Our Mongrel Selves: Pluralism, Identity and the Nation

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On the wall of the West End YMCA in Toronto is a framed, sepia-tinted photo of the men's track team for the year 1908. The team has 29 members. Judging from appearances, all are of European origins. Judging from their names—Marshall, White, Tait, Pratt, McKendrick, and so on—most stem from the British Isles.

The West End YMCA no longer has a track team. However, in keeping with the times, it has a club devoted to Tae Kwon Do, a Korean martial art. The Club's membership reflects the profound changes that have occurred in Toronto's ethnic composition over the past century. A "Club photo" would reveal the following.[1] Of a total of 33 adult members, three are of Korean descent, three of Chinese descent, two East Indian, three Portuguese, two Iranian, two Caribbean, two Russian, two Brazilian, one Argentinian, one Sudanese, one Côte d'Ivoirean, one Greek, one Irish, three British, one Ukranian-English, two Chinese-Irish, one Japanese-English, one Croatian-French, and one English-Aboriginal. It is worth noting that the Club is largely youthful; most members range in age from their mid-teens to late twenties, with a sprinkling of people in their thirties, and a few still older. By my reckoning, some 58 per cent were born in Canada, and about 42 per cent born outside Canada. The working language of the Club is English, the official language of the sport of Tae Kwon Do is Korean, and Club members also use a variety of other languages in conversation, depending on the context.

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[1] These figures reflect the composition of the Club in 1996, when I first began researching this paper. Since then, the Club membership has changed but remained as diverse as ever.

These two "snapshots" are interesting not only in their own right but also for the way that we interpret them. For I have focussed your attention on the national origins of the people involved. This is not, perhaps, a forced or unnatural perspective. To some extent, it reflects the actual attitudes of Club members, who show a lot of good-natured curiosity about one another's ethnic roots, languages, cuisine, and so on. Nevertheless, my juxtaposition of the two snapshots has a certain sub-text that raises questions of its own. For I have implied that the first photo represents the "standard" situation, in which the people of a certain place are more or less ethnically homogeneous. The second snapshot, by contrast, represents a departure from the norm—a situation that is "new" and "different" and worthy of comment.

This viewpoint reflects a common assumption: that the world is composed of distinct and broadly homogeneous ethnic groups, which occupy separate portions of the globe. Indeed, my classification of Club members by national labels such as "Korean", "Portuguese" and "Sudanese" tacitly perpetuates this outlook. Considered simply as a feature of our everyday discourse, such an assumption is relatively innocuous. However, elevated to the theoretical plane, it forms the basis of a far-reaching and significant premise, which we may call the *theory of national segmentation*. This theory has two interwoven strands.

First, it holds that humanity is naturally divided into a host of "national", "ethnic", or "tribal" groups. Each such group forms a more or less uniform whole, united by such factors as ancestry, historical experience, physical characteristics, culture, language, religion, laws, customs, and social and political structures. Group members view themselves as forming a single unit and are perceived as such by their neighbours and other outsiders. Each group occupies a definite territory, marked off from neighbouring territories by reasonably well-defined boundaries. For convenience, we will call all such groups *national groups*, always remembering that the term includes not only "nations" in the modern sense but also smaller-scale units organized on a tribal or kinship basis.

Second, the theory maintains that most individuals gain their dominant sense of identity from national groups and owe their primary allegiance to these groups. National membership takes precedence over other competing bases of identity and allegiance, such as family, neighbourhood, workplace or religion.

Several features of the theory deserve particular attention. The theory insists on the natural segmentation of the human race, as opposed to theories that would emphasize the natural unity of humanity or downplay its internal sub-divisions. The theory maintains that this segmentation occurs mainly along a single dimension, that of national or tribal affiliation, rather than along multiple overlapping dimensions. Finally, it argues that this segmentation has territorial and political aspects, which in more recent times have given rise to the "nation state".

The theory of national segmentation is graphically illustrated by maps that display the globe as a multi-coloured quilt, with each patch representing a distinct national group. In the words of the pioneering anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski:

> "An ethnographic map of the world shows, on every continent, well-defined boundaries which separate one tribe from the other. The unity of such a tribe consists *de facto* in the homogeneity—at times identity—of culture. [...] The tribe in this sense, therefore, is a group of people who conjointly exercise a type of culture. [...]
>
> One tribe [...] differs from the other in the organization of the family, the local groups, the clan, as well as economic, magical and religious terms. The identity of institutions; their potential cooperation due to community of language, tradition and law; the interchange of services; and the possibility of joint enterprise on a large scale—these are the factors which make for the unity of a primitive, culturally homogeneous group. This, I submit, is the prototype of what we define today as nationality: a large group, unified by language, tradition and culture. To the division as we find it between primitive culturally differentiated tribes

there correspond today such divisions as between Germans and Poles, Swedes and Norwegians, Italians and French."[2]

This ideal picture may, in practice, be tempered by the recognition that the boundaries between national groups cannot always be drawn with absolute precision and that a certain amount of inter-cultural mixing occurs in "border zones". However, the theory of national segmentation views these zones precisely as "peripheral" or "transitional" areas and contrasts them with the "core" areas of the nation, where the national culture and language are maintained in their authentic and unadulterated forms.[3] The "purity" of the French spoken in the Île-de-France may be contrasted with the "dialects" used in areas bordering Germany and Spain, just as the "neutral" accent of the Home Counties in England may be contrasted with the "heavily accented" speech of the Northern Counties. So, while a certain amount of blurring at the edges may be admitted, the basic image of a palette of contrasting colours is maintained.

It is important to note that the theory of national segmentation is not just an observation about how humanity has happened to arrange itself in recent times. The theory maintains that throughout known human history, in all parts of the globe, human beings have formed national or tribal groups occupying exclusive territories. Some exponents of the theory suggest that this phenomenon is too widespread to be merely accidental. Rather, it satisfies some deep-rooted drive or tendency in human nature.[4]

2 Bronislaw MALINOWSKI, "An Anthropological Analysis of War" (1941) 46 *Am.J.Soc.* 521; quoted in Robert A. LEVINE and Donald T. CAMPBELL, *Ethnocentrism: Theories of Conflict, Ethnic Attitudes, and Group Behavior*, New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1972, p. 83.

3 See the suggestive discussion in R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, note 2, p. 83-84 and 101-104.

4 See Johan M.G. VAN DER DENNEN, "Ethnocentrism and In-Group/Out-Group Differentiation: A Review and Interpretation of the Literature", in

At this point in the argument, we often observe a shift from the empirical realm to the normative, from observations about social realities to claims about the way things should be. And here we also witness a profound parting of the ways.

