

What Good is Language?

Andrew Shorten

July 2005

[DRAFT COPY ONLY]

Government, International Politics and Philosophy

University of Manchester

andy.shorten@gmail.com

Versions of this paper have benefited from the comments of Stephen De Wijze, Thomas Uebel, Hillel Steiner and Richard Shorten.

Languages are fairly useful things. Ordering breakfast, gossiping or discussing semiotics would all be difficult without them. But languages are also sometimes said to matter in another way, in the sense that because those attached to them invest emotional energies in them, hold an identity stake in them, and so forth, then others (who do not possess that particular attachment, but do, of course, possess another similar one) owe them obligations, to treat their linguistic attachments fairly or with respect, to recognise their linguistic preferences or to accommodate them within institutional arrangements, to assist in language rejuvenation programmes or to help protect them against the corrosive pressures of linguistic assimilation, and so on. If my linguistic attachments place others under an obligation, then it must be because *my* language is in some sense valuable – either *to me* personally or to humanity at large - and in a different way to that in which my language is a useful means to order breakfast, gossip, or discuss semiotics. In other words, if linguistic attachments generate obligations, then they must be non-instrumentally valuable, and this value must carry some significant moral weight. Asking what good language is, then, is to enquire not only into its instrumental usefulness or communicative utility, but also about what good *my* linguistic attachments are *to me*.

This paper aims to clarify why linguistic attachments do (and do not) matter for normative political theory, and especially for theories of distributive justice. I do this by seeking to ascertain what *kind* of good linguistic attachments are for those who speak them, and then to see what, if any, obligations this should place upon speakers themselves and others. This question requires illumination, if not resolution, because there is little consensus amongst commentators (be they comparative political scientists, sociolinguists, philosophers or representatives of minority language speakers themselves) about why language - and especially about why *my* language - is valuable or important.¹ More specifically, three claims will be scrutinised here: first, that particular linguistic attachments matter because they are connected to our ability to secure self-respect; second, that particular linguistic attachments matter because national memberships matter; and third, that linguistic attachments matter because

¹ For example, some seem to think of language primarily as a public good (e.g. Van Parijs, 2003) or as a means to social mobility (e.g. Barry, 2001; Pogge, 2003; Laitin and Reich, 2003), whilst others have described it as a collective human accomplishment that constitutes an ongoing manifestation of human creativity and originality (e.g. Reaume, 2000) and as a repository of a particular culture's history, traditions, art, ideas and so on (e.g. Crystal, 2000).

they are *primary goods*, in the sense that Will Kymlicka has suggested that cultural memberships are (Kymlicka, 1989, 1995). If the first of these is true, then linguistic attachments matter for theories of distributive justice to the extent that treating linguistic attachments unfairly is something to be avoided. If the second is true, then individuals carry *duties* to protect and enrich their national tongues, and not to assimilate to other linguistic communities, even if doing so brings tangible benefits. If the third is true, then individuals possess a *right* to use and preserve their ancestral language, and if this right is to be effective then it will also impose significant correlative obligations upon non-native speakers (e.g. an adjacent or overlapping majority language community).

In practice, these three arguments tend to intersect. For example, Kymlicka (the leading proponent of the third argument) associates cultures with national groups,² suggesting that cultures matter for reasons not dissimilar to the reasons that nationalists give about nations (the second argument). Meanwhile, he also offers an explicitly *liberal* argument about the relationship between culture and autonomy, an argument grounded on a concern to ensure that the social bases of individual self-respect are not undermined (the first argument).³ This overlap is not surprising, given that each of the arguments I consider here connect (in some sense) ‘respect for linguistic attachments’ to the more general concept of ‘self-respect’. Furthermore, this overlap explains the rationale for the current investigation, which seeks to examine three of the different ways in which this connection has been forged. Thus I seek to discover what kind of good linguistic attachments are by examining the respective significances of our (instrumentally valuable) communicative ranges, and our (non-instrumentally valuable) linguistic attachments, whether mediated through the concepts of autonomy-fostering culture or duty-generating nation.

1. Language and Liberalism

² Both ‘tend to be territorially concentrated, and based on a *shared language*’ (Kymlicka, 1995, pp. 75-6, emphasis added).

³ For instance, in a revealing summary of (one part of) his argument he concludes that ‘freedom of choice is dependent on social practices, cultural meanings, and a *shared language*. Our capacity to form and revise a conception of the good is intimately tied to our membership in a societal culture, since the context of individual choice is the range of options passed down to us by our culture’ (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 126, emphasis added). A secure linguistic environment, on this view, is a fundamental pre-requisite for human freedom.

Language policy can be a fraught site of political conflict because of the profound implications it has across political and social life, and language disputes can emerge in a disquieting array of spheres - from public institutions and political/legal processes to educational systems and commercial practices. Hence if our attachments to particular languages are problematic, then perhaps the best thing for a liberal society to do is to treat them like religious attachments. After all, just as religious conflict in seventeenth century Europe led - albeit in a somewhat convoluted fashion - to the separation of church and state (Levine, 1999), then the recent spread of volatile ruptures in Eastern Europe in which linguistic diversity was implicated (Taras, 1998, p. 79) should perhaps prompt us toward some form of linguistic disestablishment.⁴ However, as has been frequently pointed out, a policy of linguistic 'benign neglect' (Kymlicka, 1995, pp. 107-15) would be illusory, because the state's agencies, institutions and services all have to operate in some language(s).⁵ All states, to some extent, will do things that encourage and discourage particular linguistic choices, because they cannot refuse to recognize, endorse or support particular languages in the way that a secular state can treat particular religions.

Though there has been only a limited philosophical engagement with the numerable recent country-specific studies of language policy (e.g. McRae, 1983, 1986, 1997; Coulombe, 1995; Macmillan, 1998; Schmidt, 2000; Grillo, 1989), work in sociolinguistics (e.g. Fishman, 1991; Edwards, 1985; Phillipson, 1992; Nettle and Romaine, 2000; May, 2001) and comparative political science (e.g. Laponce, 1984; Laitin, 1992, 1998),⁶ three preliminary (and hopefully uncontroversial) points can be noted about the significance of linguistic attachments for political theory. First,

⁴ During the early colonial period of the US, a number of languages (notably German, French and Spanish) competed with English in the public domain, and the drafters of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution resisted formalising any single 'official' language (Shell, 1993). However, even if no language (at the federal level) carries official status, 'it is a *de facto* requirement for employment in or for government [in the USA] that the applicant speak English' (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 25).

⁵ Kymlicka's rejection of this strategy is paradigmatic: 'Many liberals say that just as the state should not recognise, or support any particular church, so it should not recognise, endorse, or support any particular cultural group or identity.... But the analogy does not work. It is quite possible for a state not to have an established church. But the state cannot help but give at least partial establishment to a culture when it decides which language is to be used in public schooling, or in the provision of state services. The state can (and should) replace religious oaths with secular ones, but it cannot replace the use of English in courts with no language' (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 111). See also Pool, 1991, p. 496; Kymlicka, 1995, p. 111; Carens, 2000, pp. 77-8; Baubock, 2001, p. 321; Patten, 2001, p. 693; Rubio-Marin, 2003, p. 55.

⁶ Van Parijs (2000, 2003), Reaume (2003), May (2000), Rubio-Marin (2003) and Patten (2003a, 2003b) are all excellent exceptions.

whether or not a person's linguistic attachments can be exercised in public life has a notable bearing upon the likely longevity of that particular language, especially in urbanised, industrial societies.⁷ Second, the processes of democratic transition in Eastern Europe, and elsewhere, are unlikely to bear fruit if linguistic justice is neglected (Grin and Daftory, 2003). Third, increasing levels of immigration and emerging patterns of 'transnationalism' have challenged the assumption that immigrants will happily learn the majority language of their new country, and though such groups rarely call for official state recognition of their mother tongue, the likelihood that immigrants will lose touch with their ancestral language by the second or third generation has diminished (e.g. Ong, 1999; Basch, Schiller and Blane, 1994; Castles, 2000).⁸

2. Language, Persons and Self-Respect

Linguistic attachments are manifest and pervasive cultural commitments. Many people are deeply attached to their ancestral tongues, and can feel a profound sense of estrangement if the only available options involve communicating in a non-native language, never fully at home nor capable of expressing themselves with the same sense of ease they feel when speaking amongst members of their own linguistic community.⁹ For example, at the outbreak of the Second World War, Antoni

⁷ According to Kymlicka, 'it is very difficult for languages to survive in modern industrialized societies unless they are used in public life. Given the spread of standardized education, the high demands for literacy in work, and widespread interaction with government agencies, any language which is not a public language becomes so marginalized that it is likely to survive only amongst a small élite, or in a ritualized form, not as a living and developing language underlying a flourishing culture' (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 78)

⁸ The 'problem' of linguistically distinct immigrant enclaves has been controversial. For example, Portes and Rumbaut, (2001) deny that patterns of language shift are undergoing such a transformation. Meanwhile, others speculate gloomily about such prospects (e.g. Schlesinger, 1992; Lind, 1996; and Brimelow, 1996), emphasising the potential disadvantages for both immigrants (in terms of their political marginalisation and economic disabilities) and for the state itself (in terms of patriotism and loyalty felt to the wider society). Vexed by the same problems, in the US theorists have variously proposed declaring English to be the 'official' language so as to remove any entitlements 'enjoyed' by minority languages (Schmidt, 2000; Crawford, 2001), strengthening the language tests for naturalisation (Pickus, 1998; Piller, 2001) or providing greater support for majority language learning (Bloemraad, 2002). Such proposals have met with significant criticism, especially from who dismiss their assimilative thrust as fundamentally illiberal. But if the fear that prompts such proposals is valid, then diverse communities, like multinational ones, look set to face an ever more pressing need to attend to questions of linguistic justice.

