

'cultural variety' respectively. By the first, Bauman means an essentialist conception, in which 'cultures' are thought of as things—simple, separate wholes—for which individuals are mere cyphers. The second, by contrast, is premised on an individualistic conception of society and recognises that individuals have complex identities and occupy a range of overlapping networks of relationships with others.

The multiculturalist confusion has had unintended but potentially dangerous effects. The 'politics of recognition' can fix and reify 'cultures' which are never hermetically sealed from their environment and so otherwise evolve and change. 'Irishness', for instance, might have seemed simple enough to define for the founders of the Free State in 1922: it had strong Catholic, rural and Irish-speaking connotations, which might well have been envisaged as everlasting. The Ireland bequeathed by the 'Celtic Tiger', characterised by mass immigration and globalised communications, would be unrecognisable to Griffith and Cosgrave.

Since, moreover, the 'community' (Bauman 2001) of the multiculturalist is always an imagined one, the linked rights claims can only ever be pressed by an association which claims to speak on behalf of the collective. Yet the supposedly ascriptive nature of such 'communities' (ie one's allocation to them by accident of birth) often means the democratic norms related to associations of affinity (a club one chooses to join) are absent. Who is to say, for example, that a group of male Muslim elders can speak for their young and particularly their female counterparts? What rights of voice or exit are the latter to enjoy?

As Christian Joppke and Steven Lukes (1999: 10) stress, 'Cultures are not windowless boxes, each containing a discrete territory. And in any cultural group whatsoever in the modern world, there will be at least the following: identifiers, quasi-identifiers, semi-identifiers, non-identifiers, ex-identifiers, cross-identifiers, and anti-identifiers. A multicultural politics of identity is

angled exclusively towards the concerns and interests of the first group'. Fiona Bloomer and Peter Weinreich (2003: 155-7) have established such a nuanced spectrum of identity in Northern Ireland—their five categories being 'in-group identified', 'mixed identified', 'conflicted', 'alienated' and 'cross-ethnically identified'.

'Culture' as a superficial portmanteau term can be the excuse for the 'generous betrayal' of the human rights of real individuals, as in documented cases in Norway of second-generation south-Asian girls being abducted for forced marriage (Wikan, 2002). It is for this reason that the modern minority-rights conventions also enshrine the principle that all individuals must be free from discrimination, whether because they choose to be associated with a minority or, conversely, because they do not.

The Council of Europe document also enjoins states party to promote 'a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue'. For the most worrying aspect of multiculturalism is how claims for 'parity of esteem' between competing communalist representatives can even exacerbate, rather than assuage, intercommunal tensions. The paradox is that since the 'communities' are defined by their supposed differences from one another, it is as easy to compare apples and oranges as it is (say) to know when parity has been achieved between Orange and Green, so an unending attrition can follow, in which neither 'side' is satisfied and intracommunal power flows to those Yeats would have described as 'full of passionate intensity'.

Melita Malabotta (2005: 117) writes that multiculturalism, as epitomised by the UK and the Netherlands, represents 'the coexistence of non-communicating vases in the same shared space';<sup>1</sup> it 'facilitates the maintenance of the original identity' but 'on the cultural level there is no significant synthesis'. Interculturalism, on the other hand, is 'based on the plural presence of individual subjects' and 'not only on the communities they belong to'. In this model, 'The meeting and exchange take place between the different elements within the public space ... and the society has a low ethnic conflict rate.'

Cross-communal civic associations



can be a powerful antidote to violence associated with 'identity politics'.

Ashutosh Varshney (2002) has shown by comparing three sets of Indian cities—in each case one peaceful, the other prone to Hindu-Muslim violence, in the face of national political 'shocks'—that business, trade-union or similar networks can act as buffers against what Giddens (1994: 245) calls the 'degenerate spirals of communication' through which intercommunal violence escalates.

Amartya Sen (2006: xiii-xiv) argues that we have 'inescapably plural' affiliations, on whose relative importance we must decide in any particular context by the exercise of 'choice and reasoning', which means that as individuals we are all 'diversely different'. This militates against the hardening of lines of ethnic division.

Ethno-political entrepreneurs thus play a key role in precipitating conflict (Sen, 2006: xv): 'The art of constructing hatred takes the form of invoking the magical power of some allegedly predominant identity that drowns other affiliations, and in a conveniently bellicose form can also overpower any human sympathy or natural kindness that we may normally have ... In fact, a major source of potential conflict in the contemporary world is the presumption that people can be uniquely categorized based on religion or culture.' For the most part, and most of the time, Sen's native India has been an intercultural success story since independence, under its secular-state umbrella.

Ethnic protagonists only succeed, achieve 'groupness' (Brubaker, 2002), if they can suppress individuality by condensing the complex determinants of identity into one simple definer, such as nationality, in which they can invest great significance and which they can represent as a boundary marker against the 'other' — represented via a