For some, the "social fact" of national segmentation is, like original sin, something to be acknowledged only to be overcome. Strong attachment to one's national group is seen as a fertile source of prejudice, discrimination, oppression and conflict. Various ways of countering this natural tendency are envisaged, such as entrenched guarantees of individual rights, federal constitutional arrangements, and strengthened international institutions. Thus, in a recent book, Thomas Franck issues a rallying cry for individual autonomy as against the ancient claims of tribe and nation:

> "The individualist is an authentically modern phenomenon: a person who sets out to choose the components of his or her own, unique identity. Until the recent past, such self-definition was strictly forbidden: by law, custom, culture, and religion. One was, simply, the sum of where one lived, where one's parents worshipped, and the language one spoke. The blood in one's veins commanded absolutely the cells in one's brain and heart. Even now, for many, personal emancipation from these dictates of one's identity may still be beyond reach. But, change is coming."[5]

However, not all observers view the phenomenon of national segmentation in such a negative light. For many others, it is something to be welcomed and nurtured, at least within limits. For, so they argue, only within the protective cocoon of a flourishing national culture can an individual hope to acquire and maintain a secure identity and the basic

Vernon REYNOLDS, Vincent FALGER and Ian VINE (eds.), *The Sociobiology of Ethnocentrism*, London, Croom Helm, 1987, p. 1-47.

5 Thomas M. FRANCK, *The Empowered Self: Law and Society in the Age of Individualism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 1.

linguistic, cultural and spiritual capacities of a fully-developed human being.

It is this second viewpoint that mainly interests me here. For it provides the basis for the asserted *principle of national self-determination*, which has had a considerable impact on international political discourse and wielded a certain influence in the legal realm as well. In its broadest form, the principle of national self-determination involves two basic propositions.

First, each national group has the inherent right to determine its own status and destiny. In particular, it is entitled to decide whether to become (or remain) an independent state or an autonomous unit within a state, or to enjoy some other distinctive international or constitutional status.

Second, a national group may justifiably take steps to preserve and enhance its national culture and identity. So doing, it may encourage cultural, linguistic, and even (according to some) ethnic and religious homogeneity within its territorial homeland, by means of measures concerning education, citizenship, immigration, language, and the like.

The quest for ethnic and religious homogeneity is, of course, highly controversial and rejected by many modern advocates of the principle of national self-determination. However, without seeking to make too much of the point, we cannot avoid noting that a survey of nationalist movements around the globe does not provide any reassurance that the cards of ethnicity and religion have actually been removed from the deck.

It is important to distinguish between the asserted political principle of *national* self-determination and the international legal principle of self-determination, which, as generally understood, is not based on the supposed natural division of humanity into national groups and does not confer special rights on such groups. As Cassese writes:

> "[T]he international body of legal norms on self-determination does not encompass any rule granting ethnic groups and minorities the right to secede with a view to becoming a separate and distinct international entity."[6]

At present, the principle of national self-determination constitutes at best a political principle—one which, nevertheless, has had a remarkable influence on popular notions of self-determination and which aspires to acceptance at the level of international law.

The basic rationale underlying the principle of national self-determination is that membership in the national group is central to the identities of the individuals concerned. So the prosperity and fortunes of the group, its language and culture, will have a crucial impact on the welfare of its members. However, decisions affecting the destiny and prospects of the group cannot safely be left in the hands of outsiders, who cannot be expected to have the group's true interests at heart. As Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz have argued, history teaches us that groups that lack the right of self-government are "not infrequently persecuted, despised or neglected."[7] So it is appropriate that each national group should have the right to determine its own destiny, and in particular to determine whether it should form an independent state or some other kind of self-governing entity.

The important point, for our purposes, is that the principle of national self-determination hinges on the reality of *national segmentation* as a simple matter of fact. Thus Margalit and Raz base their argument for self-determination on the observation: "We assume that things are roughly as they are, especially that our world is a world of states and of a

[6] Antonio CASSESE, *Self-determination of Peoples*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 339.

[7] Avishai MARGALIT and Joseph RAZ, "National Self-Determination", (1990) 87 *Journal of Philosophy* 439, 457.

variety of ethnic, national, tribal and other groups."[8] They go on to explain:

> "It is a natural fact about our world that it is a populated world with no unappropriated lands. It is a social and a moral fact that it is a world of nations, tribes, peoples, etc., that is, that people's perception of themselves and of others and their judgments of the opportunities and the responsibilities of life are shaped, to an extent, by the existence of such groups and their membership of them. [...] To speculate concerning a reality different from ours in its basic social and moral constitution is pointless in a deeper way. Such social facts are constitutive of morality. Their absence undercuts morality's very foundations."[9]

And, of course, given this "social and moral" premise, the argument for the principle of national self-determination has considerable strength.[10]

But is the basic premise correct? Is it true that in "our world" humanity divides itself into clearly bounded, homogeneous national groups that are central to the formation, identities and welfare of their members? It seems to me that the theory of national segmentation is open to two basic objections, which call into question the two main tenets of the theory identified earlier.

The *first* objection addresses the claim that humanity naturally arranges itself into clearly bounded national groups, occupying discrete territories. It argues to the contrary that, on the *social* plane, ethnic and cultural pluralism has always been a widespread and important reality, not only in states and empires, but also in relatively small-scale tribal and

[8] *Id.*, 440.

[9] *Id.*, note 1, p. 440.

[10] For a detailed assessment of the argument mounted by Margalit and Raz, see Brian SLATTERY, "The Paradoxes of National Self-Determination", (1994) *32 Osgoode Hall L.J.* 703, 716-733.

kin-based societies. This phenomenon rules out any easy identification of homogeneous national types or clear cultural boundaries.

The *second* objection targets the claim that national groups are central to the identities and welfare of their members. It argues to the contrary that, at the *personal* level, in all known societies, individuals have always belonged to a range of differing groups, which mould their identities and affect their welfare in complex and multi-dimensional ways. The claim that an individual's identity and well-being is tied in a central way to the welfare of their "national group" is wrong as a simple matter of historical fact.

In a word, the theory of national segmentation fails to take sufficient account of *social* and *personal pluralism*. We explore these related phenomena in the next two sections.

I. Social Pluralism

In the city of Montreal, near the St. Lawrence River, there stands a huge boulder, some ten feet high. It was unearthed from the river in 1859 by Irish workmen engaged in building Victoria Bridge. The boulder was subsequently inscribed with these words:

> "To preserve from desecration the remains of 6,000 immigrants who died of ship fever, A.D. 1847-48."

