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The origin of ethnic groups has generated a great deal of historical argument without providing a definitive answer. Part of the reason for this is that ethnic identity cannot be boiled down to a checklist of what is and is not ethnic. This is because ethnicity is, more than anything, a belief in common ancestry, not a genetic inheritance (though primordialists would argue otherwise). Inherited elements give a starting point to ethnicity but do not restrict the individual to identify with that ethnic group permanently; ethnicity is a more fluid concept rooted in history, not biology. This is the ethno-symbolist interpretation of ethnicity, which provides a link between the primordialists and the instrumentalist-modernist argument, which posits that ethnicity is a top-down construct imposed as a control mechanism.

The primordialist and instrumentalist approaches are too restrictive; they apply in some cases but are demonstrably wrong in other cases. Ethno-symbolism, therefore, offers a viable alternative to try and explain as wide of tract of ethnic group origin as possible. It recognises the historical rootedness of primordialism, but not the biological inevitably; it understands the instrumentalist manipulation of myths, but not the denial of individual choice and self-definition.

It is first necessary to define what is meant by an ethnic group and to this end, a number of factors are held to be necessary for a group to consider itself ethnic. The group must have a name for itself, share a belief in a myth of common ancestry (the veracity of that myth is insignificant) and in historical memories, possess a common culture that can differentiate itself from others, associate itself with a homeland, (even if it does not inhabit that territory) and share a sense of solidarity among the group's members (Kaufmann 2010). It is the sense of shared identity and solidarity that is key; ethnicity is a belief which is legitimised by others recognising its existence, whether as part of it or as part of another.

An ethnicity is widely held to consist of a central core, where the group's myth complex operates as a centre around which individuals can gather and interact, sharing their understanding of what defines them. From the centre, the group looks out to the boundary, peppered with cultural markers, and decides who can enter. Importantly, these boundaries must be recognised by both the ethnicity's insiders and its outsiders; in other words, ethnicity is a two-way process (Nash 1989). One's claim to differentiation must be certified by another. That ethnic groups can disappear and new ones appear simply by the decision of groups to recognise it or not, is a marker of the primordialist problem; ethnicity is not a rooted identity, but a constantly evolving one drawing on whatever myths and symbols are required or felt.

Language, religion and race are all powerful markers of potential ethnic affiliation, used for origin and maintenance, but are not without their problems and none can be considered to give a legitimacy to an ethnicity on its own. Ethnicities balance a range of identifying markers. Polyglots share more than one culture; worldwide religions struggle to shift local cultural markers and themselves adapt; whilst racial difference does not automatically mean cultural heterogeneity, any more than racial confluence signals cultural homogeneity. An ethnic group takes varying degrees of each of these markers, and more, and melds them together in its central myth-complex.

The primordialist Pierre van den Berghe is said to regard race as a special case of ethnicity, whereas Michael Banton holds race to categorise people and ethnicity to identify groups (Eriksen 1993). Further, Nash notes that "transient national identities" can be voluntarily tossed aside. Ethnic identity, on the other hand, is only partially voluntary (Nash 1989:26). It is the temporal continuity of markers which Nash believes gives the authority of tradition to an ethnic identity (Nash 1989). For Nash, then, it is history that gives identity. Though identity is transient, it is rooted in symbolic reference points.

An ethnic group becomes a potential nation when it adds political ambition to its cultural markers. It wants to assert its right to control of the territory that the shared myth of identity claims as its rightful homeland. It is no longer happy as an entity within a multi-ethnic state or a multi-ethnic nation. Nationalism, then, results when a politically ambitious ethnic group with a national conception wishes to unite itself, and all members of itself, as one political and national entity with congruous borders (Gellner 1983). The difficulties of achieving this perfect political (national) and cultural (ethnic) harmony are immense and history is littered with the violent fallout of such attempts, pointing to the strength of symbolic ethnic origin, an identity deeper than a top-down construct.

