

ETHNICITY AS LIFE-WORLD

A Phenomenological Approach to a Theory of Ethnic Identity

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Conceptual Approaches

It has been said that the nation has its roots in ethnicity (Smith 1986). In order to understand nations and nationalism as movements based on 'collective self-consciousness' (Shils 1995) we have to ask for the structures of ethnicity. A theory of ethnicity must be conceived as a theory of ethnic identity. An analysis of contemporary ethnic conflicts, however, will deal preponderantly with questions of diverging ethnic interests and, hence, of conflicts between competing ethnic and national groups (Horowitz 1985). Ethnic identity must be considered a first-rank instrument to promote one's own interests (Hechter 1975, Nairn 1972, Keating 1991). This integrational structure must be differentiated against single fields of interests because of its outstanding character. Ethnicity has to be seen as multidimensional (Glazer / Moynihan 1975).

A First Approach: Ethnicity Creates Borderlines

Ethnicity has been seen as a mechanism for drawing boundaries toward other ethnies (Barth 1969). 'By definition, ethnic groups remain more or less discrete, but they are aware of - and in contact with - members of other ethnic groups. Moreover, these groups or categories are in a sense created through that very contact. Group identities must always be defined in relation to that what they are not - in other words, in relation to non-members of the group' (Eriksen 1993: 9 f.; 1995). Indeed, ethnic groups can be seen in the evolutionary perspective of ordering bounded societies by contrasting them with other bounded societies, thus making manageable the otherwise incomprehensible world: Drafting boundaries makes the world, humankind, work by tailoring the adequate dimension for the actual social processes. The size of societies in their different stages of development cannot be varied arbitrarily. The fulfilment of the basic functions of society (to speak with Parsons 1976, adaptation to the "social" environment, goal attainment, pattern maintenance and, above all, integration) depends upon the scale of productivity, which on its turn is dependent upon the level of communication and organization. This should not be misunderstood as some sort of determinism. Anyway, not every society can bear all institutions. But man has always different options. Thus, there are varying political institutions which vary also in the degree of their capability to integrate many (or not

so many) humans. And they differ in the cohesiveness and durability of the links they are offering. A tribe may have the same economic and social basis compared with a confederation of tribes. While the tribe is a typical socio-political institution for segmented societies which can bind together only a small number of persons (it has been said: not more than about 25.000) these tribal links and solidarities are usually enormously solid. At the same scale of productivity one has to expect to find also institutions like tribal confederations which encompass large numbers of beings. Hundreds of thousands of humans can be organized by these institutions. Anyway there is always lurking the spectre of splitting off and the threat of falling apart. The obligations and solidarities within a large confederation do not seem very committing. But looking forwards, these federations offer the perspectives for developing into an ethnic unit going far beyond a tribe. The until now final points in this development was the modern nation as a combination of societal needs and communal (ethnic) ties. Maybe we can discern at far horizons the shadow of a supra-national society which has not lost all communal ties. Most people are not able to experience mentally and emotionally this perspective. Quite another question is the existence or usefulness of political institutions regulation some aspects of supra-national societies. Sovereign nations can and may institute such regulations whenever needed.

To rely exclusively upon the material dividends of social boundarization maybe trying especially for hard core-functionalists. Thus, ethnicity has been seen as a means for minimizing information costs for identifying persons whom you can trust, that is: to avoid 'opportunism - self-interested behavior that has socially harmful consequences' (Fearon/Laitin 1996: 717). I would not consider this idea wrong; it is, however, incomplete - what the authors are ready to admit. The approach to ethnicity proposed here, based on shared life-worlds, implies such ideas of low information cost-systems. Nevertheless, it goes beyond the limits of rational choice by conceptualizing man not exclusively as *homo oeconomicus* but as *homo sapiens* in its full capacities.

Why, f. i., Euro-Americans are often clinging to their ancestry as to their ethnic identity in a context where 'the structural basis for ethnic differentiation (e.g., labour market niches, residential segregation, endogamous marriage patterns) have declined across generations levelling many social distinctions based on European ancestry' (Stoller 1996: 145)? The former authors answer: 'Because they can probably learn something about the other's past in short order by "asking around"' (Fearon/Laitin 1996: 718) in the relatively small ethnic community. The insufficiency of this answer springs to one's eyes. It is presupposing what it is expected to explain - the existence of the groups network and cohesiveness. Speaking in a broader sense, we would suppose there is a deep felt need for ordering the social world in circles more easily to overview which can deliver security in a very extensive meaning of the word: 'Fellow ethnics are in certain ways always "known in advance"' (Stoller 1996: 151). Evidently, we have to resort to other concepts in order to avoid vicious circles.