As the inscription indicates, the boulder marks the location of a common charnel pit in which were buried victims of the terrible typhus that afflicted immigrants pouring into Canada from a famine-stricken Ireland. Some 100,000 Irish are thought to have come to Canada in the single year of 1847. They were not the last nor were they the first. In 1836, the Agent for Immigrants had reported that over 164,000 Irish had landed in Quebec during the previous ten years.[11]

[11] The story of the boulder is related in Timothy P. SLATTERY, *Loyola and Montreal*, Montreal, Palm Publishers, 1962, p. 21-28.

Not all of these people remained in what was then Lower Canada. Many moved on farther West. But those that stayed contributed to the growing diversity of the Province. The same forces of imperial expansion, war, disease, trade, and economic opportunity that had brought French traders, fishermen and settlers to the shores of the St. Lawrence and transformed the Aboriginal societies they encountered, also scattered Irish and millions of other immigrants across the continent. French, English, Irish, Scots, Italians, Poles, Ukranians, Greeks, Portuguese, Chinese, East Indians, Lebanese, and countless others were swept together in a series of historical whirlwinds that none could foresee or entirely control, processes that laid the foundations for the emergence of Canada as a polyethnic society. It is not surprising that a leading francophone intellectual and politician in Quebec is named Claude Ryan, and that a prominent Québecois political family carries the moniker "Johnson". Nor is it remarkable that two recent Grand Chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations should have the family names "Erasmus" and "Mercredi".

The forces at work are not new. The world historian, William H. McNeill, has argued that, over the long stretch of recorded human history, polyethnicity was normal in civilized societies "whereas the ideal of an ethnically unitary state was exceptional in theory and rarely approached in practice."[12] He goes on to say:

> "My fundamental thesis is that the Canadian public experience of polyethnicity on the one hand and of ambivalence towards a richer and more powerful neighbor on the other is shared with most of the rest of the world throughout recorded history. Marginality and pluralism were and are the norm of civilized existence. [...] And ethnic political unity, even among barbarians, was often illusory and always fragile, because military conquests and other encounters perennially resulted in mixing one sort of people with others."[13]

[12] William H. MCNEILL, *Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1986, p. 4.

However, the point is not confined to large-scale societies with substantial urban centres. Anthropological studies of small-scale tribal and folk societies have questioned whether well-defined ethnic units are the norm or the exception. As the anthropologist A.W. Southall has stated:

> "The studies of the last few decades, in particular, have indicated that very many traditional societies are of a much more ambiguous nature than had been supposed from the earlier idea of the tribe as a simple and clearly bounded entity."[14]

These studies have described a variety of phenomena that tend to undermine the concept of clearly bounded ethnic communities. Expanding and adapting the classification suggested by Robert Levine and Donald Campbell,[15] we may group these phenomena under seven headings: (1) ethnic mosaics; (2) cultural blurring; (3) overlapping cultural areas; (4) nested societies; (5) disagreement about labels and boundaries; (6) communal interaction; and (7) shifts of identity and life-style. These headings are not mutually exclusive, and many phenomena might be grouped under more than one heading. However they provide a convenient way of organizing and analysing the evidence.

A. Ethnic Mosaics

Contrary to the standard picture of homogeneous, territorially continuous ethnic units, it is common to find situations in which ethnic groups are interspersed with other peoples, sometimes in a series of

[13] *Id.*, p. 6.

[14] Aidan SOUTHALL, "Ethnic Incorporation Among the Alur", in Ronald COHEN and John MIDDLETON (eds.), *From Tribe to Nation in Africa*, Scranton, Chandler Publishing, 1970, p. 71.

[15] R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, note 2, p. 84-99.

enclaves. The people of these dispersed communities view themselves as distinct from their neighbours in name and origin, and they also display significant external differences in such matters as language, religion, mode of subsistence, culture, and social organization.[16]

For example, the pastoral Fulbe or Fulani people of West Africa live in scattered groups along the southern fringes of the Sahara desert, in a broad swathe of territory extending from their presumed homeland on the middle Senegal River near the Atlantic coast to Lake Chad on the east, a distance of some 1500 miles. Throughout this territory, they pursue their avocation of cattle-herding in close association with a variety of sedentary peoples, from whom they differ in language, social structure, ecology and lifestyle. It is notable that, despite the distances involved, Fulbe pastoralists have maintained a common language with comparatively little variation.[17] Likewise, in Swat, North Pakistan, ethnic groups that pursue differing pastoral and agricultural ways of life occupy "ecological niches" that are defined by their elevation rather than by territorial contiguity. Barth argues that in areas where such arrangements exist—which includes much of West and South Asia—the notion of distinct culture areas is inapplicable: "Different ethnic groups and culture types will have overlapping distributions and disconforming borders, and will be socially related to a variable degree."[18]

16 See the evidence reviewed in R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL: *id.*, p. 85-88.

17 The complex history of the Fulbe (both pastoral and sedentary) is recounted in Philip CURTIN, Steven FEIERMAN, Leonard THOMPSON and Jan VANSINA, *African History: From Earliest Times to Independence*, 2nd ed., London, Longman, 1995, p. 84-86; see also R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, note 2, p. 86.

18 Fredik BARTH, "Ecologic Relationships of Ethnic Groups in Swat, North Pakistan", (1956) 58 *American Anthropologist* 1079, 1088, quoted in R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, note 2, p. 86.

It is often thought that people that speak distinct languages or dialects naturally live in geographically discrete "speech communities" that correspond closely with distinct cultural units. However, as Hymes and others have shown, this assumption is frequently incorrect, even with regard to non-literate peoples living in small communities. We will review the evidence on this point in later sections. For present purposes, it is sufficient to note that multilingualism is a surprisingly widespread phenomenon even in small indigenous societies, as documented in such diverse areas as the Amazon, Queensland, New Guinea and the Pacific Northwest.[19] For example, the people of the central north-west Amazon live in a variety of tribal units, which speak distinct and mutually unintelligible languages. However, due to the practice of exogamy, men marry women from tribes other than their own. These women take up residence in their husbands' longhouses, where they use their husband's language to communicate with their children. However within these longhouses there are usually other women from the same tribe, who speak among themselves in their own language. So, each longhouse has its distinctive repertoire of languages, usually numbering at least four. Most people are multilingual from adolescence onwards and continue to enhance their linguistic abilities throughout their lives. People use the various languages at their command in an unselfconscious way, depending on the situation and the person they are talking to. One of the tribal languages, Tukano, functions as a *lingua franca* throughout much of the area.[20]

Linguistic heterogeneity is, of course, a familiar feature of many large-scale societies and urban situations. To take only one example, as Hobsbawm points out, until 1945 people speaking various German dialects lived not only in their core area of central Europe but also in towns and peasant settlements dispersed throughout eastern and south eastern Europe as far as the lower Volga. This diaspora was the product

19 Dell HYMES, "Linguistic Problems in Defining the Concept of 'Tribe'", in June HELM (ed.), *Essays on the Problem of Tribe*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1968, p. 23, at p. 31-32 and 39.

