CULTURES IN SPACE: SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE
MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BALTIC IN A COMPARATIVE
ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVEON THE POLITICS OF
MULTICULTURALISM

MULTICULTURALISM AND REMAKING OF BOUNDARIES

ON THE POLITICS OF MULTICULTURALISM

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ABSTRACT
Some of the words used in these discourses about multiculturalism, and everyday multicultural practice, such as "culture", "ethnicity", and "identity", are ubiquitous and figure in almost every argument about multiculturalism, or discussion about multicultural practice. What I am going to argue is that, in popular and some scholarly discourses, these words and concepts may be used in ways that may be completely incompatible with our anthropological understandings of them. I am going to focus on three interrelated problems: ethnocentrism, essentialism, and primordialism.
KEY WORDS: socio-cultural anthropology, politics of multiculturalism, ethnocentrism, essentialism, primordialism.

ANOTACIJA
Sąvokos *daugiakultūriškumas* (angl. „*multikultūralizmasmulticulturalism*)" sudėtyje yra žodis „kultūra", tad priimta manyti, kad šis pavadinimas turi tiesioginių sąsajų su antropologija. Tuo tarpu antropologai skiria palyginti mažai dėmesio multikultūralizmui daugiakultūriškumui kaip politiniam reiškiniui. Straipsnyje tiriami kai kurie multikultūralizmo daugiakultūriškumo ir antropologijos santykių pobūdžio aspektai ir daromos išvados, kad šių dviejų sričių intelektualieji procesai yra praktiškai nesuderinami. Straipsnyje aptariamas airių kilmės amerikiečių Niujorko valstijoje socialinio tyrimo atvejis, ir nuo jo pereinama prie multikultūralizmo daugiakultūriškumo retorinių ir politinių strategijų analizės šiandieninėje Amerikoje, remiantis trimis pagrindinėmis analitinėmis sąvokomis: etnocentrizmu, esencializmu ir pirmapradiškumu.
PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: sociokultūrinė antropologija, multikultūralizmo daugiakultūriškumo politika, etnocentrizmas, esencializmas, pirmapradiškumas.

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Between the politics of recognition and the politics of compulsion, there is no bright line. (Appiah 1994: 163)

... the logic of the war of recognition presses the combatants to absolutize the difference: it is difficult to eradicate the 'fundamentalist' streak in any claim that makes recognition demands ... (Bauman 2001: 145)

I

My current field research is in the United States, among the descendants of nineteenth-century European immigrants. My particular interest is in people of Irish ancestry, and how – nowadays – they see themselves. I am myself an American more or less, having spent the first 25 years of my life in that country, and being myself the descendant of immigrants from Europe. Although I have spent well over half of my life living on this side of the Atlantic, my background is otherwise very much like those of the people among whom I have been working for the last fifteen years. Like most of my informants, as indeed like nearly all Americans whose ancestors were nineteenth-century immigrants, I have a mixed pedigree. I have English, Scottish, and German ancestors. I suppose you could say that I am a living example of multiculturalism, as are tens of millions of other Americans of mixed ancestry, most of whom have pedigrees that are more mixed than mine.

Having mixed ancestries like this is the result of a particular set of social conditions: these conditions brought about the decline and disappearance of boundaries between cultural categories that were once quite distinct. My immigrant ancestors spoke different languages and professed different religions. The weakening of such cultural boundaries over time is both the precondition for, and consequence of, the kind of intermingling and intermarriage that results in mixed-ancestry individuals like me. This is, however, not what multiculturalism is about, at least incontemporary American politics

An illustration of what it does concern comes from a newspaper story that appeared in February 1996 in the place in New York State where I do my fieldwork. This was a report about a bill sponsored by Irish-American ethnic activists that was being put to the state legislature. The bill, if passed, would make it a state law that children in New York's schools be taught that the Great Famine in Ireland was a crime against humanity of the same order as the enslavement of Africans and the Jewish Holocaust, with which it would be bracketed in school curricula on human rights

issues.[1] They were to be taught that mass starvation was deliberately planned by the British government to rid the country of unwanted Catholics, and that this was the main cause of emigration from Ireland to the United States in the nineteenth century. The bill was a clear attempt to use the law to make official and legally binding the view that Irish people were involuntary migrants, by nature attached to their nation of birth, and to the religion and culture handed down to them by their forefathers – things held to be deeply rooted, authentic, and morally satisfying, things that they would never have abandoned unless forced to do so by political oppression.

