'Apartheid' and 'Democracia Racial': South Africa and Brazil in Contrast

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265

To Walter, my father

SUMMARY

Ideology is not something that is added on to reality, on the contrary, it is, to borrow an expression from Wittgenstein, a 'language game'. That is, it is embedded in a context understood as a historically constructed social setting. Accordingly, ideological discourses cannot really be understood merely as positions on their own but as loci inside a common language game. In this sense, the critique of apartheid developed in South Africa and the language of apartheid itself cannot be considered as two entirely divorced systems. Both the language of academia and the politically correct language used by young urban professionals in Cape Town therefore belong together with apartheid even though they have constructed themselves as oppositional discourses that are incompatible with each other. The fundamental notion here is that of essentialism or the rigid categorisation of people, be it in terms of 'race', 'ethnicity', 'culture', 'background', 'class' or political persuasion. Essentialism is here a mode of thought that is synecdochic: categories may change, but the need to categorise and create compartmentalized loci does not. Hence what Crapanzano has termed the 'weasel' quality of essentialism. This 'weasel' quality would also be present both in apartheid and anti-apartheid discourses.

Modes of thought must also be understood in terms of the social practices that come with them. In terms of social practices, separateness remains the rule in South Africa, particularly (but not only) in the private sphere. Even people who identify openly with and took part in the struggle against apartheid still socialize separately. In this sense, 'apartheid' ceases to be a political locus (or, even more narrowly, a juridico-political system) to become a flowing mode of thought that moves around society as a whole. The point is that ultimately apartheid cannot be pinned down to any one locus in society (say, 'conservatives', 'whites' or 'Afrikaners'), for thinking tends to overflow its boundaries and its only description couched in history that can tell us where it is showing up at a specific point in time. Going back in history is here a vital exercise, especially if one is to understand apartheid as metonymy and not only metaphor. However, 'going back' does not uncover ultimate roots, but only produces further interpretations: essentialism becomes then something that flows back and forth between the Dutch at the Cape in the late eighteenth century and the new British overlords of the Cape Colony, on the one hand, and the Boers of the interior, on the other hand, and, later in this century between whites and coloureds, and whites and Africans.

The comparison with Brazil entails a flowing vantage point. Essentialism is not absent there, but is historically recent and socially circumscribed in comparison with South Africa. The dominant metaphor there is an ideology of assimilation centred on the very notion that is abhorred in apartheid ideology, namely, blood-mixing. From a native cosmology, this assimilationist thought is turned in this century into the ideology of democracia racial. This transformation happens through a confrontation with modern, individualistic and universalistic values: democracia racial is in this sense an acculturative response to modernity on the part of a traditional society. Interestingly, though it has more modern traits than democracia racial, apartheid too comes up as a response to universalism. The underpinnings in both cases, however, are different. Apartheid rests on a very narrowly defined and historically specific form of Calvinist fundamentalism, whereas democracia racial is informed by a Portuguese Catholic universalism. In the first case, 'race discrimination' happens within a counter-response to Enlightenment ideals whose main metaphor is separation, in the second case within an equally reactive ideology whose main metaphor is a common national whole. Though on the surface, in terms of statistics and analysis that is merely political and economic, Brazil and South Africa seem similar, in terms of values the two societies can therefore be very different from each other. Moreover, of course, this difference in values also bears directly on social practices and politics, and is therefore not only 'ideological'.

Through a scrutiny of the 'coloured issue' in the Western Cape, it is shown that in fact apartheid arose as an attempt to check exactly the kind of flow and contact that has been the hallmark of the Brazilian metaphor of democracia racial. Namely, 'coloured' is shown as a category that does not fit the essentialist system and therefore has a subversive value in it, as it poses a constant threat. The threat, however, is never fully enacted as the predominance of essentialism stifles the full development of another system of values.

The author argues that the coming of democracy in South Africa has not fundamentally changed the system of values of society, on the contrary. He proposes instead that both a universalistic pole (stressing egalitarian, individualistic values) and a particularistic pole (that tends to insist on separate identities) are part and parcel of South African society. They historically arose together, as scrutiny of Afrikaner identity-building shows, and cannot be understood in separation or merely as two antagonistic positions that rule each other out. In this sense, it is suggested that both democracia racial and what might be called ethnicity are enduring features of respectively Brazilian and South African societies, as are the egalitarian, universalistic values found in both of them (particularly in South Africa).

Finally, the author suggests that comparison - understood as a movement between different realms of discourse - is fundamental for a balanced understanding of any society in order to counteract the modern, universalist tendency of the social sciences and common sense alike to either flatten out or overemphasize difference. In this perspective, difference would only exist as a floating, fluid entity, not as an essentialist construct that can once and for all be pinned down to a single social locus. Accordingly, interpretation would not aim any more at uncovering ultimate roots or finding ultimate explanations, but would simply be an on-going process of reading.

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Introduction

Though there have been a few circumscribed attempts at comparing Brazil and South Africa (notably Berghe [1967] and Banton [1967] and, in a very different vein, Seidman [1992] and Marx [1994]), this is perhaps the first comparison ever undertaken that takes account of what Dumont (1980:Appendice A) calls **faits de valeurs**, namely, a perspective that assumes that, though ideology is not necessarily the ultimate reality behind social facts nor is their 'explanation', it is nonetheless the condition for their existence. However, it must be said right away that my aim was not, strictly speaking, to 'compare' in the more usual meaning of the word, but to engage in a process that Geertz (1983:167:234) called 'hermeneutical tacking', namely, going back and forth between two different 'shores.' His idea is that meaning does not inhabit some 'scientific', extra-worldly realm from which the anthropologist can, say, 'compare' two different languages or systems of meaning. Rather, the very outline of the languages being compared comes out in the movement back and forth between the two different realms (one closer to oneself - one's home society, say - the other more distant - one's field). In this movement of 'cultural translation' both Louis Dumont and Clifford Geertz seem to be closer to each other than one would have expected. In spite of the fact that they are speaking from positions that are avowedly at the antipodes of each other (Dumont still talks about **la science**, whereas Geertz is most emphatically not practising la science), Geertz's proposal of a hermeneutical tacking is not altogether different from Dumont's stress on a **sociologie comparée** (see, for instance, Dumont's 1991 work on German ideology where he deals with Germany and France, and the appendices A and D to his **Homo hierarchicus** [1980]). If practitioners of the discipline that are apparently so different from each other as Geertz and Dumont somehow seem to be talking about a similar movement, then what I have attempted here is perhaps altogether not too far-fetched, namely, retaining a 'difference' within a changing perspective that tries not to freeze difference into metaphor but rather ground it on metonymy (my debt here must be also extended to Coetzee [1991]). For metaphor - say, apartheid as an evil ideology - no matter how useful it is, tends to freeze its object in a particular locus. It is especially useful when we want to stress our distance from it (as, I believe, most serious scholars, South African and foreign alike, have stressed in the past few decades). However, to me, metonymy is perhaps a more adequate tool, among other things because it inevitably exacts a certain connectedness from

us: apartheid as metonymy can never really be kept entirely at arm's length as an 'alien ideology' that has nothing whatever to do with us and with our sense of who we are. True, apartheid, even when turned into metonymy, can still seem to be 'madness' to us (as Coetzee [1991] pointed out). However, that is fine with me, for I am not postulating here an all-out identification; rather, I am proposing that we move from 'identity' to 'difference' back and forth, pulling apart and bringing together both in the process.

In this thesis, I have attempted to move back and forth in more than one way. Though avowedly a comparison, in fact South Africa looms larger in this study than Brazil. However, the movement is there nonetheless: it is as a Brazilian scholar that I look at South Africa, as someone who has been trained in a different, more heavily French-influenced, academic tradition rather than in an Anglo-Saxon/Dutch-German one (as in South Africa), someone who was brought up in a former Portuguese colony rather than in a former Anglo-Dutch one, in South America rather than in Southern Africa. To me, the fact that I had not been brought up in South Africa but in a **different** environment (provided we do not lay too much stress on the difference) allowed me to take a much closer approach to apartheid thinking than I believe is usually the case in South African scholarship (where, historically, for the most part, to put it very roughly, you either subscribed to apartheid wholeheartedly or just as wholeheartedly dissociated yourself from it). I could not identify with apartheid, but neither could I turn it into pure metaphor. Instead of taking a position, I tried to keep moving between several different positions in South African discourse. I have also profited from my stay in South Africa to take a fresh look at Brazil, and at democracia racial: as a result, the metonymic character of the latter also became clear to me. I could not therefore entirely dissociate myself from it as I used to before my stay in South Africa and as is usually the case with most Brazilian scholars (see Ribeiro [1993] for a taste of this previous state of affairs). This is what 'comparison' really amounts to here: a working out of metonymy, a constant process of moving to and fro or what is according to Coetzee (1991) a **following** or an on-going process of interpretation where one does not reach an ultimate explanation, nor find an ultimate root.

Having stated that in fact I do not have a position (though, as will be clear from the narrative that follows this introduction, I do have my own opinions), I must point to the limitations of this study. First and foremost, South Africa here was approached via fieldwork in Cape Town, a very specific locus in the South African scene. I have also chosen to work among young urban professionals in that city, which, at the time of my fieldwork (1993-1995) still basically meant working among whites (see chapter 3) and coloureds (see chapter 5), Cape Town being the only city in the country where Africans are still a minority (and

therefore still badly represented, in comparison with Johannesburg, among the people I worked with). However, Cape Town is also a city where a lot of interaction goes on across racial lines - even if mostly only between whites and coloured (the situation is far different in Johannesburg: I try to explain why in chapter 5). The choice of young urban professionals has to do, first, with my own locus in Cape Town - that was the group that was readily available to me and with whom I tended to naturally spend a lot of time - and with the fact that this group, as I soon discovered, was very interesting for various reasons. They were very much embedded in the ideology of individualism (see chapter 2), were modern, well-read, well-travelled, sophisticated, etc. They did not identify with apartheid in any way. At the same time, however, in different degrees, apartheid did cast a long shadow over their lives and was also the background against which they per force had to move as they were growing up. As I have chosen metonymy here rather than metaphor, I inevitably sensed that, in spite of their avowed dissociation from essentialist discourses, their own discourse and behaviour were very much informed by essentialism, even though they did not in the least belong to any of the social groups that are stereotypically associated with that discourse (say, conservative Afrikaners - for a definition and discussion of essentialism, see chapter 1). On the contrary, they often made a point of constructing 'apartheid' and its supporters as an 'Other' that was most emphatically different - and distant - from themselves. This dis-identification was strongest and most emphatic among whites, for obvious reasons. However, as this dis-identification is also at the root of a great amount of important scholarship on South Africa (not to mention political discourse in and on South Africa), I have scrutinized it and the kind of discourse in which it surfaces.

The Brazilian part of this study is not based on any fieldwork, but rather based on reflections made during a stay in Rio in 1994-95 in-between my stays in South Africa. This stay in Rio was, however, most important in the development of this thesis, for it allowed me a breathing space and a different environment in which I could reflect and write on my South African experience. It also allowed me to take a fresh look at Brazil, whose outcome is a review of democracia racial in chapter 6.

Dumont's work figures somewhat prominently here. This is due to my academic background: Dumont's work is very important in Brazilian anthropology and, besides, I did the first year of my doctor's studies in Paris under Dumont's successor. However, Dumont's work is mostly analytical, and mine here is not (except for chapter 2, where I try to pay my debt to Dumont's theory - once and for all, I hope). I left Paris because I could not possibly write in an analytical language where distance was reproduced again and again. Writing in Paris would have meant a triangular movement between three different languages (one Brazilian, one South African and yet another French), where one

of the languages - the French one - would have the very problematic status of a 'scientific' language that was not open to scrutiny (for it was supposed to be the language of anthropology). Registering instead at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands and, at the same time, residing and writing in Rio and Cape Town, has allowed me a scope of freedom that would have been unthinkable in Paris. The movement away from an analytical language has not been completed, however, as witnesses the attempt at analysis in chapter 2. This thesis is therefore is also a snapshot of my own on-going movement away from that language.

There are several movements in this thesis: from ethnography to historiography (as in chapter 3), from ethnography to analysis (chapter 2), from what is experience-near to what is experience-distant (to employ two terms from Geertz) in several passages (for instance, chapter 1), from 'pluralism' to 'universalism' back and forth (chapter 4), from 'British' to 'Afrikaner' (again, chapter 4), 'Brazilian' to 'South African', 'white' to 'black', etc. What must be borne in mind is that nothing here - whether it be social practice or a mode of thought - can ultimately be assigned to one locus only. In this way, for instance, essentialism - a key notion in this thesis (see chapter 1) - cannot really be ascribed to a single social group (say, the 'British' or, worse, 'whites'). Hence my writing 'British' or 'Afrikaner' above between quotes. As Coetzee (1991) points out, there is a flow here, and a flowing substance (be it 'apartheid', 'individualism' or 'essentialism'), and we can only observe it as it passes through several loci, but never really pin it down anywhere for it belongs to the system as a whole (understood as a historically constructed context), not to a specific place in it where it would be found, say, 'coagulated'. I try to stress this point particularly towards the end of chapter 4.

There have been historically precious few contacts between South Africa and Brazil. Considering that a direct flight between Cape Town and Rio used to take between six to eight hours, depending on the winds (the flight has been discontinued as from 1994), we can only speculate that lack of contact is due to different colonial origins rather than geographical distance per se (othe-rwise I cannot understand why South Africa should have more contacts with distant Hong Kong and Australia than it has with Brazil). As from the Brazilian side, there are already signs that at least one or two doctoral students are willing to go across the ocean to do fieldwork in South Africa. In South Africa there is also a growing, if still circumscribed, interest in Brazil (however, the language barrier, that is directly linked to different colonial origins, looms large here, not to mention different academic styles and traditions. In what concerns language, some South African friends and acquaintances seem to have difficulty understanding that Brazil does not speak English not out of wilfulness but because of history and metonymy). It is

my hope, however, that this thesis will pave the way to more studies of each other's countries by both South Africans and Brazilians, and to an exchange that goes beyond tourism and economic interests.

I

The Language Game

'Democracy', 'elections', 'transition' – how do you tackle a specific reality with categories belonging to an almost transcendental discourse? For these are terms from a universalist language of politics and interest. Without many qualifications, they can be used to take stock of contexts as diverse as, say, France, Brazil, Rwanda or Indonesia. I have lived for almost a year and a half in South Africa, exactly during the transition leading to the first democratic elections ever in the country. However, as I read the news about the country in local and foreign papers, I am often under the impression that there is a whole dimension of what South Africa is all about that either escapes or is underplayed in political analysis. When I read the work of political scientists or other scholars committed to unravelling the South African situation, I am also under the impression that something important is missing. Overall, the discourse is somehow too neatly polarized.

This polarisation is also present in everyday life. If you open your mouth to criticize sharply the African National Congress in some circles, then you are perhaps a reactionary and your discourse is that of the former apartheid government. Conversely, before its demise, if you spoke against apartheid to some of its supporters, then you were certainly one of those 'communists', or at least one of those deluded foreigners who cannot really understand the local predicament. This is – or used to be – very roughly the main binary opposition along which you can place a myriad of other positions. All of these positions, of course, exist only in contrast to each other. They could all be described as representing different 'interests'. However, rather than delving in this current way of looking at the situation, I would rather concentrate on something else: namely, on what I call the blunting of discourse. It is almost as if, faced with South Africa, language is stretched so thin that the tension becomes nearly unbearable. That is the tension between what you perceive to be 'out there' and the language you have at your disposal to describe it. This tension for me translates itself in the blunting of discourse. That is, all the sharp edges and inconsistencies have to be rounded off and smoothed if discourse is to go on at all.

A prime example of the process of blunting is a controversy I entered with Paul. He is a young white English-speaking historian. The controversy centred on Rian Malan's best-selling **My Traitor's Heart** (1991), which describes and analyses

situations of violence in South Africa. The final chapter deals with faction fighting among the Zulus of Msinga, in the province of Natal (now Natal/KwaZulu). Msinga is one of those 'pockets' of 'native' land that were part of the patchwork of the homeland of KwaZulu, a series of discontinuous, overcrowded territories. These last were in turn (at least in part) remnants of the old pre-colonial Zululand. The latter was conquered in 1879, when the British defeated King Cetshwayo, direct ancestor of the present King Goodwill Zwelithini, made constitutional monarch of Natal/KwaZulu in 1993. The apartheid government's intention was to create an independent Zulu nation out of those territories so that the rest of Natal could remain safely in white hands for posterity. Msinga is a fairly typical homeland territory: it is very poor and its soils are badly eroded. Also, it is surrounded by white-owned farms. Most of the male population migrates to work in the mines in Johannesburg, living for most of the year away from their families. These had to stay behind. Following the famous 'Stallard doctrine' of the 1920's, they did not receive permission from the apartheid government to accompany the men.[1]

For years, Msinga has suffered from factional fights among several local clans. Such fights have become in modern times, with the use of sophisticated weaponry, long-drawn, bloody affairs. These contrast sharply, according to Malan, with the old, short and low-casualty encounters of the past. As fighting starts, the women rush to the post-office to cable their husbands in Jo'burg to come back to fight. There is a police station in the area, but the one white police officer who was in charge at the end of the eighties (when Malan visited the area) did not interfere in the fighting (actually, as Malan shows, he was mostly unable to). Malan describes the fighting (that he actually did not witness himself) through the accounts of local residents, especially a white woman who has been in the area for decades. She - Creina Alcock - and her husband Neil had come into the area to develop a pioneering agricultural project, which Malan depicts rather like a pastoral fairy-tale: biodigestors, a locally-made water-wheel, a beadwork cooperative, and vegetable gardens, all developed with local resources and skills, instead of Western technology. In spite of generous help from donors (among them Anglo-American, who bought the land for the project), and the unrelenting efforts and ingenuity of the couple, it failed. Neil was ultimately killed in a factional fight. Creina, his wife, however, hanged on doggedly. Malan tells us how she kept trying to pull off the project on her very own, in a most modest and -

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[1] The doctrine established that blacks could only reside in the (white-proclaimed) cities if and only as long as their labour was needed (Davenport, 1987:527-28 and Dubow, 1989:123-24). This saw the city as being the seat of European civilisation - as the 'native' did not belong to it, ultimately his proper place was in the reserves.

to me – despairingly unrewarding way. Basically, she gave in to the local Zulus and tried to love them as they were, in an almost otherworldly way. Among other things, she let their goats graze on the project's lands therefore destroying any possibility of crops. She learned – the hard way – that any attempt to do things against the grain of the people she was living with could have dire consequences. Most of Msinga was uncultivated, though there was quite a lot of land and a fairly extensive irrigation network that drew water from the Tugela river. The people were very poor and therefore would have had a use for the crops. The reason for the lack of cultivation was that the fighting and the competing land claims among the clans did not allow cultivation even on the project's land.

Among sympathizers (white and otherwise) of the liberation movement in South Africa, there is a common attitude that amounts to a taboo when it comes to talking about violence among blacks. There are two contrasting views that dominate discourse here. One is that blacks are violent by nature or because they are 'uncivilized'. The other view is that the apartheid government instigates violence among blacks, using the old principle of 'divide and rule'. Violence in the black townships, for instance, is also explained, according to this perspective, as springing from extreme poverty imposed on blacks by apartheid and its capitalist allies. There is in fact plenty of evidence that the apartheid government did give financial and other support, for instance, to the Inkatha Freedom Party in Natal against the African National Congress. This support fuelled a state of violence in Natal bordering on civil war. The first view – of 'inherent' black violence – is held by more or less conservative sectors of the white, coloured and Indian population, whereas the second view tends to be that of leftist or 'progressive' groups, intellectuals, academics, etc. Of course, the latter is also the politically-correct view.

I am in the lounge of a Victorian cottage in Vredehoek, Cape Town. The neighbourhood is on the lower reaches of the imposing Table Mountain that towers over the city. The front porch of the house – the stoep – commands a view of Table Bay. It is a pleasant place to live, except for the noise coming from the traffic on the De Waal Drive, a highway that is just across a stretch of lawn from the house. It seems Vredehoek used to be a lower-middle class and white working-class neighbourhood, also inhabited by Jewish immigrants. I am not sure whether there ever were coloureds or blacks living there (Vredehoek is, however, right next to District Six, the racially mixed area razed down by the government in the late sixties and early seventies). The house belongs to Paul's father, a Jewish Transvaal real estate agent who lives in Jo'burg. Paul also used to live there before moving down to the Cape to study at the University of Cape Town. The latter was officially declared a whites-only university by a

law of 1959 segregating tertiary institutions in the country.[2] In his own words, Paul comes from a liberal white family in Jo'burg. He is a member of the ANC's Youth League, where he used to be a political activist. He would do humdrum things like recruiting members, handing out pamphlets and storing propaganda material and party flags. However, he also engaged in daring acts like planning and executing an invasion of the National Party's offices in Cape Town (that lasted for five hours and almost took him to jail) and helping carry out a public demonstration where ANC members and sympathizers publicly burned the old South African flag (the burning of which constituted a criminal offense penalized with imprisonment). When I first met him, through an ad for a room on the Groote Schuur campus of UCT, Paul used to spend hours and hours indoors. He was reading and studying for his dissertation on some aspects of the history of black movements in Cape Town in the 1920's.

A Victorian cottage's lounge is a very pleasant place. The floorboards are beautifully varnished and there is usually a small cast-iron fireplace, as in Paul's lounge. Above the mantelpiece there is a mirror with a black wooden frame, topped with a clay head from Mozambique that looks like a Chinese soldier, plus some Africana (for instance, a stylized pipe) on the mantelpiece itself and around the fireplace. In one corner there is a cabinet with a display of minerals, all the pieces with labels beside them. There is a poster in Norwegian, depicting rain drops and saying something about water and peace. On another wall there is a red flag with Che Guevara's face on it. I myself used to be a fan of Che Guevara's - when I was fifteen - though I never had his picture on the wall. A bookcase beside the fireplace contains an assortment of pocket editions with quite a few translations of works by Latin American and East European writers. Paul is especially fond of Gabriel García Márquez, whom he calls only 'Márquez', which is unusual in Latin America (where he is called by at least two of his names). The lounge is the only common room in the two-bedroom cottage, besides the kitchen. It is cool and furnished with comfortable couches. One tends to spend a lot of time there. Paul and I some times used to talk about several subjects there, mostly intellectual ones. For, like me, he is not someone who talks openly about his private life.

Paul has long hair - the kind of hair I associate with the sixties and the hippie generation. He usually dresses in a somewhat careless way, but, unlike most other white students I met - who dress in shorts and t-shirts - he prefers a somewhat alternative style, with patterned shirts and loose trousers. A

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[2] See Brookes (1968) for text of the law. The university is now fairly racially mixed and is, of course, officially open to all people regardless of race.

friend of mine - Graeme - remarked to me after meeting Paul that he looked like a Chippendale. Indeed, Paul is an attractive, hairy-chested and fairly well-built man, but the thought of him as a Chippendale made me laugh. He is somehow too serious and intellectual to be cast as one. Graeme liked him - there is something boyish in Paul that is appealing, a kind of light that kindles in his eyes when he is talking to you that can be either mischievous or playful. But Graeme (who is an open and friendly coloured man) also found him arrogant. He is also very intelligent and bright, and is aware of it. There is however something stern and somewhat forbidding about him. He is not to be trifled with. I would not be surprised if he turned out to be, later in life, a teacher whom students dread.

Paul is aware I am his match in at least one or two intellectual pursuits, so as we talk he both treads carefully and on occasion challenges me openly. He does the latter either to see whether I can really hold my ground or because he doubts the accuracy of what I am telling him. When I came to Cape Town, from Paris, I was somewhat haughty. I had hated the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales on boulevard Raspail, where I had been studying for my doctorate, as an elitist, arrogant place. Yet the academic level there was the highest I had ever experienced (it is the school where prominent scholars like Pierre Bourdieu and Jacques Derrida teach). Of course, coming from Paris to the University of Cape Town to be a visiting associate researcher could only be a fall from grace. Though the general level was high (and UCT people are quick and proud to point to you that theirs is an internationally recognized institution of high academic standing in a continent where that is a rarity), I felt the ambience was often intellectually vacuous. That is because academic debate there seemed to be a language game (to use an expression of Wittgenstein's) where you were always constructing positions further away as you abandoned previous ones: a kind of constantly recycled vanguardism.[3] However, instead of it being only a process of intellectual advance, a lot of it seemed to me to be part of a sort of morality play. The construction of newer positions was often directly linked to underlying claims of political soundness (a valued commodity in a stigmatized country like South Africa, especially for whites who look outwards to Europe and the United States, both of whom have often condemned the country for its apartheid practices). Sometimes, this process seemed to me to be an almost desperate attempt to take a ride in the latest intellectual currents available. My impression was that the latter were taken on as if in a hurry, without deeper

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3 "Language game" (Sprachspiel) here implies that language use is actually always embedded in a way of living (Wittgenstein, 1961:125). By using "language game" I try to point to the set character of a kind of discourse and also to its embeddedness in a certain way of thinking and in social practice.

reflection. On the whole, at least among some people, there seemed to be a pressing urge to be in the intellectual vanguard and politically sound or correct. Paul's term for the latter was 'radical'. For instance, according to Paul, the anthropology department at UCT was 'pretty radical'.

Back to Malan's work, I felt enthusiastic about the book after I first read it. There was something real being told about South Africa that did not reek of political correctness. Though Malan was a journalist and not a scholar, I identified with his text because it had, to me, a unique quality about it in the South African context: it was a view that could always be accused of being personal but at the same time was deeply informed by embeddedness in the South African experience and by a scrutiny of aspects of society in South Africa. It was metonymic rather than grand or metaphorical. It brought together several strands that usually are only found separately in South African writing: the intensely personal, the historical, the political, the social. It broke through apartheid as a mental barrier and, consequently, brought apartheid from the heights where it usually inhabited in writing - say, as political oppression or evil ideology - to a realm where it could be fleshed out and reinscribed in lived experience. It also brought to the fore issues that hardly anybody wanted to scrutinized, either inside or outside South Africa, foremost among which was the so-called 'black-on-black violence'. To this day, it remains a fairly unique account in South African writing. Paul had never read the book but, of course, had heard about it, for it became a best-seller inside and outside South Africa. His objections to the book were that Malan published it - with its saddening and graphic accounts of violence in black townships - at a moment when it could only serve the interests of the Nationalist government. I found such opinion to be fairly widespread in leftist circles in Cape Town, especially among whites with whom I talked. For them, Rian Malan is a 'neo-conservative,' for his discourse is considered to be a recycled version of conservative discourse. As far as I am concerned, however, in an extremely polarized environment, Malan dared raise quite a few thorny issues that most politically-correct people just brush aside.

Take the Zulus of Msinga, for instance. I made the mistake of telling Paul that the Msinga faction fights Malan described reminded me of Evans-Pritchard's account of Nuer blood feuds in his classic **The Nuer** (1940). As someone who is not an Africanist and had never lived in Africa, I found it interesting that I could recognize something I knew from my academic training as an anthropologist in a contemporary account related to South Africa. However, Paul stroke at once. I had committed two deadly sins. The first and most unpardonable was that I was **generalizing**. That is quite a capital sin in radical circles in South Africa. It means that you are taking a whole people and stereotyping it by ascribing to it certain characteristics. That is, you are seeing

the Zulus in terms of a supposed 'Zulu-ness,' exactly as the apartheid government (and apartheid anthropologists) liked to see South Africa's different 'population groups'. In other words, I was wantonly ascribing to the Zulus ethnic characteristics - say, a tendency to engage in blood feuds. I tried meekly to argue that Malan in fact was talking only about the Zulus of Msinga, and not about the Zulus in general, but Paul was adamant. The sin of generalization had been committed all the same. According to this line of reasoning, as everyone knows, ethnicity is constructed, so there is really nothing that can be pinned down as Zulu-ness, unless you generalize. That is, unless you do what colonialist, old-fashioned and utterly un-radical anthropologists do: to consider a people as a totality possessing certain characteristics - say, a culture, this most incorrect and unacceptable of terms in today's South Africa. For 'culture' has since long been appropriated by the Nationalist government to justify apartheid. As peoples and cultures differ from each other, they must be kept apart for the sake of their survival as distinct entities, apartheid reasoning goes (see next chapter). Gert - about whom I will talk at length on chapter 3 - also used to tell me again and again (surely hoping that I would mend my ways) that each individual is unique and therefore you cannot resort to a cultural explanation in group terms on pain of being suspect of engaging in (self) apology or condescension. So there was no point in talking about 'Zulus,' even though, ethnographically speaking, the Zulus were there all the same. The South African radical anthropologists Paul admired also thought along similar lines (see Boonzaier and Sharp, 1987).[4]

As for my mentioning Evans-Pritchard's work, well, that was a text that had to be put in its right perspective: as a product of colonialism, that is. I had naively ascribed to Evans-Pritchard's account of the Nuer of the southern Sudan an iota of reality. I had to learn that poor Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard was in fact the producer of colonialist ethnography that could only be used - if at all - after being properly deconstructed and contextualized in its time and environment. Paul would try and teach me again and again that you have to see where someone is speaking from in order to understand his or her text. Gert - who had studied literary criticism - also took this view: the construction of a text is a very important factor in understanding it. So forget about the Nuer or the Zulus and concentrate instead on Evans-

[4] However, after 1990, with the gradual demise of apartheid and the consequent slow demise of the need to create a discourse to oppose it, South African anthropologists (at least English-speaking ones) seem to be awakening again to the importance of culture. At least, that is what a sympathetic external observer, Fry (1992), indicates in his account of the 1991 annual conference of the Association for Anthropology in Southern Africa in Johannesburg.

Pritchard's and Malan's authorship and the place they are talking from.[5] But I am being somewhat unfair to Paul. Later he did come to understand that an anthropological text is also a source of information, not only a discourse to be put under scrutiny. Also, he would start having doubts about progressive conceptions of ethnicity. However, that was much later, well after our Msinga talk.

So I was stuck. For if you cannot generalize, and cannot use the anthropological literature available for guidance, how on earth are you going to try to account for what happens among the people of Msinga? As an apartheid-provoked predicament (that is the politically correct view to take), when it apparently - judging from Malan's account - is not the case? There seems to be an unfortunate split here. The colonial Zulus were treated as a fit subject for anthropologists. The modern Zulus are more properly a subject for political scientists or at best for historians or sociologists. Of course, 'tribalism' or factional fighting did become apartheid shibboleths. I remember that when I first went to visit the South African embassy in 1990 in Brasilia the old Afrikaans ambassador told me that 'tribalism' was rife in Africa. This was after he had told me that the homeland policy, as we inspected a chequered map of South Africa of the old kind on his office wall, had only failed because it was economically unfeasible, though it had been a good idea. So explaining what the Zulus of Msinga did in terms of factional fighting actually paralleled the way the apartheid government - and many whites, coloureds and Indians - viewed such things. As this goes frontally against the rules of the language game in question, the only way out for people like Paul is to brush the matter aside or not look into it at all. Our conversation in his lounge stalled and was never resumed.