The concept of social character has been introduced as a widely presupposed device of delimiting social groups. Norbert Elias (1989) has insisted in the notion of 'national character' as pre-scientific. It was reformulated as 'national habitus' or 'national mentality' (Blomert u. a. 1993, following Bourdieu 1979). The concept, however, can not gain scientific merit if it is not restructured carefully. We find an early rational approach two and a half centuries ago with David Hume (1985: 198, 197): 'A nation is nothing but a collection of individuals... Some particular qualities are more frequently to be met with among one people than among their neighbours' (Of National Characters). The nation is

a political unity forming a communicational community. Thus, the sober empiricist offered a theoretical explanation we will find again only recently: If the concept is debated today, social scientists are asking for the 'basic structure of the personality' (Inkeles 1997: 3): "To what extent do the patterned conditions of life in a particular society give rise to certain distinctive patterns in the personalities of its members? To what extent, that is, does the sociocultural system produce its distinctive forms of "social characters", "basic personality structure", or "modal personality"?"

Drawing boundaries is fundamental not only for social technology; it plays a role, too, in the economics of human emotions. De-boundarization must also be considered a process which is crucial for human ontogenesis as well as in historical development. Identity is always shaped and re-shaped newly (cf. Verdery 1993). But we must warn against confounding this process with an iron law of history. Fusion and fission have been alternating political processes. Everybody can see it at European maps of different years in this century. The decisive fact, however, is that delimitation needs the complement of integration. This parallel / antiparallel course was the strategy which has engendered the individual as the personal structure able to deal with the demanding aspects of unfolding the social potential of greater societies. Paradoxically enough, this brought the loss of the individual's consciousness of being a limited and by social conditions bounded creature. There is a trade-off between intensity (higher frequency of interaction) and range of interaction (number of possible partners for social relations. High frequency-actions are matters of everyday life and restricted essentially to two domains - family and recreation on the one hand; occupation and profession on the other hand. Far reaching relations, in spatial and social terms, are mostly such in economic and political affairs. While the former yield satisfaction, care, and subsistence, the latter are to be measured in financial gains and, in less well accountable terms, power. In modern societies men need both interconnections. There are, however, different categories of people, some comparatively more concerned with the far reaching relations in their everyday life than others. If we label one kind of interactions 'societal', and the second 'communal', then it should be immediately clear that both types will endure and survive. The question is not the fading away of communal interaction systems, but their perhaps varying forms and their surely varying function. It is by no means necessary that ethnic units have to care for communal ties. But there will be social sub-, or medium range-, or even small range-systems, serving as communal, high intensity-/high frequency-groups.

There are several possibilities to draw boundaries between different societies. Communal strategies are only one possibility. Probably the most important mode for creating borderlines have been power-based administrative boundaries between social groups. Today this means primarily borderlines between states. We would expect societies to be held together more likely by states, as state power is not only in recent times the single most important political device (cf. Miles/Rochefort 1991). Boundaries between states are in modern societies incorporated in citizenship as politically decisive distinction, decidedly more important than ethnic affiliation. The limits of the state, juridically expressed as sovereignty, and administratively as the limits of effective power, mark the threshold, which delimits most often the area within which ethno-national identity is build up a fortiori. Citizenship is a mode of dividing humankind in smaller units, thus having the most serious practical consequences. Ethnic identity should be expected to fade away. As this is not the case, at least until now, we must consider the delimiting function of ethnicity as real but not exhaustive for defining ethnicity. It misses the specific difference of ethnicity compared

with other societal or political structures having a similar function. Ethnic identity (ethnic affiliation) will grasp, on the one side, the social structures (the macro-perspective) and, on the other side, personal consciousness (the micro-perspective).

Defining an ethnic unit exclusively by processes of boundarization is a misinterpretation of the general mechanism of human understanding. 'Difference' as the core concept of human and social recognition is an intellectual tool indispensable for giving orientation and direction in the apparently chaotic world of innumerable possible social relations, creating social categories in general and not only ethnic ones.

Ethnic boundaries can be drawn following variable needs, as Evans-Pritchard (1969) in his work about the Nuer demonstrated masterly. Finally, there are two basically different possibilities for defining ethnic membership, the emic and the etic perspective: 1) Those who are involved decide whether they want to or in fact do belong to a specific group (ethnic self-definition). 2) Limits can be applied from outside, by people who do not belong to the ethnic in question and who don't like to belong to 'them' (ethnic hetero-definition). The different consequences of these alternatives are not to belittle. First, there is the mere fact of the size of the group, seldom being the same if the limit is decided inside or outside. The extension of the concept of 'co-ethnic' usually differs, and the limits of the groups are not the same under the different approaches. An example will illustrate this.

'The Sami 'Lapps' as a unique people had never a unified culture, uniting them into one single unit; the different Sami-groups economically and culturally lived in rather autonomous units exploiting different ecological situations' (Tuomi-Nikula 1992: 11; cf. Svanberg 1996 on the lumping together of ethnic groups in China). Anyway, seen from the outside by the Christianized Scandinavians, they were told of as 'Lapps', heathens, and sorcerers' and considered as one single ethnic group. So they began - very lately, indeed - to organize themselves and to develop a common Scandinavian ethnic consciousness tinged with national characteristics and aspiration.

