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Introduction

Ethnicity seems to be a new term. In the sense in which we use it—the character or quality of an ethnic group—it does not appear in the 1933 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but it makes its appearance in the 1972 *Supplement*, where the first usage recorded is that of David Riesman in 1953. It is included in *Webster's Third New International*, 1961, but did not find its way into the Random House *Dictionary of the English Language* of 1966, nor the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 1969. It did, however, make the 1973 edition of the *American Heritage Dictionary*, where it is defined as "1. The condition of belonging to a particular ethnic group; 2. Ethnic pride." One senses a term still on the move. The first of these two definitions fits well with our own: an objective condition. The second, however, is decidedly subjective, that of "pride." How very different from an old meaning, "obs. rare" as the OED has it, "heathendom: heathen superstition." At the very least, a change of relative status is going on here.

All of which may prompt the reader to ask how useful this "new" term is. Any such categorization taken up and given currency by sociologists suffers from a certain presumption of disutility. Does it *mean* anything new, or is it simply a new way of saving something old? Does it make for greater precision in describing the world, or does it merely compound the confusion, fuzz further the fuzziness? Is it the result of insight, or the resort of bewilderment? A reader of this volume for example might well ask any or all of these ques-

tions as he encounters this single term applied to phenomena as various as the survival of psychological differences between Italian and Irish Americans in the United States; black politics here; the difficult effort to find a satisfactory place for the French-speaking element in an undivided Canada; the restrained but devastating conflict between Fleming and Walloon in Belgium; the looming nationalities issue in Soviet Russia; the language problem in India; border minorities in China; the status of Indian and *mestizo* in Peru; the all-important issue in Africa of which tribes got recruited for the modern armies there. The phenomenon seems everywhere to be encountered, but somehow, everywhere, also, various. Does a single term help? Would it not be better to describe such varied phenomena as linguistic, national, religious, tribal, racial, and the like, depending on their nature? Would it not be better to separate the very different problems of old nations from those of the new? of the developed world from those of the developing? of heterogeneous empires from homogeneous nation-states? Are these not, in truth, age-old human characteristics and sentiments, expressing themselves, perhaps, in new settings, but in themselves nothing new? Isn't this really what we are dealing with here?

No, it is not. Such, in any event, is our contention. Something new has appeared. The object of this volume—the work of many men no one of whom need subscribe to the views of the editors—is to present certain theoretical explanations for this appearance and to provide a number of concrete illustrations. We cannot hope to be conclusive in our effort, to settle the matter once and for all. The phenomenon is too new and, doubtless, our own range too limited. Hence we do not ask any final assent from the reader. Yet we do hope for a certain openness to the idea that there may indeed be something new here. A reader of the early nineteenth century, encountering the assertion that industrialization was shaping distinctive social classes, could well have shrugged it off with the thought that there had always been social ranks, always different ways of earning a living. Yet to have done so would have been to miss a big event of that age. Similarly, we feel that to see only what is familiar in the ethnicity of our time is to miss the emergence of a new social category as significant for the under-

standing of the present-day world as that of social class itself. For in the welter of contemporary forms of group expression and group conflict there is both something new and something common: there has been a pronounced and sudden increase in tendencies by people in many countries and in many circumstances to insist on the significance of their group distinctiveness and identity and on new rights that derive from this group character.

Despite the enormous diversity among the groups and situations in which such tendencies have become evident, and among the issues and demands raised by each group, it is possible to explore these various examples of group assertiveness and conflict in terms of what they have in common. Each, of course, arises in a distinctive historical and social setting and must be treated as unique in the sense that everything in human affairs is unique. Yet it is also necessary, we are convinced, to search for common sectors. Perhaps these are deeply felt human needs that have always been present but only recently focused by certain political and social developments that have given rise to new common social circumstances in many countries in the postwar world. Merely to begin speculation is to encounter the range of possibilities.

In other circumstances it would be the task of an introduction to a volume of some half-dozen theoretical essays on a given social phenomenon, and eleven accounts of how the phenomenon expresses itself in a variety of nations and parts of the world, to address key questions, in this case questions concerning ethnic identity, assertiveness, and conflict today: whether they are deeply founded in human needs, or in new social developments, or in the characteristics of modern states, and so forth. The object of this introduction—and of the volume—is more modest: not a theory, but a bundle of partial theories; not an exhaustive source, but an illustrative one; not definitiveness, but merely the assertion that here is a phenomenon that *must* be studied.

The claim is modest but is not unimportant, when one considers how little attention ethnicity as a phenomenon in society and politics has received until the last few years. Thus, in our search for an appropriate definition and characterization we reviewed some available handbooks. G. Duncan Mitchell's *A Dictionary of Sociology*

(Chicago, Aldine, 1968) does not contain an entry for "ethnic groups" or "ethnicity"—although it does contain an entry for "ethnocentrism." (The same is true of the much older *Handbook of Sociology* by Edward Byron Reuter, New York, Dryden Press, 1941.) A *Modern Dictionary of Sociology* by George A. and Achilles G. Theodorson (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1969) does contain an entry for "ethnic group" but one which reflects a somewhat older usage ("a group with a common cultural tradition and a sense of identity which exists as a *subgroup* [our italics] of a larger society"). But do we not now tend increasingly to apply the term "ethnic group" to any group of distinct cultural tradition and origin, even if it is the majority ethnic group within a nation, the *Staatsvolk*? Thus, in the United States we increasingly consider old Americans, descendants of Anglo-Saxons, as themselves an ethnic group—and the odd term WASP, coined one assumes in jest, is often used to describe them.

Admittedly, this is not universal usage, not even in this volume (see the essay by Orlando Patterson). In the carefully prepared *Dictionary of the Social Sciences* by Julius Gould and William L. Kolb (New York, The Free Press of Glencoe-Macmillan, 1964), Melvin Tumin follows the more limited usage also: "a social group which, within a larger cultural and social system, claims or is accorded special status in terms of a complex of traits (ethnic traits) which it exhibits or is believed to exhibit." But the fact that—as we believe—social scientists tend to broaden the use of the term "ethnic group" to refer not only to subgroups, to minorities, but to all the groups of a society characterized by a distinct sense of difference owing to culture and descent, itself reflects the somewhat broader significance that ethnicity has taken up in recent years.

It also to our mind reflects something more important: a shift in the general understanding about ethnic groups. Formerly seen as *survivals* from an earlier age, to be treated variously with annoyance, toleration, or mild celebration, we now have a growing sense that they may be forms of social life that are capable of renewing and transforming themselves. As such, perhaps, the hope of doing without ethnicity in a society as its subgroups assimilate to the ma-

majority group may be as Utopian and as questionable an enterprise as the hope of doing without social classes in a society.

This is not an assertion to be passed lightly. If true, a very great deal of radical and even liberal doctrine of the past century and a half is wrong. To repeat one final time for fear of being misunderstood, we do not assert that it *is* true, although we suspect it to be. In anticipation of a later point, let it also most explicitly and emphatically be stated that we neither welcome nor deplore the phenomenon. When, years ago, Margaret Fuller announced that she accepted the universe, Carlyle commented that she had better. This, and only this, is our purpose, and, for what interest it may have, it is also our view. It is a view we find we have held to with fair consistency for the fifteen years since we first collaborated on *Beyond the MeltingPot*,¹ a study of ethnic groups of New York City which appeared at a time when in theory they were supposed to be disappearing.

We are suggesting that a new word reflects a new reality and a new usage reflects a change in that reality. The new word is "ethnicity," and the new usage is the steady expansion of the term "ethnic group" from minority and marginal subgroups at the edges of society—groups expected to assimilate, to disappear, to continue as survivals, exotic or troublesome—to major elements of a society. Suggestive as usage and language may be, however, they are not an argument. Let us consider some of the questions that are inevitably raised when one tries to make the argument that there is something new afoot in the world, and that we may label it "ethnicity."

1. *What, after all, is new about conflicts between ethnic groups and between "majority" and "minority" ethnic groups, based on demands for prestige, respect, civil rights, political power, access to economic opportunity? Haven't there always been such conflicts?* First of all, we would suggest, there seem of late to be far more of such conflicts, and they are more intense. Walker Connor has undertaken the invaluable task of recording the rise and extent of what he calls "ethnonationalism," which he dates to the French revolution. He reports

1. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the MeltingPot* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press and MIT Press, 1963, 1970).

that nearly half of the independent countries of the world have been troubled in recent years by some degree of "ethnically inspired dissonance."² We do not have benchmarks for earlier periods, but if we compare some specific known cases, there has clearly also been a rise in *intensity* in given ethnic conflicts in the last decade or so. As some examples, consider the conflicts between Anglophone and Francophone in Canada, Catholic and Protestant in Northern Ireland, Walloon and Fleming in Belgium, Bengali and non-Bengali in Pakistan, Chinese and Malay in Malaysia, Greek and Turk in Cyprus, Jews and other minorities on the one hand and Great Russians on the other in the Soviet Union, and Ibo and Hausa and Yoruba in Nigeria. And, we may add, between black and white in the United States. If we had measurements of intensity we would not necessarily find that *every* ethnic conflict has become uniformly more intense—some of them seem happily to have peaked (sometimes in war and violent conflict), and measures of harmonization and accommodation seem to have had some effect since these peaks were reached (in Nigeria, the United States). In other cases—Pakistan—conflict has reached the point of separation, and has subsequently declined in intensity to be succeeded perhaps by a rise in ethnic discord in the two successor states of Pakistan. But we think it can hardly be disputed that there has been a greater degree of ethnic conflict in the last ten or twenty years than most informed observers expected. If the origins or causes of ethnic conflicts are not new, it is certainly true that their extent, scale and intensity are.

2. *But old lines of division can be found between most of the groups now in conflict, divisions of culture, religion, language, political affiliation. Is there anything about these conflicts that permits us with any legitimacy to give them all a single label, "ethnic"?* We think there is. Perhaps the best way of suggesting what is common is to refer to the *expectations* of most social scientists some time ago and even today as to the course of modern social development. In one of the chapters that follow, Milton Gordon refers to a "liberal expectancy"—the expectation that the kinds of features that divide one group from an-

2. Walker Connor, "The Politics of Ethnonationalism," *Journal of International Affairs*, 27.1 (1973), 1-21.

other would inevitably lose their weight and sharpness in modern and modernizing societies, that there would be increasing emphasis on achievement rather than ascription, that common systems of education and communication would level differences, that nationally uniform economic and political systems would have the same effect. Under these circumstances the "primordial" (or in any case antecedent) differences between groups would be expected to become of lesser significance. The "liberal expectancy" flows into the "radical expectancy"—that class circumstances would become the main line of division between people, erasing the earlier lines of tribe, language, religion, national origin, and that thereafter these *class* divisions would themselves, after revolution, disappear. Thus Karl Marx and his followers reacted with impatience to the heritage of the past, as they saw it, in the form of ethnic attachments. *Interest* should guide rational men—or drive them—in social action; and interest was determined by economic position.