Malan is also considered a neo-conservative because he recovers the concept of race as an heuristic device in his narrative; actually, he even confesses to his fear of blacks (indeed few politically-correct white South Africans would confess to that), and also to his feeling that at bottom race does matter in South Africa, no matter how often it is crooned that race is a 'metaphor'. He describes, for instance, his feeling of relief whenever he leaves Soweto after one of his many trips to the area. This comes from a man who, it becomes clear as one reads through his book, has taken the trouble to cultivate black friends and spent a lot of his time trying to understand life in the townships and in homelands. It must be pointed out that 'race' is another taboo word in the discourse that prevails at UCT and politically-correct circles (such as the official circles

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[5] This position parallels that of Geertz (1988) who also sees Evans-Pritchard's (and other anthropologists') work mainly in terms of an authorial strategy.

of the African National Congress, for instance). According to the prevailing orthodoxy, 'race' is a shibboleth, roughly speaking, a catchword used by apartheid to advance capitalist interests. 'Class' and political and economic interest are what matters and constitute the reality behind the system (that was Paul's view too). Therefore, if you talk about race, you are within the enemy's discourse, you are indulging in apartheid thinking, something that self-respecting English-speaking enlightened urban dwellers of any race are loathe to do. Coming from a country where 'race', for better or worse, properly deconstructed and contextualized, remains a term in academic debate (though not in the larger society), I was almost astonished at the theoretical prissiness that has taken hold of academia in South Africa. In what has been perhaps the most racist society in the world after Nazi Germany you are not supposed to use 'race', not even heuristically as a native (in the anthropological sense) category that is meaningful in local discourse. Race is a metaphor, insists this line of reasoning. Yes, indeed it is. However, I do not like putting the issue along these lines because this has been done too often in South Africa to be a useful way of tackling the problem here. That is, in South Africa there is a strong tendency simply to substitute 'class' for 'race' or 'culture' in what Crapanzano (1986) has rightly called a synecdochic discourse, i.e., a discourse where any one term metonymycally stands for the whole range of possible terms without any major change in the ideological contents of the discourse as a whole. Of course, this view goes against the commonly held view in South African academic and much political discourse, where the search for the right term, depurated from any apartheid or 'colonialist' associations is an enduring pursuit for many. There seems to be little awareness that, after depuration, one is still very much inside the same realm of discourse or engaging in the same language game.[6]

Crapanzano is the one who puts it best. He also points out that race in South Africa is an essentialist construct. The definition and discussion of essentialism in Crapanzano (1986:20) is a very useful one here:

> South Africa's apartheid, understood, as here, in its broadest sense, is an extreme case of the Western predisposition to classify and categorize just about everything in essentialist terms. In this view, once an object or being is classified, it is forever that object or being. It has an identity. It partakes of a particular essence. It is subject to certain

[6] For a different view in South Africa itself (the exception that confirms the rule, one might say), see Coetzee (1991) and my discussion of his suggestions below (see also the end of chapter 6 for a fuller discussion).

> regularities, which are understood as rules or laws of nature, and has its own place within a particular picture of the universe, rather like a jigsaw puzzle. Essentialist classification is static. Any change in identity, in essence, in regularity, or in place poses a problem: indeed, it threatens the classificatory system itself. Or, as in the case of human society...we try to interdict changes that risk toppling the classificatory system. We legalize them out of existence. We deny them. When applied to human beings, essentialist thought precludes that small space of freedom that is at the heart of our humanity and enables us to engage in a vital manner with those about us. Racism is, of course, one of the most blatant and potentially evil forms of essentialist thought, but often its critical consideration masks other classifications that have the same epistemological roots and permit the same social and psychological tyranny. When we isolate racism, we risk the perpetuation of the *status quo* by letting one weasel category substitute for another. This is clear in South Africa, where many of the more 'enlightened' whites no longer talk about 'race' but about 'culture', 'ethnicity', 'class', or 'character', while still making the same social distinctions.

Whenever I talk about essentialism in South Africa or elsewhere, many object that in fact classifications are not static. As they change, then it would not be appropriate to talk of essentialism. However, essentialism is a principle, as Crapanzano tries to show above, and it does admit change. Only, the principle remains behind the change: hence the weasel quality of the whole system. The squeamishness at facing race comes from a desire to disengage from the admittedly oppressive discourse of apartheid and link oneself to the oppressed's side. There is an unspoken assumption that by depurating your language of apartheid thinking you will be pure and whole again, you will be able to inhabit a realm where you are somehow one with the oppressed, where you will escape the constraints (admittedly horrible) of being white in South Africa. Malan is the one who best describes this process of language depuration, showing, however, that, at the end of the day, you are still very much white. That means you have not escaped essentialism - you have only engaged in a language game where you are always proceeding to a position further afield after your present position has been declared no longer discursively valid. That is, you proceed in a synecdochic way from 'race' to 'culture' to 'class' while remaining still inside the same language game.

If you listen to many South African whites you will think they are not part of all that - of apartheid thinking. The people I met and befriended in Cape Town were sophisticated, world-wise

and more often than not also well-travelled. They had access to information and often read a good deal. They were consequently a far cry from the discursive crudeness of extreme right wing Afrikaners as these were being shown and interviewed in the international media at the time (1993). That is, they were very different from the people who most blatantly embody the stereotype of the South African racist, the people with whom the media has seemed quite fascinated. Also, the people I met made a point of distancing themselves as much as possible from any racist posture by carefully refraining to use abusive language or making racist allusions, by pointing to the abusiveness and racism in the language of others (say, of the extreme right), or by discussing and condemning racist ideas and attitudes and discrimination in general. The people I met were indeed very cultivated. Also, they would be cultivated not only in South Africa but anywhere else in the world. How do you discern, then, that they belong nonetheless to the same configuration of ideas, that they take part in the same language game, as South Africans of another ilk? By noting not only the way they construct their discourse but also by observing the way they lead their lives. After all, the language game operates within a context of social practice.

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Arthur – a coloured friend about whom I will talk at some length in Chapter 5 – for a time used to take me around the city in the evening. He is a hard worker. He works for a small NGO concerned with children's education that sucks his blood out as NGOs usually do in South Africa and elsewhere. Arthur is also a hard 'joller'. **Jol** is the South African term for having fun, going on a spree, revelling. Jolling is a counterpoint to the harsh life of divisiveness that prevails in South Africa. Maybe that is why jolling seems to be common to all sectors of society. I myself indulged in quite a lot of jolling in Cape Town, to the point that at UCT's Centre for African Studies people would answer, when asked about me, that I was doing research on the city's night life. Actually, jolling – especially with Arthur, who took me to all kinds of places – opened up new vistas for me. It was through jolling that I got in touch with quite a few interesting people whom I would otherwise never have met.

Anyway, Arthur took me one evening to a place in Observatory, one of Cape Town's southern suburbs where jollers go. It was originally a white working-class suburb with quaint old Victorian houses and cottages. Nowadays many students live there (and some work there as waiters and waitresses) and it has a somewhat bohemian atmosphere. Most of the restaurants and assorted hangouts are near the intersection of Lower Main Road and Station Road, where you can find a bit of everything. There is Duke's,

for instance, a bar with a pool table and music that is one of the most racially mixed places I know in town, namely, one of the few places were you find blacks, coloureds and whites together in some sort of shared, relaxed atmosphere (that is, not just spatially together in the same venue). Almost around the corner from it, though, there is a place where apparently only young whites of a certain kind go (the 'alternative' kind you often come across in Cape Town, that look like they came out of the sixties). Arthur goes to all these places, regardless of whether he is going to be odd-man out or not, with his afro, stylish vests and flamboyant manners.

The Africa Café is on Lower Main, not far from the intersection. You have to buzz before a waiter will come, unlock a security gate and usher you into a backyard with tropical-looking plants. The inside of the restaurant is painted a pastel tint between yellow and orange. There are Africana hanging on the walls and from the ceiling, like this gigantic toy airplane made out of wire (a common township product, originally made for the amusement of black children and now marketed all over the world). A very tall white waiter dressed in colourful West African garb - unlike anything black South Africans put on - tells us in detail about all the African food available. I think virtually all of it was from other parts of Africa, from Mozambique and Zambia to Ghana and Camerun (local African cuisine is not considered very interesting. Its emblematic dish is putu or maize meal porridge). A big tray full of small pots with intriguing delicacies with strange names was presented to us, from which we chose a few items. As we ate them, while sipping some African beer (I found it very tasty and unlike other beer), we looked around at the whites-only clientele out to have a taste of Africa. Of course, you might say they all live in Africa. Besides, they grew up there too. However, the Africa they live in is, as Malan points out in his book, a kind of 'generic Western' society (I myself would have said it is a kind of generic northern European society of colonial origin). The white suburbs they live in are theoretically in Africa, but in fact people who live in them mostly grew up apart from Africa, as Malan says of his own segregated childhood in Johannesburg's white suburbs. In this kind of predicament it makes sense to have a place called Africa Café where 'real' African food is served by white waiters dressed in African garb. For 'Africa' is actually elsewhere. It is an exotic place that is not 'us'. In Brazil, though there must be some, I do not recollect ever having seen an African restaurant anywhere. However, food whose origins are in (mainly West) African cookery is served daily at many tables in a great deal of the country. For, in Brazil, Africa is somehow also part of 'us'. Here is a difference that, to me, is quite fundamental. In spite of the relative scarcity of direct contacts with Africa nowadays, there is certainly much more of Africa in Brazilian society and culture as a whole than in South African white culture. In this sense, in spite of the fact that Cape Town is in Africa, cities

like Salvador or Rio can be said to be more African than it.

As Malan says, Africans he used to meet in his childhood in the northern suburbs were all 'from somewhere else': 'some faraway place where natives lived in mud huts and kept cattle' (Malan, 1991:44). I myself discovered that some blacks looked askew at me when I asked them where they came from. Traditionally whites have assumed that blacks are not from there, that is, not from white South Africa. Actually, South Africa proper was conceived to be a white country by most whites, hence blacks were supposedly all from the homelands. The apartheid government forcibly removed millions of urban and rural dwellers from areas that were declared white. As the conservative Afrikaans father of a friend of mine says (he is a former hand of the diplomatic service), the real settlers in Cape Town are the blacks, who 'traditionally' (this cursed adverb comes up at every turn in South African discourse) did not inhabit the Western Cape (a coloured and white area, 'traditionally').

In South Africa, there is no active interaction in any way with 'Africa,' nothing of the mixing (often called 'syncretism') one finds in Brazil. In the latter, for instance, it has since long become fashionable for the white upper and middle classes to become members of the candomblé cult and go to black diviners who throw their cowrie shells just like their counterparts in West Africa, to read what fate has in store. Also, there are several diviners, priests and practitioners that are white. Of course, in South Africa too there are cults such as the Zionist Church's that in Brazil we would call 'syncrectic'. That is, it is neither an entirely 'native' product nor is it entirely a Western religious cult either. In Brazil, it would be a cult where people of all races would take part. That is not so in South Africa, where the Zion Christian Church is quite important only among blacks (it boasts over three millions members, according to Malan, p.142). Brazil is full of such cults. However, contrary to what happens in Brazil, where music, cults and religious practices of African origin were appropriated by the whole society to the point that some of them (like samba and candomblé) acquired the status of national symbols, in South Africa whites (and coloureds and Indians) usually do not take part in them.[7]

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[7] See Fry (1982:4 and 7-53) for the rising of candomblé, umbanda and **feijoada** ('bean-stew': Brazil's equivalent of the Deep South's 'soul-food') to national symbols. For samba's syncreotic character (a blending of music of African origin and music and parading conventions of European origin), see Vianna (1994). It would also be interesting to look at soccer in both countries in this regard, for it is a truly national sport in Brazil, whereas in South Africa it is almost exclusively a black and coloured one (whites prefer either rugby or cricket to it. See chapter three below).

It was only little by little that I started realizing the extent of the isolation of white South Africa from Africa proper. Take, for instance, a quiet evening at a friend's house. I am sitting around a table with Duncan, an archaeologist friend, Joseph, a white English-speaking friend of Duncan's from Zambia and Hein. The latter is an Afrikaans artist who lived in a small dorp (village) north of Cape Town, where he had converted a local church into his residence, workshop and showroom. Hein was still somewhat bitter and heart-broken for having been expelled from UCT a few months before because of his political incorrectness (apparently, he did not watch his language carefully enough). From what I gathered from him, the students demanded his head and out he went, after a hearing in which he was not allowed to speak up for himself. We have just finished dinner - cooked by Duncan in his own house in Devil's Peak, a sub-section of Vredehoek (he lives on the same street as Paul). Joseph is telling us about his country of birth. 'Zambia is very Anglo-Saxon', says Joseph. I have been in South Africa for barely three months, and have not entirely mastered the rules of the language game yet. I am astonished by what he said. How can Zambia possibly be dubbed very Anglo-Saxon? Of course, Joseph meant that the white community in Zambia was mostly of British origin, say, in contrast to the white community in South Africa (that is mostly of Afrikaans origin - that is, Dutch, German and French Huguenot with a sprinkling of black blood). However, Zambia's whites are an even more insignificant minority than the already tiny white community in neighbouring Zimbabwe (who makes up less than 1% of the total population, in contrast to South Africa's 14%). Nonetheless, during a whites-only dinner, Joseph felt perfectly entitled to say that Zambia was very Anglo-Saxon. Except for me, nobody else around the table raised a brow.

Later Joseph started telling us about his mother who lives and farms in Botswana. I am always amazed at the mobility of Southern African whites. There are perhaps just under six million of them all in all, and yet they move around over an enormous area. Jeremy - a journalist I met - was born in Kenya, and a few years after independence his father - who was a school teacher - felt uncomfortable with the new status quo and went back to England. Then the family immigrated to Durban, Natal, where Jeremy grew up. There is also Christina, Paul's girl friend. Her parents are both South African but went to farm in Zambia, where Christina was born, grew up and went to school (Joseph went to school both there and in Zimbabwe. He became a dentist in England, though). Christina's parents own a house in Cape Town that is normally used only by Christina herself. However, they intend to settle in South Africa after retirement. Christina tells me that after they retire her links to Zambia will be severed (she goes back every summer on vacation). She does not feel herself a Zambian. It is just the country where she was born and grew up. Similarly, Carl - another of Paul's friends - was born and grew up in Swaziland. His parents are British, though. Carl likes Swaziland

(it is a beautiful country, he tells me, as yet largely unspoiled and untouched by the violence that has become so common in South Africa). He came to study in Cape Town but will probably not settle there after graduation because there are few jobs going for architects. Instead, he intends to travel. Christina is also a student of architecture. When Paul ultimately got a scholarship from an American ivy-league university to do his doctorate in the States, Christina decided to stay on in South Africa where she said she had a lot to do. Zambia was not an option for her.

White Southern Africa is in fact just a few suburbs, small towns and farmsteads scattered over a huge subcontinent comprising several countries. I felt my white friends and acquaintances were nevertheless rooted in that subcontinent. Most of them had lived overseas (invariably Europe or, less commonly, North America), but had chosen to go back to South Africa. However, differently from what happens in Brazil (where the idea of a common nationality for all has been very strong and there has never been any formal, legally enforced racial separation) whites in South Africa are not rooted in the country **together with** blacks, but rather **beside** them, as if by coincidence they occupied the same or adjacent territories.[8] Even Paul, politically correct as he was, did not have one close black friend (and had only one coloured friend). The only black whom I ever saw cross his threshold was his maid, who came once a week to clean. Paul, however, had been active in the ANC's Youth League. He had also done research once on drug use in the dangerous, gang-ridden coloured township of Lavender Hill. Also, before he left for the States he started studying Xhosa in earnest.[9] He also regretted he had to leave just after the elections to do his doctorate in the US, when South Africa was going through such a new, exciting phase in its history. He was very knowledgeable about the history of his country (especially its African part). Also, he was generally very concerned with South Africa and whenever I raised any criticisms that he thought were unfounded or unfair he would be visibly annoyed.

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[8] See next chapter for an explanation of this image in apartheid thinking.

[9] Xhosa is now one of South Africa's eleven official languages and the Western Cape's main African language. Most whites - especially urban dwellers - usually do not know any African language. Carl could not speak SiSwati, the language of Swaziland, and neither could Christina speak any of Zambia's African languages. Joseph does not speak any African languages either. Actually, none of them could even speak Afrikaans or any foreign languages. They were all monolingual in a multilingual subcontinent where there are millions of people who do not speak English even as a second language.

Too many foreign observers have pointed again and again to the lack of connectedness between whites and blacks in South Africa, due to the apartheid system and, worse still, apartheid thinking inside people's heads. Accordingly, too many politically correct, 'radical' whites in South Africa have been only too happy to show how often they went to the townships (where most whites never go), how many black friends they managed to invite for dinner at their houses, how very much 'in' they were in relation to blacks and their predicament, and how generally enlightened and non-complacent they were. In this sense, I do not think Paul is either a freak or else 'typical'. He made an effort: and his effort failed. In order to understand why I think it is vital to have in mind the wider context. For many whites in South Africa, to try and really jump across the racial divide is a very different matter from mingling in, say, Rio's hill shantytowns for samba rehearsals.[10] That is because, unlike in Brazil (in spite of the widespread character of race prejudice there), the racial divide can indeed be quite a barrier in South Africa. For there is no wider framework to facilitate contact as in Brazil.

As I said above, not only was Paul part of the ANC's Youth League, but he was also an activist within it. This at a time when the ANC was still a banned organization. I pressed Paul more than once to tell me why he had abandoned his activism in the Youth League. He hedged the question more than once and I could not get a straight answer out of him. He once showed me a notebook with pictures that he had collected when he was twelve: pictures of demonstrations with captions - added by him - saying things like 'South Africa, my land.' I remember doing similar things back home in Brazil: an expression of a boy's quiet pride in his own country (something that is still common, I believe, in the life history of scholars in developing countries). He identified with the struggle because identifying with the struggle became part of being a white South African for quite a few people. It would be in Cape Town that a white friend of Paul's would take him to illegal meetings in Gardens, a neighbourhood in the city-bowl not far from Vredehoek. And from there it would all start. Paul told me that he had hoped that, once the ANC was unbanned and things got better, there would be a coming together of everybody. I am familiar with this reasoning. As apartheid was supposedly what mostly kept people apart, its demise would surely bring about a long awaited family reunion of like-minded South Africans from all backgrounds. Paul expected it, with his heart, since the time he did his boy's work about his beloved land South Africa. It did not happen: once he got to go to openly held meetings of the ANC, he did not feel a coming together. A barrier was left, and he did not know how to break through it. I believe that it was at this time that he first attempted to learn Xhosa at UCT. Most of the members of the ANC

[10] See for instance Guillermoprieto's (1990) account.

section to which he belonged (and to one of whose meetings he took me) were black maids who worked in the white suburbs. He would not put this as bluntly as I am putting it here (not even privately to himself, I am afraid), but at the end of the day he was still white and they were still black. That is, they were very different from each other in many ways other than mere skin colour. To me, that was what ultimately alienated him from the ANC. The party, of course, is full of whites (and blacks, Indians and coloureds) who will swear to you that race is not a problem for them or inside the ANC. And, of course, as it must be, for it is a party with modern, egalitarian and democratic ideals (as shown in its Freedom Charter of 1956), non-racialism is the official line of the ANC.

I think the odds were against Paul, especially because he is genuinely sensitive and intelligent. My impression is that he could only blunt his discourse by withdrawing behind the essentialist barrier, from where he could go on pursuing his interest in African history. When I first rented the front room in his father's cottage in Vredehoek, he did strike me as a fairly inner-looking person. During my first months with him, hardly anybody ever came to the house or phoned, though later I discovered he had quite a lot of friends (whom I would eventually meet at one of the many dinners he would give after he had got over his hermit phase). Malan's way of withdrawing from South Africa's harsh reality of divisiveness was, as he tells us in his book, getting drunk and then moving to the United States. Paul, instead, would delve in his many books on African history, historiography, and philosophy, some of which he kept urging me to read. It was an alternative way he found of keeping in touch with Africa, besides learning Xhosa. Maybe his years in the States will provide him with a fresh perspective, just as Malan's eight-year sojourn in the States helped him put his country in perspective and write his unique book.

It was perhaps to be expected that I encountered more than once whites in such straits that were highly gifted and sensitive. Vanessa is another Jewish friend from Jo'burg. Once, for two days, I stayed with her in Jo'burg's white northern suburb of Saxonwold, in a beautiful, big house turned into a fortress. The house belonged to her parents (her father, just like Paul's, was also in the real estate business). Beside the usual assemblage of security gates, burglar bars, locks and strong doors, her parents' house also had an internal cast-iron gate separating the bedrooms from the rest of the house (it was usually left open during the night, though). Vanessa told me that since she was a child she had lived in terror of noises in the middle of the night. Jo'burg's crime rate is very high, and burglaries in both white and black suburbs are very common. Just as most other whites and well-to-do coloureds, Indians and blacks, Vanessa hardly walks anywhere in the city except in shopping centres. My own experiences of walking in Jo'burg were not very cheering.

Nothing happened to me, but I sensed danger in the air. Once, on a Saturday morning, on my very first day in South Africa, I walked from Eloff Street downtown to the mixed-race neighbourhood of Hillbrow past the train station, the Rotunda and Joubert Park. The city was crowded and there were blacks everywhere. I felt as if I were walking in a ghetto (an uncommon experience for a Brazilian, by the way - strictly speaking, Brazil has no ghettoes, though there are areas where either blacks or whites tend to be the majority of residents). The only whites I saw were behind the wheel of cars driving past and one lonely Portuguese shop owner right across the street from Joubert Park and its kombi-taxi ranks. There were also a few Indian shopkeepers standing outside their shops.[11] Later friends (both white and coloured) would tell me that you should not walk in that part of town, especially not on your own. Muggings are a commonplace experience. Gert told me he would walk around that area (he used to live close to Hillbrow) even during the evening and nothing had ever happened to him. But he is a tall, well-built man with the body of a rugby player.[12]

I also spent one evening strolling around Pretoria Street in Hillbrow and going into cafés, bars and restaurants there. Many whites do not go there any more. It is considered to be a dangerous area. However, some whites still live there, and it used to be the only defiantly 'grey' (racially mixed) area in the city during apartheid. I thought it was an interesting place, that reminded me of São Paulo's Boca do Lixo, a sleazy downtown area. Not far from there, there is Rockey Street in Yeoville, also a mixed race area. That is where Vanessa took me for the evening, to watch a performance of an old township jazz band of the fifties. Most people in the venue were whites. Afterwards, we took a walk along Rockey Street, past bars, restaurants and

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[11] The presence of Portuguese and Indian shopkeepers in the area was not accidental. Both Portuguese and Indians are often placed in intermediary areas such as Johannesburg Central. I remember that in Graaff-Reinet - a small town in the Karoo (now in the Eastern Cape Province) - there was also an Indian shopkeeper in a no-man's territory between the white town and the black location. The Portuguese were officially white under apartheid, but their whiteness was suspect (for they mixed) and they were accordingly discriminated against by the white population.

[12] Some Brazilians who have been to Jo'burg tell me they felt that there was 'racial tension' everywhere. The tension here was not linked in their minds to political events (such as riots, demonstrations, etc) but was rather the tension inherent in the racial compartmentalization of an essentialist country (a tension that, by comparison, Brazil lacks). As for the different situation in the Western Cape, see chapter 5 below.

entertainment places. After ten minutes, we came to the end of that part of the street. That was as far as Vanessa seemed willing to go. Once I discussed mixed areas with Arthur, who has been all over the country. I was trying to find out from him where the mixed areas lay. There are actually precious few of them, even now. In Jo'burg, for yuppies and alternative young people, Rockey Street is the place (Hillbrow being too sleazy and dangerous). There is hardly anything else. In the rest of the country, Arthur tells me, it is pretty much the same, if not worse. Mixing is good, and it is politically very much correct. However, overall, it is still done by precious few people in the whole country outside their workplace or formal occasions (say, 'mixing functions').

Vanessa has her own car, as most white young people. She goes everywhere on her own. As we drive past Central Jo'burg's fairly empty and eerie streets in the evening, where only blacks are seen walking, Vanessa tells me that she has memorized the location of every police station in the area, in case her car breaks down or she has a flat tyre. She would run to the nearest station, she tells me. Vanessa complains to me that she feels cornered in Jo'burg. At first I think that it is a phase she is going through in her life. However, little by little it dawns on me that indeed her life is pretty restricted. She goes to the houses of friends, she drives to the university (where she is doing a masters course in comparative literature), she goes to the shopping centres. For whites, Jo'burg is a series of islands in a sea of black territory. They almost invariably go from one island to the other by car (by the way, South Africa's system of public transport is ghastly. It makes the Brazilian system seem worth of Scandinavian countries). They do not even walk the streets of their own suburbs. The only approximate equivalent to this style of living that comes to mind in relation to Brazil is that of the **condominios fechados** or exclusive condos in new areas such as Barra da Tijuca in Rio. However, I find that life in condos is less typical of the Brazilian middle classes than suburban life is of the South African ones.

Vanessa complains to me that she is tired of trying to jump across the racial divide. The complaint is linked to an incident. We go into a bar in Rockey Street and she leaves me to talk to a black guy with an afro. She returns some fifteen minutes later. She tells me the guy is for her typical of the new South Africa. He is cute and intelligent enough, and has staged a few plays that were successful, if short-lived. However, it turns out that the contents of his plays are abusive. They please the audience because they use sexist stereotypes about women and gays. She thinks he is mediocre, and is only successful at all because he is black and cute. He also proposed going to bed with her, adding that otherwise he did not see the point of their continuing their friendship.

On the following day Vanessa took me to town again. As we reached downtown we were stopped by a young, stout Afrikaans police officer. There was an Inkatha demonstration going on just ahead of us. We got out of the car to watch. I asked the officer what it was all about. He dismissed the whole thing with a shrug, saying it was nothing. I was under the impression he had been trained to say that to curious whites. 'It's nothing, don't worry, we'll take care of it for you'. Inkatha is a Natal-based party that caters to a black nationalism based on Zulu ethnicity. It used to be all right to sympathize with Inkatha until the mid-eighties, I am told, but now it is considered to be a conservative party (see Maré, 1992). The Inkatha members were parading with all their paraphernalia, for instance, their famous 'cultural weapons' (traditional shields, spears, etc). Vanessa observed them and then turned to me and said that she was wondering what a man like that - she pointed to one guy that was dancing - thought about her. She was white, fragile and of another class, she said. I looked at her: indeed she looked pretty puny next to that guy, what with her frailty and her intellectual's spectacles. She went on wondering aloud what she possibly had in common with that man. Precious little, I thought.

And this is the crux of the matter. People like Paul and Vanessa are sophisticated, highly intellectualized and well-informed. Their conversation is cultivated and fluent. They watch their language carefully and ponder thoughtfully about a wide variety of issues. They have been exposed to good education - about the best available in the country and the continent, as a matter of fact. In this sense, the blacks they come in touch with are no match for them. However, there is more to it than that. Differently to what happens in Brazil, where there is a common language of cordiality that can be resorted to in cases of contact across class and other barriers, in South Africa there is no language (both in the narrower and wider sense of the term) bridging all the huge gaps. In comparison with Portuguese, English feels stiff and unbending on these occasions. Instead of bridging the gap, it is my impression English - or at least white South African English with its built-in formality and distance - rather widens it. Afrikaans (as spoken by whites), though striking me as more flexible, also seems to lack the quality I am assigning here to Brazilian Portuguese. In comparison with Brazil, South Africa therefore is not a country where there is a common language of contact. In this sense, indeed, the distance between Vanessa (who only speaks English) and that toytoying Inkatha supporter (who probably speaks Zulu and Fanagalo) feels very great. Of course, it is not that distances do not exist in Brazil. They do. Any piece of statistics about income distribution, educational opportunities, etc will tell you how wide the gap is, whether you choose 'race' or 'class' as your

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category.[13] However, this does not change my feeling that the distance indeed is huge in South Africa in comparison with Brazil. I will try to explore this feeling and contextualize it in the subsequent chapters.

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[13] See, in this regard, the pioneering work of Hasenbalg & Valle e Silva (1988 and 1993) on racial inequality, and the biannual **Os Números da Cor**, a statistical bulletin on race inequality issued by the Centro de Estudos Afro-Asiáticos in Rio.

II

The Racial Vision

I mentioned before the process of blunting of discourse, the dulling of language that Malan successfully broke through in his book by indulging in a personal view. This blunting of discourse is widespread in South Africa and is therefore not a phenomenon restricted to, say, white 'radical' circles. In fact, it parallels a similar blunting that happens in the very discourse of apartheid, in spite of all the important, diacritical differences between both discourses. For, as I will try to show below, in apartheid thinking too the language game requires that you mark off a circumscribed field and then only move around its well-defined boundaries. Everything outside is potentially a source of defilement or pollution (in the anthropological sense, as classically laid out by Douglas, 1966). There is something that defiles - in this case, a kind of language use. Any contact with it therefore can be seen as a source of pollution. Hence, I believe, Paul's outright and immediate rejection of my attempt to talk about the 'Zulus'. I was entering polluted ground and he would have none of it. To me, political correctness in South Africa amounted at times to an almost desperate attempt at securing ground that could be considered 'pure'. This purity, of course, belongs in the language game just as much as its counterpart, impurity, as Coetzee (1991) shows in his analysis of Cronjé's work (see below). Because of its lack of awareness of this, the usual kind of discourse in or on South Africa usually misses the overall configuration, or the larger picture inside which all the different positions can fit, however different they may seem at first.[1] For the language game can only work if all positions are there and make sense inside the same whole. For instance, denying that the Zulus exist as an ethnic group at all only makes sense if there is another perspective that posits people as invariably belonging to ethnic groups (and not as individuals on their own right). The latter position is that of apartheid thinking, as I try to show below, whereas the former is linked to what I call universalism (in this case, of British origin - see chapter 4 below). One position only makes sense in

[1] For a good and, to my knowledge, unique appreciation of the overall configuration of South African discourse and its different positions, see Bekker (1993).

terms of the other. That is why political or economic analysis alone more often than not just reproduces the polarization of native discourse without providing an overall context. You take one of the poles as your side and leave the other out in the cold, so speak. That is politically expedient (and even necessary, if one is to engage in politics at all). However, this procedure also tends to be sociologically impoverishing. In my opinion, that is where the blunting of discourse comes in. You have to blunt your perception and accordingly your discourse because otherwise you would be faced with at least the outlines of the overall pattern, not to mention its intricacies. As a consequence, you would not become a political activist as Paul used to be but rather someone who reflects (and describes), as Paul eventually became later. As West (1979) points out in his critique of 'cultural anthropology' in contrast with 'social anthropology' in the South African context, in the former you become concerned with the 'how', 'where', 'when' and 'what' instead of the 'why'. West favours 'social anthropology', as he also favours a stress on change, political and otherwise. Another South African, however, the well-known literary critic and writer J.M. Coetzee favours instead in his analysis of apartheid thinking a process of reading, in which a reading position is not a position at all but a **following** (1991:30). That is, for Coetzee there would never be an ultimate why, no deep root (in this case, of apartheid) to be excavated and extirpated. Instead of an ultimate explanation, there would only be a continuous process of interpretation. That is as it should be for, after all, who can really claim to know why the Zulus of Msinga engage in all those blood feuds? Or is Coetzee wrong and is there an ultimate reality to which one can turn for an explanation after unveiling all attendant myths on the way?

Looking back, I notice that among the people I met in Cape Town there was the perception of the absurdity (what Coetzee calls 'madness') of apartheid and at the same time a groping for explanation that led, more often than not, to some recycled version of a perspective stressing domination and exploitation. At times I would contest, say, Arthur's opinions, trying to pin him down to some opinion closer to what I was looking for (say, a heart speech), and yet he would talk away about the actual political workings of domination. At times, however, he did relent, affording me glimpses of another perception. These last, however, only came up somewhat unexpectedly, in the lulls of his more 'official' discourse to me that turned on the usual themes of domination and exploitation. It is not that these themes were valueless in the comprehension of what apartheid had been. Also, they were not only the thread in a continuous, somewhat mechanical discourse, but contained bits and pieces of Arthur's own experience as a displaced citizen. His family had been forcibly removed from an area proclaimed white to a coloured township when he was a child. He had been in 'youth structures' (as he called them) since an early age, that is, had been active

in the underground movement. However, to me, the lapses in Arthur's discourse, his sudden sighs, a sad look on his face, and occasional telling remarks coming out of the blue, apparently unconnected to any of his previous argument, at times illumined more than his other talk. For then I caught glimpses of the 'ungainly creature' (to borrow an ironic expression of Coetzee's, p.1), namely, apartheid as something other than an easily explainable system of domination. It was then that Arthur might be liable to use phrases such as 'it was crazy the way they operated...', say, referring to the practices of the minions of the apartheid government. Here I saw again, if only fleetingly, the shape of apartheid's 'madness', or of apartheid vision as something other than a political structure. However, this perception of the 'madness' of it all was only there for a moment, to be soon submerged again by the more usual kind of discourse.