By self-definition and social referencing groups belonging to one cultural district with the same basic cultural patterns is internally differentiated. Intruders, more powerful militarily and politically, claiming dominance about them, perceive these different groups not only as clustering to one culture but to one ethnic unit, too. They have the power to make effective and permanent their view, thus creating a new ethnic unit by forcibly fusing the older ones. Being outcasted by the majorities, many autonomous groups in the last centuries, with their own specific and asserted identities and life styles, emerged as a common Samic people. Quite a similar process in structural terms of 'self-making and being made by power relations' (Ong 1996) is going on, when in the U.S.A. immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and the like, are lumped together as 'Hispanics', and Cambodian, Vietnamese, Korean, etc. as 'Asians', as pan-ethnies. Ethnogenesis is, like nation-building, a process conditioned by socio-political power-relations. There is nothing natural about it, and there is no necessity in it except one fact: Modern world is divided into nations as the historically most recent universal survival units (de Swaan 1995).

Ethnic Identities - Life-Worlds and Worlds of Meaning

High intensity groups are groups not only in a metaphorical sense, that is, small. They cannot transgress a few hundreds of persons. Ethnic 'groups' (units), on the contrary,

consist ordinarily of many more persons. Thus, they can impossibly work as high intensity systems. They must have another function and be more complex as usually assumed. They are 'worlds of belonging', limiting the circle of those persons for whom it is possible to regard each other as potential partners for high intensity relations. Thus, ethnic units may be constructed to the image of family and kinship, in order to meet the necessary condition of familiarity. This may emerge as a core concept uniting the meanings of relations of trust, open to achievement, and the semantics of 'family', as the paradigm of ascriptive traits. But from the very beginning, beyond bands of foraging hunters and gatherers and village societies, ethnicity cannot be considered 'primordial'. Nevertheless, it is constructed as an ideological picture of generalized features stemming from much smaller communal units. The ethnic phenomenon seems to be some sort of a social universal.

Ethnicity as structuring social reality is constructed upon the basic category of identity. Identity, firstly, is a psychic structure: The individual person is integrating his needs with the necessities and challenges of the outside world. We can consider it the core of the person, at the same time 'me' and 'I' (Mead 1975). Identity is central to the conscious personality and to the system of society build up of many conscious personalities. Secondly, the person is integrating himself into society with its norms and expectations. Thus, identity is a relationship expressed in social action and aiming towards other persons. This aspect, however, is not exhaustive in analyzing the concept of identity.

Identity, and by implication: ethnicity, is a world of meaning (Berger/Luckmann 1969), the main tool for a human mind to apperceive his own position within society and society's position in the universe. Ethnicity construes a structure of relevance (Schütz 1982) for the member of a specific ethnic unit. If my structure of relevance or world of meaning does not coincide with that of other persons in social and mental fundamentals, these other persons are 'strangers' to me. We cannot understand each other, and if I (or he/she) is anxious, or ethnocentric, there will arouse xenophobia. The way of thinking and acting of this 'others', then, lacks meaning for me. I don't understand that there is meaning in his/her acting and communications even knowing that human actions are always meaningful although sometimes I do not understand exactly what is meant. There is not a far distance, and if I am not experienced or educated enough for recognizing that this lack of meaning is due to not being familiar with his/her way of thinking on my behalf, this lack of meaning will be followed by lack of esteem.

Ethnicity designates a corporation or group of persons 'relating to which we are subjects of a common (social) environment... The persons belonging to this corporation are given to each other as 'fellow-men' and as 'co-persons', they are not objects for each other but subjects who live 'together', are related to each other, communicate with each other' (Husserl 1984: 21 and 25). Only those 'co-persons', those 'fellow-men', who share their mutual life-world, recognize each other as co-humans of equal value. 'All experience of social reality is founded on the fundamental axiom positing the existence of other beings 'like me'... I immediately perceive another man only if he shares a sector of the life-world's space and of world time in common with me' (Schütz / Luckmann 1973: 37). The following rather lengthy quotation, taken from Schütz-Luckmann (1973: 3 - 4) is perhaps the best description of ethnicity in its original structure, although Schütz/Luckmann did not think of ethnicity by writing these sentences.

The everyday life-world is the region of reality in which man can engage himself and which he can change while he operates in it by means of his animate organism... Only

within this reality can one be understood by his fellow-men, and only in it can he work together with them. only in the world of everyday life can a common, communicative, surrounding world be constituted... In the natural attitude I always find myself in a world which is for me taken for granted and self-evidently 'real'. I was born into it and I assume that it existed before me. It is the unexamined ground for everything given in my experience, as it were, the taken-for-granted frame in which all the problems which I must overcome are placed. This world appears to me in coherent arrangements of well-circumscribed Objects having determinate properties... Moreover, I simply take it for granted that other men also exist in this my world and indeed not only in a bodily manner like and among other objects, but rather as endowed with a consciousness that is essentially the same as mine. Thus from the outset, my life-world is not my private world but, rather, is inter subjective; the fundamental structure of its reality is that is shared by us... Furthermore, I take for granted that the significance of this 'natural world'. which was already experienced, mastered, and named out by our predecessors) is fundamentally the same for my fellow-men as for me, since it is brought in a common frame of interpretation.