One element thus that is new in the present situation is that *interest* is pursued effectively by *ethnic groups* today as well as by *interest-defined* groups: indeed, perhaps it can be pursued even more effectively. As against class-based forms of social identification and conflict—which of course continue to exist—we have been surprised by the persistence and salience of ethnic-based forms of social identification and conflict.

One of the striking characteristics of the present situation is indeed the extent to which we find the ethnic group defined in terms of interest, *as* an interest group. Thus, whereas in the past a religious conflict, such as that which is tearing Northern Ireland apart, was based on such issues as the free and public practice of a religion, today it is based on the issue of which group shall gain benefits or hold power of a wholly secular sort. Language conflicts—as in India—today have little to do with the right to the public use of the language, as did so many struggles of the nineteenth century when, for example, there were efforts to Russify the Russian empire and Magyarize the Hungarian kingdom. Today they have more to do with which language user shall have the best opportunity to get which job. One should not make the distinction too sharp: certainly the prestige of one's religion and language is

involved in conflicts where one advocates the right of public use of religion and language and where one advocates the right to economic or political advantages of the individual adherents of a religion or users of a language. But nevertheless it is clear the weight of these kinds of conflicts has shifted: from an emphasis on culture, language, religion, *as such*, it shifts to an emphasis on the *interests* broadly defined of the members of the group.

It is not easy to know how to interpret this. Talcott Parsons, in a chapter which follows, using a term of David Schneider, refers to the "desocialization" of ethnic groups: the cultural *content* of each ethnic group, in the United States, seems to have become very similar to that of others, but the emotional significance of attachment to the ethnic group seems to *persist*.³ In this respect the "liberal expectancy" was right: the cultural differences between groups have been worn down by the institutions and circumstances of modern society. But since each group had a different history, these groups were differentially distributed in the various social positions of society. As a result, the ethnic group *could* become a focus of mobilization for the pursuit of group or individual interests. Perhaps then, in answer to our second question, we might hazard the hypothesis that ethnic conflicts have become one form in which interest conflicts between and within states are pursued.⁴

We would suggest there are two, related explanations that account for this development. The first is the evolution of the welfare state in the more advanced economies of the world and the advent of the socialist state in the underdeveloped economies. In either circumstance, the *state* becomes a crucial and direct arbiter of economic well-being, as well as of political status and whatever flows from that. In such a situation it is not usually enough, or not enough for long enough, to assert claims on behalf of large but loosely aggregated groups such as "workers," "peasants," "white

3. In an essay now more than twenty years old Nathan Glazer, referring to the way in which ethnic groups in the United States were becoming "ghost" nations, had something similar in mind: "Ethnic Groups in America: From National Culture to Ideology," in Morroe Berger, Theodore Abel, and Charles H. Page, eds., *Freedom and Control in Modern Society* (New York, D. Van Nostrand, 1954), pp. 158-173.

4. This was suggested by the authors in Glazer and Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*.

collar employees." Claims of this order are too general to elicit a very satisfactory response, and even when they do, the benefits are necessarily diffuse and often evanescent, having the quality of an across-the-board wage increase which produces an inflation which leaves everyone about as he was. As a matter of strategic efficacy, it becomes necessary to disaggregate, to make claims for a group small enough to make significant concessions possible and, equally, small enough to produce some gain from the concessions made. A British prime minister who does "something for the workers" probably doesn't do much and almost certainly does even less for his party. Doing something for the Scots, however, becomes an increasingly attractive and real option for Westminster. *That* much in the way of resources can be found, and the Scots are likely to know about it and to consider it a positive gain, at least past the point of the next general election. One can win votes that way, it being a notable quality of ethnicity in our time that it involves itself relatively easily with democratic governmental systems. (It may be noted that nineteenth-century liberalism was at a loss to decide which was the more offensive aspect of the newly risen urban, working-class political "machines": the distribution of governmental largesse *or* the introduction of ethnic categories as a distributive principle. It comes to a matter of strategic efficacy in asserting claims.) The welfare state and the socialist state appear to be especially responsive to ethnic claims. This is everywhere to be encountered: an Indian minister assuring his parliament that "Muslims, Christians and other minorities" will receive their "due and proper share" of railroad jobs; a Czech government choosing a Slovak leader; a Chinese prime minister in Singapore choosing an Indian foreign minister; and so on.⁵

5. Leaders of groups are aware that political skills in pressing such claims vary and occasionally voice their concern, as reported in a recent Associated Press dispatch from Los Angeles:

US-Asian allege exploitation. The Asian-American community leaders have accused the U.S. Department of Labor of exploiting their inexperience in "the political game" to exclude them when allocating federal funds.

"We Asians have always been a quiet minority. We've always been a quiet minority. We've always been taken for granted, and we always get the crumbs," Miss _____ a leader of the Chinese Community Council, told newsmen.

Miss _____ was referring to the distribution of \$314,000 in federal funds for career counseling projects. The council leaders accused the U.S. manpower area planning council

The strategic efficacy of ethnicity as a basis for asserting claims against government has its counterpart in the seeming ease whereby government employs ethnic categories as a basis for distributing its rewards. Nothing was more dramatic than the rise of this practice on the part of the American government in the 1960s, *at the very instant when such practice was declared abhorrent and illegal*. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the very embodiment of the liberal expectancy. "Race, color, religion, sex, national origin": all such ascriptive categories were *outlawed*. No one was to be classified in such primitive offensive terms. In particular, government was to become color blind. However, within hours of the enactment of the statute, in order to enforce it, the federal government, for the first time, began to require ever more detailed accountings of subgroups of every **description—job** trainees, kindergarten children, kindergarten teachers, university faculties, front office **secretaries—in** terms of race, color, and sex. (We seem not yet to have proceeded to religion and national origin. And yet an application form of the Graduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University now states: "It is to your advantage to state if you are a member of an ethnic minority." The question is a fuzzy **one—is** it advantageous regardless of whether the answer is yes or **no—** but invites an expansion of reference. Hence, are Catholics an ethnic minority for Harvard purposes? Portuguese? There is, for example, a **Portuguese** community in Cambridge and in Massachusetts quite undiscovered by equal opportunity offices.) The expectancy that such things would not be **known—in** the immediate postwar years governments were **busy** eliminating all references to race and religion from official forms, even forbidding universities to request photographs of applicants for **admission—was** instantly replaced by the requirement that they not only be known but the facts as to distribution be justified. Skewed distributions

of doing "a tremendous wrong" in giving the funds away entirely to Black and Chicano groups, whose project proposals were more professionally drafted.

Not all Asians in the United States are well off, but Americans of Chinese and Japanese descent **recurrently** come out at the top of census based rankings of American racial groups in terms of social and economic status. No matter: such a claim has a prima facie legitimacy.

would not do: quotas appeared in American society. The instrument of national social policy designed ostensibly to prevent discrimination inevitably went beyond that to positive efforts on behalf of those presumptively discriminated against, a list which in short order commenced to lengthen.

Statutes began to reflect this new strategy. A small example: the Drug Abuse Education Act of 1970 provides "for the use of adequate personnel from similar social, cultural, age, ethnic and racial backgrounds as those of the individuals served under any such program." In other words, the federal government was not only to know the peculiar ethnic patterns of various kinds of drug abuse but was to match the therapists with the patients: Azerbaijani junky, Azerbaijani counsellor. In a variation of folk medicine, it was judged that wherever a malady was found, there, too, would a remedy reside. Which may or may not be nonsense: what is not to be denied is that the statute appropriated many millions of dollars for social services which were going to end up in the pockets of those who dispense them, and these could be concentrated on specific ethnic groups. If government was doing a group a service by providing special therapeutic services, it could compound the favor by concentrating the patronage involved within the same group or groups.

We have suggested there are two related reasons that could account for the degree that ethnic conflicts appear to have become the form in which interest conflicts between and within states are pursued. The first had to do with the strategic efficacy of ethnicity in making legitimate claims on the resources of the modern state. (This is largely an internal matter, as is ethnic conflict itself, but as something like international social policy takes shape in settings such as that of the United Nations, ethnic claims are also made in such fora and with effect.) The second of our two suggestions has to do with the social dynamics that lead to such claims and concerns the fact and the nature of inequality. Men are not equal; neither are ethnic groups. That they should be, or should not be, is, of course, a wholly different question. If one is to describe the way the world is, one describes men everywhere ranked in systems of social stratification where one person is better or worse off than

another. This is the empirical fact. As with individuals, so with groups of individuals, with social groups defined by ethnic identity. As to the origins of this inequality, we follow Ralf Dahrendorf in holding that it arises from differential success in achieving social norms.⁶ Dahrendorf accounts for individual inequality in these terms: we adapt his thesis to group inequality. His thesis is that every society establishes norms—socially established values—selected from a universe of such values. There seems no end to human ingenuity in thinking of characteristics that can be described as desirable or undesirable. It can be thought a good thing to be wealthy, alternatively to be poor; to be dark or to be light; generous or mean; religious or atheistic; fun-loving or dour; promiscuous or chaste. However, once a selection is made as to what is good and what is bad, individuals—and, we now add, ethnic groups—have different levels of success in attaining the desired condition. Woe to the ectomorph in a society which sets great store on plumpness in the female. Or pity the fat girl in the age of Dior and of blue jeans. Woe to blacks in Rhodesia which sets great store on being white. Pity the white in Uganda. Pity (perhaps) the Nepalese in Bhutan who labors on construction gangs before the eyes of a land-owning peasantry which despises such servility. Woe to the Malay facing the onslaught of Chinese industriousness. A Burmese showing one of the present editors around Mandalay commented that before Independence Indians and Chinese had owned all the land. "Do you see," he continued, "why we had to have socialism?" By which he meant simply expelling these settlers who had followed the British.

In Dahrendorf's account the individual encounters the norms of his society and the "sanctions designed to enforce these principles" (p. 32). Some do better than others and reap the rewards; some suffer the punishments. This is a dynamic process which forms groups (classes), those who do better and those who do worse. Equally, it can be a process which begins with groups, and helps form them further. Dahrendorf clearly anticipates this: "The selection of norms always involves discrimination, not only against per-

6. Ralf Dahrendorf, "On the Origin of Inequality among Men," in Andre Bêteille, ed., *Social Inequality* (Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1969).

sons holding sociologically random moral convictions, but also against social positions that may debar their incumbents from conformity with established values" (p. 33).