I must say that for the people I met in Cape Town - virtually none of which, I think, had ever identified with the system - apartheid was almost as strange a creature as it was for me, a foreigner and outsider. Though they had all been born under it, had lived through it and often suffered oppression of one kind or another on account of it, they seemed to regard it as some kind of strange nightmare or spell that was at last fortunately over. It could often be an object of their disgust and criticism, but seldom, if ever, an object of keen curiosity. That is, the inner workings of apartheid thinking were somehow as opaque to them as they might be for me. They were capable, of course, of providing me with many illustrations and anecdotes (whites would usually tell about things that had happened to others, coloureds about things that had happened to themselves), if only to point out to me how absurd the whole thing had been. Also, they had plenty of factual information to provide (whites would some times tend to impart the latter in a reasoned monotone, whereas coloureds might be more forceful and emotionally involved in their own discourse). Coloureds would also talk about apartheid in relation to themselves, and, in this way, veer the conversation towards their own lives, feelings and emotions. I found it particularly difficult to elicit any heart speech from whites, that is, any discourse where well-packaged rationalisations of one kind or another did not figure prominently. However, beyond a certain point, whites and coloureds would all either fall silent, change subject or fall back on to the usual kind of explanation stressing political domination and economic exploitation. There were exceptions to this pattern (especially when I got to know a few people better), but the pattern nonetheless was there. I soon learned that the subject was best approached indirectly, if at all. For apartheid had a strange quality then. It seemed to be both too close to people's experience to be openly scrutinized and too distant in terms of people's overt identification to deserve detailed attention.

I propose therefore that we try and desiccate what my friends in

Cape Town could not point to me, and then try and see whether their apparent avoidance or ignorance of apartheid's deeper layers might not have something to do with something in apartheid itself (and also, perhaps, something in themselves). We could do worse than looking at the work of Geoffrey Cronjé (1945, 1946, 1947, 1948). For it is this obscure Afrikaans sociologist who systematized apartheid in a grand, scatological vision. His cardinal importance in codifying apartheid into a grand political project is acknowledged by several authors.[2] Interestingly, Cronjé is all but unknown in South Africa. None of the people I knew in Cape Town, for instance, had the faintest idea who he was (though Paul would later mention to me Coetzee's article on Cronjé, he first learned about the latter through me, in spite of the fact that he is a professional historian). Cronjé's works only appeared once (through an obscure Transvaal publisher) and were never reprinted. Besides, their circulation seems to have been restricted to a very narrow Nationalist circle. Cronjé was a member of the Broederbond (the secret Afrikaner organization behind Nationalist politics), and, though his work was far from secret, his organisation's opaqueness seems to have rubbed off on it and his own reputation in the wider society.

However, in spite of his obscureness outside Nationalist circles of an earlier age, Cronjé's works were very influential. Reading them one is fascinated by the spectacle of, as Coetzee (1991:3) puts it, 'apartheid nakedly occupied in thinking itself out.' None of the restraints of the language game I had become accustomed to in Cape Town seemed to apply here. Well, not quite. As Coetzee points out (p.8), Cronjé does address a warning to his (Afrikaner nationalist) readers right in the beginning of his major work (1945:7): he warns that there will be people reading him with a magnifying-glass in order to find evidence to present Afrikaners as the enemies of blacks and Coloureds. Consequently, he will have to restrain himself. As Coetzee shrewdly notes, the

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[2] The first reference on Cronjé I ever came across was in De Klerk's (1975) popular book on Afrikanerdom and 'puritanism'. Later, I came across other references, for instance in O'Meara (1983:70), Thompson (1985:43-4) and Davenport (1987:318 and 357). However, the most authoritative and detailed analysis of Cronjé's work is Coetzee's (1991). The latter remains an amazing and forceful interpretation of apartheid that, interestingly, has received little attention in spite of its author's stature as an internationally acclaimed writer and literary critic. Though I have read Cronjé's works extensively, I rely to a great extent on Coetzee's own analysis, especially in matters of linguistic detail (a field in which I could not possibly hope to surpass him). For more information on the importance of Cronjé's work in Nationalist circles of the forties and fifties, see Coetzee, p.4. For information on Cronjé himself and his overall work, see Pieterse (1969).

Afrikaans reader has to put back into the text the hostility that has been elided because outsiders (say, English liberals) might use it for their own purposes. However, just as it is, Cronjé's work makes for fascinating reading. At times it can be a rabid tract trying to pose as a travesty of sociological work; at other times, it reads as a confessional text where the author is indulging in his crassest fears and obsessions. Cronjé is avowedly in the pursuit of consistency and justice in putting forth his vision of a racial policy for South Africa (and Africa as a whole), but his texts themselves are full of leaks and contradictions. In a sense, his work anticipates in an awesome fashion exactly what apartheid would turn out to be: a Sysephean, obdurate, blind and obsessive attempt at imposing a narrow order in a world scatologically perceived to be on the verge of destruction and chaos. Like apartheid itself as it would subsequently unfold largely according to his own vision, Cronjé's narrative is, borrowing an image from Coetzee's (p.16), an integument perilously kept together and always threatening to burst apart. And the closer the threat was perceived to be, the more obdurate the determination to keep the whole thing together, as shown by Cronjé's constant - and utterly boring - admonitions as to the dangers awaiting society if any concession was made that could mar the overall picture.

Cronjé's nemesis is blood-mixing or **bloedvermenging**. He expatiates on it at length (Cronjé, 1945) and returns to it again and again. Though he despises and fears it, and sees in it the source of defilement and chaos, he is also clearly fascinated by it because he goes back to it again and again. This in spite of the fact that his tone can become minatory in his denunciation of the dangers of mixing blood, as when he says that

> there are whites, born in this country, that are so degenerate concerning morality, self-respect and racial pride that they do not feel any objection to blood-mixing... Blood-mixing in our country must be characterised as a **crime** because it is an extremely serious offence against the white race and undermines its continued existence. Whites must protect themselves against unscrupulous and criminal blood-mixers not only by forbidding mixed marriages but also by making all other blood-mixing (unlawful intercourse) punishable. **The individual is responsible to his community for his actions. The volk community [volksgemeenskap] can call to task anyone who does something that clashes against its highest interests. It is the duty of the volk community to punish such atrocities. The interest of the volk [volksbelang] always outweighs personal interest [eiebelang]** (Cronjé, 1945:47, emphasis in

original).[3]

This passage presents in a nutshell - and in a rather forceful manner - a variety of assumptions contained in Cronjé's work that we must look into in order to understand it. First of all, there is the characterisation of blood-mixing as a **crime** that undermines the existence of the white community. Why should that be so? First, humanity is seen by Cronjé as naturally divided in races. This variety (that has been divinely willed into being) has to be protected. This necessity, rather than explained, is simply stated as the cornerstone of his argument. The races are there, they are given, and each of them is a separate whole onto itself. These separate wholes have each an **eie**, their own singularity or uniqueness. This is in fact their essence (though Cronjé does not employ the term), upon which is based their identity and all that they can become. Through contact - say, through living in mixed neighbourhoods, working together, etc - there is an (inevitable) process of **gelykstelling** or 'levelling' between the races that leads to the levelling off of differences between them. This process leads to what to Cronjé is that great leveller of differences, namely, blood-mixing. This last, in turn, leads to **mengelmoes** ('mixmush') or a state of total indistinction. The **mengelmoes-samelewing** or 'mixmush' society is one in which 'the different races live so higgledy-piggledy that they ultimately form only one South African 'community'" (1945:65).

Coetzee (p.11) notes that, in its colloquial usage, **mengelmoes** is always derogatory because it 'implies a mixture in which not only individual character but all original structure have been lost; what is left behind is shapeless, undifferentiated and pulpy - much like faeces, in fact.' That is, in Cronjé's scatology, the **mengelmoes-samelewing** would be a society where all the inherently different races and communities would steam together until they turned into mush or pulp. The result would be, Cronjé muses, a **mengelmoes-ras** or 'pulp-race', even if one tried one's best to avert such terrible fate (ibid, p.66). Cronjé then goes on to contest a point of view that stated that the 'bastardization' (**verbastering**) of South Africa was an inevitable process (p. 66-71), examines the supposedly biological disadvantages of blood-mixing (p.71-8) and concludes that mixed race (Coloured) people live necessarily in 'social disharmony' (p.77). He next proposes the only way out of this sad predicament for whites, coloureds and blacks, namely, the necessity of fighting blood-mixing and

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[3] I have - and often will - run paragraphs together. I am deeply indebted to Fernel Abrahams from the Department of Afrikaans en Nederlands of the University of Cape Town for kindly revising with me my own translations throughout this chapter. However, though I have also relied on Coetzee's choice of terms, ultimate responsibility for the choice of certain terms is my own.

the pressing need for 'consistent' and all-out segregation: '**the more radically racial segregation is implemented, the better it shall be; and the more consequently the policy of racial segregation is put into practice, the more efficiently our blood purity and continued existence as a genuine European race will be assured**' (p. 79, emphasis in the original. Cronjé is very fond of italics). Segregation, therefore, is the only way to keep difference in this profoundly essentialist system where any assimilation of differences into each other is to be avoided at all costs.

The rest of Cronjé's book is mainly devoted to laying out the apartheid vision in its full scope. The first step that must be taken is to devise legislation prohibiting mixed marriages and punishing interracial sexual relations. Afterwards, there would come local racial segregation (i.e. segregation in separate residential areas in the same city) as a stage towards the ultimate aim of total segregation, whereby each volk community would keep to its own. The need for segregation is based on the need to avoid the state of total indistinction or **mengelmoes**. The latter is much feared by Cronjé because it leads to loss of identity, or loss of **eie**. The link between 'bastardization' and loss of a specific cultural identity is very clear when Cronjé talks, for instance, about the 'detribalisation of the Bantu'. This would be a direct consequence of the process of total bastardization (**uitbastering**) where the disappearance of the Bantu's ties to his own people (say, by immigrating to the cities) would cause him 'irreparable spiritual harm'. This would happen because, having lost his innate culture, the Bantu only takes up 'European civilisation externally and superficially, but cannot make European culture his own [**nie die Europese kultuur tot sy eie kan maak nie**])' (p.10-11). Afrikaners themselves have suffered such process of 'denationalization' in the hands of the British, and therefore they know what it is to lose one's eie and become one more in an indistinct mass of **losstaande individue**, individuals without any ties to a volk (p.17). Furthermore, as they have suffered 'denationalization' themselves, and managed to recover their own **eie** against British imperialism and liberalism, they are in a position to understand the sufferings of the Bantu and also in a position to act as 'guardians' of the Bantu (and Coloureds). That is, the white man (the Afrikaner) will be the guardian (**voog**) because he alone is in a position to see the need to implement segregation in order to defend or maintain (**handhaaf**) difference in society (Cronjé, 1946). In this way, apartheid is envisaged by Cronjé not as white supremacy but as a system devised to actually end any domination of one racial group by the other. The guardianship would thus not be domination but merely a necessary measure to implement the system.

Going back to our first quote from Cronjé's work, we notice the term **volk** contrasting with 'individual' (**individu**). In Cronjé's view, a denationalized or detribalised individual is not really

human, but just a being that somehow floats hopelessly in a pulpy world of non-differentiation and chaos where he is neither one thing nor the other. One example is, for instance, the Bantu who has lost his ties to his people but cannot genuinely become European (for he can only imitate European culture, not take it on as his own). The volk or the race, in fact, has primacy over the individual: in Cronjé's conception, the latter only is at all because of the former. The key to understanding this assumption is the term **volk**. The term harks back to the work of the eighteenth century German thinker Herder. **Volk** in Herder (cognate with Afrikaans and Dutch **volk**) can be translated as 'people' or 'nation', provided that one bears in mind that it is an organic, naturalized whole. As Berlin (1976) and Dumont (1986:113-132) point out, Herder's whole work can be seen as a local and particularist response to the French universalism of the Enlightenment. Instead of regarding history as the unfolding of a disembodied reason that is everywhere identical (as in French thought of his time), 'Herder sees in history the contrasted interplay between individual cultures. Each of the latter would make up a specific community, a people, a **Volk**, where humanity would again express in a unique way an aspect of itself of which the German people, as bearer of the Western Christian culture, is the modern example' (Dumont, 1986:116). The similarity with Cronjé's thinking here is remarkable, for the latter sees South African society as the interplay between individual cultures or races each ideally having their own unique identity. Afrikaners, who are also seen as bearers (and keepers and defenders in Africa) of Western Christian culture, would also be a **volk** in the same way as postulated in Herder's (and later German) thinking.

This particularist response to universalism deserves to be explained in more detail, for it is a kind of reconstructed traditionalism that in fact incorporates universalist values in itself. That is, at bottom, as Dumont is in the habit of pointing out in his works, it is an adaptation to modern values. In order to see that, however, one must have in mind what the latter are. The main feature of French universalist thought was the primacy of the notion that each individual would be unique and singular, different from all its counterparts, and that each individual would also have value in himself (or herself). That is, contrary to what happened in traditional societies (that Dumont calls 'holistic'), the ideological accent is placed on the notion of the individual, and not any more on society as a whole (Dumont, 1986:113 ff and 279-80). In universalism the individual would now have a value in himself or herself, independently from his ties to anything outside himself. This idea is now part and parcel of modern thought to such an extent that we mostly take it for granted. In traditional societies, however, the individual is not given primacy over society (if the individual is postulated at all). Dumont calls the two different systems - one giving emphasis to society, the other to the notion of individual - 'holism' and 'individualism'. Individualism would have come up

historically in the West, and would have been the dominant ideological model there as from the eighteenth century, from where it would have spread to the rest of Europe (and the rest of the world).

Historically, the prime example of interaction between a traditional society and individualist values is Germany's case. Eighteenth century Germany was a traditional society where modern, individualist values started causing some amount of havoc. In order to counteract universalism, Herder translated the emphasis on the individual over society of universalism into the idea of **Volk**, namely, into the notion of a society as a **collective individual**. That is, just as individuals were thought to be unique and singular, so were the **Völker** conceived by Herder as entities that were also singular and unique. For Herder, therefore, the **Völker** became individual and organic wholes, founded on history, language and nature. Just as specific individuals are thought of as having each their own specific identity, so each and every **Volk** would have their own identity that would distinguish them from all other **Völker**. For Herder, humanity, rather than made up of individuals as in French Enlightenment thought, would be made up of nations or **Völker**, each of them unique, irreplaceable and irreducible to any of the others. It is also interesting to note that the egalitarianism of Enlightenment ideals is translated by Herder into the equality between all **Völker**. Just as individuals would be all equal, so would the **Völker** be equal among themselves. Of course, Herder's conception of difference is an essentialist one. The **Volk** is ideally an identity that partakes of an essence (its singularity). Though changing over time, it would somehow keep its identity, again, much like individuals (see Dumont, 1986:118).

In this scheme, one would be first and foremost German, and only secondarily an individual. Or, to put it more accurately, one would only be at all because of one's link to a specific society (in this case, Germany). This ran counter French universalism where there is little or no emphasis on the nation as organic whole: the individual's belonging in humanity happens directly, as if it were, and not through the agency of a reconstructed social whole, as in the case of Herder and later German thinking. Dumont calls conceptions such as Herder's a case of 'artificialist holism'. He deems it artificial exactly because it is an attempt at recreating a social whole in an ideological environment that is not any more a holistic one due to the penetration of universalist values. That is, the traditional emphasis on the primacy of society has already been shaken. Therefore, an artificial holism comes up as a response to universalism. However, it is also a response that contains in itself elements of that which it consciously opposes. Hence the recreation of society as **Völker** or collective individuals conceived quite differently from society in traditional holism. Whereas hierarchy is the principle that predominates in traditional

holism (see Dumont, 1980:239 ff.), equality would be the ideological value predominating in individualism and artificial holism (in one case, equality between individuals as such, independently from their social ties, in the other equality between nations rather than between individuals).

The **Völker** are therefore supposedly well-bound, essentialist entities each with its unique traits. Their boundaries should be clear and kept under pain of dilution of their own identity, what would create an amorphous mass of individuals floating in the world without any ties or identity. Just as for Cronjé, the Herderian struggle is also one against loss of identity (understood as **Volk** identity), i.e. a struggle against submersion (in Cronjé's words, against being **verswelg** or 'swallowed down') in universalizing categories that take no account of society as more than a mere collection of individuals (or a **kultuurlose massa**, a 'cultureless mass,' in Cronjé's words). Accordingly, for Cronjé, culture is always **volkskultuur**, a 'structure of differences within which the individual lives and which sustains him' (Coetzee, p.15; Cronjé, 1948:33). That is, the individual has in fact no existence worth the name outside his own **volksgemeenskap** or volk community. That is why Cronjé (1945:47, see quote above) states that the '**individual is responsible to his community for his actions**' and that '**the volk community can call to task anyone who does something that clashes against its highest interests**'. Here there is a clear subordination (Dumont would say 'hierarchical encompassing') of the individual to the volk, without which he or she is supposedly little or nothing. Just as in (traditional) German ideology, where one was human because one was German, in Cronjé's thinking too one is human because one is Bantu, Afrikaner, etc.

For Cronjé, the only way of keeping difference from disappearing into 'mush', the only way for each and every race or volk community to keep and develop their own identity, free from all forms of domination, would be to implement total separation or apartheid. Through complete segregation the danger of the **mengelmoes-samelewing** or 'pulp-society' of indistinction would be averted and instead all the volk communities would develop separately according to their own pace and needs, without outside interference. This separate development would happen with one community '**next to the other [naas mekaar] and not one in the midst of the other [een te midde van die ander]**' (1945:80), as happened in the South Africa of his time, where, for instance, Coloureds lived 'in our midst', working in white houses and taking part in 'our' industrial and commercial life (id). If the stage of merely local segregation was not overcome, Cronjé admonishes, all that will be achieved will be the creation of **kleurlingkolle** ('Coloured spots') inside the white community (id). As Cronjé's language here is very revealing, we will later consider its implications. However, first, a contrast with

Freyre's description of Brazilian society might be useful.[4]

Freyre was a Brazilian sociologist who put forth an interpretation of Brazilian society that made him famous both at home and abroad (see chapter 6 below). In Freyre's works, what is depicted ad nauseam is exactly the **mengelmoes-samelewing** Cronjé fears so much. Slavemasters consort with slaves inside their own houses, sleep with slaves, etc. As Araújo (1994) points out, in Freyre's depictions every nook and corner of life has been invaded by this constant intimacy between whites and blacks (and Indians). Miscegenation is the most elaborate metaphor for all contact - not only are whites and blacks living in the midst of each other, but they also partake of each other's essence and identity, racially and culturally:

> Every Brazilian, even the light-skinned fair-headed one, carries about with him on his soul, when not on soul and body alike....the shadow, or at least the birthmark, of the aborigine or the Negro (Freyre, 1946:278).

Differently from what happens in Cronjé's texts, in Freyre's narrative mixing is good. Freyre (1987) goes into piquant details about love affairs between slave women and their masters. He praises highly the Portuguese colonizer's virility and the latter's supposed lack of racial prejudice. Freyre tells us that the Portuguese are essentially a mixed people from the south of Europe who received throughout the centuries heavy and welcome admixtures of African, Moorish, Jewish and Northern European blood. Because of this mixed character, the Portuguese race was supposedly able to adapt successfully in the tropics more than any other European race. Through the unions, first, between the colonizers and Indian women (who are candidly and graphically described as literally opening their legs as soon as the Portuguese landed in the country), and later between the colonizer and his black slave women, the Portuguese (then, Freyre assures us, a noble and enterprising race unlike their present-day descendants), though a tiny group, were able to people a huge 'new' country. They were also able to lay in this way the basis for the future Brazilian nation.

Though atrocities were often committed in the name of securing a position in a new continent and founding a new country, colonial society was essentially tolerant and benign in the long run. Far from being an inferior race, blacks (especially the Sudanese, whom Freyre considered to be superior to the Bantu) in fact played an indispensable role:

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[4] See chapter 6 below for a fuller account of Freyre's view. Some of the paragraphs below were taken from Ribeiro (1993a).

> The slaves who had come from the more advanced areas of black culture were an active, productive and, we could almost add, noble element in Brazil's colonization: they were only degraded due to their condition as slaves. Far from being mere draft animals or workers with a hoe in the service of agriculture, they had a civilizing function. They were the right hand in the agrarian making up [**formação**] of Brazil, and the Indians and, from a certain point of view, the Portuguese, were the left hand. (Freyre, 1987:307).[5]

And here we have the crux of the ideology: the notion of the complementarity of the races expressed in the trope of blacks as the right hand and Indians and the Portuguese as the left hand. DaMatta (1981) points out the fact that, as this ideology is based not on equality but on explicit hierarchy, there is no need to segregate either blacks or Indians. This is because the latter would have their own niches assigned to them within a complementary whole thought of as presided over by whites. That is, hierarchy here is understood as a relation of complementarity. Hence the famous emphasis on contact and intimacy between masters and slaves throughout Freyre's work, and the similar emphasis on contact that one comes across in everyday life in Brazil.

> Here [according to this ideology] the master does not feel threatened or guilty because he is subjecting another man to slave work: on the contrary, he sees the black man as his **natural complement**, as an **other** that devotes himself to hard work that is complementary to his own mental activities. Thus, according to the logic of the system of social relations in Brazil, there can be intimacy between masters and slaves, superiors and inferiors, because the world is ordered according to a hierarchy... The crux of our system is its profound inequality. (DaMatta, 1981:75)

DaMatta contrasts this system with the American system. As the latter postulates equality among all, segregation follows as a logical step. Hence the principle of 'separate but equal'. That is, segregation would be necessary to maintain essentialist values. There is little emphasis on complementarity in American thinking. In comparison with Brazil, there is almost no notion that out of the potpourri a (racially and otherwise) united whole will come up. As Dumont (1980:App. A) has shown, that was the only way to keep discrimination in a system that thought of itself as egalitarian. Given the essentialist basis and the dominant notion of equality (a notion that was comparatively absent or very weak in Brazilian ideology), segregation was the only way out to keep **both** egalitarianism **and** essentialism. The

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[5] All translations from the Portuguese are my own.

South African case - which we could regard as the American pattern taken to its ultimate consequences - also follows along the lines of essentialist differentiation.

No notion of equality was present in Brazil as a primary or dominant value. Thus, in Brazilian society, the paramount values have traditionally been hierarchy and contact instead of equality and segregation. In such a system there are all kinds of gradations, compromises and exceptions. For you must remember it is not a fixed hierarchy with congealed positions: the **principle** is hierarchical (in the Dumontian sense discussed below), but actual rank or position of given individuals within it often depends largely on a considerable degree of manipulation and a flowing process of redrawing of boundaries. For instance, though the juridical system is recognizably Western (and a rather sophisticated one at that),

> Nobody is equal among others or before the law; neither masters (differentiated according to lineage, family name, money, titles, property, education, personal relations that are liable to manipulation, etc) nor slaves, servants or subordinates, equally differentiated among themselves through several criteria.... The whole social universe therefore ends up paying the price for its extreme inequality by expressing everything in terms of gradations. In this system, there is no need to segregate either the mestizo, the mulatto, the Indian or the black because the hierarchies ensure the white's superiority as a dominant group. (DaMatta, 1981:75)

This is what Freyre's famous **democracia racial** actually amounts to: there can be 'democracy' or equality because everyone is differentiated inside the system, hardly any position being necessarily the exact equivalent of any other. Thus, the essentialism that is very clear in the American and South African cases in Brazil would be replaced by an ideology of contact, complementarity and blood-mixing.[6] The whole Brazilian system would be based on a rejection of the conceptual polarization implied in essentialism, and would therefore be at the antipodes

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[6] In an earlier paper (Ribeiro, 1993a, 1993b) I argued that essentialism was clear in the American and South African cases, but 'disguised' in the Brazilian one. I do not think any more along those lines. Now I assign essentialism to both the United States and South Africa, but not to Brazil, except as a phenomenon with localized importance in big urban centres and some social groups only: say, the small black movements in Brazil's big cities, the academic community that sympathizes with them and a few fairly circumscribed aspiring social groups, such as the country's middle classes.

of South Africa's essentialism. For traditional Brazilian thinking is an assimilationist thought. As for democracia racial, its contemporary equivalent, it is essentially modern, but with several important hierarchical traits (see chapter 6 below).

In his postface on hierarchy in his major work on the caste system in India, Dumont (1980:239-245) suggests that hierarchy is not fundamentally 'a chain of superimposed commands, nor even a chain of beings of decreasing dignity, nor yet a taxonomic tree, but a relation that can succinctly be called "encompassing of the contrary"' (ibid, p.239). The example he gives is the Biblical story of Adam and Eve. Adam represents in it both the human species as a whole and the male member of that species. Initially indistinct (neither male nor female), Adam becomes, when God draws Eve out of his body, both the major representative of the species and its male representative. 'On a first level, man and woman are identical; on a second level, woman is opposite or the contrary of man. These two relations characterize the hierarchical relation, which cannot be better symbolized than by the material encompassing of the future Eve in the body of the first Adam. This hierarchical relation is, very generally, that between a whole (or a set) and an element inside that whole (or set): the element belongs to the set and is in this sense consubstantial and identical with it; at the same time, the element is distinct from the set or stands in opposition to it. That is what I mean by the expression 'encompassing of the contrary'" (ibid, p.240). In other words, as Dumont points out, the principle of unity is above and beyond the two individuals in question. That is, it is on another level. Hence, if equality is declared on all levels, unity is broken. And unity springs from the principle that hierarchizes (encompasses) Adam in relation to Eve and vice-versa. That is, on one level there is equality, on another there is hierarchical encompassing.

Dumont (ibid., p.242) illustrates this point with two different schemes. One figure is a rectangle with two identical divisions (A and B), one next to the other; the other is a bigger rectangle (X) that contains in itself a smaller rectangle (Y). These two figures illustrate the difference in perspective between Brazil and South Africa that concerns us here. What Cronjé proposes is exactly the first figure, that follows the model of the modern ideology of individualism. If we think the rectangle as standing for humanity, then A and B would be two completely separate divisions inside humanity (say, two **volksgemeenskappe**, whites and blacks). One division excludes the other and there is no third possibility. In the case of the second figure, there are two rectangles **plus** the relation between X and Y (a relation of encompassing). The latter relation is not possible in the case of the first figure. The second figure, however, could not stand for apartheid thinking. For it shows exactly that which Cronjé wants to avoid and eradicate at all costs: Y **in the midst of X**, instead of A **next to** B (as in the first figure). The latter is Cronjé's

ideal, as when he explicitly says that separate development should happen with one community **next to the other**, but **not one in the midst of the other** (1945:80). For what Cronjé proposes is exactly the expulsion of Y (blacks, coloureds and Indians) from inside X (whites), what Dumont would call the destruction of structure in favour of dialectics (ibid., p. 242-3). In the Brazilian case, however, what one has is rather a model that resembles that of hierarchical encompassing. That is, what is postulated is a relation of complementarity rather than equality, as in the quote by Freyre above, where he suggests that blacks were the right hand, whereas Indians and the Portuguese would be the left hand in the agrarian moulding (**formação**) of Brazil.

Let us expatiate on Cronjé's narrative a bit more. In the hierarchical model totality preexists differentiation and differences. Also, there is the possibility of multiplying differences, without changing the overall principle.[7] According to Dumont, in the dialectical scheme (such as Hegel's) the opposite happens. The problem here is how to create a totality where there was none before. That is, the problem is how to create a differentiated totality out of an undifferentiated substance. This formula seems to translate well Cronjé's thought, where transcendence is synthetically produced. The volk communities will be rescued from the indistinctness of **mengelmoes**. Cronjé says at one point that total racial segregation will 'create and develop [**sal...skep en ontwikkel**]...different volk communities' (1945:80). That is, the primary substance is already potentially there: the natural differences on which the different races and communities would be based. Cronjé, however, emphasizes the fact that blacks and coloureds will have to develop their own communities in their own way. That is, in spite of the fact that Cronjé talks about these communities, in fact they are primarily given as a potentiality that will have to be developed (**ontwikkel** or 'develop' is a term that comes up throughout his texts). Out of the pulpy society of indistinctness will come up the **volksgemeenskappe** (volk communities) free from the plagues of detribalisation, blood-mixing and denationalization. That is, free to develop in separate according to their own character or essence. Transcendence here is not in the hierarchical relation within a previous whole, as in Brazil, but in the (artificial re-) creation of new wholes from 'raw' substances. We could perhaps also say that from the indistinct humanity of **mengelmoes** there will come up the differentiated humanity of apartheid. In Brazil, as is obvious from

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[7] In this sense, there comes to mind the amazing multiplicity of popular classifications of racial phenotypes in Brazil that contrasts with the rigidly essentialist - and comparatively poor - South African system of classification. A survey done by the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatistica (IBGE) in 1976, for instance, came up with 134 different self-designations.

reading Freyre's works, it is rather the opposite: differentiation is at best difficult and at worst impossible because blood-mixing is seen to pervade the whole society.

In the value dimension too we can see that Cronjé's thinking follows more closely the modern, individualist model. At times he tries to ascribe value to the communities of **volk** and the races, for instance, whenever he says that the white race has reached a higher level of development than the Bantu race. However, as we saw, on another level, this does not imply a single evolutionary model, though it does imply evolution or development. That is, some kind of evolution or development is necessary, but on each race's own terms. The core issue on this level is that development is development of one's own singularity (eie). That is, the **eie** or singularity of, say, the Bantu is what is going to be developed thanks to apartheid. As it turns out, the best illustration of this process is the very history of Afrikaner nationalism in this century. As O'Meara (1983) shows in his well-known book, Afrikaner nationalists in the thirties and forties had to 'interpellate' their potential constituency. That is, they practically had to create it. Rather than drawing on something that was already there, they strove to create something, namely, an Afrikaner community, where there was not one before. They successfully did that by creating a host of Afrikaner institutions, Afrikaner environments (schools, cultural associations, etc) and Afrikaner ways of thinking, all separate from English institutions and ways. Though Afrikaner nationalism (as all nationalisms) would claim again and again to be reclaiming and strengthening a threatened or lost tradition, the whole here - of 'Afrikanerdom' - was in fact a synthetic one.[8]

We are here in the modern configuration of values, in what Dumont calls the ideology of individualism. Just as every individual is thought of as unique and singular, so also every race or **volk** is unique and singular. Hence the impossibility of creating a system of value that would encompass them all. For in the hierarchical model value is contained in the hierarchical relation and is intrinsic to it, as Dumont proposes, whereas in the dialectical model it is seen as something that is **added on**. As the value-creating whole does not exist, it has to be created separately. Hence expressions such as **selfwaardering** ('self-valuing' or 'self-appreciation') that come up here and there in Cronjé's text (as in **nasionale selfwaarderingsgevoel**, or the feeling of ethnic self-appreciation of poor Afrikaners - Cronjé, 1945:57). That is, Cronjé's 'raw' substances, as they do not belong in any totality (except the totality of indistinctness of **mengelmoes** that has an entirely derogatory value), they do not have value in themselves

8 See Hofmeyer's (1987) interesting article on the construction of an Afrikaner history and identity. See also the discussion in chapter 4 below.

(or, if they had value, that was in the past, before they were 'detribalized', namely, before contact). Hence the need to create and develop a process of 'self-valuing'.

The 'levelling' or equalization (**gelykstelling**) of British liberalism that disgusts Cronjé so much can in fact be found in his own thought, but on the level of the **volksgemeenskappe**. By separating the latter, Cronjé postulates them as being on an equal footing. In other words, they can be thought of as equal to one another (if not now then at least in the future as they develop along their own lines), without domination of non-whites by whites, exactly because of separation and the lack of a common framework to encompass them all. For contact leads to domination, as in the case of the Bantu, detribalised and 'denationalized' under white rule, or in the Afrikaners' own case (oppressed by the British as they had been). Therefore, only separation would ensure equality. In his inability to distinguish levels (that is also the modern inability, as Dumont puts it), Cronjé is very modern. Hence perhaps why contact for him is so harmful.
Apartheid thinking, therefore, in spite of its claim to protect differences, by shunning compromise in fact levels all the finer shades off and creates instead a human landscape that is flat and without surprises. Leaving aside obvious contrasts in personal talent (judging from their respective works), the vibrant, colourful and varied world of Gilberto Freyre's works, full of verve, people and situations, gives way in Cronjé (1945) to a very schematized and impoverished world where people make only fleeting and didactic appearances (white women who work for Indian bosses; a white man who is married to a coloured woman; a young coloured woman talking about the young white men who come to visit her at night). Also, whenever people appear in Cronjé's text, it is in a context of (racial) contact (what is in itself meaningful). Most of his text, however, is often only the dreariness of his discourse on the **volksgemeenskappe** and the races, of rules and norms for the implementation of apartheid, of constant admonishments on the danger represented by blood-mixing, 'denationalization', contact, mixed neighbourhoods and the English liberal point of view. There is no possibility of transcendence, no escape from an intensely lit world devoid of dark corners. Even the mention of God in his text can hardly stand for transcendence. Cronjé's God, after having willed the variety of creation, disappears from the scene. His is a Calvinist God. As Dumont (1986:52-29) points out, it is a distant God, the archetype of the will in which one can see a stronger confirmation of the individual. Cronjé's God is therefore in a certain sense himself, and God's will has turned into a man's individual will (what is also in accordance with Calvinist doctrine, where otherworldliness is now concentrated in the individual will). As Dumont points out, we are here faced with the domain of Tönnies' 'arbitrary will' (**Kürwille**). The mystical and affective aspects (so common in Brazilian Catholicism, with its adoration of saints and prophets) are absent in Calvinism.

