

## 2. NAVORSINGSARTIKELS

### "VOLKEKUNDE": OPEN SYSTEM AND CLOSED MINDS? - SOME CRITICAL REMARKS ON CRITICISM

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#### OPSOMMING

### VOLKEKUNDE: OPE SISTEME EN GESLOTE DENKE? ENKELE KRITIESE OPMERKINGS OOR KRITIEK

Die skrywer gee in die artikel aandag aan kritiek wat oor die teorie en beoefening van Volkekunde uitgespreek word. Deur middel van 'n kort vergelykende opsomming van die teoretiese uitgangspunte van die sogenaamde vaders van etnosteorie, word daarop gewys dat daar nie sonder meer sprake van teoretiese en metafisiese uniformiteit in die dissipline is nie. Die mening word ook uitgespreek dat alhoewel daar nie genoeg aandag aan strukturele verhoudings in die verklaring van kulturele behoud en verandering gegee word nie, dit nie noodwendig beteken dat 'n sogenaamde paradigmatiese revolusie in Volkekunde vereis word nie.

#### 1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In this paper, the author would like to make a contribution to the current debate on the scientific merits of Volkekunde in South Africa (cf. Sharp, 1980a:4-6; 1980b:1-16; 1981:16-36; 1985:134-140 and 1988:79-99 also Pauw, 1980:315-318; Kotzé, 1985:140-144 and Kuper, 1988:33-51). At the outset, however, I would like to state that the contribution will be confined mainly to some of the remarks by Prof. John Sharp on the history and pursuit of Volkekunde. In his articles Sharp has made a cutting but seemingly also penetrating analysis of the theory and practice of Volkekunde and especially the so-called ethnos theory amongst Afrikaans-speaking academics.

As a partial reaction to Sharp's point of view I shall try to demonstrate that in some respects he did not look at his object of criticism with sufficient acuity. Volkekunde, therefore, is neither such a strange kettle of fish nor as monolithic as the impression Sharp might have left with his readers. In addition to overlooking some signs of change, Sharp also seems to confuse a general theoretical orientation with ethnos theory in the more restricted sense of the word.

The main theme of this contribution will be a summary of some of the theoretical proposals put forward by two men who may be regarded as the fathers of ethnos theory. I am referring to P.J. Coertze and J.H. Coetzee, the former heads of the Departments of Volkekunde at the universities of Pretoria and Potchefstroom respectively. I shall restrict myself mainly to their views on ethnicity and try to show that their respective points of view are not in all respects the same and above all not as theoretically sterile as Sharp insists. It should also be stated clearly that within the confines of this article, it will not be possible to do justice to the real scope and complexity of their views. With regard to the views of Coetzee, especially with reference to ethnos theory, I must confess that I am aware of the fact that it is not as widely known as perhaps it should be. The main reason for this is that it was only published locally in the form of a study guide for students in their third academic year. Publications on ethnos theory by the two authors date back to the late fifties. The main focus of this contribution will, however, be on their most recent publications which are mainly revised and expanded editions of their earlier work (Coertze, 1980 & Coetzee, 1980). At this point, mention should also be made of the fact that Coetzee is a member of the staff of an academic institution where it is the explicit policy to practise science within a Christian (Calvinistic) framework. This fact is stressed, because certain propositions, stated below, might seem to be somewhat esoteric to some readers.

It should also be stated that for purposes of this discussion, it is taken for granted that the question why, i.e. explanation and perhaps prediction, is part and parcel of the anthropologist's scientific endeavour. The question whether or not anthropologists should only try to understand and not explain will not be at issue.

## 2. SHARP'S CRITICISM: EVALUATION OR CONDEMNATION?

The main thrust of Sharp's critical evaluation or perhaps rather total condemnation of Volkekunde as practised at universities of Afrikaans orientation seems to be more or less the following:

He is of the opinion that the centrality attached to the volkskonsep (ethnos concept) and ethnos theory in Volkekunde is absolute. As a consequence, it is being given an autonomous explanatory (theoretical) value. Sophisticated theoretical innovation and development are therefore impossible within this deterministic framework with its simplistic view of the relationship between ethnos and culture. This also implies an essentially ahistorical and overly simplistic model of reality (cf. Sharp, 1980b:4-6 and 1981:19). Volkekundiges, accordingly, stop asking why after answering that question at the superficial level of tradition and primordial ethnic attachment. He is also of the opinion that it is because of the academic and philosophical roots of the discipline - especially German Romanticism, (propped up, however, by the ideology of apartheid) that the discipline became ossified (cf. Sharp, 1981:4,25,32).