What kind of social positions? Those of social class, perhaps, come quickest to a European mind. (Or did.) Eliza Doolittle is of a social class in which one does not learn the diction of polite English society: only when she has been taught it does the possibility of owning her own florist shop open for her. But an American—and persons in many other parts of the world—is as likely to associate poor diction with ethnicity: first and second generation difficulties with English, and patterns of grammar and pronunciation that persist long after. "Where d'ya worka, John? On the Delaware Lackawan." Similarly, a European might associate wealth with social class. An American—and, again, persons in many other parts of the world—is as likely to associate wealth with ethnicity. To a child of the slums of New York City a generation ago it was "Jews" who were "rich," a point of view that evidently persists in the slums of the present. In Dar es Salaam, in Singapore, in São Paulo the same, but different, perceptions are extraordinarily powerful social facts. And why is this? We suggest it is because so much of the mixture of ethnic groups in the modern world is the result of more or less sharply defined and not infrequently organized movements of people from one part of the world to another to meet new, and, again, often organized demands for labor. The plantation economies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries moved Africans and Asians to the farthest reaches of the globe. Other economic forces led to mass European migration to the Western Hemisphere and Asia and Africa. Migration was nothing new, but speed was new. North Africa presumably absorbed the Vandals but presumably because they came over generations. The nineteenth-century French came suddenly and were never absorbed. In the end they were expelled after a bloody ethnic civil war. So equally in dozens and dozens of situations: peoples thrown together quite suddenly and thereafter trying to deal one with the other.

Here the matter of norms comes into play. There are norms within a social group: some individuals are better than others are at achieving them, some are worse. But as between different ethnic

groups, which have made quite different selections from the universe of possibilities, the norms of one are likely to be quite different from those of another, such that individuals who are successful by the standards of their own groups will be failures by those of the other. In a situation of mixed ethnic groups where one group is dominant, which is to say that its norms are seen as normal not just for it, but for others also, there follows an almost automatic consignment of other groups to inferior status. But some groups may discover that they are quite good at achieving the norms of the dominant group: even better than the group that laid down those "laws." This is to be encountered almost everywhere: in some instances cheerfully accepted, in others bitterly resented. Africans are traders, so are Indians. In Kenya the Indians were evidently better than the Africans, and so the Indians are being expelled. Jews have known the experience, Japanese, Chinese: which group has not? There are, of course, situations in which no one group is dominant, such that differing norms compete with one another, but this makes if anything for less social peace, as no one is ever quite certain what constitutes success or failure.

We offer these assertions in quest of a theory of ethnicity. They are subject to empirical test, and we believe the chapters that follow offer suggestive evidence from many and varied settings. In the United States, at all events, arguments that follow from this "theory" are increasingly put forward by persons dealing with day to day ethnic issues. Thus, consider this passage in a letter from a U.S. Army colonel, director of Army Equal Opportunity Programs, which appeared in the *Washington Post* of March 21, 1974, and was later distributed by the U.S. Civil Service Commission:

As a black I do not believe it is fair or meaningful to call [actions to correct racial imbalances] "reverse discrimination." Let's examine what is meant by racial discrimination and then apply the word "reverse" to the term after the examination. Please accept as an operational definition that racial discrimination is the relationship between two groups of people, wherein *one group has defined the rules by which the other group must act*. Such has always been the relationship between the white majority and the minorities in this country. Moreover, the meaningful and political, economic and social power to maintain that relationship in America has been consistently vested in the white majority. (Our italics.) /

Herein lies the dynamic element in the system. Dahrendorf writes that inequality "serves to keep social structures alive." This is because "inequality always implies the gain of one group at the expense of others; thus every system of social stratification generates protest against its principles and bears the seeds of its own suppression." It is not perhaps necessary to assert *that every* system of social stratification generates protest against its principles. Some may not. But most that we run into in the twentieth century seem to do so. This is to say that a *different* set of norms is set forth as desirable. Struggle ensues. Changes occur, not infrequently changes that favor those previously unsuccessful. Things *they* are good at come to be labeled good. That at least is the typical object of such struggles.

Here again we come to the strategic efficacy of ethnicity as an organizing principle. Different groups *do* have different norms. In the most natural way the unsuccessful group has the best chance of changing the system if it behaves *as a group*. It is *as a group* that its struggles becomes not merely negative, but positive also, not merely against the norms of some other group, but in favor of the already established norms of its own. One of the difficulties of social class as an organizing principle surely is that there just is not that much conflict of *norm* between most social classes. In the West intellectuals and others at the top of the social stratification will fantasize about the differences between the values of those at the bottom and those in the middle—always to the advantage of the former—but it usually turns out that those at the bottom pretty much share notions of desirable and undesirable with those in the middle. Ethnic differences, however, *are* differences, or at least are seen as such. Marxists thought they would disappear. Why on earth would one wish to be a Pole when one could be a worker? Well, for some reason or set of reasons, there is a desire to be Polish. And not the least of these, to conclude this point, is **that** being a Pole, or a Sikh, or a *mestizo* frequently involves a distinctive advantage or disadvantage, and that remaining a Pole, or a Sikh, or a *mestizo* is just as frequently a highly effective way either to defend the advantage or to overcome the disadvantage.

Some individuals opt otherwise. They "pass" out of their ethnic

(or social, or regional) group into another, typically one that offers greater advantages. This process of absorption is extremely powerful: probably in the United States still quite the most important social process. Americans become more "American" and less ethnic all the time. But in the course of participating in this process, they may also—simultaneously—become more "ethnic." This was most dramatically the experience of Negro Americans during the 1960s—they even changed their name to "blacks" to establish that new assertion of distinctiveness—and other groups followed them, or accompanied them on parallel tracks. As with student activism, this was a phenomenon whole parts of the world were experiencing simultaneously, and any explanation that depends solely on local elements is not likely to remain satisfactory for long. Something larger was going on. Something so large that Ralf Dahrendorf has recently referred to the "refeudalization" of society, the return of ascribed as against achieved characteristics as determinants of social stratification. It may be ethnicity is merely part of this larger development. It is a development worth considering, just as it is worth noting that Dahrendorf took but little pleasure in calling attention to it.

In a most tentative way one further suggestion may be advanced concerning the modernity of ethnicity. Dahrendorf notes that for almost two centuries—"from Locke to Lenin"—"property dominated social and political thought: as a source of everything good or evil, as a principle to be retained or abolished." Yet, he continues, in societies such as those in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Israel, where private property has been reduced to "virtual insignificance," social stratification—class—persists, even flourishes. Further, we would add, the new stratification is to a considerable extent correlated with ethnicity. It probably always was, but the preoccupation with property relations obscured ethnic ones, which, typically, were seen either as derivative of the former, or survivals from a precontractual age. Now, as Yugoslav Communists struggle hopelessly—or so it would seem—to achieve some equity of development and living standard as between Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia, as Israeli Socialists look with alarm at the persisting differences in the "social

class status" of "European" Jews as against "Oriental" Jews in their homeland, as Great Russians prattle on about the equality of ethnic groups in the Soviet Union, while Ukrainians in Washington rally in protest at the *Russian* Embassy, and Jews in Moscow demand to be allowed to emigrate to Israel, it is *property* that begins to seem derivative, and ethnicity that seems to become a more fundamental source of stratification. Why is this? To repeat, our hypothesis is that ethnic groups bring different norms to bear on common circumstances with consequent different levels of success—hence *group* differences in status. This phenomenon is likely to be as much in evidence in an advanced capitalist society where property relations are attenuated, as in a Communist or Socialist society where they are abolished. A note of caution. As quantitative studies of these issues begin to provide data, they will certainly show that what is common to, say, all Yugoslavians must be accorded much greater weight than what is disparate, but of this it may simply be said that the Croats don't seem to know the "data."

In any event, Communist nations have shown a concern with ethnic matters far more pronounced than most others, possibly because ethnic reality is so at odds with Marxist-Leninist theory. There are scores of official nationalities in the Soviet Union, and every citizen, at age 16, must opt for one such identity, which he retains for life. Similarly, the Chinese, with their great, central Han culture, find themselves paying considerable heed to "minority nationalities." A recent news dispatch from Peking reads surprisingly like a report of an American political party in the age of New Politics:

China Has More Minority Nationality Communist Party Members—More than 143,000 people of minority nationalities in the autonomous regions of Sinkiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Kwangsi and Ningsia and the Province of Yunnan have been admitted into the Communist Party of China since the Ninth Party Congress in 1969. They include Tibetans, Mongolians, Uighurs, Chuangs, Huis, Koreans, Kazakhs, Yaos and Miaos.

Most of the new party members are workers and former poor and lower-middle peasants or herdsmen. There is a certain number of revolutionary intellectuals. The new members are both men and women and range in age from young to old.

Many of the new party members from national minorities are eman-

cipated slaves or serfs, or children of former slaves or serfs. They warmly love Chairman Mao, the Party and the New Society, and hate the old society.

It may be noted that the flag of the People's Republic of China features one large star, and four smaller ones, representing the Han people and the four principal minority peoples.

But to return to our question: religion, language, and concrete cultural differences did, in our judgment, decline, at least in the West, as specific foci of attachment and concern. But the groups defined by these cultural characteristics were differentially distributed through the social structure. The old bases of distinction, even as their cultural characteristics were modified by modern social trends, became, one may say, increasingly merely "symbolic"—nevertheless they could serve as a basis for mobilization. Thus there is some legitimacy to finding that forms of identification based on social realities as different as religion, language, and national origin all have something in common, such that a new term is coined to refer to all of them—"ethnicity."⁷ What they have in common is that they have all become effective foci for group mobilization for concrete political ends challenging the primacy for such mobilization of *class* on the one hand and *nation* on the other. Class was expected in the modern world to become the focus for the mobilization of group interests—it related directly to the rational character of society and the way it generated different interests. Nation was the other great pole around which group interests could be mobilized. We do not in any way suggest that these are not the central categories for understanding modern societies; but it is also true that we must add ethnicity as a new major focus for the mobilization of interests, troublesome both to those who wish to emphasize the primacy of class, and those who wish to emphasize the primacy of nation.

3. *But is not ethnicity more than simply a means of seeking advantage?*

7. For a particularly subtle account and analysis of how this happens, see Michael Hechter, "The Persistence of Regionalism in the British Isles, 1885-1966," *American Journal of Sociology*, 79.2 (September 1973), 319-342; and Hechter, "The Political Economy of Ethnic Change," *American Journal of Sociology*, 79.5 (March 1974), 1151-1178.

We must modify the bald assertion that ethnicity becomes a *means* of advancing interests—which it does—by insisting that it is not *only* a *means* of advancing interests. One reason ethnicity becomes an effective means in the modern world of advancing interests is that it involves *more* than interests. As Daniel Bell writes in his chapter, "Ethnicity has become more salient [than class] because it can combine an interest with an affective tie", (p. 169). While, on the other hand, in the case of class, "What had once been an *ideology* had now become almost largely an *interest*" (p. 167, italics added).