Calvin's doctrine is in this sense a nomocracy. Significantly, Cronjé proposes rules and regulations quite often (see for instance his list of rules to regulate segregation in the workplace, 1945:83). Also, he often invokes the need for consistency in the implementation of apartheid. Affection - something belonging in the domain of Tönnies' 'spontaneous will' (**Naturwille**) - takes refuge in Cronjé in the issue of blood-mixing, only to be denied and rejected, as when Cronjé states that he does not believe that the white man he met who was married to a coloured woman was really happy as he claimed to be (ibid, p.61). However, as Coetzee notes (p.18-9), Cronjé is also returned by his own imagination again and again to what he most fears, namely the pulpy world of mixing.[8]

It is in the very realm of affection that placing Cronjé's thinking becomes problematic. As Coetzee seems to imply in his text, if affection is left out of interpretation then one cannot really read apartheid properly. Coetzee tries to reintroduce it, in my view, through the concept of 'madness', a category that is not really part of any of the sociological, historical or political studies on apartheid that he quotes. Coetzee (p.24) proposes that perhaps madness makes use of rationality in order to pursue its objectives, and not the other way round as scholarship on apartheid has always proposed. That is, the search for a rationality - say, apartheid based on capitalist interests, or group interest (the Afrikaners') - would in fact be a vain search. One can accordingly only keep a process of reading on the move, where one is going to read metaphors that slide into other metaphors, without arriving at any ultimate, 'solid meanings' (p.30). Of course, this view is unacceptable to many in South Africa and outside it. There is a widespread feeling that pervades both the literature and people's discourse that there **must** be a rationality behind apartheid, something that can report us to some ultimate meaning. That understanding apartheid is in fact a constant process of reading metaphors such as Cronjé's is hardly acceptable for us, especially because we feel that someone - or something - must ultimately be responsible for it all.

Coetzee (p. 27-30) puts forth a good, if brief, review of points of view among some well-known authors. We could roughly sum up these points of view by stating that apartheid thinking or ideology is seen as a kind of false consciousness. The scholar's search then becomes one to find the true meaning behind that false consciousness. As Coetzee points out, the image of the individual subject, moved by self-interest, that thinks up the ideology as a more or less mystifying system is implicit in many of the analyses (as, for instance, Moodie, 1975 and Dubow, 1989). In Thompson (1985), the mythology created by a group of intellectuals subsequently expands to society, acquiring in the process a

8 For a fuller discussion of Calvinism, see next chapter.

life of its own. The ideologue creates the ideological text that is then adopted by the man in the street because it is in accordance with his fears and prejudices. In Johnstone (1976), the ideology is something that 'masks' social inequality. The latter would be the true theme and premise of the ideology, of which race would be only the superficial form. In the work of two historians (Marks and Trapido, 1987), there is talk of 'ideological rewards': the 'petit-bourgeois' obsession with blood-purity would have found an expression, among others, in the laws against blood-mixing.

And so on with O'Meara (1983), Sharp (1981) and others. There is in all those authors a search for explanation that is a search for an ultimate meaning inside a methodologically individualist framework where the reality acknowledged is that of individuals or groups of individuals that get together around common interests (for instance, as in the case of the Broederbond, the secret league to which Cronjé and other Afrikaners belonged). Hence, lacking a wider frame, those authors find themselves having to explain apartheid as an ideology created by a handful (say, the Bond) that somehow spread to many (say, the white voters who voted for the Nationalist Party in 1948). Though Coetzee (p.20) singles out MacCrone's (1935) analysis as the one that is least able to 'empathize', in fact one might say that all the authors mentioned, in one way or another, also fail to deal with affection in their interpretations of apartheid. I have always found it intriguing that personal accounts such as Malan's (1990) or Kuzuwayo's (1985) could be not only so much more gripping than scholarly analyses but also, in a way, more true to the subject they were trying to tackle. I can only speculate here whether what former prime-minister and architect of grand apartheid Verwoerd called 'the blunting of the emotions' would not be a fairly widespread phenomenon in what concerns attitudes towards apartheid.[10]

The 'man in the street', so to speak, may suffer from a similar problem, though perhaps to a lesser degree. Arthur, for instance, does not build grand interpretations of apartheid, but the gist of his arguments when he gets carried away is one that is not essentially different from what one finds in scholarly analyses. Namely, he also somehow subscribes to the ultimate rationality of self-interest.[11] However, as he is not a scholar, Arthur can

[10] 'The Blunting of the Emotions' is the title (in Afrikaans, 'Die Afstomping van die Gemoedsaandoeninge') of his doctor's thesis in psychology (Verwoerd, 1924).

[11] This congruity between lay conceptions and scholarly ones is due, as Dumont (1977) shows, to the prevalence among us of conceptions rooting the individual in notions of interest and power. Dumont traces the construction of such conceptions through

still every now and then leak insights of quite another nature, if only unexpectedly and fleetingly. Then he will lapse from the monotone of his discourse and his voice will carry emotion, frustration and even, on occasion, anger. Whites are far less given to such lapses, in my experience, and their discourse (I am talking here of enlightened urban professionals, of course) tends to parallel more closely scholarly discourse, even though it is usually not as elaborate as the latter (unless they are scholars themselves). Comparing Arthur with Paul, for instance, I noticed that the latter's lapses were much rarer (and, perhaps because of their very scarcity, somehow more meaningful). In general, I often felt there was something missing in the often fluent and well-packaged discourse about apartheid that one comes against in South Africa again and again. Here the blunting of discourse that I mentioned in the last chapter therefore seems to parallel a blunting of affection too.

Is Cronjé's discourse well-packaged and fluent? He tries to streamline it into an 'ex-cathedra lecture' model (Coetzee, p.17), with neatly numbered sections preceded by concise summaries, but in fact his text is full of leaks, as Coetzee points out. Leaks that would later become embarrassments (like the centrepiece of his work of 1945 on blood-mixing) even inside Afrikaner nationalist circles (Coetzee, p.24 and note 22). For, very significantly, the silence that has enveloped Cronjé's work seems to have begun exactly in the innermost circle of Afrikanerdom where his work circulated. Coetzee (id) declares to be most reluctant to put Cronjé's 'madness' aside into some segregated compartment (say, Cronjé's own mind or a section in a handbook on apartheid propaganda called 'appeals to the irrational'). Coetzee goes on to say that 'I am strengthened in this reluctance, rather than weakened, when I observe that not only hostile commentators but Cronjé's ideological heirs have difficulty integrating his madness into the accounts they give of his reason. His heirs are either silent about it or euphemize it; as clearly as decency permits they signal that it is extraneous, unnecessary, even an embarrassment' (id). Coetzee therefore refuses to contain Cronjé's thought to its assigned place, and asks himself whether it is really possible to talk of 'rationality' (say, self-interest) making use of 'irrationality' (say, fear of blood-mixing) for its own ends. Would it not be, Coetzee asks, rather the other way around, namely, that 'irrationality' makes use of 'rationality' for its own ends?

As someone trained in the social sciences, I find Coetzee's use of 'rationality', 'irrationality' and 'madness', somewhat disturbing. I was trained (in a Brazilian social science tradition seeped through with French 'rationalism' of the so-called French

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the work of several authors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

sociological school) to look for some kind of rationality behind everything, even though in not quite the same way as political scientists or historians. Though my training does not allow me to use Coetzee's terms without quotes, I must say I am just as reluctant as Coetzee to assign Cronjé's imaginings to some neat pigeonhole. For in South Africa (though it must be added the phenomenon is not restricted to that country) I often came across very fluent and glib interpretations of apartheid in academia and outside it that seemed to do exactly that: assign 'madness' to a specific locus and then, almost in the same breath, distance themselves and their authors from it. It is my impression that the vast enterprise of explaining apartheid (that has already yielded thousands of titles worldwide)[12] is somehow also a process of distancing through labelling and pigeonholing. Academics in South Africa and outside it often seem to be saying, if only under their breath, that they have nothing to do with that, that visions such as Cronjé's can actually be set aside in their proper place where they will not contaminate the rest of us. At its worst, theirs is an exercise which is disturbingly similar to apartheid's own obsessive attempt at exiling to prescribed spaces what it considered dangerous. For it is fundamentally the same language game preoccupied with constantly displacing impurity (and with it affection) to spaces further removed. In this sense, the relative silence surrounding Coetzee's own article is also significant. It is certainly the most challenging interpretation of apartheid to have appeared in the past few years, and yet it has received little attention. I wonder whether any attention would have been paid to it at all had it not been for its author's renown.

Paul, for instance, read it and passed on his copy to me. When I had finished reading it, I mentioned to him how impressed I was. He told me there were other interpretations and then, as a way of example, lent me a rather insipid piece on early Afrikaner intellectuals in the nineteenth century Cape. He expressed no curiosity about the copies of Cronjé's books that I had previously made and shown to him. There were other interpretations - other opinions, other voices. To him, Coetzee's was only one among many. Paul did not let himself be contaminated by it.

I also mentioned Cronjé's works to a few other friends. Graeme said that he would like to know what is in them but stressed that he would never want to read them himself (he and his family had been forcibly removed during apartheid from an area proclaimed white to a bleak and dangerous township - Hanover Park - in the Cape Flats). Duncan is an intelligent, white archaeologist friend with a very rational mind whom Graeme finds pedant. I also told

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[12] For a partial but nonetheless significant bibliography with some eight hundred titles (not a few of them important works), see Van Kessel (1989).

him I was reading Cronjé and how difficult it was for me (because of Afrikaans). He remarked that reading Cronjé must be also difficult because of the incredibly abusive language he must employ. Enlightened, progressive whites like Duncan can be - for Brazilian standards - incredibly fussy about language use. Any trace of racism in language can be readily pointed out and condemned. To me, this fussiness at bottom also had to do with the need to distance oneself. By repeatedly pointing to apartheid thinking in others you are also placing yourself firmly and decidedly outside it in the same way as Cronjé believed that he could distance himself from mixture by condemning it wherever he saw it. As Fernel (who is coloured) commented to a friend about the language in passages from Cronjé's texts that we were reading in his lounge in order to check my own translations, it is all 'apartheid Afrikaans'. That is, it is most obviously not the language we speak. The only one who expressed curiosity about Cronjé's texts themselves was Arthur. When I told him what they were about, and of the importance of Cronjé's works in the subsequent devising of apartheid policy, he asked me to make copies of them for him (I still owe him those copies). He is a very well-informed and tuned-in person with an inquiring mind, and I am quite sure he would at least leaf through the texts and read a few passages from them. For, as I said above, Arthur, in spite of his glib political discourse (and his long political activism), has managed not to always blunt his perception or curiosity (or, for that matter, his emotions).

For most of us, however, Cronjé belongs to a very specific locus very far away - if we bother at all to pay any attention to his obsessive musings and imaginings. To me, the huge international interest awakened by the first democratic elections in South Africa in April 1994 can be at least in part explained as an overwhelming feeling of relief that apartheid was at last over - and with it, supposedly Cronjé's hatred and obsessiveness that were also the hatred and obsessiveness of apartheid itself. As Coetzee (p.1) says, the 'unlovely creature' has been laid to rest and we will not have to face the likes of it any more. But has it really been buried? Coetzee ominously points out that legislation can be dismantled, practices combated, but thinking ultimately tends to overflow from its assigned place.

III

Whites

Gert more than once placed me face to face with my own limitations. With him, I often had to strive to read what was not explicitly there. He once or twice complained that I saw him as a type - as an Afrikaner from the dry, desolate Karoo in the Cape interior - rather than as an individual, unique in himself. Indeed, perhaps more than almost anyone else I closely interacted with in South Africa, Gert did appear some times to me as a type. I have always had more difficulty trying to understand, say, Arthur in terms of his origin as a Cape Coloured. As I write this Arthur's image stands before me. I am reminded of how unique he can be. With Gert rather the opposite might happen. Namely, I might have to strive to see his uniqueness through my perception of him as someone from a different place, with a different history and perhaps even feelings all too different from mine. This might happen in spite of the fact that his was a fairly untypical Afrikaner life history. I wonder whether he might not have had the same difficulty in my regard, namely, whether he did not also see me as a type of some kind or other.

At times Gert would react to things I said in ways I could not fathom. Once, for instance, on our way to the Karoo, I had insisted that we stopped to take a look at Swellendam. The small town had been founded during the times of the Dutch East India Company. It was pleasantly nestled on a slope at the foot of a high, green mountain, and still had its original Drostdy (magistrate's court and residence). The Drostdy had been turned into a museum. It was well-preserved and had some old period furniture plus an assortment of various odd trinkets that had obviously come out of the family chests of local inhabitants. Gert was, however, less than happy about our stopping over. As we walked around the grounds of the Drotsdy, he told me, with a hint of irritation in his voice, that only foreigners and a few other people ever came to such places, implying that he himself would have never come. We ate something in a café (in South Africa, that is a corner or night shop). Unlike most cafés, however, that one had a few tables and so we sat down to eat our mince and kidney pies (both are found more or less all over the country). There were gaudy religious pictures hanging on the walls that reminded me of similar (though not as gaudy) pictures and religious sayings spread by Gert's mother on the walls of her farm house in the Karoo. Gert read the text in one of them for me. It was about meeting Jesus on a beach. It sounded very tacky.

We were in a café owned by whites but where mostly only coloureds went. Across the street, there was the town hotel. Whites were coming in and out the door. Gert told me it was a custom to go and eat at the town's hotel restaurant on a Sunday. As we finished eating, I was still curious about the place and wanted to take a look around: that was my first **dorp** (small town) in South Africa. I was particularly intrigued by the fact that it was dead calm and empty on a Sunday, when a Brazilian small town of equivalent size might have some life in it. Also, practically only coloureds roamed around (a feature that, I would discover later, Swellendam shared with its counterparts all over the Karoo. Later I would ask Gert about it and he would say that whites did not roam the streets because it was considered to be **slegte maniere**, bad manners. He also pointed out to me that coloureds who had risen into the middle-classes - teachers, for instance - would not walk around). However, Gert would have none of it. He did not want to look around. He said, with a hint of annoyance in his voice, that it was only an Afrikaans dorp like any other. I felt he knew such places too well to feel any interest in them.

It was only much later that I realized - putting together bits of incidents with pieces of evidence - that Gert's background had in fact amounted to a kind of straight-jacket he had to break from. One of the possible reasons he was annoyed in Swellendam that day was that, as I discovered much later, the town was associated with his family past. An uncle of his (who was a politician in the National Party) once had told the family that their roots went back to a burgher who had supposedly been somewhat of a prominent citizen in Swellendam. Enterprising and sceptical as he was, Gert did some research of his own and discovered that his ancestor had in fact not been as respectable as his uncle had implied. His uncle therefore had only wanted to polish the family roots. Looking for family roots and constructing genealogies is a very common pursuit among South African whites (far more common than among any comparable group of Brazilians, I am afraid). Bulging volumes with long genealogical lists can be found in almost any bigger South African bookshop. As I would come to realize later, in some way, our visit to Swellendam may have taken Gert back not only to a family incident, but also to the whole issue of Afrikanerdom and its emphasis on an incredibly tight fit between history, language, religion, national and self-identity. What was for me only a foreign - and therefore interesting - place to be explored, for him was most probably a profoundly **déjà vu** context he was tired of. It would be only little by little, however, that I would come to understand what exactly it was that Gert was apparently fighting against.

Differently from being a Brazilian (in probably any current version of being Brazilian that you may choose, except perhaps the military's), being an Afrikaner seems to carry a very heavy freight with it, especially if you are from what is some times

referred to as a 'traditional background' (which is Gert's case). For Afrikanerdom was constructed as a total space. That is, just as with apartheid ideology (that, though it is not necessarily so any more, has been an integral part of Afrikaner identity for a long time)[1] being Afrikaner was also conceived as a total field. It was supposed to rule all spheres of one's life, from behaviour to thought and feelings. For instance, Eloff (1942:95) claims that a 'typical Boer' simply cannot figure out how on earth a white man can commit the 'gruesome crime' of engaging in sex across the racial line. He states that a young Boer does not talk to Native or coloured women unless it is absolutely necessary (as when discussing wages during harvest). Though he respects old people of colour (**skepsels** or 'creatures'), the young Boer would not think of talking to a woman of another race (let alone sleep with her, Eloff is obviously saying). Also, Eloff emphasizes that this deportment is so normal to a Boer boy that he cannot even conceive of any different conduct. Therefore, being an Afrikaner means (or used to mean) being a very specific type of person: white, Afrikaans-speaking, with an innate aversion (**afkeer**) to blood-mixing (Eloff, p.96), Calvinist, loyal to the **volk**, etc. It is not surprising, therefore, that Carl Verwoerd, former Prime-Minister's Hendrik Verwoerd's grandson, declared, after he joined the African National Congress after a lot of painful soul-searching, something to the effect that he was experiencing freedom from an enclosed space.[2] For within the straight-jacket of Afrikanerdom, there was very little room for compromise or just to move about, as both Carl Verwoerd and Gert ended up discovering.

As a teenager, facing fierce opposition from family and school friends, Gert decided to spend a year abroad. He was not going to any radical, revolutionary place, but only to a small town in German-speaking Switzerland. Nonetheless, it was felt that he would be brainwashed by foreign ideas and therefore become estranged from the **volk**. There is even a word in Afrikaans to designate that highly undesirable predicament. Those who part from the **volk** or are seen to deviate from its ways become **volksvreemd** or foreign, alien to the **volk**. When Piet, an Afrikaner friend of Gert's, went to **Die Burger**, a conservative Afrikaans newspaper in Cape Town, for a job interview, he was

[1] As Cronjé and others emphasized, apartheid was the 'autochthonous' (**inheemse**) policy of the equally autochthonous Afrikaner people (Cronjé, 1945:22). Apartheid, more than a mere policy, was therefore **the** Afrikaner point of view par excellence (Coertze, 1943).

[2] He declared that when he came to the Cape to speak in Parow (a working-class Afrikaans suburb outside Cape Town) in the campaign for the 1994 elections. See also his interview (Pople, 1993).

turned down because he had a foreign accent in Afrikaans. Piet had been raised abroad. He had been contaminated, had become **volksvreemd** and therefore suspect. The heavy import of the term should not be underestimated. The large three-volume Van Dale dictionary of the Dutch language says that **volksvreemd** comes from German **Volksfremd**. The term belongs in Nazi terminology and was used to designate those that did not belong to the volk nor were acceptable to it such as Jews, gypsies or homosexuals. Afrikaans itself has other expressions denoting (inner) transformation through contact or estrangement. In this way, it may be said of someone who has close or intimate contact with Africans that **hy het verkaffer**, 'he has become a Kaffir'. As Coetzee (1981:10) notes for another, similar compound - **vermeng** or to mix - the prefix **ver-** has a perfective force that is lost in any translation. In the case of **vermeng**, it denotes mixing so that no unmixing will be possible. In this vein, perhaps it would not be too inadequate to translate **hy het verkaffer** as 'he has irremediably become a Kaffir'. Cronjé's own terminology is full of such terms denoting irreversible transformation (such as **verbastering** or, even worse, **uitbastering**: total, complete bastardization).

Gert still keeps his ties to his family. However, he has come a long way, or at least all the way from a farm in the Karoo to Cape Town (and Europe, where has lived altogether for two years at different points in his life, and Brazil, where he has spent a few months travelling and learning Portuguese). The bits of his life history he has related to me seem like tales from another world altogether. When he was five his mother decided to send him away from the farm to a good boarding school in Stellenbosch, a small historic town that is the home of Afrikaner academic excellence in the Cape. Gert told me that in order to survive both at that and another boarding school in the same town to which he would go later he had to become very organised (he is indeed a meticulous person). My impression was that not only was there a tight schedule to be followed at his schools (as is usually the case), but pupils also had to toe a very narrow ideological line informed by an equally narrowly conceived religious framework. He told me that the newspaper available in the reading room of one of the schools was **Die Burger**.

The apparently high prominence of religious values in education particularly intrigued me. I had heard of Christian National Education but, until meeting Gert, had failed to appreciate its full significance. Though there are plenty of catholic schools in Brazil (including boarding schools, especially for girls), and I had friends who had studied in some of those schools, I had never heard a tale of such a degree of intent organisation and discipline, of a world whose boundaries - intellectual and otherwise - were so well-marked and narrowly defined. Later, I would often hear school tales from whites. Vanessa, for instance, would tell me tales of her narrow (I believe fundamentalist) Jewish

schooling, as would Paul (and friends of his gathered in the evening in his house). All those stories had in common the fact that they were the tales of seemingly sensitive, intelligent people who felt at odds with their surroundings. I could see no bitterness or open resentment in the way they told those stories - mostly stories of repression of the mind (not to mention the body) in stifling environments. However, the frequency with which I heard such stories from different people perhaps show that, deep down, some scar must have remained. To think that generations of white South Africans have been subjected to such schooling under more or less severe forms makes one think that the system must have left its imprint on a whole sector of the nation. If anything, it was when I heard such stories that I realized I came indeed from a very different world. Even though I found school in Brazil often utterly boring and teaching uncreative, I can only compare what apparently prevailed in many South African schools to the environment in one of Brazil's military schools. For somehow schools in Brazil more often than not never managed to be such a totalizing environment.

I started then to search for the roots of such 'totalisation', i.e., the creation of an environment that is ideologically 'air-tight,' so to speak, a space where everything is one's own (eie) and not different (**anders**), where there is ideally no pollution from outside. First I discovered that Christian National Education is rooted in Calvinism. However, not in just Calvinism per se but in a very specific form of it, namely, Reformed (**Gereformeerde**) Calvinism or what also came to be called in South Africa the Doppers' church.[8] 'Dopper' is a most interesting term. Apparently, nobody knows for sure where it comes from, but the interpretation favoured by Doppers themselves is that it comes from Dutch **domper**, a device used to extinguish a candle. According to Willem Postma, a Dopper himself and an important figure in South African Reformed Calvinism during the first decades of the century, the Doppers were called that because they extinguished the light of the Enlightenment 'which threatened to destroy Afrikanerdom' (quoted in Hexham, 1981:47). This self-denomination is meaningful because it points to the reactive character of their identity: the Doppers are against the universalism of the Enlightenment. Significantly, Hexham (p.100) mentions the fact that the Reformed Church in the Netherlands came up as a reaction to French domination of the country under Napoleon and the subsequent liberal state that replaced it (where the Calvinist faith did not retain the paramount role it had before). In Dumont's terms, we are here faced with a case of artificial holism: a new social whole is recreated inside an environment already deeply informed by Enlightenment ideals. The

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[8] 'Reformed' here is a tricky translation because it also serves as a translation for **Hervormd**, which refers to the official, not the separate Calvinist church.

Doppers' recreated holism was of a special kind, though.

The cornerstone of the Doppers' beliefs - separation - can be gleaned from Postma's quotation of Paul's injunction in II Corinthians 6:14-18 in his book **Doppers**:

> Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean things; and I will receive you (quoted in Hexham, p. 48-9).

Hexham (ibid, p.49) says that Postma declares after this Biblical passage that Doppers therefore 'instinctively react to everything English and Kaffir...' For Postma, Doppers opposed universalism and imperialism and the 'hallmark of their nobility is the maintenance of the purity of their race and blood' (quoted id). Therefore, the danger that faced Doppers - and Afrikaners - after the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 was considered to be both anglicization and 'going native' (ibid, p.71). The ideological foundation for separation had been laid.

It must be stressed that the Doppers were a minority within the Afrikaans population (about 10%) and that the Dutch Reformed Church per se was at the time - the first decades of this century - evangelical in orientation, namely, it did not share the Doppers' interest in separateness, as Hexham shows. However, the Doppers were very instrumental in the early period of the Afrikaans nationalist movement. For instance, they were the majority of Hertzog's supporters when he found himself in the political wilderness after Union in 1910 and created the National Party soon afterwards in 1914 (the forerunner of the National Party who would win the 1948 elections and implement apartheid).[4] Besides, they almost single-handedly tried to keep a separate Dutch-speaking school system running counter to Milner's strong anglicization campaign after the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. The campaign was aimed at what would soon become the Afrikaans population (then referred to more commonly as Boer or Dutch). This separate school system was to embody the ideal of Christian National Education and was supported by the **Gereformeerde** Church: a separate education for Afrikaners (and Doppers), that is, separate from the Anglicized state school system (this last did

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[4] Hertzog was an important Afrikaner politician who later became prime-minister of South Africa.

provide a religious education that Doppers, however, found unacceptable because it diverged from their own beliefs).

As Hexham (p.60 ff) shows well, there is a direct connection here to the Netherlands and the Reformed movement there. For several ideas that were to be later transplanted to South Africa would first appear there, in the wake of the **Afscheiding** or separation ('chasm') of a group within the Dutch Reformed Church (the State Church) in 1834 to form the **Christelijke Afscheiden Gereformeerde Kerk** (Separated Christian Reformed Church). The Reformed church then sent a minister to South Africa - Dirk Postma - who would join Paul Kruger's (the future president of the Transvaal) Dopper congregation in Rustenburg (ibid, pp.60-1). The Dutch connection did not stop there, as other Dutchmen - such as Jan Kamp - would also become important figures in the local Reformed church. However, the most important aspect of the connection is the ideological influence rooted in the work of two important Dutch Calvinists, Groen van Prinsterer and Abraham Kuyper.

Van Prinsterer's most important work is **Ongeloof en Revolutie** ('Unbelief and Revolution') of 1847. According to Hexham (pp.106-9), for van Prinsterer revolutionary thought - that of the French Revolution that had led to the invasion of the Netherlands and the early nineteenth century Dutch liberal state - had removed God from human affairs and instead enshrined reason in its place, making 'every man a law unto himself.' Van Prinsterer condemns this individualism. However, the totalism of an individualistic framework is also his own. To him, humanity is divided into two radically opposed groups. Liberals were not really liberal (as persecution of the **Gereformeerden** in the Netherlands had shown). Liberals believed in the equality of men, but God had in fact favoured some men over others, so there were the saved and the lost. Van Prinsterer then goes on to defend the necessity for Christians to preserve their religion. Hexham says that, according to him, to preserve their religion 'Christians must actively promote the Gospel in all areas of life. They must develop their own political theories and their own versions of history. But above all they must diligently educate their children as Christians' (p.108). The motto 'In Isolation is Our Strength' - that would later become the slogan of Kuyper's Anti-Revolutionary Party - was created by Van Prinsterer.

Van Prinsterer's disciple and later an important political figure, Abraham Kuyper transformed individual salvation into social salvation embracing not only all of society but even all of creation. He therefore shifted the believer's attention from his own soul to the condition of society. To him, 'the Christian must make the Lordship of Christ a reality, by applying Christian principles to every area, thus developing an integrated way of life' (ibid, p.111). Most importantly, Christians must not accept an 'ungodly compromise': 'everything not obviously opposed to the Gospel must not be accepted as good. Christians must struggle

continuously to bring all their thoughts and actions under the scrutiny of God's Word' (id). There is hardly any room for dissidence or compromise in such a view of the world. It is no wonder that difference in this view can only be accepted, if at all, as inhabiting elsewhere. For contact and proximity with the lost can bring about the downfall of the saved too. Hence the repeated emphasis on separation.

In the Netherlands, the fight for what Kuyper came to call **soevereiniteit in eigen kring** - 'sovereignty in one's own sphere' - ultimately led to the creation of the famous system of **verzuiling** or vertical divisions within society. The main idea here is that society is divided into **zuilen** or 'pillars', groups each of which would have its own institutions (parties, schools, universities, newspapers, hospitals, etc) separate from the others. The **zuilen** are mainly religious, the main ones being the Dutch Reformed (**Hervormden** and other) and the Reformed (**Gereformeerden**), on the one hand, and the Catholics, on the other, besides which there is a general non-religious **zuil** (Kruijt, 1959; Lijphart, 1968:17).[5] This system - that led to what Lijphart (1968) denominated a 'politics of accommodation' - implanted as from the 1920's has pervaded all Dutch society. It reminds one very much of the principle of separateness in apartheid, except, of course, that it did not bring about the inequality that apartheid brought (nor was it imposed from above, as apartheid, on an unwilling population). What happened then in South Africa, where instead of **verzuiling** there came up **apartheid**?

The premise behind apartheid is in fact not different from that behind **verzuiling**: both are premised on separation. According to Hexham (p.188) the first use of **apartheid** comes up in an article of 1914 by the prominent Dutch Dopper settled in South Africa, Jan Kamp. The article - published in a Reformed paper in Potchefstroom, the Reformed Church's centre in South Africa - refutes charges that Doppers are reactionary saying, however, that they should be prepared to stand apart to be effective Calvinists. Therefore, **apartheid** apparently first comes up in a religious context, what is in itself quite meaningful. Also, significantly, Jan Kamp was a theorist of Afrikaans - that he defended as the Afrikaners' true language instead of Dutch - and also a strong and prominent supporter of Christian National Education (ibid, p.136-7). Kamp's argument was that Dutch literature had evolved out of the national spirit of the Dutch people which in turn had emerged from their Calvinist religion. Besides, he assumed that 'essential understanding demands careful intellectual articulation' (p.138). Accordingly, literature in

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[5] The situation is somewhat more complex than that. For instance, the liberal or socialist are only a **zuil** as to what concerns politics. As for 'culture' they are neutral.

South Africa had to emerge from Afrikaans, not from Dutch, as Afrikaans was the language of the Afrikaners. The stress on the need for intellectual articulation created a high degree of deliberateness in the building of the relevant ideological constructs here, namely, the Afrikaans language and tradition.

There is here a primordial linking of language, tradition or history and (self)identity. It is, in Crapanzano's words, a synecdochic discourse where language became the exact replica of the nation (Hexham, p.135). Any breaking of this visceral linking is seen as a loss of identity for both self and **volk**. That is the theme of Postma's novel **Die Eselskakebeen** of 1909. The novel is the story of a boy who feels alienated in the English-language school where he studies. He eventually realizes his own true identity as an Afrikaner, becomes a teacher and returns to his people (Hexham, p. 138-141). The novel is centred on the language issue. Naturally enough, just as with the Gereformeerden in the Netherlands, in South Africa too the key issue became education. For it was through education that the primordial linking of language, tradition and identity could be maintained and cultivated. Education became then not, as in modern theories, a means of loosening traditional bonds and creating a critical individual, but a means of keeping the individual within the very tightly defined boundaries of his social situation (Hexham, p.150).

This cannot be overemphasized. In a booklet of 1905, Jan Kamp argued that free schools could save Afrikaners from becoming 'bastardized Englishmen' (p.152). State schools with their anglicizing tendencies therefore were seen as a threat to the language of Afrikaners, and consequently as a threat to the recreated holistic Afrikaans identity. In this thinking, just as in Cronjé's, taking on any foreign, outside traits was a step towards the annihilation of both self and **volk**. Just as many Englishmen undoubtedly believed, Kamp also thought that Afrikaners could never become true Englishmen, but only 'bastardized' ones. Therefore, it would be far preferable, considering that no assimilation was possible, to keep to one's own identity. 'Bastardization' therefore refers not only to mixture between blacks and whites, as in Cronjé's texts, but to a much wider process of loss of identity - **any** mixture here seems to lead to 'bastardization', to an identity that is 'put on' instead of being genuine. Christian National Education, therefore, was much more than a specifically nationalist and religious way of educating children. Rather, it was a veritable ideological straight-jacket deliberately and consciously devised to keep the essentialist unity between history, tradition, language, religion and identity and to stifle anything that could threaten that unity. No wonder Gert felt oppressed and eventually had to break away from it.

