

Jennifer Jackson Preece

Multiculturalism, Dignity and the Liberal State in Canada

Multicultural societies that contain voluntary ethnocultural associations raise important questions with regard to the state's role in conferring social dignity. In circumstances of majority hostility, such associations will only be entered into by individuals who possess exceptional courage and determination. The less robust will, in effect, be denied this freedom. This seems both unreasonable and unwarranted if something can be done to change it which does not sacrifice a value of equal importance. I argue that the political affirmation of dignity is integrative, entails no significant social or economic costs, and is not only the right but also the enlightened self-interested thing for a liberal state to do. That I suggest is the lesson to be learned from Canada's practice of multiculturalism.

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Andre Laurendeau
Canadian Royal Commission
on Bilingualism and Biculturalism

Introduction

Dignities and indignities - „the quality of being worthy or honourable“ and its opposite - are fundamental subjects of political theory because these individual states of mind are human values which can be affirmed, denied or ignored. (*The Concise Oxford English*: 326, 602). They arise out of social evaluation by other agents - including not only other people but also the state. As Donald Horowitz reminds us,

if the need to feel worthy is a fundamental human requirement, it is satisfied in considerable measure by belonging to groups that are in turn regarded as worthy. Like individual self-esteem, collective self-esteem is achieved largely by social recognition. Everywhere...collective social recognition is conferred by political affirmation (Horowitz, 1985: 185).

Consequently, dignities and indignities provoke normative questions of the sort that political theorists ordinarily discuss. What claim can individuals have on other individuals and the state to respect their dignity? When should governments actively affirm the dignity of citizens? And can governments ever legitimately ignore their indignity?

This essay will investigate the value of social dignity for ethnocultural associations and their members in plural immigrant societies from the perspective of liberal or pluralist political theory.¹ Once the importance of dignity as a value or social good is properly understood, it may become necessary to modify certain liberal assumptions regarding the legitimate role of the state in conferring dignity on

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its citizens. My argument seeks to justify not only government toleration of ethnocultural associations and protection of their members - negative liberty - but also government action to promote ethnocultural diversity and to affirm the dignity, esteem and mutual respect which are basic to robust individuals in multicultural societies.² In making this argument I obviously have in mind plural societies such as Canada where the members of ethnocultural associations comprise a sizeable minority of the population and may eventually even comprise the majority. But to the extent that global migration is fostering the creation of sizeable immigrant populations of diverse ethnocultural backgrounds in other countries, such as those of Western Europe, my argument may also have some application to them as well.³

Political theorists have approached plural societies - i.e., those societies in which many different associations are publicly visible - in basically two different ways: descriptive pluralism and normative pluralism.⁴ Descriptive pluralism is mainly concerned with characterizing particular historical societies.⁵ Normative pluralism, in contrast, celebrates pluralism as a good in its own right in the conviction that it is only in situations of social diversity that freedom can be fully realized. Pluralist political theorists such as Isaiah Berlin, Joseph Raz and Judith Shklar are not concerned with describing group co-existence - like anthropologists and sociologists - nor exclusively with limiting state absolutism - like British and American descriptive pluralists (Berlin, 1990; Raz, 1986; Shklar, 1986). Instead, their emphasis is on the individual's ability to define, pursue and realize his or her conception of the good life - in other words, to be fully autonomous. It is ob-

vious that dignity and its opposite are important elements that are likely to affect the realization of that human condition. If it requires extraordinary determination and courage to pursue a course of life or disclose an association which differs markedly from that of the majority, then one is not living in a completely free or fully open society.

Ethnocultural associations raise normative questions because they are driven not only by fate but also by *choice*. We cannot choose our race or ethnicity or culture or mother tongue but we can choose to express it or suppress it in our social relations. That makes it a fit subject of normative political theory. In countries composed in part of immigrants of diverse ethnocultural backgrounds some people are inclined to express their ethnocultural identity but the choice is not always easy to make. In the historical experience of plural immigrant societies like Canada and the United States, for example, there have been certain periods when ethnocultural association and expression were despised by the majority of people - at least in part, I shall argue, because governments did not actively recognize and respect them. In circumstances of hostile public opinion and government indifference such choices can only be made by exceptional individuals who possess the necessary courage and determination. People lacking these unusual dispositions are likely to suppress their social identities and in so doing will, in effect, be denied an essential element of freedom. That is both unreasonable and unwarranted if something can be done to change it which does not sacrifice a value of equal importance. I shall argue that no such sacrifice is necessary.

Dignity as a Social Good

Dignity has many sources but for some people in immigrant plural societies this particular enjoyment will come from membership in ethnocultural associations.⁶ The liberal state - because it fundamentally values liberty, personal autonomy and equality and thus a society characterized by diversity - is reciprocally obliged to affirm the dignity of all individuals - including those who choose to be members of such associations. However, because ethnocultural identities have sometimes been despised by public opinion in immigrant plural societies which claim to be liberal, I am singling out this particular source of esteem and contempt for special attention.

Dignity, esteem, respect and self-worth are, I argue, intrinsic goods. By „intrinsic good“ I mean a human value whose merit will be self-evident to any reasonable person. For example, we are identifying an intrinsic good when we acknowledge that every child deserves love. Similarly, an „intrinsic evil“ - in legal theory, the so called *mala in se* - is a human abuse which any reasonable person would recognize and condemn. Murder, rape, child abuse, and terrorism are examples of intrinsic evils. I maintain that it is also intrinsically wrong for an individual to be held in contempt, despised, scorned, disdained or hated exclusively because of his or her ethnocultural associations, and, furthermore, that the liberty of individuals who are so despised is thereby diminished in a significant way. I elaborate on this point in the next section.