## 3. ROOTS WITH IDEOLOGICAL AND METAPHYSICAL "BOOTS"

It must be stated at the outset that I do believe that because science is a human endeavour, there can be no such thing as a totally neutral scientific exercise (cf. Hatch, 1973). In this regard, I appreciate Sharp's efforts towards uncovering the philosophical roots of Volkekunde (Sharp, 1981:25-33). I am also of the opinion that he is mainly correct in his assessment of the different historical currents influencing what may be called the general theoretical orientation of the practitioners of Volkekunde. The use of the name Volkekunde therefore is perhaps not merely an etymological accident.

Although I do not want to repeat Sharp's conclusions in regard to the main historical trends which could have influenced volkekundiges (ethnologists) in their initial conception of the discipline, I would like to draw attention to the following and to elaborate on a few of them. These include: the ethnogenesis of the Afrikaner, religious (theological) issues, political dogma and philosophical

and academic currents. The latter include the influence of Cultural Anthropology from the USA.

Concerning Cultural Anthropology, I am of the opinion that it may be regarded as the pivot of *Volkekunde* as an academic discipline. Although I am not acquainted at first hand with the way(s) and means by which students in die USA are introduced to the subject, it is a well-known fact that, until recently, quite a number of American introductory texts have been in use at Afrikaans universities, in addition to the only introductory anthropological text in Afrikaans (cf. Coertze, 1973).

The Afrikaans textbook *Inleiding tot die Algemene Volkekunde*, which has been in use since 1959 and which is now dated despite being revised, does not, to my mind, differ substantially from American texts. The main difference seems to be that it has an ethno-cultural orientation as against a society-cultural approach. It should also be pointed out that fairly recently the relation between *volk* (a people) or society and culture and ethnic and cultural boundaries has been questioned in any profound sense (cf. Helm, 1968; Barth, 1969 & Dorman, 1980). Some while ago, the following statement could still be found in an American text in use in South Africa: "Men, like animals, live in more or less organized clusters which we shall call societies. Members of human societies always share a number of distinctive modes or ways of behaving, that taken as a whole, constitute their culture. Each human society has its own culture, distinct in its entirety from that of any other society" (Beals & Hoijer, 1971:103).

Although the concept *volk* (*ethnos*) is given particular emphasis in the Afrikaans introductory text, in the context of the book as a whole it amounts to nothing more than a substitute for the cultural anthropologists' *society*. Although somewhat belatedly, a general introductory Afrikaans textbook did appear in which some attention is given to the problem of ethnic boundaries (cf. Pauw, 1980:36-39, In Myburgh). The influence of a point of view such as that of a more or less discrete *society/ethnos* synchronised with a more or less discrete culture, emanating from American sources, should therefore not be dismissed as a mere sleight of hand used by some *volkekundiges* to exonerate themselves from their "Romantic" roots (cf. Sharp, 1981:36). It is, however, possible that German Romantic influences on American Cultural Anthropology

itself made the theoretical orientation of certain American anthropologists acceptable to Afrikaans ethnologists.

The special importance attached to the cultural concept in South African anthropology - even among some social anthropologists - is also attested to by Pauw (1980:317-320).

As regards Afrikaner ethnogenesis, one does not need to elaborate much more than stating that as a historical process, it is characterised by events experienced and articulated by a large number of Afrikaners as threats to their material and cultural survival. It is, for instance, a widely shared (ethnic) joke among Afrikaners that they should have erected a monument in honour of the arch-(British) imperialist Lord Milner because his anti-Afrikaans attitude brought about or rather intensified the cultural awareness of Afrikaners after the disastrous Anglo-Boer War. For many decades now appeals have been directed to Afrikaner loyalty towards their country and people sharing their identity, to cherish their cultural and ethnic heritage and guard their common interests. This struggle for survival reached one of its pinnacles during the time of the recognition of *Volkekunde* as a discipline at Afrikaans-oriented universities. If there is any relationship, however remote between cognitive salience and human behaviour, *Afrikanerskap* (Afrikaner-hood) surely may be regarded as an (ethnic) identity used and abused like any (bar none). This is done by stressing Afrikaner individuals' perpetual indebtedness to a heroic past - a debt that could never be paid back in full. It therefore (a la Alliance Theory) keeps the structure of intra-group relations intact. The tendency of the merging of individual identity with group identity among Afrikaners, seems to amaze some outside observers (cf. Crapanzano, 1986:38-39). I therefore admit that the view that Afrikaner nationalism as ideology must have affected Afrikaner academics' conception of *Volkekunde* cannot be dismissed lightly.