Our 'natural attitude' is to presuppose that the world remains what it has been before us, and that our experiences are valid as knowledge about this constant world. This is the fundament of primordial trust in my social group and natural environment. If groups get bigger or - what is the same for me personally - if my personal reach is enlarged, I furthermore will trust in my hitherto acquired experiences and in the sameness of my co-humans. Nevertheless, the quality of my affects will alter. Unconditional trust in the others' friendly behaviour towards me is no longer an adequate attitude for survival in a world which is getting always more unreliable while the spatial (and social) distance is growing. Thus, new forms of ethnic units emerge. Proximity as familiarity will supersede factual familial links as base of primary trust. This new form of ethnicity cannot claim primordality. If society grows bigger again and counts millions of members and forms a 'nation', then the new form of social 'familiarity' by (more or less) proximity is at best a 'remembrance' (Husserl) of the 'originary impression'. Primordial ethnicity, therefore, is to be considered quite another phenomenon than nationality. However, nations are built up of individual persons, and it is their experience and their consciousness which determine the collective's limit and its possibilities. It is a question of different qualities of collective experience. While primordial ethnicity is founded in the comprehensive life-world of everyday relations, nationality is founded in a special aspect of it - the remaining weak communal ties which huge communities, too, are needing for system maintenance besides co-ordinated interests. It is meant for one specific goal: ensuring the communal link in political life for justifying decision rules.

The process of ethnic identification is drafted often as 'organic'. Theoretically, this is justified by labeling ethnicity as 'primordial'. Since Geertz (1963) in the 60ies published his analyses of 'primordial' sentiments, that is, sentiments swinging up in competition with other affectual belongings, it is taken for granted: Ethnicity is the paradigm for such primordial sentiments. Originary Ethnicity may indeed serve as model for the primacy of a social identity humans are achieving in the process of socialization. In this sense, it is 'primordial' and fundamental to other identities, superior to them in contexts of competition. This may be the answer to the riddle why ethnicity, and sometimes an ethnically conceived nationality - this, however, is a problem of its own - competing with parties or with pressure groups usually, but not always ("Trade unions transcend tribes" - Eriksen 1993: 33) were victorious. If an organization is dealing only with one single dimension

and aspect (a certain professional interest, f.i.) it will not be able to mobilize the same support, emotional as well as political, as if the total person is involved. The exception to be mentioned is the sometimes existential character of such struggles. If we consider the ontogenesis of primordial sentiments and belongings, then, ethnicity as a communal identity starts with being a microsocial identity and never gets rid off completely of this origin. Ethnic units or nations as huge sets of persons, cannot bear this trait. Only in this sense of originary communality can ethnicity be considered a primary social identity in human history, and a universal. Those societies which succeeded in the hazardous process of nation building must, above all, succeed in one paramount process: They need to transform primary solidarity of many small in-groups into solidarity of huge social units by giving this transformation the appearance of a simple linear enlargement of the small groups' originary personal ties. This may be cleared up again by Schütz' concepts. He is speaking of 'co-humans' where Husserl is speaking of 'fellow-men'. Both are targeting human beings acting in everyday life towards other human beings familiar to them with whom they share their experiences, and of whom they know they do the same. Outside the restricted circle of this comparatively small group there is the huge crowd of all the other men, who are my 'contemporaries'. By transforming the primordial solidarity, a considerable slice of the huge amount of contemporaries is turned into fellow-men. I may not even know them personally - and, indeed, mostly I do not. Of course, communal ties will weaken after this transformation. The supposed links are not founded in personal experiences but rather in abstract learning. My potential range of action is enlarged by using emotive symbols for encompassing persons into an always growing body of persons belonging to 'Us'. This will lead to some sort of abstract and thinly symbolical form of belonging together. Man is not able to enlarge his emotive range and his capacity for social action without limits. But we are able to widen the perception of who might be our fellow-men. A key role in this process plays the mechanism Weber has called 'representation' (*Stellvertretung*) that is, action on behalf of somebody else. A specific person is conceived as incorporating his group total, he/she is seen representing a region, or a commune, or a linguistic (dialect) group. Society, however, is stratified: Different strata will have different interests. Therefore, the representational process will be shaped differently according to different strata. Anyway, representation is marked by the fact that persons belonging to upper strata will ordinarily strive to represent those from lower strata, too. They often will succeed, exactly because this special representation of ethnic or national segments is held by them to be indifferent to stratification, unlike interest groups' representation. Persons belonging to different strata will have a different range in social action; this is usually characterizing the leaders from their respective movements.