20 *Id.*, 31, reporting the field research of Arthur F. Sorensen.

of successive waves of conquest, migration and colonization that occurred over a long period extending from the eleventh century to the eighteenth century.[21] Less well-known, perhaps, are the instances of linguistic heterogeneity in small-scale societies. A dramatic example is provided by the community of Hpalang, in the Kachin Hills area of North-East Burma, as described by Leach. In 1940, Hpalang consisted of nine villages, spread along the crest of a ridge about two miles long. Its total population was small, amounting to roughly 500 individuals distributed in 130 households. Nevertheless, the community contained sub-groups speaking no less than six distinct languages and dialects (Jinghpaw, Gauri, Atsi, Maru, Lisu and Chinese), with all the households in a single village normally speaking the same mother tongue. Interestingly, although Hpalang was riven internally by factions that to some extent corresponded to language groups, the community presented a united front to outsiders, such as the neighbouring Shan people, who reciprocally treated its members as belonging to a single group.[22]

B. Cultural Blurring

The theory of national segmentation envisages a world divided into distinct national groups, each separated from its fellows by relatively clear boundaries based on distinctive linguistic, social, economic and cultural features. However, in reality, clear boundaries of this type are often difficult to discern, especially in areas that lack durable state structures.[23] Cultural and social characteristics tend to vary in a gradual and continuous manner, with different features merging and interpenetrating like the ingredients in a well-simmered stew. In such situations, as Moerman has observed: "It is often difficult to discern discontinuities

[21] Eric J. HOBSBAWM, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 47.

[22] Edmund Ronald LEACH, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, London, G. Bell and Sons, 1954, p. 44-46 and 66-70.

[23] See discussion in R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, note 2, p. 88 and 89.

of language, culture, polity, society, or economy with sufficient clarity to draw boundaries."[24]

It is well-known that spoken languages tend to vary somewhat from community to community, so that small variances of accent and vocabulary between adjacent communities may gradually escalate over greater distances into larger differences, sometimes blossoming into full-scale dialects which may be mutually incomprehensible. However, this process holds true not only for languages but also for many other cultural characteristics. For example, in the Northwest of the West African colony of Gold Coast, as described by Goody in 1956, the whole area was characterized by a gradual and continuous cultural flux, so that one could not speak of distinct cultures but only of slow waves of cultural merging and transformation, with few marked discontinuities:

> "Unilineal descent groups are widely dispersed among peoples of different language and social organization. Compounds are scattered unevenly across the countryside in such a way that it is difficult to tell where one settlement ends and another begins. There was no crystallized political system before the advent of the British, nor does any group crystallize around a cohesive ritual institution such as the Great Festivals of the Tallensi. Cultural changes take place imperceptibly like dialects merging into one another."[25]

[24] Michael MOERMAN, "Ethnic Identification in a Complex Civilization: Who are the Lue?", (1965) 67 *American Anthropologist* 1215, quoted in Morton H. FRIED, "On the Concepts of 'Tribe' and 'Tribal Society'" in J. HELM (ed.), *op. cit.*, note 19, p. 3, at p. 4.

[25] Jack R. GOODY, *Social Organization of the LoWilli*, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1956, p. 17, quoted in R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, note 2, p. 88.

Not only are many cultural boundaries fuzzy, but the location of such boundaries tends to shift over time. The phenomenon was noted by Jacobs in a study of the historical evolution of indigenous languages in Oregon and Washington states, an area populated by numerous small groups linked by trade and the practice of exogamy. Jacobs argued that the distribution of languages observed in 1937 was the product of recurring trends whereby the languages of upriver locations gradually shifted downstream at the expense of languages located closer to the coast:

> "There must have occurred gradual changes in the percentage of speakers of one or another language in smaller bilingual upriver border villages; in a bilingual border village the percentage of upriver dialect speakers increased, the percentage of lower river dialect speakers diminished. The changing percentages reflect the greater attractiveness of certain locations and the larger numbers moving in such directions."[26]

Even where a common language exists, it does not necessarily correspond to a cohesive social or cultural unit.[27] For example, the Siuai of the Solomon Islands, as described by Oliver in 1955, shared a common language and so, on this basis, arguably qualified as a distinct tribe or national group. However, they were generally bilingual and intermarried with another people that spoke a different language. They did not act together in land matters or cooperate in any joint enterprises. They did not possess any common hierarchy and had fuzzy notions of boundaries. Considered as a whole, they did not constitute an exclusive interactive community. Indeed, some Siuai interacted with greater frequency and regularity with people in adjacent groups than with other

[26] Melville JACOBS, "Historic Perspective in Indian Languages of Oregon and Washington", (1937) 28 *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 55, quoted in D. HYMES, *loc. cit.*, note 19, 39.

[27] See the detailed analysis in D. HYMES, *loc. cit.*, note 19.

Siuai. As a result, Oliver declined to describe the Siuai as a distinct tribe or group, preferring to classify them as a simple aggregate.[28]

C. Overlapping Cultural Areas

Levine and Campbell draw attention to the related phenomenon of "noncongruent variation", in which several distinct cultural traits vary at different rates and in different ways throughout a region, so that a map illustrating the geographical distribution of one trait does not tally with maps showing the distribution of other traits. This phenomenon may be observed, not only in areas where there is gradual variation of cultural traits, but also in areas featuring sharp ethnic discontinuities.[29]

For example, in North-Western Africa, one might expect to find distinctive cultures corresponding to the three different environmental zones of the region: the Sahara desert, the Sudanic savanna, and the tropical forest. While this is broadly true of material culture, it does not hold true of other cultural traits, which have unique patterns of distribution. As Curtin, Feierman, Thompson and Vansina comment:

> "If we were to map these distributions we would need a base map of northern Africa with a series of overlays—several hundred of them. These overlays could map each important aspect of culture—language, political structure, religion, art, family life, kinship systems and much more. Very few of the overlays would show an identical pattern, and few would correspond closely to the pattern of the physical environment. The total pattern would show a remarkable degree of

[28] Douglas L. OLIVER, *A Solomon Island Society*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1955, p. 103; cited in M.H. FRIED, *loc. cit.*, note 24, 5.