The view that religion and formal theology played an important role in Afrikaner ethnic awareness is fairly generally held. The well-known concept Christian - national bears evidence of it. Botha, for one, is of the opinion that the theology of Abraham Kuyper played a decisive role in this regard. However, elements of Romanticism and the historical school in German philosophy in his theological reasoning, which were amplified by national-socialist accents in South Africa, led some Afrikaner leaders away from what Botha would like to

call authentic Calvinism. Although not all forms of Afrikaner nationalism and Calvinism could be typified thus, there are some indications of the development of an Afrikaner civil religion as conceptualised by Moodie (Botha, 1982:44; also Sharp, 1981:31). This led, inter alia, to the concept volk becoming more or less normative to quite a number of leading figures and Afrikaners in general (cf. Botha, 1982:41).

If there is some merit in this reasoning, there could be a distinct possibility of the concept volk also becoming more than merely an analytical construct in Volkekunde, particularly in a discipline attuned to the study of culture and cultural groups. From the vantage point of the pursuit of science from a Christian angle, it should be admitted that history and tradition - and this includes scientific traditions - are not always viewed adequately in a true reformed spirit (cf. Botha, 1982:44).

#### 4. NO THEORETICAL ROOTS WITHOUT METAPHYSICAL "BOOTS"

There are without doubt some indications, from a metaphysical point of view, that the volkskonsep did indeed tend to become normative to some volkekundiges, especially in regard to the possibilities of change in ethnic identity. Whether this is also the case from a methodological point of view will be discussed below. The tendency to reflect ethnos as normative seems to be evident from the work of Coertze. He writes in regard to what he calls the conditions for survival of ethnic units that there must be biological growth in the sense of reproduction, selfmotivated mental and physical labour, and preparedness to defend and protect what is perceived as belonging inalienably to a people. He stated a fifth condition as follows:

"Daar is 'n vyfde voorwaarde en dit is dat die etnos daarteen moet waak om nie ontrou aan homself te word nie. Elke etnos het sy eie kultuur en sy eie tradisie maar is steeds blootgestel aan beïnvloeding van buite ... Deur onversigtige oorname van vreemde idees kan hy van homself vervreem raak en op die pad na die toekoms in sy wese ontaard en 'n ander etnos word. Dit is moontlik omdat 'n etnos nie net 'n biologiese verskynsel is nie maar ook 'n geestesverskynsel. Geestesontaarding is net so moontlik as 'n biologiese ontaarding" (1980:78). ("There is a fifth

condition and that is that the ethnos should be vigilant not to lose fidelity towards itself. Every ethnos has its own culture and tradition but is always exposed to influence from outside ... By being careless in its adoption of foreign ideas it may alienate itself and on its road towards the future may degenerate or change to such a degree as to become a totally different ethnos. This is possible because the ethnos is both a biological and moral (spiritual) phenomenon. Moral degeneration is as possible as biological degeneration.'<sup>1</sup>

From the quotation it is clear that Coertze does not necessarily expect a particular ethnos to survive in perpetuity (cf. also Coertze, 1971:63 & 1980:71,84). He is, however, more or less convinced that there is a connection, in a genetic sense, between race and ethno-cultural life which will hamper ethnic assimilation or even make it impossible (cf. also Coertze, 1971:110 & 1980:116). This statement oozes with an unacceptable view of racial superiority.

From the above, and especially from the choice of words (an implicit lesson in morals directed towards Afrikaans students?) one gets the impression that the good life and may be even salvation is to be found in the culturally and racially homogeneous ethnos. Elsewhere, however, after an indication of what he regards as the better qualities of early Afrikaners, he stated that the volk should not be deified (1974:50).

