this sense, the Soviet Union was always a multicultural society. The dynamism and vigour of a multicultural society are reflected in or may be gauged by a country's art, literature, education and other cultural indicators. Culture is embedded in and transmitted through language, and the number of people able to speak different languages is a key indicator of multiculturalism in a country.

In the prevailing values in most Western societies, the statement goes beyond simple description. The treatment of minorities has become a measure of democracy. The statement therefore entails an additional normative component: the notion that multiculturalism is a good thing, that multicultural diversity should be fostered and encouraged, and that it is a proper task of government to seek such a goal. That is to say, the statement connotes a set of public policies in respect of the range of cultural heritages of the population mix. Multiculturalism is not a problem to be solved but an asset to be developed. 'Culture' embraces a wide range of phenomena. When many different cultures come together within one society, there is need for goodwill and mutual accommodation. It is the task of the state to devise and sustain a framework where different cultures can thrive without restriction or harassment. Minority communities therefore should be preserved, their cohesion maintained, and their diversity recognised in law consistent with a unitary legal system.

Linking the two components, the descriptive attribute can be investigated even in regard to the major institutions of a country. To what extent has multiculturalism penetrated the political, legal, bureaucratic, journalistic institutions, and to what extent are minority cultures marginalised in these institutions? The answer to this question is an accurate indicator of the attitudes and practices of the dominant groups in a society. On this measure, for example, Canada is fully bicultural but some distance away from being multicultural. (The official formula is 'multiculturalism in a bilingual framework'.)

It is possible to construct a fourfold typology for the underlying orientations to multiculturalism (Foster & Stockley, 1988:23):

- assimilative-universal, assuming a shared value system and unconcerned with culture-specific experiences of migrants. During the large-scale postwar immigration to Australia, the dominant attitude seemed to have been that the new Australians should be grateful for the opportunity to have been allowed to come to Australia and should not expect any special provisions to ease the process of adjustment after arrival. There is a denial of migrant problems;
- assimilative-ethnic targeted, assuming common needs but recognising the need for and providing such facilitating services as interpreters and multilingual information. With a significantly diversified base of migrant intake, the old ideas of assimilation give way to an appreciation of the need to integrate the new arrivals into mainstream society. There is a perception of migrants as problems;
- pluralist, where general institutions develop cultural sensitivity and culture-specific services. Perceptions of what constitutes mainstream society are altered, and there is general acceptance that it is possible simultaneously to be an 'ethnic' and a 'mainstreamer'. There is an affirmation of cultural pluralism as a virtue, and migrants are seen as an integral part of national society;
- ethnic, with services and agencies being geared solely towards a particular ethnic group.

## III. THE RUSHDIE AFFAIR

Most theoretical discourse is abstract and formal. It is relatively rare for formal discussions among political theorists to resemble the terms of the public debate on a major subject of controversy. In this essay, I want to lead into the mosaic and melting-pot alternatives to multiculturalism through discussions of the Rushdie affair and of affirmative action.

*The Satanic Verses* is a rich, powerful and complex novel. Among other things, Salman Rushdie agonises over the impossibility of the quest for identity by the migrant. The novel chronicles the immigrant's journey to a new land, his experiences of self-alienation, the joys and anguish of possessing multiple identities. Faith in the religion of birth is broken but not replaced by faith in the dominant religion of the host society. The novel seeks to destroy the dichotomies between heaven and earth, the angel and the devil, good and evil, reality and illusion. Fact blends seamlessly with fantasy. The divine and the profane have no discrete territories but inhabit the same integrated universe.

Among other issues, the controversy surrounding *The Satanic Verses* brought to the fore the question of the proper constitution of a multicultural society, highlighted the tension between Western secularism and Islam, invited debate on whether multicultural diversity should be encouraged and fostered or discouraged and limited in the interest of social homogeneity (an issue discussed in Australia as part of the Blainey debate), and raised the spectre of legal pluralism with different laws for different cultures.

**Group Rights**

In a sense, multiculturalism is an outgrowth of increasing consciousness that the political community is not coterminous with the cultural, and that problems of adjustment need to be addressed where one political community embraces several cultural communities. Political rights may not be distributed equally among group-defined individuals even when in principle they are distributed equally among all citizens. The aborigine is not functionally equal to the average Australian even when under the same legal and political framework. The disjunction between individuals' membership of discrete political and cultural communities attracts the interest of political theorists because of a tension between conceptions of how to treat individuals justly as persons *qua* members of cultural communities and as persons *qua* citizens.

Many non-Western societies have difficulty conceiving of an individual identity outside its cultural context. Westerners can have difficulty coming to terms with the idea that the self is inextricably embedded in its social environment. While all Western countries are committed today to protecting the rights of minorities, they are less united on the question of whether the objects of protection should be individuals or groups. France and the United States dislike group rights, and their laws tend to be notably reticent about groups. Canada by contrast aims to be a mosaic of different groups. The concept of group rights is incorporated in Western (and other) legal systems also in laws which prohibit incitement to racial hatred. A statement that Jews or Indians are devious, cheats and liars would not just perpetuate negative stereotypes, but also lower the social standing of the two communities and demean them in the eyes of others. Hence the desire to ban such communal libel.

The paradox of individual versus collective rights can be illustrated by the right to self-determination. Individuals exercise the right; the outcome of the exercise is to determine the fate of collectivities. Similarly, the right of freedom of religion is simultaneously an indi-

vidual right — the right of any one person to choose between religions; and a collective right — the right of the members of any religion to maintain the beliefs, practices and symbols of their religion. The individual's right would be an empty concept if unaccompanied by the right of the group as a collective entity, unless we mean to reduce it to the right to be a closet worshipper (Van Dyke, 1982:27). Freedom of religion is a communal right. A Muslim in India has the right to believe in and practice Islam unfettered by the state; the Muslims in India have the corresponding right to maintain the Islamic community: neither is complete without the other.

**Legal Pluralism**

The Rushdie affair threw up four different conceptions of the equal treatment in law in a multi-religious society:

- the orthodox view that the state may not persecute or suppress any religion but remains free to reflect the dominant religion in society (blasphemy against the Christian faith, and only against the Christian faith, is illegal);
- the notion that all religions should be equally protected by the law (blasphemy against any religion should be banned);
- the belief that all religions should be left equally unprotected by the law (the blasphemy law should be repealed);
- the legal equivalent of affirmative action: anti-discriminatory legislation seeks to provide special protection to women and minorities because they are perceived to be under special threat. Similarly, if a particular religion should be under exceptional threat in a given political or social climate, then extraordinary measures of protection for it would be justified too (Parekh, 1990a:703).

Legal pluralism had in fact been given effect in British law already. For example, under the Motorcycle Crash Helmets Act 1976, Sikhs are excused from wearing crash helmets if they wear turbans as required by their religion. But the Sikh example seems consistent with and evidence of a unitary system of law that shows sensitivity and flexibility in dealing with differing beliefs, mores and values. In other words, it is possible to reconcile the demands of legal uniformity and cultural diversity without parallel systems of law. When the principle of equality is extrapolated from individuals to groups, then under certain circumstances equality requires differential treatment rather than uniformity. It is a question of striking the right balance.

The initial anger of British Muslims at *The Satanic Verses* gained potency when Ayatollah Khomeini issued a *fatwa* condemning Rushdie to death. Mainstream British opinion reacted with hostility, insisting that free speech was a cherished and non-negotiable element of British society; that the terms of engagement required immigrants to consent to abide by the host society's norms, laws and values; and that Muslims who could not live comfortably with the traditions of their host society should emigrate to countries more congenial to their intolerance. The Muslims responded with the claim that they were prepared to respect British laws and authority, but not to the point of suppressing their own identity in order to conform totally to the British way of life.

In reality as in the novel, the custodians of absolute truth rose up in defence of the divine nature of truth as revealed via the prophet. The status of truth is not easily investigated in religious matters (Mendus, 1990). But belief in such truth was held crucial to the identity or self-definition of Muslims living in Britain (and elsewhere in the West). An assault on beliefs, therefore, became on attack on their persons.

This is a dangerous game to play. One of the most explosive issues in India's secular and multi-ethnic society is the controversy surrounding the mosque in Ayodhya (the city of Lord Rama), which allegedly displaced an earlier temple on the same site more than four centuries ago. Hindu zealots destroyed the mosque and wanted to build another temple; the less fanatical among them would have removed the mosque to another site but build a temple there and nowhere else. I have heard Hindu fundamentalist leaders insist that the actual historical record is irrelevant. Religion is a matter of faith and belief; Hindus believe that a temple to Rama stood originally on the site; this belief gave extraconstitutional sanction to their program. The continuing existence of the mosque on a site so sacred to Hindus, they argued, was a continuing assault on every Hindu personality. Not surprisingly, Muslim leaders in India were not as easily swayed by Hindu fundamentalist appeal solely to faith. (In contemporary newspeak, the Hindu program for building a temple is justified on grounds of maintaining national unity and integration.)

Both the Ayodhya controversy and the Rushdie affair demonstrate the difficulty of basing public rules in a plural society on religion. In a society characterised by moral and religious diversity — that is to say, in a multicultural society — legal restrictions must be grounded in reasons that everyone can share. The force of religiously based arguments will be rejected by adherents of competing faiths as well as by atheists. But the faithful are not prevented from recognising the

validity of arguments grounded in secularism: hence the imbalance in the recognition of religious and non-religious values in the public realm of multicultural societies (Jones, 1990:690).

*The Satanic Verses* may have offended Muslims; but no believer was thereby prevented from practising the faith. 'Freedom of religion' means the freedom to live and worship according to one's religious beliefs. Freedom of expression is functionally meaningless if it does not include the freedom to offend. If it is inoffensive, then it does not need safeguarding. Equality is the right to be critical of anyone without discrimination on grounds of race, creed or gender. Multiculturalism predicated on cultural pluralism should not be confused with cultural relativism.

Equality of religions before the law would require a change in England's blasphemy law. Either its protection should be extended to all religions or it should be repealed. The former option is not quite as simple as might appear at first blush. Structures of belief are not common to all religions. Islam is distinctive in its concept of treason to the universal community of the faithful *(umma)*. How could such a concept be protectively embedded in the laws of a multicultural society? The status quo option will perpetuate a source of discontent. The most equitable outcome would thus seem to be to repeal the law of blasphemy altogether.

For some apologists of the intense Muslim reaction, liberalism is nothing more than a series of continuing compromises: 'that which is yours is yours, that which is mine is open to negotiation'. Liberal apologists of outraged Islamic reaction failed to appreciate the profoundly political nature of much of the outrage. Fundamentalist activists invoke extrapolitical sanctity in their grab for political power most stridently precisely when they fail to make much political headway within existing channels. Religion becomes an instrument of legitimisation and control for the fundamentalists, of delegitimisation and challenge for other contenders for political power. The 'spiritual' leader of Iran was responsible for the torture and deaths of thousands who were opposed to his rule. The more vulnerable the ruling class, the more powerful is fundamentalism as the (de)legitimising ideology. As indicated earlier, in India the Muslims risk being victims of the same phenomenon. Exploiting religious passions to the full, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with close links to Hindu fundamentalists, multiplied its parliamentary representation 40-fold in the 1989 elections, and then increased its share of the seats by 50 per cent again in the 1991 elections to comprise about one-fifth of the Indian Parliament.

Was the Western outrage yet another instance of the double standards of 'Orientalists'? I would like to believe not, even though the depth and spread of the Muslim reaction cannot be explained without reference to a longstanding sense of grievance against the Christian West. If self-appointed inquisitors were to take over the Church and all political power in the West today, then the Western world would react with Rushdie clones and provoke fierce protests from large numbers of outraged citizens. (For the record, Western hypocrisy is one of Rushdie's many targets and brilliantly exposed by him.) European peoples should be proud of their tradition of independent thought and scepticism.

The European in settler society must surely be unique in his or her willingness to elevate all other cultures and denigrate his or her own. Simon Upton is now a minister in New Zealand's Bolger Government. While he was in opposition, he attacked Pakeha liberals for their guilt over their ancestors' policies, which blinded them to the values of achievement and excellence. The 'liberal pakeha guilt', he said, was 'one of the biggest stumbling blocks to race relations'. It offered 'a shallow tolerance' instead of 'moral leadership'. And it responded with intolerance to any challenge to its concept of biculturalism (*Otago Daily Times*, 12 March 1990). The European may not criticise aboriginal or Canadian Indian or Maori culture, but the other has no corresponding restraint of reticence. Feeding on the pervasive and all-enveloping sense of European guilt, the 'indigenous' cultures begin to claim ever-expanding spheres of privilege while nursing real grievances and inventing new ones like theft of radio airwaves. The end result is that privilege and grievance become habits of mind.

A variant of cultural relativism would impose limits on the freedom of expression by proscribing attacks on beliefs that could lead to public disorder. This was the ground on which *The Satanic Verses was* banned in India. This has two deleterious consequences. Practically, it will lead to threats to create disorder by any group which wants to stop anything that it dislikes. Philosophically, it amounts to penalising the victim rather than the perpetrators of disorder. Some at least in the Islamic world showed that they were prepared to kill for the courage of their convictions. The British authorities showed that they were not prepared to prosecute for the courage of theirs. The ferocity of the reaction that *The Satanic Verses* provoked proved to some the diagnosis of Islamic theology that it offered: 'In the East today as in the West of the past, the intellectual route to secularism, democracy, and freedom passes through blasphemy' (Afshari, 1991:114). Amen.

## IV. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Multiculturalism as an ideology has flourished alongside a worldwide resurgence of racial and ethnic identity. It accepts diversity and supports policies of maintaining ethnic identities, values and lifestyles within an overarching framework of common laws and shared institutions. Broadly speaking, in addition to cultural identity, multiculturalism also entails social justice (equality of opportunity and treatment) and economic efficiency (the need to develop each citizen to the fullest potential in order to tap the total human capital of a country). The quest for identity, justice and efficiency has led India into policies of positive discrimination mandated by the Constitution. Many of the issues that are now the subject of passionate debate in the West have been played out for a much longer period (1950 to the present), involving far larger numbers of peoples, in India. As Richard Mulgan's and Chandra Muzaffar's contributions in this volume show, affirmative-action programs are integral components of Malaysian multiculturalism and New Zealand biculturalism as well. The belief underlying affirmative action is that some groups are so far behind in all measurable criteria that their survival and integration into the mainstream of society will not be possible without the government taking an active role to bring them to the same economic, political and social level as the other groups.

It is possible to identify four distinct dimensions of affirmative action:

- protective, where the state strives to achieve equality of protection for all its citizens. The weak and the vulnerable, it is argued, need such protection through legal enactment and enforcement;
- ameliorative, with the goal of achieving equality of opportunity by the state earmarking generous financial outlays for the welfare and development of target groups. Only so can the hitherto disadvantaged be given a realistic base for upward mobility. Ameliorative measures help to rectify injustices of the past. There is no serious opposition in India or among liberal and social democrats elsewhere to protective and ameliorative measures;
- compensatory, motivated by the desire to achieve equality of outcome through the provision of privileged access to education, employment and promotion. Direct state intervention in the major institutions of society is held to be necessary to bring about statistical parity (or proportionality) in educational opportunities, jobs and promotions. Welfare and unemployment benefits are no

substitute for equity and justice; equal treatment of unequal groups produces inequitable outcomes. One does not choose to be born into a culture (although the choice of exit may be available). Members of historically maltreated groups are disadvantaged by circumstances over which they have no control. They should not, therefore, it is argued, have to bear the cost of those disadvantages;

- participative, with the goal of achieving equality of empowerment so that target groups are given increased access to the corridors of power by having seats set aside for them in the major decision-making institutions at various levels. It is argued that lack of empowerment leads to alienation; participative democracy encourages social integration.

**Moral Premises**

The moral premises underlying affirmative action are open to question but, out of political delicacy, rarely debated. In the period immediately after decolonisation, much of the anger against Western cultural imperialism served the useful purpose of helping the colonised to rediscover the past that the coloniser had disfigured, and to reassert indigenous cultural authenticity and dignity. However, the concept of indigenous rights and traditions can also be usurped by corrupt and self-serving indigenous ruling elites partly as a shield against outside criticism directed at universalising minimum human rights. Its more important function may be to cloak the corrupt rule with a mantle of indigenous legitimacy in order to protect it from rising challenges from within. That is, the rise of fundamentalism serves the political function of entrenching the existing ruling elite or empowering a challenger in an internal political struggle.

In the case of the Maoris in New Zealand, the most pressing claim is on grounds of indigenousness. But why should I as a non-indigenous citizen of New Zealand concede any exclusive claims to the Maori?[1] The Maori might well wish to make claims upon the Pakeha on grounds of historic ill-treatment: but this is a universal ground (that is, race- and colour-blind), not confined to Maoris and having no relation to them *qua* indigenes. The point can perhaps be grasped

1. Although, if it came to that, could I make a claim of prior indigenousness on the grounds that India was once part of the super-continent of Gondwanaland before drifting off to the northern hemisphere? This does illustrate an extreme-case absurdity of indigenousness as the validating principle of preferential claims.

more readily by recalling that Malays claim special privileges against other Malaysians based on being the *Bumiputra* (which ironically is a Sanskrit word) or 'sons of the soil'. Similarly, in Fiji the Indians brought over by the British were as much the victims of colonialism as the Fijians. The latter can have no claim therefore against Indian compatriots based on the wrongs committed by Indians as a conquering people. Conversely, non-indigenous people in some countries can claim with lesser or greater validity to have been dispossessed or mistreated in the past as well. In short, what is morally significant is not indigenousness as such, but past injustices. Indigenousness in itself is a morally neutral descriptive category (but not an uncontested one; Mulgan, 1989b).

This is not to suggest that attempts to right historical wrongs are easily defensible. A compensatory principle requires further empirical investigation. Are we to believe that force was not the arbiter of the fate of land-holdings between different individuals or tribes in the pre-European native societies? Why should the winners of earlier wars give up their fruits of victory today? If this principle was to be applied worldwide with no historical boundaries, then we would be in for some considerable upheaval and dispossession and injustice today. The oppressors and the oppressed are all dead. How do asset, income and other transfers between collective sets of living people atone for ill-gotten benefits by one set of dead people taken from another set of dead people? Is guilt collective and hereditary? Are benefits collectivised and inheritable? And what responsibility do I have if my religion has no notion of original sin? The modern-day Robin Hoods want to take from those who caused no harm in order to give to those who suffered none.

It is sometimes asserted but not often demonstrated that the level of poverty correlates positively with the degree of oppression. Nor is it very difficult to show that yesterday's oppressed can become some of today's worst oppressors: think of the Khmer Rouge, or even of Hitler's sense of historical grievance.

An alternative argument is that indigenous minorities deserve special protection because they are more vulnerable than other groups. Their very survival can be determined by choices made by people from outside their community. They therefore need the extra protection of fenced-off jurisdictions in some areas in order to stay masters of their own fate. But now the criterion has altered from indigenousness to vulnerability, requires empirical investigation once again, and could be applied to any group irrespective of indigenousness.

The status of the claim that unequal treatment of American Indians or of Maoris is based in treaty rights is similarly assessable quite independently of indigenousness. It is a matter of the sanctity of contract between the state and any individual or group. Although the difficulty remains perhaps that the Indians and the Maoris negotiated treaties as once-sovereign collectivities, today's immigrants and citizens enter into treaty relationships with the state voluntarily. Even so, contractual obligations are just as incumbent, for example, upon the 'indigenous' governments of Europe in their treatment of 'guest worker' immigrants.

**Assumptions**

The underlying assumptions of affirmative action need systematic and intensive scrutiny. The first and most important is the assumption that discrimination is pervasive, and that it explains social disparities. Has there ever been any society in which the different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups were represented in mathematical proportion at all levels and in all sectors? If such a society can be found or created, will it automatically (not tautologically) be a more just society? A perfectly just society? All the empirical evidence would seem to point in the opposite direction, that correlations between ethnic groups and occupational and income differentiation is the norm, not the exception. Nor is there a necessarily positive correlation between those who wield political power and those who perform well in educational and occupational rankings (Asians in the English-speaking world, Indians in Fiji, Tamils in Sri Lanka).

Discrimination (negative or positive) cannot explain the dominance of Gujaratis in the small-business sectors of overseas Indian communities (East Africa, Fiji, New Zealand). In Fiji at least all the discrimination (leaving aside the Europeans for the moment) has been in favour of the 'indigenous' Fijians — not just since independence in 1970, but since the time of British colonialism. The Indians thrived and prospered in the face of substantial and persistent discrimination against them. An Indian-dominated government (headed by a Fijian) lasted just a couple of months before being overthrown by the military.

The assumption that income disparities generate social conflict is in turn largely untested. If it were true, then the greatest Fijian hostility would have been directed not against Indians, but against Europeans. The same comment would apply to some African countries. If anything, the pattern in these instances is that when the elite in an 'indigenous' group finds itself unable to compete against foreigners

(whether a majority as in Fiji or a minority as in Sri Lanka and Uganda) on equal terms, then the demagogues get into action by mobilising mob sentiment to dispossess the more successful and the better skilled. The most persuasive explanation of the 1987 coups in Fiji is that they amounted to a refusal by the ruling elite to countenance a loss of power at the ballot box: 'Race was used as a vehicle to return to power a group of people for whom power had become an unbreakable habit' (Naidu, 1988).

Even otherwise, just how much, or how well, does 'discrimination' explain differential class and social variables? Controlling for quality of degrees, number and quality of publications, age, and length of employment, I would hypothesise that a Maori (and a woman) in a New Zealand university or public sector department today would have a higher salary and rank than a non-Maori (or man). Attempts to disguise the problem produce odd results: it becomes easier for ethnic students to get first-class degrees in ethnic studies programs than in mainstream ones. But then these are not the most marketable qualifications for getting jobs and advancing rapidly up the career ladder.