Analytically, there are a number of points that one might tease out of this example. I shall mention six. All are fairly typical of the way that cultural politics now proceeds in the United States. The first is that there was no grass-roots movement behind this bill; it was not the result of popular demand (nor even – as far as I can tell, based on the research I have done with several hundred Americans of Irish ancestry – are these the views a reflection of majority opinion within this category of people). The second point, therefore, is that the main protagonists are not the people themselves, but elites who claim to speak for them, and presume to educate them as to who they are and what they ought to believe. The third point to note is the attempt by these protagonists to use the legal system to transform a loose category of people into an officially recognised group having a set of defining attributes or properties. The fourth concerns the nature of these properties: common descent and a common religion (the two are tied together), and a narrative about historical injustice. The fifth is the circular nature of the proposition: we are a group because of our common descent and historical experience, and because of that descent and historical experience we are a group. The sixth concerns the field or platform upon which this claim to recognition is made: an obviously political one, involving the state legislature and educational institutions (in this case, every school in the State of New York).

By October 1996, the newspapers were quoting the following press release:

> Governor George E. Pataki today signed into law legislation that requires the state Board of Regents to devote particular attention to the study of mass starvation in Ireland from 1845 to 1850 when establishing mandatory courses of instruction in human rights issues.

> "History teaches us the Great Irish Hunger was not the result of a massive failure of the Irish potato crop but rather was the result of a deliberate campaign by the British to deny the Irish people the food they needed to survive", Governor Pataki said.

> "More than one million men, women and children died as a result of this mass starvation, and millions more were forced to flee their native land to avoid certain death, while large quantities of

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[1] The bill sought to amend Section 801, Paragraph 1, of the Education Law of the State of New York, to read as follows (I have italicised the added words):

In order to promote a spirit of patriotic and civic service and obligation and to foster in the children of the state moral and intellectual qualities which are essential in preparing to meet the obligations of citizenship in peace or in war, the Regents of The University of the State of New York shall prescribe courses of instruction in patriotism, citizenship, and human rights issues, with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity of genocide, slavery (including the freedom trail and underground railroad), the Holocaust, *and the mass starvation in Ireland from 1845 to 1850,* to be maintained and followed in all the schools of the state. The boards of education and trustees of the several cities and school districts of the state shall require instruction to be given in such courses, by the teachers employed in the schools therein. All pupils attending such schools, over the age of eight years, shall attend upon such instruction.

grain and livestock were exported from Ireland to England", the Governor said. "This tragic event had dramatic implications on the United States, where millions of Irish immigrants had significant impacts on every facet of American life and culture".

The legislation adds the study of the mass starvation to existing law that requires the Board of Regents to prescribe courses of instruction in patriotism, citizenship and human rights issues, with particular attention to be devoted to the study of genocide, slavery and the Holocaust. The law takes effect immediately. (Press release, Office of the Governor, 9 October 1996)

We might note here that although Governor Pataki did not actually say that the Great Famine was an act of genocide, the word "genocide" is mentioned in this press release along with the words "slavery" and "Holocaust", inviting his readers and listeners to make the connections themselves. The responsibility for this tragic event is, however, made perfectly explicit: it was, he says, "the result of a deliberate campaign by the British." Anyone familiar with the history of Irish nationalism will recognise in Mr Pataki's statement echoes of the rhetoric used by John Mitchel (1815-75), the radical Young Irelander who, following his emigration to the United States, sought to mobilise American support for Irish independence and is famously quoted as having said "The Almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight, but the English created the Famine" (see, for e.g., Miller 1985: 306).

Governor Pataki's words are even more exaggerated, flatly – and quite breathtakingly – denying that a potato blight was to blame (saying that it "was not the result of a massive failure of the Irish potato crop"), thus implying that the Famine was a calculated act of malign human intention, leaving no room for bad luck, plant pathology, or the Almighty. In other words – although he was careful not to use them – this was a case of expulsion and mass murder, comparable to the Jewish Diaspora and the Holocaust. A century of Irish historical scholarship has had rather different things to say about the causes and consequences of the Famine, overwhelmingly holding it to be a natural disaster of unprecedented magnitude, not a man-made one, although it is generally agreed that its effects were exacerbated by unpreparedness, ineptitude, mistakes, misunderstandings, ignorance, and confusion at all levels of government in Ireland and Britain, along with some policy responses by parliamentarians in London that seemed harsh and wrong-headed even by the rather less humanitarian moral standards prevailing in the western world at that time (see Byron 1999 for references). Had this disaster, under all the same objective conditions, happened in the United States rather than in Ireland, it is open to question whether the public authorities of the day would have been any better able to deal with it, or any more generous or consistent in their policy responses.