Not surprisingly, the same Postma who wrote about loss of iden-

AFRO-ASIATICOS
BIBLIOTECA

tity through education in a foreign medium repeated Van Prinsterer's dictum 'in isolation lies our strength' and stressed the need to preserve Afrikaans identity from being destroyed, on the one hand, by the English, and, on the other hand, by Africans (through 'swamping' due to the latter's high numbers). Postma said some time in the first decade of this century: 'give the black nations a piece of ground where they can establish their own schools, churches, prisons, parliaments, universities. If we go there we must not ask to own ground or vote... If they come to work they must not play tennis...' (quoted in Hexham, p.180). Therefore, Postma wanted for Africans exactly what Doppers wanted for Afrikaners: an essentialist space of their own that much later the apartheid government would try to build for them in the form of the homelands. Wishing for others what one wished for oneself was to become in Afrikaner eyes the essence of the honesty of the apartheid system.

Hexham (p. 187 ff) traces the Nationalist Party's acceptance of the 'Dopper myth of apartheid' as from 1914. The Dutch Reformed Church, until then dominated by evangelical traditions, also eventually became a haven for Reformed views. Besides, Doppers came later to dominate the Broederbond (the secret Afrikaner political organisation), a dominance that lasted until the 1950's, when Verwoerd would wrest control of the organisation from them. Therefore, in the formative period of Afrikaans politics prior to apartheid the Dopper influence seems to have been very important. The waning of that influence was marked by Verwoerd's quarrel with Du Plessis, a Dopper political scientist from Potchefstroom University. Du Plessis believed in the consistent application of apartheid in South African society. He believed equality for Africans was necessary for the very survival of apartheid: he consequently criticized sharply Verwoerd's policies. Verwoerd won the quarrel (p. 190). With Verwoerd, not only so-called 'grand apartheid' (say, the homeland policy) would be implemented but also the inequity inherent in the system would become more and more glaring. That some Doppers sincerely believed in the system (in its idealized form rather than in its implemented, supposedly debased one) does not change the fact that, in the end, though Calvinism helped create Afrikaner nationalism the latter eventually turned on the former (p.197) and took a life of its own. This is perhaps best illustrated by Diederichs' work in the thirties (Moodie, 1975:159-161). Diederichs introduced the nation between the individual and God and invested it with divine will. Later, as we saw, Cronjé would also place the accent on the **volk** and the race, reducing the individual to a mere vessel for social values.

It would be worth pausing a little longer over the issue of the Calvinist framework here. I believe that a good understanding of

apartheid ideology depends on it.[8] First, as a religious doctrine, Calvinism represents the break of the duality between what Troeltsch puts as the 'given conditions' and the 'ideal claims' (Dumont, 1986:53). Catholicism, on the other hand, lives with the ambiguity of a world that is not as it should ideally be. It employs several mediating instances in order to take account of this duality (for instance, monasticism as invested in a group of secluded faithful, the clergy that mediates between the faithful and God, the Pope, the saints, etc). In Calvinism, however, all mediation disappears and instead a direct bond between individual and God is established. The tripod that supports doctrine in Calvinism is the conception of God as **will**, predestination (that depends on God's will) and the Christian city as 'the object on which bears the will of the individual' (Dumont, 1986:54). Contrary to Catholicism, Calvinism - as exemplified by Calvin's own life - is turned towards action, discipline and rules (Calvin was a law-maker in Geneva). Dumont (p.55) writes:

> God's inscrutable will invests some men with the grace of election, and condemns others to reprobation. The task of the elect is to work for God's glory in the world, and faithfulness to this task will be the mark and the only proof of election. Thus, the elect relentlessly exercises his will in action, and in so doing, while absolutely subjected to God, he will in fact participate in Him in contributing to the implementation of His designs.

The task here is the calling or **roeping**, through which the elect links himself to God's will. That is, in Calvinism there is an active participation in God. It is through acting in this world that the faithful shows his election. With Calvin, the world as an antagonistic component - as an obstacle to the ideal - disappears. The other world is embodied now in ourselves through 'our determined action on this one' (p.56). There is here the systematic application to this world of an extrinsic, imposed value. Dumont points out that here Tönnies' 'arbitrary will' (**Kürwille**) predominates. This value is not 'a value drawn from our belonging in this world, such as its harmony or our harmony with it, but a value rooted in our heterogeneity in relation to it: the identification of our will with the will of God' (id). Messianism disappears completely. 'The Kingdom of God is essentially, we may say, to be built up piecemeal on earth through the efforts of the elect (p. 57). Community here derives only from an ethical duty to preserve election and make it effective. Life in society should be modelled by the Spirit (p. 58).

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[8] The following discussion is based on Dumont's (1986:52-59) discussion of Calvin and his doctrine. Dumont's discussion is in turn based on the work of the German scholar Ernst Troeltsch.

It is within this framework that we must place the Sisyphean character of apartheid policy and Afrikaans identity-building. God's will has to be respected, and as racial separation is in accordance with God's will, there is no way out except implementing it. In the same way, Jan Kamp argued that 'God, in His providence, had formed the Afrikaner people just as He had created the English, giving them their own history and traditions' (Hexham, p.163). Therefore, it was one's duty to preserve that history and those traditions. Furthermore, this preservation of tradition should be as thorough as possible for the sake of God's glorification. It would not be an exaggeration, therefore, to see both apartheid and Afrikaans identity-building as an attempt to implement God's kingdom on earth, to create a society modelled by the Spirit, a well-bounded, ideally 'watertight' construct where individual freedom was reduced to a highly stereotyped social role.

I mentioned above that Gert to me, more than most other people I had met, seemed a type. However, he had in many ways taken quite a distance from his traditional background. He became involved in anti-apartheid politics to some extent, left an Afrikaans institution for an English one, started working for NGOs dealing with black education and started teaching blacks (something condemned in his traditional circle). All that said, however, and making allowances for personal traits (for instance, a tendency to be very reserved about himself), Gert still struck me as a type, though he could hardly be taken to be a 'typical' Afrikaner. My impression is that the tight-fit postulated by Christian National Education and traditional Afrikaans thinking in general between self-identity and **volk** identity left its imprint on him. This in spite of the fact that, as I indicated above, Gert reacted to the tight fit between language, culture and identity in his background. He would accordingly some times accuse me of trying to hide behind culturalist views, as when I tried to explain to him people's behaviour in terms of their cultural background. He pointed out to me once or twice that I even did it in relation to myself, when I tried to 'explain away' acts of mine in terms of what I thought was customary in Brazil. Like many other whites I met, he felt strongly that people were individuals, and that if they behaved one way or another that was their own responsibility. Namely, their behaviour ultimately could not be ascribed to nor explained in terms of their culture. However, interestingly, he was also very much aware of cultural ways of behaving, as when he made certain sweeping remarks about Brazilians or coloureds or Africans. I found Gert was also keenly aware of racial or ethnic differences. Once in Brasília, during an evening gathering, in order to show me how white South Africans classify people, he classified for me all the people in the room with a swiftness and certainty that astonished me. So-and-so was Italian-looking (and therefore an Italian), so-and-so was white and so-and-so coloured. I then realized that, as Nogueira (1985) pointed out, Brazilian awareness of racial/ethnic

differences tends to be intermittent and sporadic whereas American (or, in this case, South African) awareness of the same is all pervading. I would have never been able to classify my friends so swiftly and with such certainty. Of course, as soon as Gert had classified everybody I realized I could also classify them, though I had to think before I could do it. Also, my classification was in one or two cases different from his, and I was not very sure how to classify some of the people there.

Unlike in South Africa, in Brazil such classificatory categories are not like shiny badges that you carry along wherever you go. For Brazilian society lacks the totalizing spaces of South Africa. Though it certainly is a racist society, awareness of difference operates in what is, in comparison to South Africa, a rather fuzzy and unsystematic way. The best guide here is still Nogueira (1985), in spite of the slightly outdated character of his text (originally published in 1954). He compares race classification and relations in Brazil and the United States in terms of prejudice based on appearance (**preconceito de marca**) in the first case and prejudice based on origin (**preconceito de origem**) in the second case (his division is the equivalent of the essentialism/assimilationism pair that I prefer to employ. See also Degler (1971) for a more fully developed comparison between the two countries that is also significant for a comparison between Brazil and South Africa).

To me, the different religious matrix operating in both cases might be an explanation for this difference. As for Brazil, DaMatta (1981:75) points out the importance of mediation in the social universe patterned after Catholic cosmology:[7]

> ...the logic of the system of social relations in Brazil is one where there can be intimacy between masters and slaves, dominant and subordinate because the world is in fact hierarchized just as the Catholic church's heaven. This last is also divided and totalized into spheres, circles, planes and wholes peopled by angels, archangels, cherubs, saints of diverse merit, etc. All these are consolidated in the Holy Trinity, which is whole and part at the same time. Equality and hierarchy are simultaneously given. The fundamental point of the whole system is its profound inequality. Nobody is equal among others or before the law. The masters are differentiated through blood,

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[7] The Catholicism here is, of course, the Portuguese-Brazilian version. Freyre's (1987) exposition is still the reference text. See also Araújo's (1994:75-96) observations on Catholicism in Freyre's work.

> name, money, titles, property, personal relations liable to manipulation, etc. Slaves, servants or subalterns are equally differentiated among themselves through several criteria... The whole social universe ends up paying a price because of this extreme inequality by expressing everything in terms of gradation (my translation).

That is, unlike in apartheid or American segregationism, all diacritical differences are encompassed inside the same whole but always assigned different loci within it. There is no equality overall, nor inside any of the categories. There is also no need to construct well-defined, essentialist categories later to be assigned a place of their own. The principle that hierarchizes inside the system (the primary value placed on white appearance) creates a common universe dominated by gradations and intermediary categories, such as those highlighted by DaMatta as an example, namely, **mameluco** (of Indian and white parentage), **mulato** (of black and white parentage) and **cafuso** (of black and Indian parentage) (DaMatta, p.82). Instead of essentialism, here we have an assimilation of categories one into the other creating a modulated, common whole. In the South African system all intermediary categories are reduced to a single, all-encompassing category, 'coloured', that is then emptied of its mediatory value and constructed as yet another compartmentalized category on its own (see chapter 5 below).

Back to Gert's classificatory competence, generally, though progressive white South Africans refuse any explicit linking between race, culture, background, etc, and instead stress individual ability, effort, choice and responsibility, they did look at the world from a perspective that was far from being race- or culture-blind. Only, their discourse was too sophisticated to accept the kind of open linking present in the discourse of Afrikaner nationalists. Namely, they did label people in their minds even though they might watch their language carefully so that such labelling would not be too obvious. Of course, it is not that people are not labelled in Brazil. They are. However, the labelling is not so open and so conspicuous, nor does it matter so much as it seems to in South Africa, where by labelling you people exile you to some category or group outside their own. In South Africa, labelling is the process by which people end up sending you out in the cold to what is supposedly your 'own people' (whether they be 'leftists,' 'gays,' 'academics,' 'Africans,' etc), namely, to where you supposedly belong. (White) South African identity depends on very well-marked boundaries. It is your 'background' (in South African synecdochic language, this can stand for 'race,' 'culture,' 'class,' etc): where you grew up, where you went to school, what kind of accent you have, what your interests are, and your manners. The kind of work you do and what you own are also very important. 'Background' is also, to my mind, closely tied to the

manner of presentation of self. It is advisable to present oneself as an achieving person, for instance, as someone who is reliable and hard-working. When Gert and I broke up, the very first critical remark that he passed around among common friends and acquaintances was that I did not do any work. That is, he did not see me as someone who performed properly according to his own (and, I assume, South Africa's) standards. I eventually discovered that in South Africa it is advisable to make clear again and again that one is working, preferably hard, either by dropping appropriate remarks to that effect (say, an occasional remark on how much work one has done on a given day) or by behaving in a way that shows one is working. There is, in comparison with Brazil, little patience or good will towards people who are seen as slow or inefficient workers, or as people who do not live up to the high standards white South Africans believe they abide by. There is a lot of criticism of Africans in that regard, for instance, as being unreliable, lazy and incompetent workers. Somehow, ability to perform is directly linked to one's 'background'.

The interesting thing about 'background' is that whites generally believe it is quite a hindrance to have, say, a close relationship with someone from a different background. Difference here is not a somewhat erratic, fuzzy entity as it is in Brazil's gradualist, contact-ful universe, but is rather a compartmentalized, total and all-pervading entity. It is considered to be a serious obstacle. In intimate relationships across the racial line, for instance (relationships that are far less common than in Brazil),[8] white friends and acquaintances of the white partner involved tend to inquire again and again about problems deriving from difference in background. Hein, a tall, good-looking coloured dancer who has had relationships with several white women, tells me that not only difference in background is thought to be a very thorny problem, but also it is expected of him that he will adapt to his partners' standards and values ('come up to their level' is the expression he used). He says he is often put against the wall by his white partners for not following their standards of self-reliance, achievement, etc. For instance, it bothered his partners a lot that he was not from a wealthy background nor had any wealth himself, and that he consequently was seen as someone who did not have anything to 'fall back on.' Having something to 'fall back on' also meant more than economic assets: it implied having a culture of one's

[8] According to Carlos Hasenbalg, of Rio's Centro de Estudos Afro-Asiáticos, around 20% of all marriages in Brazil can be considered inter-racial marriages (this percentage was arrived at through study of census results). He also added that the corresponding percentage for the United States was around 2-3% (Dr Carlos Hasenbalg, personal communication). I assume South Africa here is closer to the American than to the Brazilian pattern.

own too. From what Hein told me, he was both expected to live up to white standards and expected to have something of his own to fall back on. There is an underlying ambiguity here that is, to me, at the heart of the South African dilemma.

As Coetzee (1988:8) points out, in the context of an essentialist European identity search blacks find themselves in a quandary in South Africa. If they rise up socially and, in Hein's words, 'come up' to the whites' level, they are hard to accept because they have left behind their own culture.[9] However, if they stick to their own culture, then they are not acceptable because their standards are too different. In fact, ultimately, it is my impression that blacks and coloureds would be acceptable only in separation. In contact, there comes up an apparently insoluble problem: the management of difference within a shared framework.

Taking Hein's case as a starting point for comparison, I would say that traditionally, in Brazil, relationships between whites, mixed race people and blacks can often involve an assumption that is at least in part hierarchical. That is, there is not necessarily a requirement that there should be equality between partners, namely, that both partners have to come from the same background. Values do not need to be shared; rather, they must be hierarchized. Not that there is no conflict of values, but there is more space for accommodating differences than in South Africa. This is due to the more traditional - and consequently more hierarchized - character of Brazilian society. DaMatta (1981) is right: there can be contact in Brazil between different others because there is an assumption smacking of hierarchy at work that differentiates a series of diverse positions inside the same system, assigning to each one of them a different (though not necessary unchanging) value. Therefore, difference in standards, though occasionally considered annoying, is not necessarily seen as an almost unsurmountable hurdle as it usually is in South Africa. Also, there is generally no undiscussed (nor undiscussable) assumption that the partner from humbler origins has to 'come up' to the other partner's level. Besides, there can be a preference for such relationships, namely, relationships where there is a difference in 'background' between the partners (that is what Hasenbalg and Silva, 1988:50 indicate for inter-racial marriages). In gay relationships, one can often observe an almost Socratic principle at work (with whiter, older men taking on younger, darker-skinned lovers) that is not necessarily nor even

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[9] Coetzee (pp. 8) puts the African's 'double-bound' situation in the following way: 'in order to convince the European that he appreciates Africa he must give evidence of a degree of alienation from it; once he is thus alienated he can no longer claim to be by nature at one with it.' Those who are not at one, in this essentialist framework, have forfeited their identity.

mostly based on an economic arrangement between the partners. The difference that in South Africa is shunned or at least posed as a problem in Brazil is often actively sought for.[10]

In Brazil, people may point to you, if racism is brought up, that they - and Brazilians in general - talk to everybody, shake everybody's hands, namely, have contact with everybody. Though this cordiality is far more genuine the lower you go in the social scale, some of it does indeed survive among the middle and upper classes. Also, it is often used as an intellectual deterrent when criticism of the inequality prevailing in the country is brought up (of course, the other important deterrent here is miscegenation and interracial sex). Therefore, Brazilian social scientists usually make a point of stressing to you how untrue such discourse is, how it masks social inequality, etc. However, Brazilian society is one in which lots of contact occur in comparison with South Africa and even the United States. Even when one looks at prosaic things such as the transport system one notices the differences. In Rio, buses run all over the city, even after hours. Also, quite a few lines connect poor neighbourhoods to wealthier ones with a frequency unheard of in South Africa (waiting times for buses in Rio can be incredibly short for South African standards). People from the poorer North Zone of Rio, for instance, can go to the posh beach of Leblon in the South Zone. Of course, Leblonites usually dislike this southwards movement, but it happens. In South Africa, public transport is a joke. It is mostly a makeshift system based on privately-run minibus taxis. Buses do not run after six in the evening (an unacceptably early finish for Brazilian standards), and after nine one cannot get on a minibus taxi in Cape Town. Normal taxis are prohibitively expensive. In Brazil, it is said that there are as many buses running as in the whole of Europe (almost every tiny town or village is connected to others by regular bus services). In comparison, South Africa's transport system seems adequate only for the very compartmentalized society South Africa still is, where you were not supposed nor expected to socialize across the lines nor across the areas to which you were assigned by apartheid.

Also, all the lively street culture that Rio, for instance, has, where all kinds of people walk about in the evening, is not found in Cape Town, except in some townships or in a few streets in the city centre during weekends (the majority of people around are white, however). The enclosed social spaces that are so common in South Africa are much more fluid in Brazil, at almost whatever level you want to look at. There is social distance, there are

[10] Strictly speaking, this tolerance for difference is not unknown in South Africa (nor is intolerance to difference unknown in Brazil). Here, as elsewhere when comparing both societies, it is rather a matter of stress than absolute polarisations.

posh condos and favelas, but people cannot really avoid each other so thoroughly as they can, by comparison, in South Africa. Coming back to Rio from Cape Town, for a month I was fascinated by the liveliness and noisiness of the city. I was also surprised at all the comings and goings and the enormous amount of time people devoted to talking and relating to each other. Overall, I had found that in South Africa contact took quite a lot of effort. Say, if you are based in a white suburb it is unlikely you will ever be taken by anyone to a township. In Rio, I was almost at once whisked off to visit a favela (shantytown). Some of the golden youth of both sexes of wealthy Ipanema at times climb the hill to Cantagalo, a favela towering above it. There they can dance in a **baile funk** (funk ball), buy drugs and occasionally have affairs with favela youth, who are usually a different colour (though they never, as far as I know, marry them). Some people go on such visits on a regular basis. No such thing happens in Cape Town, except for the odd group of young white people who may venture to go to a jazz venue in one of the coloured townships once in a lifetime. With all its deep-rooted classism and widespread racism, Brazil is a people's country because of the existence of an overall framework encompassing all the differences. That is, you find it hard to isolate yourself as you can with comparative ease in South Africa, where you are readily assigned to your 'own' locus. In Rio, I could only manage to isolate myself by making a deliberate effort at warding people off.

Of course, now things are changing in South Africa (whereas, as some will point out to you, in Brazil they are not). Mandela's government has been on a course of what some times is called 'reconciliation.' Mandela's support for the World Rugby Cup in June 1995 is an example of this. Rugby is mostly a white sport in South Africa (especially Afrikaans - the big black sport being soccer). For years it has been a very privileged sport, in spite of international boycotts against it. For instance, it is the only sport in South Africa that is tax-exempt. South Africa won the recent world cup, to wide acclaim and enthusiasm among the white community. South Africa would never win the world soccer cup at this point (its teams are still too underdeveloped for that). Mandela's (and Tutu's) support for rugby has been accompanied by wide media coverage. Though very few Africans (and comparatively few coloureds) went to the stadiums to watch the games, they were also drawn into it through television and radio. Before the final match between South Africa's Springboks and New Zealand's All Blacks Mandela came on the field dressed in the green and yellow South African team uniform, shook hands with each player and waved to the crowd. There has been quite a lot of talk of opening rugby training schools in the townships, to spread the sport. Also, some of the rugby stars have been to the townships and were photographed with African children. There is a widespread attempt at making rugby politically correct and also less of a sport that only appeals to one sector of the

population.

However, Arthur was very angry about all the rugby hullabaloo. He pointed out to me again and again that it is a white sport. He is not very pleased about Mandela's outright support for it either. He is also very critical about what he (and others) call the 'token coloured' on the team, the only player who is not white (to make matters worse, the player declared himself to be 'non-white,' a term which progressive people reject as negative and derogatory). We are sitting around a table in his cottage in Observatory, Cape Town. There is a Canadian with us who used to be a soccer coach in a school in Site B in Khayelitsha. Like me, he is not impressed by South Africa's soccer teams. He told us that the international sports boycott against the country was very harmful to soccer, as it is a fledgling sport in South Africa that needs a lot of input from abroad in order to raise its standards. I conjured the possibility of South Africa winning the soccer world cup, and we all smiled, Arthur included. I teased Arthur, pointing out to him that South Africa might as well stick to rugby as there was not a chance the country would do so well in soccer in the foreseeable future. But he was adamant. Even if it took a very long time, soccer had to have the priority, for it was the most widely played sport in the country.

Beyond the rugby cup controversy, Arthur is not very happy about Mandela's continuing efforts at 'reconciliation.' Like many others, he thinks Mandela is going too far, namely, that he is catering too much to 'white needs and symbols'. Seeing Mandela on a video replay of the last game of the cup, I wonder. Is it all only about reconciliation, that is, a diplomatic gesture? To me, it looks more like a nation-building strategy (it is being widely interpreted as such). That is, the affair is not an attempt at catering to white needs, or giving in to white pressures (Arthur mentioned the whites' continuing economic power), but rather an attempt at refashioning the nation making use of some elite symbols, such as rugby. This has happened elsewhere and is a common enough occurrence. One might mention the case of soccer in Brazil, for instance, that was not in the beginning a popular sport but rather an elite import from abroad. However, as Arthur was quick to point out himself, in South Africa there is no clear 'mainstream.' He meant that there is no culture that is acknowledged as the basis for a national culture. That is the problem with rugby, to my mind, and the whole 'white culture' issue. Unlike in Brazil, where there has been a relatively high degree of acculturation (even in the linguistic realm - it is no coincidence Brazil is largely a monolingual country), where it is said some times that the elite is 'invisible' (meaning that it does not usually stand out as a clearly separate group from the rest of the population) the elite in South Africa is highly visible and, I would add, highly obtrusive too. Also, its symbols and attachments, in spite of recent attempts at somehow

´nationalizing´ them such as Mandela´s, are very much its own and hardly anybody else´s.

The problem here is that a nation has traditionally been symbolically woven around a core that provided the basis for the ´national culture´ as in the case of Brazil and its myth of the three founding races presided over by the Portuguese, for instance. In South Africa, historically, whether one finds that acceptable or not, this core has been a group and culture of European origin (particularly British, in spite of the historical precedence of the Dutch). If the nation is in most of the world a construct of colonial origin - and I do not think one should have qualms about that proposition - then this is only to be expected. However, due to the overall premise of separateness of identity, ´white´ culture, at least from some time in the nineteenth century on, was not thought to be the country´s culture, except inasmuch as the country was defined as a white nation, as it traditionally was. The assimilationism that predominated in Brazil, whatever its evil effects (such as the ideology of whitening), brought the benefit of a common national space, something that South Africa is attempting to build only now and with great difficulty. Here the heritage of Calvinism, separateness and essentialism may yet prove to be a heavy one.

IV

Particularism versus Universalism?

Once Gert burst out, impatient as he was with my intrusive anthropological insights in a conversation he was having with Brazilian friends of mine about Brazil. He countered that 'there are millions of opinions,' and mine was therefore just one among many (and, of course, he did not think it was the correct one). He had just pointed out to my friends that they were talking about 'Brazilians', i.e., they were committing - very unselfconsciously - the sin of generalization (which, by the way, is usually not a sin in the Brazilian language game). I had eagerly interrupted Gert to try and point out that my friends' attitude stemmed from a different perspective from that prevailing in South Africa. For me, Gert's phrase - uttered in a situation where he was confronted with both Brazilian generalization and my own gloss of it - embodied the difficulty of seeing South Africa from a totalizing perspective (and even from seeing anything social nowadays from that perspective). 'Millions of opinions' stand side by side on the vast Herderian stage of humanity, each as equally valid as any other (that was Gert's message at bottom). However, as I often found out when people in South Africa would ask me whether I had investigated other perspectives, 'millions of opinions' or 'other perspectives' paradoxically or not, is shorthand for 'there is my opinion too' and a subtext that goes: 'you should take it into account.' This became clear to me on several occasions, as when, for instance, an Afrikaans professor of architecture interested in Brazilian modernist architecture asked me over coffee if I had considered other points of view in my work (other than the University of Cape Town's liberal one that he readily assumed was also mine because I was affiliated there). When I thought he was going to suggest I took a look at the University of the Western Cape (probably the most politically correct university in the whole country because of its open support for the liberation struggle), as several people had already suggested to me, he mentioned instead, alas, the University of Stellenbosch (that even nowadays is often considered to be an Afrikaans conservative institution in English-speaking circles). As we say in Brazil, **cada um puxa a sardinha para o seu lado**, 'everyone pulls the sardine to their side.'

It is very difficult to look at the South African scene from a

totalizing perspective exactly because the 'sardines,' though they can certainly be grouped together in several schools, are almost too various to be included in a single, encompassing view. For the internal divisions of the country also have a bearing on the academic field and on the way one can look at South Africa. It is not only South African discourse that has constructed itself as a discourse of positions. Discourse **about** South Africa has also been very much an oppositional discourse, where different positions supposedly rule out each other. Whether we have to do with discourses legitimizing white rule (such as Cronjé's), or what Coetzee (1988) called 'white writing', or discourses of black resistance, a piecemeal perspective is the rule. The fact that most recent academic discourse attempts to be from the perspective of the oppressed, the majority or the masses does not change that fact.[1] The problem comes out clearly when one makes a comparison with Brazil, where the situation has been the opposite (namely, there has predominated a totalizing perspective - if not tackling it outright then at least assuming a 'Brazilian society', a 'Brazilian culture' or that quintessential Brazilian social science construct, the **sociedade nacional** or 'national society', redolent of the holism of Cronjé's **volksgemeenskap**). Whereas, as Peirano (1981) shows, the social sciences (she concentrates on anthropology) in Brazil have been concerned with a project of nation-building, the human sciences in South Africa have rather concentrated on sectorial approaches (and sectorial nation-building projects), reproducing inside academia the situation on the ground (as was to be expected).[2] It must be stressed - for it is not something often pointed out - that looking at the majority of the people, though a necessary and praiseworthy exercise (especially in South Africa) - is actually different from looking at society as a whole. For, as Hoetink (1967) once stressed in what concerns Caribbean societies, a 'segmented' society is formed by all the different 'segments' (by which he meant the different 'races'). And it is from the interplay between the segments that one can derive a totalizing picture, not from looking at society from one or other point of view. This age-old piece of sociological wisdom - a view of totality - seems to have been mostly forgotten in what concerns South Africa, for obvious reasons. Many white South Africans point to the achievements of their society - the theatres, the beautiful houses, the well-kept neighbourhoods, the universities,

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[1] See for instance, the so-called 'history from below' (Bozzoli, 1983, 1987).

[2] A more complex and nuanced picture can be found in Bekker (1993). He distinguishes between three traditions in South African academia: the Afrikaner nationalist, the liberal and the marxist ones. The 'pro-black' ones are the last two, particularly the marxist one. Of course, the vast majority of scholars in all traditions are white.

the hospitals - and, just as in the post-cards available for tourists (that show only beautiful landscapes, modern cities, beaches, plants, animals, and natives in traditional garb) they blot most of the country out of the picture.[3] Other South Africans (white or other), on the other hand, point to the townships, the squatter camps, the miserable rural areas where the majority lives, to counterbalance the first tendency, thereby also producing a somewhat lopsided picture.

Once Gert and I were sitting at a coffeeshop in Camps Bay, a wealthy neighbourhood by the sea in Cape Town. Gert remarked that the place felt unreal with its beautiful, wealthy people and its white-painted houses gleaming in the sun against the grand background of Table Mountain. And indeed it did. I pondered on the issue: would then Khayelitsha, the biggest black township in Cape Town, be the 'real' place? I pondered again. In Brazil too there are rich and very poor places. Does, say, Ipanema or Leblon in Rio feel unreal? Not really, at least not for me, though I am well aware of the huge gaps and disparities in my own country. What, then, makes Camps Bay 'unreal'? For me, the answer was the disconnectedness. It was as if Camps Bay was somehow a world onto itself, an enclave of sun and gaiety floating apart from a world of destitution. That assumption of disconnectedness is perhaps what makes Camps Bay feel unreal. In this sense, however, Khayelitsha too would be unreal (unless one considers as 'natural' the existence of a segregated neighbourhood to which were forcibly assigned people belonging to one category only). For the 'real thing,' if I may put it that way, would be the connection between the two, a connection that is denied in both a conservative (i.e., pro-white and pro-Camps Bay) or progressive (i.e. pro-black and pro-Khayelitsha) perspective. That is, to me, what might make both Camps Bay and Khayelitsha 'real' is not a localized gaze (that tends to fix itself either on one or the other), but an all-encompassing gaze. However, Gert once complained about how difficult it is to jump from one environment to the other, and how each 'enclave' in Cape Town (we were talking about organizations) had its own language and codes. He felt it took a lot of energy to go from one enclave to the other. In this his complaint was just like my friend Vanessa's in Jo'burg, whom I mentioned in chapter 1. Of all the people I know who try and go around the enclaves of South African society, Arthur is the one who goes around the most, dashing from and to the townships and the white suburbs on an almost daily basis. He knows people both in Khayelitsha and Constantia (another posh suburb). He tends to complain too. And indeed, especially in an inner-looking society like South Africa, where contact has traditionally been not only discouraged but actively prevented, trying to include both Camps Bay and Khayelitsha in an all-

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[3] For an interesting appraisal of this 'post-card' country, see Rassoul's and Witz's (1994) essay.

encompassing gaze can be hard. For both neighbourhoods are not even side by side (Camps Bay is on the ocean side of Table Mountain, whereas Khayelitsha was built far away in the Cape Flats near the shores of False Bay), contrary to what happens, say, to Ipanema and the Cantagalo favela in Rio who are right next to each other (entangled in each other would perhaps be a not altogether inaccurate description). The geographical distance in South Africa (that can also obtain in Brazil, though less frequently) to me is a direct reflection on the urban space of the conceptual distance (and disconnectedness) postulated and implemented by apartheid. Whereas one might say that the distance between Ipanema and Cantagalo is conceptualized within a common, if hierarchical, framework, the distance between Camps Bay and Khayelitsha feels far greater because of the assumption of separateness.

