

11.5 Identity and Essence (p. 294)

The Ethics of Minority Identity

THE CULTURE OF MINORITY groups is, of course, extremely important for several reasons. The existence of a variety of cultures is good in itself, and individual people sometimes find themselves rootless and despairing, without a sense of self and prone to disastrous life failures, without their old cultural surroundings, inside what is, for them, for a while, a foreign culture.

These considerations sometimes lead to a genuine ethical dilemma. Usually, the continuing destruction of aboriginal culture is not due nowadays to government policy or the actions of the European-origin majority; rather, a more important factor is the attractiveness of mainstream culture to the young aboriginal people who may prefer to have cars, shopping malls, and cell phones rather than the traditional aboriginal life in the bush, which anyone would find difficult. So, well-meaning outsiders have taken it upon themselves to try to get them to want to maintain their traditions, despite how they feel. The paradox here is that these people are again being pushed into something against their will by the mainstream culture.