The bill was designed to appeal to a narrow, carefully chosen audience. This was not the public at large, for the bill was never put to a popular vote (as through a referendum or a party manifesto proposal), but rather the intended audience was the State Assembly itself, many of whose members were of Irish ancestry or had large numbers of Irish-ancestry electors in their constituencies, and New York State has the greatest number of Irish-ancestry electors in America. Remarkably, the bill was passed within *three hours* of its presentation in the legislative schedule: this was highly expeditious. It was not referred to a committee; there were no public hearings, and there was no opportunity for international and scholarly opinion to be heard by the legislators. Thus an ideological position taken by militant ethnic activists – supported by little or no academically respectable evidence, with scarcely any debate, and without a public mandate of any kind – became the sole officially recognised version of Irish history to be taught in the State of New York.

The bill was quickly passed into law by the Governor, who put his own populist interpretation on the significance of the new law in the press release quoted above. Only then, after the bill had passed into law, was there much public discussion of the matter. A number of high-profile objections to Governor Pataki's statement appeared in the press in October 1996 (see Archdeacon 2002 for details), pointing out that this was not what historians in Ireland have had to say about their own history. These objections were casually swept aside. It was too late anyway, and in any case by then the issue was not about truth or historical accuracy – if, indeed, it had ever been – but about votes.

II

The origin of multiculturalism as it has developed in the USA lies in the civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s, which attempted to correct the historical wrongs suffered by Americans of African ancestry by recognising them as a category of people deserving of restorative justice. No one would dispute the moral rectitude of this. Yet, as has been observed, "Once [officially recognised] minority status has been granted to a group, there is an inherent likelihood of proliferation. The recognition of a minority group divides the world into three segments: majority, recognised minorities, and not-yet-minorities" (Joppke and Lukes 1998: 12).

In other words, the politics of multiculturalism encourage competition between ethnies or would-be ethnies. In practice, in the USA, those who have been able to sustain their claims to have endured the most suffering and injustice through their ethnic advocates have won the contests for recognition. The success of these claims has not been lost on all those other interested parties seeking to advance their interests or even just to avoid losing ground relative to the rest. There are political goods to be won for being a wronged and exploited minority, but none for being part of the comfortable, middle-class majority. Political expediency thus influences what stories come to fill the spaces within the ethnic boundaries (Byron 1999: 291; cf. Turner 1993).

And, as we see in my example, even the advocates of people of Irish descent have joined in – despite their now being thoroughly assimilated, intermarried, prosperous, and middle-class. Nonetheless, some Irish-American ethnic activists seem to have felt the need to make the same kind of claims of historical victimhood in order – one surmises – to distance themselves from the suspicion that they and their people might have been (and still be) part of the oppressive majority that was, and is, complicit in keeping others in their places (such as Native American Indians, Blacks, Jews, Hispanics, women, and gays).

In the United States, and increasingly elsewhere – especially elsewhere in the Anglophone world – multiculturalism has come to be generally accepted as a kind of diffuse moral principle. Most people think it is a good thing to recognise people's cultural differences, and that these differences should in some way be respected. This much, at least, seems uncontentious. Yet, at the same time, the idea continues to provoke heated debate, and the terms used in this debate are often difficult, complex, and ambiguous (see, for e.g., Kuper 1999 and Watson 2000 for British anthropological views on the usages of "culture" in this debate). There seem to be two main dimensions of this debate: firstly, philosophical arguments about particularism versus universalism and the rights of the individual versus those of the group (see esp. Taylor 1994); and second, more practical and pragmatic arguments about which groups are deserving of recognition in what ways, and how mul-

ticultural policy works, or should work (e.g. Baumann 1996). The reason for some of this confusion must surely lie in the tension between *phenotype* (or "race") and *culture.* In American interpretations of multiculturalism (which have been exported to much of the Anglophone world through the dominance of American media and scholarly publishing) the word "culture" is prominently implicated in the term "multiculturalism", but the first successful case of recognition, that of African-Americans, concerned a phenotypical difference, not a cultural one, as have other successful cases since then. This is a point to which we shall return later in this essay. However, multiculturalism is not just a matter of these ambiguities, tensions, and unresolved arguments. In one way or another, normally by means of piecemeal affirmative action, anti-discrimination, and equal opportunities legislation, it is already legally established in most Anglophone countries; if not in name as multiculturalism (as in Canada), then – in variable degrees – in effect.