A caveat may be necessary: I do not deny that certain human choices, actions and lifestyles may be justifiably despised; contempt itself is not intrinsically wrong (Raz, 1986: 404). We should despise

murderers or rapists or child abusers or terrorists or anyone else who inflicts harm upon innocent persons. Public contempt can justifiably be directed against such agents not only because their actions warrant it but also because such contempt actually encourages a social good: a society that will not condone such people. No liberal and no liberal state should refrain from expressing such contempt when and where it is justified. And if a state did refrain from condemning such agents - perhaps because it could do little about them - it certainly could not claim to be a liberal state - or perhaps even a state, for that matter.⁷

However, indignities which are bestowed upon individuals exclusively because of their race, ethnicity, language, culture, religion, gender, disability and so forth are an entirely different matter and cannot be justified. This particular type of indignity is wrong because it is not merited in any way. To indulge in it or even to tolerate it would be unacceptable conduct for any genuine liberal.

A state which encouraged or even merely turned a blind eye to such indignities would also probably undermine its own legitimacy. Individuals who were despised as a result of their race, ethnicity, language, culture or religion, for example, would have legitimate grievances against it. Why should individuals support and obey a state which participated or acquiesced in a diminution of their liberty? Why should they pay taxes or serve in the armed forces or in other ways be responsible citizens if that were the case? In short, why should despised and disesteemed people be loyal citizens when their adversity or oppression is encouraged or ignored by public officials? Political theorists will recognize these questions as highlighting important problems

of political obligation which could arise in liberal countries where minority ethnic associations and their members are held in contempt.

These problems would not be as likely to arise, however, in states which affirmed the dignity of ethnocultural associations and their members. Citizens who are publicly respected by their governments are more likely to recognize them as legitimate. Individuals and groups would have a stake in a political system which affirmed their dignity: they would have a compelling reason to identify with that state and be loyal to it. The dignity of the minority would make a contribution to not only the dignity of the majority but to the good of the society as a whole. Everybody could make a contribution to the political good. Thus a state which affirmed the dignity of members of ethnocultural associations would benefit not only those associations and their members or even itself but all citizens and the country at large (Raz, 1986: 256). In affirming their dignity such a state would be encouraging the development of a positive social climate. One could therefore argue that the affirmation of ethnocultural identities by the state would be not only the right thing to do, it would also be in the state's interest. This is a public policy issue with regard to which morality and state self-interest happily converge. I return to these issues in the conclusion.

Freedom and Dignity

There is an important relationship between freedom and dignity which must be clarified. While freedom alone cannot create esteem or self-worth, contempt and scorn which is tolerated can nevertheless diminish or restrict freedom. Despised and denigrated identities - as indicated -

will only be displayed and the associations based on them will only be supported and sustained by individuals who possess exceptional robustness and determination in the face of strong and persistent social pressures to do otherwise. However, the average person - who must be the main focus of any realistic political theory - cannot be expected to possess such strength of character. Given this climate of negative public opinion, he or she is less likely to support these associations - even if he or she privately values them. Thus, because public opinion is, in effect, dictating the kind of choices such average people make, these individuals can no longer be considered „free“ in the full liberal sense of the word.

Social tyranny and the pressures for conformity which express it do not ennoble individual human beings. Instead it restricts, reduces, and handicaps individuals by obliging them to adapt to the conforming expectations of the majority and refrain from freely and fully expressing their own inclinations in associating with whomever they wish.⁸ They cannot as effectively conduct experiments in living which, for liberals, is the purpose of life.

It is not difficult to comprehend the alienation, frustration, low self-esteem and other suffering that social conformity produces in a pluralistic society. Suppose I really value my minority immigrant ancestry, whatever it may be, but public opinion and social pressure prevent me from expressing this openly by joining with others like myself and forming an ethnocultural association which celebrates our common heritage. I avoid openly associating with them, and they with me, because we genuinely worry that public opinion would take real offense at our ethnic pride. We fear that we would

very likely become the object of derision and contempt. If I am a person of average sensibilities and strength of will I might very well deny myself and give up this social experiment for the sake of avoiding a public stigma which might otherwise be attached to me by all those who cannot tolerate people who are different from themselves. Or I might be driven to go underground and only associate clandestinely.

We can readily imagine plural immigrant societies in which individuals who valued ethnocultural association become victims of such social tyranny and are effectively inhibited by it. Public opinion would ridicule those who were openly „ethnic“ and applaud those who assimilated. In a predominantly Anglo-Saxon immigrant society, for example, „Soma-rakis“ or „Sorabjir“ might be not only difficult for most people to pronounce and spell but might also be despised. „Smith“, on the other hand, would be recognizable and respected. This is a small example, to be sure, but it represents a big issue: the opportunity for people to be who and what they happen to be, and freely express that identity, even if it is inconvenient and unwelcome by the majority. Shedding ethnicity for such expedient reasons would be regretted by anyone who values free choice and expression and condemns what Mill terms moral coercion of public opinion (Mill, 1989: 13). „Melting pots“ which resulted not from freedom of choice in questions of identity but, instead, from such moral coercion would be illiberal and would not be justified. A liberal would want to prevent situations in which an individual felt obliged to make cultural choices in such a way as to avoid social ridicule and contempt.