The next link in the affirmative-action chain, therefore, is to insist that such qualifications are 'monocultural' determinants of performance and skills, not objective criteria. The focus has shifted from equality of opportunity to equality of outcome, and the slogan now is that 'equality is not the same as equity'. The tribals, untouchables and other backward castes in India have acquired a powerful sense of entitlement independently of the 'tyranny of skills'. If they fail to get jobs because they are unqualified, then the fault lies in the system. If they fail to be promoted because their performance is not up to the mark, then the fault lies in the appraisal system. Even those from among the target group who might have been inclined to aspire to superior skills lose the incentive to do so: why bother with hard work, if there is a job waiting with good promotion prospects without it anyway?

A progressive abandonment of achievement-based criteria of merit and skills in favour of ascriptive attributes of race and ethnicity produces further adverse consequences for the group being discriminated against. Its members begin to withdraw from the qualifications and skills competition, for there is little incentive to stay in the hunt. That is, both the target group and the excluded group perform at lower levels of achievement, and this can only be a net loss to the society as a whole. It is also inadequate preparation for an increasingly

competitive and penetrated world in which political frontiers are merely administrative inconveniences to cross-border trade and other exchanges.

Perhaps the most insidious consequence of affirmative action is its counter-productiveness. State dependency undermines the dignity of a collective entity and retards the realisation of human worth of its individual members. Preferential policies:

- rest on the assumption of superiority in the non-target group — they are so much better than the target group that the latter cannot possibly compete without extra help;
- reinforce the sense of inferiority in target groups — they are held to be incapable of uplifting themselves by their own wit and ability;
- perpetuate their sense of being victims not masters of their own destiny;
- foster the working-class values of solidarity instead of the middle-class values of thrift, hard work, self-improvement and property ownership; and
- keep target groups in ghettos.

Even if — and the preceding paragraphs should suggest that this is not a trivial if — the desirability of affirmative action is accepted, other important questions remain. Should the target groups be selected by ethnic, religious, gender criteria? If yes, then entire social categories are included with no discrimination between the well-off and the economically disadvantaged. Or should affirmative-action criteria of inclusion be based on measures of economic and social deprivation among individuals?

The experience of many countries with affirmative action has not been particularly happy. In no case does it seem to have produced unequivocally beneficial results. In several it has engendered reactions ranging from disquiet to hostility, opposition, divisive litigation, minor convulsions and outright civil war. It can also be shown to be a net cost to society under certain conditions. Consider the case of competitive entry for limited medical admissions at university. On pain of being found to be in breach of the law (or, in Western societies, politically incorrect), the university might set aside 50 per cent of the total of 500 new places for a minority group. Let us also assume for the sake of argument that the failure rate is 10 per cent among the open intake, and 50 per cent among the target group. Thus of the 250 reserved admissions, only 125 will pass, compared to 225 of the other group

who could have passed. That is to say, the restricted group must lose 225 graduates in order for the preferred group to gain 125 graduates. By any mathematical calculation, this is a net welfare loss of 100 graduates to society as a whole.

If the Indian experience is anything to go by, then the perceived loss — and perceptions are more important for political reality than 'objective' truth — is far greater. Typically, the number of students applying for medical places will be ten times (and in exceptional cases perhaps even 100 times) the number of places available. In the case above, without preferential policies only another 250 upper-caste students would have been admitted, of whom only 225 would have graduated. But if the number of upper-caste applicants was 5000 and only 250 were successful, then 4750 of them go away with a totally illogical but socially explosive sense of grievance that they were somehow denied their due by discriminatory policies in favour of the 'downtrodden' coalition. And the process is repeated endlessly in the employment and promotion stakes. Little wonder then that reserved medical-school admissions was the trigger to long-running bloody violence in the state of Gujarat in the mid–1980s.

The pity is that ameliorative resource transfers are less resented and more widely beneficial for the target group. Designed to assure equality of opportunity to disadvantaged groups, they are viewed as levelling the playing field. Compensatory resource transfers, in contrast, are widely perceived as levelling down standards (Hariharan, 1983) and are equally widely resented and ultimately resisted with varying degrees of intensity and violence (Reddy, 1985). Few Indians took the government to court on issues of programs of special educational courses; virtually all the litigation has involved reservations in universities and jobs. The moral seems to be that the method of preferment is critical in mobilising or losing public support. And without public support, any program of affirmative action is doomed to failure.

We should note too the 'structural' continuity in the principle of government apportionment of preferential privileges to select groups: from laws used in previous eras to restrict social and political opportunities to Jews and blacks, to the system of apartheid in South Africa. The element of continuity lies in the belief that the government, knowing best, can set rules that control or supersede the marketplace. Affirmative action to underpin multiculturalism results from the politicisation of sectarian identities. State supported multiculturalism is as capable of imposing the dominant (that is, politically correct) values

of today's society as in an earlier era the state was prepared to sanction the snatching of children from indigenous families in the cause of ensuring that they received a proper Christian upbringing. To paraphrase Pierre Trudeau, a government has no business in the cultural bedrooms of its peoples.

From my experience and knowledge of India, I can identify at least six types of pathological outcomes of positive discrimination policies. All six, I fear, may be replicated in New Zealand.

### The Persistence of Preferential Policies

In all cases, affirmative-action programs are described as temporary expedients: 'affirmative action . . . is a necessary but only a transitional phase in the development of a society. It is not intended to be a permanent feature' (Dube, 1988:96). In India and elsewhere, they in fact outlive their proponents and become a permanent feature of the sociopolitical landscape, even if supposedly limited with constitutionally mandated cut-off dates. The rhetoric of transience is negated by the reality of persistence and proliferation. Such an outcome should not be altogether surprising. Preferential policies create new networks of social exchange that reinforce existing cleavages. As group-based programs permeate the public institutions of a country, they end up institutionalising the very divisions that they are meant to eradicate.

### The Triple Expansion of Preferential Policies

Positive-discrimination policies in India have trebled in scope, embracing additional measures for the same target group, extending positive discrimination to newer sectors of society, and incorporating additional target groups into the programs. Policies justified at inception by reference to unique historical sufferings of the tribals and the untouchables have successively included ever-growing numbers of individuals and groups within their protective umbrellas. Indeed, today the quaint category of 'other backward classes' outnumber the original backward communities of tribals and untouchables. At the same time, their share of reserved quotas has kept going up. And additional institutions and occupations (public and private-sector employment, university admissions, government loans) have come within their purview.

The Kaka Kalelkar Commission had identified 2399 backward castes, comprising 22.5 per cent of the total population, in the early 1950s; the B.P. Mandal Commission managed to find 3743 by the 1970s, representing 75 per cent of the Indian population (Hariharan, 1983).

The backward castes and tribes already had 22.5 per cent of government jobs, parliamentary seats and university admissions reserved for them. The Mandal Commission recommended the incorporation of another 27 per cent into the reserved quota. The state government of Maharashtra rejected the Mandal report because 80 per cent of the state jobs were already fenced off from open competition: 24 per cent were reserved for backward communities, 23 per cent for the poorest people, 10 per cent for other backward classes, 15 per cent for ex-servicemen, 5 per cent for those displaced by development projects, and 3 per cent for the physically disabled (Hariharan, 1983). One is tempted to add that the remaining 20 per cent were probably reserved for political patronage.

After decades of constitutionally sanctioned efforts to protect and promote group preferences, India finds itself in an escalating cycle of expanding numbers of sectarian groups putting forth claims to entitlements. Measures that were viewed as temporary expedients at inception have become self-expanding as well as self-perpetuating. If one were so inclined, then clearly the data would support the contention that positive discrimination, within the terms of its proponents, far from solving the problem, has considerably exacerbated it.

### The Capture of Preferential Policies

An important reason for the persistence of policies of positive discrimination in India has been their utility to the better educated, more articulate and more politically skilled elite among the disadvantaged-as-a-social-category. Within target groups receiving preferential treatment, benefits have been captured disproportionately by the more fortunate at the expense of the less fortunate. The poor generally lack the minimum qualifications for entry into the elite vocations. In the state of Haryana in India, for example, of the 37 different untouchable castes, just one accounted for about three-quarters of all preferential university scholarships (Sowell, 1989:33). Nationally, the proportion of untouchables has increased simultaneously in the elite civil services as well as among landless agricultural labourers. In the United States, the less fortunate blacks have actually retrogressed while a lucky few have gained visible prestige posts (Carter, 1991; Sowell, 1989:33). In other words, the price of advancement by the elite among the so-called disadvantaged is paid not by the privileged but by the poor from among the advantaged and disadvantaged alike. The names of Birlas and Tatas are not likely to figure prominently among the higher-caste victims of positive discrimination taking governments to court over the

injustices being done to them. The Tatas and the Birlas will always be able to look after their own.

Affirmative action based on promoting sectarian interests is self-negating because, for a number of reasons (such as lack of access to information or resources), such programs are captured by those who are privileged rather than disadvantaged. Those who are the real objects of affirmative action end up being trebly disadvantaged. First, their problems continue. Second, the spotlight of public policy shifts away from their problems, for affirmative action by expiating the guilt of the hereditary privileged permits them to ignore the continuing problems with an easier conscience. Third, the conviction grows that the poor surely now deserve to be poor because of indolence or other self-inflicted faults.

Most Indians still support the principle of helping the disadvantaged. But they have begun to revolt against the practice of favouring the already advantaged. People from the constitutionally classified disadvantaged sections of Indian society have made a success of their lives in politics, the professional occupations, and the civil service, without using affirmative-action clauses. Their children now exploit these clauses to protect positions of privilege. Where is the justice in the child of a high caste but impoverished family, with better 'academic' qualifications, being pushed aside to make way for the son of a High Court judge, the daughter of a top bureaucrat, or the in-law of a cabinet minister with lower academic ranking? In other words, what has happened in India is that affirmative action, designed to help the weak, has been hijacked to protect the privileges of the strong.

When the P.V. Narasimha Rao Government decided in 1991 to introduce an economic means test for some of the reserved quotas in India's preferential policies, some of the shrillest screams of protest came from the political leaders of the disadvantaged groups. They know that they are on to a good thing, and that quotas enable their children to climb up the social ladder on the backs of their unfortunate in-group members.

In New Zealand, a newspaper reported some years ago that the father of a rebuffed graduate seeking preferential entry into a medical school was a distinguished New Zealander occupying a high office (*New Zealand Times*, 18 August 1985). The question naturally arose then as to why the graduate needed preferential treatment as a 'disadvantaged' applicant. One angry Maori spokesman (Tipene O'Regan) condemned procedures that deal with people in 'mathematical rather than human terms'. Was it not in fact advocating such a

procedure to say that 12 per cent of doctors should be Maoris? Another glib phrase used is 'institutional racism'. Giving preference to one applicant over another solely on grounds of ethnic difference is institutional racism.

The same spokesman noted that medical students admitted under preferential quotas already see themselves as 'second class citizens'. This would surely intensify if academic standards were to be lowered still further. And who will trust the skills of the preferential medical graduates? Non-Maoris are likely to be most suspicious of trusting their health to Maori doctors — even those who may have made it as doctors without using the quota system. Will there then be two classes of doctors? Do we want to end up with the Maori people being treated by second-class doctors — and this as a result of trying to end institutional racism?

The leaders of the so-called disadvantaged groups might be said to belong to the political elite and, in the Indian context at least, are likely to be wealthy. Their reaction might reinforce suspicions that the ideology of sectarianism mediates class relations. That is to say, in the stage of transition to capitalism under bourgeois political processes, social cleavages can be exploited and shaped in the reproduction of the social relations of feudalism. I mention this because indeed the same argument has been made in relation to ethnicity and multiculturalism in Australian society (Jakubowicz, 1981). Ethnicity was an attempt to co-opt community leaders into a partnership with government and appease the underclass with surface features like pretty dresses.[2] It obfuscates people's consciousness of class relations and deflects questions about access to power structures. From this point of view, for politicians multiculturalism represents the path of least resistance. Setting up an Institute is a convenient means of packaging a problem instead of solving it. The greatest threat to the political system comes from ethnic and class cleavages being reinforced, as they very largely seem to be in the case of the Maoris, the Aborigines and the North American Indians.

The second reason I mention the argument is that belief in its essential correctness underlay the formation of the Fiji Labour Party.

---

2. The politics of symbolism entails promoting a *National Geographic* model of multiculturalism: folk dances and folk songs, handicrafts, food. (If ethnic food be the measure of multiculturalism, then Australia is far more multicultural than New Zealand, and the United States more than Canada.) How else does one interpret a comment from a 35-organisation workshop that the learning of Maori will have special commercial benefits in tourism (NZVCC, 1991:9)?

Indeed its campaign and victory in the 1987 general election resulted from breaking the bi-racial mould of Fiji politics that had been dominant since independence in 1970. Others have attempted to explain the production of the ideology of state multiculturalism in Fiji by exploring the meanings of and relationships between class, race and multiculturalism.

**The Divisiveness of Preferential Policies**

The highly visible and readily ascertainable fact that preferential benefits intended for the have-nots are instead captured by the haves creates enormous tension over time. Said a Justice of the Supreme Court of India who spent a year inquiring into the riots in the state of Gujarat: preferential policies have 'created conflict between different sections and become the vested interest of a few who hang on to reservations as their privilege' (Reddy, 1985). But, for individuals at the top of the preferred group, it remains rational to be intransigent in their demands. The Constitution of India with a system of positive discrimination to help the weaker tribals and outcastes was adopted in 1950. In August 1990, as the V.P. Singh Government tried to broaden the definition of the underprivileged and to extend the range of reservations for them in keeping with the recommendations of the Mandal Commission (eight years after its report was tabled in Parliament), Indian society was convulsed. Students took to highly publicised suicides, streets were in flames, and the government, by pitting Indian against Indian, destroyed Indian society more effectively than any external enemy could have dared to hope. Months later, the Chief Minister of one of the more populous states declared with impunity that he would bulldoze upper-castes into chutney. The instrument of sectarian harmony has become the path to civil conflict.

It is difficult to see even in logic how attempts to perpetuate cultural cleavages by making multiculturalism a criterion of public policy can have an effect other than reinforcing cultural divides. In New Zealand too there is much opposition to preferential policies for Maoris because of fears that separatism will be entrenched. Structural pluralism, many fear, is the path to apartheid — at a time when the structure of apartheid is being dismantled in South Africa and the ideology underpinning it has been rejected worldwide.

It is also of course divisive in practice. No country that has promoted multiculturalism by means of active government involvement has escaped sectarian squabbles or worse: Canada, Fiji, India, Lebanon, South Africa. There is a potential tension between cultural

diversity and social cohesiveness. The task always is to produce a proper balance between them. If it is acceptable for government to frame public policy in a racially conscious way, then it is foolish to expect that the groups suffering relative deprivation will continue to act in a race-blind manner. To paraphrase, every affirmative action produces an equal and opposite racial reaction. The inherent contradictions of discriminatory 'multiculturalism' contain the seeds of its destruction. Programs of positive discrimination create and nurture vested interests parasitically dependent upon the dispensing of state privileges. The programs are meant to reduce and eliminate inter-group disparities. But group leaders are dependent for their leadership positions on the perpetuation of perceived disparities. After four decades of constitutionally mandated programs of positive discrimination in India, the number of disadvantaged groups keeps expanding, and the numbers of people within each group keep growing. So too does the backlash.

Shall those who live by the multicultural sword die by it? India is hardly alone in suffering the pains of excessive 'tribalism'. The civil war in Yugoslavia took hold partly because there are too few Yugoslavs and too many Serbs and Croats and Slovenes. In Lebanon, the so-called confessional system institutionalised sectarian differences in a rigid constitutional balance that paved the way for the disintegration of the country in the mid–1970s. In Sri Lanka, linguistically and religiously diverse communities had managed to live together in harmony for centuries. Difficulties arose when first one and then another group tried to use the levers of governmental power to promote group identity or group interests. Attempts to use the process of government to create group entitlements and preferences set Sri Lanka on the path to group violence and outright civil war. In Fiji, a self-consciously racial political system produced a racial explosion in 1987.

The ideologues of positive discrimination are not unlike Marxist zealots. The scale, magnitude and frequency of pain, suffering and deaths resulting from the cause can never invalidate the goodness of the principle: it is simply evidence of the policy being implemented unwisely by people less gifted than themselves (Sowell, 1991). Or else the policies will be proved right in the long run — although why we should have confidence in the ability of managers to get the long run right when they have made a mess of the less complex short run remains a mystery. Why should the medium and long term in New Zealand be any different from that already being experienced in India?

Are New Zealanders somehow immune to the human foibles and policy failures that have bedevilled India?

In fact there would appear to be very little support among ordinary New Zealanders for separate treatment of different racial (or cultural) groups. It is an odd triumph of Orwellian newspeak that those who believe in no discrimination between people on grounds of race or religion should be the new racists. This is why demands for 'one nation, one society, one people' are dismissed as the new agenda of the old racists.

**The Politicisation of Preferential Policies**

Why do governments promote affirmative action? The short answer in democracies is that they see votes in it. That is, the policy is a specifically political response to the highly visible symbols of sectarian identity (an argument not unlike that made in regard to multiculturalism itself; Sestito, 1982). The most extreme example of this has occurred in India, where politicians try to calculate sectarian 'vote banks': 'reservations have now degenerated into a political manoeuvre for capturing vote banks to gain or retain power' (Reddy, 1985). That former Prime Minister V.P. Singh miscalculated the political equation does not invalidate the claim that he was motivated by the desire to capture vote banks in a country where the 'backward' castes had been expanded by political fiat to constitute a majority of the electorate.

Pluralistic democracy presupposes that the common good will result from individuals pursuing self-interest in the marketplace of voluntary exchanges. Considerable — indeed dangerous — cynicism towards the political process is now evident in India because individual and national interests are widely perceived to have been subordinated to the claims of numerous special-interest groups. Politicians have been seduced into engaging these groups in exchanges where benefits are dispensed by the state to selected groups at the expense of the general good. Utility-maximising political parties try to attract new voters in pursuit of their overriding goal of gaining office. Preferential programs are of dubious value to the intended beneficiaries, but they are politically attractive because they mobilise middle-class support for the political parties pushing them. Everyone likes being on the side of the angels.

In contrast, actually addressing the real issues and redressing the real problems might require considerable financial outlays in building better schools, improving peoples' skills, transforming peoples' attitudes towards education, work and competition — and it would not

even promote a sense of moral righteousness. Millions more outcaste women becoming secretaries instead of latrine cleaners might help a lot more people, but is not as headline-grabbing as another outcaste cabinet minister or departmental head. Symbolic representation (for example an outcaste village headman) is politically marketable, real progress (providing clean drinking water for every villager) less so. Statistical representation sells, eliminating the need for them does not, attempts to terminate them are politically suicidal.

Public policy therefore becomes an outcome of bargaining between political parties and special-interest groups, not parties and voters. In democratic polities, multiculturalism promotes the competition for votes of individuals, not as individuals, but as members of special-interest groups. Thus in India the equivalent of multiculturalism (righting group wrongs of the past, preserving and promoting Islamic identity) has become part of the great coalition of interests created by politicians in their attempt to win elections. The symbols of group identities have been patronised by politicians for their own political ends. Group rights in practice have turned out to be about ethnic leaders receiving favoured treatment in exchange for delivering group votes to political leaders. Consequently, group rights become the new arena of political conflict with established and emerging groups engaging in an increasingly bitter struggle against one another to maintain and expand relative privileges.

Political parties did not respond to organised pressure from the lower castes. Instead, they were the initiators of changes in policy, and the lower castes became more overtly political and organised into pressure groups for the pursuit of common interests in response. The political system then becomes captive to an escalating cycle of demands from special-interest groups. The middle ground is progressively abandoned as more privileges are demanded by increasingly radicalised leaders: today's extreme is tomorrow's middle ground. In a two-party (or two-coalition) competitive model in which sectarian groups represent a large proportion of the vote, rival political parties or coalitions ignore the groups only at their peril. Group leaders in effect auction their vote banks to the highest bidders.

In time this creates its own dilemma. If parties move beyond symbolism to real structural change to accommodate minority group claims, they risk alienating majority group support and so losing office. Minority groups in the meantime have had their expectations aroused, so a failure to implement structural change leaves them disappointed and, if their claims are founded on a sense of historical grievances,

alienated. Thus both groups end up being dissatisfied. The mixture of dashed hopes and political backlash is a potentially explosive recipe for ethnic strife. Hence the transformation of multiculturalism into a political balancing act, in which parties try to attract some sectarian voters without antagonising other groups. In the final analysis, therefore, multiculturalism as public policy may contain the seeds of its own destruction. Predicated on mutual respect and tolerance in a free society, it may generate mutual suspicion and hostility.

In short, the problem lies not in the existence of group differences, but in their politicisation. When demagogues take over, reason retreats. The idea that bellicose intransigence and deliberate seeking of conflict with out-groups can be politically rewarding for regimes and leaderships has long been around in the international-relations literature. Students of ethnicity seem surprisingly resistant to the plausible hypothesis. Yet examples abound of unelected radical spokespersons dictating terms to elected governments under pain of 'rivers of blood' (or 'kill a white' — which can earn a rebuke for the media reporting the comment but not for the person uttering the threat). Out-group members raising questioning voices are dubbed racists, in-group members are traitors: 'heads I win, tails you lose'. A solution of ethnic or cultural problems would deprive self-appointed leaders of a platform and a role; upping the ante by raising ever-expanding demands (control of the maritime resources, airwaves, skyways; separate schools, languages, judiciaries, territories) enlarges the role of group activists and gives them a bigger stage from which to manipulate more people. If peace and harmony prevail between different cultures in a multi-ethnic society, then the activists must do their best to create a climate of bitter recriminations before their political aspirations can be realised. Looking at India, the most spectacular success from pressing group grievances has come for the group politicians.