What is this something more than interest, what is the source of the affective tie? Harold Isaacs, in his chapter, describes the making of a basic group identity. His analysis deals with things as immediate as body image. Clearly that, as well as language and immediately transmitted, intimate, culture, all play a role in permitting ethnicity to combine affectivity with interest. But in a world of rapid change and shifting identity, we tend to shy away from any fixed notion of the "primordial," of basic ties and connections that create groups, as against any rational interest. One problem with the primordial is that we know how many of the groups that have engaged in "primordial" conflict are themselves recent historical creations. We know to what degree attachment to one group or another, or the intensity of attachment to any group, depends on accidental circumstances. One should, even in dealing with ethnicity, resist any division of human beings into fixed compartments, monads, between which some basic separation or conflict is inevitable. That is not what history tells us. The variety of circumstances that members of a given group can meet in different situations does lead to radically different outcomes. (See Orlando Patterson's analysis in this book of the different fates of Chinese identity in Jamaica and Guyana.)

The two poles of analysis by which we try to explain the persistence or revival or creation of ethnic identities seem to waver between what we may call "primordialists": "Men are divided thus and so, the reasons for their division are deep in history and experience, and they must in some way be taken into account by those who govern societies"; and what we may call "circumstantialists": "We are doubtful of any such basic division and look to specific and

immediate circumstances to explain why groups maintain their identity, why ethnicity becomes a basis of mobilization, why some situations are peaceful and others filled with conflict."

We have taken our stance somewhat uneasily between these two positions. To repeat, we do not *celebrate* ethnicity as a basic attribute of man, which when suppressed will always rise again: such a position is for advocates, not for analysts. Nor do we *dismiss* ethnicity as an aberration on the road to a rational society in which all such heritages of the past will become irrelevant to social and political action.

As a political idea, as a mobilizing principle, ethnicity in our time has spread round the world with the curious consequence of sameness and difference that is encountered with other such phenomena. A common rhetoric attaches to widely disparate conditions, with luxuriantly varied results. Thus, in the United States the rising demands among blacks first for civil rights, then equality of opportunity, finally some equality of participation in the social, economic, and political institutions of the country, can be understood in terms of the distinctive history of the United States. But it is striking that the organization and demands of blacks found response among other ethnic groups in the United States—Latin American, American Indian, Oriental, and eventually white ethnic groups. The circumstances of each of these groups was different. Some had been conquered, some had emigrated from colonies, some from free countries, some had met substantial prejudice and discrimination, others nothing much more than the inconvenience of a new country. The form of the mobilized ethnic group seemed, in some degree, to satisfy individuals in each: by defining individual identity, by suggesting forms of organization and specific demands, by perhaps (though this is still most unclear) suggesting a somewhat different accommodation by the political order to ethnic difference. We do not assert that some common need, some common distress, existed in everybody ready to be evoked. We do not suggest that ethnicity is something like the identity of parents in Victorian novels: that must be discovered lest some nameless distress follow. But on the other hand neither do we suggest that the new intensity of ethnic identification among a number of

groups was *merely* a matter of imitation of blacks, or merely a matter of protective mimicry. Some combination of need and imitation seems to be closer to the reality.

The black movement had as surprising a resonance abroad as at home. A "black power" movement developed in the West Indies, a "civil rights" movement in Northern Ireland, "black panthers" formed in Israel, and some French Canadians explained they were "white niggers." Once again, when we consider the real problems affecting various groups in each of these settings, it would be idle to suggest that what was borrowed was more than a name, a term. Yet in social matters the right name, the right term, is more than terminology. It suggests a comparison of situation, it may propose a similar political course, it may foreshadow similar scenarios of action. The French Canadians did not need the blacks of the United States to teach them that they were conquered and that Anglophones dominated their nation, nor did the Catholics of Northern Ireland need the black example—their miseries go back rather farther in history than even those of American blacks: nor yet did the Oriental Jews of Israel need the black example to remind them something was amiss with their position. In each case, there was a reason for grievance—but there was also the influence, through the ever more pervasive world mass media, of another's example, a teaching.

The exchange is rarely one way only. To the English-speaking peoples of the world, the struggle to put an end to British rule has been a prime source of ethnic invention, adapted by example in widely varied climes by virtue, no doubt, of the sheer inventiveness involved, but also a consequence of the prestige of things British and, by extension, anti-British. (A prestige now largely passed to things American.) The American civil rights movement avowedly and explicitly adopted techniques developed in twentieth-century India. The more recent (and, one hopes, marginal) incidents of urban terrorism in the United States follow, albeit without any evident awareness of the fact, a model of resistance developed by the Irish in the nineteenth century and still present there. (The civil rights movement in Northern Ireland lasted months: in no time the I.R.A. was active again, as were the Orangemen, and the pri-

mal struggle resumed, unchanged save for the greater convenience of plastic bombs.) Underground "commandants" in San Francisco issuing "execution" orders against deviant revolutionaries are only acting out the drama of Dublin in 1916. North Africans picked up the technique or else invented it on their own. An Italian made a movie, *The Battle of Algiers*. Soon persons in San Francisco were acting out scenes from *The Informer*. And so exchanges proceed, with, in our time, ever mounting violence. Hijacking was invented—we believe by the Palestinians—but American blacks, Croatian workers resident in Sweden, Eritrean dissidents in Ethiopia (to refer only to some of those who have acted out of some ethnic interest) have all made use of it.

We have noted the role of the welfare state in raising the strategic efficacy of ethnic demands, and of international economic developments that led to great migrations of labor in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, creating many multi-ethnic states in the process. This process has not stopped. Never in history did Western Europe import as much labor as in the postwar years. A new colored population of West Indians, Indians, and Pakistanis was added to England. One third of the labor force of Switzerland, one eighth of the labor force of Germany, and substantial parts of the labor force of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden came to be made up of foreign workers. The legal circumstances of each of these waves of new immigrants varied: some were permanent, and had all the rights of citizenship, such as the new colored groups of England. Some were from neighboring members of the European Economic Community, and had claims to full social benefits in any other state of the Community. Some—as the Algerians in France—came from former colonies under special arrangements. But many—e.g., Turks and Yugoslavs in Germany—came under permits that theoretically at least gave no right to any permanent settlement. In other cases, such as Sweden, an egalitarian philosophy of government treated all newcomers, whether Italian or Finnish, generously, as far as social benefits were concerned. The patterns are extremely various, though we see everywhere two different approaches in conflict: on the one hand, the common philosophy of egalitarianism asserts that *all* should be treated alike;

not only those within a nation, but those who come to work and settle there. On the other, Western Europeans have learned that new and permanent settlements of other ethnic groups mean ethnic conflict, and they mean to avoid it if they can. For Great Britain it is too late. Its colored population is permanent, with the full rights of citizenship, and that 2 percent of the population already forms an issue in British politics that far outweighs its proportion. Further immigration has virtually been halted. The North Africans, Spanish, and Portuguese in France, and the Italians, Yugoslavs, and Turks in Germany are not citizens, but one wonders whether they will actually be a less permanent part of those countries. One sees the development of common issues—in conflicts over housing, schooling, jobs. The process of the creation of multi-ethnic European states through immigration may be slowing down, pursuant to an internal logic of its own. For welfare states are generous to their citizens and tend in that measure to be careful as to who is allowed to become one. But the heritage of the recent period of mass immigration is now being felt, and one wonders whether the new heterogeneity of European nations can really be settled by simple mass expulsions, legal as that may be. In any case, this option exists.

Almost alone among the major nations, the United States continues to accept large numbers of permanent immigrants. Moreover, these immigrants are of quite different "stock" from those of the past. Many are Asian, and the new immigrants are to an unprecedented degree professional, upper middle class persons. What this means is that the process of gaining political influence as a small group, a process which took even the most successful of earlier groups two generations at least, is likely to be rapid for these most recent newcomers. It is odd how little this phenomenon figures in American public discussion: it is neither hailed nor challenged, but simply ignored. Without too much exaggeration it could be stated that the immigration process is the single most important determinant of American foreign policy. This process regulates the ethnic composition of the American electorate. Foreign policy responds to that ethnic composition. It responds to other things as well, but probably *first of all* to the primal facts of eth-

nicity. In a multi-ethnic society there are often conflicting ethnic loyalties, and our history records sufficient instances of just that, such that no obvious, simple redirecting of foreign policy is in the offing. But our future will record even more such conflicts as Koreans, Filipinos, Indians, Pakistanis, Singaporeans, and dozens more make their interests known. Foreign policy will be affected in diverse and profound ways. Yet oddly, the United States Department of State almost wholly ignores the immigration process. The fact that immigration policy *is* foreign policy is a seemingly inexplicable thought in Foggy Bottom. However much Western Europeans and others may succeed in protecting themselves from the ethnic storms of the twentieth century, we may be sure they will continue to buffet the Great Republic. "Can the Blacks Do for Africa What the Jews Did for Israel?" asks a recent article in *Foreign Policy*. The answer, in the view of the author Martin Weil, is yes, they can, and yes, they ought. The view of the Action Committee on Arab-American Relations, or the recently formed National Association of Arab Americans is unrecorded as of this writing, although they may well welcome the prospect of greater American participation in pan-Islamic adventures. And so round the globe. If other nations wish to lessen ethnic diversity, it is clear that this is not yet the view of Americans, certainly not of Greek-Americans, whose numbers, militance, and congressional strength became evident with the onset of the Cyprus crisis of the summer of 1974.

Nor, of course, can the remaining nation-states easily succeed in avoiding their share of such difficulties. Since World War II almost every new nation, and they far outnumber the older nations, has come into existence with a number of serious ethnic conflicts waiting, as it were, their turn to be the focus of post-independence political life. The old European states, while becoming somewhat more diverse, with the addition of new groups, are still in the process of finding out just how diverse history had already made them. Add to this the fact—still given surprisingly little attention—that in a world in which each society becomes ethnically more diverse, we have had, since World War II, a surprisingly strong prejudice against adjusting any boundary, for any reason. As Samuel Huntington has written, "The twentieth century bias against political

divorce, that is, secession, is just about as strong as the nineteenth century bias against marital divorce." ⁸Since 1948 remarkably few international frontiers have been altered, and those that have remain very unstable.

Certainly these political realities alone seem to provide a good number of the ingredients for a greater degree of ethnic conflict than, for example, in the world of the Great Depression. Further, as we have suggested, the international mass media network rapidly spreads the story and symbols of ethnic discontent.

Note that this set of reasons that might explain why ethnicity has become a focus for political mobilization—the rise of the welfare state, the conflict between egalitarianism and the differential achievement of norms, the growing heterogeneity of states, the international system of communication—does not easily differentiate new nations from old, or developed from undeveloped ones; and this is why there is reason to consider ethnicity as not only a phenomenon of new states, concerned about "nation-building," but of old states, too.