Supra-Ethnicity

Presupposition and, on the other hand, consequence of amplifying the range of social action and capability is recognizing ever-widening circles of 'others' as 'equals'. The concept of equality with its two meanings as identity and possessing equal rights is important. Only a fundamental consent on national equality concerning different ethnic groups is accepted as fairness in national relations. 'In a just society equal citizenship rights are assumed to exist. Rights basing on justice cannot be the object of political bargain or considering equalization of social interests' (Rawls 1979: 20).

The problem of equality touches to even more profound psychic and philosophical grounds. To come to terms with it, we have to use the notion of supra-ethnicity. Let us begin with some definitional elements. Supra-ethnicity means the cultural structure of a

total of ethnically defined units in its profound similarity whereby, nevertheless, these units do not accept each other as ethnically equal, belonging to the same ethnic. In this sense it is roughly equivalent to what European ethnologists are labelling 'cultural districts', and what in former times has been called cultural area (*Kulturkreis*). Although populations insist on their ethnic distinctiveness and diversity, the possibility exists basically to see each others as equals. They share the same cultural values, so they have the capability to construe a reciprocity of their perspectives in everyday life. Objectively, they share the same culture, and so they dispose about the capability of mutually understanding meaningful social action. Subjectively, they do not consider each other as equals: They do not share the same 'world of belonging to'. Ethnicity, however, is dependent upon the subjective apperception of belonging together. If society is considered tiered in terms of meaning, supra-ethnicity is a level above ethnicity. The supra-ethnic commonalities do not serve as frames of reference for political mobilization. 'Small differences' (Volbrachtova 1988) are significant within the objectivated structures and almost common symbolic expressions. They serve to delimit ethnic units dividing supra-ethnies in many ethnic units. The shared fundamental structure of the cultural system does not generate automatically a common ethnic identity. Human and social identities are construed within culture (Caputi 1996). Consciousness about this commonalities is attainable under certain circumstances. Most often it is realized in confrontation with humans of other cultural districts. These constitute ordinarily the limits of persons accepted under the term of 'humanity'. Beings beyond this boundaries are not accepted as humans, although they may be considered near-human. 'Humanity' in contrast to Christianity, *dar-ul-Islam*, *t'ien-hsia* ('what is under the heaven') or *oikomene*, is a concept embracing all beings to which today is applied the term *homo sapiens*. It is an important and very late achievement of civilization perhaps not easily acceptable to the greater part of our species.

Supra-ethnicity is not to be confounded with 'Pan-ideas', Pan Slavism, Pan Turkism, and the like. These are to be considered as proto-national movements lead by politically ambitious intellectuals, counting rarely more than a few dozens, dreaming of the building up of giant nations along linguistic lines. Supra-ethnicity until now had political significance only in a few cases. Pan Arabism, *f.i.*, served as anti-imperialist counter-movement against political projects of western oriented classes.

If societies become large enough to differentiate autonomous sub-systems, like religion, economics, or politics, and - for the individual person - to form out different rôles, the dividing lines between ethnic units (if not amalgamated by political force into one single unit) will be found there where several of important social cleavages are falling together. Different collective identities (rôles) will constitute a single comprehensive identity, and the concerned person will usually not be able to distinguish its components. Ethnic identity is the foremost identity for such a comprehensive rôle and identity: It has come into existence in the formative period of primary socialization as the 'natural' everyday world, entrenched deeply by all friendly and hostile affects toward the 'Us'-group and against the 'others'. Interests, originated of quite other aspects of daily life, then tend to get 'ethnicized': The socially differentiated interests tend to merge into one total interest which we now call 'identity'. Inverting the usual approach one is tried to say that it is not ethnicity which creates conflict, but conflicts which engender ethnicity (Dencik 1992). This is valid insofar as in fact to a large extent the boundaries between groups are due to such social conflicts. To be wise we must admit that these processes presuppose a core of ethnic identity.

At least in Europe, language is considered the ethnic phenomenon par excellence. Of course, understanding and speaking the same language makes it easier for the ethnic core to recruit people ready to define themselves alike. Nevertheless, we must avoid confounding ethnic groups with linguistic units: Social scientists time and again are repeating that the nations of the ex-Soviet republics in Central Asia have been created 'artificially' by Stalin dividing the Turkistani people constituting 'originally' one single ethnic unit (cf. Lindgren 1979). They should better read Armin Vambéry (1990) who traveled in 1870 disguised as dervish for motives of rooting - he believed in Central Asia as the original home of the Magyars. He tells us that the differences between the Ösbegs (= Uzbek) and the Turkmens as well as the Kasakh and the Kirgiz are at least as big as between Hottentots and Europeans. Later on, political ambitious intellectuals desiring to see themselves as designated leaders of an all-encompassing Turkic nation tried to unite all these people speaking nearly related Turkic languages into one single nation. Sultangaliev and his disciples failed miserably although supported massively by other elite Turks coming from outside. Impregnated by romanticist national ideology stemming from Central and Eastern Europe, they did not understand that linguistic similarities a priori have nothing to do with ethnic affiliation.