The social tyranny I have described imprisons the genuine interests, desires,

passions, and sensibilities of the human personalities affected. It prevents certain individuals from living and enjoying the life they really value. Instead, they are obliged to live a deception: to suppress and conceal their true beliefs and inclinations and values beneath a veneer of social conformity defined by majority opinion. This is not conducive to the free development of individual personality. Nor is it conducive to the development of the kind of liberal society in which such individuals can flourish.⁹

Contempt as a Social Fact

It is a human predilection to respect those who are like ourselves and despise those who are different. The vast majority of people seek out the company of those who share their convictions and inclinations. This common desire is the basis of friendships, clubs, churches, parties, movements and associations generally. However, if one such conviction or inclination dominates the larger society it may be the origin of that moral coercion of public opinion which targets individuals and associations who do not conform to its expected model of behavior (Mill, 1989: ch. 3).

As long as everybody chooses to exercise his or her freedoms in the same general way, freedom remains untested. It is easy to respect my neighbour's freedom when he or she exercises it as I exercise my own. When this is the case, my neighbour's choices and values will be similar to mine and consequently I will have little if any excuse to chastise these choices. For example, my neighbour and I may enjoy freedom of religious worship but as long as we both choose to attend the Church of England service on Sunday there is no way of knowing how pow-

erful or effective a freedom it really is. The same cannot be said of situations in which two or more different creeds exist side by side in the same society. If my neighbour attends Catholic mass on Sunday or - even more controversially - goes to a synagogue on Saturday or worships at a mosque on Friday and works on Sunday while I attend the Church of England service, the right of free religious worship becomes far more important. The individual who adheres to one particular religion or sect will have less in common with and probably much that is different from the individual who adheres to another. Consequently the freedom of everyone to practice his or her preferred religion with dignity becomes a challenge. Religious diversity could easily provoke the moral coercion of public opinion and could even be a strong temptation for political interference by the state - as often has been the case historically.

In a predominantly ethnically homogeneous society like seventeenth century England the earliest attempts to limit the moral tyranny of public opinion - as Mill reminds us - were made out of a regard for religious nonconformists - who were its most obvious targets. John Locke's famous *Letter Concerning Toleration*, for example, argued that religious beliefs must not be coercively imposed (Locke, 1983). This conviction became enshrined in British law beginning with the Act of Toleration (1689) (which granted freedom of worship beyond the established Church of England to Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers) and in subsequent acts that extended this freedom to Unitarians (1813), Catholics (1829), and Jews (1858) (Bury: 100-105). These laws give some of the earliest intimations of the liberal state's accommodation of the multiethnic society.

In immigrant plural societies, such as Canada and the United States, this human predilection for intolerance and suppression will tend to assert itself along broadly ethnocultural rather than strictly religious lines. On the same street or even in the same apartment building people of diverse ethnocultural backgrounds may live side by side. They may eat different foods, read different books and magazines, play different games, listen to different music, speak different languages, and perhaps even possess different physical characteristics - in addition to possibly having different religious beliefs. Consequently, race, ethnicity, culture and language - in addition to religion - are likely to be tests of liberty for plural immigrant societies.

These difficulties may be further exacerbated if one ethnocultural group arrives first and establishes the prevailing values of the immigrant society as a whole. This pioneer group may come to disparage groups which arrive later and do not easily conform to its beliefs, customs and way of life. It may even promote assimilation through public opinion - especially if it is the majority. This, of course, was the case in both Canada and the United States where the pioneer white Anglo-saxon protestant (wasp) group for a time looked down upon later immigrants of different ethnic origins. Charter Americans and Canadians created a social vocabulary which consisted of pejorative references for all other ethnic groups: Irish were „Paddies“, French were „Frogs“, Poles were „Polacks“, Spaniards were „Dagos“, Chinese were „Chinks“, African Americans were „Niggers“, and so forth. These derogatory labels were symptomatic of a more important general contempt which placed assimilationist pressures on members of disparaged ethnocultural groups - all who were not wasps.

Contempt is often accompanied by discrimination. For example, both were widespread during the time when Canada and the United States were experiencing great waves of immigration. Thus it is important to clarify the relationship between them. A person who discriminates necessarily also disesteems the object of his discrimination, but a person who disesteems may not discriminate. Take, for example, the case of a nineteenth-century American of English descent who despises the Irish. He holds all Irish in contempt; they are Catholics, have too many children, are drunkards, and cannot be trusted. The American who discriminates takes this contempt one step further: he not only despises the Irish but also refuses to have anything whatsoever to do with any Irish person in his public as well as his private life. Above the door to his business hangs the sign „No Irish wanted here“. Thus he actively discriminates against the object of his contempt.

However, another American wasp who equally despises the Irish may nevertheless work alongside an Irish person dawn to dusk, Monday to Friday, year in and year out though he would never voluntarily associate with any Irish person in his own free time. Thus while contempt is present wherever discrimination occurs, a lack of discrimination is not proof of respect. Consequently, banning discrimination does not necessarily remove disesteem. The liberal state that has legally abolished ethnic or racial discrimination, perhaps out of regard for the principles of negative liberty, has not necessarily freed people from the suffering of unwarranted social contempt. That may require positive affirmation on the part of liberal states as I shall argue in the following two sections.

The Ideal of Negative Liberty

Negative liberty signifies the idea of freedom from interference or coercion by the state, private individuals, or associations (Berlin, 1989). According to this conception, interference presupposes an identifiable interfering agent. Underlying this definition of liberty is the assumption that each individual left to himself or herself has an equal chance to succeed or fail in his or her chosen life plan. Thus, human beings do not need to be further empowered to exercise their freedom; this ability is inherent in the unencumbered individual. Consequently, if interference in the lives of individuals is prohibited, each person will be able to develop whatever talents and pursue whatever interests he or she desires. If an individual in this position fails to carry out experiments in living it is his or her responsibility alone.