How exactly an ethnic group comes into being, then, is a matter of great debate and the answer in many respects is that there is no one answer, that there are multiple forms of ethnogenesis. Ethnic groups can be rooted in blood ties, real or perceived, across spatial separation, or in territorial ties to a native soil, even in in the form of a burial ground, across temporal separation. Again, a shared belief must be stressed as vital to the existence of an ethnic group; an ethnographer demarcating an ethnic territory for a group does not automatically give rise to that ethnicity if the group being demarcated does not recognise itself as such. They may have chosen to identify with another ethnic group on the basis of other shared foci and it is recognised that ethnic groups can arise from the integration of different groups, whether at a subethnic level to create a

new ethnic group, or through the fusion of two or more existing ethnic groups (Jutes, Saxons and Angles into the English, for example); similarly, they can result from the break-down of an ethnic group into new ethnic groups, which may be seen as a modernist-instrumental response to state collapse and the necessity of nation-building (the ethnically-based realignment of the post-Yugoslav space) (Armstrong 1982; Kaufmann 2010).

There are a multitude of processes which feed ethnogenesis, hence the multitude of markers on which it can be based. The tricky analysis of how ethnic groups originate arises from the uneven interplay of the processes of ethnogenesis. There is no defined pattern for how the processes should meld a collective into an ethnic group, no recipe for what measure of each factor should be put into the pot. Ethnogenesis can result from contact between groups or communication within groups (Kaufmann 2010), whereby the self can then identify itself against what it is *not*, for this is a far easier starting point than what the self *is*.

Once a group has realised it is different to another group, it can begin to codify its cultural markers. Cultural mores develop and are spread among the group members, whether organically or by design; myths and memories develop in a temporal space, the veracity of them being of no concern to the group members who internalise them and pass them on; and language is codified to give an ethnic group its means of sharing its identity; Adrian Hastings is a strong proponent of the linguistic foundation of ethnicity (Hastings 1997).

It should be understood that none of these can for certain be seen as cause or effect in ethnogenesis. For example, one ethnic group might emerge because of language similarity; another might seek to sever that linguistic bond post-genesis by asserting another, separate linguistic bond, deliberately for a historical reference point in order to do so; failing that search, the instrumentalists may be right to argue for the modern creation of such reference points.

The wax and wane of political fortunes might see the same factor used to integrate and then differentiate an ethnic group. To continue the linguistic focus, Yugoslavia sought to unite south Slavs at various stages between 1918 and 2003 stressing, amongst many other things, the linguistic similarities; the collapse of the Yugoslav state, or nation, then saw the 'obvious' differences in ethnic groupings defined by, again amongst other things (religion), language, so Serbo-Croat became independent and fiercely defended Serb, Croat, Macedonian and Bosnian languages, not dialects. These linguistic gymnastics could be seen as a modernist, instrumentalist interpretation,

even though their enactors would see them as self-evidently ethno-symbolist, if not primordialist, differences.

The Yugoslav example alone is a microcosm of the problems of developing an understanding of the processes of ethnogenesis. In the space of 85 years, it has demonstrated fusion and fission, displayed modernist constructs and primordial truisms, and been through all the shades of ethno-symbolic romanticism in between.

The three main schools of thought on the origin of ethnic groups can now be discussed. The schools are the diametrically opposed primodrial and modernist-instrumental theories, kept apart by the third school of ethno-symbolism in varying degrees. It is the ethno-symbolists who give the flexibility needed to recognise that individuals have some influence over their ethnic identity; it is neither an innate collectivism, nor a top-down construct.

For the primordial theorists, such as van den Berghe, ethnicity is an instinctive identity felt by everyone within the given grouping. It is argued to come from a pre-historic evolutionary struggle for survival which continues to the present. The primordialists argue that such identities emerged organically as peoples met through and war and migration (Kaufmann 2010).