[29] R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, note 2, p. 89.

homogeneity, but with diversity, too, as widely shared cultural features were mixed in different ways."[30]

More remarkably, certain modern European countries often considered to epitomize the nation-state did not in fact achieve linguistic uniformity until relatively recently, so that language and "nationality" did not correspond. In France, for example, it has been estimated that in 1789, some 50% of the citizenry did not speak French at all and only 12-13% spoke it "correctly". In fact, outside a central region, French was not habitually spoken except in towns, and in northern and southern France it was hardly spoken at all. Italy presents an even more striking picture of linguistic diversity. In 1860, the year that the country was unified, it is thought that only 2% of the population used Italian for everyday purposes.[31]

The presumed link between language and nationality is also belied by the well-known instances where a *lingua franca* spreads throughout a linguistically diverse region and is spoken or understood by many of the inhabitants as a second or even third language. This is the situation in many African states today, where such languages as English, French, Portuguese and Swahili have often assumed the official or *de facto* status of "national" languages, overlaying a multiplicity of local languages and dialects.

The example of Swahili is a particularly interesting one.[32] The language emerged in the polyethnic, largely Muslim communities that developed along the coast of East Africa from the Middle Ages onward,

[30] P. CURTIN, S. FEIERMAN, L. THOMPSON and J. VANSINA, *op. cit.*, note 17, p. 69.

[31] E.J. HOBSBAWN, *op. cit.*, note 21, p. 60 and 61.

[32] See P. CURTIN, S. FEIERMAN, L. THOMPSON and J. VANSINA, *op. cit.*, note 17, p. 120-128; Joan RUSSELL, *Swahili*, London, Teach Yourself Books, 1996, p. 1-3; Thomas J. HINNEBUSCH and Sarah M. MIRZA, *Swahili: A Foundation for Speaking, Reading, and Writing*, 2nd ed., Lanham, Maryland, University Press of America, 1998, p. xiv-xvi.

due to the interaction between Arab traders and Africans. Through trade and conquest, migration and education, Swahili has now spread throughout much of Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Eastern Congo, supplementing rather than displacing local languages. The grammatical structure of Swahili resembles that of the "Bantu" languages spoken throughout eastern and southern Africa so that it can be learned with comparative ease by many local peoples. However, its rich and diverse vocabulary betrays the multiple waves of influence that have washed against the East African coast and spilled onto the mainland. For example, the concept of "money" is currently rendered in Swahili by at least four words, each with a distinct linguistic origin, each drawn from differing periods in the area's history: "fedha" (from the Arabic); "pesa" (from the Hindi); "hela" (from the German); and "shilingi" (from the English).

The phenomenon of non-congruent variation exposes the one-dimensional character of ethnographic maps, which display the world as neatly divided into clearly bounded national groups. Such maps conceal the diverse forms of group affiliation, which overlay each other, like strata in ancient rocks that show the diverse influences of wind, tide and geological upheaval. The boundaries of membership groups ranged in one stratum do not necessarily correspond to those of groups ranged in other strata. In reality, it is rare for the frontiers of a modern state to tally with the boundaries of any single national, cultural, linguistic, or religious group, much less for all of these boundaries to correspond. Even if we disregard state boundaries and focus exclusively on the boundaries of "national groups", we find striking instances of disparity as we move through the various strata of linguistic, racial, cultural and religious affiliation.

It need hardly be added that such divisions may seem unreal, not only to outside observers, but also (and especially) to the peoples themselves, whose conceptions of community may be moulded by quite different factors. As Nadel comments in a 1947 study of the Nuba tribes of central Sudan:

> "We shall meet with groups which, though they are close neighbours and possess an almost identical language and culture, do not regard themselves as one tribe [...]; and we shall also meet with tribes which claim this unity regardless of internal cultural differentiation. Cultural and linguistic uniformity, then, does not imply, and cultural and linguistic diversity—at least within certain limits—not preclude, the recognition of tribal unity."[33]

D. Nested Societies

Many societies are organized in a segmented fashion, such that the larger social units are composed of a number of distinct segments, which in turn break into smaller segments, which themselves consist of still smaller segments, and so on. Thus among the Nuer of Southern Sudan, as described in the 1930s by Evans-Pritchard,[34] an individual is ordinarily a member of a residential family group living in a homestead (*gol*), which in turn is located in a hamlet (*dhor*) comprising several homesteads of close agnatic kin. The hamlet itself is part of a village (*cieng)*, a closely-knit unit bound together by a web of kinship and affinal ties, whose members cooperate in many spheres. Evans-Pritchard remarks:

> "The people of a village have a feeling of strong solidarity against other villages and great affection for their site, and in spite of the wandering habits of Nuer, persons born and bred in a village have a nostalgia for it and are likely to return to it and

[33] Siegfried Frederick NADEL, *The Nuba*, London, Oxford University Press, 1947, p. 13, quoted in D. HYMES, *loc. cit.*, note 19, 29.

[34] Edward Evan EVANS-PRITCHARD, *The Nuer*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1940, p. 4-7 and 113-125. Although published in 1940, the book draws on material gathered at various times in the 1930s, as explained at p. 7-15. For a brief treatment of the Nuer, see Meyer FORTES and Edward Evan EVANS-PRITCHARD (eds.), *African Political Systems*, London, Oxford University Press, 1940, p. 272-296.

> make their home there, even if they have resided elsewhere for many years."[35]

During the annual dry season, the Nuer congregate in cattle camps (*wec*), which they may share with people of neighbouring villages or more distant kinfolk. A collection of villages and camps form a "district", which is an anthropological construct representing the sphere of a person's normal social contacts. The people of a district take part in common dances, feuds, and raiding parties, and tend to inter-marry and share cattle camps. In the smallest Nuer tribes, the district comprises the entire tribe, but in the larger tribes, it represents only a secondary or tertiary tribal segment. The Nuer as a whole are comprised of a number of tribes, each of which has a particular territory containing building sites, water-supplies and fishing-pools. The tribe is the largest political segment known to the Nuer. It represents the highest level at which they feel a duty to combine for offensive and defensive actions, and an obligation (however diluted) to settle feuds and other disputes by arbitration. The tribe occupies a prominent place in the affections of the Nuer:

> "Tribesmen have a common sentiment towards their country and hence towards their fellow tribesmen. This sentiment is evident in the pride with which they speak of their tribe as the object of their allegiance, their joking disparagement of other tribes, and their indication of cultural variations in their own tribe as symbols of its singularity. [...] Tribal sentiment rests as much on opposition to other tribes as on common name, common territory, corporate action in warfare, and the common lineage structure of a dominant clan."[36]

[35] E.E. EVANS-PRITCHARD, *op. cit.*, note 34, p. 115.