And, because multiculturalism is at a certain level popularly accepted as a positive moral principle (confused and ill-defined as it may be) it has also become an everyday practice. There are many thousands of people involved in the practice of multiculturalism in these countries: in education, in employment policy and administration, in social welfare, and in the justice system; and there are also the media, all trying hard to put some sort of multicultural ethos into practice. Those groups who have achieved recognition as official minorities, or are attempting to do so, or have been identified by others as potential groups of a recognisable kind, may of course have their own advocates, spokespersons, or friends at court. Some of the words used in these discourses about multiculturalism, and everyday multicultural practice, such as "culture", "ethnicity", and "identity", are ubiquitous and figure in almost every argument about multiculturalism, or discussion about multicultural practice. They are used by hundreds of thousands of people, and are drawn from same lexicon as anthropology draws its terms, but their meaning can be very different. What I am going to argue is that, in popular and some scholarly discourses, these words and concepts may be – and frequently are – used in ways that may be completely incompatible with our anthropological understandings of them. I am going to focus on three interrelated problems: ethnocentrism, essentialism, and primordialism.

III

Ethnocentrism

In the scientific tradition in which I was trained, Lesson Number One is the idea that while it is a common human propensity to see the world through the medium of your own culture, and to judge other people by your own moral standards, as anthropologists we try not to do this. We adopt a position of cultural and ethical relativism. We accept that other people – or peoples – have different ways of seeing the world, and that it is worth making the effort to understand how they do so; only then can we begin to appreciate why they think and behave as they do. This relativistic approach is an ideal that is not always easy to live up to in practice because we are just as much creatures of culture as anyone else, and it is often difficult to avoid making moral judgements about the things we witness. Nonetheless, a commitment to cultural relativism and ethical neutrality are among the fundamental precepts of Anglo-American anthropology, and they are also among the main things that define the discipline.

Ethnocentrism is not just judging others by the standards of "the majority", as is often thought by the proponents and practitioners of multiculturalism. Anyone, anywhere, can be ethnocentric. Ethnocentrism, in its most stripped-down form, is to privilege any cultural belief, or practice, over another. What is implicit here is the likelihood that this will also involve a value-judgement or a moral position: if something has been privileged, it is probably because the speaker feels that one cultural belief, or practice, is better or worse, more true or false, or more or less authentic and worthy of our attention and respect.

In an effort to distance themselves from their own perceived propensity to be ethnocentric – of which they are keenly aware – the proponents and practitioners of multiculturalism are, all too often, prepared to accept at face value what people of other cultural backgrounds say about themselves, and to privilege these others' understandings over their own. To my mind, this is a sort of half-baked understanding of cultural relativism. If the matter of "culture" is approached with the idea that all our ideas and observations about others are false, and the others' accounts of themselves are true, we are headed for trouble, and bound to make matters worse rather than better. This is because, in so doing, we are not attempting to negotiate some common ground of mutual understanding, but simply exchanging our subjectivities for their subjectivities (or what we imagine their subjectivities to be).

The principle of cultural relativism demands that all viewpoints be accorded equal weight, and that we do not judge some of them – our own, for example – to be less true or morally less worthy, and other viewpoints – theirs – as more true and morally worthy. Or vice versa. We are entitled to have a view of ourselves as well as them and what they do, just as they are entitled to have a view of us and what we do, as well as of themselves. As social scientists we have an obligation to accord equal weight to both parties' points of view, and to be equally sceptical and enquiring of both. Genuinely relativistic and objective approaches to questions of ethnicity, culture, and identity recognise that ignorance and self-interest, or prejudice and racism, can – and do – work both ways.

Essentialism

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The second of the Three Mortal Sins is that of Essentialism. Essentialism has to do with the essence of things; their fundamental nature. Just as it is a common human propensity to see the world through one's own cultural lenses – something that we, as anthropologists, try to avoid – it is also a common human propensity to see the world it terms of categories and meanings. We tend to divide up and classify our cognitive and material worlds into manageable bits and pieces, and to imbue these bits with certain characteristics by which we can recognise them and think and act in appropriate ways. Among the things in our material and cognitive worlds which we classify and attribute typical or essential characteristics are other people: men and women, us and them, people like us and people not like us. There is nothing wrong with this: all of us do this, all the time. It is the way our brains are wired. It is called analogical thinking. It is what makes our kind of languages possible, and distinguishes us from apes.