Van den Berghe is one of the leading proponents of primordialism, arguing that it is a biological given that individuals will act nepotistically towards those they see as most similar to them on a biological and physical basis. For Van den Berghe, it is an unavoidable outcome of nature and the Darwinian principles of evolution. He responds to criticisms of his theory by claiming "a myth of ethnicity will only be believed if members of an ethnic group are sufficiently alike in physical appearance and culture [and if the myth has] developed a substantial measure of biological truth," through intermarriage. Furthermore, cultural markers are only used where groups need to identify themselves in opposition to close neighbours with indistinguishable physical features. He asserts that the "proof of the political pudding is that, where physical, genetic markers do a reliable job of differentiating between groups, they *are* used" (van den Berghe 1995:57-58). But, one could argue, so, too, are religious and linguistic differences, when they do the job.

In a similar vein, Steven Grosby argues for "the evidently inexpungeablenes of primordial ties," claiming that a new-born child is already a member of a "larger cultural collectivity" (Grosby 1994:51). What needs to be recognised, however, is that that child can choose a different cultural collectivity if it so desires. For Grosby, the difference between such collectivities is more than

simply emotion; it is an ethnic connection through kinship, which is derived from "a common territory of origin and residence, and biological connection" (Grosby 1994: 52).

Finally, Joshua Fishman argues that ethnicity is intuitive and "an eternal bond from generation to generation, [...] a guarantor of ethnicity" (Fishman 1980:63). Whilst recognising ethnicity can be manipulated, Fishman argues that that is the modernist concept of ethnicity, as opposed to the ethnicity based on tradition, habituality and authenticity (Fishman 1980), a term decried as "awful" by Peter Heather (Heather 1996:5), who argues for a more fluid, instrumental version of ethnicity.

Heather seeks to explain the 700-year run of Gothic identity across a vast swathe of Europe not in an intransigent, innate sense of self shared by the whole community, but in a politically expedient and malleable identity that is shared by a large portion of those under the Gothic umbrella, but not all. It fuses with the local communities with which it collides in order to ensure its continuity, thus a fourth century Goth from Scandinavia is unlikely to identify too closely with a seventh century Goth from Toledo. Heather recognises the symbolist nature of ethnicity as offering a temporal linear connection to the past, for, despite the discontinuities, "without the continuities, there would be no story at all" (Heather 1996:321). Both the aforementioned Goths would have an indisputable right to call themselves Gothic, but neither would have the primordial right to argue their manifestation of that identity was the correct one (Heather 1996). Heather thus bridges a gap between the ethno-symbolist camp of Anthony Smith, Hastings and John Armstrong, and the modernist collective of Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm and Anthony Giddens.

Modernist thinkers see ethnicity as a modern construct, used to validate nations and hand down identity to the masses. For Gellner, ethnicity is hijacked by elites for the purposes of nationalism. The elite assumes its position and imposes a top-down culture it claims to be ethnic and based on folk, rural traditions but in reality is an imagined ethnic culture for consumption by the newly-urbanised (Gellner 1983). Ethnic identity is viewed as an instrument for controlling large groups of people by giving them a shared sense of unity: a perceived folk, or ethnic, culture takes the place of religious identification with secularisation and urbanisation. If it is accepted that nations are a modern construct, and that nations are the end point of politicised ethnicity, then ethnicity cannot be viewed as a primordial concept. Even though the likes of Hobsbawm can argue successfully that nations are modern constructs of the post-French Revolution era, the foundations of those nations are drawn from history. Nations might be the modernist fashion for organising collectives from a top-down perspective, but ethnic, cultural identity, through language, religion or other cultural

markers, has existed as an organising centre since before nations. Individuals and groups do not need to wait for their elites to tell them who they are.