It would appear that the experience of India with policies of positive discrimination is by no means unique. A powerful and sustained critique of affirmative action, built on evidence from Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand and the United States as well as other countries, is provided by Thomas Sowell (1990).[3] In the United States, the black academic Shelby Steele has argued that blacks 'take the rap for affirmative action programmes but get precious little benefit from them' (Hodges, 1991). The greatest gains were made by blacks in the 1960s before the institution of preferential policies. Affirmative action had helped a few middle class and privileged blacks who would

3. The analytic framework in this section has been adapted from Sowell.

have made it anyway. But for most blacks, the programs had produced more segregated campuses, less racial mixing, more racial tension (Steele, 1991).

### The Fraudulence of Preferential Policies

If membership of a particular group confers unequal privileges, and if job markets and prospects for upward mobility are stagnant or shrinking, then inevitably fraudulent claims of membership in the target groups will multiply. This has occurred in India. It has the potential to be an acute problem in New Zealand because a Maori is essentially a self-defining category.

## IV. FROM EXPATRIATE TO IMMIGRANT

Problems of cultural pluralism arise because human beings have a tendency to engage in wholesale movements of populations over time. If in the process some indigenous peoples are overwhelmed, then a subsequent generation of the colonising race might seek to expiate historical guilt by policies of positive discrimination. The movement of people across political frontiers is subject to government control and regulation today as it never was before. Migration can be smooth and untroubled when state-assisted out of a desire to preserve cultural homogeneity. The rites of passage can be rough and traumatic when they take place against the grain of official policy, as with the Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. In the former case, migrants may wish to transplant home identity to their new environment. After all, it is their home identity that made them attractive for assisted passage in the first place. But the more typical migrant is one who pulls up roots in the home country and seeks to put them down again in the adopted country.

Cultural assimilation of the new migrants into the dominant mainstream may be a gradual or an enforced process. But for someone who has been traumatised by the experience of crossing a major cultural divide, a speedy integration into a new society and its dominant values may not necessarily be such a bad or unwelcome thing. From the point of view of migrants, the most attractive option is to be given the choice instead of being forced to assimilate or retain a separate identity. The mosaic, by emphasising the ethic of multiculturalism, ends up exerting as much social pressure as enforced assimilation.

Immigration is no longer as simple as it might once have been in distinguishing between nationals and aliens. In most contemporary

Western societies, we find a range of possibilities:

- migrants who have acquired host-country citizenship, grown roots there and intend to see out the rest of their lives there;
- migrants who have dual or even multiple citizenships and shared loyalties;
- migrants who are long-term residents but hope eventually to return to their countries of origin;
- migrants who are only short-term residents working temporarily in more remunerative environments until retirement back to the home country;
- descendants of migrants who retain ties of affection and identification to the homelands of their parents.

Consequently, citizenship is today a less homogeneous concept than is recognised perhaps in theories of rights and obligations between citizens and states. There is room for the development of a more nuanced and differentiated theory of political obligation. (The counterpart of this is the argument developed by William Maley in this volume, that in today's global society states may have duties to non-nationals beyond their borders.)

Immigrants move to new countries in search of lands of opportunity. They accept social dislocation as the price of the new opportunities available to them. They seek equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome. Migrants have choice of entry and exit (both legally and socially); their children have no choice of entry, but retain the choice of exit in most cases; but from the third generation onwards, the choice of exit too will be lost. Policies of multiculturalism should be based on this social reality, for from the third generation on, people will know only one country as home.

The vast scale of immigration into Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States has radically changed the cultural, linguistic and racial composition and balance of these countries since their settlement as transplanted European societies. In each case, demographic shifts made it necessary to develop ideologies for the legitimisation and management of ethnic relations. But there seems to be one important difference between New Zealand and the other three countries. The terms of the debate in New Zealand are between the Maori and the European. That is, the debate in New Zealand is about biculturalism, not multiculturalism: the two are mutually exclusive. Once the problem is defined in terms of a bicultural (or biracial) dichotomy, then groups that are neither Maori nor European

are frozen out of the debate on the identity and future of the country and disenfranchised insofar as the politics of multiculturalism is concerned. They become impotent in terms of setting the agenda of the debate or defining its vocabulary.

In Australia, Canada and the United States, it would appear that the demands of the indigenous groups (Aborigines, Eskimos, Canadian and American Indians) are put forward and processed outside the multicultural debate. (But Canada is somewhat peculiar in this respect. It has long been wedded to an official policy of bilingualism — meaning English and French, which created occasional difficulties for me in answering questions on bilingual facility — alongside multiculturalism.)

As a newly-arrived migrant in Canada or New Zealand, I had and have a certain instrumental loyalty to my new country and its laws and people. Acknowledgment of multicultural diversity that makes no further ethnically targeted claims on it for resources or privileges helps to foster affective ties towards the new state and society.

There is a distinction between being an immigrant and an expatriate. Bharati Mukherjee, a gifted writer of Indian origin who lived for 15 years in Canada before moving to the United States and becoming an American citizen, wrote that immigration is the psychological opposite of expatriation (Mukherjee, 1988:28). By being officially hostile to assimilation, Canada forces newcomers to be expatriates rather than immigrants. The mosaic becomes a subtle policy instrument in the hands of 'true blood' Canadians for maintaining their distance from the new pretenders. Separateness is maintained, there is no cross-contamination, caste purity is not polluted. In contrast, people arriving in the great American melting pot quickly learn the trappings of the American way of life. They know what they have to do in order to become an 'average' US citizen, and most choose to cloak themselves with these trappings as speedily as possible. But they are not required to eradicate their ethnic identities in the process. It is possible to be an American and an Irish-, Polish- or any other hyphenated American simultaneously.

It is in this sense that the mosaic is flawed in comparison to the melting pot or salad bowl or whatever label one wishes to pin on America. The ethic of assimilation has not precluded the reality of thriving cultural minorities all across America. A very considerable number of different racial, cultural, linguistic and religious groups live in the United States. They manage, furthermore, to retain their distinctive group identities. And, most crucially, they manage to do so without government involvement. They can form not-for-profit associations, be

eligible for tax-deductible contributions (which could perhaps be described as disguised subsidies), and engage in all manner of activities to preserve and promote their cultural heritage.

Individuals are free to choose between identities of inheritance and adoption. In the beginning, immigrants or their children start learning English — the language with which they are bombarded on all fronts in their new environment — in order to be able to compete equally with everyone else for economic, political and social status. Over generations, many stop learning their own language as well as English. The integrating institutions of their culture are eroded as they assimilate into the dominant culture: the price of mainstreaming is the loss of cultural distinctiveness. But where is the harm in this? American society suffers from many ills, including widespread violence. But when American minorities demand rights, they demand the rights as and of Americans.

The mosaic ethic can also be unconsciously patronising. Expatriates, who in the original meaning are exiles from their homelands, come gift-wrapped in a cloak of exotic mystery. The discreet charm of the newly-arrived is not allowed to fade by assimilation, but preserved in the mosaic. Friends and acquaintances indulge a backward-looking nostalgia with faint condescension. Exotica becomes embedded in their permanent identity. Encouraged to hang on to their identity of origin rather than melt into the identity of destination, they become 'The Nowhere Man' of Kamala Markandaya's novel: people who can celebrate a claim on both lands without having a true home country in either. Expatriation, not immigration, is our final destiny.

Duality, even multiple identity, is of course part of the inheritance of every person coming from a sometime colonised country. In the Indian textbooks, 'our' glories past and wondrous include the best of Dravidian, Aryan, Mughul, British, Hindu, Muslim. We learnt fairly early that instead of absolutes, we have only shifting correct contexts. In the ethnic and gender-fractured English-speaking world of multiculturalism, it is perhaps easier for us to see ourselves both as 'us' and 'them'. Certainly my own roots, and that of my family, are now spread across many continents spanning the equator and east and west, and also the social ladder. Multiculturalism is a fluid set of identities for the individual as well as the nation.

## V. MULTICULTURAL PROGRAMS

Multiculturalism thus entails informational programs, educational campaigns, attitudinal transformations and government services

(interpreters, social workers, ethnic liaison officers, and so on). The burden of my argument is that, based on the examples of the Rushdie affair and the documented patterns in programs of preferential policies, the melting pot provides a more acceptable guide to public policy than the mosaic. Multiculturalism connotes non-discrimination in the migrant intake, but does not require unlimited or unregulated immigration. Although the so-called Blainey debate of the early and mid–1980s in Australia at times degenerated into hysterical polemics, it also raised some important issues that should be dispassionately addressed. There may be limits to the absorptive capacity of a country. If the multicultural peace is fragile, then too rapid an intake of multi-ethnic migrants is likely to spark off sectarian explosions that will threaten the welfare of ethnic migrants already in the country. On balance, it is more important to ensure fair and equitable treatment to those already in than to insist on enlarging their proportion in the face of hostile opposition, even if the opposition is racist and ignorant. No government policy can afford to move too far ahead of grass-roots community attitudes. If appeals to consensus are used as a means of stifling legitimate debate on issues of public policy, then they will simply engender mounting frustration and anger, whether in the field of Asian migration or Maori-Pakeha relations.

Multiculturalism in education means celebrating the diversity of the multiple cultural heritage of a nation and helping groups to overcome educational disadvantages. A tension can arise between utilitarian and sentimental choice of languages. English is the gateway to the world, and a denial of competency in this international language does grave disservice to any individual. Similarly, some languages and subjects are more useful than others in helping to prepare people for the demands of the modern world. Given their share of the New Zealand population, Maoris must have the right to being educated in their own language if they so wish. But they should make the choice in the full knowledge of the consequences for themselves as individuals and as a group. The key to national and international mobility will be languages like English and subjects like economics, mathematics and medicine. Having opted for cultural values over utilitarian calculations, they might have to resign themselves to disadvantages on a European scale like income levels in a market economy.

Education offers the surest but not necessarily the easiest or shortest path out of the bicultural dilemma in New Zealand. Statistics released in 1990 showed that Maoris and Pacific Islanders were over-represented in the lower grades in the New Zealand school system,

while Asians were over-represented in the higher grades (*Otago Daily Times*, 10 & 30 May 1990):

- almost two-thirds of Maoris failed English and Geography in the 1989 School Certificate examinations at the end of Form V;
- about 40 per cent of Maori students had even failed Maori — a worse result than achieved by European and Asian students;
- about 70 per cent of Pacific Islanders failed English, Mathematics, Science, Economics and Geography;
- among Asians, 19 per cent and 37 per cent gained A passes in English and Mathematics respectively; the corresponding figures for Europeans were 18 per cent and 19 per cent. Asians outperformed Europeans in Science, Economics, Geography and Technical Drawing as well;
- Maori retention rates at secondary school had improved over one decade from 18 per cent in Form VI in 1976 to 28 per cent in 1987. But this was still well behind the European retention rates of 62 per cent and 63 per cent in the same years;
- for Form VII, the Maori figures had improved from 2 per cent to 7 per cent over the same period, for Europeans from 18 per cent to 27 per cent.

Academic results are not of course a perfect indicator of ability and intellect. But they are a critical factor in determining career opportunities for school leavers. The fact that school performance of Maoris is relatively much poorer can only lead to a reinforcement of racial and class cleavages. Hence the urgent need to analyse the ethnic disparity of academic grades throughout the education system.

If we accept the research findings that Maori students are not doing well in the New Zealand educational system, the next task is to identify the causes of their exceptional failure. One could argue the racist position that for genetic reasons Maoris are incapable of high educational attainment, but there is little evidence for such a proposition. The fault could lie in the system: perhaps it is excessively monocultural. Such a statement is difficult to reconcile with the fact of Asians succeeding so well in the New Zealand educational system (and American, Australian, British, Canadian). Even so, teachers could be checked to guard against self-fulfilling educational outcomes for Maori children, where stereotypical expectations produce predictable results. Or it could lie with the Maori community: perhaps insufficient stress is given to the importance of education and to qualities of achievement

and excellence. Indirect support for such a contention comes from the success of Asians, who value education very highly and are prepared to bear enormous sacrifices so that the children of the family can receive the best educational opportunities. (This can of course have a dark side, for example the phenomenon of 'failures' producing youth suicides.)

Separate educational systems for Maoris are unlikely to rectify the problem. The solution must lie in an integration of all groups, with quality education being available to all students to achieve equitable outcomes. Separate or parallel educational systems will increase the demands on Maori students. For as well as learning their own language and culture, they will still need to learn, in addition, the basic skills of the dominant culture in order to survive and thrive in it. Unless immersion in Maori language is accompanied by improvement in English, scientific and numeracy skills, separate Maori-medium curricula will become part of the problem.

It is also worth bearing in mind that millions of non-European parents around the world would love to have the opportunities available to Maori children in New Zealand for education in the so-called alienating Pakeha system. The mainstream schools do offer a way out of the poverty trap for all Maoris by acquiring the necessary educational skills. It is difficult to see how individual Maoris or Maoridom collectively will benefit by abandoning the opportunities of the mainstream schools for parallel schools. If Maoris (and Pakehas) are genuinely interested in avoiding becoming welfare statistics and in eliminating collective demoralisation, then the surest path out of the jungle lies through the mainstream education: including the work ethic and the drive to competitiveness.

Gesture diplomacy like Europeans learning Maori goes only so far even in acknowledging the real problems, let alone alleviating them. 'If a neighbour comes to your door and says I am out of work, can't pay my mortgage, and my son is in trouble with the law, there is something bizarre about saying, "Be of good heart, I'm learning Maori"' (Flynn, 1988). The task for Europeans is to decide whether they wish to feel good or break the cycle of low income, low employment and high crime rates among Maoris. The first can be achieved relatively easily, for example by the Pakehas learning Maori. The second involves taking tough decisions. To date there is little evidence that New Zealanders have even begun to acknowledge the difficulty of the problem, let alone act to resolve it. The critical question is how to close the skills gap between Maori and Pakeha. This is not to dispute or

reject the benefits of self-esteem conferred on Maoris if they learn and preserve their own language. (Although, given the reality of extensive inter-racial marriage in New Zealand, the question of who is a Maori and who is not is likely to become irrelevant anyway.)

But native language fluency and self-esteem are the beginning, not the end of the process. To complete the preparation for success in the modern world, more than anything else Maoris will have to learn to come to terms with the dominant educational system, adapt to it and exploit it to their advantage. Indeed if given the choice, they could more usefully learn English, German, French and Japanese among the languages; and mathematics and science among other subjects. Perhaps they should learn from the Asians. A minority sub-culture can cope with the dominant culture more adequately if its members can beat the dominant group at their own educational game. Wherever they have gone — Europe, North America, Australasia, even Fiji — Asians have not looked to governments for creating the conditions of their success. The family structure and family pressures have ensured that Asians are disproportionately represented in the high-income professions of scientists, engineers, lawyers and doctors; and that they are employed, law-abiding and fully integrated citizens of their new communities.

Those who fail to come to terms with the dominant educational system, in contrast, get locked into the vicious cycle of low individual and group self-esteem, unemployment, low-income, family violence and continual familiarity with the police, courts and prisons. (In the year to 30 June 1991, 37 per cent of crimes in New Zealand were committed by Maoris, who make up only 12 per cent of the population.)

I make no stricter demand upon Maori than upon my own children. Given the negligible proportion of New Zealanders who are Hindi-speaking, I do not expect the state to provide the opportunity of learning Hindi in the school system. Should a group of us get together to foster our language by private means, then I would expect to have the same access to state resources as any other group. It would bring me much joy to be able to speak to my children in my mother tongue. It will bring me more lasting satisfaction to see them gainfully employed with bright prospects for advancement because their education has prepared them well for an intensely competitive job market. We do not live in an ideal world. In the real world, educational choices entail opportunity costs. But if discovery of roots brings greater satisfaction to my children, then they are perfectly at liberty to pursue

the satisfaction of their emotional wants.

At the tertiary level, the transition from affirmative admissions — the standards of admissions for Indian students were higher than for others at the University of the South Pacific in Suva — to affirmative grading is smooth and relatively painless. For once the demand for ethnic balance has been conceded at the admissions stage, it is that much harder to resist it at the results stage. Unfortunately, this is akin to attacking the symptoms rather than addressing the cause. It is not perhaps a case of breaking the thermometer as the means of curing the fever. It is more the case that if a reading above 37° registers fever, then we will recalibrate the thermometer so that what was previously 45° now reads as 37°: if certain cultural or ethnic groups fail on existing literacy or achievement standards, then the correct solution is not to identify why they are failing and remedy the causes, but to change existing standards.

This in turn exacts yet another cost from those individuals among the disadvantaged groups who have succeeded. The presumption will be that a Maori (or black) professor has attained that rank by courtesy more than merit, even though the opposite may be the case. In a talk at Otago University some years ago, this point was made poignantly by Thomas Sowell, the 'conservative' black American academic. It has also been made more recently by yet another American black law professor at Yale who is unsure whether he would have made it without affirmative action, and whether he is as good as his white fellow-workers: while many whites are quite certain that he is not (Carter, 1991).

What does 'cultural sensitivity' require of us when examining university students? I take it to mean two things. First, we should be sensitive to culture-specific tendencies, for example to be questioning or deferential towards social, political, and even academic authority. Second, we should avoid becoming obsessed with grammatical errors and stylistic shortcomings, concentrating instead on the substance of the essay in regard to content and logic of argument. If an essay or answer should be seriously deficient in substance, then a Maori, Pacific Island or Asian student must not be deemed to have performed satisfactorily simply by having submitted some written work or scribbled a few lines on the answer sheet. This is not just grossly unjust to all other students; it also demeans Maori, Pacific Island and Asian students by its implicit belief that they are not deserving of standards roughly equal to the rest of the student population.

A multicultural society will provide equality of access to the whole

range of the legal process: legal aid; anti-discrimination legislation and enforcement; human-rights legislation and enforcement; family law. Some of the most sensitive cultural differences lie in the realm of family relations. On an admittedly superficial impression, it does not appear to me that divorce, child-custody and property-division laws take adequate heed of cultural attitudes. One of the more poignant incidents in New Zealand this year occurred on the death of a noted Maori entertainer. His Maori tribe acted against the wishes of his widow and gave him a ceremonial Maori funeral. The general reaction in New Zealand, reflected and fuelled by the media, was one of outrage. There was no understanding of the Maori point of view that the identity of the individual is derived from and always subordinate to the collective identity of the tribe. Changes in family law might be indicated if the mores and values of different cultures are to be given due recognition in the legal structure.

The legal process can produce alarming encounters with the law for minority groups. Multiculturalism requires the provision of services such as interpreters and translators as a right; the police and lawyers do not always reflect cultural sensitivity (for example, the differing stigma attaching to the simple act of being finger-printed); lawyers, police and media can stereotype and stigmatise ethnic groups during court appearances and press reports.

The disadvantages of a migrant caught in the legal bureaucracy can be qualitatively different from and additional to those of the poor. As we know from literature (including *The Satanic Verses*) and films, the migrant is peculiarly vulnerable, likely to be alienated from the legal structures and institutions, and easy prey for law sharks.

The legal system seems to be particularly resistant to change, and is often the last bastion of monocultural hegemony in the formal structures of political authority. The law embodies and promotes fundamental values and should provide a basis for social cohesion and harmony. I can recall incidents in Fiji of European circuit judges refusing to accept reconciliation between antagonists following traditional modes of conflict resolution.

The media as an institution have the potential to divide or unify the country as well as transmitting information and entertainment. Mainstream media should avoid stereotyping and stigmatising cultural or ethnic minority groups. It is incorrect and irresponsible of the mainstream media to deny that they create as well as reflect images of cultural minorities. Beyond this, 'market forces' can take care of the amount of news coverage from different parts of the world. The ethnic

media can cater to specialised target groups, as is done very successfully in the United States. Their publications can be widely available or channelled through ethnic organisations. Typically they report activities and publicise issues of interest to the ethnic community (for example, a campaign is presently under way by Indians in the US to change the implementation of the new immigration law). By the very fact of their existence they help to keep alive the language and the culture of the ethnic group. Thus they serve both instrumental and affective purposes.

A commitment to reducing the role of the government should entail a willingness to accept radio and television stations being opened and run by any group that can satisfy minimum standards neutrally set and meet the necessary costs of entry. That is, the role of the government is to ensure minimum standards (technical, legal, ethical), and to ensure that these standards are neutral between different competing groups and individuals. I remain puzzled as to why the electronic media have been treated differently from the print media in being open to commercial and cultural entrepreneurs.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

Multiculturalism is entrenched in political discourse in modern Western societies. What will the post-multicultural society look like? Accepting that diversity is a good thing, we may still differ on whether to support a limited role for the state (that it should not discourage or suppress multiculturalism), or an interventionist role (that the state should foster and promote multiculturalism).

A government's commitment to multiculturalism will usually reflect the ideology underlying its wider public policy. Belief in an interventionist state will likely produce active state involvement in promoting the cause and policies of multiculturalism. But we seem to be witnessing a major shift in ideology towards limited government, individual self-reliance and the pursuit of economic growth without obsessive attention to social justice. In such a worldview, the way to solve the crisis of legitimisation and to contain the problem of ethnicity is to shift the locus of responsibility back to the individual, the family and the group: local communities must take more responsibility for alleviating problems arising from physical and social disadvantage.