Mill's moral coercion of public opinion is obviously an amorphous and pervasive form of coercion unlike the identifiable interfering agent of negative liberty. Consider, for example, situations where an Anglo-Saxon majority of which Tom Brown may be a member looks down upon all Irish as ignorant, superstitious, lazy, unreliable and generally contemptible people. Negative liberty assumptions would not identify this contempt as a form of interference: no significant connection between freedom and states of mind like dignity and indignity is acknowledged. For example, Sean Murphy's freedom is seen to be complete as long as Tom Brown does not threaten him with a gun, or steal his life savings or dismiss him from work on wrongful grounds, or refuse him service in a restaurant for discriminatory reasons, and so forth.

According to the negative liberty ideal, how should a liberal state act? Of course,

it should not abuse its own powers: its actions should be limited to the negative role of preventing one agent from coercing another. Two general principles of state action follow from this ideal: state nonintervention and neutrality regarding the lives of its citizens. First, a liberal state committed to negative liberty should not intervene in the private affairs of its citizens as long as they harm no other agent. It is only when coercion of one agent by another agent arises that the state is obliged to intervene. Second, a liberal state committed to negative liberty should be neutral regarding the freely chosen values and lifestyles of its citizens. Partiality is to be avoided and even condemned because it favours one interest, activity, value or way of life over another and therefore has discriminating consequences on an individual's ability to pursue these options. If a liberal state supports one interest, activity, value or way of life, then an individual or group of individuals who prefer another will be unfairly disadvantaged.

Given these two leading principles, what actions would a liberal state constrained by negative liberty take to preserve individual freedom? (Vincent, 1987: ch.3) It would, of course, establish and enforce a system of criminal law that prohibited coercive behavior on the part of private individuals and associations. The intention here would be to deter physical threats to individual liberty. Such a state would no doubt also prohibit negligence, breach of contract, wrongful dismissal and other such wrongs - i.e., a system of civil law would be enforced. A liberal state would also prohibit discriminatory practices in employment, in education, in the provision of services, and so forth - by both public and private agents. Furthermore, in its dealings with

citizens, such a state would not want to favour or penalize one equally valid moral belief (i.e., one that did not entail harm) over another.¹⁰

The principles of negative liberty have in practice encouraged the development of anti-discrimination legislation. Discriminatory practices in employment, for example, have in recent times been recognized as infringements upon the liberty of individuals. Consequently, liberal states - such as Canada and the United States - have enacted legislation to ban discrimination by both public and private agents. Under this kind of legislation, for example, it would be illegal to advertise „No Irish wanted here“ or use other irrelevant criteria such as ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and so forth in hiring. Discriminatory government practices have also been rescinded and prohibited in these two states. For example, country of origin quotas in immigration that gave preference to certain ethnic groups and restricted others have been abandoned by Canada. Similarly, discriminatory legislation that imposed a head tax on Chinese immigrants or that denied suffrage to specific ethnic or racial groups - as existed in early twentieth century Canada and the United States - has been abolished. Measures such as these have definitely furthered the cause of liberty in plural immigrant societies.

The ideal of negative liberty has also influenced the liberalization of legislation designed to uphold specific beliefs or moral judgements.¹¹ H. L. A. Hart, for example, employed the principles of state nonintervention and neutrality to advocate the legalization of private homosexual acts between consenting adults (Hart, 1963). Neutrality and nonintervention have at least checked the tendency of moral majorities in democratic countries

to have their beliefs enshrined as law. However, as I will now argue, these operative negative liberty ideals can do little or nothing to prevent the tyranny of public opinion and in particular the unwarranted infliction of indignity, disesteem and disrespect on ethnocultural minorities.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Negative Liberty

Liberals have employed the principles of negative liberty wielded by the state to combat the use of coercion by some people to obstruct or interfere with the liberty of others. Yet as Mill reminds us, social oppression is more formidable since it penetrates more deeply into the details of life and enslaves even the soul itself - by depriving human beings of that social dignity which they have an intrinsic right to possess. Without such dignity, individuals are not free in the fullest liberal sense. Unfortunately, the ideals of negative liberty cannot so readily be employed to combat this insidious form of social oppression.

Non-intervention and neutrality allow social tyranny and moral coercion to continue unimpeded. Paradoxically, therefore, nonintervention is not neutral at all because it allows a situation prejudiced in favour of the dominant way of life - where one exists - and against other ways. Nonintervention cannot prevent or discourage the stigmatization and inhibition of ethnic or cultural expressions that do not conform to the majority's expectations. In a plural immigrant society, this would allow „melting pots“ that result from moral coercion rather than freedom of choice.

As I intimated earlier, negative liberty assumes individuals are inherently robust

and thus fully capable of conducting experiments in living without further support. This assumption would appear to indicate that self-esteem is internally rather than socially created and therefore not a fit subject of political concern. According to this view, if an individual lacks dignity or self-esteem, it is his or her own fault and not the fault of any other agent. Therefore no coercion - which can only occur between agents - can possibly have taken place. Such assumptions are, I have argued, mistaken. Dignity, esteem, respect, and self-worth are individual states of mind that arise out of social evaluation by other agents and therefore can be targets of moral coercion. When the relationship between freedom and dignity is properly understood it becomes apparent that the principles of negative liberty cannot be employed to combat social oppression in plural immigrant societies.

The logic of prohibition is inapplicable to states of mind like dignity, esteem, respect and self-worth. The state could not control what its citizens thought, and - if it tried - such an attempt would be considered illiberal. Liberals do not dictate what other people think; they let each person decide what to believe for himself or herself. The provision of dignity is not usually spontaneous within a legal framework of negative liberty but requires positive action by the state. The most appropriate way for a liberal state to remedy and prevent the harmful effects of indignity is by affirmation - the state should affirm the dignity of those who are now or previously were held in contempt. In this way, it may convince - as opposed to dictate or force - public opinion to view ethnic or other identities with respect. We are here taking note of a traditional activity of states which is to confer or confirm honour on its subjects or citizens.