When psychologists use the term "identity", or sociologists speak of "ethnicity", or ethnologists and anthropologists talk about "culture", what they have in mind are limited general statements based upon bodies of empirical evidence which have been, or are capable of being validated through the accepted scientific procedures of the discipline. When we hear ethnic spokespersons, politicians, journalists, or other multiculturalists use these words, however, they can mean anything the speaker wants them to mean. Sometimes they are used in ways that are beyond time and space. They assert that the real essence of being, for example, Irish, is to have inherited and unconsciously to embody the true spirit of Celticness. If something is beyond time and space, like a transcendent "true spirit of Celticness", of which its human embodiments are not conscious and so are unable to talk about to us, it is highly unlikely to be capable of testing or validation by means of our normal scientific procedures. What would count as empirical evidence? How would we collect it? Who would we talk to, or what would we measure? Such an assertion is simply a statement of someone's belief, and no more; in turn, it demands *your* belief: it has to be taken on trust, or not, according to your inclinations.

The absence of any verifiable or independent evidence that is congenial to the position they wish to take frequently tempts multiculturalists to accept, as substitutes, the assertions of persons who are not social scientists – so-called ethnic experts or spokespersons, who may be anything from footballers to poets to theologians, to say nothing of those who take it upon themselves explicitly to advocate the political interests of "their" group, or that of another set of people for whom they presume to speak. The claims made by these persons about the existence and qualities of the cultural attributes that are supposed to characterise the group are more often based upon personal anecdote, interpretations of historical or literary sources, or idealised or wished-for states of affairs, than upon anything resembling representative evidence. And, the idea that these qualities – so asserted – can then be said to inform the identities of the individual members of that group is simply accepted without any additional justification as a self-evident, logical corollary of the previous statement: that this further claim is a reification any sort of pertaining to these individuals' actual identity-choices, is unnoticed or ignored.

The authors of such claims do not normally stop here, however, but go on to make *normative prescriptions:* that is, to make ethical or moral statements about what the people of a certain category ought to believe about themselves, and how they ought to behave in respect of these beliefs. Persons of the category who do not believe these things, or behave in these ways, are not "proper" members of the category: they are ignorant of the "true" meaning of their culture, and have to be educated; or they are revisionists, heretics, or traitors who have to be disciplined, excluded, or pun-

ished. We should note well that the strategic deployment of essentialisms is a highly effective tool in the creation of moral solidarities. Their use is frequently quite deliberate.

Orthodoxies and fundamentalisms – in various kinds and degrees – seem to be the consequence of this procedure, depending upon how far it is taken. The words "orthodoxy" and "fundamentalism" are, of course, associated most closely with theological ideologies and their corresponding social movements. There would seem to be close parallels with ethnic ideologies and their corresponding social movements. One could call certain kinds of ethnic representations secular theologies, if they are concerned (as most of them are) with the true, transcendent essence of being, believing, and behaving; in other words, they are concerned not merely with *des*cribing *difference,* but with *pre*scribing *moral values*. In this multicultural world, in which ethnic interest groups jostle and compete for attention, it is not enough simply to say – for example – that most Irish and Welsh people speak the same language and except for a few small details have pretty much the same ways of life as people in England; there must also be a narrative about what Irishness or Welshness *means,* a narrative that is bound to involve judgements about the rights and wrongs of history; and things that make Irish or Welsh people different, in a moral sense, from the English.

Primordialism

> Ethnic identity and its practical upshot, ethnopolitics, base their authority on bonds of blood and descent, and even the bonds of language and culture are treated as if they were natural facts. This essentialist position does not hold water: Far from being a natural identity, ethnicity is a carefully cultivated, and not seldom a manipulated strategy of social action led by unelected elites who often exploit or mislead their supposed beneficiaries. (Baumann 1999: 136-37)

Finally, the Third Deadly Sin. For our purpose, primordialism may be defined as the intellectual position which asserts that ethnic identity is a more-or-less immutable – permanent and unchangeable – aspect of the person. The Second Lesson of the kind of anthropology that I was taught as a first-year undergraduate was contained within the words of Edward Burnett Tylor's definition of culture, written in 1871, that culture is "learned by man as a member of society." That is, culture is a matter of social propinquity: one grows up to speak, think, and behave like the people who are nearest to you, and with whom you have the most social traffic. Thus, "culture" is a phenomenon of society, and not of nature. One does not inherit culture genetically. One acquires it environmentally. How one becomes cultured, and what one become cultured as, is a matter of his or her socialisation and immediate social environment. There is nothing here about deep or true essences, or inheritance, or genetics.