Neither is culture the dividing line. Modern minorities living since long time side by side with members of the dominant ethnic majority share with them their life-world, the basic features of a common culture, except in one single aspect: the world of ethnic (social) membership and belonging. Thus, not different cultures are constituting different ethnies. Their first difference is that of belonging to distinct units of reference. If a social relation is constituted by the meaning the actor gives to it, than, ethnicity is a world of direction and social meanings, not of culture difference. Seen under the political view, their difference is socio-political, not cultural (de Shalit 1996). They are in a non-dominant position caused by their lesser numerical weight. Modern politics is centered around the number of supporters and especially around the concept of 'majority'. It is not by chance, therefore, that the problem of a greater or lesser numerical membership is fought most bitterly in such conflictual relations. This, however, must not be seen as a question specific to ethnic groups. It is, indeed, a problem stemming from the organization, first, of the political world in national states, and, secondly, of the inner organization of states basing the legitimacy of government on the principle of majority, understood as the only valid procedure for decision making, not as a rule for political competition and selecting personnel for governmental positions which have to care for all segments of their polities, respectively. The law of the greater number has got an unquestioned appeal.

Kinship

Godelier (1989) is considering the social structure of kinship the real boundary between humans and prehuman primates. These are capable to parent-children relationships but - according to our knowledge - not to kinship which can be conceptualized only beyond this simple dyad. It is the complexity of the symbolic system which demands relations between relations, which they do not master. Kinship, thus, is founded in cultural and not in biological systems. It is the first human social structure, in Weber's concepts, the first human social relationship at all. Thus, it is offering the model for all other societal as well as communal forms. Stating this, kinship offered the first identi-

ties for human beings. If we chose the ontogenetic view, this is valid, too, for modern societies and its members.

Traditional societies define their 'co-humans', 'fellow men', and 'fellow subjects' by kinship, and delimit thus their outside world.

Arapesh children grow up dividing the world into two great divisions: relatives, which division includes some three to four hundred people, all the members of their own locality, and those of villages in other localities which are connected with them or their relatives by marriage; ... and strangers and enemies ... to be hated, mocked, outwitted, upon whom all the hostility that is disallowed in the group is actively displayed (Mead 1963: 54). - Those who are distant, who are unknown, who because one has never seen them or given them fire or food are believed to be capable of any evil, are the ones which it is possible to hate (Mead 1963: 136).

Ideologically kinship is based on biologically interpreted social relations of a face to face type. Its function is to create a network to care for trust and social alliances. Socialization is a process which works by enlarging the circle of fellow-humans. It makes an increasing number of 'contemporaries' belong together, extending the trustworthiness beyond the bonds, first, of kinship, and second, of spatial proximity. It is essentially this what we call getting adult in modern societies. The reach of the individual person is getting wider, and so is the extension of one's life-world and meanings. The child's limited zone of action is widened and is embracing finally a whole world. Today, the potential reach is coterminous with the whole world which gets at disposal, with its sum of knowledge, to an adult. Actually, the reach of most people is by far more limited. It is dependent mainly upon the social stratum the person is belonging to. Upper class persons usually do have far reaching social communications. Their reach is exceeding that of lower class members. In modern society with its tendency to globalization, also this reach is subject to political influence on behalf of the national leadership. Obligatory pre-schooling and schooling is the predominant tool to attain this target. By public education politics is featuring directly the world of meanings the children will get and adults will hold for the rest of their life. Governmentality is mediated by complex symbols. The impact of such an early learning is profound. It is foremost responsible to induce ethnicity and national identity from ancestry and kinship.

Nearly all humans grow up within such networks and are provided with the fundamental care: Thus, they trust in everyday society and security for their life, or at least they think to be able to rely on their kindred and family, even when hating them and distancing them from nasty reality. It is their 'kin', and that is crucial for the whole forthcoming life. In this sentiment, in fact, consists primordiality. It is the first mode to grasp the world and to recognize its apparent structure. The fundamental idea is to be born into this group and rooted in it on behalf of this fact.

The ascriptive principle of kinship and its universalization is applied to the society as a whole. Kinship, as ascribed, is assumed to be a given, something which you cannot achieve, at least if kinship is typified as agnatic. As in elementary structures of kinship marriage patterns are conditioned by kinship (Lévi-Strauss 1981), also this second procedure to build up alliances, the cognatic type of kinship, is regulated by the agnatic one. It norms not only whom you are allowed to marry - as in our societies - , but whom you are obliged to marry (preferential and prescriptive marriages). Kinship is always determined by ascription. This, of course, is not meant to mirror reality. There are strategies to manipulating kinship within its apparently so rigid scheme to one's own interests and

wishes. The determinist model has to be consistent with societies' ideology, and the probabilistic or stochastic praxis knows of exceptions and possibilities to frame it. In seeking alliances, and treaties, and furthermore prestige, population groups are constructing their kinship relations. The Saiar, e. g., a tribal group in Southern Arabia, construed a complete and consistent genealogy proving their ancestry to come from the prestigious Kinda, one and a half thousand years ago. This ancestry is considered purely fictitious by anthropologists (Dostal 1967: 113).