State intervention can be as market-distorting in the cultural marketplace as in the economic. Because it promotes an artificial market, it could be as futile an effort as state economic planning. The state may be as misdirected in efforts to capture the commanding

heights of multiculturalism as of the economy. In both cases, the proper role of the state is to provide the political, legal and administrative contexts whereby non-governmental actors can compete freely on a level playing field. That is, laws and policies should be neutral between the competitors. Facilities available to one group should be equally available to any other group. For example, the Maori people should not have the right to certain state favours *qua* Maori that is not available to the European, African, Asian or any other Pacific Islander. Ascriptive distinctions should not be acceptable criteria for discrimination between individuals, while those formulated on the basis of such criteria as income levels and treaty rights may be permitted.

But what if Maoris (or any other group) dominate the ranks of the poor, the uneducated, the dispossessed and the misfit? What indeed? Far from my prescription (of income-based affirmative action) breaking down in this case, it manages to achieve the same social good while remaining race-blind. For if Maoris (or any other group) are disproportionately represented in the underclass of society, then they will automatically receive the most benefits under any means-testing program of state benefits. But a wealthy Maori (or an affluent member of any other ethnic group) will receive no preferential treatment over an impoverished Pakeha or Samoan or Chinese.

As an observer of multiculturalism, I believe that the state must strive for a balance between the rights of individuals and the interests of collective entities (that is, groups which exist as units and not merely as disaggregated individuals) and the interests of states. Judgments on the proper balance between competing claims must include an evaluation of their relative urgency and importance. I conclude with three propositions:

- A resolution of the multicultural dilemma may lie in Pareto-optimal solutions. A solution is Pareto-optimal when there is no other achievable result where both parties in a dyadic negotiating set could be better off, as distinct from one party being better off at the expense of the other. An increase in total welfare occurs when some people are better off as a result of a change without anybody being worse off at the same time.
- An alternative resolution may lie in the compensation principle. The Pareto criterion requires that for a policy to be socially beneficial, no one should be worse off than before the change and someone should be better off. But there may be cases where loss is unavoidable. For these cases, economists bring in the compensation principle, which states that a policy is socially desirable if

those who gain from it remain better off even after fully compensating those who lose.

- A third solution may lie in a (possibly idiosyncratic) conception of distributive justice. Inequalities between ethnic groups should be minimised, but consistent with attaining the maximum benefits for the greatest number of intra-ethnic and exogenous members of society. The debate about the competing conceptions of affirmative action can be organised around two alternative principles of distributive justice: maximising benefits or minimising deprivation. Relative privilege for some amounts to relative deprivation for all others. Can distributive inequalities be said to be justified to the extent that they are necessary to maximise the range of benefits available to all nationals? Or should distributive inequalities be minimised, but consistent with attaining the maximum benefits for the greatest number? That is, the only role of equality in the latter conception is to break deadlocks between alternative strategies of social welfare that are indifferent from the point of view of maximising benefits. By contrast, the deprivation-minimising principle would redistribute benefits in order to maximise the well-being of the worst-off groups in society.

As a consumer of multiculturalism, I would want it to mean:

- I neither make or concede a claim (in health, education, employment, social welfare) to a member of any other ethnic group that is not equally available to me.
- I have the same right to preserve my original identity and perpetuate my group as anyone else, with state assistance being determined by ethnicity-blind criteria (for example critical thresholds of income and population).
- My family and I are not forced to adopt dominant social values.
- Our values have equal status so long as they do not violate established consensual norms and laws.

# Multiculturalism and the Idea of an Australian Identity

**Chandran Kukathas** was educated in Kuala Lumpur and Canberra. He is now Senior Lecturer in Politics at University College, University of New South Wales, at the Australian Defence Force Academy. Previously a Lecturer in the Departments of Philosophy and Political Science at the Australian National University, he is the author of a number of books in political theory, including *Hayek and Modern Liberalism* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989), and *Rawls: A Theory of Justice and Its Critics* (co-authored with Philip Pettit, Polity Press, Oxford, 1990). He is also director of the CIS Multiculturalism Research Program, and author of *The Fraternal Conceit: Individualist versus Collectivist Ideas of Community* (CIS, Sydney, 1991).

# Multiculturalism and the Idea of an Australian Identity

Chandran Kukathas

## I. INTRODUCTION

In an article entitled 'Ugliculturalism' in *The Australian* (17 September 1991), economics commentator Alan Wood suggests that as Australia goes through a difficult and dramatic economic transition, it will need a strong sense of national identity and purpose. Wood is not the first — nor will he be the last — to express such sentiments. At present, many of those calling for the Australian republic to become a Republic appeal to the importance of asserting a national identity. Professor Geoffrey Blainey, in a chapter entitled 'Going Somewhere?', has written eloquently about the need for people to feel they belong to their country and to enjoy a sense of solidarity with their fellow countrymen (Blainey, 1984:153). And there is, of course, a long tradition of reflection and writing about the Australian character, about Australian nationalism, and about their respective strengths and inadequacies (McQueen, 1986; King, 1978; White, 1981; Collins, 1985; Alomes, 1988; Shaw, 1988; Hume, 1991).

Preoccupation with questions of identity is not peculiarly Australian. National identity has been an issue in almost every part of the modern world. Many see it as an unpleasant and, at worst, destructive feature of modernity. Others, like Anthony D. Smith, suggest that it may have certain functions. First, national identity provides a satisfying answer to the problem of personal oblivion: identification with the nation in secular times 'is the surest way to surmount the finality of death and ensure a measure of personal immortality'. Perhaps. Second, to identify with a nation 'is to be offered personal renewal and dignity in and through national regeneration'. Again, maybe. Third, national identity gives a certain prominence to the ideal of fraternity (Smith, 1991:160–2). Hence the parades, remembrance ceremonies, anniversary celebrations, monuments to the fallen, flags and the eulogies of heroes.

Whether or not national identity does really serve these functions, however, there is no doubting the ubiquity and the durability of its ceremonial and symbolic aspects. Indeed, symbol and ritual are the most decisive markers of the success of the idea of national identity, for

it is through these aspects that the connection between individual and collective identity is most forcefully drawn. Part of the reason for this affinity, Smith suggests, is aesthetic: symbols, whether in words, shapes or sounds, are evocative — in this case, of national 'spirit'. But a more important reason why the symbolic aspects of nationalism affect the sense of individual identity is that they usually revive ethnic ties and identifications, 'especially in commemoration of 'the forefathers' and the fallen in each generation of the community' (Smith, 1991:162).

This, I think, brings us to the problematic relationship between two ideas that have been prominent in so much of recent public discussion in Australia: national identity and multiculturalism. Some political advocates, perhaps seeing an ethnic component implicit in prevailing ideas of national identity, have embraced and commended multiculturalism as the appropriate antidote, or at least corrective, to an earlier and now obsolete ethnic tradition. Others think only of spitting the antidote, and view multiculturalism as the 'nigger in the woodpile' — reducing, if not destroying, all prospect of preserving national identity. Yet others look, perhaps more with hope than with anticipation, for some new way of reconciling the two ideas, or at least overcoming the conflict between them.

My primary purpose here is to explore the connection between multiculturalism and national identity, and so to contribute to a discussion that has touched numerous areas of public policy ranging from immigration to law reform. I propose to do so by considering a number of questions which have become pertinent. The first question might be 'Do we need a strong sense of national identity?' This presupposes a prior question: 'can there be such a thing (and if so, in what sense)? Third, 'do we need a (sense of) national purpose?' And fourth, can multiculturalism be consistent with any of these things (and if so, what kind of an idea of multiculturalism would this be)?

These questions and their answers are important because of their potential bearing on matters of public policy. They are also difficult, however, because they are address not only matters of public policy but deeper issues about the nature of a political community. My secondary purpose is to say a little about the nature of the desirable political community.

## II. CAN THERE BE AN AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY?

Let me begin by considering the question of whether there can be such a thing as a national identity, and an Australian national identity in particular. In fact, quite different questions are being asked here

because 'identity' might be construed in different ways. It might be taken to mean 'character'; is there an Australian national character? Russell Ward's *The Australian Legend*, I think, gives a sort of an answer to this particular question, suggesting that there are some characteristically Australian traits that have their roots in the pastoral life of the 19th-century outback. There is a myth, Ward writes, about the typical Australian.

> According to the myth, the 'typical Australian' is a practical man, rough and ready in his manners and quick to decry any appearance of affectation in others. He is a great improviser, ever willing 'to have a go' at anything, but willing too to be content with a task done in a way that is 'near enough'. Though capable of great exertion in an emergency, he normally feels no impulse to work hard without good cause. He swears hard and consistently, gambles heavily and often, and drinks deeply on occasion. Though he is 'the world's best confidence man', he is usually taciturn rather than talkative, one who endures stoically rather than one who acts busily. He is a 'hard case', sceptical about the value of religion and of intellectual and cultural pursuits generally. He believes that Jack is not only as good as his master but, at least in principle, probably a good deal better, and so he is a great 'knocker' of eminent people unless, as in the case of his sporting heroes, they are distinguished by physical prowess. He is a fiercely independent person who hates officiousness and authority, especially when these qualities are embodied in military officers and policemen. Yet he is very hospitable and, above all, will stick to his mates through thick and thin, even if he thinks they may be in the wrong. No epithet in his vocabulary is more completely damning than 'scab', unless it be 'pimp' used in its peculiarly Australasian slang meaning of 'informer'. He tends to be a rolling stone, highly suspect if he should chance to gather much moss. (Ward, 1958:1–2)

Ward's thesis was that such qualities were widely attributed to bushmen in 19th-century Australia, rather than to Australians generally. And unsurprisingly so, he implies, since 'the material conditions of outback life were such as to evoke these qualities in pastoral workers', though shared convict origins also had their influence (Ward, 1958:2). But this section of the population exercised a considerable influence on the rest of the colonial society. Bush manners and mores worked

upwards from the lowest strata of society and outwards from the interior, subtly influencing the whole population, until, eventually, Australians not only became 'actively conscious' of their bush ethos, but embraced it as reflective of their preferred self-image (Ward, 1958:13).

There may be something to the idea that this is how many Australians like to view 'the Australian character'. Stephen Knight, observing that in the 'realm of the national self, Australians construct as their own figure of fantasy someone leathery, wry, purposive in image — impassive and shrewd rather than cultured and brainy', insists that this is the 'unstereotypical truth', since there is also a 'vigorous, responsible, and self-generating intellectual sphere' in Australian life. There is such a thing as the Australian mind (Knight, 1990:175). Nevertheless, when Knight comes to describe this mind it turns out to be a mind of familiar — not to say stereotypical — qualities: 'a rugged independence, bred from harsh physical conditions and a sceptical distrust of authority bred from even harsher human treatment' (Knight, 1990:188).

Yet for some, like Jonathan King, this is all just too much. Australians may see themselves as hard-working, lean and lanky bushmen in a classless democracy, but in reality they are lazy, arrogant, racist, urban money-grabbers who have surrounded themselves with the myth that they are outback heroes. 'Waltzing materialism' rules because Australians seem incapable of putting community interests ahead of personal gain (King, 1978).

Whatever merits or inadequacies these contrasting views may possess, the contrast itself points to the difficulties in trying to tie down any notion of a 'national character'. And this is before considering the added complications stemming from Australia's Aboriginal inheritance, large-scale immigration, and the fact that many Australians have been women.

These difficulties have not gone unrecognised, and many contemporary writers are wary, if not downright suspicious, of talk about an Australian identity. Richard White goes so far as to suggest that Australians have 'invented' different identities at different times, to serve various interests (White, 1981). And the four authors of *Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism in Australia* rightly point up the tangles the Bicentennial Authority got into in 1988 in asking people to celebrate 'national identity' (Castles, Kalantzis, Cope & Morrissey, 1988:102). As one *Sydney Morning Herald* commentator put it, 'What generalisation could you possibly make that

applies to the 15 million people who live on this continent? Or even most of them?' (Castles et al., 1988:102).

Yet there is a second way in which the word 'identity' might be construed, to denote not 'national character' but something rather different: a national inheritance or a tradition. In this case, to ask if there is an Australian identity would be to ask if there is an inheritance that Australians can identify with, and which, perhaps, also helps to identify them.

Here, I think, we are on surer ground, provided it is reasonably clear what is meant by a national inheritance. The notion of a national inheritance here refers to two interrelated things: first, a history; and second, a set of legal and political institutions. To the extent that these things are generally accepted and shared, a political community exists. A 'national identity' here is nothing more or less than an identity given by membership of such a community.

To say this is not to suggest that the question of the existence of such a community and identity is necessarily uncontroversial. The American Civil War was fought partly because the southern states declared themselves to be a separate nation with a common history and tradition, regarding themselves as the true upholders and inheritors of the political ideals of the American Revolution (Carpenter, n.d.). These were claims northern nationalists would not accept, and northern victory denied the south a separate national identity by destroying the political institutions of the Confederacy. Controversy may also surround the interpretation and evaluation of the community's institutions and history. Yet insofar as a common history and common political institutions are recognised, we can speak of a political community and of a 'national identity'.

In the case of Australia, national identity is given by an ancient Aboriginal inheritance, a history of European colonisation, a common-law legal tradition, and liberal-democratic political institutions. However, this political community, and so 'national identity', has been shaped primarily by Britain, which bequeathed not only a common language, but also the legal and political vocabulary in which public affairs have been conducted.

So I am suggesting that there is an Australian 'national identity' in this second sense of the term. Australians may be identified as those who are the inheritors of a political tradition and members of a political community. People seeking to become Australians are, in effect (even if not by intention) seeking to identify with or join that political tradition or community.

As I have expressed them, these views may sound commonplace, if not downright platitudinous. So it is worth indicating what is distinctive, and even contentious, about them. The first point is that 'national identity' is determined fundamentally by political membership, and by the nature of a nation's institutions. Primacy is given to history and politics; biology, geography and the natural environment are regarded as much less important. In this respect, my sympathies are with David Hume, who, in his essay 'Of National Characters', argued against Montesquieu that moral causes were much more important than physical ones in trying to understand the character of a nation. By moral causes he meant 'all circumstances which are fitted to work on the mind as motives or reasons, and which render a peculiar set of manners habitual'. These circumstances included 'the nature of the government, the revolutions of public affairs, the plenty or penury in which the people live', and so on. Thus Hume observes: 'That the character of a nation will much depend on moral causes must be evident to the most superficial observer; since a nation is nothing but a collection of individuals, and the manners of individuals are frequently determined by these causes' (Hume, 1903:202–3). So while there may be something to be said for the view that Australia has been shaped by its geography — by its climate, its landscape, and its proximity to Asia — I would argue that these things are much less important for the understanding of its national identity than its 'moral' inheritance.

A second point is that national identity is not — or at the very least, need not be — based on ethnic community. Anthony D. Smith may be right to say that, 'historically, the first nations were . . . formed on the basis of pre-modern ethnic ones' (Smith, 1991:41), but ethnicity itself is not what makes for nationhood and national identity.

Finally, there can be a national identity that does not imply the existence of a 'national character' in any strong sense. In Australia there may be too much variety to speak sensibly of national character, but this does not mean that there is no national identity. Perhaps Hume's remarks about the English will serve us well when looking at Australia: 'We may often remark a wonderful mixture of manners and characters in the same nation, speaking the same language, and subject to the same government: and in this particular the English are the most remarkable of any people that perhaps ever were in the world . . . the English government is a mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. The people in authority are composed of gentry and merchants. All sects of religion are to be found among them; and the great liberty

and independency which every man enjoys, allows him to display the manners peculiar to him. Hence the English, of any people in the universe, have the least of a national character, unless this very singularity may pass for such' (Hume, 1903:212).

## III. MULTICULTURALISM AND IDENTITY

This notion of national identity is clearly a very weak one because it demands very little in the way of substantial content to make for national identity. It requires a shared history and political institutions but no common ethnicity or 'character'. What does this mean for the idea of multiculturalism? Perhaps an answer to this question should begin by distinguishing two senses of the word 'multiculturalism'. In the first sense, the word refers to the idea or ideal of cultural diversity: a multicultural society is one in which different cultural communities coexist and flourish. In the second sense, the word refers more narrowly to a particular (Australian) government policy which involves actively promoting or supporting cultural diversity using a range of instruments from subsidy to preferential treatment.

Multiculturalism, in the first sense of the word, is quite clearly consistent or compatible with the idea of a national identity. Cultural diversity is no obstacle to national identity if national identity is given essentially by a shared history and common legal and political institutions. The less emphasis is given to national identity having a particular ethnic or religious content or to its expressing some kind of essential character, the easier it is to accommodate ethnic or other forms of cultural variety, provided these other forms are willing to operate within those common legal and political institutions. Multiculturalism, insofar as it amounts to no more than a welcoming or simply an acceptance of cultural variety, poses no challenge to national identity. At the most, it means that a greater range of influences might shape and re-shape social institutions in the course of historical development.

This is not to say that there are no issues or problems that ever need to be addressed. Questions and disputes will arise over such matters as the understanding of marriage contracts, the obligations of parents to their children, and the rights of women. The legal institutions of society in particular will have to develop answers, as they have, in the main, been doing in countries like Australia and Britain for some time now. But no deeper difficulties or fundamental conflicts need arise unless more is expected in the idea of national identity, or more is demanded in the name of multiculturalism.

This brings me to the second of the two senses of multiculturalism: the sense in which it refers to a particular government policy what came into being in Australia in the mid–1970s. The early conception of multiculturalism, when the idea was still in its policy infancy, was probably based on a notion that, whatever an individual's cultural origins, there is no reason why he or she should not be able to live peacefully in a society in which different cultural traditions are tolerated. The definition of multiculturalism supplied by the now-defunct Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (in its *Annual Report 1979–80*) very much suggests this:

> Multiculturalism recognises the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of Australian society and actively pursues equality of opportunity for all Australians to participate in the life of the nation and the right to maintain ethnic and cultural heritages within the law and the political framework. (Quoted in Rimmer, 1988:2)

But during the 1980s multiculturalism came to mean much more than this. It acquired a meaning distinct from the first sense of multiculturalism I discussed earlier, in which the emphasis is on the acceptance as far as possible of cultural differences. The new meaning was perhaps best expressed by Dr Andrew Theophanous who, in associating the older view of multiculturalism with the thinking of 'conservative forces in Australian society', stressed that 'A multicultural plan of action involves a programme for the whole of society, an attack on major inequalities due to cultural differences' (quoted in Rimmer, 1988:3; see also Theophanous, 1984). This understanding of multiculturalism does not stress that the law should uphold the rights and liberties of citizens to associate freely and to live according to their own customs and beliefs insofar as this does not threaten or endanger others. Rather, it emphasises the need for action to modify or change social attitudes, and to alter the distribution of economic resources, and indeed the distribution of political influence. This outlook comes through clearly in the 1988 federal government report *Towards a National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*, where it is argued that Australian parliamentary democracy disadvantaged migrants and that what is required is a radical restructuring of Australian political, legal and bureaucratic institutions.

This understanding of multiculturalism is considerably more demanding than the first. It mounts a challenge to existing legal and political institutions, as well as to social attitudes generally. The

problem with this view of multiculturalism is that it does come into direct conflict with even the weak idea of national identity described earlier in this essay. That view suggested that national identity was defined by common membership of a political community that shared a history and legal and political institutions. The second understanding of multiculturalism challenges the basis of that identity by bringing the worth of these institutions into question.

Now, to this conclusion some have simply said, 'yes, and a very good thing too'. This, I think, is the upshot of the critical analysis of multiculturalism offered by Castles et al. in *Mistaken Identity*. Though they do not distinguish explicitly between different understandings of multiculturalism, they make clear that they see it as in some respects a doctrine that looks mainly to managing ethnic conflict, even at the risk of accepting ethnic chauvinisms and sexism. 'The neo-conservative project of multiculturalism (of the Fraser-Zubrzyski-Galbally type) trades on such regressive elements as aspects of a divide-and-rule strategy for social control in a multi-ethnic society'. The 'social democratic variant' is not much better, they suggest, since it rests on an inaccurate view of power relations in Australia, fails to address the fundamental (i.e., class and gender) dimensions of inequality in Australia, and ignores the fact that 'cultural pluralism can actually preserve and deepen inequality by creating separate and inferior educational and social systems for different groups' (Castles et al., 1988:145–6).

Part of the problem with these views is that the authors have very little to say that is of much help in explaining what is to be done. The answer, they say, is not to abandon multiculturalism but to concentrate on combating structural inequality. In the context of this struggle 'it will be possible to resolve the issue of ethnic separatism: all individuals and communities should have the right to cultural autonomy in a society based on equal social, economic and political rights for everyone irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity or class background'. How this will be possible is never explained. To further confuse matters the authors add that 'This implies combating racist and sexist attitudes and institutions, both in Australian society, and in all of its subcultures'. How far the reshaping of the attitudes of subcultures is compatible with the 'right to cultural autonomy' is never raised as an issue. Indeed, at times, their solutions look like little more than a wish list, insofar as they seek to combine 'the best elements of national tradition, the most important postulates of multiculturalism, and the needs and interests of the broad majority of the population' (Castles et

al., 1988:146–7). The aspects of multiculturalism they regard as worth maintaining are the principles of cultural self-determination and of cosmopolitan identity. The problem, however, is that these two aspects are in conflict. Those who seek to preserve their particular cultural ways are, in so doing, rejecting the idea of a cosmopolitan identity. And those attracted by cosmopolitanism are generally willing, or will be forced, to shed many aspects of their original cultural inheritance.

The difficulties these authors face — or fail to face — stem from an unwillingness or an inability to decide where they stand: they are for cultural autonomy and self-determination, but not if some cultural practices are involved; they are against the nation-state as an 'obsolete relic of early industrialism' (Castles et al., 1988:148) that has to be transcended in the name of real community, but call for a range of measures that only the state can implement across all local communities — from labour-market regulation to education about the history of white racism. But these are difficulties they have created for themselves by embracing the more demanding conception of multiculturalism.