The Sin of Primordialism, however, frequently takes the form of asserting that culture is mainly a matter of nature – of "blood" or inherited essence – rather than of social learning. If, say, your parents are Ethiopians, someone taking a primordialist position would claim that you have acquired or inherited the deep essence of Ethiopianness, even though you might have been adopted as an infant by Danes and brought up in Denmark only among Danes. A primordialist interpretation would say that you still embody this essence of Ethiopianness, which is buried deep within you, and which defines your "real" or "true" identity: an identity that it is "unnatural" for you to deny. You will find yourself classified and treated by people holding these views as "really" an Ethiopian, and "not really" a Dane. Since you look physically different from most Danes, the attribution of Ethiopianness to you may well be a form of racism (even otherwise well-intentioned middle-

class people often assume that someone who looks different must be culturally different, if not on the surface then somewhere deep down in their psyche).

This form of primordialism merges and confounds questions of genetics ticswith questions of culture. It relies on myths and folk theories of blood and essence that do not distinguish between inherited physical characteristics (e.g. facial features and skin colour) and cultural characteristics transmitted through socialisation (e.g. language and religion). The ethos of multiculturalism has revitalized and given new veneer of legitimacy to these folk theories of blood and essence, because they usefully reinforce difference, and difference is what multiculturalism is about. here phenotypic (Black African), not a cultural one, and the monitoring of minorities under later American anti-discrimination legislation has been largely concerned with phenotypical categories – people who are visibly different from the white, Euro-American majority e issue of phenotype, not only in the United States but also in other English-speaking countries that have been influenced by American ideas and practices Nowadays, no group can enter the political arena, or hope to achieve public recognition, unless it can successfully establish that it is different in some quite distinctive and de-monstrable ways from other groups, and that at least some of these differences are – or can be treated as if they were – of a genetic kind: that is, that they can be asserted to be involuntarily and permanently embodied, implanted through inheritance in one's persona, if not actually in one's phenotype.

Chief among these involuntary embodied differences are, of course, the facts of birth and origin. Ethnic advocates may well use these things in ways that deliberately confound them with culture, so that any criticism of a minority or any attempt to negotiate a cultural practice that is unpalatable to the majority (e.g. the mutilation of children's genitals, slavery, the sequestration of women, kid-napping and forced marriage, the public utterance of death-threats, and honour killings: all of which are customary practices among some varieties of recent immigrants to Great Britain) can be countered with an allegation of "racism". Cultural activists (including some academics) have had a propensity to counter adverse sentiment about these things in Britain by tactically invoking the most powerful rhetoric available to them – that of 'race' – and in doing so blurring the distinction between immigrants' non-European origins on the one hand (which might not be the main source of British disquiet), or their religion in a general sense (which might not be much of a worry either) and, on the other hand, some of their old-country social customs (which almost certainly are mat-ters of widespread public concern).

This is a good example of the ratcheting-up of rhetoric that now characterises political causes of almost any kind. Those social phenomena are normally matters of degree and contingency are soon ignored, once the debate heats up. Ethnic activists and "anti-racist" spokespersons regard questions about the compatibility of some new-immigrant cultural practices with the predominant values of contemporary European society not as matters of public interest in which it might be possible to explore questions of degree and contingency, but as unwarranted attacks on "their" people – as evi-dence of bias, discrimination, the oppression of minorities, or "race hate". And, likewise, people have come to believe that they must not question these claims; it is too risky: people are afraid that they might, themselves, be branded as racists. People are born with their skin colour, about which they can do nothing. But culture is a different matter: it is not fixed by the facts of one's birth. For generations, anthropologists have been pointing this out. They have also emphasized that culture

changes over time, and how it changes is a matter of its contexts. Where contexts change, cultural practices can be expected to change along with them.

To complicate things even more, "ethnic" is often used nowadays as a euphemism for "race". People in the Anglophone world have come to think that the word "race" is impolite.. This seems to be a growing trend, even among educated professionals who ought to know better. "Ethnic" refers to *ethnos* or nation, to a people having common origins shipand customs. In other words, to both race and culture. To use it to refer mainly to physical differences encourages the belief that culture as an emergent or secondary property of genotype (that is, that you have "a culture" by virtue of your parentage, or that your culture is an inseparable part of your ancestral inheritance). This thoroughly muddles two quite separate things, confounding what is genetically inherited with what is not. Again, emphatically, human beings are not "born with" any particular culture, language, or religion: they are socialised into ways of thinking, speaking, believing, and behaving by the people around them.