The ascriptive and apparently unalterable character of this organizational principle seemed to constitute a 'natural relationship' not underlying voluntary decision-making. Like primordial relations in general, kinship as a structure is longliving and can not easily be destroyed. Not only traditional people missed, however, that kinship as a workable relation presupposes a nomenclature. A socially regulated system of selection defines and generates kinship and its nomenclature. It serves for controlling the means of human reproduction, that is, the women, as well as the means of production in agrarian subsistence societies (Meillassoux 1978).

By interpreting ethnicity as kinship it will get its strong appeal to most humans. Members of an ethnic group are conceived as belonging to a network of extended kinship. Metaphorically, you can say that men try to stay, if not in their mother's womb, then at least in a socially comfortable place which has some resemblance to it. It is exactly this need and desire which leads to define identity, 'mechanical solidarity' (Durkheim 1988), emotional belonging, by recurring to family and kinship, and amplifying it at least metaphorically. This is all too convincing. Similar processes load up the concept of 'Heimat' (home, native soil) although it is altering basically the structure of kinship by founding trust not in personal relations of the kinship type, but in proximity and spatial terms. Kinship on the one side, and 'home' on the other side are thus equivalent in sharing emotional trust into bounded communities as the fundament of social relations. The nationalist term 'fatherland' tries to repeat this process of conferring primordial trust on a further extended level. At least in the German language it is carrying with it a lot of ambivalent Freudian semantics concerning fathers. Kinship and ancestry, thus, are conceived by most people as the founding principles not only of ethnicity but of nations, too. This has little to do, of course, with social reality.

Competing worlds of social meaning and belonging

In modern times an ethnic world of meaning is only one of several possible worlds of meaning. Ethnicity is one mode to frame one's life-world. But life-worlds are changing, individually and collectively. To be distinguished from life-worlds are spaces of belonging. If a change in the world of belonging is caused by social or political power, we speak of this process with the term of assimilation (Reiterer 1986 and 1996).

Ethnic identity competes with other social identities. Although this competition may occur often, ethnicity is ordinarily not an exclusive identity. Many social identities can, and do, co-exist. Nevertheless, the question of primacy between ethnic and other identities is often put as the essential political problem (Boucher u. a. 1987). The most famous juxtaposition has surely been that between ethnic / national belonging and class consciousness. A considerable part of the Marxist left was inclined to think and argued for the superiority of the latter one. Historically, this was a normative approach whose descriptive value was limited to small groups. In sharp contrast to that, and yet thinking in quite similar terms, bourgeois intellectuals designed ethnic (national) identity as the only permissible one. For the great majority of the population neither the first nor the second

exclusive option did apply. In some contexts, however, especially men seemed to experience the truth of the dominant ethnonational identity. If the nation-state went into war, he demanded in his 'deadly earnest' (Weber) that men should sacrifice their lives, justifying this by appealing to ethnonational consciousness. It, then, constituted in the fullest sense the center of an ethnonational constituted world for the concerned.

The weaker version of a similar thinking is quite common to almost all human societies. It is their own way of life which becomes the only possible way of 'human' acting. Sometimes self-naming mirrors this reasoning. Eskimos tell of themselves as 'Inuit', humans. And so do other people. The 'others' are the barbarians, those who are not even able to speak understandably. 'Totally un-English' as well as 'un-American' is not only a shame; it was and sometimes it is politically rather dangerous to be seen as such.

Gender

Ethnicity is constituted by individual as social meanings. If there is a gendered division of labour giving men the public realm on the one side and - as is nearly universally the case in pre-modern settings - restricting women to their private one, on the other side, then it follows immediately that ethnic life-worlds are to be considered fundamentally different if seen from the perspective of men or from that of women. We have to reflect this and to take it into account in our narratives about ethnicity. If the ethnic phenomenon as a process of integrating and bounding social units is leaning more to the 'public' end of the public - private polarity, then, we might complain the 'excessively viricentric accounts' (Hutchinson 1996: 29) of most anthropologists; the theorician of ethnicity will see this viricentric view as partly justified in analysis, if consciously reflected. Of course, we have to put a lot of questions neglected mostly in ethnic theory. The most important one will be: How are the more private life-worlds of women and men - for gendering will affect the private life-worlds of men, too (Chmielewski 1991) - structurally integrated in the more public world of ethnic belonging? In this way, a gendered analysis will probably not contest the fundamental validity of the viricentric idea of ethnicity as this idea is reflecting male hegemony of social reality. Nevertheless, it must be complemented by the framing in of differently gendered privacies. In modern societies the gendered structure of the public sphere gets questionable. This will have the most far reaching consequences for ethnic relations - consequences almost entirely neglected until now.