The view I would like to put in opposition to this reasserts the value of the first notion of multiculturalism. This view seeks to develop institutions that will accommodate different cultural communities, but not institutions that are intended to reshape them or society in accordance with some specific ideal. The development of such national institutions does not require the fostering of a national identity in any strong sense; indeed it is only by not creating too strong a sense of national identity that it will be possible to tolerate a variety of ways of life within the political community.

This is a view which David Miller, in his recent defence of market socialism, rejects as 'impeccably liberal'. The trouble with this kind of thinking, he suggests, is that it makes no attempt to get to grips with the idea of citizenship and the beliefs that support it. 'Citizenship is not just a matter of knowing how to be effective politically, but of identity and commitment . . . there cannot be a complete divorce between a person's public identity as a citizen and his private identity as a member of an ethnic group' (Miller, 1989:290–1). Miller is undoubtedly right to say that a complete divorce between the public and the private realms is not possible. Public norms must always to some extent shape private conduct. But the issue is not whether or not there should be a complete divorce; it is rather to what extent we should allow the public realm to shape the private. Miller's answer is: to the extent that is

necessary to produce good citizens who share sufficient cultural understanding to take part in a political dialogue. Political dialogue is important because citizens should 'continually reshape their collective identity' (Miller, 1989:291). He favours an activist idea of a community of people determining its own future. Nationality is valued because it gives people the common identity that makes it possible for them to conceive of shaping their world together (Miller, 1989:245).

The view I have put, which plays down the importance of national identity, differs from Miller's. It takes a more liberal view of political community, placing little emphasis on the value of collective shaping of national identity, and little faith in the prospect of a community of people determining its own future (as opposed to having it determined by elites in the community and uncontrollable circumstances). But it also plays down the importance of national identity because the stronger the emphasis on that identity, the more difficult it becomes to accommodate identities.

Now taking such a view can also lead one down another path, down which I do not think we should travel. It is a path which has been cut most recently in the work of Iris Marion Young, in her book *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Her concerns, in some respects, are like mine: she tries to deal with the issue of how to accommodate particular identities within a larger society. And she is extremely critical of those who place great emphasis on the ideal of community. The problem with communitarian views, in her estimation, is that they tend to suppress particular identities. 'The ideal of community denies the ontological difference within and between subjects' (Young, 1990:231). What is interesting about her account is that it levels the same charge at liberal or individualist views that are normally regarded as the antithesis of communitarian thinking. Her contention is that there is in fact a common logic underlying the alleged polarity between individualism and community.

> Each entails a denial of difference and a desire to bring multiplicity and heterogeneity into unity, though in opposing ways. Liberal individualism denies difference by positing the self as a solid, self-sufficient unity, not defined by anything or anyone other than itself. Its formalistic ethic of rights also denies difference by bringing all such separated individuals under a common measure of rights. Proponents of community, on the other hand, deny difference by positing fusion rather than separation as the social ideal. They conceive the social subject as a relation of unity or mutuality composed by

> identification and symmetry among individuals within a totality. Communitarianism represents an urge to see persons in unity with one another in a shared whole. (Young, 1990:209).

In different ways, Young suggests, both individualist and communitarian ideals tend to value and to enforce homogeneity. The way to go, she further suggests, is towards a politics that more actively embraces difference. This, she thinks, may require quite different sorts of democratic institutions. More important, it means that 'the public cannot be conceived as a unity transcending group differences, nor as entailing complete mutual understanding. In public life the differences remain unassimilated, but each participating group acknowledges and is open to listening to the others' (Young, 1990:241).

What this amounts to in concrete terms is unclear; and Young herself admits that the institutional implications remain in the realm of speculation. But taking the view as it is, I think it should be rejected for several reasons. First, it seems to me that if there is to be any kind of dialogue between groups of the kind Young desires, there has to be some common ground: there have to be common public institutions through which basic questions can be settled. At the very least they would be needed to settle the question of what counts as a group and a group interest, since groups are mutable, not fixed. Second, her view seems to me to be too optimistic about the prospects for order if differences are emphasised and identity is put at the heart of politics. This seems to be a recipe for social conflict. And third, I think she mischaracterises the liberal view when she says that it denies difference. I think it would be more accurate to say that the liberal view is indifferent to differences. It is indifferent to whether communities assimilate into the wider community or merely integrate and retain their distinctiveness. This view is less hostile to particularity and difference than Young suggests.

In distinguishing my view from those of Iris Young and David Miller I am, in a way, trying to steer a course between two alternatives: one that seeks to strengthen overall community and one that wants to grant greater recognition to sub-groups. National identity, I am suggesting, is not to be overvalued, in part because it can lead to an exaggerated sense of collective purpose, but also because it poses a threat to the identities of minority communities within the society. On the other hand, this need not mean denying either the possibility or the worth of national identity in some weaker, less demanding sense.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The answer to the first question raised in this paper, then, is that we do not need a strong sense of national identity. One of the reasons for this is that it does not make sense to talk of national identity in any strong sense of the term. Even a nation that exhibits very little cultural variety will have difficulty presenting an identity that does not misrepresent the diversity of identities within the society, and that is not largely an invention. Another reason is that it is a mistake to think in terms of national 'purposes' (in the way that Alan Wood does in the article quoted in the beginning of this essay): individuals have their own purposes to pursue, and some they share with others — but it is unnecessary in a free society that all should share some common goal, unless that goal be that of preserving the rules of a free society so that each might pursue his or her own ends.

These points hold even more strongly for societies marked by cultural pluralism. In a society like Australia's, which exhibits considerable ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity, there can be a national identity only in the weak sense of an identity based on shared or common institutional and historical inheritance. Any stronger notion of identity would have to begin excluding particular individuals and communities.

Equally, this notion of identity comes under no threat from multiculturalism understood as an ideal of peaceful coexistence among culturally diverse communities. One can be an Australian in this sense without ceasing to identify also with the Aboriginal, Irish or Italian communities. Difficulties arise only when too much is asked of national identity or of multiculturalism: when proponents of both ideas look to reshaping Australian institutions in accordance with some more definitive notion of what Australian society should look like. It is then that multiculturalism and the idea of a national identity come into conflict.

# The Baby Trade: The Political Economy of Inter-Country Adoption

**Geoffrey Brennan** is Director of the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University. Formerly Professor of Economics at the same university, he has written on topics in public finance, public-choice theory, and economics and philosophy. His books include *The Reason of Rules* (coauthored with James Buchanan, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985) and *Democracy and Decision* (coauthored with Loren Lomasky, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, forthcoming). His publications for the CIS include *The Christian and the State* (1983) and contributions to G. Brennan & J. Williams (eds), *Chaining Australia: Church Bureaucracies and Political Economy* (1984) and M. James (ed.), *Restraining Leviathan: Small Government in Practice* (1987).

# The Baby Trade: The Political Economy of Inter-Country Adoption

Geoffrey Brennan

## I. INTRODUCTION

In certain intellectual traditions, 'narrative' plays a uniquely significant role. Those intellectual traditions are not my own: I come from a school of thought in which extrapolation from a sample of one is thought to be scientifically outrageous (and in which, for that matter, the offering of one's own experience as distinctively instructive or compelling for others is morally objectionable). All the same, there is a narrative associated with this essay. It concerns that part of the Brennan saga covering a period in the late 1970s, when my wife and I and two young children happened to be living in the US and when, after several disastrous attempts at extending our family, we found ourselves at the doors of Catholic Family Services in Roanoke, Virginia. The story relates how Robyn Elizabeth, and eventually Philip Alexander, became members of the Brennan family and thereby essential players in our lives as we have each become in theirs.

I don't intend here to rehearse that narrative (though I suspect it may be a good bit more interesting than the things I shall say). I refer to it mainly so as to 'declare an interest' (as the lawyers would have it) in this topic: the topic, that is, of inter-country and inter-racial adoptions. But since I have mentioned it, let me take the opportunity to make three points about that experience.

The first is an economist's point about psychology, to the effect that human imagination is limited; that desires are constrained by experience. In 1978 when we first arrived in Virginia, we would no more have thought of adopting a couple of mixed-race American children than of flying to the moon. Only a very particular sequence of events brought us to contemplate seriously the prospect of inter-racial adoption; and it was only as we contemplated that prospect that it became for us by degrees first intriguing, then exciting and ultimately compelling. Thus supply creates its own demand.[1]

---

1. That, incidentally, is Say's law; though my endogenous preference account is not what Jean-Baptiste had in mind.

Second, to underline the particularity, that sequence of events could never have happened in Australia. The possibility that an adoption agency would ring you up, out of the blue, some 18 months after the adoption of one child, to ask you whether you might consider adopting another — it's the kind of thing that makes Australians shake their heads in incredulity (as anyone who has had any experience of adoption in Australia will testify). But just how the position within Australia has changed over the last two decades, and just how restrictive the prospects for adoption are — whether domestic or international — are, I think, not well-known. And yet the relevant facts are astounding: in an area where most changes are glacial, these facts are spectacular. Part of my object in what follows will be to spell out those facts.

Third, a point about the psychology of ethics. Occasionally, well-meaning people, sometimes even close friends, would say to us things like: 'I think what you're doing for those kids is wonderful'. To be sure, such remarks were more common among our American than our Australian acquaintances, and we were never quite sure whether they represented simple American gush or revealed on the part of the speakers a sense of the momentousness of taking part-Negro kids under one's roof. (This was the South, remember.) We never cared to find out what exactly was meant. It may have been no more than Australians are inclined to say in 21st-birthday speeches or toasts to the bride's parents at country weddings — that what the parents have done for their children is pretty terrific. But if the implication is that what one does for adopted children is somehow distinctively and self-consciously virtuous, I think that's just plain false. I know a not insignificant number of adoptive parents — some of the adoptions inter-racial ones — and in almost no case that I can recall was there any sense on the adoptive parents' part of doing what they were doing as an act of benevolence, any more than such a sense prevails with natural children. In fact, although the consequences of the inter-racial adoptions that occur are benign, the adoptions demand nothing more in the way of personal virtue than the entirely natural affection of parents for their children. That affection is almost invariably supplied as spontaneously and automatically with adopted children as with natural, and in no less abundance.

So far so good. But, you might say, all this hints at some interesting demographic facts, and at some ideas about feasible morality, but it has relatively little to do with multiculturalism as such. True enough — and much of what I say will deal with demography and ethical

compliance. But at the level of practical politics, the question of inter-country adoption involves a distinctive blend of policy entanglements: specifically, those relating to immigration and social welfare. Because of this association, inter-country adoptions come to be addressed willy-nilly in terms of the rhetoric of multiculturalism. And we need to understand something of that rhetoric and the lines of debate that it stands for to explain why Australian policy on inter-country adoptions is as it is and why it is set so firmly against doing what, on the face of it, is so good a thing.

## II. THE DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

Let me return, though, to the beginning and to the demographic background. Adoption figures are not the most reliable statistics released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (the Bureau actually ceased to publish them in the late 1980s for reasons of suspected unreliability), but the general picture they present is crystal clear. In 1972, adoptions by non-relatives (what we might think of as adoptions for which the primary motive on the adoptive parent side is infertility) were around 7800. By 1985, the total number of such adoptions had fallen to about 1150 (a number that includes about 400 inter-country adoptions, of which there was a negligible number in 1972). In other words, the 'supply' of Australian-born children available for adoption had fallen by a factor of ten: 90 per cent of the families who qualified to adopt on the open-market in 1972 could not have adopted an Australian-born child a mere dozen or so years later. There seems no reason to suspect that the demand for adoptive children would have declined to that degree in that brief space: conceivably, fertility drugs, in-vitro fertilisation, and the like may have reduced the demand somewhat, but the major causal factors seem to be the increased availability of abortion, increased availability and use of contraception among the young, and changes in social attitudes towards, and welfare support of, unmarried mothers. We should, furthermore, bear in mind that there are no grounds for believing that 1972 was a year in which there was no excess demand for adoptive children. We simply have no independent information about demand, beyond the general folk lore that it has always been difficult to adopt in Australia. The facts clearly imply, however, that there has over the last decade been very considerable 'excess demand' for potentially adoptive children in Australia.

Of course, not all Australian couples who would seek to adopt a white Caucasian child if one were available would be interested in inter-country adoption. Equally, however, not all those who would be

interested in inter-country adoption — and specifically orphaned infants in institutions in Third-World countries — would be interested in domestic adoption. Certain matters are brought into play in the inter-country adoption case that do not apply otherwise. Still, when one seeks to adopt, a child is a child irrespective of that child's country of origin. To put the point in economist's jargon, Australian-born and foreign-born children seem likely to be close substitutes for a wide range of prospective adoptive parents.

Australian experience with inter-country adoption in any systematic way began with the Vietnam airlift in 1975. By 1982–83, there were 325 inter-country adoptions within Australia; by 1986–87, the number had risen to 575. At that point, Korea was supplying more than half the children, but Korea has since closed its books and as far as I know they remain closed. The current picture within Australia is one of extreme and increasing scarcity of foreign-born adoptive children, and scarcity of adoptive children more generally.

## III. BARRIERS TO TRADE

Now the obvious question is: why is the number of inter-country adoptions so small? On the face of things, there is no lack of supply. We hear for example of 30 million children on the loose in Brazil alone; India, China, Indonesia and parts of Indo-China are all reputed to have problems in dealing with unwanted children; Africa is in a similar situation. It seems self-evident that there are enormous potential gains for all parties here. Why are those gains not appropriated?

As you know, economists are great proponents of the gains from trade (broadly construed). The notion of gains from trade is in fact a central organising principle in economists' explanations of social phenomena, and certainly the predominant driving force in the economist's normative scheme. Arguments in the latter connection focus on the expected benefits that both parties derive from voluntary exchange; and arguments in the former connection focus on the rationality of potential traders in searching out such mutual gains. So there are two puzzles here: why are the relevant gains not appropriated[2] and why should they not be?

Now we should concede at the outset that the presence of unwanted children in Brazil (or wherever) is not sufficient grounds for concluding that real gains from trade exist. It costs resources to shift

2. To put the question in a more Chicago-esque style, why is the world not efficient?

children from Brazil to Australia; and it costs resources to surround any such traffic with an appropriate regulatory apparatus. After all, we are dealing here with a traffic in persons, and at the very least we would want in place the same set of legal restrictions to protect the rights of those persons as exist more generally. Moreover, we ought to recognise that these children are, by virtue of being 'unwanted' in the domestic environment, deprived of normal resources for representing and defending those rights. If, as seems appropriate, the Australian government is to assume the responsibility for defence of rights for those children adopted into Australia, then the primary present beneficiaries (resident potential adoptive parents) should contribute predominantly to the costs of enforcing those regulations. Nevertheless, I am taking it that even when required to pay for all relevant costs (say, the home-study, the international transport, and full confinement costs for the birth mother) there would still be an excess demand for inter-country adoptions from Australian parents who meet any reasonable standards.[3]

In other words, the primary reason why there are so few inter-country adoptions is that the Australian immigration authorities and the relevant State welfare agencies place between the hopes of would-be adoptive parents and the best interests of the children an array of political and administrative barriers that keeps foreign adoptions to a trickle. Not all of these barriers are explicit. In some cases, they arise because the Australian government is not prepared to make inter-country adoptions an issue in international negotiations or to take the trouble to make inter-country adoptions easier. In some cases, the barriers arise from an explicitly adversarial posture (for example, the failure to recognise under Australian law adoptions legally effected in foreign countries).

In some measure, the reluctance is to be explained in terms of a natural bureaucratic fear of scandal. Any single case of an adoption 'gone-wrong' (say, a foreign adopted child who is the victim of abuse apparently motivated by racial prejudice) imposes much more political cost (negative media attention and the like) than the political benefit of any number of successful placements. Sins of commission cost disproportionately more than sins of omission because, with sins of omission, 'fault' on the part of the bureaucracy is much more difficult to identify. However, because any such posture is a matter of public policy; it tends to breed its own justification. And there clearly is a kind

3. For potential adoptive parents, for example, the standards that were actually applied in the early 1970s.

of ideology in the social-welfare bureaucracy, and possibly more widely, that sees foreign adoptions as something to be discouraged and if possible prevented.

The report of a Western Australian inquiry into adoptions (WA, 1990), for example, exemplifies exactly this negative view. That inquiry's recommendations would, if implemented, effectively bring to an end inter-country adoptions in that State. Recommendation 102 states that: 'every child placed for adoption shall be placed with adoptive parents of the same broad ethnic and cultural background as the child, thus ensuring the child's cultural and ethnic identity is not lost as a consequence of the adoption', and Recommendation 105 reiterates that principle specifically with reference to 'children living in overseas countries to be adopted in Australia'.

## IV. THE DEFENCE OF THE BARRIERS

The arguments that lie behind these recommendations are varied. Some involve an appeal to an association between inter-country adoptions and alleged commercial baby-farming in some foreign countries, or between inter-racial adoption and the enforced separation of aboriginal children from their parents (a much vaunted, outrageous practice occurring sporadically through recent Australian history). Such appeals have, of course, considerable rhetorical effect, but it is difficult to see how any such association can be sustained: the appeals are not so much arguments as pieces of demagoguery.

There are, however, several assertions that might be construed as genuine arguments, and these include at least four claims:

- there are practical difficulties: for example, special problems of bonding, or the failure of adoptive parents to confront adequately possible experience by the child of racist attitudes from others;
- foreign adoptions are usually third choice (after natural children and Australia born children);
- foreign adoptions are often motivated by a rescue mentality;
- foreign adoption is an assault on the child's true identity.

These claims are often subsumed under a single claim, to the effect that, ideally, children should be brought up in the culture into which they are born. This claim is often made as the point of departure for relevant argument, I suppose because on its face it seems incontrovertible. But I regard it as having implications that are by no means self-evident, and I think it better here to confront the more specific propositions. We shall deal with them seriatim.

**The 'Practical Difficulties' Argument**

The 'practical difficulties' that are often alluded to direct attention to matters that are, often enough, artifacts of the regulatory system itself: for example, long delays in organising adoptions that lead to inter-country adoptions occurring at an older age than would be ideal and hence to adjustment problems that might otherwise have been avoided. Some studies refer to an excessively 'intellectual' approach on the part of adoptive parents in their endeavours to maintain the racial self-awareness of adoptive children, or of the tendency of parents to play down the child's distinctive racial identity. (See, for example, the studies referred to in Chapter 7 of the Western Australian report). One would not of course expect that trans-racially adoptive children would be necessarily exempt from experience of racism, or that they might not feel alienated from the culture of most members of their race. However, there is little evidence that transracially adopted children suffer from lack of self-esteem: indeed, as the Western Australian Report concedes (p.182) 'when groups of transracially and same-race adopted children are compared, both groups tend to have a level of self-esteem as high as that found in the general population'. In fact, the WA Report offers no evidence of systematic divergences between transracially adopted and other adopted or non-adopted mixed race children: it rather takes the line that something might go wrong, and that therefore such children were 'at greater risk' and hence that 'the risk to the child be minimised by ensuring that the child's cultural and ethnic identity is not lost'. The Committee thus seems, by sleight of hand, to move from the position that some attention be given to matching the child with racially similar parents in Australia where possible to the conclusion that inter-country adoption ought to be stopped tout court. In any event, the cited studies do not seem to focus on the relevant control group in their conceptual experiments. Even if we could show that trans-racial adoptions were 'at greater risk' (of what?) than other children in the host country on average, the relevant comparison would still have to be the fate of those transracial adoptees absent adoption. On this fate, we can only conjecture but the conjecturings cannot reasonably avoid including the more tragic alternatives.

**The 'Third-Best Choice' Argument**

For an economist, it is a little difficult to know what to make of this charge. Since adoptions are, under current regulations, effectively restricted to childless couples, there is no behaviourist check on the

claim; but it seems unlikely to be true universally. It is certainly the case that, since most couples have natural children, natural birth is their 'first choice'; but it is first choice only in the sense that it is the course that they most naturally think of — that they would think of 'first', as it were. But this is not to say that if inter-country adoption were a salient option — one that people confronted as a matter of course and that was sufficiently common to be widely recognised as feasible — many people would not find it an exciting and attractive possibility. All kinds of motives might be in play here: a desire to determine the sex of one's child; a fear of the pains of childbirth; a concern over world population growth; a desire to improve the lot of some otherwise unwanted child; a sense of adventure, not unlike a love of travel; a desire to enrich the experience and expand the horizons of one's other children. Once the prospect of foreign adoption becomes real, it may not remain a 'third choice' in any sense at all. But neither does the ranking of options seem at all critical. Ultimately, all that is at issue is the question of whether interracially adoptive parents are less loving and caring than biological parents or than racially homogeneous adoptive parents — or indeed, are less loving and caring than those (if any) who would tend the child in the original birth environment. And there is no evidence to that effect at all.

**The 'Rescue Mentality' Argument**

This argument reminds me of one sometimes advanced by theologian friends of mine: that one ought to live a life of total self-indulgence because anything else is a temptation to the (much worse) sin of self-righteousness. The theologians see this as a joke: the social-welfare putsch seem to be utterly serious. Of course, one can concede readily enough that certain kinds of 'charity' can be deeply patronising. For example, the World Vision manoeuvre of connecting up one's giving to a particular child who dutifully writes obsequiously grateful letters has always struck me as vaguely pathetic and disturbing; the children are made to act in the manner of performing bears. However, I take it that there is a constituency for whom that World Vision mechanism is successful in the sense that it induces some people to give more than they otherwise would; given that this is so, it is not obvious that one's anxieties are not merely a form of self-indulgence. After all, inhibition of that procedure would simple serve to hurt those who need help most. I would not on balance want to ban World Vision, however offensive its style is to my aesthetic sensibilities. More to the point, perhaps, one would not want to ban the Fire Brigade or the Rescue

Squad because some (or all) of the firemen are motivated by a 'rescue mentality'. At its most extreme, an antipathy to motives of 'doing good' is vicious, and borne out of deep-seated cynicism and moral despair. Of course, one would want to inhibit casual and unreflective adoptions: and we have regulations in place to secure this end. But there is nothing at all flippant about wanting to share your life with another person, nothing at all patronising about being deeply moved by the spectacle of suffering children, and nothing unnatural about wanting to do something about it. In any event, it is not clear that the adoptive parents' motives at the point of adoption are germane. Whichever of the many possibilities motivate the adoption in the first place, after a time the basic repertoire of one's feelings are called into play: if one is a loving and caring parent, one will love and care for one's children whatever one's motives in having them. The simple and obvious point to be made here is that most natural children over most of human history have emerged as a largely incidental consequence of motivations quite other than that of having a child. The children in question have been no less the object of care. If it were otherwise, the race would never have survived.