It is most difficult to get an overall picture here. Not because of the supposed immensity of the task, but rather because the perspective available is more often than not a splintered one. That (to me) quintessential South African question (often asked whenever I mentioned my work) 'from what perspective are you doing it?' points exactly to the problem. Of course, it is not that diversity of perspective is absent elsewhere. On the contrary, Brazilian discourse, for instance, is perhaps almost as riven with differences in perspective as discourse on and of South Africa. However, the overall framework inside which discourse moves itself is different in both cases. It is not a coincidence that in Brazil one often assumes or talks about a **sociedade brasileira** ('Brazilian society') or a **literatura brasileira** ('Brazilian literature'), whereas in South Africa one mentions 'our different communities', 'African literature', 'white writing', or 'black politics'. The challenge here is, therefore, to try and see the overall picture that is pulled apart by the splintered perspective or, rather, to try and integrate the different perspectives inside one and the same whole. In this, in my view, vital exercise one could do worse than start from a very localized and obscure academic debate that nonetheless provides an important illustration for my case: a brief academic debate between some South African anthropologists.[4]

How do you go about doing anthropology in a divided society? Dividedly, I am afraid. For English South African anthropologists and Afrikaans ethnologists (**volkekundiges**) seem to have come up with different answers to that question. In an inaugural lecture at the University of Cape Town (where he succeeded illustrious names like Radcliffe-Brown, Isaac Schapera and Monica Wilson), West (1979) proposed a social anthropology stressing social

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[4] I am grateful to Dr Peter Fry from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro for having called my attention to this debate.

change, in the tradition established by the most famous South African anthropologist of all times, Max Gluckman. To West, this social anthropology - practised especially in the four English-medium universities in the country - would be different from the 'cultural anthropology' (**volkekunde**) practised in the Afrikaans-medium universities. The former would have a comparative perspective, a sociological orientation and an interest in social change that would lead it away from the assumptions about the immutability of culture (ibid., p.3), whereas the latter would place the stress on culture as an invariant element. A few pages later West (ibid., pp.11-12) mentions the issue of faction fights in mining compounds and the two approaches to the problem. The approach of the 'cultural anthropologist' (**volkekundige**) in South Africa is to interpret the issue in terms of 'deep ethnic divisions' rooted in 'ancient animosities.' The social anthropological approach, on the other hand, looks also at other variables, 'institutionalised circumstances' such as the structure of the compound (an isolated environment where men are packed together along ethnic lines, away from their families who have remained in the countryside) or the harsh working conditions in the mines or, still, the apparent preference of management for an ethnically segmented labour force. West concludes that this 'sort of analysis would therefore point to a **system** which is likely to give rise to tensions and violence, and which also institutionalises ethnic differences. It is therefore not surprising that tension takes on an ethnic dimension.' (ibid., p.12, emphasis in the original). Even in the absence of ethnic divisions such a system would be likely to 'produce tensions that could lead to other forms of segmentation' (id.).

West's objection to what we might call a culturalist approach lies in that one can draw the inference from the latter that, as ethnic divisions are cultural (and therefore somehow appear to be immutable), then separation - the official policy of the apartheid government - is thus necessary. Here, I think, lies the crux of the matter. No anthropology - and no social science - develops outside a specific context, as Peirano (1981) has shown for anthropology in the case of Brazil. In the context of South Africa, where segregation based on an assumption of cultural differences was the premise, Gluckman's famous stress on change (that made him well-known in Brazil as elsewhere), subscribed to by other eminent South African anthropologists such as Monica Wilson (whose work West also quotes to bolster his argument), makes sense in opposition to cultural explanations as favoured by the government and many Afrikaans anthropologists. On the other hand, in Brazil, where culture was not hijacked by the government to build a segregationist system, Brazilian anthropologists did not feel they had to put aside the concept in favour of other explanations. Also, contrary to English-speaking South African anthropologists, though many Brazilian anthropologists opposed government policies and the military dictatorship of 1964-1985, we could say that the Brazilian state never alienated Brazilian

anthropologists as a class (though it certainly did alienate a few individual practitioners) to the extent that it did several of their South African counterparts. That is, to me, English South African anthropologists in the past half-century may have kept (and perhaps even stressed) their international connections, and also their 'outside-ness' in terms of what was happening in South Africa (after all, it was an Afrikaans government with an unacceptable segregationist policy). Brazilian anthropologists, comparatively speaking, never felt so alienated that they had, as a group, to take such a critical distance from the state and, consequently, from its language. Therefore, though Brazilian anthropologists are in the habit of pointing out that the supposed cultural unity of the country is not empirically verifiable, they do not go as far as being wary of a cultural approach as English South African anthropologists seem to have been.

The position of many Afrikaans anthropologists in this regard has traditionally been quite different. The stress of **volkekunde** (ethnology or what West calls 'cultural anthropology') has fallen on culture, along premises that seem similar to those of Cronjé's discourse. Different ethnic groups (though Cronjé never uses the term) are distinct and have distinct values. This distinct character of each one of them is, if not racial, then at least cultural, what makes it not much different in terms of this synecdochic discourse. For 'culture' here too, as West indicates, tends to be frozen in an immutable invariant just as 'race.' It is not for nothing that Afrikaans ethnologists have some times worked for the government and even been appointed to high positions (in a few cases to very high posts, as shown by the case of Piet Koornhof, who became a cabinet minister). Traditionally, an Afrikaans anthropologist, besides a university chair, could hope, for instance, to work for the Department of Plural Relations (in itself a very culturalist designation, that came to replace the also culturalist-sounding Department of Bantu Affairs) or for the South African Defence Force. Actually, the involvement of some **volkekundiges** in the government has been fairly common, especially in 'Bantu administration' or as 'Native Commissioners' (though by no means all **volkekundiges** - and more recently not even most - have been thus involved). Also, departments of ethnology at homeland universities have traditionally been staffed with Afrikaans ethnologists (I hear, however, that they have been sacked in 1994). It is not therefore a coincidence that West reports that in 1979 only 28% of all anthropologists in South Africa were social anthropologists. For it has been much more prestigious inside the country, at least in Afrikaans circles, to follow a career in **volkekunde**.[5]

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5 See Gordon (1988) (a social anthropologist of Namibian origin) for the role played by Afrikaans ethnology in South Africa. See also Bekker (1993:89-95). It is Gordon who reports

Of course, though there are different currents inside the discipline in Brazil as elsewhere, as well as different academic backgrounds, there have not really been two largely divorced traditions (pursued in two different languages inside two different university systems and with two different professional associations) as is the case with South Africa. The split in the discipline in South Africa has been an important one, goes well beyond the political positions of both groups, and points to a division in perspective that has been commonplace in South Africa. Whereas the English-speaking group has often kept more or less strong ties with overseas institutions (and are generally employed in institutions that have an international reputation), the Afrikaans-speaking group has tended to be, in comparison, fairly inner-looking, with few or no international connections and little or no prestige abroad. In Brazil, for instance, the work of Afrikaans ethnologists is quite unknown, whereas that of important South African social anthropologists of the past like Gluckman, Fortes, Monica Wilson or (to a much lesser degree) Isaac Schapera is generally acknowledged.[6]

Now, back to the brief discussion I mentioned above, it occurred some time after West's inaugural lecture, and involved an exchange between an English South African social anthropologist and an Afrikaans ethnologist. It is interesting to see how it started. First of all, an English South African anthropologist - John Sharp - from the University of Cape Town wrote an article on Afrikaans **volkekunde** (Sharp, 1980). In it he draws a picture of a fairly inner-looking discipline that complements that drawn later by Gordon (1988). I found the ethnos theory employed by some **volkekundiges** - interestingly, borrowed from the Soviet social sciences - peculiar. In that theory, the world is made up of ethnoses or ethnic groups, just as Cronjé's world was made of races or **volksgemeenskappe**. Thus, one **volkekunde** thesis that Sharp mentions describes the history of colonization in Zambia as a meeting between the local ethnoses and the British ethnos. Just

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that Cronjé drew on a work by Afrikaans ethnologists (Coertze et al., 1943) to write his work of 1945. Indeed, Cronjé (1945) quotes the above mentioned work by Coertze more than once. In this way, considering the importance of P.J.Coertze in Afrikaans ethnology (he set up departments and had many students and followers), one can say that **volkekunde** has been implicated in apartheid policy since its very beginnings, whereas social anthropology perhaps has a record of defiance rather than compliance.

[6] Of course, recent work by South African anthropologists is not generally known in Brazil (the opposite being also true, i.e., the work of Brazilian anthropologists is not generally known in South Africa).

as Cronjé's world was a world made of the conflict between races, the world of ethnos theory is a world of conflicts between ethnoses. Another interesting feature of the thesis is that it was a bibliographical one: fieldwork has somehow fallen outside the purview of many Afrikaans ethnologists. For, as Gordon (1988) points out, fieldwork implies contact, and it is exactly the latter that is to be avoided at all costs (as we saw above in chapter 2). Consequently, an apartheid ethnology necessarily had to become an ethnology where extended fieldwork became, in most cases, either restricted to a few interviews or altogether absent. At their worst, some Afrikaans ethnologists became somewhat like armchair specialists in a discipline whose hallmark in most of the world is exactly fieldwork and ethnography.

Two Afrikaans ethnologists (Booyens and van Rensburg, 1980) bothered to reply to Sharp's article (there has usually been little or no communication between the two groups: each pursues its own affairs very much in isolation from the other which is, again, a typically South African situation).[7] The crux of the reply centred on the ethnos theory, and Sharp's claim that the latter - and consequently **volkekunde** - fell somehow outside the mainstream of the discipline. Booyens and van Rensburg (1980) retorted that there are different traditions inside the discipline, and that the British tradition was just one of them. This argument is very Herderian and, to me, amounts to much the same as saying that the British are just another ethnos among ethnoses. We might say perhaps that the subtext to Booyens' and Van Rensburg's reply was that, though there may not be millions of traditions, there certainly are quite a good deal, and the English should acknowledge that. The problem is that, whether Booyens and Van Rensburg acknowledged it or not, there are some mainstream traditions in anthropology and other traditions that more or less fall outside the mainstream. The theory of ethnos, in spite of its importance, for instance, in Germany and the former Soviet Union and South Africa, is not exactly part of the mainstream of the discipline such as the works of many British, French or American anthropologists. It is not for nothing that, when I studied anthropology in Brazil and Japan (two countries with very different societies and consequently very different academic traditions), I read British, French and American

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[7] As late as early 1995 anthropologists at the University of Cape Town and the neighbouring University of Stellenbosch had never met. Mutual isolation was not always the case, as shown by Schapera's reader on **The Bantu-speaking Tribes of South Africa** (1937), where contributions by both English social anthropologists and Afrikaans ethnologists (such as the famous W.E. Eiselen who helped Verwoerd set up his 'native policy') are to be found side by side. Also, nowadays, there is some tendency to a rapprochement, as John Sharp indicated to me in February 1995 (personal communication).

anthropology but no German or Russian anthropology.[8]

Booyens's and van Rensburg's point - the existence of specific, different traditions - is also very much the point of the cultural context of Afrikanerdom from where, I assume, they are talking from. The emphasis on what is specific, one's own (**eie**) against what is different and foreign (**anders**) is a typically Afrikaans emphasis (as Coetzee, points out, these two poles are ever present in Cronjé's narrative). Now, profiting from my foreign perspective, coming as I do from a country that is not traditionally essentialist, and that has long subscribed to an assimilationist ideology, I must say I find the Afrikaans claim for difference insistent to the point of being self-detrimental. The comparatively claustrophobic and enclosed space of Afrikaans ethnology that we glean from both Sharp's and Gordon's articles is perhaps typical in this regard. To me, the accent on difference here has clearly precluded a more open and more inspiring approach based on exchange of views. However, if what is outside (Cronjé's **uitheemse** or 'non-autochthonous') is a source of danger (as we saw in Cronjé's narrative), then, obviously, a fenced-off and limited space where one wallows in one's eie is perhaps all one can hope for. Hence, I believe, the comparatively claustrophobic character of Afrikaans ethnology (that is also the claustrophobic character of traditional Afrikaner identity). However, that said, I must also add that I have problems with West's and Sharp's claims in favour of social anthropology as a more universalist, mainstream discipline. Having had direct contact with the discipline in a variety of academic settings (Brazil, Japan and France) I am aware that there are indeed differences. The universalist claim seems to me to be typically British or French (or perhaps, in this case, British South African), just as the particularistic claim to difference is typically Afrikaans. In this sense, I am afraid that West's definition of social anthropology in contrast to 'cultural anthropology' would not be readily accepted all over the world (it would probably prove to be a problematic definition for most Brazilian anthropologists, for instance).

British ideology, just as French ideology, is universalist, in spite of the differences between them (for Dumont, they are both variants inside the same overall Western ideological configuration). This universalism to me is typical of most English South African positions: contrary to Afrikaners, the English in South Africa have not seen themselves as yet another group in the

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[8] German **Völkerkunde** has been another source of inspiration for Afrikaans ethnology, as Sharp (1980) points out. For the ethnos theory in the Soviet social sciences, see Shanin (1989). Of course, German anthropology used to be one of the main currents of the discipline up to the interwar period, but it is not so any more.

country. Crapanzano (1986) points out the dismay of the English farmers he met in the Cape over the success of Afrikaans nationalism (he did his research just after the heyday of apartheid, in 1980-1), and their perception that the English too should unite just as the Afrikaners (and perhaps, in that way, also construct a strong ethnicity). The English farmers felt especially offended by the Afrikaans language monument in Paarl (site of the first Afrikaans language movement in the last century), a monument to Afrikaner nationalism. However, that was still during apartheid, and in a small town and rural setting where Afrikaners were in the majority in the white group.

During my fieldwork in Cape Town, I noticed again and again that the Afrikaner bid for respect for Afrikaans culture and language had been, all things considered, somewhat unsuccessful. In Cape Town, among coloureds, for instance, it is often a sign of prestige to speak English well, not Afrikaans, though the latter is the mother tongue of the vast majority of them. Many English-speaking whites I met could not really speak Afrikaans (whereas Cape Afrikaners usually speak English), and their views on Afrikaans and Afrikaner culture were more often than not disparaging, no matter what they said 'officially' if asked bluntly about it. Above all, English speakers like to point to the 'artificiality' of Afrikaans language and culture. I remember Paul laughing when I first mentioned to him 'standard Afrikaans'. 'There is no such a thing', he sentenced. If not officially, in practice the popular image of Afrikaans remains very much that of a mixed, artificially contrived language, and that of Afrikaans culture of a somewhat ridiculous hodgepodge that is not specifically anything. As from April 1994, many people in Cape Town simply told me that Afrikaans would disappear, as it had no official support any more (of course, it has not). All the respect that Afrikaner nationalists fought so hard to obtain seemed to have almost vanished in thin air overnight. This weak position of Afrikaner culture and language, after so many years of struggle, seemed to me curious and gave me much reason for thought.

In comparison with traditional Afrikaans discourse, English discourse in Cape Town is not one that stresses difference of self-perspective in group terms. It is a discourse about individuals or, when it mentions groups, it is about others as groups (and not about self as a group). In this sense, it is relevant to say the English in fact are not another ethnos in the South African scene: they certainly do not in general see themselves as such. Their official discourse (I am talking here of enlightened urban professionals) is often that of acknowledgement of and tolerance for difference (in others, whereas Afrikaans discourse is, at bottom, for the acknowledgement of and tolerance for difference in self). However, I do not think this amounts to any real conviction. My impression of English speakers in general was some times of an often unbelievable arrogance and condescen-

sion hidden (carefully in some cases, not so carefully in other cases) beneath a polite and articulate surface. A meticulous care with language (and offensiveness in language) - to me, a hallmark of urban and urbane English South African discourse that borders on fussiness for Brazilian standards - covers up a sensibility that in fact is often far less resilient than it appears at first.

Take an incident that happened after I delivered a seminar paper at UCT, for instance (Ribeiro, 1993). A history lecturer invited me to address her students in a course she was teaching on Latin America. I then delivered a somewhat debased version of my paper, stressing the Brazilian assimilationist ideology, to a classroom of whites and coloureds. The lecturer assured me they had enjoyed my talking to them (and indeed at least some of them seemed to be interested). We left the classroom together, and as we walked outside she told me how useful she thought my seminar paper was because in South Africa people took essentialism for granted. Therefore, a comparative perspective, by pointing to a society where that was not the case, could be very useful to help South African students to open up their minds. I then started suspecting that she saw the assimilationist ideal in Brazil as a kind of universalism closely related to her own. She next mentioned the case of two fundamentalist Jewish students in her class who were particularly essentialist. I became somewhat uncomfortable as she mentioned them, because some of the students were walking just behind us. As it turned out, hardly a minute later we were interrupted by exactly the two Jewish fundamentalist girls she was talking about. One of them wanted to ask me more about Brazil and specifically about the Jewish community there. I am quite sure she must have overheard some of the remarks her teacher had been making to me. The girl, however, was very cool and diplomatic, and so was her teacher. There I had been caught, consorting with **die Engelse** (the English) and listening to them talk about others under the latter's nose (a fairly common practice, as I learned afterwards). Gert would become somewhat annoyed with me some time afterwards, when he caught me talking about coloureds and Afrikaners, in a manner that reminded him of UCT talk. 'What about **them**?,'(that is, the English) he asked. His point was that the focus might as well turn to them for a change.

This readiness to talk and analyze the construction of identity in others called **my** attention again and again. I was often under the impression that they wanted me to take part in their universalist discourse, in which they deconstructed other people's identities from a perspective supposedly evacuated of any trace of an eie or singularity. My impression was that by doing so they left no alternative to those others except, once they had deconstructed and taken a distance from their background, slide over to their own perspective of, say, a 'deconstructed', universalized view of **humanity**.

Once I tried to argue with Paul that democracia racial was an ideology that was not merely a coverup for domination, but in fact a living cosmology adhered to by blacks, whites and mestiços alike. He at once put on a condescending smile on his face, not entirely devoid of cunning: there he had caught me red-handed, apparently trying to defend something indefensible as democracia racial. If blacks, whites and mestiços all believed in it somehow it could only be because they had been duped. In fact, I found it amazing how he - and other people I met in Cape Town - simply did not accept the possibility of any ideological constructs mediating between tradition and modernity. That is, any constructs of the kind that Dumont has called 'modern artificialism', i.e., a (re)construction of tradition within the modern configuration of individualist values. Once, reading a paper Paul had written, I chanced upon the word 'spurious': the ideologies of Cape black movements in the twenties, that tried to take on traits of British imperial ideology (for instance, by declaring black leader Marcus Garvey the Prince of the Blacks or some such title, fashioned after that of the Prince of Wales, who was at the time on a visit to South Africa) were deemed by him 'spurious'. When I argued with him about his use of such a charged word, he retorted that those ideologies were spurious because they did not spring from Africans' own traditions, but instead were borrowed from British tradition. It was this process of borrowing, of taking on what belongs to others and not to oneself, that was considered spurious by him. And, of course, just as in Cronjé's thought, what is borrowed from outside is **uitheemse** and therefore goes against the eie (own-ness) or one's essence. Only the latter is valid or acceptable. Coetzee (1988:8) was right when he pointed out that blacks in South Africa live in a double bind in what concerns white society: if they deviate from their background or their essence, they are looked down for not being genuine or, worse, for being imitators (he does not employ the term, though, that I here borrow from Cronjé's - as a translation for **namakseels**[9]). Paul would probably feel somewhat uncomfortable about my drawing a parallel between his discourse and that of Cronjé, but it is relevant to point out here that there is indeed a parallel to be drawn. That is because the universalist discourse does not really provide for any kind of assimilation. Once you deconstruct yourself and place yourself in a wider perspective, you are still, on some level, an outsider who has supposedly his or her own identity lurking somewhere in

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[9] Cronjé (1945) uses **namakseels** when talking about the coloureds who for him are the imitators of the white men. That for him, is an undesirable condition that the coloureds have to overcome in order to become a nation on their own (see chapter 5 below). An Afrikaans **volkekundige** of the time, Coertze (1943), also mentions 'siellose aapery' ('soulless aping') to denigrate the process of Westernization of the Bantu: if you imitate or 'ape' you therefore lose your soul.

the background. That is why there is talk of a double bind.

Thus, you deconstruct your own background but are still expected to have some identity of your own. You learn to see yourself from the outside, so to speak, from a universalizing perspective that does not really accord value to ideological setups (and at bottom pays only lipservice to tolerance of difference), but at the end of the day there seems to be still a lingering, irreducible difference. Let us analyze this issue more closely, breaking it down in order to understand it better. First, there is the rejection of anything that looks ideological or 'metaphysical.' In my opinion this attitude - that amounts to a deep-rooted empiricism - perhaps accounts for the fact that English South Africans have not constructed for themselves an explicit ethnicity as Afrikaners have. For what Afrikaners have constructed as their identity is denounced again and again (by both scholars and lay persons) as 'artificial'. 'Artificial' here stands for a more or less deliberate ideological construct that is not, in this profoundly essentialist discourse, 'natural' (or perhaps 'autochthonous'). Sharp (1980), for instance, inveighs against the notion of ethnos for its supposed 'metaphysical' character. I found his objection very interesting. For it sounds similar to objections often raised across the Channel to, for instance, the French sociological school's use of 'society' as a kind of ensemble of both ideology and social practice.[10] Perry Anderson (1968) has also observed this characteristic empiricism in the case of the human disciplines that, to him, are at the root of their poverty as disciplines in comparison to their continental counterparts. He specifically mentions the lack of the construction of any view of the social whole.[11] Thus, we can perhaps say that **any** ideological construct here is not welcome: there seems to be, on some level, the assumption that, once ideological layers are 'peeled off', some universal Lockean **tabula rasa** will appear as the common denominator to all (artificially

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[10] See for instance Dumont's (1984:23) use of ideology as including both thought and social practice - the 'cultural' and 'social' dimensions, so to speak - and, of course, Durkheim's (1976) **The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life**, in whose work Dumont's conception is ultimately rooted.

[11] To him, the only notable exception to this is social anthropology. However, as we know, the discipline applied the notion almost exclusively to societies outside Britain. I am grateful to Mariza Peirano from the department of anthropology of the University of Brasília for having pointed out Anderson's essay to me.

constructed) difference.[12]

However, even given this bias against anything 'metaphysical' one could still object that, following Dumont's definition of an artificialist form of holism, Afrikanerdom is indeed 'artificial'. But so are most cosmologies in the modern world (the prime example being exactly the German ideology whose aspects Dumont, 1991, analyses). Let us take a look at the issue at close quarters. Hofmeyer (1987) relates the construction of Afrikaner identity in the first decades of this century, following the Anglo-Boer War (that gave enormous impetus to Afrikaner nationalism that up to then had been a somewhat limited construct embraced by comparatively few). From the assumption of a separate Afrikaner eie or singularity (uniqueness), there sprang up a very lively process of imagining that amounted to, in Hofmeyer's (p.111) words, a 'redefinition of everyday life'. Thus, in Afrikaans magazines (then the main battlefield of identity construction aimed at the masses), there came up articles on a variety of phenomena of everyday life that were then repackaged as Afrikaans, such as food, architecture, interior decoration, dress, etiquette, health, humour, landscape, monuments, the plastic arts, music, handicrafts, transport, agriculture, etc. For instance, what had been previously just furniture became Afrikaans furniture, 'what had been a house became an 'Afrikaans' house built in an **Afrikaanse bouwstijl** (Afrikaans architecture)' (id.). This preoccupation went, therefore, far beyond the mere retrieval of a tradition.[13] In what concerns the language too, there was a kind of engineering at work: Afrikaans had to be retrieved from its low status as a kitchen language (**kombuistaal**) and reinvented as a standard language (**algemeen beskaafde taal**). Importantly, Hofmeyer points out that in order to 'accomplish this aim, one had to shake off the very strong associations of poverty and particularly 'colouredness' which clung to the language' (ibid, p.104). It is important to note that Afrikaans

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[12] This **tabula rasa** can be conceived as rooted in nature but, more often than not, it is presented as rooted in economic or political interest that would be a universal constant. Hence perhaps the enormous emphasis on the importance of 'domination' (and unmasking it) in academic and quasi-academic discourse related to South Africa. See Dumont (1977) for an appreciation in historical perspective of this point of view in Western thinking. The **tabula rasa** can be gleaned in the essays by South African anthropologists in Sharp and Boonzaier (1987). The authors seem to overlook the fact that, once deconstructed, identity is still somehow there, whether it is an essentialized construct or not.

[13] Though, of course, that was also very important. This job was done by **volkskundiges** (not to be confused with **volkskundiges**) or 'folklorists' (id.), initially scholars who had studied in Germany and the Netherlands at the turn of the century.

was then also derogatively called a **hotnotstaal** (a Hottentot language).[14]

We could see the whole Afrikaans language movement as an attempt to construct not only a **volk** by interpellating a constituency (in O'Meara's words) but also an identity that could be placed side by side with that of British or English identity. The **beskaafde** in **algemeen beskaafde taal** is an important clue here. **Beskaafde** means here 'standard' but also 'civilised'. Its noun equivalent, **beskawing**, means 'civilisation' or 'culture'. The verb in Afrikaans, **beskawe**, like its Dutch counterpart (**beschaven**), means to 'polish', to make even (as when one polishes a wooden surface to get rid of any unevenness - see the Van Dale Dutch dictionary and the Government Printer's Die **Afrikaanse Woordeboek** for the relevant entries). This meaning, of course, is related to that of **politesse** (of which it is in fact a translation) that in France preceded the concept of **civilisation**, as Elias (1982) shows. We could therefore say that a 'civilised' surface here is one that has an even appearance: all the roughness and the irregularities are polished away and a smooth, streamlined landscape replaces it. Hence the need not only to standardize the language in a specifically linguistic sense, but also the need to rid it of any non-polished, non-cultured associations, i.e., as Hofmeyer pointed out, its associations with colouredness and poverty. This parallels the attempt at defining Afrikanerness as whiteness (as in Cronjé's works), and the economic movement to lift Afrikaans-speakers from poverty that O'Meara (1983) analyzed. That is, we are here faced with a cosmology that works on several fronts at the same time: linguistic, racial, economic, cultural, etc, creating a standardized product out of a set of disparate conditions. To me, one is here faced with a true and veritable civilizing process.[15] If it seems more artificial or contrived than similar efforts elsewhere, then perhaps we have to look at the wider context to understand why.

Here we have to go back to the early British occupation of the Cape to see the root of the problem. One might perhaps say that certain trends that had been present in the eighteenth century Cape society became more prominent with the change in sovereignty

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[14] Interestingly, the very name 'Afrikaander' (percursor to 'Afrikaner') was also used to indicate a racially mixed person in the nineteenth century Cape.

[15] Even in terms of behaviour, the prescriptive character that Elias points out in his interpretation of the civilizing process is also emphasized by Afrikaans nationalists. See, for instance, Langenhoven's (1938) long pedagogical list ('**Honderd prekies**') of behaviourial injunctions and rules of deportment in one of his popular books.

from the Netherlands to Britain.[16] Elphick and Giliomee (1982:413) pointed out that the eighteenth century represented a turning point in the colonial experience: whereas in the first seventy-five years of the eighteenth century the opinion that Europeans were intrinsically superior to slaves, Khoikhoi and Xhosa was rare, from the last quarter of the century onwards it became increasingly common.[17] Though attempts by the Company to protect the Khoikhoi had been made, it was during the first British occupation that the colonial government attempted to enforce stricter statutory protection of them. The perception that had already dominated the accounts of some Dutch colonial authorities - namely, that of a population of colonists in the interior that was very 'rough' and very prejudiced against Khoikhoi and Xhosa [18] - seems to have sharpened considerably after the British takeover of the Cape Colony (then the only part of what is now South Africa that was under colonial rule). This view of a rough population of Boers - an image of people who could hardly be called 'civilized' - has informed parts of the South African imagination ever since Dutch colonial times through to the present. Even nowadays, in Cape Town, in English-speaking circles, being Afrikaans (especially of the non-anglicized sort) is not quite it. I was told endless stories and anecdotes about how rough, tacky, and peculiar Afrikaners could be. There is an Afrikaans town outside Cape Town - Belliville - that is the butt of Capetonians' derisiveness. Therefore, this negative image has persisted in many South African narratives throughout South African history. It is therefore worth pausing over it for a while.

The English image of the Boers in the interior (that was shared by other travellers and also by the Dutch Cape elite) is one of laziness, of a life lived in sloth and in close contact with the 'Hottentots', as both Coetzee (1988:25-35) and Streak (1974) indicate. The portrait by John Barrow, drawn after his travels in the interior in the late 1790's, became quite famous. He depicts the Boers leading a very rough existence in very isolated circumstances, unwilling 'to work, and unable to think; with a mind disengaged from every sort of care and reflection, indulging to excess in the gratification of every sensual appetite...' (Barrow, quoted in Crapanzano, 1986:64). Crapanzano (ibid, p.65)

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[16] The first British occupation of the Cape lasted from 1795 to 1803. The second started in 1806 and became permanent as from 1815.

[17] It was, however, couched in different terms from modern ones: non-whites were 'heathen' whereas colonists were 'Christians' (ibid, pp.414).

[18] See for instance Van Plettenberg's account of 1780 mentioned by Elphick and Giliomee, 1982:413.

comments that it was in part in reaction to attitudes such as Barrow's that the Boers 'trekked into the country'. The Afrikaans historian Van Jaarsveld (1974:1-39) quotes from contemporary English-language and Dutch-language sources in the Cape during the time of the Great Trek, the mass emigration of Boers out of the Cape Colony (as from the 1830's), especially the **South African Commercial Advertiser.** The **Advertiser** was particularly noxious in its attacks against the Trekkers, talking about the latter's 'rude nature' and 'uncontrolled self-will' (quoted ibid, p.5), continuing therefore the tradition consolidated by Barrow decades earlier.[19] Governor D'Urban - who was sympathetic to the Trekkers - complained about the **Advertiser's** link to Dr Philip and the London Missionary Society (ibid, p.6).

Dr Philip was a British missionary that, through his **Researches in South Africa** (1828), became well-known both in the country and abroad. In his book, he defended the Khoikhoi and slaves and criticized the Boers' treatment of them. Dr Philip's work became what was probably the first detailed indictment of the Boers and their policy towards the inhabitants of the country. His philanthropy and concern about treatment of slaves and Khoikhoi earned him fame and, in Boer circles, enduring enmity. The indictment of Boer (later Afrikaner) policy towards Africans has become since then an exercise so common that it has traditionally fostered among Afrikaners an enduring feeling of being deeply misunderstood by the outside world. I believe research has still to be done on this, but I think we have here, in the rise of Afrikanerdom, a peculiar case of what Dumont has called variously acculturation or adaptation to modernity (Dumont, 1986:113-132). As I indicated above, the British occupation of the Cape brought along with it a great intensification of modern, individualistic and consequently egalitarian discourse. Also, interestingly, it brought about **the need to create an ideological explanatory framework** to oppose modern discourse. Dumont (1991) traces and analyzes (through the work of a few authors) this need in the case of Germany in its confrontation with the French Enlightenment as from the eighteenth century. On a much smaller and protracted scale, this confrontation is also that between the Boers and their British overlords in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Just as in the case of Germany and her contact with France, in South Africa too the contact of the Boers with the British produced a continuing clash that has not disappeared even in our days and that has given rise to a whole ideological, reactive framework.

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[19] It must be said, however, that quite a few British colonists and even Governor Benjamin D'Urban himself were sympathetic to the Trekkers. The governor saw the departure of the Trekkers as 'an incalculable loss to the colony' (quoted in Van Jaarsveld, 1974:6).