The foregoing scarcely comprises a "theory" explaining why ethnic identity has become more salient, ethnic self-assertion stronger, ethnic conflict more marked, in the past twenty years. Indeed, we know that the facts assumed in the last sentence themselves can be—and are—disputed: some say that ethnic conflict is simply the *form* that class conflict has been taking on certain occasions in recent decades, and without the motor of class exploitation nothing else would follow. Others say that ethnic conflicts must be decomposed into a variety of elements: colonial conflicts; the uprising of the "internally" colonized; the ambition of individuals organizing followings; fashions and fads; to cite but some assertions ranging from the most serious to the most trivial. Little in this field has been resolved. We are all beginners here. We consider this volume very much an initial contribution in an enterprise to be continued.

It is our hope that this book presents a more catholic view of ethnicity than is generally current: one that extends beyond the more

(8. In the foreword to Eric A. Nordlinger, *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies*, Occasional Papers in International Affairs, no. 29 (Cambridge, Harvard University, Center for International Affairs, January 1972).

limited categories of race, nationality, and minority group; that includes developed as well as developing nations; that presents a variety of theoretical approaches (though scarcely all that could make a case for themselves); and that this approach will suggest to readers that there is a phenomenon here that is, in ways not yet explicated, no mere survival but intimately and organically bound up with major trends of modern societies.

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TOWARD A GENERAL THEORY



1

HAROLD R. ISAACS

Basic Group Identity: The Idols of the Tribe

Your typical ultra-abstractionist fairly shudders at concreteness: other things equal, he positively prefers the pale and the spectral. If the two universes were offered, he would always choose the skinny outline rather than the rich thicket of reality. It is so much purer, clearer, nobler.

—William James

. . . the unsettled, indecisive character of the situation with which inquiry is compelled to deal affects all of the subject matters that enter into all inquiry. It affects, on the one hand, the observed existing facts . . . On the other side, it affects all of the suggestions, surmises, ideas that are entertained as possible solutions of the problem.

—John Dewey

The Idols of the Tribe have their foundation in human nature itself, and in the tribe or race of men . . . All perceptions, as well as the sense of the mind, are according to the measure of the individual and not according to the measure of the universe. And the human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolors the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it.

—Francis Bacon

The purpose here is to offer a sketch of what is intended to become a full-feature portrait of *basic group identity*. This is the

Note: The material in this chapter has been expanded to book length in *Idols of the Tribe, Group Identity and Political Change* (New York, Harper & Row, 1975).

identity derived from belonging to what is generally and loosely called an "ethnic group." It is composed of what have been called "primordial affinities and attachments." It is the identity made up of what a person is born with or acquires at birth. It is distinct from all the other multiple and secondary identities people acquire because unlike all the others, its elements are what make a group, in Clifford Geertz' phrase, a "candidate for nationhood."

This may sound like a claim to have caught up with the snowman of "ethnicity," whose footprints have been around us for so long but which has been so curiously difficult for academic hunters to track down. But nothing so dramatic is indicated, because the face and form of this creature have been in full view all the time. The difficulty has been to "see" it by itself, to distinguish it from all the other "groups" and "identities" with which it has been so commonly lumped or confused or even covered from view.

In a previous paper I have described the setting and marked the starting points of my own inquiry into this matter.¹ It discussed the present pervasive condition of group fragmentation in all our current politics, post-colonial, post-imperial, post-revolutionary, and—in the United States—post-illusionary. This condition amounts in effect to a massive retribalization, running sharply counter to all the globalizing effects of modern technology and communications. The evidence seems strongly to suggest that the House of Muumbi—the home of the progenital mother of the Kikuyu tribe in Kenya, used here as a surrogate name for all the rooms—all the wombs?—in all the tribal mansions—is where human beings still mostly live. It is the refuge to which, in any case, great masses are retreating and withdrawing in the face of the breakdown or inadequacy of all the larger coherences or systems of power and social organization. To get some better understanding of its tremendous power of survival and persistence, it was necessary, I suggested, to detach this basic group identity from the blur

1. Harold R. Isaacs, "Group Identity and Political Change: The Houses of Muumbi," September 1971. Published in part as "The Houses of Muumbi," *Washington Monthly* 3 (December 1971), 10; and as "Group Identity and Political Change: The Politics of Retribalization," *Bulletin of the International House of Japan* 31 (Tokyo, April 1973).

in which so many social scientists and psychologists—unlike the poets, artists, and historians—seem to prefer to leave it, to sort out and examine the elements of which it is made, to see the ways they relate to each other, what functions they perform and what needs they meet, to try to look, in short, at what it is that gives it its extraordinary strength. If this seems elementary, it could be because our past awareness of this phenomenon of basic group identity has clearly not prepared us for the shapes and roles it has assumed in our present affairs and because all that was ever assumed about it as "given" has now been taken away. We have to try to "see" it now, I believe, as if we had never seen it before. The only place to begin, therefore, is at the beginning.

To begin with, then, basic group identity consists of the ready-made set of endowments and identifications which every individual shares with others from the moment of birth by the chance of the family into which he is born at that given time in that given place.

There is first the new baby's body itself, all the shared physical characteristics of the group acquired through the long process of selection, through what Rene Dubos has called the "biological remembrance of things past," plus whatever else—we still argue about *how* much else—comes through the parental membranes to give each new person the original shape of his or her unique self.²

2. Two remarks here regarding the "his" and the "her" of this matter:

a. The only third person singular possessive pronoun in English besides "his" and "hers" is the neuter "its." If the use of "his" when we mean both "his" and "hers"—like the use of "men" when we mean "human beings" or "men and women"—does come to be seen simply as male sexist arrogance instead of acceptable surrogate usage and extension of meaning, then, as in the case of the deeply imbedded uses of the word "black," the language may need some revising. Meanwhile, a feminist from way back, who finds sexless neuterism just as offensive as sexist male or female chauvinism, must keep on trying to write about these matters without mangling sensibilities or, as far as possible, the prose.

b. Women obviously share common characteristics and some common conditions with other women across many cultures. But that does not mean that they share the same basic group identity as *women* any more than men do as *men*, not in the sense of basic group identity as I am trying to specify it here. The physical and other differences between men and women, marvelous as they are, do not make men and women candidates as such for separate nationhood. Every basic group identity is shared by the men and women in the group, with its particular terms, rules, conditions fixing the relationships between them. The struggle for equality

But even as it draws its first breath, hears its first sound, feels its first touch, the new infant begins to be endowed with everything else that awaits it in that family at that time in that place. These are the common holdings of the group of which the baby becomes a member, the social features, the "shared samenesses" that enter in all their complex ways into the making of the individual ego identity. It is quite a stock of endowments.

The baby acquires a *name*, an individual name, a family name, a group name. He acquires the *history and origins* of the group into which he is born. The group's culture-past automatically endows him, among other things, with his *nationality* or other condition of national, regional, or tribal affiliation, his *language, religion, and value system*—the inherited clusters of mores, ethics, aesthetics, and the attributes that come out of the *geography or topography* of his birthplace itself, all shaping the outlook and way of life upon which the new individual enters from his first day.

These legacies come to the child bearing the immense weight of the whole past as his family has received it. They shape the only reality in his existence and are made part of him before he has barely any consciousness at all. This is done formally and ritually at or soon after birth, as in baptism, circumcision, and similar rites of entry into the world of the group, and again, after the conditioning of the **childhood** years, in the varieties of puberty rites or initiations by which young persons become fully admitted members of the group.

The new member of the group comes not only into his inheritance of the past but also into all the shaping circumstances of the present: the conditions of status that come or do not come with these legacies, his family's relative wealth or poverty, its relative position in the larger group to which it belongs, and the group's position relative to other groups in its **environment**—all the political-social-economic circumstances that impinge on the family and the group, with all the inward and outward effects these conditions

of status for women is being fought with different degrees of success in different societies as part of the general current renovation of social and political systems. It has its problems, but as in the fight for racial justice in the American society, separation does not seem to be among the viable solutions.

have on the shaping of the individual's personality and the making of his life. Of these most decisive are the political conditions in which the group identity is held, the measure of power or powerlessness that is attached to it. How dominant or how dominated is the group to which this individual belongs? How static or how changing is this condition, and how, then, is he going to be able to see and bear himself in relation to others? This is the cardinal question and it is essentially the question of the governing politics, the push and pull of power among the groups who share the scene.

Such are the holdings that make up the basic group identity. How they are seen and celebrated has provided the substance of most of what we know as history, mythology, folklore, art, literature, religious beliefs and practices. How the holdings of others are seen has provided most of the unending grimness of the we-they confrontation in human experience. Raised high or held low, these are the idols of all our tribes.

These elements of the basic group identity invite fresh scrutiny, each in itself. For as far as I may dare stretch the prescribed length of this chapter, I will include some additional incomplete notes on ~~two of them—the~~ most symbolic, ~~(name),~~ and the most palpable, ~~body—if~~ only for purposes of illustration. But as far as this kind of dissection can take ~~one—quite far—the~~ way invariably leads back to the clustering of all these elements in intimate relation to each other. I will be describing several such clusters of group identity elements as I have found them arranging themselves in different combinations in different settings. My own case study interview material deals with black Americans, American Jews in Israel, Indian ex-Untouchables, English-educated Chinese Malayans, Filipinos, Japanese. The public prints are filled every day with material bearing on other examples from almost everywhere on earth.

Each case, one finds, develops its own shapes, its own dynamics, its own peculiar intensities. There is not much about the study of basic group identity that can be reduced to single formulas or be symmetrically arranged. The various elements show up in different relationships to each other and with quite different specific gravities. Skin color and physical characteristics may be at the heart of the group identity cluster of the black American but only at the

margins in the case of the blacker African, the core of whose group identity may lie in his tribal affiliation. History and origins can appear as the most powerfully positive centerpiece, say, for the Chinese with his Great Past, and as the most crushingly negative centerpiece for the ex-Untouchable in India who wants to blot his past out altogether. In Ulster it is being "Catholic" or "Protestant"—with the mix of history and religion that gives these identities their content—that governs everything about the terms on which a person in that country now is going to live or die. The common holding of Islam and fear-hate of the Hindus thrust East Bengal into a nation with the Punjabis, Pathans, Sindis, and other Muslim peoples of India's west: geography, physical differences, language, history parted them a generation later in one of our current history's bloodier amputations.

✓ But varied as such particulars can be, I do believe it is possible to say that in all cases, the function of basic group identity has to do most crucially with two key ingredients in every individual's personality and life experience: his sense of belongingness and the quality of his self-esteem. These come defined in many ways and the needs they serve are met in many degrees of plus-ness and minus-ness in different cases, shaping thereby much of the behavior of the members of the group.