Ethno-symbolists separate the nation from the ethnic far more, however, identifying ethnic groups before any politico-national manifestation of that identity. They see ethnicity as a more organic unifying force, though they do not rule out that it can be invented and dated within History. For them, it is a construct of a coalition between Romantic intellectuals and the masses, providing a sense of belonging and meaning, for "*National identity is, fundamentally, a matter of dignity*," (Greenfeld 1992:487)[1] and national identity is the politically ambitious strain of ethnic identity, which also enables individuals to belong.

For Smith, the modernists "forget that ethnic community has a long history" (Smith 1995:vii); he believes that nations and nationalism can only be understood as a modern phenomenon in "the persisting frameworks and legacies of historical cultures and ethnic ties" (Smith 1995:viii). Nations and nationalism are not modernist control mechanisms for the elite, but the result of ethnicity's "historical embeddedness" (Smith 1995:viii). Smith's argument continues that because instrumentalists see identity as situational, they believe it to be owned individually rather than collectively (Smith 1995:viii), but it has already been noted that ethnic identity requires recognition by another, not just the self. To combat the primordialist, Smith argues that ethnicity is only one of many social bonds, which is subject to change through time preventing the maintenance of cultural homogeneity and as such this gives the individual somewhat more choice to select ethnic community (Smith 1995:33). The individual nevertheless needs ethno-historical memory and religious myth to give sense to existence and a sense of past and future (Smith 1995:83).

Armstrong's sweeping analysis of history makes a powerful argument for ethno-symbolist myth complexes forged in all manner of conditions, from imperial territorial divisions to religious opposition and schism to frontier conflict and trade routes. Indeed, Armstrong describes myths as "among the most potent structures that have ever influenced identity" (Armstrong 1982:43). Armstrong, for example, views problems of a united Spanish national identity as heavily rooted in the differences between the ethnic formation of the groups making up the Spanish nation, most significantly the image that the Castilian ethnic group has of itself, forged in frontier conflict with Islam. Thus, it is by no means an instrumentalist, modernist construct, but nor is it a primordial, biological inevitability; it is an ethnic identity founded on a specific myth in a specific period of history.

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[1] Original emphasis

Of course, there is no suggestion that the myths of ethnic identity need to be genuine; Mongol descent from Genghis Khan is claimed by many to root a genealogical, spatial identity in a linear, temporal analysis of history. It is the belief of this descent that is important, not the actuality. By extension, ethno-symbolist myths are held to be impressive in their persistence, not their veracity or otherwise (Armstrong 1982). The main ingredients of Armstrong's ethnic broth are religion, territory, language and conflict, though he certainly errs towards the primordialist end of the ethno-symbolic spectrum and historical timescale, as opposed to Heather at the instrumentalist end. Although having some differences, Hastings similarly sees ethnicity as rooted in religion and, more specifically, the development of a vernacular literature by which religion was spread (Hastings 1997). Hastings is critical of Smith's *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* for not going far enough in rejecting modernist precepts (Hastings 1997).

Primoridalism as a viable theory of ethnic origin has been dismissed by many scholars of the subject, who consider it is not enough to say that ethnic groups have existed since time immemorial as an internal sense of identity. Even if the roots of today's ethnic groups can be sourced in pre-History, it is difficult to see how they could have survived in any contiguous manner over such a temporal period. The spatial and temporal interaction of the world's peoples will have seen to it that a person claiming ethnic descent from another will have to work hard to prove it and demonstrate the shared myth complex, though it would be possible. As an alternative, the modernist theories of ethnic identity, when considered in their basic form, suggest that there is no memory and that people have a top-down imposed identity that has no basis in the pre-modern period. Again, this does not hold. People do have memories and are capable of forming their own identities, so that whilst elites might manipulate, promote and denigrate identities to further their own ends, they can only do so by basing their theories of identity in something recognisable, something that has, or is believed to have, existed. It does not matter whether the myths created by elites are true; they are myths that can be held to through the auspices of time, symbols of connection to an ethnic lineage that has historical resonance: "For a nation, you need a fairy tale element" (Kendall 2010). And that is based in the ethno-symoblic origin of ethnic groups.

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