Since primordialism holds that one's ethnic identity is fixed by the facts of one's origins, parentage, or ancestry, it denies the possibilities of indifference, indeterminacy, choice, and change. It imprisons people within the cultural categories they are perceived to have been born into, and denies them any possibility of negotiating an escape from their origins. It is the same position that the Nazis— took on the Jewish Question: every person under suspicion, regardless of whether they were of mixed ancestry, or had ever set foot in a synagogue, was judged on the basis of their parentage to be either a Jew or not a Jew. There was no way out: to the Nazi mind, if you were born as one of them, one of them you would always be. Life-or-death consequences followed.

Nowadays, ethnic advocates seeking to mobilise their constituencies use exactly the same rhetoric in mirror-image (you were born as one of us, and one of us you will always be) to draw artificial boundaries around the group where none existed before (and without boundaries, there is nothing to define"group"), or to reinforce existing boundaries, or to resist the threat of assimilation. A sceptic might ask: Who profits from the drawing-of, and policing of the moral boundaries? To whom is assimilation a threat? To ethnic advocates fearing the loss of their power-bases and reputations as spokespersons? To politicians playing to the gallery, or toeing the party line, in order to garner "ethnic" votes? To academics deriving social and economic capital from their interpretation of cultural symbols, or "speaking for" a minority? To civil servants whose pensionable jobs involve administering multicultural policy? To school teachers trying to say the right thing, but not knowing quite what the right thing is? To the people themselves? How often are the people actually asked, as individuals, under conditions free from surveillance and possible sanction? How free are young people – in particular – to decide for themselves who they want to be, once it has been accepted by almost everyone in positions of power and influence that they have been "born into a culture" or to have "inherited a culture", and the maintenance of their parents' or grandparents' language, religion, and old-country marriage customs has become a political goal, supported by laws and government grants?

This future-world is already with us: Quebec's Law 101 states that Francophones and immigrants must bring up their children as French-speakers; neither the parents nor the children are given any choice.[2] Where people actually are given the choice, what they choose is not always

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[2] There have been court challenges to this law. Most recently, in March 2005, the Supreme Court of Canada denied an application filed by French-speaking parents who wanted to enrol their children in English-language schools. The court upheld Law 101, which prevents Francophones from placing their children in English schools, and stated that the law was reasonable. It said that linguistic majorities have no constitu-

what the proponents of multiculturalism would choose for them: in Oakland, California, Black parents concerned about their children's future employability rejected a proposal that their children should be taught in Black English dialect as the official language of instruction for Black children in the city's schools. Again in California, Hispanic parents overturned a proposal by multiculturalist educators that their children should be taught mainly in Spanish rather than in English, but in other states, children with Hispanic surnames are placed in bilingual classes regardless of their fluency in either language, or their (or their parents') wishes. And, in Britain, social workers and adoption agency officials (who themselves were mostly white), influenced by ideas about multiculturalism, refused to place Black Afro-Caribbean children with white families on the grounds that the children would be denied their natural culture of Blackness and so would be confused about their identity, a policy that was formally repudiated only when it came to public attention through the tabloid press as an extreme example of "political correctness".

IV

The tragedy of multiculturalism, as a political phenomenon, has been to encourage the belief that cultural categorisations are "natural" (rather than merely social, or political), and that they are permanent (rather than context-dependent and subject to change). And that the world of people can be neatly divided up into such categories into which everyone can be fitted, ignoring people of mixed or indeterminate background, and disregarding the willingness of individuals to be classified, spoken for, and have their cultural loyalties put under surveillance and continually policed. Ethnic boundaries have been drawn where none existed previously, or have been reinforced: cultural differences have been politicised: sharpened up, and claims made about their essence, their immutability, and their power to define the "identity" of individual human beings. Ironically, the possibility that we might all become one big happy family of cultural mongrels recedes into the distance, instead of being brought closer to reality.

As one such cultural mongrel, I do not feel that I have been denied anything in not having a clear, singular sense of ethnic identity. In fact, I have a mixed set of cultural options that is unique to me, not identical with those of any legally defined ethnic group, that is unique to me and which I can exercise as I choose. The idea that my psychic well-being demands that I embody only one true ethnic identity, and that this essence must be awakened within me so that I know who I really am and so can believe and behave appropriately, and so that other people can know what my identity is and what I signify, is an idea that I find deeply offensive, inimical to my liberty and integrity as an individual. Yet it is precisely this absurdly reductive and anti-anthropological idea that multiculturalism turns into political reality, whether intentionally or not.