Obviously—and this is precisely the point at which much blurring takes place—these needs can be and often are satisfied in some more purely interpersonal context, or in one or more of the many other multiple and secondary group identities individuals acquire in the course of their lives in all the different collectivities to which they come to belong—class, social, educational, occupational, professional, even recreational. But these secondary sources of belongingness and self-esteem serve only where basic group identity differences do not get in the way. This does occur in some multi-group situations—more today in the American society, for example, than it did only yesterday, as Catholics, Jews, blacks, and others so well know—but takes place most commonly in the enclosure of homogeneous groups, where the basic group identity is a given, shared by all. In most such cases in mixed societies, however, the "outside" is quite nearby and out there it becomes necessary to

face what Kurt Lewin called the "uncertainty of belongingness," the challenge to self-esteem, in dealings with members of other groups, be they more powerful or less. Here once more the basic group identity and the conditions of that particular pecking order determine how far these needs are met or not met.

An individual belongs to his basic group in the deepest and most literal sense that here he is not alone, which is what all but a very few human beings most fear to be. He is not only not alone, but here, as long as he chooses to remain in and of it, he cannot be denied or rejected. It is an identity he might want to abandon, but it is the identity that no one can take away from him. It is home in the sense of Robert Frost's line, the place where, when you've got to go there, they've got to take you in—the House of Muumbi, the womb, the emotional handholds of childhood, sometimes the physical place itself. Or, in this age of massive migrations, for great numbers transported great physical and cultural distances, it is the ark they carry with them, the temple of whatever rules one's forebears lived by, the "tradition" or "morality" or whatever form of creed or belief in a given set of answers to the unanswerables.

With this belongingness there goes, all but inseparably, the matter of self-esteem, the supporting measure of self-acceptance, of self-respect, that every individual must have to live a tolerable existence. Some individuals derive sufficient self-esteem out of the stuff of their individual personalities alone. Others have to depend on their group associations to supply what their own individualities may often deny them. Most people, we can probably agree, need all they can get from both sources. Again, like health or money, this matter of self-esteem derived from group identity presents little or no problem when the group identity and the self-acceptance it generates is an assured given, an unquestioned premise of life and therefore not in itself a source of conflict. This can be the case in a tightly homogeneous society or group, or in a stable society in which all groups from top to bottom in the pecking order not only know their place but accept it. All, including the master groups at the top and the lowest at the bottom—for example, the Untouchables in the Hindu caste system—accept themselves as they are told they are and accept the belief system that fixes the

conditions of their lives. Such frozen pecking orders have existed for periods of time in different societies. But it is precisely this need for self-esteem, the need to acquire it, feel it, assert it, that has in our own time upset all such orders and become one of the major drives behind all our volcanic politics. The drive to self-assertion, to group pride, has fueled all the nationalist movements that broke the rule of the empires. It stoked up the national/racial chauvinisms that have characterized both the Russian and Chinese revolutions. More than anything else, it generated the power that broke the system of white supremacy in the United States.

We have become familiar with what is called identification with the aggressor, with the patterns of self-rejection and self-hate coming out of negative group identities successfully imposed by stronger on weaker groups. But it is precisely when members of such groups stop submitting to this condition that group identities become a problem both to victimizers and victims and, as all our current affairs show, sooner or later erupt into social and political conflict and crisis. This is the point at which basic group identity and politics meet. It has been the starting point of many notable lives, much notable history, and hardly any more notable than the history of our own time.

This brings us back to the task of making a detailed examination of the elements that make up this basic group identity. For the purposes of this chapter, and to illustrate the beginning of a suggestion of what such an examination involves, here are some notes on just two of these elements, body and name.

BODY

The body is the most palpable element of which identity—individual or group—is made. It is the only ingredient that is unarguably biological in origin, acquired in most of its essential characteristics by inheritance through the genes. Primary as they may be, all the other things that go into the making of group identity are transformable. An individual can change his name, ignore or conceal his origins, disregard or rewrite his history, adopt a different nationality, learn a new language, abandon his family's religion or convert to a new one, embrace new mores, ethics, phi-

losophies, take on new styles of life. But there is not much he can do to change his body.

Some body change can result from cultural change: for example, Japanese are growing taller because of changes in diet. Some aspects of the body's appearance can be changed by cosmetic or other means. This has often been done in the effort to become more "beautiful" or less "ugly" and this has frequently been associated with the effort to shed physical identification with one group or gain closer identification with another group. Hair can be dyed, curled, straightened, weight gained or lost, muscles **hard** ened or **laxed**, skin **can** be bleached (up to a point), breasts inflated or flattened, eyelids doubled and noses or other features altered by plastic surgery. But by and large and for most **people**, the body remains essentially unalterable. The color and texture of its skin and hair, the shape, size, and mutual arrangements of its main features come to us at birth and stay with us until we die. The body is at once the most intimate and inward and most obvious and outward aspect of how we see ourselves, how we see others, how others see us.

Much lore and sacred doctrine has held that the spirit or soul of man is some essence temporarily housed in his body, **surviving—in-** deed, finally **freed—when** the body wastes away and continuing its independent existence in all the other-worlds that have been created to serve the need not to die. All the ancient religions of India saw life in the body as an interlude of suffering. The body is a stronghold made of bones, an old Buddhist **Sūtrā** said, "covered with flesh and blood, and there dwell in it old age and death, **pride**, and deceit." With that more pungent concreteness acquired **during** its passage through China, Zen Buddhism called the body "a stink ing bag of skin." This image and the idea of ascetic mortification that went with it governed much of Indian religiosity but did **not** get far in China where, as in so much else, earthier notions prevailed. Hajime Nakamura quotes an old Chinese text: "We get our body, hair, and skin from the parents. To keep it from ruin and **in-** jury is the beginning of filial piety."³ For Plato too, the body was

3. Hajime Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern People: India-China-Tibet Japan* (Honolulu, East-West Center Press, 1964), pp. 162-163, 180.

something to be left behind when, high enough up that ladder of love, the human spirit could rise right out of its body and out of the world into the wondrous realm of pure beauty. Aristotle, in his more Chinese-like way, thought that mind and body had to live with each other in a knowable world where pure beauty—perfected man—would not be readily found. In later times, even Descartes, who continued to think he was because he thought, once acknowledged: "I do not only reside in my body (like) a pilot in his ship, but am intimately connected with it and the mixture is so blended that something like a single whole is produced."⁴

It has been more in the modern temper to think of the "single whole"—"the soul is not more than the body," sang Whitman, "the body is not more than the soul"—going on to think of the soul (or "spirit" or "mind" or "personality") as imbedded in a complex of which the self and the body are integral and inseparable parts and joined all but indivisibly to the society of which the individual is part. One student of this matter suggests that the body "plays a fundamental role in our impersonal sense of social identification with 'fellow-citizens' whom we may never have met" and he provocatively calls to witness "the irrepressible metaphor for society as 'the body politic,'" used, he points out, by Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas, Hobbes, Hegel, and Spencer, suggesting "that the features of civil society may reflect those of our individual body."⁵ Coming at this along quite another disciplinary dimension, the psychoanalyst Paul Schilder joins "world, body, and personality," the problem always being to see in every individual case how each relates to the other. "The body image is a social phenomenon. Our own body image is never isolated, always accompanied by the body images of others." Or as extended by Helen Lynd: "One's body image helps to shape one's image of the world and one's image of the world affects the images one has of one's own body; both parts are essential."⁶

4. Quoted by Samuel J. Todes, "The Human Body as the Material Subject of the World," Ph.D. diss., Department of Philosophy, Harvard University, Cambridge, 1963.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

6. Helen Lynd, *On Shame and the Search for Identity* (New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1958), p. 37.

More than any name, physical characteristics serve as a badge of identity. They figure with high visibility and powerful glandular effect in relations between groups, never more so than in our own time when **all** such relations are being revised as to power, status, and patterns of mutual behavior. The grossest example of this has been the relation between "white" and "nonwhite" in the making and unmaking of European world empire and of the white supremacy system in the American society. In the United States especially, the experience of change has opened a period of acute group identity crisis for blacks who must transform their blackness from the crushing negative the white world made of it into an accepted positive fact in their lives. Similar pressure has come upon some **whites**—not only in the United States by any means—for whom "whiteness" remains a paramount identification and whose group identity behavior is shaped by their need to maintain their myths about it.

But this is hardly a matter that **lies** only between "whiteness" and "nonwhiteness" or only between former "white" masters and former "nonwhite" subjects. Now that the mantling mythology of white supremacy has been pulled away and "white" political power rediffused among "**nonwhites**," long-submerged patterns of attitudes and behavior about skin color have been reappearing in varying intensities along the entire color spectrum and in many different parts of the world. When "racist" behavior erupts sufficiently to come to the world's **attention**—as it does with poignant and bloody effect in country after **country**—an effort is often made to explain it away as a legacy of Western white dominance. But evidence of social and aesthetic values attached to "lightness" and "darkness" of skin color appears in the history, art, and literature of numerous cultures widely separated in space and time, in all parts of the globe, and in times long before the spread of the power of white Europeans beyond Europe. Nor, moreover, are the critically effective physical differences confined to skin color. Between the Watutsi and the Hutu, who have been slaughtering each other in Rwanda and Burundi ever since they received their "independence" from the Belgians, the major physical difference is between **tallness** and shortness, badges of group identity that can

hardly be missed when the groups of killers from both sides seek each other out.⁷ A common feature of prejudice patterns built up between groups is the notion that members of other groups are "dirty" or have some peculiarly offensive smell. Also common are attribution of unusual sexual powers or characteristics.

Because the body is the most primordial of all features of basic group identity, extraordinarily powerful taboos and sanctions have been attached in many groups to exogamous unions or marriages that threaten their physical sameness, their "racial purity." Un-touchability in India is guessed by some to have had its origin in the imagined efforts of light-skinned "Aryan" invaders to punish and outlaw mixing with the dark-skinned peoples whom they overran. Physical characteristics are almost as important as the Great Past in the makeup of Chinese chauvinism.⁸ The Japanese, for their part, hardly needed Spencer's injunction to them a century ago: "Never intermarry!" Among Japanese generally, physical homogeneity is one of the most highly prized of all attributes.⁹

Taboos and sanctions notwithstanding, there are of course large numbers of people in the world who are products of mixed marriages or unions between members of physically quite different

7. "One woman who arrived at a . . . hospital had had both her hands hacked off with a machete. That is a common reprisal, for when the short Hutu find the tall Tutsi, they often cut off their legs at the ankles." *The New York Times*, June 17, 1973.