[36] *Id.*, p. 119 and 120.

Nevertheless, the tribal divisions of Nuer society do not preclude a sense of common identity and affinity. The Nuer see themselves as a distinctive people with a particular culture and regard such neighbouring peoples as the Dinka and Shilluk as distinctly "foreign".

As even this brief description of Nuer society indicates, the expanding series of social circles that surround the individual make it difficult to discern any single, clearly bounded "national group", which plays a dominant role in forming the identity of the individual. Nuer identity is composite and complex, moulded by the multiple levels of social organization to which the individual belongs. The importance of each level varies with the situation, season and stage of life.

The phenomenon of nested societies is, of course, not confined to tribal groups but arguably constitutes a universal human phenomenon.[37] It will hardly be unfamiliar to any student of Canadian federalism. We will have occasion to revisit this important topic later in the paper, in discussing personal pluralism.

E. Disagreement about Labels and Boundaries

It is not uncommon for peoples living in a certain region to disagree among themselves about the appropriate names for their own and neighbouring ethnic communities, a disagreement that reflects a deeper disagreement about the character, membership and geographical extent of these communities. This disagreement may be so pervasive that an observer cannot rely on the perceptions of the peoples concerned in seeking to identify the names, composition, and boundaries of their communities.[38]

[37] See discussion in R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, note 2, p. 43-48; P. CURTIN, S. FEIERMAN, L. THOMPSON and J. VANSINA, *op. cit.*, note 17, p. 70-72.

[38] R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, note 2, p. 89-92.

Indeed, the modern names of some large-scale ethnic groupings find their origins, not in the languages of the peoples in question, but in names applied by outsiders on the basis of perceived similarities of language and culture. These names were not originally recognized by the people concerned, who described and classified themselves on a different basis. However, as outsiders gained a dominant position in the region, these ethnic labels acquired a more permanent status and also provided a basis for a rise in "national" consciousness among the ethnic communities so named, communities that previously had viewed themselves as disparate groups.

This process may be observed with the Yoruba and Ibo peoples, two major ethnic groups in modern Nigeria. The name "Yoruba" is thought to have stemmed from a presumably uncomplimentary foreign nickname, meaning "cunning". It was originally applied by the Hausa and Fulani peoples to people belonging to the powerful kingdom of Oyo—today considered a sub-group of the Yoruba. In the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries extended the name to the entire group of peoples speaking what the missionaries considered the common Yoruba language, whereas the actual people concerned referred to themselves by the names of smaller groups, such as Oyo, Egba, Ijebu, Ife and Ilesha. Likewise, before the advent of Europeans, the Ibo people apparently did not have any common name and normally identified themselves by the name of the founder of the particular village to which they belonged. In fact, the term "Ibo" had been used as a term of contempt by a riverain people (the Oru—now considered Ibo) for certain people of the hinterland. As Europeans began penetrating the area, they extended the name to the entire group of Ibo-speaking peoples.[39]

F. Communal Interaction

It is often thought that members of an ethnic community have more frequent and significant contacts among themselves than with outsiders, so that there is a social *cordon sanitaire* marking the boundaries between

[39] *Id.*, p. 91.

ethnic groups. However, as we have already seen, anthropological evidence suggests that this situation is far from representative.[40] Instances of economic interdependence and inter-marriage between members of neighbouring ethnic communities are common. In other cases, internal rivalries within an ethnic community are so intense as to override any antipathy towards outside groups, as where segments of an ethnic group form military alliances with neighbouring but "foreign" peoples against their own "kind".

An interesting example of communal interaction is provided by the wide-spread African social institution known as the "joking relationship", or "*utani*" in Swahili. Under *utani*, members of distinct ethnic groups are united by strong bonds that prohibit the use of force and permit wide-ranging and even scalding exchanges of pointed ethnic humour. As Moreau reports in his study of joking relationships in Tanganyika (now Tanzania):

> "The *utani* bond is one of extraordinary power, so that in some respects *watani* are closer than relatives by blood; they have the most far-reaching mutual obligations of hospitality and the sharing of property; they perform special functions at each other's funerals, they have certain quasi-magical powers between themselves, and finally, their mutual abuse and horseplay are not merely permissive but almost ritual and are linked by a remarkable system of forfeits."[41]

[40] See the review of the literature in R.A. LEVINE and D,T, CAMPBELL, *id.*, p. 92-97.

[41] R.E. MOREAU, "Joking Relationships in Tanganyika", (1944) 14 *Africa* 386, 387, quoted in R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, note 2, p. 95.

G. Shifts of Identity and Life-Style

A number of anthropological studies have shown that it is not uncommon for individuals and groups to change their ethnic affiliations for practical, strategic or ideological reasons. In certain regions, such phenomena are recurring features of the ongoing social dynamic. As Levine and Campbell note, in some situations "the visible attributes of cultural difference have become symbols to be manipulated in a struggle for social mobility or political power rather than indications of stable groupings or objects of permanent attachment."[42]

An example of this phenomenon may be seen in Canada, where an enhancement in the public profile of Aboriginal peoples and the constitutional entrenchment of their rights have led to a heightened interest on the part of many individuals in their Aboriginal ancestry. One interesting feature of this process has been the recent emergence of "Métis" groups that identify themselves by virtue of their indigenous heritage, when in the past they may have viewed themselves more as collections of individuals who (like many other Canadians) happened to be of mixed origins.

In conclusion, then, the evidence reviewed here tends to discredit the simple view that humanity naturally itself divides into homogeneous, clearly bounded national groups, which provide individuals with their main sense of identity and focus for loyalties. Closer to the mark is the thesis advanced by Leach, in his influential study of the social and cultural complexities of the Kachin Hills area of Burma:

> "The cultural situation in the Kachin Hills, as I have described it, is both confused and confusing but it is not exceptional. On the contrary I would claim that it is largely an academic fiction to suppose that in a 'normal' ethnographic situation one ordinarily finds distinct 'tribes' distributed about the map in orderly fashion with clear-cut boundaries between them. I agree of course that

[42] R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, note 2, p. 98.