It is Sir Andries Stockenström that casts light on the issue here. Interestingly, he proposes that colonial conquest in Dutch times had not been a well-thought out plan with Machiavellian ideological underpinnings aiming at dispossession and domination, even though it ultimately did bring with it both dispossession and domination. In his autobiographical notes on his first appointment as deputy landdrost (magistrate) in the troubled (because of clashes between colonists and the Xhosa) frontier district of Graaff-Reinet in 1813, Stockenström wrote:

> The theory which makes the blacks irreclaimable savages, fit only to be exterminated, like the wolves, was not of Boer origin. We had possessed ourselves of their lands; we wanted more of their land, together with their services. Oppression had been going on for a century and a half; but we did not oppress for mere oppression's sake. (....) It never entered the imagination of the simplest of the Boers to deny the oppression, knowing that he could not take a step without crossing ground of which those he holds in bondage were once the free and contented owners. The reflecting part (that is many) of the old population regretted the evil, but could not see a remedy (quoted in Du Toit and Giliomee, 1983:225)

It is Stockenström's sharp judgement that bears again on the difference between the old and the new type of colonial conquest in regard to the frontier war of 1818 against the Xhosa (waged by the British):

> The Cape Dutch at least did wrong with less hypocrisy, for I never once heard our aggressions attempted to be excused or justified by the pretence of spreading the Bible or civilization; whilst, on the contrary, many of the elder members, who had fortunately come in contact with right-minded Christians, or had otherwise obtained an insight into the principles of the sacred volume, would sit up whole nights relating to me and lamenting over the scenes of injustice and cruelty which they had witnessed, or heard of in earlier days... (ibid, pp.225-26)

The most interesting and illuminating autobiographical excerpt, however, comes from a conversation Stockenström held with no one less than Dr Philip himself and Thomas Pringle (another important contemporary British voice deprecating the Boers) in 1825, in which they discussed relations between colonists and the inhabitants of the country:

> To have denied the extermination of the Hottentots and Bushmen, the possession of their country by ourselves, the cruelties with which their expulsion and just

> resistance had been accompanied, the hardships with which the laws were still pressing upon their remnants, the continuation of the same system against the Kaffirs [Xhosa], or the iniquity of the aggressions and murders then lately perpetrated upon the latter race, would have been ridiculous, as well as dishonest, as there was not in the Colony, even among the Boers, one single being of the slightest decency or respectability, who did not see the facts before his eyes and lament them....There was consequently little to be disputed between my guests and myself as to the past; but they certainly tried my temper by the virulence with which they persisted in denouncing the present generation of the Colonists and refused to make any allowance for their actual position, which rendered self-defence often absolutely necessary for the preservation of both parties, invariably cutting the Gordian knot by the maxim, which no people on earth have ever violated one hundredth part as much as the English themselves, viz., 'You have no business here at all.' In talking of **systems**, I happened to say, 'My system is to do my best to get the white man hanged who murders a black; but I also do my best to root out any gang of robbers and murderers among the blacks, who cannot be otherwise reclaimed.' This was met by an exclamation, 'An awful necessity into which you have forced yourselves!' Granted; or rather, our ancestors and the Government have forced us into it, and being in the scrape, we must either run away, sit still and have our throats cut, or defend what we have. Neither of the two former alternatives will benefit the blacks - either must ultimately ruin both them and ourselves; whereas the third persisted in with firmness, strict justice and moderation may in a country like this enable both parties to live in peace and plenty. My opponents were disposed to find some reason in this argument, but remained sceptical as to the existence of the soil on which the justice and moderation were to be cultivated...' (ibid, p.226, emphasis in the original).

I have chosen to quote Stockenström at length because in his notes one can see clearly the roots of the issue as it would unfold well into this century. Roughly put, it was a clash between what was and what should be, turning into a justification that tries to close the gap between the two. As Dumont pointed out, modern ideology does not tolerate well either paradoxes or contradictions, for it does not distinguish between different levels nor assigns to each of them a different value as in a traditional, holistic and hierarchical system (see his discussion on value, Dumont, 1986:239-268). The apparent relentlessness (judging from Stockenström's account) with which both Dr Philip and Pringle counteract Stockenström's explanations seems to

illustrate well the mode of operation of the modern individualistic and egalitarian mind. Stockenström - an educated, intelligent and devoted member of the Cape Dutch elite who became a prominent colonial official under the British - is obviously cornered and at pains to justify the behaviour of his countrymen, past and present. Streak (1974:2-3) gives us the key to understanding the background behind Dr Philip's and Pringle's criticisms. He mentions the introduction in England, in the late eighteenth century, 'of religious and humanitarian motives in both home and colonial policy'.

> In particular, the philanthropic desire to rescue the black African from a state of barbarism loomed large and had direct bearing on and greatly influenced what English opinion of the Afrikaner would be (...) In the case of the Cape of Good Hope it was argued that expansion had from the first been immoral since it could only have taken place at the expense of lands rightfully belonging to the natives. Furthermore, it was maintained that expansion had resulted in the deplorable disruption of the tribal way of life of Rousseau's 'noble savage', a fact which was evidenced in the subordinate position he held within the European controlled Colony. Particular condemnation was levelled at the frontiersmen of the Colony, the Boers, for the treacherous ways by which, it was alleged, they had reduced the aborigine to what was considered an ignoble and oppressed state.

The self-righteousness of his British interlocutors (not necessarily only Dr Philip and Pringle) can be inferred from Stockenström's own forceful remarks that seem to be motivated by hurt, and his emphatic and all-sweeping assertions as to the moral standing of his countrymen: 'there was not in the Colony...one single being of the slightest decency and respectability, who did not see the facts before his eyes and lament' or 'it never entered the imagination of the simplest of the Boers to deny the oppression'. He is clearly in the defensive. Also, clearly, in putting forth his people's case, he is doing two things. First, he is pointing to a difference - for instance, the hypocrisy he assigns to the actions of the British was lacking in Dutch times, when oppression had been neither justified nor denied. Namely, he is pointing that the underpinnings of an ideological discourse of oppression were not there. Next, he is constructing a justificatory model that has the potential to turn into a full-fledged ideology, as when he says that 'being in the scrape, we must either run away, sit still and have our throats cut, or defend what we have' and that the third alternative 'may in a country like this enable both parties to live in peace and plenty'. We might say that the subsequent history of South Africa proved Stockenström wrong. However, that is not the important

point here. The crux of the matter is that Pringle's and Dr Philip's obdurate refusal to make any allowance for the actual (difficult) position of the colonists is met by Stockenström's equally obdurate opposition: 'You have no business here at all.' To me, this verbal tussle between the three of them can serve as a blueprint for all the subsequent wranglings between Briton and Boer. Besides, it also points - if only in a limited and tangential way - to the reactive nature that to me will be a hallmark of Afrikaner construction of identity and what Cronjé and others would come to call the 'Afrikaner point of view' on race matters.

Plummeting now from the heights of a historical stage to the depths of a personal one, from dialogue between great voices of the past to a squabble between obscure voices in the present, I wish to present my own experience in the matter. Though not a Boer, neither, strictly speaking, a Boer sympathizer, I also experienced in the flesh some of Stockenström's feelings. For my own temper has also been tried more than once by British 'virulence' and persistent denunciation in South Africa. First, there was that time when I tried to argue with Paul about democracia racial not being merely a Machiavellian coverup for white domination in Brazil, but a cosmology (though I did not employ this term at the time) shared by wide sectors of the population, regardless of race. Paul just smiled back, condescendingly. He did not say it in as many words, but I believe he thought that something so easy to see through (and perhaps so silly) as democracia racial could not be taken seriously. To him, it was perhaps just like the notion of 'standard Afrikaans' - a sham.

My next encounter involving democracia racial was with an English-speaking, middle-aged gentleman who was introduced to me by a common friend. He had a degree in anthropology, though he had apparently not been in the field for many years (he was then working as a psychotherapist). He asked me about my work, and when I mentioned a comparison between Brazil and South Africa in terms of notions of race and nationhood, his face lit up. He thought we had common ground there. I tried to explain to him the assimilationist model in Brazil, that contrasted with the essentialist one in South Africa, but to no avail. If the whites are 'on top' in Brazil, as he said, then it is the same situation as in South Africa. No, I said, it is not. He looked bewildered, and, unfortunately for him, I had neither the time nor the patience to explain it further so that he might understand the difference better. I am afraid I left him with the impression that I was some kind of Latin white supremacist. I mentioned a paper I had written on the subject, that I would present at the department of political science at the University of Cape Town. I volunteered to give him a copy, but by now he was convinced I would be mauled down by the department for my skewed views on the subject. I have learned that it is at best difficult and at worst downright impossible to talk through this kind of barrier: for,

in this perspective, racial domination is racial domination wherever you find it and, in this sense, Brazil can only be just like South Africa, minor differences notwithstanding. Later I learned that he had once given a ride to no one less than Mandela himself: he had apparently (according to my source) taken the latter across some international border disguised as his garden boy (that was before Mandela's imprisonment after the Rivonia Trial when he was on the run from the police). I have found out it is particularly difficult to talk precisely to so-called progressive English-speaking whites[20]. In such instances, more than once, I did feel like Stockenström as he was being pestered by Dr Philip and Thomas Pringle and being unable to justify himself no matter how much explanation he might offer. I also noticed something else: the almost neurotic reaction that the 'virulence' mentioned by Stockenström brought about in me. I found myself almost defending democracia racial. That is about the last thing I would have done in Brazil before coming to South Africa. For that is exactly what Gilberto Freyre ended up doing, as we shall see below in chapter 6.

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There have been a few interesting attempts at unravelling the 'rise of Afrikanerdom'.[21] The most common shortcoming is that

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[20] I remember another confrontation, this time with Amy Thornton, head of the ANC's Veteran League in the Western Cape. The first time we met she fired questions at me about poverty in Brazil after we had barely been introduced. The point of such questions is to try and assess your interlocutor, to see whether he or she is also a progressive white just like yourself (and not a member of the more common, conservative subspecies). My feeling was also that by trying to bring me to agree to their universalist view where both Brazil and South Africa would be on equal terms (say, both being white-dominated societies with widespread poverty), they were erasing any possibility of my having a different - and possibly unpalatable - point of view from their own. At bottom, their attitude, though on the surface of it very progressive, struck me as unbelievably intolerant. Interestingly, neither Africans nor coloureds tended to require from me such an immediate and quick alignment with their own opinions.

[21] I have in mind, among others, Moodie (1975), Sharp (1980), Hexham (1981), O'Meara (1983), Thompson (1985), Dubow (1989). My favourite ones remain Hofmeyer's (1987) and Giliomee's (1989) articles. I also found the excerpts from historical documents in Du Toit and Giliomee (1983) very interesting.

the interpretations do not take enough stock of the issue from a comparative (i.e., external) point of view. I find it very difficult to have one's feet on the 'English' side of the equation and look at the Afrikaner side, as most interpretations try to do (conversely, having one's feet on the Afrikaner side is also problematic). Though I do not think that Afrikaner nationalism can be understood solely as a reaction or a response to British universalism (and, of course, to African presence), I nonetheless think that the British element in the equation is very important and has not been sufficiently emphasized. One of the possible reasons is that most interpretations arise exactly from scholars and institutions that are historically rooted either on the English side of the divide or in a perspective that is related to that side. That is, the interpretations are more often than not well-rooted in the South African tradition started by people like Dr Philip and Pringle, even if they take on that tradition critically (as, I believe, is mostly the case).

Of course, one might object, in a very South African way, that this is all 'white history' and therefore not necessarily relevant to the majority of the people in the country. However, the divide I have tried to point to here, if only sketchily - between a universalist perspective of British origin and a particularistic one of Afrikaans origin - to me is also a perspective transplanted onto the wider South African scene. For instance, one could see the Inkatha Freedom Party and its essentialist recreation of Zulu identity as something very similar to Afrikaans identity-building (the fact has not escaped observers such as Maré, 1992). The ideology of the Pan-Africanist Congress - with its exclusivist accent on an autochthonous population fighting a settler minority of outsiders that reminds one very much of Cronjé's **inheemse/uitheemse** (indigenous/non-indigenous) distinction as applied to the Afrikaner/English divide - can be also said to have an Afrikaans air to it. This is so in spite of the fact that the PAC and conservative Afrikaans groups are at the opposite ends of the political spectrum. Coloureds in the Western Cape have also recently resorted, in some cases, to an particularistic-souding discourse. The English side here is, of course, represented by the African National Congress and its wider, universalist and non-racialist ideology (as embodied, for instance, in its Freedom Charter of 1956), where the accent is not placed on ethnicity or an exclusivist identity-building. That is, the two streaks of colonial tradition may have left in South Africa an enduring legacy that goes far beyond what can be gleaned from mere conceptions of 'white domination'. The main actors on the scene may have changed, but the premises around which different sides construct themselves are still similar. Also - it is important to note - both universalism and particularism here come together. That is, you cannot really understand one without the other: for, ultimately, one only makes sense in terms of the other. They both belong together in the same language game - a fact that tends to be overlooked

because of the splintered perspective (British/Afrikaner, white/black, conservative/progressive).[22]

There is only one thing that should, to my view, be added to make a more complete picture. Just as the universalist ideology is, borrowing the term from Stockenström, 'virulent', so is its particularistic counterpart. Actually, one might say that the South African case seems to be one of over-reaction where the reactive side ended up becoming even more virulent than its opponent. There is something incredibly unyielding and uncompromising in traditional Afrikaans ideology (not to mention some traditional Afrikaners themselves), just as in apartheid thinking: they constitute both a total system narrowly confined within very well-demarcated spaces. In this, they are different from democracia racial, even though - as we shall try to show in the last chapter - the latter can also be called a reactive ideology. For the ideology of miscegenation in Brazil - in spite of its being much maligned now - was never the total space that apartheid attempted to be at the cost of so many lives. In South Africa, the obsessional neurosis Coetzee (1991) pointed out in Cronjé's works seems to have pervaded the whole system. If that turns out indeed to be an enduring legacy, then perhaps South Africa should still expect a lot of trouble ahead. And, if events in KwaZulu/Natal are any sign to be trusted (with its on-going battle between ANC-aligned Zulus and Inkatha-aligned Zulus), at least in what concerns that important province South Africa may still face serious difficulties in the not so distant future.

Finally, in what concerns a comparison with Brazil, it is worth noting that particularistic claims, though far from lacking,[23] have been comparatively circumscribed (and, for the most part, successfully stifled). I was impressed by Mandela's and Allan Boesak's (formerly leader of the ANC in the Western Cape) use of the term 'ethnicity' in a pre-election rally in 1994 in the coloured suburb of Retreat, in Cape Town. They were both trying to stem the tide in favour of the National Party that would swamp over the Western Cape and give that party a local victory in the elections of 1994. What struck me was that no politician in Brazil would have used the term - it simply is not part of Brazilian political vocabulary at all. In Brazil, the term (**etnicidade**) is only understood within the narrow confines of the social sciences and its usage is therefore exclusively academic. Therefore, 'ethnicity' as such has not self-consciously been an

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[22] See, however, Bekker (1993), who is the exception that confirms the rule.

[23] One classic example is the German-Brazilian (**Deutsch-Brasilianer**) claim to difference inside the national space, a claim that was vigorously resisted both by the government and by non-German-Brazilian society (see Seyferth, 1982).

issue in Brazil, in spite of the existence of important immigrant communities, blacks and Indian groups. In comparison with South African discourse (or, following South African usage, discourses), Brazilian discourse seems for the most part to steer a middle course between universalism and particularism, avoiding both extremes. We are not as universalist as English South Africans (for we do tend to assume the existence of a national identity) nor are we as particularistic as Afrikaners (for our national identity has tended to be inclusive and to rest on an assimilationist premise that does smack of universalism). Accordingly, academic discourse in Brazil, in comparison with academic South African discourse, seems to have followed this middle course too. In the social sciences, for instance, if the assumption of a **sociedade nacional** has been little challenged (see Peirano, 1981 and 1991:85-104), on the one hand, on the other hand discourse has not acquired a claustrophobic and beleaguered character, nor has it (to the same extent as most English South African academic discourse) been so enthraled with deconstructing others internal to the assumed national space. Of course, Brazilian discourse also has a somewhat provincial air to it (for it has been mostly concerned with the national space), and deconstruction is far from being an unknown exercise in the Brazilian social and human sciences (on the contrary, it is becoming more and more common). However, 'culture' (though, as everywhere, variously defined) has neither been completely frozen as an essentialist construct as in some traditional Afrikaans ethnology, nor has it been almost as completely evacuated from its heuristic value as in South African English social anthropology as proposed by West (1979) and others. We might say that, in comparison, the edge of 'virulence' in Brazil, though far from absent (for where is it absent nowadays), may seem somewhat blunt. Also, the 'millions of opinions', though they exist, tend to be comparatively less clamorous and discordant. The utter polarisation of South African discourse is therefore softened.

V

Coloured As Other

It is Sunday evening, end of summer, in Sea Point, a seaside quarter in Cape Town. Most of it has a wealthy and carefree air that reminds one of Ipanema in Rio. The neighbourhood is one of the main hubs of night life in the city. I am at Chaplin's, on Main Road, a theatre-restaurant. It has a small stage for small productions. I am watching a musical about a boy who likes dressing up in women's clothes. There are two women on stage, a young, lank white woman with an accent that to me sounds very British and a short, black woman with a powerful voice. The latter - Stella Magaba is her name - is a singer who has appeared recently on the city's stages. The third actor is Jay Pather, who is also a playwright and dancer. The friend who took me to see the musical - Arthur - whispers in my ear that Jay is highly qualified. He has several diplomas in speech and, I believe, scenography.

The musical is entertaining. Half the restaurant laughs heartily every now and then, whereas the other, white half, for the most part restrains itself. Later, in his normal clothes, Jay comes to our table - I am sitting with several South African friends and a Dutch girl - and starts talking to Arthur. The latter sports an afro (that some of our common acquaintances deride behind his back). Arthur and Jay talk about aspects of the musical. Jay is worried about the language he has chosen (is it accessible? or is it perhaps too elitist?) and also about the fact that maybe he has failed to convey his origins to his audience. That is, in his words, perhaps the audience has not taken notice of where he is 'speaking from' (a most important concern in South Africa, where identity is a badge one wears everywhere). My attention sharpens: Jay is coloured. For me, however, he looks white (especially because he still has makeup on his face). But his identity - that is, the position from which he is speaking from - is the same as Arthur's. They are both coloured. Besides, to make matters slightly more complicated, they are also both black.

Let's examine the situation. There I am, a (white) Brazilian sitting around a table with a group of coloured friends and a Dutch girl. I have watched a musical that, to me, is the story of a white boy that likes dressing up in women's clothes and is gay. Afterwards, I learn that I have in fact watched a musical created and enacted by a black actor that, with makeup, looks whiter than I and almost as white as the blonde Dutch girl at our table. I would watch the same musical again on another occasion. Then I would notice a line I had missed the first time. One of the

singers/actresses, impersonating the thick and angry voice of the boy's father, on discovering the boy dressed up in his bedroom, says: 'it is a disgrace to be found out like this, especially for a black man'. It is important to note here that Jay, besides his transgenderist transvestism, is not practising any race transvestism. He identifies himself as coloured and black, and the people around our table had no objection to make as to Jay's self-presentation. On the contrary, Arthur assured him that people had certainly noticed where he was talking from. What is 'coloured' and what is 'black' here? Before answering, however, I would like to further complicate matters.

It is Saturday night and I am at Tangiers. The bar is on Loop Street, in the old city centre dating back from Dutch colonial times. However, instead of Dutch-looking houses, Loop Street has several Victorian, two-storied houses with ample balconies and wrought-iron balustrades painted white. Some of the houses on the lower part of the street have been renovated and turned into bars, pubs and clubs. Tangiers is located exactly on the busiest stretch of Loop Street, and its clientele is mostly white with a good sprinkling of coloureds. I am there with Graeme, a coloured friend who is fairly dark-skinned and looks somewhat Indian. That is, his appearance is very different from that of either Arthur or Jay.[1] The bar is crowded and we are scanning the room. Graeme has a beer can in his hand and I a glass of dry white wine (the Cape is practically the only wine-producing region in Africa south of the Sahara. South African wine tastes like French wine, is of good quality and cheap). The techno music is very loud and it doesn't help conversation. I notice a boy leaning against the wall, near us. He is elegantly dressed. As I look at him, I remain in doubt: coloured or black (that is, African)? I ask Graeme, who answers unhesitatingly: coloured. I am astonished. As far as I am concerned, he might perfectly have been African. I ask Graeme how come, and he simply says he knows. It is the guy's haircut, his clothes, his way of leaning against the wall.

Another evening, another place. Now it is Woodstock, the racially mixed area where, during apartheid, both coloured and whites had residential rights (though in separate sections). Even at the height of apartheid, however, Woodstock became famous in South Africa and abroad (together with its counterpart in Jo'burg, Hillbrow) for being an area where there was deliberate disobedience of the Group Areas Act of 1950 under which different areas were proclaimed for different racial groups. It is a neighbourhood full of Victorian houses of the turn of the century that later became mostly a working class and lower-middle class

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[1] Arthur, however, on reading a draft of this chapter, told me that many people would classify Jay as Indian! I, for my part, would have never thought he was Indian, and am quite sure many people in Brazil would have thought he was white.

neighbourhood. Today it is favoured by young professionals of different races because it is attractive, near the centre of town and still cheap in terms of rent and house prices. In Woodstock there is a late night restaurant - Don Pedro's - that is very mixed both in what concerns the race and the sexual orientation of its clients. The composition of its clientele changes from time to time, but it is favoured mostly by university students, academics, journalists, jazz musicians, artists and assorted professionals from various fields. It is well-known in certain circles (and entirely unknown in others) and it is one of the few places in town where people from different races mix not only in the sense that they are together in the same place at the same time but also because they sometimes relate to each other, talk and even become friends.

Graeme was the first to take me to Don Pedro's. The owner is Sean O'Connor. Behind this typically Irish name there is a tall man with long hair that in Brazil would be considered white. Here, he can be either white or coloured (I am unaware of his official classification under apartheid). It was at Don Pedro's that Graeme introduced me to several people I know in Cape Town, among them Niels, who used to work as manager of a franchise of the American chain Kentucky Fried Chicken in Mitchell's Plain, a coloured area. For Graeme, Niels is the living example of what is considered to be the 'arbitrariness' of the category 'coloured.' That is, 'coloured' would not correspond to anything very definite (as white and African supposedly do). Niels is very black. However, he is not African, but coloured. Let us sum up our racial equation so far: Jay is coloured and black (but not African); Arthur, who has dark skin, is also both coloured and black; Niels, who is even darker than Arthur, is coloured (I am not sure whether he is black, though). Graeme is coloured; a black coloured, he told me once, instead of a black African.

Leaving coloured aside for a moment, let us examine the meaning of 'black.' The term has at least two main meanings. One is the sense in which it was used in the last years of apartheid by the liberation movement or by those who opposed the apartheid regime. That is, it meant those who were oppressed by the regime that were not officially classified as white. The term therefore excluded members of the liberation movement that were classified as white, even though they might be oppressed by the regime (say, arrested, tortured, etc) and included those that looked white but were classified as coloured. That is why someone who seemed so white to me as Jay is black. This sense of black is restricted to the years of struggle against apartheid and to those people who nowadays still identify with that struggle and therefore with the wider sense of the term. However, this sense is nowadays falling into disuse, as I will indicate below.

The other meaning of black is 'African'. That is, it points to autochthony or indigenousness. To employ a meaningful clas-

sification, used by the white government until the thirties, Africans are the 'Natives' or those who are autochthonous. In more usual usage, African is now employed to designate those who come from one of the ethnic groups that inhabit the country since before colonial times. However, interestingly, the term is also ambiguous: for 'Africander' (original form of 'Afrikaner') also means 'African,' just as 'Afrikaans.' Both terms imply a claim to autochthony. In Afrikaans there is the term 'Afrikaan' that would be 'African' in English, but, interestingly, the large Tafelberg dictionary (1984 edition) gives as the translation for 'Afrikaan' '(native) African.' The necessity of adding 'native' is significant. For Afrikaners have claimed their autochthonous or indigenous (**inheemse**) status (as in Cronjé, 1945) in contrast, say, with the supposedly non-autochthonous (**uitheemse**) English or Indians. The Pan-Africanist Congress, for instance, admits whites and coloureds in its ranks, and they are then also 'Africans' because they identify with Africa. That is, they might all be considered, regardless of race, also 'native' to South Africa, in this age-old South African language game that constantly attempts to draw new lines between those who are autochthonous and those who are not. However, leaving aside claims to autochthony, black can also mean, besides (native) African, simply those with a dark skin. On another occasion, also at Chaplin's, sitting at a table with Arthur, a young woman and a Belgian lecturer resident in the Cape, I spent the whole dinner curious about the woman. I wanted to know her classification but did not dare ask (interest for classifications, especially other people's, especially when displayed by whites, can be interpreted as evidence of racism, particularly on the part of progressive whites).[2] When the couple left, I asked Arthur whether she was black. He retorted that he had not understood my question as he himself was also black. He then pointed to his arm's dark skin. I rephrased my question and asked whether she was African. Arthur then confirmed she was.

For a foreigner, even someone curious about local classifications as I, it can be difficult to read the signs. However, the signs are there (and people read them very readily). A different accent when speaking English or Afrikaans, a certain deportment, a distinct air can all indicate whether a person is white, coloured or African. A foreigner, however, even after a year's residence

[2] This attitude is at the antipodes of the language game prevailing in Brazil, where colour (understood as phenotype, not as race in essentialist discourse) is openly and widely discussed. Even Brazilians of higher income groups and more progressive tints discuss colour (say, by referring to skin colour, nose shape and hair type when describing someone) far more often and more openly than their counterparts in South Africa discuss race. For, contrary to South Africa, there is usually no taboo implied in the dominant language game.

in the country, cannot easily read these signs. Besides, South Africans themselves at times make wrong guesses. Bradley, for instance, another coloured acquaintance of mine, one evening pointed to Niels at Don Pedro's (whom Bradley did not know) and said he was African. Shireen - a coloured friend who can easily pass as white - once went through the experience of becoming the informal confidant of a white woman on the street that complained to her about coloureds as an ignorant and stupid people (there has always been great prejudice against coloureds among whites[3]). The woman did not notice that she was talking to a coloured.

Leaving aside the question (at bottom, just as complex) of knowing who is black, if someone who is phenotypically white, for all purposes, or phenotypically black, for all purposes, can be coloured, then what is 'coloured'? Would it be a category that is, say, more 'ethnic' than 'racial'? This would explain, to my unaccustomed Brazilian eyes, why both Shireen and Niels - so phenotypically different - can be coloured. To me, the most constructive explanation, however, is that coloured is an identity that results from what is known in literature on the United States as the 'one-drop rule': the rule of the (single) drop of (black) blood. That is, traditionally, in the States, people with even the slightest (and most invisible) trace of African ancestry would be considered black. In South Africa, the same essentialist principle seems to apply, though in a different manner from the States.[4] One might say that any sign of either non-white or non-black ascendancy might lead to (official or unofficial) classification as coloured. In this sense, coloured became a buffer category between the population that was classified as white and the majority of the population classified as 'native,' 'Bantu' or 'African.' All these classifications are historical in South Africa, and date from well before apartheid days. What apartheid did was simply to rigidify them further.

Coloured was constructed as an intermediary category for people of 'mixed blood' or 'mixed descent.' In reality, it is a category in a profoundly essentialist system that defines the two poles of autochthony as 'white' and 'black' (or, historically, European and Native) excluding any mixed product as residual. In principle, those that are not (native) African cannot become white even after several generations of a 'whitening' process (i.e., marriages with white or increasingly white people) like

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[3] See February (1981) for a detailed description of white stereotypes about coloureds.

[4] In South Africa, for instance, there was the possibility of official racial reclassification, however limited it might actually be, whereas in the United States, according to David (1991) reclassification is almost impossible.

the one that has become fairly common in Brazilian society.[5] Of course, in some cases, different members of the same family were variously classified as either coloured or white (not to mention coloured or native) by the apartheid regime after the Population Registration Act of 1950, according to their acceptance by the white or coloured groups (that happened in Arthur's family, for instance). Nonetheless, the ideological principle behind the category is very different from that behind categories such as **mestiço, moreno** or **mulato** in Brazil. In a social world conceived of in essentialist terms, 'coloured' has not become the 'mestizo escape-hatch' of Brazilianist literature, that is, a category that would provide a escape from the polarization represented by the black/white pair.[6] 'Coloured' is therefore an intermediary category, but **not a mediatory category**. The mixed race categories as the point of transcendence of DaMatta's (1981) triangle of the three Brazilian founding races (white, black and Indian), the point at which the triad white-black-Indian meets and 'dissolves' itself into a common category to lay the foundations for Brazilian nationhood, those have a different character from the South African coloured. Instead of 'escape-hatch', 'coloured' is rather a cul-de-sac, a dead-end alley. In the essentialist discourse of South Africa, instead of being the base for a common nationhood in a narrative of transcendence of original difference through (race) assimilation, coloured became instead a residual category squeezed between white and African. Employing the essentialist principle, everything that was neither white nor indigenous would become coloured.[7] The Group Areas Act of 1950 defines a 'coloured person' as someone who is neither white nor native.[8] However, differently from other categories in the

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[5] For a statistical study of interracial marriage and miscigenation in Brazil with sociological implications, see Hasenbalg & Valle Silva (1992:53-100).

[6] The term 'mestizo escape-hatch' was coined by Degler (1971).

[7] There is at least one marginal instance that shows that, in the beginning of the apartheid regime, there was some doubt as to the validity of this operating principle. For instance, in 1955 the census' Appeal Board felt it had to declare officially that a man whose father was European and mother an African would officially become coloured (see Brookes, 1968:24). I am grateful to Professor Peter Fry for having pointed out this instance to me.

[8] See text of the act in Brookes (1968:132) that defines coloured as 'any person who is not a member of the white group or of the native group' or as any woman, of whatever race, that marries a coloured man. There have been exceptions to this definition, as in the case of the children of ANC-leader Oliver

VI

Back Home: Myth and Reality Revisited

There is something that I call to myself the 'statistical country'. It is the profile of a society that comes out of statistical surveys such as those of the South African Race Relations Institute or the thick IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística) volumes in Brazil. That is hard empirical evidence pointing, in both cases, to discrimination. Evidence that is irrefutable, that is the 'reality behind the myth' of both 'separate but equal development' in South Africa and democracia racial in Brazil. There is an index to measure inequality in income distribution, called the Gini coefficient. A coefficient of 0 means perfect equality and 1 means total inequality (say, one single person would concentrate in his or her hands all wealth). The coefficient for Brazil has remained around 0.6 since the 1970s (Reis, Rodriguez and Barros, 1991:141). It is considered to be the highest for a developing country (the Gini coefficient for OECD countries is usually below 0.5). I have been unable to obtain recent comparable data for South Africa in Rio. In their famous study on poverty in South Africa, Wilson and Ramphele (1989:18) give a Gini coefficient of 0.66 for 1978, saying that it was then the highest available in the world. In August 1995, however, I heard Dr Ramphele herself declaring at a conference in Cape Town that Brazil's inequality in income distribution was higher than South Africa's (she did not provide the Gini coefficient though), and the highest in the world (South Africa comes second). However it may be, in terms of the statistical country South Africa and Brazil seem to be very much comparable: they are both societies with large industrial and financial sectors, a considerable middle-class and a huge mass of poor and destitute people. However, as soon as one leaves the statistical domain, problems start.

The statistical country in South Africa is quite old. It is relevant to note here that Cronjé already resorted to statistics in his works, with racial breakdowns. And since 1929, the South African Institute of Race Relations has been providing a yearly statistical survey (see, for instance, its **Race Relations Survey 1993/94**). In Brazil, by comparison, the statistical country has been slow to come up in what concerns racial inequality (we do not have an equivalent of the South African Institute of Race Relations, for instance). As a matter of fact, the issue of racial inequality is still debated, in spite of ground-breaking work by both Carlos Hasenbalg and Nelson do Valle e Silva (1988,

system, due to its residual character, coloured occupies a problematic space because it does not correspond to any well-defined essentialist group (hence, I think, the charges of 'arbitrariness' levelled against the category by many people, among them my friend Graeme and other coloureds). This insistence on the arbitrariness of 'coloured' is absent in the case of either 'European' or 'African,' unless one claims that race classification as such is wholly arbitrary anyway.

In this essentialist discourse, that postulates difference as a set of compartmentalized and mutually exclusive categories, coloured apparently comes up in the nineteenth century as an attempt on the part of the British to classify the free population of the Cape Colony that is neither European nor African. The English seem to have developed a system of exclusivist classifications before the Dutch, and when the Colony passed from Dutch to British hands, its population seemed to be of a strange character to the new colonizer, **even the population of European origin** because it could not be easily classified in well-defined categories. Ridd (1993:4) quotes, for instance, Captain Robert Percival who writes in 1804 about the Cape colonists:

> Such however has been the influence of the medley of habits, customs, prejudices, and languages, that few retain any distinguishing trait of the country from which they originally sprang; and the whole society requires to be described as a people differing extremely from the natives of any part of Europe.

Note here the use of 'natives' to indicate Europeans and the perception of an extremely varied population that, just over half a century later, another English visitor, Lady Duff-Gordon, would describe in 1861 as 'the most motley crewe [sic] in all the world' (quoted, ibid., p.4). In a book published in the same year, J.S.Mason, a English colonist at the Cape, says:

> No one can be in Capetown for a single day, without being struck by the infinite variety of the human race encountered in the streets. Indians, Chinese, Malays, Caffers, Bechuanas, Hottentots, Creoles, 'Afrikanders', half-castes of many kinds, negroes of every variety.... (ibid, p.4).