Objections to state affirmation could still be raised even if one recognizes that dignity is both socially conferred and related to freedom in a significant way. It could be noted that the Irish in the United States eventually gained general social approval and occupied a proud place in American society. This suggests that immigrant societies do contain a spontaneous social mechanism which - over time - eliminates social contempt for minority ethnocultural individuals and groups. That may very well be the case in the longer term. However, I am arguing that it is wrong that someone would have to suffer such contempt in his or her lifetime even though his or her children or grandchildren would not have to suffer it in theirs. Liberals absolutely insist that every individual be treated as an end in his or her own right and not as a means to somebody else's end - even if this somebody is their own progeny. It is wrong that someone must be, in effect, a „second class“ citizen if something can be done to correct it which does not require unreasonable sacrifice on the part of everyone else. I maintain that no such sacrifice has to be made to support public policies which affirm the dignity of ethnocultural associations and their members.

A Justification of Ethnocultural Affirmation by the State

Liberals want to ensure that every individual is free to pursue the widest possible range of interests, activities, values or ways of life. In order to exercise this freedom in the full liberal sense, I am arguing that an individual requires dignity, esteem, respect, and self-worth. These states of mind are intrinsic social goods which every individual has a right to pos-

sess. Accordingly, indignity, disesteem, disrespect, and contempt cannot be promoted or even ignored by the liberal state. Not only can it not be neglected, the state which seeks to promote freedom must actively intervene to counter the moral coercion of public opinion which if left to itself will tend to bestow esteem and to inflict contempt on ethnocultural identities in an unwarranted and discriminatory manner. The state can do that by explicitly affirming that every citizen has a right to display his or her ethnic identity if he or she chooses, and to have that pride respected by others.

While state affirmation of dignity cannot by itself prevent or eliminate the tendency for public opinion to become overbearing, it can nevertheless go a considerable way towards counteracting it. In conferring dignity, no other agent has as much authority as the state. When the state acknowledges a choice to be valid and worthy of respect - even if public opinion believes otherwise - that choice becomes not only acceptable but also honorable. For example, it cannot be dishonorable to possess an Irish, a Ukrainian, an Italian, a Chinese, a Japanese or any other ethnocultural identity if the Canadian state says the Irish, the Ukrainians, the Italians, the Chinese, the Japanese, and every other ethnic group in Canada is an important part of the definition of what it means to be Canadian.

A critic could argue that in calling for the liberal state to affirm the dignity of despised ethnocultural groups I am espousing a version of affirmative action - which is in itself problematic (Glazer, 1978: 87-103). Affirmative action is designed to counteract the effects of discrimination - which I have acknowledged is related to contempt. Members of groups discriminated against in the past are given

preferential treatment in the present as compensation. While affirmative action assists members of previously discriminated groups, in so doing it discriminates against everyone else (the Bakke case is an illustration of this resulting reverse discrimination).¹²

However, this problem of reverse discrimination would not result from a liberal state's affirmation of dignity: honouring one ethnic group does not entail despising another. This is a fundamental point: no one will be disadvantaged as a result of this kind of state intervention. In acknowledging all ethnocultural identities to be good and worthy, in no way can the state inadvertently inflict indignity upon the ethnic identity of any individual or group. Bestowing dignity does not involve taking a social good away from one group of individuals in order to give that same good to somebody else. Nor does it involve taking anything away from the political community as a whole - as I shall argue in the conclusion.

Any state which seeks to promote inclusive citizenship, which is perhaps a definition of a liberal state, has a duty to ensure that the dignity it confers is enjoyed by everyone. This would be the intrinsically right thing for any liberal state to do. By the same token, it would be intrinsically wrong for any liberal state to allow public opinion alone to distribute dignity and assign disesteem. Thus, for example, it was wrong for Canada not to confer this dignity upon all the ethnocultural identities of its citizens in the past and it is right that Canada does confer it on them all today.

The good society of normative pluralist theory is a society wherein a diversity of values, interests, activities, and ways of life flourish in an atmosphere of respect. In such a society nobody's choices

would be despised or ridiculed or held in contempt on irrelevant grounds such as ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability and so forth. „Melting pots“ that might emerge in this ideal society would result from choices that were freely made rather than from inhibition or stigmatization or similar social pressures. Here, people would abandon their ethnic identities only if that is what they really want and not because public opinion would otherwise make them suffer. Furthermore, assimilation would never be a final decision: individuals would always be free to reclaim or rediscover their ethnocultural heritage if they desire. This is perhaps merely another way of saying that the good society of normative pluralist theory is an open society in the fullest meaning of the word (Popper, 1944).

What measures could a liberal state take to affirm the dignity of all ethnocultural identities in its jurisdiction and thus ensure the openness of its society? Public policy-makers would, of course, have to consider the specific circumstances of their own country and tailor measures to them. It is not the role of the political theorist to provide specific advice. However, political theorists should be prepared to offer general - although admittedly tentative - reflections on the practical implications of their normative analyses. There are several conceivable measures a liberal state could take that can be derived from the foregoing argument.¹³

Firstly, it could provide funding for ethnocultural associations which met certain minimum membership requirements. Such funding would be primarily symbolic and would cost the government comparatively little. Irish folk festivals, Ukrainian dancers, Italian singers, Chinese cultural centers, Japanese martial

arts centers, and so forth could all be eligible for such financial support from the state. The government could also assign responsibility for the funding of ethnocultural associations to one of its ministries which might then administer a grant application and distribution program. Such an institutional arrangement would itself be an important affirmation of the worthiness of ethnocultural choices; if the organization of government reflects such choices they must be important and honorable.