Which brings me to a more general point. The claim is often made that would-be adoptive parents would do better to give money to the aid agencies than to adopt; and that governments would do better to increase inter-governmental aid then to pay for the machinery required to ensure smooth and proper adoptions procedures. This claim reminds me of a story about Milton Friedman. Apparently Friedman liked to trouble those students who were in the Peace Corps and Volunteers Aid Abroad. He used to point out to them that they would do more good by taking the highest paid job they could find in the US and sending half their income to the Third World than by going to the Third World themselves. The economics of Friedman's claim are undoubtedly right; but the psychology is implausible. People who don't go to the Third World do not make comparable sacrifices. Equally, people who do not adopt foreign children do not make the kind of transfers to international charitable agencies that they would make to a child of their own: any more than childless couples make contributions to children at large of the same magnitude as parents make to their own children (a point Malthus made to Godwin.)

Some colleagues of mine in the Economics Department of the Research School of Social Sciences once calculated the average 'cost of a child', mainly measured in terms of the income forgone (on average) by looking after the child at home. The amount came to somewhere

between $200 000 and $300 000, as I recall. The calculation was somewhat playful, but there is a point: parents on average make what are on any reckoning very substantial aggregate transfers to their children entirely as a matter of course and without the mediation of any conscious altruistic deliberations: this is what parents qua parents do and we for the most part take it entirely for granted.

Now, economists from Adam Smith on have had a particular interest in arrangements that 'economise on virtue'. Here, I take it as self-evident that in the overwhelmingly predominant number of cases the international adoption of children has benevolent consequences: the child is lodged in an environment of affection and care and security that is literally worlds away from what that child would otherwise know. Yet there is no particular strain on the virtue of those who bring those benevolent consequences about. The adoptive parents offer their love and their means and, indeed, everything they have to offer with enthusiasm, eagerness and dedication. We do not require sainthood here; or if we do, it is a variety of sainthood that is amazingly common. However, the ready availability of parental affection should not lead us to take it for granted. The object of policy, it seems to me, ought to be to mobilise these natural instincts as extensively as possible, not to inhibit their operation.

Think for a moment of international adoption simply as an immigration program. Suppose I told you of a form of immigration under which the sponsor would take full responsibility for the immigrant; would ensure that immigrant's full acculturation into Australian life; would maintain that immigrant fully for up to 18 years (including providing for the immigrant's education in some measure); and provide the prospect of support and a guarantee of continued concern thereafter. And all this without any assault of the immigrant's rights — with the incidental expectation of a contribution of upwards of $200 000 to the immigrant's establishment costs. Seems like a pretty fair offer to me.

### The 'Assault on the Child's Identity' Argument

I have argued that none of the earlier considerations amounts to much of a case against inter-country adoptions. The questions about identity are more difficult to dispose of. There is an apparently widespread intuition that children ought ideally to be brought up 'in the culture into which they are born'. And this intuition is apparently shared by adoptive-parent associations who seem to acknowledge an obligation to make adoptive children as aware as possible of their 'indigenous'

cultures. I find this view quite puzzling. At least for infant children the view strikes me indeed as extraordinary, because it seems to imply that culture and ethnicity are genetic rather than environmental attributes: that identity, to put it baldly, is a matter of race. Perhaps there is a fear that in later life, the child himself and/or others will see him as alienated from the ethnic and cultural allegiances of those who look like himself, and that this will lead to some kind of identity crisis: a catastrophic war of alien impulses. But on this front, the evidence is entirely lacking: foreign adoptees, as far as the evidence extends, appear to have no less self-esteem than others of the same age in the population at large.

The truth of the matter is, I believe, that many of those who make the connection between the child's 'identity' and the culture of the child's birthplace do not act to defend so much the rights or interests of the child as the culture of the child's natural parents and/or extended community. Indeed, the child is made to serve that culture, essentially involuntarily, and is seen to be properly claimed by it. That this is a consideration for the country of birth is hardly to be wondered at: politics will necessarily play a role in policies of child release, and defence of the relevant domestic culture will predictably play some role in that politics. And equally in agreements among sovereign states (such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) the political implications within those sovereign states (including in particular the imperative to defend indigenous culture) will predictably play a privileged role. But what seems to me to be a major puzzle is why the prevailing ideology in domestic social welfare circles also insists on a connection between race and culture/ethnicity and does so under the guise of protecting the integrity of the child's identity.

## V. CULTURE, IDENTITY AND MULTICULTURALISM

I have no solution to this puzzle. But I do nurture certain suspicions. And it is in connection with those suspicions that, at long last, the question of multiculturalism makes an appearance on my stage.

As I have indicated, the claim that I find underlying the social-welfare position on inter-country adoptions and that I find most objectionable in its effects is the claim that 'cultures' take ethical primacy over 'persons'. That claim is one that goes with a certain strand of multiculturalist thinking that involves what I term 'normative collectivism'. This 'normative collectivism' treats societies or cultures as ethical primes. Multiculturalism is taken as good because it is seen to be good for societies; the maintenance and juxtaposition of the

relevant cultures becomes a means to that social good. On this view, persons derive value from being culture-bearers rather than in their own right. Their ethical significance derives from being members of a multicultural society , a society, that is, that is somehow better for being multicultural and needs representatives of the various cultures to secure that betterness.

In contrast, I am a normative individualist. By this I mean that all 'good' has to be good for someone, and that cultures and societies only make claims on our moral attention because and to the extent that they are valued by actual persons. This position should not be characterised as a radical atomism, still less as ahistorical. In particular, I do not want to minimise the extent to which culture contributes to a sense of identity, or the very genuine grief that people experience when they see their culture disappearing. Nor do I want to deny that Australians may feel a loyalty to some mystic entity 'Australia' for no better reason than that they and Australia happen to be 'here', 'now'. But I do want to deny that anyone's identity can properly be exhausted by his belonging to a culture or a nation; indeed, that the claims of any group on a person's identity can ever be total and/or ultimate.

I confess that I have no well-worked theory of identity and no satisfying account to offer as to the role that culture specifically plays in that identity. But, surely, identity must include in some measure: a person's own experience; the person's interpretation of that experience; and the particular other persons' experiences and interpretations that she chooses to 'make her own' as we might say, or in some other way 'identify with'. On that reading, identity is continually emerging, as the person's experience expands and as she discovers new links with particular groups of others and discards yet other links as being of less significance. 'Cultures' may be various of these relevant 'particular groups', and in this sense cultures may become a significant part of the vocabulary of identity. Or those cultures may influence the way different persons construct their identity — more grammar than vocabulary. In particular, different cultures may involve different conceptions of the authority of the person herself in determining identity: whether she chooses her identity or has it thrust upon her. But, whatever the account, identity is always in some measure open-ended, and in the case of the child radically so.

To slightly misquote Thomas Traherne:

> An infant's soul is like an empty book in which anything may be written. It is capable of all things, yet containeth nothing.

Or at least so it seems to me. And as Traherne goes on:

> I have a mind to fill this with profitable wonders, and with those things that will show my love — things strange, yet common; most high, yet plain; infinitely profitable, yet not unseen. Truths you love, but know not.

So might the prospective parent well desire. None of this is anti-multiculturalism. Quite the contrary. But it does carry a couple of implications for how multiculturalism is construed. First, arguments for or against multiculturalism ought to be cast in terms of the good of persons. And second, against any possibly hegemonic claims of particular cultures, we ought to be particularly attentive to the needs and claims of multicultural persons. The ideal multicultural society is not, as I see it, one partitioned into mutually exclusive sets of persons, each set representing a different culture, but rather one composed of overlapping sets in which significant numbers of persons are themselves bicultural or tricultural. In that kind of 'melting pot', the divorce of racial from cultural characteristics is exactly the kind of thing we should expect and we should resist systematically policy moves that seek to 'match up' race and culture. Or for that matter, any analogous moves to suppress pluralism of persons in the interests of the pluralism of larger groups or entire societies.

I have only one small thing to add by way of confession. It is that I have a taste for ambiguity, not less in moral than in other areas. I find that I can almost always put myself in the other guy's shoes, and make a half-persuasive case for his point of view. And I often find in myself a disposition to do just this. Perhaps this is a virtue of a kind. But it can sap one's moral vigour. Too much imagination can leave one, with Hamlet, 'sicklied o'er with the pallid hue of thought'. Here, at least, in the 'baby trade' there is something that strikes me as unambiguously good, at least within the framework of the standard protections. For would-be parents, for the children themselves, and even for the rest of us, it is nothing short of tragic that the good on offer is systematically, and determinedly confounded. Forget protectionism. Here is a case where barriers to exchange are truly, truly vicious.

# Multiculturalism, Refugees, and Duties Beyond Borders

**William Maley** is Associate Lecturer in Politics at the University of New South Wales, at the Australian Defence Force Academy, where he has taught since 1984. He is also a Project Associate of the Regime Change and Regime Maintenance in Asia and the Pacific Project at the Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University; and has served as a consultant to the Australian charity AUSTCARE on its work for Afghan refugees. He has co-authored *Regime Change in Afghanistan: Foreign Intervention and the Politics of Legitimacy* (Westview Press, Boulder, 1991), and *Political Order in Post-Communist Afghanistan* (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 1992); and co-edited *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989) and *The Transition from Socialism: State and Civil Society in the USSR* (Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1991).

# Multiculturalism, Refugees, and Duties Beyond Borders

William Maley

## I. INTRODUCTION

To many philosophers, the circumscription of moral obligations by geographical boundaries is disturbing: the notion of special duties that may underpin treating compatriots differently from strangers coexists uneasily with universalist ideas that emphasise the irrelevance of distinctions based on national identity (Miller, 1988). Indeed, recent decades have witnessed an upsurge of discussion of 'human rights' claims, made by individuals not on the basis of their membership of a specific nation or residence in a particular nation state, but rather on account simply of their humanity. And for many people, this has provided a patch of light in what otherwise has been a rather dark century.

Although the frontiers that delineate nation states from one another are often no more than historical relics, reflecting the wrath of empires long past rather than any principles of demarcation defensible on rational grounds, they have all too frequently been used to deny to individuals the right of exit from a sociopolitical order that to those individuals is altogether oppressive (Dowty, 1987). If the state — in the sense of 'a complex set of institutional arrangements for rule' that 'reserves to itself the business of rule over a territorially bounded society' (Poggi, 1978:1) — were invariably benevolent or minimalist, the presence of these boundaries might not be so troubling. But we all know it is not. The scale of genocide and politicide since the end of World War II has been simply appalling (Harff & Gurr, 1988), and there is no reason to suspect that the conditions that spawn state-organised terror will not recur (Bushnell et al., 1991). This, in turn, creates a problem for public policy in liberal democracies. No matter how tightly a repressive state may police its borders, a certain number of imaginative people will always evade the constraints and manage to escape. Such people we tend to label 'refugees'.

The term 'refugee' has both a specific legal meaning and a more general meaning in popular usage. The 1951 UN Convention Relating To The Status Of Refugees defines a refugee as a person who

'owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country'. Popular usage, however, supplies a broader meaning. In contrast to the UN definition, it includes victims of natural disaster and famine, as well as those who are forced by political circumstances to quit their homes but are unable to cross an international frontier. The discrepancy between these two usages has prompted a number of observers to take the view that the legal definition, while providing the basis for an international regime of protection, should not exhaust the obligations of liberal democratic governments towards displaced persons. Andrew Shacknove, for example, arguing that an 'overly narrow conception of "refugee" will contribute to the denial of international protection to countless people in dire circumstances whose claim to assistance is impeccable', has offered a more expansive definition of a refugee: a person deprived of basic rights, with no recourse to his home government, and with access to international assistance (Shacknove, 1985:276, 282). It is this conception that I find the more intuitively appealing, although except where otherwise noted I use the term 'refugee' in the narrower Convention sense.

Distinguishing refugees from other border crossers is not always a straightforward task. Liberal-democratic governments can be confronted with 'anticipatory' refugee movements, where the refugee 'leaves his home country before the deterioration of the military or political situation prevents his orderly departure' (Kunz, 1973:131). The temptation to view such individuals merely as migrants can be overwhelming, and can lead to embarrassing lapses of judgment, such as the heartless treatment that a number of governments meted out to Jewish refugees from Germany in the mid-to-late 1930s (Angell & Buxton, 1939). At an international conference held in Switzerland in July 1938, the Australian delegate, T.W. White, responded to the plight of the Jews by remarking that it would 'no doubt be appreciated . . . that as we have no racial problem we are not desirous of importing one' (Gilbert, 1986:64). This chilling remark brings to the surface an oft-perceived tension between on the one hand generosity towards refugees, and on the other the preservation of harmony between cultures, and it is on this alleged tension that I focus in the remainder of this essay.

## II. THE CLAIMS OF HUMANITARIAN IMMIGRATION

The coming years do not look promising for humanitarian migration. Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program places were reduced on a one-for-one basis by the Australian government's introduction of a 'Special Assistance Category' of 4000 places for 1991/92, a move that singled out particular groups as beneficiaries in an entirely arbitrary, and possibly electorally-motivated, fashion. And in May 1992, the Department for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA) announced a cut of 2000 places in the refugee and humanitarian component of the migration program for 1992/93. In this harsh climate, it is more important than ever to emphasise that the case for humanitarian migration is morally persuasive. I therefore propose to put forward four propositions.

### Moral Obligations to Refugees

First, while Australia is under a legal obligation under the UN Convention to accord asylum to those who substantiate a claim to refugee status after arriving in Australia, we should also be prepared to resettle refugees in Australia, and on a larger scale than at present. Second, Australian government procedures for refugee selection, though proclaimed to be 'non-discriminatory', have the effect of systematically disadvantaging certain applicants in a way that is indefensible; and need should generally be the criterion used to select those refugees who will be offered the chance of resettlement. Third, 'special duties' have very limited relevance to the selection of refugees; and the 'cultural' background from which an asylum seeker comes can never on its own provide justification for denying to that person the benefits of resettlement. Fourth, it is important that bureaucratic decisions, both in the choice of applicants for resettlement and in the determination of claims to refugee status within Australia, be exposed to the accountability provided by judicial review.

My own preference, I should remark at the outset, would be very much for a world of open borders. This applied until comparatively recently in human history. Up to the time of World War I, it was possible to travel the world without even a passport (Passmore, 1972:267). But the combination of affluence and technology put an end to open borders, and whereas one may still look with optimism to the breakdown of borders that serve only to keep insiders in, borders that keep outsiders out are here to stay. This means that our discussion from this point becomes one of public policy, since it is up to the state

to establish exceptions to the general rule that closes borders to all but citizens, permanent residents, and authorised temporary entrants. Immigration policy typically is concerned with the number of migrants to be granted residence within an identified period, with the composition of the migrant intake over that period, and with the criteria and procedures for migrant selection.

The UN Convention imposes an obligation upon Australia not to return refugees to the country from which they have fled — the so-called obligation of *non-refoulement*. The Australian government has been accused of approaching this obligation in a grotesquely legalistic fashion, notoriously through a legislative provision deeming that those who are denied an entry permit at points of entry have never arrived in Australia (Crawford & Hyndman, 1989). From my point of view, however, it suffices to note that those who apply for refugee status within Australia are to be assessed by what one might call 'refugee' criteria, and need not meet broader criteria for migrant selection of the type that may apply to those who make an application for refugee settlement at some Australian government office abroad.

For many, even this exceeds the limit of Australia's responsibilities towards refugees. Lincoln Day, for example, has argued that as far as physical accommodation of refugees is concerned, Australia cannot reasonably be expected to do more than allow itself 'to be used as a "port of first resort" on a temporary basis and in concert with as many other nations as possible . . . with no promise, implied or otherwise, that those admitted would be allowed to remain permanently', and that selection of refugees for permanent residence 'should be in terms of the kind of criteria applied to non-refugee migrants' (Day, 1988:134). However, this approach, while having a certain populist appeal, is totally at odds with the thrust of the UN Convention, and if imitated by other developed countries would set refugees adrift with no hope of resuming stable and meaningful lives. Most regrettably, the Australian government has recently moved to a policy of granting only four-year temporary entry permits to successful applicants of this kind (DILGEA, 1991), but at least it has not (yet) reached the point of applying the 'survival of the fittest' rule which Day appears to endorse.

**Refugees and the Immigration Program**

The position of refugees within the broader migration program is not shaped by obligations under international law, but by much more overtly political factors. Admissions under the Refugee Program and the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) must compete with both

skilled and family migration — and for reasons that hardly need to be elaborated at great length, interest-group activity in support of these last two programs tends to be much more extensive than that in favour of refugee resettlement, where the Refugee Council of Australia is almost alone in seeking to highlight the importance of generosity towards refugees. During the 1980s, the pattern of migration reflected this clearly. From 1982/83 to 1989/90, Refugee and SHP admissions totalled only 103 525, or 12.08 per cent of total settler arrivals of 856 824 during the period. However, even this percentage is somewhat skewed by larger figures from the earlier part of the decade: from 1986/87 to 1989/90, the annual percentages were 9.8 per cent, 7.7 per cent, 7.5 per cent, and 9.9 per cent respectively (Bureau of Immigration Research, 1991:17). This drop-off is not due to a shortage of refugees for resettlement: the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that the worldwide total of refugees and displaced persons is in the order of 17 million. One therefore needs to ask whether the weight given to refugee resettlement is appropriate.

If one's natural sympathy is for open borders, this immediately leads to rather odious comparisons. Nonetheless, it is difficult to challenge the argument that from a moral point of view at least, humanitarian claims should be given priority. This leaves us, however, with the difficulty of deciding what distinguishes a claim for resettlement on humanitarian grounds from some other claim. It is wrong to say that the expression 'humanitarian claim' is synonymous with 'claim based on refugee status': as I noted earlier, there are many compelling reasons for flight from a country that do not make one a 'refugee' under the UN Convention. So-called 'economic refugees' provide classic illustrations of this point. In many cases, of course, economic deprivation is simply a symptom of political persecution — as occurs when Marxist-Leninist regimes abolish private property rights, seek to provide goods and services centrally through bureaucratic hierarchies, and sit back to watch living standards plummet (see Eberstadt, 1988; Matthews, 1989). Unfortunately, it is often difficult to persuade Western governments of this point. But as well as 'economic refugees', there are many other potential migrants with important humanitarian claims. Close relatives whose medical needs cannot be met in their home countries provide one example. Another is where family members have been separated by circumstances that prevent reunion by any means other than migration to Australia — a circumstance that frequently arises when refugees attempt to have other family members join them in this country.

A somewhat different way to approach this matter is to identify those categories of migrant admitted under current programs whose claims have little or no humanitarian dimension. This is not of course to suggest that there is anything wrong with their desire to live where they choose, but simply that in moral terms, their claims should carry less weight than those of some others when difficult decisions have to be made. There are sound reasons for believing that a good deal of family and skilled migration falls into this category. The Skilled Migration Program does not even purport to have a humanitarian dimension. Indeed, as a Refugee Week speaker remarked at the National Press Club in 1988, before one grants an entry permit to a millionaire, it pays to find out how he made his millions.

The humanitarian claims of family migration need also to be viewed with caution. The confusion that can surround this discussion is well illustrated in the following assertion advanced by a representative of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia in a contribution to the National Immigration Outlook conference in 1990: 'Not being able to provide and care for a member of one's immediate family who happens to be living outside Australia must be recognised as a denial of a fundamental human right' (Einspinner, 1990). It would be easy to remark 'nonsense upon stilts' and leave it at that. But apart from its deployment of rights-talk in such a loose fashion, this proposition rests on a suppressed premise that many would wish to challenge, namely, that a migrant can provide and care for a member of his or her immediate family only if that family member is permitted to migrate to Australia. As a general proposition, this is plainly incorrect. For a claim to be treated as humanitarian, it seems plausible to require that there be no other reasonable means by which the end to which it is directed could be achieved. This is hardly the case in much of the Family Reunion Program, where often the fragmentation of the family is the result of the conscious and deliberate decision of one member to leave the family, and come to Australia, and where that family member can either support other family members through remittances, or safely return to his or her homeland in order to rejoin the family. Of course, some family migration has a humanitarian and compassionate character, but this is by no means true in all cases. On the contrary, Birrell has argued that for 'most Third World communities it is a carefully planned migration strategy often involving prolonged family separation' (Birrell, 1990:53).

**Resettlement vs Voluntary Repatriation**

Supporters of non-humanitarian migrant entry might make a number of responses to this argument, but I wish particularly to discuss only one at this point. The best solution to refugee problems, so the argument runs, is not resettlement but voluntary repatriation. Developed countries such as Australia should recognise this, and therefore channel resources into supporting refugees in countries of first asylum — something that may be easier if there is a substantial business migration program to support a high rate of economic growth.