⁹ The permanence, significance and enduring strength of linguistic attachments are common literary themes, especially amongst exiles and émigrés. In his *End Papers* Breyten Breytenbach writes: 'Of course, you take your language with you wherever you go – but it is rather like carrying the bones of your ancestors with you in a bag: they are white with silence, they do not talk back' (Breytenbach, 1986, p.20).

Slonimski, a Polish poet, took refuge in London, but in 1951, of all moments, decided to return to Poland for good. Asked why, he said that he had no qualms about living under capitalism, claimed to have nothing against the English and their ways, and denied feeling lonely, materially underprivileged, or socially degraded. Rather, his answer was slightly more disarming, what he could no longer stand was that whenever he tried to tell a joke to an English friend, his wit somehow abandoned him. Every joke he told amongst the English was a dud, regardless of his tireless preparations, and thus he resolved to cross the continent once again, this time for good. At least there, regardless of the hardships and censorship, he could at least sit down at his regular table in his favourite cafe, crack a joke, and hear his admirers laugh (Baranczak, 1989). That a poet should feel especially attached to his language is perhaps unsurprising, and the extent to which Slonimski found his inability to make others laugh, especially for one so famous for his wit, might have been exceptional. But beneath all this is a more general point: that people are acutely attached to their ancestral languages, deriving genuine satisfaction from their use and feeling wounded when unable to communicate with the ease wrought by familiarity. In this sense at least, the ability to exercise one's own linguistic attachments can perform a vital function in, and is closely correlated to, the ability to secure self-respect.

For many who write about language policy, one logical implication of this general point has frequently been taken as a given – that preserving vulnerable languages is a moral requirement of considerable urgency.¹⁰ Indeed, the diametrically opposed view – that members of linguistic minorities can legitimately be denied the right to communicate in their ancestral tongues – was long ruled out by the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights.¹¹ Furthermore, and as a variety of

¹⁰ For instance, one commentator has noted that this implication is the 'implicit assumption of nearly every linguistic demographer and sociolinguist' (Green, 1987, p. 653). A distinct, and similarly compelling, argument in favour of linguistic preservation originates in the suggestion that language diversity is analogous to (and just as precious as) biodiversity (e.g. Nettle and Romaine, 2000; Boran, 2003). Meanwhile, and more recently, moral and political philosophers have sought to attain greater precision about the conditions under which language desuetude can be condemned as unjust (e.g. Blake, 2003; Weinstock, 2003), although in some cases they have been extremely reluctant about preservationist programmes (e.g. Barry, 2001; Levy, 2003).

¹¹ Article 27 states: 'In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, *in community with the other members of their group*, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or *to use their own language*.' Italics added. More recently, the American Terralingua Society has claimed that 'deciding which language to use, and for what purposes, is a basic human right' (1999) and an influential language association has, in November 2000, passed a resolution advocating that 'all groups of peoples have the right to maintain their native language ... a right to retain and use [it]' (TESOL). See de

sociolinguists have pointed out, there are a number of convincing reasons to regret the irreversible evaporation of minority languages, whether as a consequence of confluent and voluntary individual choice-sets or because they were rendered vulnerable by the operations of market economies, the presence of asymmetric bilingualism, the pursuit of repressive nationalising projects, or the needs of state bureaucracies.¹² However, for Slonimski at least, such policies might not be particularly helpful, since a right to speak, read and write in Polish would not have got him what he wanted – to make people laugh (in English, Polish or any other language). Nevertheless, for other linguistic communities, especially national minorities and indigenous peoples, linguistic vulnerability is an extremely pressing issue. Furthermore, a valid normative argument for (or against) linguistic protectionism will require a more substantial explanation of the nature of linguistic attachments that Slonimski's unease provides. Usefully, within recent work, two viable propositions have been put forward.¹³

First are those who would be likely to regard Slonimski's fate as demonstrative of the hypothesis that language performs numerous morally significant functions beyond its communicative utility. For instance, according to Leslie Green, a language is 'a marker of identity, a cultural inheritance and a concrete expression of community' (Green, 1987, p. 659). Similarly, some political theorists have suggested that linguistic attachments perform a constitutive function in a person's identity (e.g. Taylor, 1992; May, 2001, 2003), sometimes by postulating some connection between a person's membership within a linguistic community and their ability to act autonomously (e.g. Kymlicka, 1995; Patten, 2003b). On this kind of view, my language is not simply a tool that I can use to communicate with others, successfully or otherwise, but a component of my identity and the foundation of my freedom. Hence to deny me the right to use my ancestral tongue at work or in public institutions, or to educate my children in the language of their forefathers, is no mere inconvenience but debases me and strips me off something important (my identity, my freedom). Theorists who take the idea of an 'identity stake' seriously are far more

Varenes (1996) for a comprehensive overview of language rights-claims and legislation.

¹² David Crystal (2000) discusses five such reasons: because we need diversity, because languages express identity, because languages are repositories of history, because languages contribute to the sum of human knowledge, and because languages are interesting in themselves.

¹³ Each of these perspectives resonates with a broader disagreement within contemporary political theory relating to the moral significance of our attachments (be they linguistic, cultural, religious, ethnic, or otherwise), a disagreement that has fuelled debates both within language policy and within multicultural politics more generally.

likely to push for forms of minority language protection, because on their view language has a *non-instrumental* value for speakers and if lost will cause irreparable harm.

Secondly, and conversely, others have questioned the suggestion that our ‘identity-stake’ in our languages is really all that important: though we may not wish to humiliate the parents of immigrant schoolchildren, it might still be reasonable to insist that their children learn the majority language so that they can access all the goods that might follow, even if doing so makes it more likely that they will lose touch with their own ancestral tongue. This is because language is not only a buckle binding us to our history and culture but is also a resource rich in opportunities, and as a resource it is variable: in some societies one language will simply be more useful than another. In contrast to proponents of the first view, theorists who emphasise the communicative and *instrumental* function that language performs tend to argue that a just language policy should be concerned with helping minority language speakers overcome any obstacles they encounter, policy recommendations that might even compromise the long-term survival of a minority language (e.g. granting a minority a right to learn the majority language at public expense).

Broadly speaking the instrumental/non-instrumental divide turns on a willingness to ascribe moral value to a *particular* language. For example, Joseph Carens thinks that instrumentalists endorse the view that ‘learning a language has no necessary or even likely impact on one’s cultural commitments’ (Carens, 2000, p. 128), whilst non-instrumentalists regard ‘a shared language as centrally connected to and expressive of the culture of a community... [because] learning a language shapes our cultural options and commitments in profound ways’ (Carens, 2000, p. 128). Similarly, Ruth Rubio-Marin describes instrumentalist language claims as aiming to ensure ‘that language is not an obstacle to the effective enjoyment of rights with a linguistic dimension, to the meaningful participation in public institutions and democratic process, and to the enjoyment of social and economic opportunities that require linguistic tools’ (Rubio-Marin, 2003, p. 56) whilst describing non-instrumentalist claims as aiming to ensure ‘a person’s capacity to enjoy a secure linguistic environment in her/his mother tongue and a linguistic group’s fair chances of cultural self-reproduction’ (Rubio-Marin, 2003, p. 56). Both writers imply that the two

perspectives are situated tangentially, suggesting that non-instrumentalism involves a ‘thick theory of language’ (Carens, 2000, p. 128) justifying ‘language rights in a strict sense’ (Rubio-Marin, 2003, p. 56) that can be juxtaposed with the thin theory of instrumentalism. Though neither perspective need deny that language use *in general* is morally relevant (in the sense that it affects our social mobility, economic opportunities, well-being, and so on) the two depart company with the ascription of moral value to something beyond the purely communicative within a language.