> ethnographic monographs frequently suggest that this is the case, but are the facts proved? My own view is that the ethnographer has often managed to discern the existence of '*a* tribe' because he took it as axiomatic that this kind of cultural entity must exist. Many such tribes are, in a sense, ethnographic fictions."[43]

Levine and Campbell offer a similar conclusion, based on a wide-ranging analysis of the available evidence:

> "[T]he ideal-typical ethnic community, in which boundaries, loyalties, and labels coincide in a single order of precedence, is not the general case for nonindustrial peoples but a special phenomenon that requires explanation."[44]

II. Personal Pluralism

In the lobby of the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal—an institution not otherwise noted for its Marxist sympathies—there is a curious and moving plaque bearing a quotation from Chairman Mao Tse Tung. The plaque honours the memory of Dr. Norman Bethune, the well-known Canadian surgeon, who worked for a time at the Royal Victoria Hospital. In the course of his medical practice in the nineteen twenties and thirties, Dr. Bethune became disillusioned with standard approaches to medical care and proposed radical changes to health services in Canada. In 1935, he visited the Soviet Union and was inspired, like some other idealists of his time, to join the Communist Party. The year 1936 found him in Spain, serving with the anti-fascists during the Spanish Civil War. And in 1938 he travelled to China, where he worked as a surgeon with the Eighth Route Army in its fight against invading Japanese forces. He died in China the following year from blood-poisoning, but not before attracting the notice of Mao Tse Tung, who in December 1939 wrote the well-known essay "In Memory of Norman

[43] E.R. LEACH, *op. cit.*, note 22, p. 290 and 291.

[44] R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, note 2, p. 99.

Bethune"—the source of the quotation on the Royal Victoria plaque.[45] The quotation runs as follows:

> "What kind of spirit is it that makes a foreigner selflessly adopt the cause of the Chinese people's liberation as his own? The spirit of internationalism [...] the spirit of absolute selflessness [...] a man who is of value to the people."

The complexities of Norman Bethune's life stand in contrast to the view that a person's identity and loyalties centre mainly on their national group. Bethune was not only a Canadian, a member of an old and distinguished Ontario family, the son of a clergyman, an Anglophone, a surgeon, and a sometime member of the Montreal elite, he was also a tireless advocate of various social causes, a member of the Communist Party, a volunteer in the Spanish Civil War, a surgeon with Mao's forces, and a somewhat unlikely hero of the Chinese Revolution.

It is interesting that, despite the Scottish name and apparently impeccable Upper Canadian roots, Bethune's ancestral origins show a mixture of ethnic influences. His great-great-grandfather was one John Bethune,[46] a Church of Scotland clergyman who emigrated to North America in 1773. At Montreal in 1782, John Bethune married one Véronique Waddens, the daughter of Jean-Étienne Waddens,[47] a Swiss national who had emigrated to New France to serve in the French colonial troops and later became a fur-trader in the Northwest. Their son, Angus Bethune,[48] himself a fur-trader, married Louisa McKenzie, who was the mixed-blood daughter of Roderick McKenzie,[49] a Scottish fur-trader, who had married Angélique, an Ojibwa Indian of the Lake

[45] *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, Edmonton, Hurtig, 1985, p. 169.

[46] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1983, p. 77.

[47] *Id.*, vol. 4, p. 757.

[48] *Id.*, vol. 8, p. 85.

[49] *Id.*, vol. 8, p. 562.

Nipigon area. Angus Bethune and Louisa McKenzie had some six children, and Angus himself fathered at least two more by Indian women. One of Angus's children by Louisa was Dr. Norman Bethune,[50] a physician and medical educator. This first Dr. Bethune was the grandfather of Dr. Henry Norman Bethune, the hero of the Chinese Revolution.

Norman Bethune serves, then, as a particularly striking example of what might be called *personal pluralism*. This phenomenon has two aspects. *First*, every individual belongs simultaneously to a number of different groups, which affect that individual's identity and welfare in intricate and multi-dimensional ways. *Second*, the nature and importance of these groups vary with the context and often change in the course of a person's life, in some cases slowly and imperceptibly, in other cases rapidly and dramatically.

Personal pluralism is a universal phenomenon. In recent years, it has probably intensified with the vast increases in individual mobility, the explosive growth of urban centres, and the emergence of extensive communication networks. However, it is important to note that, so far as we can tell, it has always existed, even in small-scale tribal and kin-based societies.

The concept of personal pluralism draws support from a body of research known as "reference group theory".[51] This research makes two useful points, which correspond to the twin aspects of personal pluralism just noted. The *first* point is that individuals in many societies, both modern and traditional, commonly view themselves as members of several groups simultaneously. As Taiaiake Gerald Alfred observes in his study of his own community of Kahnawake near Montreal:

[50] *Id.*, vol. 12, p. 106.

[51] R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, note 2, p. 62 and 63.

> "This book will present a challenge to those who see identities as clearly delineated, and whose view of community does not recognize the cross-cutting allegiances which arise over the course of a people's history. The thesis presented here integrates a conception of 'identity' which does not place strict boundaries between (a) localized Kahnawake, (b) national Mohawk, (c) broader Iroquois, and (d) pan-Native identities which are present to varying degrees within the Kahnawake community. It recognizes that these identities are 'nested'. [...] Thus people of Mohawk descent who live in Kahnawake have a multi-layered identity which incorporates each one of the 'communities' he or she has inherited, and which also includes a broader Native—or the more common 'Indian'—identity flowing from their racial affiliation and identification as the indigenous peoples of North America."[52]

In many instances, not only do these plural memberships overlap, they also involve partially conflicting loyalties and norms of conduct. While these tensions are normally dormant or manageable, at times people find themselves in situations in which they are compelled to choose between certain groups to which they belong. For example, the state's claim to be able to conscript people into the armed services may conflict with an individual's religious beliefs (as might be the case with Quakers). Less dramatically, a person contemplating marriage with someone who lives abroad may have to choose between the affections of their prospective spouse and their ties to family, neighbourhood, culture and country. In such cases, the individual will have to make a hard choice, the outcome of which may not be easy to predict.

The *second* point is that individuals are not necessarily static in their identification with certain groups. While they may be born into certain groups, they do not always want to remain members of these groups, feel

[52] Gerald R. ALFRED, *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors: Kahnawake Mohawk Politics and the Rise of Native Nationalism*, Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 18 and 19.

any special loyalty to them, or accept the internal norms and standards of the group. Thus, there are individuals who are "disloyal" to their original membership groups, who reject the standards of these groups, who aspire to membership in groups to which they do not initially belong, or who accept the normative standards of an external group and modify their behaviour accordingly.[53] As just seen, at various points in his life Norman Bethune did all these things, without ceasing—paradoxically—to be regarded as Canadian.