In his elaboration of ethnos theory the views of Coetzee show some similarities to those of Coertze, but also differences. For both these authors the existence of ethnic units and ethnic identity is self-evident (cf. Coertze, 1980:87). Coetzee is of the opinion that religion and nationality (die nasionale = ethnicity) are two general principles of group formation among people (1980:38). In a study guide, which has been revised since its first edition in 1969, Coetzee tries, among other things, to disentangle the terminology involved with ethnic phenomena. This involves concepts such as population, nation, ethnos, patriotism, ethnocentrism and nationalism. In this regard, however, he quotes

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<sup>1</sup> My translation and emphasis.

Dittmer in support where the latter points out that concepts such as people, nation and tribe are primarily abstractions which seldom answer to real situations. All these phenomena are also continually subject to change (1980:19).

With regard to the concept nationalism - Coertze prefers the term *ethno-centricity* for more or less the same phenomenon (1980:118) - Coetzee states that although different meanings are attached to it, to him it is in reality the emotional association of people with the *ethnos*. According to him, it is as old as the existence of ethnic groups and rooted in the nature of man and should be seen thus, rather than to be seen as the fruit of history (cf. also Coertze, 1980:71). He points out, however, that the concept is often used in the sense of a political theory or philosophy and also a system of thought which might be rationalised ideologically. In the latter sense, nationalism is a product of history, rooted, however, in the ethnic nature of man (1980:31). Although it is a sentimental or emotional phenomenon, it therefore is not unreal but dynamic and a very strong mobilising force in human life (Coetzee, 1980:34-35).

According to Coetzee there is an intimate link between *volk* and culture. This relationship is, however, relative in nature in the sense that although culture may change, the ethnic unit as bearer of culture could stay the same. The relative nature of the link is also evident in the fact that there may be cultural differences within the same ethnic unit or cultural similarities between different units (1980:61, 72) (cf. also Coertze, 1980). He supports Mühlmann's view that *Volkekunde* embraces more than the study of what could be called cultural elements and that it should also attend to the problems of psychosocial contact and cohesion of units (*verbande*) like the ethnic unit in its totality (1980:5,61). With reference to Barth, Coetzee also seems to favour the view that as an ascriptive unit, ethnic boundaries are essentially social boundaries with cultural markers (1980:65). As part of his definition of the *ethnos*, Coertze also mentions the ascriptive nature of such units, but he seems to hold the view that culture should not merely be regarded as markers of ethnic boundaries, but that the real boundary is the invisible cultural profundity (1980:72,73,79,113 & 119).

Unlike Coertze, Coetzee does not hold the view that man may be adapted genetically to different cultural types. According to Coetzee inter-racial



contact is socially relevant during processes of ethogenesis, because people are inclined to rationalize historical and thus changeable cultural differences as inherent and thus unchangeable racial differences (1978:247). It may therefore play a role during processes of ethnic selection and sifting (1980:62-62). Coertze also pays attention to race in this social context (1980:91,116-117). In practice, their different views on the importance of race as a factor in determining ethnic and cultural change and maintenance, have seemingly led Coertze and Coetzee to emphasize the role of race differently in, for instance, articles setting out their respective views on Afrikaner ethogenesis (cf. Coertze, 1974 & Coetzee, 1978). Coertze devoted quite a few pages in his article to try and indicate that the Afrikaner is basically a white people (1974:56-67 and especially 67-70). To Coetzee, however, the question whether the Afrikaner should, from a contemporary point of view, be regarded as a racially pure or mixed people, does not seem to be an issue of importance.

To my mind, the above more or less summarises some of the essential similarities and differences between the two fathers of ethnos theory. At another level, however, there seems to be a more profound difference. Although Coertze himself is a confessing Christian, he does not seem to operate consistently in a scientific way within an explicit Christian framework (cf. Coertze, 1973:5-56, but also 1973:56,71,78 and 1980:50,71). Coetzee on the other hand, does more consistently try to integrate what he believes to be the norms of authentic Calvinism with scientific practice. This is of course imperative within the policy framework of the Potchefstroom University. Coetzee, therefore, differentiates continually in his model of volkskap (people-hood) between a point of view founded on Christian principles on the one hand and ethnic phenomena as part of the empirical reality on the other hand. As a result of this he is, for example, of the opinion that within the political framework of a state the mono-ethnic nation (a geo-political unit) may represent the ideal situation (1980:63), but he also warns explicitly that ethnic attachment should not be viewed as normative. He summarises this Scriptural point of view, as he sees it, as follows:

"... feitelik gesien, sal volke bly voortbestaan tot die jongste dag, weliswaar met hulle sondige strewes en dade; (... in fact, "volke" will survive admittedly with their sinful aspirations and deeds, to the end;)

"... die eise en die roeping van die gelowiges in die Koninkryk van God is die hoogste en finale. Volke sowel as volksverband is ondergeskik daaraan ... (... The exigencies of service and vocation of believers in the Kingdom of God are the highest and final. "Volke" as well as the fact of belonging to a "volk" (volksverband) are subordinate to it: ...)