These two views are not mutually exclusive. Few, for example, deny that different linguistic repertoires offer speakers variable communicative utility sets, or that speakers invest deep emotional energies in their linguistic communities. My intention here is not to provide an exhaustive summary, or comparative analysis, of these two perspectives. Rather, for the moment at least, the intention is to filter this dispute through some of the conceptual apparatus contained within *A Theory of Justice*, primarily by drawing out some implications from Rawls’s discussion of self-respect in the later parts of that text. According to Rawls, one consequence of the conception of goodness as rationality is that ‘self-respect is perhaps the most important primary good’ (Rawls, 1972, p. 440), and he includes the social bases of self-respect as one important variable for interpersonal comparisons of advantage in the just society. Without self-respect our projects may seem pointless, or we might lack the will to strive for any goals that we might have. As Rawls puts it, ‘[a]ll desire and activity becomes empty and vain, and we sink into apathy and cynicism’ (Rawls, 1972, p. 440). More precisely, on this account, self-respect includes two dimensions; firstly a person’s sense of his own value (i.e. his secure conviction that his conception of the good, his plan of life, is worth carrying out); and secondly a confidence in his ability, so far as it is within his power, to fulfil his intentions (Rawls, 1972, p. 440).

Each dimension has a potential bearing upon the current investigation. Slonimski’s relative linguistic incompetence, for example, certainly undermined his confidence to fulfil at least one of his intentions (e.g. to make people laugh in English). However, most writings on linguistic justice and the moral significance of linguistic attachments have tended to emphasise the former dimension; namely the relationship between a person’s sense of his own value and the respect accorded to his linguistic attachments. To be clear about this, according to Rawls a person’s sense of his own value is

supported by two circumstances: having a rational plan of life, and ‘finding our person and deeds appreciated and confirmed by others who are likewise esteemed and their association enjoyed’ (Rawls, 1972 p. 440). Certainly, this final circumstance similarly resonates with Slonimski’s experience of linguistic dislocation, in the sense that his person and deeds were not appreciated and confirmed by others. Furthermore, and perhaps more significantly, it might also apply to (at least some) linguistic minorities, in the sense that those who do appreciate their person and deeds (e.g. fellow speakers) may not be likewise esteemed more generally within society.¹⁴

If a person (and his deeds) are not appreciated and confirmed by others who are likewise esteemed, then he can be said to lack the necessary social bases of self-respect. The consequence of this can be a feeling of shame, characterised by Rawls as ‘the feeling that someone has when he experiences an injury to his self-respect or suffers a blow to his self-esteem’ (Rawls, 1972, p. 442). If it is true, as I am trying to suggest, that some linguistic minorities might, under certain conditions, experience something like this, then there must be some kind of (demonstrable) causal chain at work – ‘injuries’ and ‘blows’ do not come out of nowhere, but require ‘injurers’ and ‘blowers’. Thus one potential explanation of the source of ‘linguistic shame’ has to do with the (possibly inadvertent) arrogance of speakers of majority languages that in turn translates into a form of intolerance expressed toward speakers of other languages. For example, Stephen May describes:-

‘the almost de rigueur distinction between majority languages as vehicles of modernity...and minority languages as carriers of culture and tradition. I use the terms ‘vehicles’ and ‘carriers’ advisedly here, since the former is clearly associated with progress and the expansion of opportunity, while the latter is most often equated with regression and active foreclosing of opportunities, an irremediably antediluvian tendency to hold on to a past that is clearly past its useful sell-by date. Or so the story goes’ (May 2003:124-5)

According to May, policies enacted by majority language communities, when they neglect the actual depth of attachment and feeling people have toward their ancestral

¹⁴ To put this in a slightly different way, according to Rawls ‘what is necessary [in order that people achieve some measure of self-respect] is that there should be for each person at least one community of shared interests to which he belongs and where he finds his endeavours confirmed by his associates’ (Rawls, 1972, p. 442), but this is something which linguistic minorities – and especially immigrants – can find difficult to access.

languages, will tend to deepen rather than alleviate patterns of discrimination and disadvantage amongst minorities, even if the intentions of policy makers are benevolent.¹⁵

What this indicates, hopefully, is that linguistic intolerance, even when enacted through public policies intended to benefit minority communities themselves (e.g. to increase social and economic mobility) can undermine the necessary social bases for self-respect and in turn generate a sense of shame. If this is true, as it may have been in the case of Slonimski, then persons might be precluded from exercising some of the fundamental human excellences. For instance, one of the classes of things that are good for us, according to Rawls, are attributes of our persons that are both good for us and for others as well, and (inevitably) many of these things have a linguistic dimension (e.g. *'imagination and wit, beauty and grace, and other natural abilities of the person'* Rawls, 1972 p. 443, emphases added).¹⁶ Such excellences 'form the human means for complementary activities in which persons join together and take pleasure in their own and one another's realization of their nature...they are the characteristics and abilities of the person that it is rational for everyone (including ourselves) to want to have' (Rawls, 1972 p. 443). But as was demonstrated by Slonimski's fate, and by that of many linguistic minorities more generally, this is precisely what majority linguistic intolerance can thwart.

3. Language and National Duties

All that has been demonstrated so far about the value of linguistic attachments is that the awkwardness of the *émigré* might undermine his self-respect, inducing a feeling of shame and constraining his pursuit of (some of) the human excellences. If this is an exhaustive explanation of 'what good language is', then there would be nothing wrong, in principle, with a language policy focussed primarily on the transmission of

¹⁵ In this regard May cites three reasons sometimes endorsed by ostensibly benevolent majority policy makers to promote majority languages at the expense of minority ones: majority languages possess instrumental value whilst minority ones carry only sentimental value; majority languages provide individuals with greater economic and social mobility; learning a minority language limits an individual's mobility, possibly leading to actual 'ghettoization' (May, 2003, p. 135). According to May this oppositional construction of the ways in which language repertoire affects social mobility, in which minority and majority language learning are typically presented as mutually exclusive, mistakes cause for effect.

¹⁶ The other noteworthy class of excellences are things that are good primarily for us (e.g. commodities, items of property etc...).

majority language skills to non-native speakers, provided that in doing so no attempt were made to denigrate or stigmatise the minority language and its speakers.¹⁷ Indeed, had Slonimski benefited from this, and assuming that the process was effective (e.g. at its culmination he could successfully crack a joke in English), then he may not have felt the need to return to Poland. More generally, this approach might bring at least two benefits. First, because linguistic obstacles can curtail the enjoyment of various rights, freedoms and opportunities that require lucid linguistic interactions, transmitting majority language competences to non-native speakers (especially recent immigrants) could help remove these hurdles and thereby *equalise* each citizen's access to the basic liberties.¹⁸ Second, there might also be sound *democratic* reasons to encourage further linguistic convergence, both within and beyond the scope of the nation-state. If citizens cannot freely communicate and argue amongst one another, then not only will they be unlikely to establish and implement fair and efficient solutions to common problems, but political power itself might increasingly fall within the exclusive domain of those with the most advantageous linguistic competences. Those who will suffer most, if this is true, will be minority language speakers themselves.¹⁹

Linguistic minorities, however, are frequently apprehensive about the corrosive potential of such policies upon their languages. One way to make sense of this trepidation is through the non-instrumentalist hypothesis itself, according to which Slonimski's life in England was a depressing one not only because making people laugh was important for him, but also because he felt his native language to be (non-

¹⁷ One infamous example of linguistic stigmatisation, amongst many, was the use of tongue clappers on children caught speaking Welsh in the school playground during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Ager, 2001, p. 36).

¹⁸ This presumably explains why even the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (in its sixth preambular paragraph) notes that 'the protection and encouragement of regional or minority languages should not be to the detriment of the official languages and the need to learn them'.