8. Chinese abroad have intermarried with other groups much more commonly than in the homeland, but even overseas Chinese remain heavily subject to strong feelings about mixing with "outsiders" of almost any description, or more especially about the children of such unions. Chinese vernacular terms for non-Chinese almost always refer to physical features or characteristics.

9. While in some sections of Japanese society during the occupation, popular culture fads and adoption of American beauty standards led to a certain currency for double eyelid operations, most Japanese have guarded themselves jealously against dilution. A glimpse of this appears in the interview account of a young Japanese woman with two impeccably Japanese parents who remembers that as a small girl between the late 1940s and the early '50s, her "big"—that is, somewhat less than almond-shaped—eyes, a faint coppery tint in her black hair, and her slightly-fairer-than-usual skin led classmates to taunt her as an *ainoko*, a mixed child, an experience that brought upon her shame and loathing that she has never forgotten. Cf. Hiroshi Wagatsuma, "The Social Perception of Skin Color in Japan," *Daedalus* 96.2 (Spring 1967), 407-443.

groups. Across color and other assorted lines of distinctiveness, they combine different sets of genes and body characteristics. At the two ends of the given physical spectrum, such individuals could often fade into the physically nearest parental group, if that is what they wanted or were allowed to do. This clearly has been happening for many generations at the margins of all kinds of groups. In some cases, this has actually brought about a change in the physical cast and/or in the range of socially or aesthetically acceptable physical types. This has happened, for example, among the more open and mobile segments of the highly diverse American society, to the extent that some of its racist critics have called it "mongrel." This wide—though never total—acceptance of blending tended to take place, however, within certain limits of difference, for example, north-south European, blonde-brunette. In many other cases, however, the difference remained too wide, usually along the color line, to overcome the governing taboos and sanctions. One result was automatic identification downward into the lower status group—that famous "one drop of Negro blood" that made a person a Negro under the laws and customs of white-supremacy America. Another result was rejection by both parental groups and relegation to a special marginal inbetweenness that often acquired its own legal, social, and group character, for example, the Anglo-Indians in India, the "Coloreds" in South Africa, and other such Eurasian or Eurafican groups that came into being during the colonial era. In colonial times, such groups were often able, under the patronage of the master race, to move into some narrow place of their own, usually as minor bureaucrats, policemen, jailers, and so on, or, as in British India, as skilled railroad labor. Most of them were left painfully, sometimes tragically placeless when the colonial masters left and the new masters took over. In the more recent and particularly poignant example of the children fathered by American soldiers in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, especially by black American soldiers, the very common fate has been abandonment and rejection by the local societies, isolation in orphanages ended in only a small number of cases by adoption by American families.

In some instances in the colonial period, the mixed group became the top elite of the lower unmixed or less mixed mass, enjoy-

ing social and economic advantages from the greater closeness to the master race, as the so-called "mulattos" or lighter-skinned Negroes did in the Americas and the Caribbean, or even eventually became the elite of the society as a whole, as the mestizos did in most of Latin America and the Philippines after the end of Spanish rule. This invariably took place on the basis of cultural assimilation to the higher status group, the adoption of its styles and its racial attitudes. Such groups usually sooner or later came under the counterattack of their own lower orders, as lighter-skinned Negroes did in America at the hands of Marcus Garvey and his call for "race purity" and again more recently in the tendency of some separationist blacks to identify black nationalism with "race purity" and integrationist ideas with "house niggerism," the "field-hand" versus the "house servant" syndrome carried down from the days of slavery. In Mexico some attempt was made to give the political revolution the color of an Indian reassertion. Some intellectuals, if not the mass of Indians, began trying to restore the pre-Colombian sources of the Mexican identity. In the Philippines similarly, some intellectuals have been urging a new view of the hitherto despised aboriginal hill peoples whose pagan "purity" could be contrasted to the uncertain physical and cultural mixedness of the lowland Filipino Christians.

But whether it takes place through intermarriage or otherwise, the degree of mobility between groups in most societies depends heavily on the degree of physical difference between them. In all societies, some individuals will try to "pass" from one group to another, to bridge status differences, to become more "like" the highly rated group. Where the physical appearances involved are varied enough or similar enough, this kind of passing, never easy, becomes at least possible. It happens all the time, even in caste India. But where plainly visible body differences are a critical feature of the group differences, it remains all but impossible. Even where all other conditions are or can be made equal, the physical characteristics themselves remain the barrier to status and belonging.

This is why, indeed, some groups without distinctive physical

features to mark them apart from other groups have deliberately created them. Thus circumcision, scarifying, tattooing, filing teeth, piercing or otherwise changing the shape of nose, ears, tongue, lips, all becoming badges by which to identify those who belong and those who do not, sometimes with highly complicated effect.¹⁰

Less permanent but hardly less distinctive are the changes made for this same purpose in the body's extensions, beginning with the hair, for example, the scalplock of some North American Indians, the monk's tonsure, the sideburns of the Hasidic Jew, the uncut hair and beard of the Sikh—mirrored more recently, and more transiently, in the adoption of long hair as the badge of the so-called youth counter-culture, the shaved heads of some of London's counter-counterculturists or of some young Americans seeking to be like Hindu holy men, and so on. Then there are all the distinctive marks that can be made on the body's surfaces, caste marks in India, painted patterns on the skin, as in parts of Africa and Oceania. Beyond these come clothes, dress used to distinguish bodies that would all look alike—more or less—undressed, all the "native costumes" which occur from nation to nation, group to group, sometimes from village to nearby village, giving to each one the identifying distinctiveness it needs to feel. Clothes, of course, also become the identifying badge for all kinds of secondary groupings in all cultures, all the special costumes or uniforms worn down through time by the holy and the unholy, priests, judges, lawyers, policemen, firemen, messengers, artisans of every description, and—perhaps most representatively of all—by the soldiers each group dresses in their identifying garb to go out to kill the soldiers of other groups dressed in *their* identifying garb.

Besides serving as the badge of identity in so many groups, the

10. Consider what Shakespeare writes for Othello the Moor to say in his final speech (Act V, Sc. 2):

. . . In Aleppo once
Where a malignant and turban'd Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the State,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog
and smote him, thus—[stabs himself]

body is for all groups the main basis for its standards of beauty, the main subject by far of most art in most cultures. This begins with what is perceived in any group as sexually attractive. One can find in anthropological literature some remarkable examples of what never pales or withers in the eyes of various beholders in different places. But the portrayal of the idealized human body as an object of art also incorporates all the other complicated perceptions and values that go into the making of any culture's aesthetics. Much waits to be learned from a comparative examination of the body in the art of different cultures, with all that it can tell us about so many aspects of each one and of the points at which they meet or part. These perceptions and values appear in one form or another among all the strands of experience that go into how members of any group anywhere see what they like in the human body—ideal or real—fair or dark, blonde or brunette, tall or short, classic or crude, round or lean, broad or narrow, smooth or craggy, muscular or soft, hairy or bare, large-breasted or small, round-bellied or flat, small buttocks or large. These become, then, the preferred shapes in which "we" see ourselves, and they determine how "we" deal with the negatives of all these positives that "they"—in all those other groups—hold differently in view.

The physical element in basic group identity has to do not only with body but also with place, the land, the soil to which the group is attached, literally, historically, mythically. Octavio Paz identifies solitude not only with the "nostalgic longing for the body from which we were cast out" but also for the place from which the body came or to which in death it will return, seen by many ancients as "the center of the world, the navel of the universe," as "paradise where the spirits of the dead dwell" and as "the group's real or mythical place of origin." He cites from Lévy-Bruhl a primitive belief that to leave one's place is to die, illustrated by an African ritual in which movement from a place is counteracted by carrying and eating every day some of the soil of the place that was home, thus giving the social solidarity of the group "a vital organic character" and making each individual in the group "literally part of a body." Almost all the rites connected with the founding of cities or houses, Paz notes, "allude to a search for that holy center from

which we were driven out." Thus "the great sanctuaries—Rome, Jerusalem, Mecca—are at the center of the world or symbolize and prefigure it." ¹¹

Such is some of the underpinning of "love of country"—slandredly love or real love—that gets imbedded in the individual consciousness about one's birthplace. In China—the Chinese name means "central country"—people continue to identify themselves with family birthplaces from which they may actually be many generations removed. In some cases the ancestral homeland, distant in time as well as in space, becomes a critical ingredient in the problem of existence. Blacks in America struggle with the placement of Africa in their redefinition of who and what they are. Martin Buber, who was more concerned with a Jewish state of grace than with the politics of statehood, saw "the physical link with the land" of Israel as crucial to the mystical and historical identity of Jews; this link is of course the mystique on which the state of Israel is based. By some readings the attachment of the group to its "turf" is seen as something that human beings share with animals, and there is little question that the defense or seizure of territory has accounted for some of the most inhuman chapters in human history. Territory is, at the least, a critical factor in maintaining group separateness; without it a nationality has difficulty becoming a nation and a nation cannot become a state.

In all the varieties of this interaction of people and land, it is obvious that the environment itself powerfully shapes the history, mores, and character of the group and the life patterns of its individual members. Thus, all the features attached or attributed to people because they are (or once were) mountain people or plains people or desert people, lake, river, or island people, seacoast or landlocked people, arctic, temperate or tropical zone people, lowland or highland, rural or urban, delta or dry land people, and so on. These differences too, in all their infinitely varied ways, are part of the stuff of which basic group identity is made.

11. Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (New York, Grove Press, 1961), pp. 205–206, 208.

NAME

Names seem to be the simplest, most literal, and most obvious of all symbols of identity. But like all simple matters, this is complicated. The quest for the meaning of naming goes back to the first framing of thought, the beginning of language, the first holding of knowledge, and forward again to all its persisting riddles.

Naming, John Dewey has reminded us, *is* knowing, "the distinctive central process of knowledge."¹² All philosophy has wrestled with viewing knowledge as fast or fluid, petrified or plastic, coming—from Heraclitus and the Chinese through to James and Dewey—to the effort to capture the elusive actuality of things by seeing them in constant motion, always being transformed, changing more rapidly than the words—the names—used to describe them. Because of the "many traditional, speculatively evolved applications of the word 'name' . . . many of them still redolent of ancient magic," Dewey looked for greater precision in other terms—designation, cue, characterization, specification, sign, symbol—hoping this would help make it plainer that "we take names always as namings, as living behaviors in an evolving world of men and things."¹³ But words and names used to represent "truth" have their own history, successfully imposing themselves on the process and usually growing, as James put it, "stiff with years of veteran service," not easily flexed or displaced.