While the phenomenon of personal pluralism is not logically inconsistent with the theory of national segmentation, in practice it tends to undermine some of the stronger theses associated with the doctrine and generally to shake its dominance as an organizing concept. In particular, the complex reality revealed by personal pluralism opens our eyes to the fact that individuals rarely if ever define their identities entirely or even primarily in terms of a single group, much less a "national group". The prominence that group membership plays in defining our identities depends very much on the context. We may view ourselves primarily as Christians or Muslims or Jews when we worship, Canadians or Kenyans or Malaysians when we travel abroad, doctors, teachers, daycare workers or firefighters when at work, members of far-flung families at weddings and funerals, and fans of certain sports teams on weekends. We juggle these different facets of our identity with relative ease and normally thrive on the diverse opportunities they afford. One of the most distasteful things about stereotyping is that it reduces our identity to a single facet, one that we may regard as relatively unimportant, or as only one among the many elements that make us what we are.

Individuals grow to maturity and flourish by virtue of their participation in a range of social networks and institutions—familial, educational, linguistic, religious, political, athletic, musical, cultural, and so on. The theory of national segmentation assumes that the most important of these institutions and networks coincide in the nation.

[53] R.A. LEVINE and D.T. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, note 2, p. 62.

However, it seems doubtful that this is true as a simple matter of social fact—to say nothing of its desirability. For many people in the world today (perhaps most), there is no strong coincidence among the social institutions and networks comprised by the language they speak, the religion they profess, the athletic pursuits they value, the music they enjoy, the way in which they dress, the books and newspapers that they read and the television and films that they watch. And few if any of these networks coincide with the sphere of the state in which they hold citizenship.

So, for example, it would not be unusual for a young man born in the northern Tanzanian town of Moshi to belong to a clan of the local Chagga tribe, to speak a version of Chagga as his mother tongue, to learn Swahili and English as second and third languages, to be a practising Roman Catholic, to play soccer and to follow closely the fortunes of Tanzanian and European soccer clubs, to outfit himself in Nike gear, to listen to Congolese soukous and American rap music on a Sony Walkman, to have a taste for curries and other Indian dishes, to be an avid fan of American television programs, to vote in Tanzanian national elections, to work for a branch of an adventure-travel organization based in London, to be engaged to a woman from the coastal town of Tanga of mixed Arab and African descent, and to harbour the ambition of sending his children to universities in the United Kingdom or the United States.

The problem with the theory of national segmentation (and its cousin, the principle of national self-determination) is that it gives unwarranted priority to the "nation" over the other social complexes that mould and support individuals' sense of identity and are crucial to their ability to live full and rewarding lives. In the broadest sense, these social institutions and complexes need to be "self-determining" in their own spheres in order to flourish.[54] Thus, to revert to our young man from

[54] I draw inspiration on this point from the writings of the early twentieth-century pluralists; see *e.g.* Leon DUGUIT, *Law in the Modern State*, New York, Howard Fertig, 1970 (translated by Frida and Harold LASKI); Harold J. LASKI, *The Foundations of Sovereignty and Other Essays,* New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921; John N. FIGGIS, *Churches in the*

Moshi, his ability to become an adult male member of his clan may depend on the capacity of the clan to carry on age-old traditions of initiation into manhood. His ability to earn a living depends on the freedom of the U.K. adventure-travel company to function in the various African countries where it mounts safaris. His participation in the world-religion of Roman Catholicism depends on the ability of the Church to function in Tanzania with relative freedom from political interference. And so on.

In sum, the basic rationale advanced in favour of the principle of national self-determination applies with equal strength to a large variety of spheres, so as to allow the institutions and networks that support the multi-dimensional life of an individual to function effectively. By the same token, the rationale does not support the assertion of a strong or exclusive version of the principle of self-determination with respect to the "nation" to which the individual purportedly belongs.

Conclusion

Salman Rushdie draws attention to the virtues of pluralism in a remarkable passage, which has provided the title to this essay. Rushdie is defending his controversial novel, *The Satanic Verses*:

> "If *The Satanic Verses* is anything, it is a migrant's-eye view of the world. It is written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis (slow or rapid, painful or pleasurable) that is the migrant condition, and from which, I believe, can be derived a metaphor for all humanity. [...] Those who oppose the novel most vociferously today are of the opinion that intermingling with a different culture will inevitably weaken and ruin their own. I am of the opposite opinion. *The Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies and songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. *Mélange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world.* It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it. *The Satanic Verses* is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love-song to our mongrel selves.
>
> Throughout human history, the apostles of purity, those who have claimed to possess a total explanation, have wrought havoc among mere mixed-up human beings. Like many millions of people, I am a bastard child of history. Perhaps we all are, black and brown and white, leaking into one another, as a character of mine once said, *like flavours when you cook.*"[55]

Modern State, 2nd ed., New York, Russell & Russell, 1914. For an excellent appraisal of the pluralist movement, see David RUNCIMAN, *Pluralism and the Personality of the State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Of course, the energy released by intercultural contact depends on the existence of differing cultural traits. Cultural flavours cannot leak into one another unless they are distinct to start with. Were the entire world nothing but cultural hotchpotch, in short order there would be no real hotch to the potch—just an increasingly bland and uniform gruel, with the occasional indigestible lump. But this fact does not lessen the force of Rushdie's point. For he celebrates, not the prospect of some vast homogenization of human cultures, languages and customs, but something rather different: the shower of cultural sparks thrown off by the collision of different worlds. He attacks, not cultural *difference*, but cultural *purity*.

It may also be noted that his observations apply, not only to people who have physically migrated from one place to another, but also to the great mass of us "stay-at-homes", who combine in ourselves membership in a variety of different groups, which change in importance and identity. For in this sense we are all mongrels and gypsies and shape-shifters and

55 Salman RUSHDIE, "In Good Faith", in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticisms, 1981-1991*, London, Granta Books, 1991, p. 394.

chameleons, altering our roles and characters and costumes and forms and colours depending on the context and stage of life.

So, when we inspect with new eyes the fading photo of the West End YMCA Track Team, we may well ask ourselves what ancient mix of Angles and Saxons, Celts and Vikings jostle and brawl and carp with one another, what competing allegiances to church and workplace, family and sports, party politics and saloon and racecourse, what mixed affections for old country and new, what conflicts of class and cult and accent lie behind those bland, white and deceptively homogeneous young faces?