¹⁹ The clearest democratic advocate of a global lingua franca is Philippe Van Parijs, who declares that 'there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that we need a way of communicating directly and intensively across the borders drawn by the differences of our mother tongues, without the extremely expensive and constraining mediation of competent interpreters. We need it in particular if we do not want Europeanisation, and beyond it globalisation, to be the exclusive preserve of the wealthy and the powerful who can afford quality interpretation. If we want all sorts of workers', women's, young people's, old people's, sick people's, poor people's associations to organise on the ever higher scale required for effective action, we must equip them with the means of talking to one another without the need for interpreting boxes and the highly skilled and paid professionals who go in them. One way of putting this is by saying that we need to meet the linguistic preconditions for turning Europe, and ultimately the world, into one *demos*, without this needing to mean that Europe, or the world, is thereby turned into a single *ethnos*: a forum can be shared thanks to a common language without the culture, including the language, becoming one' (Van Parijs, 2004, p. 118)

instrumentally) valuable. If the non-instrumentalist hypothesis is true, then majority language competence transmission policies, regardless of their democratic and egalitarian aspirations, are a cause for concern *if* their likely outcome will be the erosion of (non-instrumentally valuable) linguistic attachments. Political philosophers have canvassed two potential explanations of the non-instrumentalist hypothesis. First, that linguistic attachments are (non-instrumentally) valuable because *national* memberships are valuable; and second, that linguistic attachments are (non-instrumentally) valuable because *cultural* memberships are valuable.²⁰ Although these two arguments overlap, I shall examine each in turn.

Linguistic nationalists believe that the promotion of a national language is an urgent political concern. Patriotic citizens have a duty to develop, enrich, standardise and make dominant their shared language, using it in all the important social and political interactions (e.g. in their courts and legislatures, in their schools and churches, in their books and theatres, in their factories, offices and marketplaces, and so on). The antecedents of this view of language are ambiguous, but at least three sources can be traced. First, in the early modern period of western European history, politically motivated programmes of language promotion transformed a variety of vernacular languages (including English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Swedish, Portuguese and Dutch) from mainly spoken, highly localised dialects, with small and unstable vocabularies, into richly abundant, uniform and standardised written languages of state administration and literary endeavour. Although these programmes occurred against the backdrop of assorted processes of modernisation (e.g. state-building, print-capitalism, economic-growth etc...), patriotic language promotion itself was clearly at the forefront of the minds of political leaders and intellectuals.²¹ Second, in the late eighteenth century leading Jacobins (especially Bertrand Barère and Abbé Grégoire) despaired at the low profile of the French language and recommended that the

²⁰ Additionally, and this claim will not be examined here, proponents of the 'new ecology' movement within sociolinguistics have also suggested that linguistic *diversity* itself is intrinsically valuable (see Edwards, 2001, 2002; Haugen 1987; Mühlhäusler, 2000).

²¹ For example, Antonio de Nebrija composed the first grammar of any European language in 1492 (the *Gramática de la lengua castellana*), in whose dedicatory address (to Queen Isabella) he connected the glory and standardisation of Castilian to strength and virility of Spain (Elliott, 1963, p. 117). Likewise, until well into the 16th century English writers were preoccupied with the relative paucity of their language in comparison with the richness, variety and ornamentation of the classical languages (Jones, 1953). The subsequent expansion of the English vocabulary, both from outside and within (including approximately 21,000 contributions from Shakespeare alone), was, according to one contemporary, a matter of 'libertie and freedom' (Mulcaster, 1970 [1582]).

revolutionary state adopt measures to spread knowledge of French to all citizens of the new republic, measures that included the annihilation of numerous local idioms (Popkin and Popkin, 2000). Third, and most importantly, the goal of linguistic homogenisation was common to many of the nationalist movements of the nineteenth century, and was achieved through a variety of means - from compulsory public schooling (Gellner, 1983) to conscription (Brubaker, 1992).

Recent scholarship on nationalism has important implications for the question of 'what good language is'. According to Gellner, for example, nationalism is a specific response to industrialising societies' need for a *literate*, mobile workforce (Gellner, 1983). Whilst in Anderson's version of a similar argument, it is the rise of '*print-capitalism*' that triggers a re-imagining of community along national lines (Anderson, 1991).²² Furthermore, the Romantic nationalists, from Herder through to Humboldt and Fichte, developed a connection between language and nationality, in the case of the former describing language as the pre-eminent national treasure (e.g. Herder, 2002 [1772], p. 147) and (rhetorically) asking if a nation has 'anything more precious than the language of its fathers?' (cited in Berlin, 1976, p. 165).²³ In the case of Fichte, this connection becomes an expressly *ontological* one:-

Those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, long before any human art begins; they understand each other and have the power of continuing to make themselves understood more and more clearly; they belong together and are by nature one and an inseparable whole (Fichte, 1968 [1808], p. 190)

From a normative point of view, one implication of this ontological claim is that nationalism goes well beyond the stipulate of Article 27 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights cited above, suggesting that using one's ancestral language is not only a matter of right, but also one of *duty*. To renounce the language of one's forefathers, as an instrumentalist might have urged Slonimski, is not a viable option for the nationalist, for in doing so, as Herder characteristically puts it, 'a Volk

²² Social scientists too have connected language and nationality, and according to Weber: 'in the age of language conflicts, a shared common language is pre-eminently considered the normal basis of nationality. Whatever the "nation" means beyond a mere "language group" can be found in the specific objective of its social action, and this can only be the *autonomous polity*. Indeed, "nation state" has become conceptually identical with "state" based on common language' (Weber, 1978, p. 395).

²³ Humboldt, meanwhile, described it as 'the outer appearance of the spirit of a people', claiming that 'the language is their spirit and the spirit their language' (Von Humboldt, 1999 [1836], p. 42).

destroys its ‘self’, for language and the national consciousness to which it gives rise are inseparably joined’ (cited in Barnard, 1965, p. 58).²⁴

This normative argument contains three distinct propositions; that languages and nations are inexorably bound up in one another (the linguistic-nationalism hypothesis), that human beings are connected to their national memberships in some important sense (the nationalist-ontology hypothesis),²⁵ and that languages require speakers in order to survive (the language-preservation hypothesis). Although this final claim is relatively uncontroversial, in its nationalist variant it takes on a non-trivial and peculiar form. Namely that because all persons have a duty to speak and cultivate their national tongues, then language desuetude is not just regrettable, but calamitous. This inference is open to two interpretations, both of which are incompatible with liberalism. First, it could be the case that nationalists condemn as unpatriotic those citizens who voluntarily transfer their linguistic allegiances.²⁶ For Herder *et al*, because language and nation are intertwined, and because self and nation are bound up within a single shared destiny, then to relinquish one’s ancestral tongue is self-contradictory. But not only is this claim false (in the sense that it implies an unsustainable symmetry amongst language, nation and self), it also unfairly circumscribes the ability of a person to shape her own linguistic repertoire as best suits her interests.²⁷ Second, the object of criticism

²⁴ There is a (possibly trivial) sense in which the nationalist ontology is false – namely that it implies a strict correlation between language *acquisition* and an individual’s cultural outlook/national self-identification. This correlation is false because the fact of acquisition itself is relatively trivial in most cases, the study of another language is unlikely to negatively affect the dignity or cultural outlook of a mid-career professional, and if it does anything at all it is only likely to open her up to new influences or release her from a dependency on her culture of origin (as in Slonimski’s case). Of course, acquisition does matter for with regard to the languages nurtured in schools, since those, unlike the ones left off the curriculum, are very likely to affect future patterns of language use *and* the ‘cultural outlook’ of children (Carens, 2000, pp. 128-9; see also Kymlicka, 1995, p. 111).

²⁵ Different theories of nationalism explain this in different ways. Whilst Anderson and Gellner connect nationalism to modernity, Anthony Smith has emphasised the enduring significance of pre-modern ethnic communities as focal points for nationalist mobilisation in the modern world (Smith, 1986).