"... volksverband is nie die sleutel tot lidmaatskap van die Volk van God nie, maar wel geloof in Jesus Christus".

(... the fact of belonging to a "volk" is not the key to membership of the People of God, but the key is to be found in the belief in Jesus Christ (Coetzee, 1980:49).<sup>2</sup>

From the above (an explicit lesson in morals directed towards Afrikaans students) it seems clear that although Coetzee views the existence of ethnic units as naturally given, he does not regard an ethnos as an empirical phenomenon as inherently good or bad because the ultimate norm exists outside of it. This, of course, does not imply that in his endeavour to develop a theory of the ethnos he was innocent of ideological (political) influences. On more than one occasion, in my presence, he remarked that while the South African government's policy was one of separate (ethnic) development, the policy-makers and people in general, lacked a thorough knowledge of ethnic phenomena.

##### 5. SOME MORE THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES

Generally speaking, Coetzee's model of ethnicity seems to be the more dynamic, while Coetzee put some genetic limits on the possibilities of ethno-cultural change (1980:116). Coetzee also seems to have, in his own view, resolved the problems in regard to a synthesis of Volkekunde as a study of peoples and their cultures distinct from either Social and Cultural Anthropology. In this regard Coetzee seems to be more circumspect. In an article on the ethnogenesis of the Afrikaner, he wrote:

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<sup>2</sup> My translation.

"This is not the appropriate place to argue for a new or different approach to ethnology as a (distinct) discipline ... Hence, I merely state that in broad outlines my views on the specific subject rather correspond to the views of Shirokogoroff and Mühlmann. The concept of ethnos as a process; centripetal and centrifugal forces and movements; aspects of internal ethnical equilibrium; influences of the interethnic milieu; and the leading ethnos as a mechanism of adaptation and cultural remodelling and as a factor of change - all serve a frame of reference for a hypothesis on the origins and growth of Afrikaner ethnicity" (1978:235-236).

A general perusal of the works of Coertze and Coetzee also indicates that Coertze seems to have developed his own views on the ethnos concept in relative isolation. He indicates, however, that the main sources of his views on anthropology as a holistic discipline are to be found in Spencer's *The principles of Sociology* (1906), Spiller's *The origin and nature of man* (1935) and Vloemans's *De mens als waagstuk* (1949) (1980:14-18). His writings show little direct influence from, for instance, Mühlmann or, for that matter, theoretical work of more recent origin. Coetzee seems to be more open in this regard. It is possible that this difference could be ascribed to the fact that Coetzee started his academic career as a sociologist. One conclusion that could be reached from this is that if the use that is made of Mühlmann's work is seen as unacceptable (cf. Sharp, 1980b:4 & 1981:33), any accusations in this regard should perhaps be directed to some former "volkekundiges" at Potchefstroom and not Pretoria.

To a future researcher on the history of anthropology in South Africa, it may also be of some significance to note that for inexplicable reasons - although Coertze and Coetzee were contemporaries and both intent on unravelling the ethnic phenomena - they never seemed to refer to one another's studies in this regard.

It therefore seems that even at Potchefstroom and Pretoria, which according to Sharp may be regarded as the bastions of ethnos theory one cannot accept the view of monolithic uniformity in this regard. Although it could be argued that at the subtle level ethnos theory permeates everything (cf. Sharp, 1980:20), and although it was Coetzee's openly stated ideal to work towards a

discipline distinct from Social and Cultural Anthropology (cf. also Coetzee, 1973), as far as I am aware, Cultural Anthropology is still being taught from a Christian perspective at Potchefstroom. As far as the teaching of ethnos theory (in the stricter sense of the term) is concerned and to which one paper is devoted, it should also be clear from the sources to which the students are referred - as mentioned in RAIN (cf. Booyens & Jansen van Rensburg, 1980:3-4), - and which, apart from the study guide by Coetzee, include works by Barth (1969), Glazer & Moynihan (1976), Hunt & Walker (1974), Shibutani & Kwan (1965) and Wallman (1979), that it is not merely the theory to which Sharp refers which is being taught.