No one who has witnessed the misery of a refugee camp will deny the importance of support for refugees in countries of first asylum. This is a vital part of any aid program worth its name, not least because millions of refugees would no more desire resettlement in Australia than a trip to Mars. It is an error, however, to suppose that because voluntary repatriation is an appropriate solution for the problems of some refugees, it is an appropriate solution for the problems of all. For example, for over a decade in Afghanistan, members of the nationalist political party *Afghan Millat* were targeted for persecution by the communist regime (Saikal & Maley, 1991:35). Yet the demise in April 1992 of communist rule, though likely to trigger a substantial voluntary repatriation, does not necessarily solve the problems of the *Millat* supporters, as they are despised by some elements of the Afghan resistance just as much as they were detested by the communists (Asia Watch, 1991:112). Serious arguments can be made in support of voluntary repatriation as a solution to some refugee problems, but they should not be used, as they all too often are, as screens for bureaucratic and governmental inaction. As Stanley Hoffmann has argued, in the case of refugees 'it remains the duty of each country to open its own borders as widely as possible, without looking for excuses or waiting for others to act' (Hoffmann, 1981:224–5).

Summarising to this point, it is not sufficient for the Australian government simply to meet its formal obligations under the UN Convention. We also have a role to play beyond our borders by giving refugee resettlement a prominent place in the migration program. This is not, as far as I can judge, a point of contention. Even those commentators who are most strenuous in their criticisms of the recent high level of immigration appear to recognise that refugees constitute a special case (J. Smith, 1991:25). More politically contentious is the claim that humanitarian migration should figure more prominently in the migration program than is presently the case. It is not, however, a claim that strikes me as especially contentious from a moral point of view.

## III. THE REQUIREMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

In a world with 17 million displaced persons, it is clear that the selection of a subset of these for resettlement in Australia will involve the use of criteria well beyond the mere attainment of refugee status under the UN Convention. Australia's resettlement policy is avowedly 'non-discriminatory'. Since the process of selection *ipso facto* requires that officers discriminate between different applicants, the import of this claim is rather that 'irrelevant' characteristics are not taken into account to an applicant's disadvantage. What is irrelevant, however, is a matter of considerable importance.

Three distinct priorities are taken into account to determine who should be admitted, namely the presence of family in Australia, close ties with Australia, and resettlement potential or humanitarian claims. Those who do not fall into one of these categories can expect to have their applications rejected without the chance of an interview. Although these priorities have some superficial appeal, they notably fail to build into the calculus of decision any special weighting to distinguish between different degrees of persecution. Anyone who has had the least bit to do with refugee communities will be aware that, depending on where they apply, applicants with only the most tenuous of claims to a well-founded fear of persecution, but with close family members in Australia, may have a much better chance of resettlement than those with no family connection, but with an overwhelming claim to refugee status. Day has recently argued, and I am inclined to agree, that need should be the primary basis of selection. On moral grounds, he suggests, 'criteria like usefulness and assimilability are simply irrelevant; irrelevant because they give priority to Australian rather than refugee interests (and to those of only some Australians, at that) and all but ignore the needs of the refugees, themselves' (Day, 1991:373). It is important, however, to be precise about the meaning of 'needs' in this context. 'Need' does not connote a superior moral claim — fortunately, as such a usage, as well as such an argument, would be difficult to defend (Maley, 1985; Goodin, 1988a:27–50). Furthermore, even if one were to accept the view that there are 'basic needs' for such things as food and shelter, it would not follow that a lack of these should mark someone for resettlement: on the contrary, what those whose plight is so desperate require is emergency assistance *in situ*. Need for resettlement, in my view, increases as the likelihood diminishes that an individual will be able to lead a decent life in the future in either his or her homeland or his or her country of first refuge. While

it would be invidious to attempt a comprehensive listing of those categories of refugees whose need would be greatest, a number of groups come to mind. Perhaps the most obvious are the seriously disabled and their immediate families; but widows, orphans, and members of social groups historically persecuted in both homeland and country of first asylum also deserve priority. At present, there is provision for the accelerated processing of claims for resettlement from 'women-at-risk'. However, applicants with even minor disabilities are likely to be rejected with scant regard to the need for resettlement.[1]

In a number of other respects, current selection procedures are seriously flawed. First, while applications are purportedly 'considered on a case-by-case basis by migration officers located in Australian missions' (DILGEA, 1991:11), corners are often cut. Thus in March 1989, the Office in New Delhi of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees posted a notice stating the Australian High Commission 'has informed us that they have stopped all applications for resettlement in Australia from Afghans until they know what will happen in Afghanistan and if people can go back'.

Second, refugee selection procedures are systematically biased by the allocation of refugee places. In 1990/91, apart from a small general category, refugee places were spread between five regional programs: Indo-Chinese (4000), East European (300), Latin American (1900), Middle East (3600), African (290) (DILGEA, 1991:17). This can create serious problems of injustice. Like cases are not necessarily treated in like fashion. If applications greatly outstrip available places, migration officers are forced to devise, 'on the run' as it were, ever more exacting

1. In January 1992, for example, I paid an unannounced visit in Islamabad to a 66-year-old Afghan refugee whom I had last seen in February 1989. He was not at home when I arrived, having walked to the Mosque for Friday prayers, but he returned shortly afterwards, recognised me immediately, and greeted me in English with typical warmth. This was something of a surprise to me, for although his application for resettlement in Australia (where most of his children now live) had been accepted in principle under the SHP in August 1990, final approval had been refused in February 1991 on the ground that he suffered from 'legal blindness such that the applicant would qualify medically for the invalid pension on arrival in Australia'. DILGEA was unmoved by expert evidence supplied by the Refugee Advice and Casework Service that the applicant had 'no apparent visual disability' and could 'in no way be regarded as blind'. In July 1992, my friend died of heatstroke during the heatwave that struck northern Pakistan, yet another blow to a family already traumatised by the terrible war in their country of birth. The government's heartless treatment of this kind and gentle man has left me ashamed to be an Australian.

criteria for selection, often of the most suspect kind. Take the case of the officer whose decision was reviewed in the Federal Court in *Ebrahimi* v. *The Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs* (Federal Court of Australia, No. G 486 of 1986, 23 May 1988). In this case, the officer had denied resettlement to an Afghan applicant on the ground that his having 'secretly carried weapons' for the Afghan resistance showed him per se to be not of good character. Further, noting, *inter alia*, the 'apparently traditional dress' of the applicant's wife — a factor subsequently characterised by Mr Justice Einfeld as 'completely irrelevant to anything' — the officer concluded that she 'did not have personal qualities likely to facilitate successful resettlement in Australia'. Given that the Australian government supported the political objectives of the Afghan resistance, and had no fashion policy, these grounds understandably struck the judge as an inappropriate basis for decision.

Finally, the location of migration officers injects a bias into the refugee-selection procedure. One of the reasons why so few African refugees are resettled in Australia is that there are so few posts at which applications can be lodged. The distribution of posts reflects a range of factors — broad concerns of foreign policy and commercial policy, pressures from Australian-based ethnic communities, and the historical level of successful applications from existing posts — but the size and needs of refugee groups tend to have a low priority. For example, in 1981/82, not one Afghan refugee arrived in Australia, even though massive population outflows from Afghanistan to Pakistan had been taking place from 1978 onwards (Maley, 1989a). The reason for this surprising figure is quite straightforward: there was no resident migration officer in the Australian Embassy in Islamabad, and it was years before one was appointed. Throughout the 1980s, Afghans made up the largest single group of refugees anywhere in the world. By contrast, from 1981/1982 to 1989/90, only 258 Afghans arrived in Australia as refugees, and 1256 under the Special Humanitarian Program — 1.2 per cent of the total refugee and SHP intake during that period (Bureau of Immigration Research, 1991:7–13).

## IV. DUTIES, CULTURE, AND THE CHOICE OF REFUGEES

Many would argue that need is not the only criterion that should be used in choosing refugees for resettlement. There is an obvious case, based on responsibilities to existing citizens, for excluding from

resettlement those refugees whose need might be great but whose personal histories suggest a taste for the indiscriminate use of violence; or those who are suffering from acutely contagious diseases not presently found in Australia. These criteria are not especially contentious. Far more problematical is the attempt to augment the criterion of need with criteria derived from special duties based on such factors as proximity to the refugees' homeland, or historical association.

This seems to me to be an unsatisfactory step. There is much to be said for Goodin's interpretation of special duties as 'merely devices whereby the moral community's general duties get assigned to particular agents' (Goodin, 1988b:678); and once one accepts this view, the argument that duties should be assigned in proportion to the agent's ability to discharge the obligation that they impose also has considerable force. Yet 'special duties' claims of the kind just mentioned operate in a quite different way. First, such 'special duties' claims can all too easily provide an excuse for wealthy countries to decline to resettle. Refugee concentrations are typically found well away from those countries whose general level of economic development would best equip them to cope with the influx. Burmese refugees flee to Bangladesh, not to Australia. Second, the rhetoric of 'special duties' can be deployed to justify policies aimed largely or solely at satisfying the demands of domestic interest groups (Maley, 1989b). Historical association almost guarantees such pressure-group activity.

One particularly dangerous criterion of selection, yet one that many might find especially attractive, is that of cultural compatibility. The notion of culture is a far from straightforward one and it would be misleading to suggest that what I have to say can more than scratch the surface of what is an extremely complex topic (see Geertz, 1973). Nonetheless, there are a number of points that one can make which help to map out the complexities in such a way as to facilitate use of the concept. First, culture is a descriptive rather than an evaluative term. Second, culture is an attribute of collectivities. Although we may speak of an individual as being cultured (or, for that matter, uncultured) it is not enormously useful in an explanatory model to refer to the culture of the individual as part of the explanation. We should rather refer to the beliefs of the individual and only when those beliefs are shared with other people and replicated between generations through a process of socialisation should we refer to culture as opposed to individual conviction. Third, such shared beliefs become important when they are embodied in the traditions, norms, conventions, and rules of a society: in other words, when they provide

secondary reasons for action. Religion, seen by some as inextricably connected by culture (Eliot, 1962:67–82), is one obvious source of such beliefs, but mythology, ideology, and science can be others.

Traditions, norms, conventions and rules all have an existence that is separate from that of people who may replicate traditions, or obey conventions, norms and rules. In other words, culture supplies reasons for action, but is not actually constituted by the actions that individuals undertake. Jon Elster has written that there are 'no societies', only 'individuals who interact with each other' (Elster, 1989:248). Yet if we define culture in terms of belief, there is no inconsistency between Elster's methodological individualism and the analytical use of the idea of culture. What we rather need to do is recognise the multi-dimensionality of the phenomenon of the culture. This can run against the thrust of schematic social science. As Fredrik Barth has recently remarked, 'we are trained to suppress the signs of incoherence and multi-culturalism in the scene as inessential aspects of modernisation' and 'instead of trying to make our theories embrace what is there, we are led to picking out some small, distinctive pattern in this confusing scene, and applying our ingenuity to salvaging a (functionalist) holism by constructing (structuralist) isomorphies and inversions of this randomly chosen pattern, as if it incoded a deeper connectedness' (Barth, 1989:121–2).

There are lessons here for us all. Those I wish to highlight relate to the danger of oversimplification. Cultural compatibility is a perilously elusive notion. What may look like cultural differences between members of different groups may not relate to culture at all. Hostility between groups can be based on ascriptive characteristics that are certainly not culturally determined, although they may be epiphenomenally linked with particular cultures. It can also be fuelled by a range of factors, related to personality, social structure, and the degree of intergroup contact (McAllister & Moore, 1989:2–6). Furthermore, factors that appear to have negative implications for harmonious interaction between different groups may not be as threatening as one might think at first glance. A careful recent study of immigrant groups has found that Vietnamese-born respondents manifested markedly higher levels of authoritarianism than Australian-born respondents (McAllister & Moore, 1991b:140–1). Yet the political implications of the dimensions of authoritarianism that the study identifies are far from clear.

First, it is notable that the Vietnamese respondents proved to be no more ethnocentric than the Australian respondents, and that more

Vietnamese than Australians agreed 'very much' that immigrants should be like Australians — 40 per cent as compared to 29 per cent. Second, within the Vietnamese sample, questions designed to detect authoritarianism produced similar patterns of response from refugee and non-refugee respondents, except for a question seeking a response to the proposition that insult to honour must be punished. On this, refugees were notably stronger in their agreement than non-refugees: 79 per cent as compared to 66 per cent. However, one can legitimately query whether this dimension of authoritarianism should be viewed negatively as a hindrance to intercommunal relations, or positively as a symptom of commitment to principled behaviour. In refugees, it might point to a deeper unwillingness to compromise principles for the sake of an easy life, of a kind that one perhaps should admire rather than censure.

Most important of all, it is an ecological fallacy to claim that the fact that an individual comes from a cultural background featuring particular traditions and norms signifies that the behaviour of that individual in particular need reflect some or all of those traditions or norms. It may make sense not to select for resettlement those refugees who are likely to act in an anti-social fashion after arriving in Australia; but a decision in such a case should be made only on the basis of the personal history of the individual applicant. If an applicant for resettlement on refugee grounds is to be denied entry to Australia, it cannot legitimately be on account of the applicant's cultural background alone.

## V. BUREAUCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY

I conclude with some brief remarks about the accountability of bureaucratic decisions. Despite the avalanche in recent years of statute law dealing with migration, a great deal of discretion remains with individual migration officers. A migration officer who wishes to give effect to some private agenda has scope to do so. Yet a resettlement offer should not be a gift from a particular migration officer. It should be the outcome of an evaluative process governed by clearly-defined principles. To ensure that this is the case, it is vital that an appeal mechanism be in place to allow a challenge to suspect decisions. This is indeed the case where applications for refugee status within Australia are concerned, but the refugee applicant overseas, in contrast to the family migration applicant, has no access to an institutionalised appeals mechanism. On occasion, as in *Ebrahimi's* Case, procedural defects can be overcome by a sponsor's use of the Administrative

Decisions (Judicial Review) Act, but this does not strictly allow a review on the merits of a case, of the kind that might be necessary to rectify manifest injustices.

Beyond institutionalised appeal mechanisms, however, it is important that the upper echelons of bureaucratic agencies such as DILGEA be mindful of the fact that public servants are not Platonic Guardians, but office holders charged with performing certain tasks under the law. All too often, these agencies appear to acquire a task-performing ethos in which law and the judiciary are seen as irritating obstacles to goal-rationality rather than essential components of liberal constitutionalism. Particularly worrying is the tendency of governmental agencies to mount hopeless appeals, often at ludicrous expense, with the purpose not of securing the reversal of adverse decisions at first instance, but of deterring aggrieved but impoverished potential plaintiffs from seeking to protect their legal rights in the first place. At a lower level, this same mentality can be reflected in maddening non-cooperation, although some forms of legally 'unreasonable' conduct can again be challenged under the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act, as was recently the case in *Liu* v. *The Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs* (Federal Court of Australia, No. ACT G 4 of 1991, 22 May 1991).

Refugee applicants beyond our borders have very few avenues for ensuring that their applications are considered properly and fairly. Yet if we have obligations to resettle refugees in Australia, it seems reasonable also to suggest that the government should accord refugee applicants access to the kinds of appeal mechanisms that help to ensure such proper treatment. At the moment, the lack of such mechanisms is a serious flaw in the structure of our migration procedures, which should be promptly corrected. This does not seem too much to ask.

## References


Afshari, R. (1991), 'Ali Mazrui or Salman Rushdie: The Satanic Verses and Islamist Politics', *Alternatives* 16(1): 107–14.

Ajzenstat, J. (1984), 'Collectivity and Individual Right in 'Mainstream' Liberalism: John Arthur Roebuck and the Patriotes', *Journal of Canadian Studies* 19(3): 99–111.

Akhtar, S. (1989), *Be Careful with Muhammad! The Salman Rushdie Affair*, Bellew, London.

Alomes, S. (1988), *A Nation At Last? The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism 1880–1988*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

Angell, N. & D. Buxton (1939), *You and the Refugee*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.

Asia Watch (1991), *Afghanistan: The Forgotten War*, New York.

Banton, M. (1983), *Racial and Ethnic Competition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Barbalet, J. (1988), *Citizenship*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes.

Barth, F. (1989), 'The Analysis of Culture in Complex Societies', *Ethnos* 54(3–4): 120–42.

Berlin, I. (1965), 'J.G. Herder', *Encounter*, July: 29–48; August: 42–51.

Berry, J. et al. (1977), *Multiculturalism and Ethnic Attitudes in Canada*, Canadian Government Publishers, Ottawa.

Birch, A. (1989), *Nationalism and National Integration*, Unwin Hyman, London.

Birrell, R. (1990), *The Chains that Bind: Family Reunion Migration to Australia in the 1980s*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Blainey, G. (1984), *All for Australia*, Methuen Haynes, Sydney.

Bullivant, B. (1980), 'Searching for an Ideology of Pluralism: Some Results of a Cross-National Survey', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 5: 53–70.

Bureau of Immigration Research (1991), *Refugee and Special Humanitarian Arrivals*, Canberra.

Bushnell, P. et al. (1991), *State Organized Terror: The Case of Violent Internal Repression*, Westview Press, Boulder.

Campbell, A. et al. (1960), *The American Voter*, Wiley, New York.

Carpenter, J. (n.d.), *The South as a Conscious Minority, 1789–1861: A Study in Political Thought*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia (first published 1930).

Carter, S. (1991), *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby*, Basic Books, New York.

Castles, S., M. Kalantzis, B. Cope, & M. Morrissey (1988), *Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism in Australia*, Pluto Press, Sydney.

Ch'ien Lung, Emperor (1972), 'A Decree', pp. 100–07 in F. Schurmann & O. Schell (eds), *China Readings 1: Imperial China: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.

Collins, H. (1985), 'Political Ideology in Australia: The Distinctiveness of a Benthamite Society', in S. Graubard (ed.), *Australia: The Daedalus Symposium*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.

Crawford, J. & P. Hyndman (1989), 'Three Heresies in the Application of the Refugee Convention', *International Journal of Refugee Law* 1(2): 155–79.

Dahrendorf, R. (1988), *The Modern Social Conflict*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London.

Danley, J. (1991), 'Liberalism, Aboriginal Rights, and Cultural Minorities', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 20(2): 168–85.

Day, L. (1988), 'The international setting: Moral and political dilemmas', pp.129–135 in L. Day & D. Rowland (eds), *How Many More Australians? The Resource and Environmental Conflicts*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne.

—— (1991), 'The Obligation to Refugees', pp.370–379 in J. Smith (ed.), *Immigration, Population and Sustatnable Environments: The Limits to Australia's Growth*, The Flinders Press, Adelaide.

Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA) (1991), *Australia's Refugee Resettlement Programs: An Outline*, Canberra.

Dowty, A. (1987), *Closed Borders: The Contemporary Assault on Freedom of Movement*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

D'Souza, D. (1991), *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*, The Free Press, New York.

Dube, S. (1988), *Modernization and Development: The Search for Alternative Paradigms*, Zed Books, London.

Eberstadt, N. (1988), *The Poverty of Communism*, Transaction Books, New Brunswick.

Einspinner, P. (1990), 'Family Reunion Category', Address to the National Immigration Outlook Conference, Melbourne, 14–16 November.

Eliot, T. (1962), *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, Faber & Faber, London.

Elster, J. (1989), *The Cement of Society: A study of social order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Esman, M. (ed.) (1977), *Ethnic Conflict in the Western World*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

Finer, S. (1970), *Comparative Government*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.

Fieras, A. (1991), '"Tuku Rangatiratanga": Devolution in iwi-government relations', pp. 171–93 in P. Spoonley et al. (eds), *Nga Take*, Dunmore Press, Palmerston North.

Flynn, J. (1988), 'The Real Job Facing N.Z. Today: Closing the Skill Gap', *The Press* (Christchurch), 13 July.

Foster, L. & D. Stockley (1988), *Australian Multiculturalism: A Documentary History and Critique*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon.

Gans, H. (1968), *More Equality*, Random House, New York.

—— (1975), 'Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2: 1–20.

Geertz, C. (1973), *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Basic Books, New York.

Gilbert, M. (1986), *The Holocaust*, Collins, London.

Glazer, N. & D. Moynihan (1963), *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Beacon, Boston.

Goodin, R. (1988a), *Reasons for Welfare: The Political Theory of the Welfare State*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

—— (1988b), 'What Is So Special about Our Fellow Countrymen?', *Ethics* 98(4): 663–86.

Goot, M. (1991), 'Public Opinion as Paradox: Australian Attitudes to the Rate of Immigration and the Rate of Asian Immigration, 1984–90', *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 3: 277–94.

Gordon, M. (1975), 'Toward a General Theory of Racial and Ethnic Group Relations', in N. Glazer & D. Moynihan (eds), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Graetz, B. & I. McAllister (1988), *Dimensions of Australian Society*, Macmillan, Melbourne.

Hanushek, E. & J. Jackson (1977), *Statistical Methods for Social Scientists*, Academic, New York.

Harff, B. & T. Gurr (1988), 'Toward Empirical Theory of Genocides and Politicides: Identification and Measurement of Cases since 1945', *International Studies Quarterly* 32(3): 359–71.

Hariharan, A. (1983), 'Levelling Down, All the Way', *Overseas Hindustan Times*, 28 April.

Hayek, F. (1988), *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Hechter, M. (1978), 'Group Formation and the Cultural Division of Labor', *American Journal of Sociology* 84: 293–318.

Higley, J., D. Deacon & D. Smart (1979), *Elites in Australia*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

Hindess, B. (1992), 'Citizenship in the modern West', in B. Turner (ed.), *Citizenship*, Sage, London.

Hirst, P. (ed.) (1989), *The Pluralist Theory of the State: selected writings of G.D.H.Cole, J.N. Figgis, and H.J. Laski*, Routledge, London.