²⁶ This condemnation is obviously at odds with liberalism: ‘it may still be that a language becomes extinct, simply because those speaking it take decisions that in aggregate result in its disappearing. Very many languages have done just that in the past and doubtless many more will do so in the future: two thousand of the world’s six thousand languages have fewer than one thousand speakers, and are unlikely to survive. A liberal society cannot adopt policies designed to keep a language in existence if those who speak it prefer to let it go. Thus Taylor is quite correct in saying that liberalism ‘can’t capture the full thrust of policies designed for cultural survival’. But why should it be expected to?’ (Barry, 2001, p. 65)

²⁷ This point has been made well elsewhere: ‘many nationalist commentators write despairingly of individual’s who have lost ‘their’ language as if they had some obligation to speak the language of their ancestors. Children of Welsh speakers who speak only English are speaking ‘their language’, whether nationalists like it or not. Claiming that people of Maori or Welsh ancestry have an obligation to carry on the language of their ancestors is to primordialize culture, and to force people into cultural mileus from which they might want to exit. In disregarding the preferences of potential assimilators, nationalist

might instead be those external to the nation, who through a variety of choices, processes and mechanisms render the national language intolerably frail. Many nationalists, for example, infer that no shift in language repertoire could occur under just conditions. According to Stephen May, all instances of linguistic vulnerability involve the expression of what he calls an ‘ideology of contempt’ (May, 2001, p. 19) by dominant language cultural leaders toward the language of the minority. But this explanation risks excluding any trace of ambiguity about the strength of the attachment particular citizens have toward their national language.²⁸ Moreover, even if it is the case that a majority has, at some moment in the past, contributed to the decline of a minority language, this does not mean that that same majority (or its descendants) now has an obligation, or even the right, to compensate the supposed victims through policies to encourage the re-birth of their ancestral tongue, whether they want them or not.²⁹ Successful preservation and rejuvenation programmes will necessarily involve imposing substantial restrictions upon a fairly large group of people, including residents who presently might not use the language under rejuvenation.³⁰

4. Language and Cultural Rights

The second explanation of the non-instrumentalist hypothesis has received significant attention in recent work on multiculturalism. This approach both differs and overlaps with linguistic nationalism. It differs in the sense that instead of stressing linguistic *duties*, it endorses a voluntaristic claim that persons have a (waveable) *right* to use their ancestral language.³¹ Meanwhile, it is similar in two regards: that language

commentators are fundamentally illiberal’ (Laitin and Reich, 2003, p. 87).

²⁸ For example, he bewilderingly cites the 1993 Draft Declaration of Indigenous Peoples as evidence of ‘the clear desire of indigenous peoples for greater linguistic and educational control’ (May 2001:284).

²⁹ This is not to deny that linguistic shift is often a consequence of genuine injustice. For instance, during the Franco period, subsidised housing policies encouraged a significant migration of Castilian speakers into Catalonia. It may be true that Catalanian speakers consequently continue to experience an injustice (because it would be extremely costly to restore Catalanian as the language of everyday use), but it does not follow that the remedy would be to coerce the (Castilian) immigrants to pay this cost.

³⁰ Language revival or preservation programmes will face difficulties if schools still teach a rival language (e.g. Ireland’s policy of trying to revive Irish while still encouraging knowledge of English). Van Parijs notes that vulnerable languages can only be protected through ‘the imposition of the weaker language as the public language of a particular territory, that is, essentially as the only admissible language in that territory as regards public administration, political life, judiciary procedures and above all publicly funded education’ (Van Parijs, 2000, p. 219).

³¹ For example, according to Kymlicka ‘the real question is, what is a fair way to recognize languages, draw boundaries, and distribute powers? And the answer, I think, is that we should aim at ensuring that all national groups have the opportunity to maintain themselves as a distinct culture, *if they so choose*. This ensures that the good of cultural membership is equally protected for the members of all national groups. In a democratic society, the majority nation will always have its language and societal culture

vulnerability matters because there is a deep connection between language and culture and that the proper recipients of such rights are national minorities.³² In turn, this first similarity introduces a further overlap with the argument analysed in section 2 – that linguistic attachments, and the right to exercise them in concert with others, are closely connected to self-respect. In its paradigmatic form, the crucial idea is that cultural membership is important for modern citizens because autonomy is intimately tied up with access to one's culture, with the prosperity and flourishing of that culture, and with the respect accorded that culture by others (Margalit and Raz, 1990; see also Raz, 1994). More precisely, in the version of the argument to be evaluated here, cultural memberships (including linguistic attachments) are said to matter because they perform a vital role in our ability to effectively exercise our autonomy, and therefore should be regarded as a primary good (Kymlicka, 1989, p. 162).

According to this argument, people should not be expected to set aside their deepest beliefs in political discourse and political life, either because they are so important, because they are in some sense 'constitutive' of their identity, or because doing so might unfairly marginalise them or undermine their chances of long-term survival. Minority cultural (including linguistic) communities are granted 'exceptional status' to enable them to protect their own unique ways of life against the homogenising tendencies of the dominant majority.³³ Group-specific rights, on this view, are not remedial measures to rectify a current but soluble injustice (e.g. they are not justified

supported, and will have the legislative power to protect its interests in culture-affecting decisions. The question is whether fairness requires that the same benefits and opportunities should be given to national minorities. The answer, I think, is clearly yes' (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 113, italics added). Thus Kymlicka thinks that 'ethnocultural justice' (2001, p. 42) will require language policies favourable to minorities in the schoolroom (2001, p. 26-7), in the workplace (2001, 78-9), in the courts (1995, p. 45) and beyond (2001, p. 79).

³² Hence Kymlicka rejects the view that immigrant communities are entitled to a comprehensive set of language rights: 'So while there are many aspects of their heritage that immigrants will maintain and cherish, this will take the form not of re-creating a separate societal culture, but rather of contributing new options and perspectives to the larger anglophone culture, making it richer and more diverse. For the third generation, if not sooner, learning the original mother tongue is not unlike learning a foreign language. Learning the old language may be rewarding as a hobby or business skill, but for the children of immigrants, it is the anglophone culture which defines their options, not the culture from which their parents uprooted themselves' (Kymlicka, 1995, pp. 78-9)

³³ Part of the intellectual heritage of this approach, and the understanding of cultural membership driving it, can be traced back to the communitarian break with liberalism during the 1970s and 80s. Whilst the concern then was to protect cultural groups from the supposedly hidden and insidious imposition of foreign liberal values through the processes associated with globalisation, western cultural hegemony and so forth (e.g. Taylor, 1989; MacIntyre, 1984, 1988; Walzer 1983), in its reinvigorated form the emphasis has been upon the importance of 'cultural membership' or 'national identity' for modern freedom-seeking citizens (see, for example, Kymlicka, 1989; Tamir, 1993; Miller, 1995; Spinner, 1994; Margalit and Halbertal, 1994; Raz, 1994).

relationally by reference to existing inequalities in the distributions of power, resources, opportunities etc...), but are a fundamental prerequisite for the enjoyment of autonomy. Culture is important for people because it defines and structures the realm of the possible, offering options for action and a source of normative authority that gives value to the decisions people actually undertake. Thus ‘respecting minority rights [including language rights] can enlarge the freedom of individuals, because freedom is intimately linked with and dependent on culture’ (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 75).³⁴

The connection between individual freedom and respect for culture has been comprehensively discussed (e.g. Bricker, 1998; Carens, 2000; Margalit and Halbertal, 1994; Margalit and Raz, 1990; Parekh, 2000; Tomasi, 1995; Walker, 1997), and I will limit myself to simply rehearsing the most salient aspects of the argument with regards to the question of ‘what good language is’. Kymlicka’s argument begins from the straightforwardly liberal assumptions that human beings have an essential interest in leading a good life, and that an important aspect of the good life is to be found in the ability to exercise one’s own autonomy (Kymlicka, 1995, p.81). Autonomy has nothing to do with self-creation or self-legislation, it does not involve the expression of our essential moral nature, human uniqueness or individuality, and nor does it matter if it leads to progress, happiness or the discovery of moral or higher truths. Rather, to be autonomous simply requires that people live their lives ‘from the inside’ (i.e. in accordance with their beliefs about what gives value to life) and that they are capable of questioning and revising these beliefs.³⁵

³⁴ By culture, Kymlicka roughly means something similar to what nationalists mean when they talk about nations, and he describes societal cultures as phenomena ‘whose practices and institutions cover the full range of human activities, encompassing both public and private life... [providing] its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both private and public spheres’ (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 75-6). Indeed, ‘societal cultures are typically associated with national groups... [and they] tend to be territorially concentrated, and based on a shared language’ (Kymlicka, 1995, pp. 75-6).

³⁵ This thin conception of autonomy enables Kymlicka to build into his theory the familiar set of civil and political liberties associated with liberalism (e.g. constitutional government, freedom of conscience etc...), since to live one’s life ‘from the inside’ will require that people feel able to act according to their beliefs without fear of intimidation or punishment. Likewise, the concern with autonomy also ensures that Kymlicka - unlike some of his communitarian predecessors - stress the importance of enabling individuals to acquire information about different ways of life and to develop the mental apparatus required to critically examine them (hence he is concerned to defend education, freedom of expression, freedom of the press and so on).