Secondly, through school curricula it could encourage study of the history, religion, customs, languages, literature, architecture, music, and dance of at least the most significant ethnocultural groups in its jurisdiction. Students presumably would not only gain greater insight into various cultures but might also learn to respect and celebrate social diversity. The state might thereby foster in the next generation a public opinion which is more receptive to expressions of ethnocultural identities.

Thirdly, it could not only encourage but make regulatory provision for ethnocultural broadcasting. Perhaps a separate cable television channel could be set aside for that purpose. Such programs could provide another opportunity for individuals to maintain or rediscover their ethnocultural heritage if they choose. Admittedly, this would be a small encroachment on the freedom of most of the audience - but in an emerging technological world of numerous cable television channels it would not be unreasonable.

Finally, a liberal state committed to affirming the dignity of the ethnocultural identities of all its citizens could decide to constitutionalize that affirmation. It might, for example, include a clause in its constitution which recognized that the

country was in significant measure the creature of its many immigrants of diverse ethnocultural backgrounds. Such a clause could also require the state to preserve and promote the dignity of all ethnocultural identities in its jurisdiction.

Andre Laurendeau's Canadian Legacy

This political theory argument was inspired by the reflections of a political practitioner who was dealing with a specific policy issue in a particular country at a certain moment in its history; that man was Andre Laurendeau and his country was Canada. Following the recommendations of The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1964-1967) - which Andre Laurendeau co-chaired - Canada instituted a policy of multiculturalism. I think it is important to comment briefly on this policy because it is an example of what one liberal state with a plural immigrant society has done to affirm the dignity of all the ethnocultural identities of its citizens.

Prior to the 1960's, Canadian governments did not affirm the dignity of ethnocultural identities (Christopher, 1987: 332ff). Instead, when ethnic diversity was considered at all in government circles - and, one may conjecture, in Canadian society at large - it was looked upon as a disintegrating element which required assimilation into a singular Canadian identity. Whether this assimilation would assume an Anglo-Saxon mold or something entirely new was the topic of much debate.¹⁴ John Diefenbaker's vision of an „unhyphenated Canadianism“ was an example of the latter kind of assimilation (Palmer, : 90-100). Recognizing that distinct ethnic identities could become the targets of discrimination, he endeavored

to create a Canadian identity in which all ethnicities would blend to form a common „Canadianess“.

However, Quebecois demands for status and recognition as one of Canada's two „founding nations“ produced a dualist response from the Pearson government. In an effort to accord Quebec the special status it sought, the federal government created the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. Canada was to be conceived as a nation born of two parents - the English and the French - each of which had an important and dignified role to play in the future of the country. To the surprise, chagrin and possibly even dismay of some members of the commission, this definition of Canada met with unexpected and fierce opposition from non-English and non-French - the so-called „third-force“ - Canadians. This dualist vision of Canada was felt to have little if any regard for the dignity of „other“ ethnocultural groups. In presentation after presentation, especially in Western Canada where the „third-force“ was demographically most significant, the question was asked: „but where am I as a Canadian of non-English and non-French ancestry in this definition of Canada?“ „What role do I have in the future of my country?“ „Is the contribution of my forebears to be ignored, obscured, forgotten?“ „Am I to become a second class Canadian?“ It is obvious that the constitutional doctrine of dualism had a powerful emotional impact upon these ethnocultural groups, who felt cheated, ignored, irrelevant.¹⁵ The word „multicultural“ appears to have been coined by „third-force“ Canadians as they tried to create a political discourse that dignified their ethnocultural identities.

This demand for multicultural recognition and respect was not - in fairness

could not be - overlooked by the commission. Consequently, the fourth volume of the *Report on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* was dedicated to the concerns of these „other Canadians.“ By recognizing their contribution to the development of the nation as important and honorable it sought to dispel their fears of being insignificant and perhaps unworthy. *Book IV* specifically outlines the historic contribution of many of the most sizeable ethnocultural groups - Germans, Scandinavians, Dutch, Ukrainians, Doukhobours, Jews, Hungarians, Italians, Russians, Greeks, Slavs, Icelanders, Negroes, Japanese, Asians. The commission made sixteen recommendations which reflected multicultural demands for social dignity including: anti-discrimination legislation, the rejection of country of origin quotas in immigration, the creation of heritage (that is, non-English and non-French) language education programs in public schools, Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC) provisions for heritage language broadcasting, and general government support of ethnic associations (*Preliminary Report*: 51).

In response to these recommendations, the Trudeau government in 1971 officially rejected the idea of biculturalism, advocating instead „bilingualism within a multicultural framework.“ (Government of Canada, 1978) In announcing this change in policy, the prime minister declared „there cannot be one cultural policy for Canadians of British and French origin, another for the original peoples, and yet a third for all others. No ethnic group takes precedence over another and no citizen or group of citizens is other than Canadian.“ (*Multiculturalism and the Government of Canada*, 1978: 45). Canadians were told that a hierarchy of „Canadianess“ did not exist and would not be

permitted to exist; Canadians of every ethnocultural identity were fully and equally citizens.

The federal government thereby committed itself to: (1) support all of Canada's cultures, and to assist - resources permitting - those cultural groups which have demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop, a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada, as well as a clear need for assistance; (2) assist members of all such groups to overcome social barriers to full participation in Canadian society; (3) promote interchange amongst all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity; (4) assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society (*Multiculturalism and the Government of Canada*: 45).