Hodges, L. (1991), 'Black Pride in Equal Prejudice', *The Higher Education Supplement*, 9 August.

Hoffmann, S. (1981), *Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse.

Horowitz, D. (1985), *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, University of California Press, Berkeley.

Hume, D. (1903), 'Of National Characters', *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, Grant Richards, London.

Hume, L. (1991), 'Another Look at the Cultural Cringe', *Political Theory Newsletter* 3 (1): 1–36.

Jakubowicz, A. (1981), 'State and Ethnicity: Multiculturalism as Ideology', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 17(3): 4–13.

Jayasuriya, D. (1991), 'State, Nation and Diversity in Australia', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, November: 21–6.

Jones, P. (1990), 'Rushdie, Race and Religion', *Political Studies* 38(4): 687–94.

Jupp, J. (1966), *Arrivals and Departures*, Cheshire-Landsdowne, Melbourne.

—— (1988), 'The Defused Issues: Ethnic and Aboriginal Affairs', in I. McAllister & J. Warhurst (eds), *Australia Votes*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne.

Kedourie, E. (1971), *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London.

Key, V. (1966), *The Responsible Electorate*, Belknap Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Kim, J.-O. & C. Mueller (1978), *Factor Analysis: Statistical Methods and Practical Issues*, Sage, Beverly Hills, California.

King, J. (1978), *Waltzing Materialism*, Harper & Row, Sydney.

Knight, S. (1990), *The Selling of the Australian Mind: from first fleet to third Mercedes*, William Heineman, Melbourne.

Kukathas, C. (1992), 'Are there any cultural rights?', *Political Theory* 20(1): 105–39.

Kunz, E. (1973), 'The Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement', *International Migration Review* 7(2): 125–46.

—— (1975), *The Intruders: Refugee Doctors in Australia*, ANU Press, Canberra.

Kymlicka, W. (1989), *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Lal, B. (1983), 'Perspectives on Ethnicity: Old Wine in New Bottles', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 6: 154–73.

Larmore, C. (1987), *Patterns of Moral Complexity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Lewin-Epstein, N. & M. Semyonov (1986), 'Ethnic Group Mobility in the Israeli Labor Market', *American Sociological Review* 51: 342–51.

Maley, W. (1985), 'Peace, Needs and Utopia', *Political Studies* 33(4): 578–91.

—— (1989a), 'Afghan Refugees: From Diaspora to Repatriation', pp.17–44 in A. Saikal (ed.), *Refugees in the Modern World*, Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra.

—— (1989b), 'Improving Australia's Refugee Resettlement Policy', *Policy* 5(3): 20–2.

Marshall, T. (1950), *Citizenship and Social Class*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

—— (1964), *Class, Citizenship and Social Development*, Doubleday, New York.

Martin, J. (1978), *The Migrant Presence*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

—— (1981), *The Ethnic Dimension: papers on ethnicity and pluralism*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Martin, J., & G. Stent (1990), 'I Think; Therefore I Thank: A Philosophy of Etiquette', *American Scholar* 59: 237–54.

Matthews, M. (1989), *Patterns of Deprivation in the Soviet Union Under Brezhnev and Gorbachev*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford.

Maybury-Lewis, D. (1984), 'Conclusion: Living in Leviathan: Ethnic Groups and the State', pp. 220–31 in D. Maybury-Lewis (ed.), *The Prospects for Plural Societies*, 1982 Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society, American Ethnological Society, Washington.

Mazrui, A. (1990), 'The Satanic Verses or a Satanic Novel? Moral Dilemmas of the Rushdie Affair', *Alternatives* 15(1): 97–121.

McAllister, I. (1991), 'Party Voters, Candidates and Political Attitudes: Testing Three Explanations for Mass-Elite Differences', *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 24: 237–68.

—— (1992), *Political Behaviour: Citizens, Parties, and Elites in Australia*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne.

—— (1993), 'Immigration as a Bipartisan Issue' in J. Jupp & M. Kabala (eds), *The Politics of Immigration*, Bureau of Immigration Research, Melbourne.

—— & R. Moore (1989), *Ethnic Prejudice in Australian Society: Patterns, Intensity and Explanations*, Office of Multicultural Affairs, Canberra.

—— (1991a), *Party Strategy and Change: Australian Party Leaders' Policy Speeches Since 1946*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne.

—— (1991b), 'The development of ethnic prejudice: an analysis of Australian immigrants', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 14(2): 127–51.

McLellan, D. (ed.) (1984), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

McNeill, W. (1986), *Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History: The Donald G. Creighton Lectures, 1985*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.

McQueen, H. (1986), *A New Britannia: An argument concerning the social origins of Australian radicalism and nationalism*, revised edition, Penguin, Melbourne.

McRae, K. (1979) 'The Plural Society and the Western Political Tradition', *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 12(4): 675–88 .

Mendus, S. (1990), 'The Tigers of Wrath and the Horses of Instruction', pp. 3–17 in B. Parekh (ed.), *Free Speech*, Commission for Racial Equality, London.

Mill, J. (1954), *Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government*, Everyman, London.

Miller, D. (1988), 'The Ethical Significance of Nationality', *Ethics* 98(4): 647–62.

—— (1989), *Market, State and Community: Theoretical Foundations of Market Socialism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Moodley, K. (1983), 'Canadian Multiculturalism as Ideology', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4: 189–204.

Mukherjee, B. (1988), 'Immigrant Writing: Give Us Your Maximalists', *New York Times Book Review*, 28 August.

Mulgan, R. (1989a), 'Should indigenous peoples have special rights?', *Orbis* 33: 375–88.

—— (1989b), *Maori, Pakeha and Democracy*, Oxford University Press, Auckland.

—— (1991), 'Peoples of the South Pacific and Their Rights', pp. 117–31 in R. Thakur (ed.), *The South Pacific: Problems, Issues and Prospects*, Macmillan, London.

Multiculturalism, Standing Committee on (1987), *Multiculturalism: building the Canadian Mosaic*, Queen's Printer for Canada, Ottawa.

Naidu, R. (1988), 'The Rise and Fall of Fijian Democracy', *The Dominion*, Wellington, 26 January.

Nicholls, D. (1975), *The Pluralist State*, Macmillan, London.

Nie, N., S. Verba & J. Petrocik (1976), *The Changing American Voter*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) (1991), *Newsletter* 15 (July).

Oates, S. (1978), *With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, Mentor, New York.

Office of Multicultural Affairs (1989), *Multicultural Policies and Programs*, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra.

Parekh, B. (1990a), 'The Rushdie Affair: Research Agenda for Political Philosophy', *Political Studies* 38(4): 695–709.

—— (ed.) (1990b), *Britain: A Plural Society*, Commission for Racial Equality, London.

—— (ed.) (1990c), *Free Speech*, Commission for Racial Equality, London.

—— (ed.) (1990d), *Law, Blasphemy and the Multi-Faith Society*, Commission for Racial Equality, London.

Passmore, J. (1972), *The Perfectibility of Man*, Duckworth, London.

Pateman, C. (1989), *The Disorder of Women: democracy, feminism and political theory*, Polity, Cambridge.

Patience, A. (1989), 'Immigration Policies', in B. Head & A. Patience (eds), *From Fraser to Hawke*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne.

Patterson, O. (1975), 'Context and Choice in Ethnic Allegiance: A Theoretical Framework and Caribbean Case Study', pp. 305–49 in N. Glazer & D. Moynihan (eds.), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Pearson, D. (1990), *A Dream Deferred*, Allen & Unwin, Wellington.

—— (1991), 'Biculturalism and multiculturalism in comparative perspective', pp. 14–21 in P. Spoonley et al. (eds), *Nga Take*, Dunmore Press, Palmerston North.

Poggi, G. (1978), *The Development of the Modern State: A Sociological Introduction*, Hutchinson, London.

Pomper, G. (1972), 'From Confusion to Clarity: Issues and American Voters, 1956–68', *American Political Science Review* 66: 415–28.

Porter, J. (1965), *The Vertical Mosaic*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.

Potter, D. (1976), *The Impending Crisis 1848–1861*, Harper & Row, New York.

Putnam, R. (1976), *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

Rawls, J. (1972), *A Theory of Justice*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

—— (1987), 'The Basic Liberties and Their Priority', in S. McMurrin (ed.), *Liberty, Equality, and Law: Selected Tanner Lectures in Moral Philosophy*, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City.

Raz, J. (1986), *The Morality of Freedom*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

—— (1987), 'Autonomy, Toleration, and the Harm Principle', pp. 313–33 in R. Gavison (ed.), *Issues in Contemporary Legal Philosophy: The Influence of H.L.A.Hart*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Reddy, P. (1985), 'India as a Meritocracy', *The Statesman Weekly*, Calcutta, 1 June.

Richardson, E. (1988), *Strangers in this land: pluralism and the response to diversity in the United States*, Pilgrim Press, New York.

Rimmer, S. (1988), *Fiscal Anarchy: the Public Funding of Multiculturalism*, Australian Institute for Public Policy, Perth.

Rorty, A. (1991), 'Varieties of Pluralism in a Polyphonic Society', *Review of Metaphysics* 45(1): 3–20.

Rorty, R. (1991), *Objectivity, Relativity, and Truth: Philosophical Papers*, vol.1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Rose, R. & I. McAllister (1990), *The Loyalties of Voters*, Sage, Beverley Hills, California.

Rousseau, J.-J. (1968), *The Social Contract*, trans. Maurice Cranston, Penguin, Harmonsdworth.

Rushdie, S. (1988), *The Satanic Verses*, Viking, London.

Saikal, A. & W. Maley (1991), *Regime Change in Afghanistan: Foreign Intervention and the Politics of Legitimacy*, Westview Press, Boulder.

Sestito, R. (1982), *The Politics of Multiculturalism*, Centre for Independent Studies, Sydney.

Shacknove, A. (1985), 'Who is a Refugee?', *Ethics* 95(2): 274–84.

Sharp, A. (1990), *Justice and the Maori: Maori Claims in New Zealand Political Argument in the 1980s*, Oxford University Press, Auckland.

Shaw, G. (ed.) (1988), *1988 and all that: new views of Australia's past*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane.

Skinner, Q. (1984), 'The idea of negative liberty', *Philosophy in History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge .

Smith, A. (1987), *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Blackwell, Oxford.

—— (1991), *National Identity*, Penguin, Melbourne.

Smith, J. (1991), 'Population, Immigration, and the Limits to Australia's Growth: A Catalogue of Criticisms', pp.1–44 in J. Smith (ed.), *Immigration, Population and Sustainable Environments: The Limits to Australia's Growth*, The Flinders Press, Adelaide.

Social Science Data Archives (1989), *Issues in Multicultural Australia Survey: User's Guide for the Machine-Readable Datafile*, SSDA, Canberra.

Sowell, T. (1989), '"Affirmative Action": A Worldwide Disaster', *Commentary* 88(6): 21–41.

—— (1990), *Preferential Policies: An International Perspective*, William Morrow & Co., New York.

—— (1991), 'Live and Let Live Key to Harmony', *National Business Review*, Wellington, 25 July.

Steele, S. (1991), *The Content of Our Character*, St Martin's Press, New York.

Stokes, D. (1966), 'Spatial Models of Party Competition', in A. Campbell et al., *Elections and the Political Order*, Wiley, New York.

Svenson, F. (1979), 'Liberal Democracy and Group Rights: The Legacy of Individualism and Its Impact on American Indian Tribes', *Political Studies* 37: 421–30.

Ten, C. (1980), *Mill on Liberty*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

—— (1987), 'Comment', pp. 334–41 in R. Gavison (ed.), *Issues in Contemporary Legal Philosophy: The Influence of H.L.A. Hart*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Theophanous, A. (1984), 'The ALP's attitude to ethnic affairs: need for more policy development', in J. Jupp (ed.), *Ethnic Politics in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Turner, B. (1986), *Citizenship and Capitalism: the debate over reformism*, Allen & Unwin, London.

van der Berghe, P. (1981), *The Ethnic Phenomenon*, Elsevier, New York.

Van Dyke, V. (1982), 'Collective Entities and Moral Rights: Problems in Liberal-Democratic Thought', *Journal of Politics* 44(1): 21–40.

Viviani, N. (1984), *The Long Journey: Vietnamese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Ward, R. (1958), *The Australian Legend*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Waters, M. (1990), *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America*, University of California Press, Berkeley.

Weale, A. (1990), 'Freedom of Speech vs Freedom of Religion', pp. 49–58 in B. Parekh (ed.), *Free Speech*, Commission for Racial Equality, London.

Western Australia (WA) (1990): *A New Approach to Adoption*, draft report of the Adoption Legislation Review Committee, Perth.

White, R. (1981), *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688–1980*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Young, I. (1990), *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

# Index


Affirmative action, 1, 79, 86, 99, 109, 113–29, 141; capture of policies of 121–4; dimensions of 113–14; moral assumptions of 114–20; outcomes of 120–9

Assimilation, 1, 9–10, 20, 49–50, 51, 55–67, 68, 69, 107, 129, 131; in New Zealand 79–80, 83, 88

Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA), 52, 152

Australians Against Further Immigration, 72n

Autonomy, 13–14, 15, 45, 55, 153

Biculturalism, 112, 133; and citizenship 87, 130–1; vs multiculturalism 86–90, 106, 130–1; and citizenship 87, 130–1

Bilingualism, 52, 87–8, 106, 131

Blainey, G., 21, 53, 72, 108, 133, 145

Bureau of Immigration Research (BIR), 52, 181, 186

Child adoptions, 2, 159–73; arguments against inter-country 166–71; and multiculturalism 171–3

Citizenship, 1, 2, 3, 31–45, 154–5; and biculturalism 87, 130–1; defined 34–4; egalitarianism of 38–9, 44, 45, 54, 87; exclusiveness of 37–8; and immigration 130–1; and indigenous peoples 85; language tests for 51; Marshall's account of 41–2, 54; and multiculturalism 44, 79, 100, 154–5; rights and obligations of 35–7, 41–2, 130

Civil society, 36

Community: 22, 25, 36, 43; communitarian critics of liberalism 16, 44–5, 154–6; political vs cultural 9, 16, 40, 108, 150, 153, 154–5

Deculturation, 55–61, 80

Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA), 52

Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA), 179, 180, 185, 190

Diversity, 1, 2, 35, 39, 42, 44, 45, 49, 51, 52, 77, 108, 124–5, 133, 139, 151; cultural vs ethnic 34; in Malaysia 91–101; in New Zealand 81–90, 133; legal 109–12; linguistic 97, 133; and national identity 151, 157; reasons for valuing 5–16; social responses to 55–61

Education, 133–7

Ethnic Affairs Council, 52

Exclusion, 20, 21, 37–8

Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia, 182

Fiji, 124–5, 136

Fitzgerald Committee, 72

Grassby, A., 51

Hayek, F., 23

Homogeneity, 9–12, 19, 20–5, 33, 39, 89–90, 108

Hume, D., 150–1

Identity, 1, 2, 3, 7, 10, 23, 108, 113, 119–20, 132, 141; Australian 143–57; and cultural diversity 151, 157; and inter-country child adoptions 170–3; as national character vs national inheritance 148–50

Immigrants and immigration, 1, 10, 23, 24, 42, 49, 53, 57, 58n, 59, 61, 62, 68, 69, 70, 88, 89, 107, 129–32, 133, 148; and inter-country adoptions 159–73; and refugees 175–90

India, 100, 110–11, 113, 119, 120–2, 124, 126

Indigenous peoples, 1, 42, 81–90, 95, 96–7, 99, 130–1; rights of 84–6, 114–16

Intergroup relations, 188; types of 55–61; public opinion about 56–72

Issues in Multicultural Australia Survey, 56–61, 73

Liberalism and liberty, 1, 2, 8–9, 10, 11, 16, 24–5, 33, 35, 36, 43, 110, 155–6; communitarian criticism of 16, 44–5, 154–6; conflicts with multiculturalism 44, 110–12, 156; vs relativism 112

Malaysia, 81, 91–101, 115; ethnic dichotomies in 93

Marx, K., 20

Media, 138–9

Mill, J. S., 12, 13

Multiculturalism: vs biculturalism 86–90, 106, 130–1; Canadian definition and origin of 33, 49, 51–2, 55–6, 106, 124, 131; and child adoptions 171–3; and citizenship 44, 79, 85, 100, 154–5; defined by OMA 52–3; and democracy 77–81, 85, 97–8, 106; depoliticised by elites 53–4, 64, *69*, 71–2, 95–7; grounds of resistance to 43, 49–50; in Fiji 123–4, 136; in India 100, 110–11, 113, 119, 120–2, 124, 126, 127, 128; issues raised by 1–2, 78–9; and liberalism 44, 110–11; in Malaysia 91–101; meaning 50, 71, 151–3; mosaic vs melting-pot conceptions of 107–32, 173; and the nation state 77–9, 154; and national identity 143–57; in New Zealand 79–90, 132–9; origins of Australian 50–4 and of European 41; vs other types of intergroup relation 55–61; vs pluralism 19–30, 157; politicisation of 119–29, 139–40, 151; programs 132–9; public opinion about 55–72; resolution of dilemma of 140–1; typology of 106–7

National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, 52–3, 152

New Zealand, 77, 79–90; affirmative action in 122–3, 125–6; biculturalism in 86–90, 112, 114–16, 130–1, 133; educational achievement in 133–6; ethnic diversity in 81–4

Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), 52

Pluralism, 20, 22, 24, 33, 39–45, 51n, 55, 107, 129, 173; associational 44–5; cultural vs structural 42, 153; defined 26; legal 109–12; vs multiculturalism 19–30, 157; vs relativism 111

Preferential policies: *see* Affirmative Action

Public opinion on intergroup relations 56–61, 65–73; distribution of 62–5

Rawls, J., 14

Raz, J., 14–15

Refugees, 2, 175–90; 'economic' 181; case of *Ebrahami* 186, 189–90; case of *Liu* 190

Relativism, 12; vs pluralism 111 and liberalism 112

Rights: of citizenship 35–7, 41–2, 130; of indigenous peoples 84–6, 114–16; individual vs group 108–9; of refugees 175–90

Rousseau, J.-J., 22, 25, 30, 36, 38

Rushdie, S., 1, 107–8, 109–12, 133, 138

Segregation, 55–61, 153

Toleration, 1, 3, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14–16

Treaty of Waitangi and Waitangi Tribunal, 83, 85–6, 89, 90

Zubryzcki, J., 51, 153

# Selected CIS Publications

| | | A$ | NZ$* |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Traditions of Liberalism*** edited by Knud Haakonssen | [R8] | $19.95 | $28.95 |
| ***Healthy Competition*** by John Logan, Alan Woodfield & David Green | [PM14] | $19.95 | $28.95 |
| ***The Welfare State: Foundations and Alternatives*** edited by Michael James | [PF7] | $21.95 | $30.95 |
| ***Regulating for Competition*** edited by Michael James | [PF8] | $21.95 | $30.95 |
| ***Socialism is Dead But Leviathan Lives On*** by James M. Buchanan | [OP30] | $3.95 | $5.95 |
| ***Welfare State or Constitutional State*** by Suri Ratnapala | [PM15] | $19.95 | $28.95 |
| ***Voluntary Welfare*** by John C. Goodman and Alistair J. Nicholas | [PM16] | $11.95 | $16.95 |
| ***Cut! Protection of Australia's Film & Television Industries*** by Ross Jones | [PM18] | $11.95 | $16.95 |
| ***Contestable Funding: A New Deal for Research & Development in New Zealand*** by Veronica Jacobsen | [PM19] | $6.95 | $9.95 |
| ***No Waiting: Ideas for Improving Sydney's Bus Services*** by Tony Sorensen | [PM20] | $6.95 | $9.95 |
| ***Wages and Welfare: the Failing Symbiosis*** by P.A. McGavin | [PM21] | $9.95 | $13.95 |
| ***Private Welfare*** by James Cox | [PM22] | $12.95 | $18.95 |
| ***The Illusions of Comparable Worth*** by Gabriël Moens and Suri Ratnapala | [PM23] | $12.95 | $18.95 |
| ***Criminal Choice: The Economic Theory of Crime and its Implications for Crime Control*** by Cathy Buchanan and Peter R. Hartley | [PM24] | $11.95 | $16.95 |
| ***Marriage, Divorce and Family Justice*** by Barry Maley | [PM25] | $14.95 | $21.95 |
| ***Multicultural Citizens: The Philosophy and Politics of Identity*** edited by Chandran Kukathas | [R9] | $24.95 | $35.95 |
| ***Water Rights in Rural New South Wales: The Evolution of a Property Rights System*** by Gary L. Sturgess and Michael Wright | [PM26] | $6.95 | $9.95 |

Prices are in Australian dollars and New Zealand dollars (*including GST) as shown and are subject to change without notice.

Please include 10% of your total order for postage & packing (min. 80c, max. $5.00)

# MULTICULTURAL CITIZENS

## THE PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICS OF IDENTITY

Although multiculturalism has been promoted for many years by Australia's main political parties, its meaning and implications remain obscure. In this collection, authorities from Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere discuss three kinds of question arising from multicultural policies:

- the relationship between multicultural ideas and liberalism, citizenship and national identity;
- the practice and degree of success of multicultural policies in different parts of the world; and
- the practical implications of multicultural policies for other policies such as the treatment of refugees and international child adoptions.

**Dr Chandran Kukathas** is Senior Lecturer in Politics at University College (UNSW), the Australian Defence Force Academy, and Director of the CIS Multiculturalism Research Program. His publications include *Hayek and Modern Liberalism* (Clarendon Press, 1989) and *The Fraternal Conceit: Individualist versus Collectivist Ideas of Community* (CIS, 1991).

ISBN 0 949769 86 X

THE CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT STUDIES

ISSN 0156-7306

CIS Readings 9