To 'live from the inside' requires some degree of self-respect – i.e. 'the sense that one's life-plan is worth carrying out' (Rawls, 1972, p. 178). As was demonstrated earlier, the ability *to* carry out a life-plan can be undermined by a limited linguistic repertoire (as in Slonimski's case), but Kymlicka's claim is more specific, and has to do with the *worth* that my life plan has *for me*. Because the source of people's beliefs about value - the beliefs by which people confirm the value of their own choices - are rooted in the structure of the linguistic-cultural communities in which they find themselves (Kymlicka, 1989, p. 165), and because cultural affiliations define and structure the world for that individual, such memberships *give worth* to the choices that we actually do make. In Kymlicka's words, 'freedom involves making choices amongst various options, and our societal culture not only provides these options, but also makes them meaningful to us' (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 83). Therefore, '[f]or meaningful individual choice to be possible, individuals need...access to a societal culture' (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 84).³⁶

This general conception of the significance of cultural memberships gives rise to the conclusion that language groups (especially minority ones) will only flourish if members possess a *right* to take part in public life in their own language and to possess the basic means of cultural reproduction (Reaume, 1991, p. 52; Kymlicka, 1995, p. 78). Such rights are required because of the difficulties minorities experience whilst under the inevitable assimilationist pressure generated by a dominant majority, and could involve granting a minority language 'official status',³⁷ 'self-government rights' within a federal structure of government,³⁸ 'promotion rights' to assist a linguistic minority in its battle against assimilation,³⁹ or rights to use a minority

³⁶ What is important for Kymlicka is not specific cultural content, but cultural *structure* (Kymlicka, 1995, pp. 80-93). To be able to access a cultural structure helps people make intelligent and intelligible judgements about what is valuable, suggesting worthwhile goals and giving meaning to the options and choices that face us. It thus provides a context of choice 'aiding our ability to judge for ourselves the value of our own life plans' (Kymlicka, 1989, p. 166).

³⁷ For example, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees a right to an education in an official language, a right to interact with public officials in that language, and a right to a presence in any publicly funded.

³⁸ Quebec's immigration policy does this in seeking to protect a secure linguistic environment.

³⁹ See Rubio-Marin, 2003, pp. 58-9; Levy, 2003.

language in parliaments,⁴⁰ judiciaries,⁴¹ at the ballot-box and other public institutions.⁴² In any case, the aim is to secure (for a minority) a linguistic environment whereby ‘their language group may flourish and that one may use one’s language with dignity’ (Green, 1987, p. 658). The aim of such rights is not only to facilitate the kind of mutual understanding that Slonimski desired, but also to secure the communal self-respect that is a pre-requisite of individual autonomy. Such language rights are thus ‘cultural’ in the sense that they would lose their ‘meaning without the community experience that makes of language a cultural-identity marker’ (Rubio-Marin, 2003, p. 57).

However, although this conception of culture is intended to grant rights and not impose duties, the ontology underpinning it is as difficult to pin down as the nationalist one. Unlike Herder, Kymlicka is not committed to the (false) suggestion that there is a strict correlation between language *acquisition* and an individual’s identity. Rather, the operative claim is that language is a *significant* and *constitutive* factor of identity (May, 2003, p. 141). On this view, even if language is not an exclusive determinant of cultural outlook, it might be an indispensable part of the cultural structure, without which our capacity to act autonomously will fall apart.

This, I think, forms a hypothesis that is open to empirical scrutiny. Specifically, if the connection between language and autonomy, albeit mediated through the concept of a cultural structure, is a fundamental one (i.e. one capable of generating a rights claim grounded on the suggestion that linguistic attachments are primary goods), then it must be the case that all instances of linguistic shift are unjust. Although one can give

⁴⁰ Spain, until recently, permitted only Spanish to be spoken in the national parliament (Catalan, Basque and Galician are now permitted on one special day annually). Congress in the US permits any language, but has no expectation of translation for non-English usage. The EU Parliament (according to the 1999 Rules of Procedure) includes provisions for all official and some ‘non-official’ languages spoken within member states.

⁴¹ Many states provide translation facilities, whilst Canada grants the right (to the accused) to choose amongst the official languages, regardless of his own linguistic competences (Reaume, 2000)

⁴² For instance, numerous states explicitly designate some particular language(s) for internal communication (e.g. the 1991 Law on the Languages of the People of the Russian Federation (articles 3.1. and 11.1) requires that all work by federal government bodies be carried out in Russian); some require that federal government be conducted in the official language of the state but also include provisions for the use of other languages in local or regional administration (e.g. Estonia (1995 Languages Act, article 3.1), Catalonia (Act No.1 on Language Policy, 7 January 1998, Chapter 1, articles 9 and 10) and Ethiopia (article 5 of the 1994 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia)); and others still grant employees the right to work in any of the official languages (e.g. Canada’s Official Languages Act (1969, 1988) facilitates this, subject to certain qualifications, and Belgium has parallel French and Dutch language sections of the same office, McRae 1986).

up that which one has a right over (e.g. I can relinquish a portion of my (legitimate) holdings to assist the needy), for the postulated connection between linguistic attachments and autonomy to generate a more substantial right than that contained in Article 27, it must be true that the actual processes of language shift and desuetude as they occur in the world correspond to this conception of language. In other words, if people voluntarily abandon their native languages, and if this process cannot be described as unjust (e.g. because it is non-coerced), then the argument for language rights will be undermined.⁴³ Since it has already been demonstrated that linguistic attachments do not carry sufficient (non-instrumental) value to generate nationalist duties, the focus here is upon ascertaining whether or not they do carry enough value to generate *rights* in a stronger sense than has already been suggested in section 2. Although the following considerations do not provide a comprehensive refutation of the non-instrumentalist case, the final three do cast significant doubt upon the suggestion (necessary to the non-instrumentalist argument) that all instances of language loss are not only regrettable, but unjust.

First, it is presumably true that language loss is usually something that usually happens to the poor, disposed and powerless, and something that the wealthy and dominant successfully avoid.⁴⁴ This is because many patterns of language shift are intimately bound up with power politics, paradigmatically taking the form of ‘top-down’ pressures toward monolingualism at the nation-state level, often compounded by modern nationalist projects or language protectionist policies, and enacted through education and immigration policies, linguistic control of state institutions (e.g. the courts, parliaments, armies, police, civil service etc...), direct state intervention (e.g. banning publications and broadcasts in other languages, public stigmatization of other languages, insisting that parents name their children in the national language) and various other means (e.g. writing dictionaries, founding schools, translating scripture and well known works, publishing and broadcasting, linking the national language to the national church etc...). The obvious implication of this is that because those

⁴³ The burden of proof might actually be weaker than I suggest, since if it is *hypothetically* possible that voluntary language shift is consistent with the principles of justice, then the connection between ancestral languages and autonomy is possibly unsustainable.

⁴⁴ Hence May notes that ‘the vast majority of today’s threatened languages are spoken by socially and politically marginalised and/or subordinated national-minority and ethnic groups... [L]anguage death seldom occurs in communities of wealth and privilege, but rather to the disposed and disempowered’ (May, 2001, p. 4).

capable of preserving their language *do* preserve their language, and because those without the resources cannot, it must be the case that our own particular language is of (non-instrumental) value to us. After all, those affected by the early policies aiming at linguistic unity were far more likely to be coerced into changing their linguistic habits than to be convinced by the merits of assimilation, and in all cases the aim has been to prompt people to do something that if left alone they in all likelihood would not choose to do.

Second, the spread of democracy over the last few centuries has also been implicated in patterns of linguistic shift, and Charles Taylor (1998, 1999) has comprehensively demonstrated that there is something in the ‘dynamic’ of democracy which urges toward a kind of exclusion, an exclusion grounded on the formation of a shared identity in which all citizens – and only those citizens – can belong. Crucially, the kinds of homogenisation that have accompanied the growth of liberal democracies have frequently been orientated around a sense of national unity that involves a shared language spoken by all within the borders of the polity. Although linguistic diversity can be sustained in democratic states (e.g. Switzerland, Canada and Belgium) both those principles animating democracy and the practical demands accompanying them have prompted an escalation in the kinds of nationalising projects that have not been mirrored in other forms of political organisation. To put this in another way, if it is true that it is difficult to realise and sustain democratic politics in a multilingual context, then minority linguistic communities who are committed to democratic principles will face something of a dilemma, either assimilate or secede, and the latter option is not one that is always available or desirable.

Third, literacy has also been identified as one of the key indicators of the likely long-term survival of a particular language. Hence Levy notes that ‘[n]early all the languages likely to fall into desuetude are unwritten or have adopted unwritten forms only very recently...it should not surprise us that unwritten languages are vulnerable...literacy appears to increase the durability of languages a great deal’ (Levy, 2003, p. 237). Literacy can do this not simply because literate peoples tend to be the richest or most powerful, but because of something unique in the way that written languages are used:-

Once there are a few hundred thousand readers and writers of a language geographically concentrated, once books and newspapers are widely commercially published in it – published by people trying to sell books and newspapers, not by those who give them away as part of a language plan – then its likelihood of fading away seems to fall dramatically (Levy, 2003, p. 237).