Coming to a Definition of Ethnicity

The process of delimiting social groups is paramount for defining ethnicity - in this process the specific form of social consciousness of the involved persons is coming to the surface. It signifies the emerging of specific life-worlds, which is to be considered central for ethnic belonging and allegiance. At the first glance this seems paradoxical: Without boundaries an ethnic group as the mental and social frame of reference for its members cannot and does not exist. It is, however, not this delimitational process which creates the internal structures of life-worlds. Anyway, this process gives the different life-worlds a new function until then not only unknown but unnecessary. Thus, we must consider delimitation not the main feature of ethnicity, but one of its specific properties, probably its most important one, in the terms of classical logic: its *differentia specifica*. Although delimitation does not grasp the structures of ethnic life-worlds, it is paramount

for defining 'worlds of belonging'. The emic view of everyday orientations can serve better for a starting point in discussing ethnicity because it refers to the next conceptual level (the *genus proximum*). This view does not neglect the ethnic boundaries. But it will take into account the most profound social psychological processes in the growing up of human beings gifted with consciousness and social sense. Only as such they are integrated into society which constitutes the single reality outside their bounded world of needs and gives them the psychic co-ordinates they are striving for.

Defining formally ethnicity

	<i>conceptual label</i>	<i>social function</i>
<i>genus proximum</i>	social identity as objectified structure of meaning	integration
<i>differentia specifica</i>	'mechanical solidarity' as interchangeable perspectives (generalized point of view)	delimitation

The reasoning until now can and surely will be seen as a 'heavy' theoretical approach involving the most fundamental social concepts. How can such an approach be conciliated with the necessity of a workable concept of ethnicity covering phenomena starting with the comprehensive organization of life in traditional societies and reaching until rather uncommitting self-identifications such as the 'ancestry' in US-census - a more or less voluntaristic 'weekend-ethnicity' of folcloristic colour? If we try to sum up our reflections, we can state: This is possible only by stratifying the concept of ethnicity into several layers of life-worlds, or worlds of meaning. There are different social identities. With *ethnic* identity we see the term 'ethnic' as the relational and group-oriented feature of ethnicity (Eriksen 1993: 12). It is its multidimensionality, that is: its 'total' character (Mauss 1995) which differentiates ethnic from other social identities like class or profession.

Talking culture has a meaning insofar, as relations between ethnic groups are interpreted in cultural differences, and these ideas get importance in social reality. Cultural differences, however, are of a more ideological than real existence. This applies especially to modern societies where ethnicity is used for political purposes (Weber's 'proposition of loyalty'). To explain such, mostly fictitious, cultural differences, other mental constructions are needed which, on their turn, may be fictitious, too. They are to be found in the 'culture shock of the tiny differences': in enhancing small cultural and attitudinal differences between groups and units at a local and regional level within culturally similar units. These differences are socially relevant and become the basis of boundarization. Hence, it is of little importance whether these differences are of no consideration to an outsider. They are interpreted as socially significant and are the moorings for fixing identities.

The layers of ethnicity

<i>ethnic identities</i>	<i>label</i>	<i>function</i>	<i>description</i>
e_5	supra-ethnic	cultural	basic values and practices
e_4	national	political	survival unit
e_3	regional	macro-social	enhanced everyday needs
e_2	community	diachronic	orientation in social universe
e_1	local	micro-social	everyday needs

If we consider ethnicity as a *world of belonging* we are able to combine apparently contradicting observations and experiences which, nevertheless, cannot be dismissed for grasping the significance of the ethnic phenomenon: Common life worlds and areas of belonging are objective facts as are social relations, societies and their limits. They are, at the same time, subjective mental structures depending upon one's moods and decisions. As life worlds they do not demand (political) limits, but they do demand social delimitations as matrices of personal identities.

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*Povzetek****Etničnost kot življenjski svet***

Avtor, ki izhaja iz Webrove teorije in še zlasti iz Schutzove kritične analize Webrovih pojmov, v teorijo etničnosti vnaša nekaj novih temeljnih konceptov; to so naprimer 'življenjski svetovi', 'svetovi pomenov in pripadanj' ter 'struktura relevantnosti'. Opušča tudi ustaljeni diskurz 'kulturnih razlik' kot središče etnične tematike. Kulturne razlike so bolj fiktiven oziroma ideološki kot realen fenomen in jih je moč razložiti le na osnovi drugih intelektualnih konstrukcij, zlasti socialnih povezav, med katerimi je še posebej pomembna vez sorodstvo oziroma skupni predniki. Sorodstvo je zelo pomemben dejavnik ustanavljanja etničnih skupnosti. Povezano je z dvojno izkušnjo odvisnosti in zaupanja, ki jo človek doživi v otroštvu.

Razlike, okrog katerih se pletejo socialne identitete, so prepoznavne v 'kulturnem šoku majhnih razlik' in v zaznavanju majhnih kulturnih in mnenjskih razlik med skupinami oziroma enotami na lokalni in regionalni ravni znotraj kulturno podobnih skupnosti. Te razlike so družbeno pomembne in so podlaga za »razmejevanje«. Ni važno, kako jih doživljajo zunanji opazovalci; njihov objektivni pomen je v tem, da so »sidrišča«, na katera se vežejo identitete.