That we should all strive to get along with one another is an ideal to which all of us can subscribe, and to some extent the ethos of multiculturalism has had positive effects in encouraging us to be more tolerant and understanding of others. But we should be aware that some of the cultural politics that go on under the banner of multiculturalism, perversely, serve only to create, reinforce, and perpetuate ethnic sectarianism. These pressures come from the inside as well as from the out-

tional right to receive education in minority languages (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation News Online, 30 March 2005).

side: they are not always forced upon minorities by majorities; sometimes they are forced on majorities by minorities, or their spokespersons. That has been my theme in this essay. Multiculturalism, as an ideology or as a political practice, is in itself neither better nor worse than assimilationism. It is what people say and do in its name that makes it good or bad. Although popular discourses about multiculturalism have freely borrowed words from our scientific vocabulary, very few anthropologists have focussed upon multiculturalism as a political phenomenon in the modern world which might, in itself, be an object of scientific investigation and analysis. More anthropological voices need to be heard, if we are to learn the lessons of history. As anthropologists, it is our duty to ensure that multiculturalism is, and remains, open and critical debate about the means and ends of tolerance, in which the policing of cultural boundaries – by anyone, insider or outsider, teacher, priest, or politician – has no place.

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APIE MULTIKULTŪRALIZMO DAUGIAKULTŪRIŠKUMO POLITIKĄ

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S a n t r a u k a

Kas yra multikultūralizmasdaugiakultūriškumas (angl. *multiculturalism*)? Kadangi jo sudėtyje yra žodis „kultūra", šios politinės praktikos pavadinimas lyg ir turi sąsajų su antropologija, ir daug kas yra linkęs manyti, kad šios sąsajos egzistuoja. Tačiau nepaisant paplitusios nuomonės, kad daugiakultūriškumas yra multikultūralizmas susijęs su antropologija, patys antropologai skyrė palyginti mažai kritinio dėmesio multikultūralizmui šiam reiškiniui kaip politiniam reiškiniui. Straipsnyje tiriami kai kurie daugiakultūriškumo multikultūralizmo ir antropologijos santykių pobūdžio aspektai ir daromos išvados, kad šių dviejų sričių intelektualieji procesai yra praktiškai nesuderinami.

Nesuderinamumo priežastis yra labai skirtingas „kultūros" sąvokos supratimas ir vartojimas: antropologiniame diskurse ši sąvoka reiškia išugdytą elgseną, jos modelius ir produktus, o daugiakultūriškumo multikultūralizmo diskurse šią reikšmę išstumia „rasės", prigimties ir protėvių paveldo sąvokos. „Rasės" ir kultūros suliejimas daugiakultūriškumo multikultūralizmo diskurse atsiranda ne dėl neteisingo „kultūros" reiškinio supratimo ar antropologinio požiūrio į kultūrą ignoravimo, bet veikiau dėl sąlygų, suformuotų tokio reiškinio pripažinimo politikos. Bet kuri grupė, siekianti visuomeninio pripažinimo kaip daugiakultūriškumo multikultūralizmo aplinkoje ryškiai išsiskirianti mažuma, turi:

a) konkuruoti su kitomis tokių pačių siekių turinčiomis grupėmis;

b) turėti komplektą būdingų bruožų, pagal kuriuos tos grupės nariai atpažįstami.

Tokiu Taigi būdu, kalba, religija ir „socialinė atmintis" laikomi lyg ir prigimties faktais, paveldimais tuo pačiu būdu kaip ir odos ar plaukų spalva, o ne socialinių atsitiktinumų rezultatu.

Straipsnio pradžioje aptariamas airių kilmės amerikiečių Niujorko valstijoje socialinio tyrimo atvejis, ir nuo jo pereinama prie daugiakultūriškumo multikultūralizmo retorinių ir politinių strategijų analizės šiandieninėje Amerikoje, remiantis trimis pagrindinėmis analitinėmis sąvokomis: etnocentrizmu, esencializmu ir pirmapradiškumu. Straipsnis baigiamas pastebėjimupažymėjimu, kad, nepaisant iš esmės geranoriškų intencijų skatinti santarvę tarp grupių ir individo laisvę, daugiakultūriškumas multikultūralizmas kartais pasiekia priešingą rezultatą: kuriamas, skatinamas ir įtvirtinamas etninis sektantiškumas bei fiksuojami nauji asmens laisvės suvaržymai.

Received in November 2005

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