However, when ‘to know a language’ presumes the abilities to speak, read and write in that language, additional language acquisition becomes more costly, and the fact of literacy constrains individual and communal linguistic diversity. Indeed globalisation and the increased importance of information technologies are both likely to make the situation of vulnerable language speakers even more acute.

Because literacy and democracy are both crucial aspects of the modern world (and hopefully permanent ones), and because evolving patterns of linguistic use, knowledge and repertoire seem to point increasingly toward monolingualism (at least at the nation state level, if not globally), one might conclude that linguistic diversity is simply at odds with the spirit of the age. This, in itself, makes little bearing upon the potential moral force of the non-instrumentalist case, and it may still be that each instance of language loss is an injustice. But given these facts, the suggestion that language shift *only* occurs under conditions of domination (an assumption crucial to a ‘strong’ form of non-instrumentalism) looks increasingly implausible. Furthermore, and more importantly, Van Parijs has identified another ‘mechanism through which weaker mother tongues get displaced by stronger ones in a post-agrarian, frequent-contact, high-mobility context’, a mechanism best viewed as a ‘bottom-up, people-driven kind of mechanism’ (Van Parijs, 2000, p. 219). Citing the work of Jean Laponce (1987, 1993a,b) he points out that though languages can co-exist side-by-side with little contact for centuries (e.g. Yiddish in Eastern Europe, Aramean in Turkey, or the native languages of North America):-

‘as soon as people start talking, trading, working with each other, indeed making love and having children together, one of the two languages will be slowly but inexorably driven out by the other, by the one which people have a stronger incentive to learn because of its being more prestigious or widely spread’ (Van Parijs, 2000, p. 219).

This final consideration is certainly an important one. Though patterns of language shift might be influenced by externally imposed policies (e.g. exclusive nation-building enterprises) and phenomena (e.g. literacy or democracy), another crucial determinant are the expressed preferences of speakers themselves. Furthermore, this crucial determinant has very little to do with any non-instrumental values language might have, and a lot more to do with the fact that language is primarily an instrumental means of communication. In short, if people willingly give up their ancestral tongues as a trade-off for other kinds of goods, then the (non-instrumentally valuable) attachments we have to our ancestral and other languages are not overwhelmingly powerful. In turn, if this is true, and even if particular (ancestral) linguistic attachments are *significant* and *constitutive* aspects of our identity, they are not primary goods, and thus they are not something over which we carry a rights claim.

5. Conclusion

As both Slonimski's fate and the stated concerns of numerous linguistic minorities testify, the liberty to exercise one's linguistic attachments amongst a community who reciprocate in kind is an important one. The concern of this paper has been to ask whether this liberty is sufficiently protected by Article 27, or whether it requires something more significant. The most plausible version of the 'stronger' argument is that linguistic attachments should be treated as primary goods. In turn, this claim forms a testable hypothesis that comprises two related arguments. First, if linguistic attachments are primary goods – if they 'are things which it is supposed a rational man wants whatever else he wants' (Rawls, 1972, p. 92) – then this must be because they form an important function in a person's ability to secure self-respect.⁴⁵ Second, if linguistic attachments perform an important function in a person's ability to secure self respect, then since 'the parties in the original position would wish to avoid at almost any cost the social conditions that undermine self-respect' (Rawls, 1972, p. 440), the accommodation of minority languages must be something that Rawlsian

⁴⁵ Language, of course, matters in a different sense with regard to the other social primary goods. For instance, certain linguistic repertoires may be disproportionately advantageous in seeking to secure an income, in making use of available opportunities, or in exercising basic rights and liberties. However, in each of these cases the value that a particular language has is connected exclusively to its *communicative utility*, and has nothing to do with the (non-instrumental) value that *my* particular linguistic attachments have for *me*.

liberals should be committed to. This paper has argued that individually held linguistic attachments *are* connected to a person's ability to secure self-respect in the sense that their linguistic competence(s) will affect their ability to secure other important goods (the instrumentalist hypothesis). This proposition alone is insufficient to justify linguistic preservation policies, nor even to generate a presumption in their favour, though it may be sufficient to justify the accommodation of minority languages. Justifying 'language rights' in the stronger sense requires a more powerful argument about the ways in which *my* ancestral linguistic attachments matter *for me* (non-instrumentally). Neither nationalist nor communitarian can provide this, or at least not in a way that is compatible with liberalism.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ager, D. (2001) *Motivation in Language Planning and Language Policy* (Clevedon, Multilingual Matters)
- American Terralingua Society (1999) *Statement of Purpose* (Hancock, Terralingua)
- Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities* (London, Verso)
- Baranczak, Stanislaw (1989) 'Tongue Tied Eloquence: Notes on Language, Exile, and Writing' *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 58, 429-38
- Barnard, F. M. (1965) *Herder's Social and Political Thought, from Enlightenment to Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965)
- Bricker, D.C. (1998), 'Autonomy and Culture: Will Kymlicka on Cultural Minority Rights', *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 36, 47-59.
- Barry, B. (2001) *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism* (Cambridge, Polity)
- Basch, L., Glick Schiller, N., and Szanton Blanc, C. (1994) *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (London, Routledge)
- Baubock, R. (2001) 'Cultural Citizenship, Minority Rights and Self-Government' in A. Aleinikoff and D. Klusmeyer (eds) *Citizenship Today: Global Perspectives and Practices* (Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), pp. 319-48.
- Berlin, I. (1976) *Vico and Herder* (London, Hogarth)
- Bloemraad, I. (2002) 'The North American Naturalisation Gap: An Institutional Approach to Citizenship Acquisition in the United States and Canada', *International Migration Review*, 36, pp. 193-228
- Boran, I. (2003) 'Global Linguistic Diversity, Public Goods, and the Principle of Fairness' in Kymlicka, W. and Patten, A. (eds.) *Language Rights and Political Theory* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 189-209
- Breytenbach, B. (1986) *End Papers: Essays, Letters, Articles of Faith, Workbook Notes* (London, Faber)
- Brimelow, P. (1996) *Alien Nation: Common Sense about America's Immigration Disaster* (New York, Harper)
- Brubaker, R. (1992) *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press)

- Carens, J. (2000) *Culture, Citizenship and Community: A Contextual Exploration of Justice as Evenhandedness* (Oxford, Oxford University Press)
- Castles, S. (2000) *Ethnicity and Globalization: From Migrant Worker to Transnational Citizen* (London, Sage)
- Coulombe, P. (1995) *Language Rights in French Canada* (New York, Peter Lang Publishing)
- Cowan, M. (ed.) (1963) *Humanist Without Portfolio: An Anthology of the Writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt* (Detroit, Wayne State University Press)
- Crawford, J. (2001) *At War with Diversity: US Language Policy in an Age of Anxiety* (Clevedon, Multilingual Matters)
- Crystal, D. (2000) *Language Death* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press)
- De Varennes, F. (1996) *Language, Minorities and Human Rights* (London, Martinus Nijhoff)
- Edwards, J. (1984) 'Language, Diversity and Identity' in Edwards, J. (ed.) *Linguistic Minorities, Politics and Pluralism* (London, Academic Press)
- Edwards, J. (1985) *Language, Society and Identity* (Oxford, Blackwell)
- Edwards, J. (1994) *Multilingualism* (Middlesex, Penguin)
- Edwards, J. (2001) 'The Ecology of Language Revival', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 2/2, 231-41
- Edwards, J. (2002) 'Forlorn Hope?' In LiWei, J. M. Dewaele, & A. Housen (eds.), *Opportunities and Challenges of Bilingualism* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter) 25-44
- Elliott, J. H. (1963) *Imperial Spain, 1469-1716* (London, Edward Arnold)
- Fichte, J. G. (1968 [1808] 'Thirteenth Address to the German Nation' in *Addresses to the German Nation*, trans. R. F. Jones and G. H. Turnbull, ed. George A. Kelly (New York, Harper Torch Books)
- Fishman, J. (1991) *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages* (Clevedon, Multilingual Matters)
- Gellner, E. (1983) *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers)
- Grafton, A. (1981) 'Wilhelm von Humboldt' *American Scholar*, 50, 371-81.
- Green, L. (1987) 'Are Language Rights Fundamental?' *Osgoode Hall Law Journal*, 25, pp. 639-69.
- Grillo, R. (1989) *Dominant Languages: Language and Hierarchy in Britain and France* (Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press)
- Grin, F. (2003) 'Diversity as Paradigm, Analytical Device, and Policy Goal' in Kymlicka, W. and Patten, A. (eds.) *Language Rights and Political Theory* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 169-188.
- Grin, F. and Daftory, F. (2003) (eds.) *Nation Building, Ethnicity and Language Politics in Transition Countries* (Budapest, Open Society Institute)
- Haugen, E. (1987) *Blessings of Babel: Bilingualism and Language Planning* (Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter)
- Herder, J. G. (2002 [1772]) 'Treatise on the Origin of Language' in Forster, M. (ed.) *Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press)
- Humboldt, W. von (1999 [1836]) *On Language: On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press)
- Jones, R. F. (1953) *The Triumph of the English Language* (Stanford, Stanford University Press)
- Kymlicka, W. (1989) *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (Oxford, Clarendon Press)
- Kymlicka, W. (1995) *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford, Clarendon Press)