Whatever the ultimate origins of the importance attached to ethnic phenomena, there are local variations of the theory and one should also distinguish between the general ethnic orientatedness in Volkekunde and theories in the stricter sense of the word. To my personal knowledge, there are also differences of opinion even at intra- and inter-departmental level concerning the importance that should be attached to the theory and the orientation in general (cf. Kotzé, 1980:29-36).

## 6. THE METHODOLOGICAL ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

However, by the above digression into syllabi and departmental squabbles, I did not intend to divert the attention from Sharp's real problem with ethnos theory. If I understand him correctly, he seems to be saying that the theory, particularly as it is being conceptualized at Potchefstroom and Pretoria, actually explains too much. It therefore seems to be of almost no analytical value. This obtains especially in regard to the close and simple conceptualization of the relation between culture and ethnos. Within this analytical scheme one is forced into some kind of circular reasoning: people act thus because they belong to a certain ethnic unit and because they belong to the unit they act (or will act) as they do (cf. also Welsh, 1978:29, regarding the problem of circular reasoning in trying to explain inter-ethnic conflict). The same applies to the question in regard to the way ethnic units maintain themselves and why and how they do change. According to a strict cultural-primordialistic point of view the answer must be overly simplistic: they maintain themselves because they have different cultures and they change when their cultures change. In a theoretical sense, this surely is a cul-de-sac. Moreover, this could with some

justification be called an ahistorical stance. To put it in another way: is it at all possible to define ethnic phenomena as a form of group formation as rooted in human nature and the formation of ethno-cultural groups as essentially universal and at the same time, to regard it not to be of uniform causal significance in space and time?

In this regard, Sharp also maintains that a number of volkekundiges give overly much attention to processes maintaining the existence and autonomy of each separate ethnos (Sharp, 1980b:33). As statement of a problem, this does not seem to me to be necessarily wrong, perhaps only one-sided. It should be stated, however, that Coertze, for one, gave considerable attention in his theoretical work to factors brought into play during processes of change in ethnicity (1980:98-121). As I see it, it also seems as though most people have at least some awareness of an ethnic identity (cf. Rose, 1976:16).

But, to return to the problem at hand. From the respective works of Coertze and Coetzee it is clear that they did not give explicit attention to the problem as defined above. I will try to show that because of certain characteristics of their views, it is quite possible that neither of them experienced it as a problem.

To indicate that both of them give considerable attention to processes of ethnogenesis - i.e. change in ethnic identity - does not solve the problem. It does not answer the question why at a profound level of analysis (cf. Sharp, 1980b:19). However, by careful reading of their work, I am of the opinion that, despite Sharp's misgivings, the answer is at least implicit in their work. The following characteristics of their work seem to have a direct bearing in this regard.

It seems that although both Coetzee and Coertze would agree with a view allowing for the fact that a culture, once it came into being could well become normative to its bearers, they do not view culture merely as a supra-organic entity (cf. Coertze, 190:14,71-72). To both of them ethnic change and assimilation are more than mere acculturation. The bearers of culture and an ethnic identity therefore are human beings with at least some freedom of choice. Both are of opinion that during processes of ethnic assimilation there should be some mutual willingness between the carriers of different identities to accept

one another (Coertze, 1980:109,117 & Coetzee, 1980:53). Coertze, for one, views ethnogenesis as a historical process. Under the heading "Determinante in die proses van etnogenese" (Determinants in the process of ethnogenesis) he wrote: "Wat in die lewe van mense gebeur, is in 'n hoë mate maar net die gevolg van die kragtige strewing van mense na hoër geluk soos hulle dit sien ..." (1980:97; see also 81). (What happens in the lives of people, is to a large extent merely the result of their vigorous striving towards more happiness as they see it ...). The above, to my mind, seems to be at least a partial answer to Sharp's view that the main weakness of ethnos theory lies in the fact that a number of volkekundiges postulate that the sense of ethnic unity is an inevitable result of a common culture, without their being able to indicate the specific conditions<sup>3</sup> under which this group consciousness would arise (1980b:5). Although it will be difficult to operationalize the concept happiness, and although Coertze does not spell out in detail all that "the striving towards more happiness" implies, it does indicate to me a possible way out of the supposed theoretical inflexibility. Furthermore, Coertze did in fact discuss factors influencing the possibilities of change and fusion in ethnic identity in situations of interethnic contact. This process he calls heterogenesis. These factors include: the characteristics of the situation of contact; numbers, cultural level; adaptation to the natural environment: racial differences and psychological factors. The specific interaction of these and the final results, however, are, according to him, largely determined by particular historical situations (1980;110-121).