"One of the difficulties of the history of ideas," wrote Alfred Cobban, "is that names are more permanent than things. Institutions change, but the terms used to describe them remain the same."¹⁴ The same difficulty bothered the Chinese philosophers who some 25 centuries ago belonged to what was called the "School of Names"—*Ming Chia*—so-called because it was concerned with the distinctions to be made between "names" and "actualities." There were at least two tendencies, Fung Yu-lan tells us, one "emphasizing the relativity of actual things and the other the abso-

12. John Dewey (with Arthur F. Bentley), *Knowing and the Known* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1949), p. 147. Cf. Anselm Strauss, *Mirrors and Masks* (Glencoe, The Free Press, 1959), chap. 1.

13. Dewey, *Knowing and the Unknown*, pp. 156 ff.

14. Alfred Cobban, *The Nation State and National Self-Determination* (New York, Crowell Co., 1969, 1970), p. 22.

luteness of names." ¹⁵ The theme of "rectification of names" recurs through the debates on the issue—which went on for several centuries—having to do essentially with the idea that "things in actual fact should be made to accord with the implication attached to them by names." One of these ancients, Hsun Tzu (ca. 250 B.C.) found three fallacies in the works of the School of Names: "the fallacy of corrupting names with names . . . the fallacy of corrupting names with actualities . . . the fallacy of corrupting actualities with names." ¹⁶ Obviously there has been more of the same than of change in these matters in all the time since.

The stretch is not great either between another leader of that ancient School of Names, Lung Kung-Sung (ca. 280 B.C.), who said that he "wished to . . . correct the relations between names and actualities, so as thus to transform the whole world," ¹⁷ and this passage from William James: "The universe has always appeared to the natural mind as a kind of enigma, of which the key must be sought in the shape of some illuminating word or name. That word names the universe's principle and to possess it is, after a fashion, to possess the universe itself." ¹⁸ Thus the taboo on uttering or even writing the name of Jahveh among the Jews—the founder of the mystical Hasidic sect of Jews in early eighteenth-century Europe called himself "Baal Shem Tov," "Master of the Name." A similar taboo existed on the personal name of the reigning monarch in old China. In the Indian epics, no one of lower rank ever addressed anyone of higher rank by his personal name, or used the personal pronoun when speaking to him. Names themselves over so much time in so many cultures carried with them the power of magic and incantation, the power to solve mysteries, grandly universal or obscurely personal. In the beginning was the word, followed immediately by the tabooed word.¹⁹ "But—" James went on, "if you follow the pragmatic method, you cannot look on any

15. Fung Yu-lan, *Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York, Macmillan, 1948), p. 83.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

18. William James, *Pragmatism: A New Way for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (New York, Longmans, 1907, 1949), p. 52.

19. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (Toronto, Macmillan, 1969), chap. 22, "Tabooed Words."

such word as closing your quest. You must bring out of each word its practical cash value, set it at work within the stream of your experience. It appears less as a solution, then, and more particularly as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be *changed*." 20

In the stream of our current experience, the cash value of names has clearly been fluctuating with great and unusual violence. The matter of names keeps turning up in one form or another in all the ongoing rediscoveries, revisions, remakings, and reassertions of group identity now taking place all around us. It is clear that quite by itself the ~~name—of~~ individual, of group, of nation, of ~~race—~~ carries a heavy freight of meaning. It is seldom itself the heart of the matter but it often points directly to where the heart can be found. Making our way ~~through~~ the thickets of reality of group identity problems, we can do worse than to follow where the name alone takes us, for it can lead deep into the history, the relationships, the emotions that make up so much of the present tangle of affairs.

Each of my own case studies of particular groups has included a chapter called "A Name to Go By," dealing with the shifting use and meaning of "Negro" and "colored" and "black," and so on, among black Americans, the burdens of shame and pollution carried into every moment of ~~everyday~~ life by group and individual names among emergent Indian ex-Untouchables, the new pools of meaning forming around the terms "Jew" and "Israeli" and the many other terminological ironies and curiosities that turn up so ~~bountifully~~ now in Israel, where Jews from America and Canada become "Anglo-Saxons," Jews from Poland become "Poles," and Jews from Morocco and Yemen become "Moroccans" and "Yemenites." In the Americas, the people called "Indians" by Europeans who thought they had landed in the Indies held to their distinctive tribal names for themselves until they had been wholly conquered and had to submit to the ~~identiv~~ identity imposed on them, along with the name, by their conquerors. In North Carolina quite recently, a nameless and "raceless" group of Indian-Negro-white mixed Ori-

20. James, *Pragmatism*, p. 53.

gins, always previously lumped with Negroes for purposes of segregation under the white supremacy system, won recognition as a distinct "Indian" group by getting the state legislature to give them a name, the "Haliwas"—made up of syllables of Halifax and Warren counties where many of them live. In India, meanwhile, the effort to give substance and usage to the national identity "Indian" makes only slow headway against all the separate regional and linguistic groups bearing the separate names by which most people in India still identify themselves. The lexicon of vernacular or informal names that groups apply to each other—and sometimes in a complex transference to themselves—gives the most direct and pungent expression to the feelings that members of most groups most commonly have about other groups: contempt, hostility, fear, envy, hatred. The familiar list in American English—nigger, mick, wop, kike, chink, jap, spic, honky, polack, gook, and so on—can be safely assumed to have its counterpart in every tongue in every place in every culture where differing groups exist or there is any awareness at all of human differences. But informal or formal, all group names carry with them a heavy store of past and present history. The term for white men among some Eskimos is "gosseks" because the first white men they ever saw were Cossacks from Russia. In South Africa there is a heavy cargo of history in the twist of usages that have gone from "kaffirs" (an Arabic word that originally carried only the meaning of "unbelievers") and "niggers" to "Natives" and "Nonwhites" and, now, "Bantu." In the Philippines, there is much to be learned by tracing the passage from the term "Indio"—the Spanish gave the same name to the people they found in these islands that Columbus gave to those he found in the Caribbean—to "Filipino."

The name of the Philippines itself—like every country name—opens a fruitful vein of inquiry. Similarly in Japan, the use of *Nihon* or *Nippon* as the style, which in either version identifies it as the land where the sun rises, in the one case suggesting a certain softness of spirit and in the other a harsh muscularity. The name China—*Chung Kuo*—identifies as the "central country," China being, as Chinese have always known, the true center of the universe, the only civilized land in a world of barbarians. Some notable

country names, to be sure, have less self-conscious, more accidental origins. America, as every schoolboy knows or used to know, got its name from the explorer Amerigo Vespucci, a contemporary of Christopher Columbus who ventured less, it seems, but wrote more, and who—according to one provocative analysis—had a name that had very special resonances, psychoanalytically speaking, for the man who quite literally first put the name America on the map.²¹ In the recent great multiplication of new states in the world, however, the reappearance of long-submerged names—for example, Viet Nam, Ghana, Mali, Zambia, Sri Lanka—marked the self-conscious reopening of veins of identification with the remote past. The different attitudes and usages in North and South Korea involving the ancient name of *Chosen* reflect strongly felt current views about some very old affairs. Or, in quite a different kind of case, consider the synthetic creation of the name Pakistan, made up as an acronym of the names of the main regions from which that remarkably synthetic state was carved—Punjab, Afghanistan, Kashmir, and so on—omitting any initial for Bengal, an omission finally confirmed by reality, 25 years later, by the severance of Bengal from Pakistan and the emergence of a brand new Bengali state with the old name of the Bengali homeland, Bangladesh.

Individual names usually—though not always—also serve as badges of the basic group identity. By language and style, they tell us a great deal about an individual's origins and probable present associations. The individual name, to be sure, remains primarily the symbol for the single and unique person who bears it, that one and only unduplicatable individual who is distinct and different from all other individuals. We have made much of this uniqueness in our own culture, though perhaps not as much as is suggested by the fact that on the island of Truk every single living person has a distinctive name, no duplications allowed. A person's own name in some ways establishes the fact of his existence. The sanction of namelessness imposed on bastardy in our culture is one of the most fearful that a group can impose. Namelessness of any kind, indeed,

21. W. G. Niederland, "The Naming of America—Psychoanalytic Study of an Historic Event," in Mark Kanzer, ed., *The Unconscious Today* (New York, International Universities Press, 1972).

is almost beyond bearing; "nameless fear" is worse than any other kind of fear. Names, like social norms, provide a certain minimum security, bearings that every individual must feel around him or else be lost. As Helen Lynd so acutely put it: "The wood in *Through the Looking Glass* where no creature bears a name is a place of terror." In most, if not all, cultures and languages, we not only have names, but we acquire "good" names or "bad" names. Good names are inherited, won, protected, besmirched, lost, and—worst of all, the poet has told us—filched. Good or bad, we see that they are kept in view on ancestral tablets or graven, as deep as may be, in stone, a desperate effort to keep the name alive to stand for the person who bore it for as long as possible after the person has gone.

But regardless of all that our individual **names** may come to signify, they do most generally also identify the group to which we belong or from which we come, by nationality, perhaps, or by religion. Where behavior bearing on group status is involved, the name alone can serve as an instant signal for the indicated response—open or closed, welcome or repulse, inclusion or exclusion. Hence, in so many different settings, the familiar business of name-changing by individuals who want to mitigate or conceal inferior status, to be more "like" the more favored group, to gain some more comfortable anonymity by **sharing**, at least in name, the identity of the dominant group. In the ex-colonial world, the shift in political power relations has brought about a reversal of this process. European given names were in many cases acquired by colonial subjects by baptism, by bestowal, or by choice, **reflecting** ambition and/or the need to accommodate to the master culture.²² The shedding of these names, like changing their country names, has been one of the easier, more obvious, and more symbolic ways for ex-colonial subjects to assert their independence and to reassert their own national/cultural identities. In the ex-Belgian Congo now

22. In one case, unique as far as I know, in the Philippines, where Christian given names had long been in use via baptism in the church, Spanish surnames—taken pageful by pageful from a Madrid directory—were simply "given" to large numbers of people by a mid-nineteenth-century Spanish **governor** for the greater convenience of his tax collectors.

renamed Zaire, President Mobutu recently followed the example of other nationalist leaders, not only by changing his own Christian given names, but legally outlawing all such names in the country and fixing penalties for any priest who baptized a child with any but a Zairian name. Regaining a lost identity takes a particular form in Israel, where the Zionists raised the Hebrew language from the dead and returning Jews often marked the shedding of their Diaspora past by adopting new Hebrew names to fit their new Israeli identities. For some blacks in the United States, the drive to re-establish more prideful self-accepting identities for themselves has involved not only replacing the group name "Negro" and "colored" with "black" or "Afro-American" but also changing individual names, abandoning those acquired from the time of slavery and replacing them with African or—~~for~~ reasons that invite examination and reflection—Arabic names. Perhaps boldest and harshest of all were the Black Muslims, who shed what they saw as slavemasters' surnames and substituted a plain X, as though to proclaim that while they would no longer go by the names that the hated white world had given them, they did not yet know who they were.