- Kymlicka, W. (2001) *Politics in the Vernacular* (Oxford, Oxford University Press)
- Laitin, D. and Reich, R. (2003) 'A liberal Democratic Approach to Language Justice' in Kymlicka, W. and Patten, A. (eds.) *Language Rights and Political Theory* (Oxford, Oxford University Press) pp. 80-104
- Laponce, J. (1987) *Languages and Their Territories* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press)
- Laponce, J. (1993a) 'Do Languages Behave Like Animals', *International Journal for the Sociology of Language*, 103, pp. 19-30.
- Laponce, J. (1993b) 'The Case for Ethnic Federalism in Multilingual Societies: Canada's Regional Imperative', *Regional Politics and Policy*, 1, pp. 23-43
- Levine, A. (1999) *Early Modern Scepticism and the Origins of Toleration* (Oxford, Lexington Books)
- Levy, J. (2000) *The Multiculturalism of Fear* (Oxford, Oxford University Press)
- Levy, J. (2003) 'Language Rights, Literacy, and the Modern State' in Kymlicka, W. and Patten, A. (eds.) *Language Rights and Political Theory* (Oxford, Oxford University Press) pp. 230-249.
- Lind, M. (1996) *The Next American Nation* (New York, Free Press)
- MacMillan, M. (1998) *The Practice of Language Rights in Canada* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press)
- Margalit, A. and Halbertal, M. (1994) 'Liberalism and the Right to Culture', *Social Research*, 61, 491-510
- Margalit, A. and Raz, J. (1990) 'National Self-Determination' *Journal of Philosophy*, 87
- May, S. (2001) *Language and Minority Rights: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Language* (Harlow, Longman/Pearson)
- May, S. (2003) 'Misconceiving Minority Language Rights: Implications for Liberal Political Theory' in Kymlicka, W. and Patten, A. (eds.) *Language Rights and Political Theory* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 123-152
- McRae, K. (1983) *Conflict and Compromise in Multilingual Societies. Vol. 1 Switzerland* (Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press)
- McRae, K. (1986) *Conflict and Compromise in Multilingual Societies. Vol.2 Belgium.* (Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press)
- McRae, K. (1997) *Conflict and Compromise in Multilingual Societies. Vol. 3 Finland.* (Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press)
- Mühlhäusler, P. (2000) 'Language planning and language ecology', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 1, 306-67.
- Mulcaster, Richard (1970 [1582]) *The First Part of the Elementaria which Entreateth Cheflelie of the Right Writing of Our English Tung* (Menston, Scolar Press)
- Nebrija, Antonio de (1976 [1492]) *Gramática de la lengua castellana* (Madrid, Espasa-Calpe)
- Nettle, D. and Romaine, S. (2000) *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages* (Oxford, Oxford University Press)
- Ong, A. (1999) *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (London, Duke University Press)
- Parekh, B. (2000) *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (London, Macmillan)
- Patten, A. (2001) 'Political Theory and Language Policy', *Political Theory*, 29, pp. 691-75

- Patten, A. (2003a) 'What Kind of Bilingualism?' in Kymlicka, W. and Patten, A. (eds.) *Language Rights and Political Theory* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 296-321.
- Patten, A. (2003b) 'Liberal Neutrality and Language Policy', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 31, pp. 356-386.
- Phillipson, R. (1992) *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press)
- Pickus, N. (1998) 'To Make Natural: Creating Citizens for the Twenty-First Century' in Pickus, N. (ed.) *Immigration and Citizenship in the 21st Century* (Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield) pp. 107-40.
- Piller, I. (2001) 'Naturalization Language Testing and its Basis in Ideologies of National Identity and Citizenship', *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 5, pp. 259-77
- Pogge, T. (2003) 'Accommodation Rights for Hispanics in the U.S.' in Kymlicka, W. and Patten, A. (eds.) *Language Rights and Political Theory* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 105-122
- Pool, J. (1991) 'The Official Language Problem', *American Political Science Review*, 85, pp. 495-514.
- Popkin, J. and Popkin, R. (2000) *The Abbé Grégoire and His World* (Dordrecht, Kluwer)
- Portes, A. and Rumbaut, R. (eds.) (2001) *Ethnicities: Children of Immigrants in America* (London, University of California Press)
- Rawls, J. (1972) *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford, Clarendon Press)
- Raz, J. (1994) *Ethics in the Public Domain: Essays in the Morality of Law and Politics* (Oxford, Clarendon Press)
- Reaume, D. (1991) 'The Constitutional Protection of Language: Survival or Security?' in Schneiderman, D. (ed.) *Language and the State: The Law and Politics of Identity*. (Cowansville, Editions Yvon Blais), pp. 37-57
- Reaume, D. (1994) 'The Group Right to Linguistic Security: Whose Right, What Duties?' in Baker, J. (ed.) *Group Rights* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press)
- Reaume, D. (2000) 'Official-Language Rights: Intrinsic Value and the Protection of Difference', in Kymlicka, W. and Norman, W. (eds.) *Citizenship in Diverse Societies* (Oxford, Oxford University Press)
- Reaume, D. (2003) 'Beyond Personality: The Territorial and Personal Principles of Language Policy Reconsidered' in Kymlicka, W. and Patten, A. (eds.) *Language Rights and Political Theory* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 271-295
- Rubio-Marin, R. (2003) 'Language Rights: Exploring the Competing Rationales' in Kymlicka, W. and Patten, A. (eds.) *Language Rights and Political Theory* (Oxford, Oxford University Press)
- Schlesinger, A. (1992) *The Disuniting of America* (New York, Norton)
- Schmidt, R. (2000) *Language Policy and Identity Politics in the United States*. (Philadelphia, Temple University Press)
- Shell, M. (1993) 'Babel in America: The Politics of Language Diversity in the United States', *Critical Inquiry*, 20, 103-17
- Smith, A. D. (1986) *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, Blackwell)
- Taras, R. (1998) 'Nations and Language-Building: Old Theories, Contemporary Cases', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 4, pp. 79-101.
- Taylor, C. (1992) 'The Politics of Recognition' in A.Gutmann (ed.) *Multiculturalism and the 'Politics of Recognition'* (Princeton, Princeton University Press)
- Taylor, C. (1998) 'The Dynamics of Democratic Exclusion', *Journal of Democracy*, 9, pp. 143-156

- Taylor, C. (1999) 'Nationalism and Modernity', in R. Beiner (ed) *Theorizing Nationalism* (New York, State University of New York Press), pp. 219-45
- Teachers of English to Speakers of Foreign Languages (2000) *TESOL Board of Directors Reaffirms Position on Language Rights* (Alexandria VA, TESOL [Press Release])
- Tomsai, J. (1995) 'Kymlicka, Liberalism, and Respect for Cultural Minorities' *Ethics*, 105, pp. 580-603
- Van Parijs, P. (2003) 'Linguistic Justice' in Kymlicka, W. and Patten, A. (eds.) *Language Rights and Political Theory* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 153-168.
- Van Parijs, P. (2004) 'Europe's Linguistic Challenge', *European Journal of Sociology*, 45:1, 113-54
- Walker, B. (1997) 'Plural Cultures, Contested Territories: A Critique of Kymlicka' *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 30:2, 211-234
- Weber, M (1978) *Economy and Society* tr. E. Fischhoff, H. Gerth, A.M. Henderson, F. Kolegar, C.W. Mills, T. Parsons, M. Rheinstein, G. Roth, E. Shils, C. Wittich (Berkeley, University of California Press)
- Weinstock, D.M. (2003) 'The Antinomy of Language Rights' in Kymlicka, W. and Patten, A. (eds.) *Language Rights and Political Theory* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 250-270