To achieve these goals, the Canadian government introduced a number of administrative changes. In 1972 a Minister of State for Multiculturalism was appointed to promote the new federal policy, and in the following year the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism was created to encourage discussion of cultural policies at both the federal and provincial levels. In addition to funding cultural associations, the federal government financed special multicultural programs conducted by various federal agencies such as the National Museum of Man, the National Film Board, the National Library, and the Public Archives. It also established a number of federally funded programs at the provincial level - in particular, heritage language preservation designed to encourage heritage language acquisition and retention by children of various cultural communities. These programs have been particularly active in Alberta, British Columbia,

Manitoba, Ontario, and Saskatchewan where demographics reflect a noteworthy ethnocultural diversity.¹⁶

Encouraged by the recommendations and policies of the late sixties and early seventies, multicultural groups were dismayed by the Trudeau government's initial proposals (1978-1979) for a Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Romanow, Whyte og Leeson, 1984: 7-10, 76-88). In trying to secure the rights of English and French language groups across the country, the government had - in the opinion of multiculturals - completely ignored or perhaps conveniently forgotten the interests of those whose heritage was neither French nor English.¹⁷ „Third-force“ Canadians again feared they might become relegated to a „second class“ status in Canada. Where, they asked, was the government's avowed commitment to the multicultural heritage of Canadians? Had this commitment to foster ethnic diversity been only so many words? Or, even more incriminatingly from the multicultural viewpoint, did the federal government believe that multiculturalism was, relatively speaking, trivial. A policy, yes, but not a constitutional principle? In the eyes of ethnocultural leaders, multiculturalism had to be more than „so many ethnics dancing in a church basement“; it had to reflect fundamental values about cultural equality and the very definition of Canada.¹⁸

Ethnocultural associations immediately began a concentrated lobbying effort to have the principle of multiculturalism entrenched in Canada's constitution. In the 1980-1981 Joint Senate and House of Commons Committee Hearings on the Proposed Constitution their representatives repeatedly emphasized three basic points: (1) „third-force“ Canadians had made an important contribution to

Canadian development; (2) this contribution deserved political recognition and encouragement; (3) in particular, the proposed charter must entrench a general commitment to multiculturalism, heritage language rights, and protection against discrimination.

These ethnocultural demands were embodied in several clauses of the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The principle of multiculturalism found expression in section 27 which stipulates that everything in the Charter „shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians.“ Section 22 specifies that the legal or customary rights of any language that is not English or French is neither abrogated nor derogated by the Charter. Finally, the equality rights clause of section 15 prohibits discrimination based on „race, national or ethnic origin“, „color“ and „religion“ - among other things. As can be seen, provisions in the Canadian Charter include both the (positive) affirmation of ethnocultural dignity and the (negative) prohibition of discriminatory acts based on ethnocultural criteria.

Conclusion

There are several objections deriving from common worries concerning political affirmation of ethnocultural associations in plural immigrant societies that must be addressed before this argument can be brought to a final conclusion. They will be examined in an ascending order of importance.

First, it could be feared that immigrants and their descendents would not accept and conform to the prevalent social mores and living standards of their adopted country. But such a worry is probably

unfounded. They could not reasonably use their private property - including housing - in the same way they would use it in their ancestral country, for example, crowding a large extended family into a small nuclear family dwelling, or keeping livestock in suburban backyards. They would have no right to impose on citizens of their adopted country in any such intolerable ways. Certain standard lifestyles of their adopted country would have to be observed not only out of courtesy to neighbours and fellow citizens of their adopted country but also out of respect for its laws, including local by-laws.

Second, it might be feared that political affirmation of ethnocultural associations will undermine loyalty, patriotism and other political sentiments toward the present state. This fear could arise from the belief that members of such associations will retain a primary and thus a preemptive loyalty to their ancestral state or nation. For example, it could be feared that some members may think of themselves entirely in terms of their ethnic membership and no longer as citizens of their present state.

Such worries are probably not warranted. Even if such associations and their members did possess strong foreign allegiances there would be very few occasions when that patriotism conflicted with allegiance to their present country. As long as loyalties do not conflict, there is no inherent problem with possessing more than one. But suppose such a conflict did arise and individuals wanted to act according to their perceived ancestral loyalties which brought them into conflict with the interests of their present state. The social mechanisms for conformity to the norms of the immigrant country would still be compelling. The laws would still apply to everyone. Public opinion would

condemn anyone who engaged in disloyal acts. The beneficial effects of social contempt would still be available. That would inhibit many individuals and probably most of them from acting in any unacceptable way. However, suppose a few individuals nevertheless were prepared to break the law and defy public opinion. Such isolated acts probably are no more likely to pose a serious threat to the political community than any other criminal or socially unacceptable behavior. If that is a price to be paid for honouring ethnocultural identities it is a tolerable price.

Third, it might be feared that such affirmation will undermine the legal obligations of members of such associations to the larger political community. They might think that within their own ethnic communities the rules of the larger political community do not apply. For example, certain non-Western groups may believe they are free to practice ritual mutilation of children. Or an ethnic association may think it can dictate - at penalty of expulsion - who its members must associate with, how they must vote, and so forth. Or members of an ethnic association may think they can buy and export arms for wars in their ancestral countries. Or they might even think they are at liberty to commit acts of terrorism against rival ethnic groups in their present country when the ancestral nations of these two groups are at war.

However, political affirmation does not legally privilege any citizens on whom it is conferred: members of ethnocultural associations, no more and no less than any other citizens, remain bound by the laws of the state. Ethnocultural associations - like any other voluntary associations - are not above the law: they cannot appropriate the authority or powers of the

state; their members cannot resort to threats or acts of violence against other members, nonmembers, or other associations. (Benn og Peters, 1964: 332-340) Every state has a criminal justice system and law enforcement agencies to deal with these and other criminal acts. In short, members of ethnocultural associations are subject to the rule of law like everybody else.