In his work, Coetzee also seems to point toward some of these conditions. This is implied, for example, when he quotes Mühlmann in support when the latter wrote that the historical consciousness of ethnic units seems to be only really awakened during situations of inter-ethnic contact. However, he goes further and with reference to studies amongst the Pathan, Baluck, Fur and Darfur (cf. Barth, 1969:117-134; also Haaland, in Barth, 1969:58-73) pointed out that motives of material gain seem to be of importance during attempts towards change of ethnic identity. He is also of the opinion that virtually all attempts toward migration across ethnic boundaries include elements of this phenomenon

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<sup>3</sup> My emphasis.

(Coetzee, 1980:66). In another context he also refers to numbers, cultural level, religious differences, cultural competition, economic competition and differences in standards of living as factors of importance which may intrude upon inter-ethnic systems (Coetzee, 1980:74). This seems to be more or less in agreement with the position taken by Welsh when he emphasised that ethnicity and class, although they may overlap, must be kept analytically distinct (1978:32).

It is granted that in the context of their publications as a whole they may possibly be accused of not giving enough explicit attention to external conditions which may intrude on ethnic life. To me they do not seem to credit ethno-cultural existence with a life of its own, though, without taking into account human motivations. They therefore seem to be saying that there are more than one or two mobilizing forces - or variables - of relevance in accounting for ethno-cultural dynamics. Coetzee could, seen from a certain point of view on the theory of science, perhaps even be accused of sterile eclecticism when he remarks in regard to the process of ethnogenesis: "The important point to keep in mind in all cases is to avoid any trace of determinism and to be able to evaluate the relative effects of the whole gamut of contributing forces in each specific case" (1978:236).

I also think that Coetzee's analytical distinction between nationalism as political dogma and programme for action which manifests itself amongst leaders, and nationalism as a universal human phenomenon, may be seen in the same context (cf. also Coetzee, 1962:142 and Cohen, 1978:396-397 for the role of leaders). This, I think may be seen as more or less the same as Mühlmann's point of view that nativism as a cultural movement may be seen as a necessary infrastructure for meaningful - in the emic sense - nationalism (1964:324). Of late, Patterson has also made the useful distinction between "existential solidarity" and what he calls "ethnocentric solidarity" within the context of ethnic group solidarity. Existential solidarity to him is "assumed solidarity", which is affective but also taken for granted as part of that which is normal for the group. The latter is more of a conscious togetherness and may, within the context of Patterson's work, be seen as a political phenomenon. According to Patterson these two types of solidarity may exist more or less independently of each other, but existential solidarity may easily be transformed into ethnocentric solidarity (Patterson, 1977; quoted in Dorman, 1980:31-32).

## 7. "VOLKEKUNDE" - IDEOLOGICALLY "BOOTED" BUT SCIENTIFICALLY ROOTED

Within a general framework of anthropological theoretical orientations, Coertze and Coetzee could both perhaps be regarded as epiphenomenal idealists in the sense that they seem to hold that patterns of human interactions are largely produced by individuals who have internalised the values and norms of their societies (ethnic groups) (cf. Hahn & Kleinman, 1983:310), although Coertze, as has been indicated, placed more stress on genetic variables in socio-cultural dynamics (but cf. also Kuper, 1988:44).

Nevertheless, and with particular reference to ethnos theory in the strict sense of the word, I believe that the points of view as expressed by Coertze and especially Coetzee, do at least, by implication, point away from the constraints of an inflexible primordialism. Sharp's remark amounting to the view that volkekundiges seem to be artless enough to conceptualize ethnic groups as developing their defining characteristics in innocent isolation from one another therefore seems to be based on wishful thinking (cf. Sharp, 1980b:5).

Although my analysis of the points of view of Coertze and Coetzee may still be seen within a pervasive ethnic framework, it does not seem to me to be totally at odds with the conclusion reached by Kwen regarding the concept of identity. Kwen writes that "(t)he multifaceted nature of identity requires that it be treated as a social process. In the context of inter-group relations, such process must incorporate the fact that groups exist in an unequal relationship" (1982:52).

By viewing the concepts of identity and ethnogenesis dynamically and relationally, it seems possible to conceptualize these processes as interrelated on a relational continuum or perhaps as functionally related within an open system with positive and negative feedback. Ethnicity could therefore be highly salient and politicized as perhaps Afrikaner ethnicity or the so-called neo-ethnicities in the USA, or it can only be existential as it appears to be the case in parts of South East Asia and elsewhere. But I do not think that such a view can do justice to this complex process of becoming and being and perhaps



becoming again. This is a process propelled by the more or less continuous conscious or subconscious appraisal of the relationship between subjectively perceived self-interest or quality of life and inward and outward-looking sentiments and loyalties based on historical myth and personal experience of the past and the present. Moreover, it is a process contingent on the exigencies of the givens of the accident of birth and the (objective) realities of cultural and structural differences and similarities as rationalised by members of named social (ethnic) units and categories whilst interacting within a comprehensive social system (excluding of course cases of relatively isolated mono-ethnic societies) (cf. also Cohen, 1978:389-95 for types of relations).

In this regard, it also seems reasonable to distinguish between cultural and social identities (cf. Kwen, 1982:45) and processes and to attend to the nature of the interplay between these within the framework of intergroup relations. By this I mean that there is also what could be called a third dimension to culture, the study of which has to a large extent been neglected by *volkekundiges* in South Africa. This dimension is a consequence of the nature of the contact situation in South Africa and elsewhere and therefore between various ethnic groups and categories with more or less different ways of life. Any answer to the vexing question why people behave as they do, could therefore be found within the context of the dynamics of the different systems of shared meaning, but it should also be sought within the context of the specific historical situation of contact between groups. Cultural groups as social categories in their inter-relationship therefore also historically exist in an unequal (structural) relationship. This may lead to novel ways of relating meaningfully and rationally to the social environment, which involves not merely the exchange and adaptation of new cultured traits, i.e. acculturation or diffusion.

Methodologically this seems to be at least implied by Coertze, when he stresses the point of view that man is in perpetual active adaptation to, for instance, his socio-cultural environment (1980:31; 60-61; 66-67).

The above statement is hardly profound. It should, however, be seen as a move away from a static way of conceptualizing socio-cultural phenomena and views of identity. It tries to indicate that human beings are active agents and that somehow cultural maintenance, rather than change, should be regarded

as problematic. Structure and culture are intrinsically part of the same situation.

I would, therefore, like to concur with Sharp (1988:80) that ethnic groups and nations are constructs of the human imagination - this view, however, also holds for class. All are historically derived cultural constructs. They may be used and abused to meaningfully relate to the social environment. Being ideas or representations of reality, they are, however, not necessarily less real than - contra Sharp - the state. Their salience and manipulation as vehicles of identity should be empirically informed. Like concepts of individual ownership of property, democracy, individual autonomy and ontological views of man, they are real in the sense that they all have certain consequences for the endeavours of everyday life and science, being intertwined with relations of power and the material conditions of existence.

## 8. CONCLUSION

To call attention to the fact that the study of the way in which culture may mediate in systems of intergroup relations and how structural relations may become culturally meaningful is still to a large extent a virgin field of enquiry in *Volkekunde*, but this does not imply that it could not be done within the present framework of the discipline. I do believe that my exposition in regard to *ethnos* theory indicates that even this theory, in the stricter sense of the word, is not as rigid as, for example, Sharp seems to believe. However, in this regard it will be necessary to take into consideration some important insights of social anthropology.

In conclusion I am of the opinion that although a politically motivated *volkish* dogma (Sharp, 1981:19) most probably did influence ethnologists' conception of *Volkekunde*, the above does not confirm Sharp's hypothesis that had taken a scientific discipline on tow. Whatever philosophers, theologians or men of politics might say in regard to *volkskap*, it is not necessarily the same as the conception of all *volkekundiges* of this phenomenon. To my mind, *ethnos* theory and *Volkekunde* in general still seem to be wide open *vis-à-vis* theoretical innovation. This innovation does not imply a so-called paradigmatic revolution because *Volkekunde* does not seem to be in the grip of a closed theoretical system.

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