Behind these objections there may still be a more fundamental and conservative concern about social disintegration deriving from an assumption about social conformity as a basis of national integration. However, this fear too is questionable. Political affirmation of ethnocultural associations in a plural immigrant society is far more likely to be integrative. Members of such respected and worthy groups would have a significant reason to identify with and be loyal to the political community that adopted such measures: they would have a stake in that political community. A government which ignored or tolerated public opinion that was hostile to such associations and their members would actually be encouraging societal divisions among its citizens and inviting the disaffection or disloyalty of those who were suffering from acts of contempt or discrimination.

The conclusion can be wrapped up as follows: the political affirmation of the dignity of all ethnocultural identities in a plural immigrant society is integrative rather than disintegrative, entails no significant social or economic costs, and is not only the right thing but also the enlightened self-interested thing for a liberal state to do. That is the lesson of Andre Laurendeau's Canadian legacy.

Notes

1. National minorities and indigenous peoples could also benefit from the political affirmation of their dignity. There is, nevertheless, an important category distinction between immigrant ethnocultural groups and those ethnocultural communities which exist in their historic territories. The logic of immigrant ethnicity is integrative rather than disintegrative. Immigrants make a *voluntary* choice to become members of their adoptive state. Thus, immigrants and their descendents seek greater recognition of their ethnic identities within the larger immigrant society and not separation from it. In contrast, national minorities have been, to a greater or lesser extent, *involuntarily* incorporated into their present states through conquest, colonization or the transfer of territory. As a result, national minorities may and very often do demand separation into their own distinct political units. Thus, national minorities raise questions and indeed prompt solutions (regional autonomy, local self-government, etc.) which do not apply to immigrant minorities. See Preece, 1997: 75-93.
2. Recent contributions to the emerging political theory of multiculturalism include: Addis, 1991: 615-76; Green, 1994: 100-117; Gutmann, 1992; Gutmann, 1993: 171-206; Kymlicka, 1995; Modood, 1994: 53-73; Parekh, 1991: 183-204; Raz, 1994: 67-79.
3. Immigrant ethnicity in an "old world" context is sometimes perceived as more problematic than it is in those states where the vast majority are descendents of immigrants. Europe, in contrast to Canada and the United States, is comprised of historic national cultures which are not by definition products of immigration. Thus, it is sometimes feared that to actively support the retention of immigrant cultural identities in European states would be to undermine or erode these states' historic national identities. Yet, culture is not a zero sum game; the protection of these historic national cultures is not necessarily at odds with the affirmation of immigrant cultural identities. National trusts and heritage ministries, for example, can co-exist alongside multicultural ministries and endowment funds. Moreover, both policies can be justified by the same political objective - i.e., dignifying and preserving the greatest number of cultural choices possible and thus facilitating that free expression which is the primary concern of liberalism.
4. The existence of associations conducted in secret and oftentimes in fear of state oppression or punishment (for example, Catholic masses in the United Kingdom prior to the Act of Toleration) is not evidence of a plural society but rather its absence.
5. For a discussion of the category I have termed "descriptive pluralism" see Nicholls, 1974; Also see Nicholls, 1975, esp. ch. 5.
6. Although this article deals exclusively with ethnocultural identities, other minority identities (gay/lesbian, disabled, etc.) may also justifiably receive state affirmation on similar grounds.
7. This calls to mind a famous remark of Augustine (1952), "States without justice are but robber bands enlarged." *City of God*, Chicago: Benton Publishers, part IV, section iv.
8. Kymlicka, 1989 argues in a similar vein, referring to aboriginal communities, that cultural membership is a primary good for people because anyone who is stripped of such membership is stunted in his or her personal development.
9. Havel, 1986: part one, discusses an extreme version of such a social tyranny.
10. For a detailed analysis of negative liberty see Benn and Peters, 1964: esp. ch. 10; Berlin, 1989, esp. ch. 3; Lucas, 1985: esp. section 32, section 33, section 34, section 35, section 36.
11. For a discussion of various liberal responses to law and morality see Mitchell, 1967.
12. Bakke - a white male - applied for admission to the University of California Medical School at Davis and was twice turned down even though he satisfied the minimum entrance requirements. Bakke later argued that his right to be assessed on non-discriminatory grounds was denied because the school reserved sixteen affirmative action places for minorities. The United States Supreme Court eventually ordered that Bakke receive a place in the medical school but ambiguously upheld the legitimacy of affirmative action. See Glazer, 1983: 254-273.
13. It is important to note that none of these measures require a corporatist system; they stipulate no particular forms of ethnic organization and their administration demands no formal ethnic classification of citizens. See Walzer, 1980: 781-787.
14. For a discussion of the changing attitudes

- towards non-English and non-French ethnic groups in Canada during the twentieth century see Palmer, 1976: 81-117.
15. For a discussion of the symbolic repercussions of dualism for „third-force“ Canadians, see Breton, 1984: 123-144.
 16. For an overview of the Canadian policy of multiculturalism see Christopher 1987: esp. pp. 334-337.
 17. Alan Cairns has noted that multicultural leaders and other „constitutional outsiders“ employ „the language of status...they evaluate their treatment through the lens of pride, dignity, honour, propriety, legitimacy, and recognition - or their reverse.“ This observation suggests the social good in question is dignity, 1991: 132.
 18. For a discussion of minority ethnocultural perceptions of the events leading up to the 1982 *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, see Lupul, 1982: 1-10.

Litteratur

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