At the end of the Dutch colonial period, the law distinguished between four categories of people in the Colony: officials of the Dutch East Indies Company (who owned and operated the colony), **burgers** or free colonists (farmers, tavern-keepers, hostel-owners and traders of European origin), slaves (from different parts of

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Tambo and his white wife, who were African and not coloured.

Africa and Asia) and 'Hottentots' or Khoi, that were then the only indigenous people in the Cape. Among these juridically defined categories, with different privileges and restrictions, there was the residual category - juridically undefined - of free and freed blacks. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, especially in Cape Town, this category became numerically more visible, as Elphick indicates (1979:380 and ff), calling the attention of the authorities and triggering a process of discrimination so that they would not enjoy the privileges of **burger** status.[9]

One can speculate that from this residual and marginal category that under the Dutch already created conceptual problems, plus the category 'Hottentot' (Khoi), there would come less than a century later the coloured category in British colonial censuses from 1865 on.[10] According to Ridd (ibid, p.8 ff), the first census in 1865 dealt on two groups: 'European' and 'Coloured'. The last was reserved for those that were not considered 'European'. Here we can already see the essentialist principle at work. 'Coloured' was subdivided into 'Hottentot', 'Kafir' and 'Other'. In Cape Town, 'Other' was 43% of the total population. In the remaining censuses of the nineteenth century, 'Other' became 'Mixed and Other'. More than 90% of Mixed and Other were 'Mixed'. This last category included all those who could not be classified in terms of any classification seen as 'natural'. The 1875 census director (quoted ibid, p.9) says that 'Mixed and Other'

> includes the great and increasing population which has sprung from the intercourse of the colonists with the indigenous races, and which fills the interval between the dominant people and the natives.

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[9] However, it was still far less significant than the huge free population of mixed race in Brazil (in 1872, the year of the first census in the country, they were 39.5% of the population, only outnumbered by whites, who made up 45% of the population - see Hasenbalg & Valle e Silva, 1992:68).

[10] February (1981) points to the fact that several stereotypes and images attached to Khoi were transplanted to the coloured population (as the Khoi left the stage), what indicates that the latter somehow sprang from the former too. It is interesting to note that 'black' in the Dutch colonial time referred to those that were or had been slaves (independently from their origin, be it African or Asian), whereas the 'native' Africans of the colony's Eastern frontier were called by their ethnic designation - Xhosa. See Elphick and Giliomee (1979: 380 ff). Goldin (1989:242) also notes that 'coloured' was already in use by 1853 by the administration to designate 'disenfranchised people of mixed race, freed slaves and Khoisan'.

This quote is very important, as Ridd notes. Here the principle of the system is clearly spelled out. 'Mixed and Other' falls in the **interval** between the 'dominant people' (Europeans) and natives. In other words, the category is the territory earmarked for those who at bottom have no classification because they do not fit in the essentialist framework. In spite of the increasing complexity of the classificatory system in further colonial censuses (addition of some categories and elaboration of some distinctions), this triple system will be adopted by the first census of the Union of South Africa (as the united, independent country was named in 1910). Then the categories were 'European', 'Bantu', 'Mixed and Other Coloured'. This system would later produce offshoots, namely, subcategories linked to 'Mixed and Other Coloured'.

Both among groups classified as 'coloured' and those classified as 'white', 'coloured' continued to be a problematic term, as shown both by the enduring need to refine and further subdivide the category and by the persistence of 'Other'. In terms of the Population Registration Act of 1950 that mandated the racial classification of all South Africans, 'coloureds' were subdivided into 'Cape coloured' (Christian coloureds), 'Malay' (Muslim coloureds), Griqua (an ethnic group), Chinese, Indian, 'Other Asiatic' and 'Other Coloured' (February, 1981:4). The two last subdivisions symbolize the essentialist principle's inability to solve the problem. No matter how punctilious the classificatory effort, one always ends up with an intractable residual category. Both scholars and lay people alike have since long pointed to the fact that 'coloured' is an official (white) invention that does not correspond to any 'real' group (see, for instance, February, 1981). This is so because both in what concerns the British in the last century and white South Africans in this century, 'real' was considered to be the indigenous people of the colony (Ridd, 1993:5), or, conversely, the Europeans. That is, the focus was on the supposedly 'pure' and autochthonous peoples of the interior of the colony and not on the mixed population of Cape Town and the farms. There is therefore little information on this mixed group in nineteenth century sources. In this sense, it is meaningful to point out that the contents of the book that can be considered one of the first attempts at a systematized ethnographic description of the peoples inhabiting the colony, George Stow's **The Native Races of South Africa** (1905), does not include the mixed population of the Cape. That population was also excluded from accounts relating to the population of European origin. That is, this mixed population - whose descendants today represent most of the population of Cape Town and the

Western Cape - had only a very marginal place in the colonial imagination.[11]

In this century, this situation continued, with both whites and coloureds complaining about it. An Afrikaner theologian, quoted by February (1981:5) complains - using the same term ('motley') that Lady Duff-Gordon employed in the last century - that 'the great mass reveals such a motley character that the government is forced to divide the coloured community into various sub-groups for its purposes, of which the Cape Coloured group is the largest. From the racial point of view, the Coloured group defies all classification.... Colour can also not be applied as a criterion. The Coloureds cannot simply be labelled as 'brown people', since their colour ranges from white to black.' Reverend Allan Hendrickse says (id, pp.5-6) that the 'term Coloured is not of our thinking, and if we look at the circumstances of the South African situation then you must ask why. We have no peculiar colour, we have no peculiar language and if other people see these peculiarities they see them not because they see them but because they want other people to see them....I do not want to be labelled Coloured...'. However, a coloured identity did arise historically, as Goldin (1989) shows, and, interestingly, the watershed seems to be, according to Goldin, exactly the time around the Anglo-Boer War (that was also decisive for Afrikaner identity-building).[12]

My first inkling that 'coloured' was a different category from mestiço and related terms in Brazil happened right at the beginning of my stay in Cape Town. Graeme Hendricks was one of the first people I met when I came to South Africa. Soon after we had met (through an NGO that deals with Aids prevention where he worked as a volunteer), Graeme took me to see some of the

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[11] As February (1981) shows, in the nineteenth century the coloured's place was occupied by the 'Hottentot' (Khokhoi) in the colonial imagination, a category that interestingly corresponds to an autochthonous group that could be seen in essentialized terms. Stow's book, though only published posthumously in 1905, was written decades earlier.

[12] Though Goldin emphasizes only that coloured identity is the 'outcome of a history of "divide and rule" tactics' (ibid, p.241) on the part of the colonial government (and, much later in the 1980s, by the apartheid government), he shows that there effectively came up a group that called itself coloured and even organized politically around a coloured identity. He also points out, significantly, that this identity came up through growing racial discrimination on the part of whites and the increasing difficulty of 'passing,' and through fear of identification with Africans that might lead to disenfranchisement and immiseration.

coloured townships of the Cape. The townships are one of the most peculiar aspects of the apartheid system for a Brazilian, and they would require a chapter for themselves. They are the urban embodiment of apartheid as thought. That is, they represent in the urban space the essentialist conceptualization. Just as essentialist thought builds compartmentalized categories, supposedly completely different and separate from one another, the apartheid government built an immense network of suburbs around South African cities, each as an area separate not only from the city centre (proclaimed white) and white suburbs, but also from each other. It is a very different conception from the one that has traditionally predominated in Brazilian cities. In the latter, the urban space is more or less continuous and 'disorganized' or very imperfectly (by comparison with South Africa) zoned (for instance, as in the case of Rio and, even more so, Salvador). In the urban space in South Africa, townships and suburbs are often separated from each other by vacant lots, unoccupied terrain or else by a bridge or a highway (often with empty terrain on both sides, as is the case of a road separating the coloured township of Bonteheuwel from the black township of Langa in Cape Town). For me, these landmarks and empty spaces are the representation on the urban space of the essentialized compartmentalization in thought. That is, they represent the 'empty space' that would mark off the different categories. The future Prime-Minister Verwoerd said to the Senate in 1952 that the black areas had to be separated from urban white areas by a '**cordon sanitaire**' (see Davenport, 1987:373). His term could not have been more expressive of the eschatological implication of essentialist thought.

The large coloured area known as Mitchell's Plain is perhaps typical in this regard. Rather than a mere suburb, it is a veritable city (some claim it has more than one million inhabitants) onto itself. It is located about twenty kilometres from the city centre, and was designed as a self-contained unit just like the category 'coloured' as conceived by apartheid thought. It is isolated in the middle of the Cape Flats, without immediately adjacent neighbourhoods and with just about half a dozen access roads and a railway line. To the east, there is Cape Town's largest black township, Khayelitsha. The two areas are isolated from each other by a wide strip of no-man's land that is, however, being steadily eaten away by the expansion of both townships. Mitchell's Plain has a more or less square shape sitting in the middle of the Flats, next to False Bay. The Flats were the 'dumping ground' of apartheid, and used to be a desolate, wind-swept place.[13] On our way there, we first

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[13] The coloured writer Peter Abrahams describes his experience of them in the early fifties. He gives a good picture of the dumping ground-character of the region: 'Entering the Flats was stepping into a new Dark Age. The earth, here, is barren of

stopped in Hanover Park, closer to town, but also a dumping ground to where Graeme's family had been forcibly removed from Harfield Village, Claremont, when the latter was declared a white area (now it is an almost posh area with its quaint, renovated labourers' cottages, formerly inhabited by coloured families. Arthur's family also used to live in Harfield Village. His family was also removed to a township. Arthur to this day regrets the loss and the subsequent bulldozing of their large family house). Hanover Park struck me as being a forsaken place full of derelict-looking cheap public housing and sand that was swept around by the wind.

After we rode for kilometres and kilometres of the monotonous and empty landscape of the Flats, only broken by some bushes and trees here and there, with the ragged outline of the Hottentots Holland Mountains barely visible, we arrived in Mitchell's Plain in the beginning of a sweltering afternoon. It was February, the hottest month of the Cape summer. Under the hot sun, Mitchell's Plain struck me as a vast, bleak and shadeless cityscape with its treeless wide avenues and its uninteresting façades. Formerly, Graeme tells me, there had been hardly anything there. It had been a vast shantytown, practically without any shops and no entertainment places. We at last get to Alpine Road Secondary High, the school where Graeme used to work as a sciences teacher in the mid-eighties. There, in 1985, he went through the gruesome experience of, during the riots and protests of that time, having the police punitively seal him and his colleagues off in the school building after having thrown tear-gas inside.

The school is an ample, two-storeyed building that seems standard for township schools all over the country. It is located on a very large lot. Just as with other schools in the townships, Alpine Road High does not have sports fields of any kind. The large lot it occupies is mostly grass. It is very hot and Graeme takes me to the office of one of the school directors. Graeme greets everyone he meets: he knows all of them. Afterwards, he takes me to the teachers' room: two rows of tables in the middle of a long room. I am introduced to everyone as some kind of illustrious foreign visitor. As Graeme and I talk to the teachers, I feel a growing sense of strangeness. Those people before me seem Brazilian both phenotypically and because of their way of talking (it is very open and expressive with little or no attachment to the somewhat punctilious, ritualized exchange

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all but the hardiest shrub. It is a dirty white, sandy earth. The sea had once been here. In its retreat it had left a white, unyielding sand, grown dirty with time. Almost, it had left a desert. And in this desert strip, on the fringe of a beautiful garden city [Cape Town proper], men had made their homes. They had taken pieces of corrugated iron and tied them together with bits of string, wire and rope' (quoted in February, 1980:148).

prevailing among whites). To my mind, they would be lower-middle class Brazilians. The feeling of a growing strangeness comes from the fact that I am aware that they are not Brazilian. They are talking in English and Afrikaans to Graeme, and this is South Africa. However, be it the intense heat or the surprise of it all, the feeling of strangeness remains and is intensified by the fact that those people are there on their own, i.e., there are neither whites, nor blacks nor any Asians around.

Finally, after a lot of talk, we leave the school exactly when classes have finished and pupils leave to go home. When we drive out of the school parking lot, I watch the crowd of students flooding out of the gates. It is an absolutely kafkaesque view. My feeling of strangeness now reaches a paroxysm. Among the children there are all the possible and imaginable variety between the extremes of complete whiteness and total blackness. The apartheid government had segregated there with impressive acumen and accurateness all human beings who had the slightest sign of either black or white ascent. The essentialist principle (here a kind of one-drop rule working on both sides of the divide) had apparently been very strictly followed. It was there, at Alpine Road Secondary High in Mitchell's Plain that apartheid stood out for me in all its immense absurdity. As I watched those children, I struggled in vain for a metaphor that would convey my feeling of strangeness. Later at home, thinking about Mitchell's Plain before going to sleep, with its wide, empty streets, its strange appearance of an artificial city, the intense heat and those multicoloured children streaming out of the school, the only metaphor I could find was that of science fiction. The world of apartheid seemed to be a universe so absurd that it could not possibly be a product of this world. In Brazil, those children and their teachers would be among whites, blacks, Japanese, etc. In Mitchell's Plain, they had been segregated in a world of their own, like a giant, separate biosphere. The people that in Brazil would be the **povão na rua** (the common folks on the street) - the mestiços that in our thinking would be the very substance of our nationhood - in South Africa were a people apart, segregated both from whites and blacks.

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It would be relevant to consider why in South Africa there came up a system based on three general categories whereas in the United States - also, just like South Africa, an essentialist society - a similar system had existed until the last century and then disappeared. The American system had a third category - that of 'mulatto' that lingered on in the census until 1920. In the

last century, however, this system of three categories gave way to the dualist system that has predominated ever since. It is very interesting to follow in Davis (1991) the slow rejection of the three-category system both by whites and blacks. The mulattoes eventually became black and came to identify with blacks.[14] For Davis the reason for shedding the three-category system and the appearance of a dualist system was the pressure on the Southern, slave-holding states just before the Civil War. In order to justify slavery, in an environment increasingly shot through with egalitarian ideals, those states would have created an ideology based on a rigid colour line, in which mulattoes had no place. Everyone who had any trace of black blood would be considered inferior. After the civil war, this ideology also spread to the North, and the ensuing racial polarization in the postbellum South intensified the dualist system. In order to defend themselves against discrimination, blacks (and mulattoes) themselves had to adopt the system. Nowadays the rule that any trace of black descent makes a person a black (even though the fact may not be visible at all) is generally accepted as a criterion to define 'black' in the United States, both among blacks and whites.[15]

In South Africa, the system is different because the conceptual locus of 'black' is occupied by coloured, African and (outside the Cape) Indian. In my view, perhaps this three-fold system is due to the more traditional character of South African society. The polarization that happened in the States also occurred in the last decades of apartheid, as shown by the use of 'black' as an inclusive designation for Africans, coloureds and Indians. However, this use of black - that reminds one of the American polarization is now fading away among coloureds and Indians themselves. What is happening then, as the bipolar system that came up during the struggle against apartheid has apparently not taken root?

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[14] Davis (ibid. p.136) shows that there are still small groups in the United States that try to keep a mixed identity. These groups have survived to some extent the assault of the essentialist system as, for example, Louisiana's Creoles of Color' and the several small and isolated communities in the East that have different local names but are generally referred to as 'American mestizos'.

[15] However, nowadays the dualist system is changing, as Skidmore (1993:379) points out, mentioning the increasing importance of the Hispanic population as a third group in-between. Besides, there are also people who are classifying themselves as 'multiracial' or 'bi-racial' and the whole official classificatory system is now being increasingly contested even in official circles.

The answer is that there is a movement now in the opposite direction. In the States, the mulattoes rejected by the whites and faced with the one-drop rule, became the first leaders of American black movements. In South Africa now, on the contrary, there is a reaffirmation of coloured identity through, for instance, the rejection of the African National Congress (seen as an African movement), as shown by the April 1994 provincial vote in the Western Cape (that went to the National Party). Before the elections, it was already clear that the ANC would lose in the province where most of the voters are coloured. A veritable wave of prejudice swept the coloured townships before April, making use of the same old themes of white prejudice: for instance, the protection of the coloured woman against African male aggression and rape (that parallels the protection of white womanhood in traditional apartheid ideology).[16] In this context, the use of 'black' as an inclusive term is disappearing and the old tripartite system has made a comeback, even though it is not officially enforced any more.[17] Another noteworthy development is the fact that the rejection of Africans on the part of coloureds has not brought about an affirmation of a separate coloured identity but, rather, the accent seems to fall on rapprochement with the whites. This is borne out not only by observation of increasing social intermingling between coloureds and whites in Cape Town (among the middle-classes) but also by the fact that many coloureds voted for the Nationalist party, a traditionally white and Afrikaans party.[18]

These events, to me, point to the traditional refusal on the part of the coloured population (or most of it, at any rate) to have a separate identity.[19] That is, there is a rejection of essen-

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[16] See Cronjé's (1945) injunctions as to the imperious need to protect the 'Afrikaner mother'.

[17] It struck me that at the time the derogatory term **kaffer** (Kaffir) as a designation for Africans was much more likely to be used among coloureds than urban middle-class whites.

[18] If there is rapprochement and intermingling going on between the different 'races' in South Africa, that is certainly happening between the minority groups: whites, coloureds and Indians.

[19] There are groups in the Cape now that resort to a very essentialist discourse and who are trying to build a compartmentalized coloured identity (and to enter the political arena). The most blatantly essentialist of these groups is the **Kleurling Weerstandbeweging** ('Coloured Resistance Movement'), whose name is significantly patterned after the white rightwing **Afrikaner Weerstandbeweging**. This latter-day essentialism is still fledgling in comparison with traditional Afrikaner identity-

tialism and its ensuing compartmentalization. Cronjé and other whites have traditionally deprecated what the former called the coloureds' '**gebrek aan nasieskap**,' i.e., their 'lack of nationhood' or their lack of a strong self-identity and their consequent tendency to 'imitate' whites.[20] Cronjé (1945:77) complains that the 'bastard' (coloured) who tries to pass for white 'places no value in his own colouredness. He has no place, no racial home (**rassetuiste**) of his own'. There has traditionally existed among coloureds a system of 'whitening' similar to the Brazilian one that might ultimately lead, in a few cases, to 'passing' or insertion into the white group. When apartheid came, in some families members received different classifications: Arthur, for instance, has relatives who became white (and who, therefore, subsequently disappeared from his life). The very suburb of Woodstock is an instance of this process, with its white-skinned coloureds that could pass for white living in Walmer Estate and those with darker skin leaving below Victoria (Main) Road (the road served more or less as the dividing line during apartheid between the officially white and the officially coloured parts of Woodstock, even though the line later became fairly ineffective).[21] The very fact that Woodstock became a

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building or Inkatha's reworking of a Zulu identity in KwaZulu/Natal. To me, it is yet another indication that in the South African scene you must eventually construct yourself along essentialist lines in case you do not subscribe to a universalistic point of view. Now that the Western Cape is very much part of a larger, democratic and national framework, the region (and in particular its coloured inhabitants) feels somewhat cornered and at a loss about what to do. Hence, I believe, the last minute resort to the construction of a coloured identity (a fact that is directly linked to the democratisation of the country). However, though a feeling of malaise as to their status in the new dispensation is to be found among wide sectors of the coloured population in the Cape, its translation into an essentialist identity-building is still too recent to be taken as an indication of a general change of heart: to me, a brief comparison with the (tense) situation in KwaZulu/Natal suffices to show that the Western Cape still lags behind in what concerns essentialisation. However, the appearance of an essentializing process among a community that traditionally has resisted the rigid compartmentalization of essentialism is in itself ominous.

[20] See February (1981) for the relevant stereotypes of the coloured as 'imitator' of the white man.

[21] In fact, the maps of the area in Christopher (1994:115) show that initially (1958-68) the area proclaimed white went well below the Main Road down to New Market Street, close to the railway line. Subsequently, in 1975-83, an area below Main Road was proclaimed coloured, and coloured officially remained below

'grey' area, in spite of the government's efforts, also seems to point to the potentially subversive character of coloured within the essentialist system.

This subversive character was pointed out by Cronjé (1945:136-167). In his narrative, as Coetzee indicates, the coloured is the **sluwe insluiper** or 'sly infiltrator', a most dangerous figure who threatens the order of the universe by his supposed ability of 'infiltrating' white blood with his own blood. The most terrible character in Cronjé's account is consequently the coloured or **baster** ('bastard') that has a white appearance but has black blood that will 'infiltrate' (**insypel**) in the white community. Accordingly, for Cronjé, the coloureds are dangerous and have to be segregated because they compromise the whole apartheid system due to their **proximity** to whites. The danger supposedly posed by coloureds is that they are in Cronjé's narrative the main agents of **bloedvermenging** or blood-mixture, the harbinger of the state of total lack of differentiation or **mengelmoes**. There is some evidence to the effect that the whole classificatory system of apartheid was erected exactly to contain the coloured category within its own prescribed space. The National Party appointed a commission in 1943 - known as the Sauer Commission - to investigate policy on coloureds. According to Eloff (1990:17), the commission was 'strongly opposed to mixed marriages and "hybridization". Apart from laws which, in the opinion of the commission, do not suffice, a national pride should be developed in the "Coloured" which "would remove from him the desire to whiten".' The commission went on to recommend **volksregistrasie** or 'population registration', the cornerstone of an apartheid policy (id). When the population registration bill (that was to be passed as the Population Registration Act in 1950) was discussed in parliament, Jan Smuts, former prime-minister and opposition leader, declared that the bill did not envisage the registration of either whites or Natives but that its real object was 'to deal with the Coloured situation' (quoted ibid, p.21). This makes sense, for in a system where the two poles are very clearly distinguished - 'white' and 'black' or 'European' and 'Native' - it is only an intermediary category that can threaten the polarization on which the system has been premised.

Thus, 'coloured' as a category seems to contain in itself the seed to the dissolution of the bipolar system. In this sense, 'coloured' does seem similar to mestiço, moreno and related categories in Brazil. The latter were conceived in Brazilian thought as the transcendence of the essentialist categories of

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Main Road until 1990. Nowadays, the area below Main Road seems to me almost completely coloured, and that above Main Road and below the Eastern Boulevard very much mixed, whereas the 'mountain-side' (the high area above the Eastern Boulevard) is still mostly white.

white, black and Indian (DaMatta, 1981). Degler's (1971) use of the term 'mestizo escape-hatch' is also illuminating here: in Degler's American mind, the mestiço is the way out of the polarization between the races. The potential of coloured-ness or **mesticagem** to transcend racial polarization has been the cornerstone of the Brazilian conception of nationality in the past sixty years. However, this transcending potential of the category has been rejected in South Africa. We might say that essentialism in Brazil was somehow transcended through valuing **mesticagem** or blood-mixing, whereas in South Africa, with the rejection of any possibility of a compromise or mediation (as shown, for instance, in the works of Cronjé), essentialism has predominated.

In this sense, perhaps, one might venture the hypothesis that the rejection of the African National Congress and a preference for the Nationalist Party on the part of coloured voters is an attempt at reviving once more the premise of 'whitening'. By valuing white skin and smooth hair, and the whites that imposed apartheid on them, coloureds might be seen to be attempting to establish a hierarchy (in Dumont's sense) in which they are the part that is encompassed within the whole of whiteness. Such a system contrasts sharply with the essentialist system and its compartmentalized categorizations based on the premise of separate wholes where there is no possibility of **relation** in the ideology (see chapter 2 above). During my stay in the Cape, some times I had the feeling I was living in a 'stunted' version of Brazil. That is, the Cape seemed at times to be a place that could have been similar to, say, Rio (that, just like Cape Town, is an old colonial capital), had it not been for the historical imposition of the essentialist system. The Cape remains a peculiar locus in the South African context, not unlike a rebel island in an essentialist sea, refusing to surrender but at the same time forever unable to pursue a different course due to the essentialist ideology that predominates in the country as a whole. The relative absence of what one might call 'racial tension' in the Cape in comparison with Johannesburg (where one has the feeling that there are two almost entirely separate cities existing side by side) might also be ascribed at least in part to the comparative absence of the interminable tug-of-war between the 'black' and 'white' poles. That is, the presence of a coloured population serving as a 'buffer' category between 'white' and 'black' changes considerably the atmosphere of the place.[22] Hence also South African and foreign comments to the effect that the Cape is not typical of South Africa as a whole.

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[22] This 'buffer' character even finds some expression in the layout of the city, where coloured neighbourhoods are often found between African and white ones.

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Back to Chaplin's in Sea Point, one can now understand why Jay Pather was a black boy who liked dressing in drag and why both he and Arthur are coloured, a fact that South Africans there seem to have understood but that I missed for lack of mastery of the local code. That is, Jay and Arthur, in spite of their different looks, belong to the same category (something that would not normally happen in Brazil, where informal racial classification can often distinguish between very fine shades). However, what about their self-identification as blacks? Do coloureds like them really share a common identity with Africans, say, on account of their struggle against apartheid?

As for Arthur, he seems to feel, at his most despondent moments, that there is no room for him in South Africa. However, he only voices his distress in those intimate moments around a table in a bar when people loosen up and talk openly to a close friend. As a good political activist, Arthur does not otherwise voice his misgivings. Even around a bar table, however, he voices his doubts only **en passant**, as if he were talking about something that normally does not occupy his mind. To me, that happens because political activists who are ANC sympathizers like himself do not believe in 'ethnicity'. As is the case with the ANC's official discourse, Arthur's discourse is universalist. However, in the New South Africa, Arthur has already gone through the experience of apparently being discriminated against for not being African. He applied for a scholarship to do a short specialized course in the United States and, in spite of his being well qualified, an African woman was awarded the scholarship. He sent me a fax saying - as a joke - that he would do a sex-change plus darken his skin to see whether he might increase his chances next time he applied for anything. In Cape Town, coloureds often complain about suffering a new kind of discrimination in what regards jobs and opportunities. During apartheid, they were discriminated against for not being white; now they may feel they are being discriminated against for not being African.

Arthur is well-informed about an enormous variety of subjects, especially political ones. However, when I discuss the racial issue with him, he ends up blurting that he feels 'squeezed-in'. To me, his feeling of lack of scope, besides being a personal feeling of his as a young, competent professional who wants to move on and finds it difficult, is also in part related to his position as a coloured. Arthur has no close African friends, though he knows people all over Cape Town (including the African townships). We could say that during apartheid he was an 'Other' and that now, under an African majority government, he will go on being an 'Other', or some kind of intractable residue that does not fit any categorization. Whatever Arthur's misgivings,

however, they are very personal ones, and he does not mix them with his normal, very politicized discourse, not even when I try to pin him down with an open question or two. We are sipping coffee in the Waterfront, in the old Victoria & Alfred harbour, sitting in a balcony facing Table Bay and a glorious sunset. Arthur tells me, after we discuss several other cities in South Africa in terms of their pros and cons as places of residence, that he would not live anywhere else in South Africa. I feel surprised: he has often chided me for not travelling around much and not seeing enough of the country. I was often under the impression that he might value other places in South Africa, and I had been trying to find out from him what other place might be an interesting place to live in South Africa. However, unsatisfactory as it might be, Cape Town for him is really the best place in the country. At least there, he says, one can breathe. There is really no transcendence (that he sometimes projects onto Gorée, an idyllic former colonial outpost island off the coast of Senegal where he has once been), but in the Cape the 'pressure' is not as great as in the rest of the country. And indeed, as we sip our coffee looking at the sunset over the bay, I do feel Cape Town can be a very privileged place. In Johannesburg, for instance, we would most probably be locked up inside some huge shopping-centre, as the streets have become off-limits even for the only slightly privileged.[28]

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[28] Interestingly, Gorée happens to be one of Senegal's famous historical 'Four Communes'. It is one of the oldest areas settled by the French in Africa and has historically been associated with an assimilated class (made up of mixed race families and assimilated Africans) known as 'Créoles' that enjoyed citizenship rights during colonial times. It is therefore one of the areas in West Africa where contact with Europe has been going on for centuries (the analogy with Cape Town here is hard to ignore). See Johnson (1971).

1992). Speakers at almost every meeting of Brazil's black movements feel compelled to hammer on the issue again and again, creating in the process a boring, iterative discourse of denunciation (almost invariably listened only by the already enlightened). Even recent (or not so old) articles still come out with titles such as Skidmore's (1991) 'Fato e Mito: Descobrindo um Problema Racial no Brasil' ('Fact and Myth: Discovering a Race Problem in Brazil) or Hasenbalg's (1994) 'Entre o Mito e Os Fatos: Racismo e Relações Raciais no Brasil' ('Between Myth and Facts: Racism and Racial Relations in Brazil'). Such titles show that the 'myth' is still very much a problem for it is thought to 'cover up' the 'naked fact' of racial discrimination.

There are several sides to this question here, all of them more or less thorny. The first is one that comes out of modern, individualistic discourse of the kind I have come across in urban, enlightened South Africa. If a mass that is mostly made up of blacks or mestiços is discriminated by a white elite, then Brazil is at bottom just like the United States and South Africa, if not worse (for in Brazil discrimination has not been as widely acknowledged and followed by a process of redressment of inequality). A few blacks - especially (but not exclusively) those belonging to one of Brazil's black movements - will tell you exactly that. Worse, they will even tell you that Brazil, because of its 'hypocritical' democracia racial, is actually worse than South Africa.

I am at a seminar organized at the State University of Rio by one of Rio's tiny black movements (it happens to be also the oldest one, created in the 1970s). Jurema Batista is one of the speakers. She is a robust black woman from Andaraí, one of Rio's hill favelas. She is now a town councillor and has become fairly well-known. She talks about black oppression and inveighs against a prime time soap opera where there are some racist allusions.[1] She also inveighs against democracia racial as a 'myth' that is still there and has to be destroyed. She is articulate, convincing and even forceful. Then comes Dr Peter Fry, a white academic from the Federal University of Rio. He is going to present the academic side. He mentions a survey done in São Paulo that shows that most of the blacks, mestiços and whites interviewed believed that racism should be fought by a common front of blacks, mestiços and whites. He also mentions a research done by an

[1] The network broadcasting the soap opera had to face a lawsuit from an organisation of black women in São Paulo. The lawsuit and the ensuing polemics in the press have proved to be a landmark: the network has now an affirmative action policy for black actors and actresses, and has created a new soap opera that features a successful black middle-class family (see the polemics in 'Questões de Raça', 2, Centro de Estudos Afro-Asiáticos, 1995).

American anthropologist in a favela that shows that the local inhabitants both acknowledge the reality of discrimination and the value of the 'myth' of democracia racial (as a promise and vision of citizenship and equality in the future). That is, they both point to present discrimination and emphasize the value of the vision of equality to be attained through the 'myth'. Peter makes an analogy between ideology and traffic rules. People drive in different ways (particularly in Rio, I guess), but the rules are the same for everyone. The ideology too serves as a kind of blueprint that is there in spite of differences of approach. I am afraid that this analogy -and its implicit message pointing to the need for a closer look at ideology - are lost on the audience. A woman asks Peter whether the research was done by a black or a white woman. Peter answers the researcher had been a white woman. After he finishes talking, he is heartily applauded by the audience (in a typically Brazilian way), and the seminar then proceeds along the usual tack: denunciation. They had heard him but not listened to what he had to say. I leave with the feeling that it could not have been otherwise.[2]

Marcos, Rogério, Vantoan and Renata are four black students. Namely, they consider themselves black (**negro**). We have been meeting once a week for months. I direct the seminar, where we discuss the literature on 'race relations' and 'Afro-Brazilian studies.' Rogério and Renata can read in English (which is very unusual for undergraduate students in Brazil), so we have also been reading some texts about South Africa and the United States. Whatever we read, the discussion often turns around a problem that preoccupies them: why is it that the vast majority of the potentially black constituency in Brazil does not see itself as black (in a 1990 census survey only 4.9% of the people declared themselves to be black)?[3] That is a puzzle they ponder on again and again. It affects them directly, for they belong to those precious few who, in the parlance of the black movement, 'state their true colour'. As I listen to them, I some times think that essentialist classification requires a wholesome conversion. Namely, in this case, once you have constructed yourself as black, the people who have remained on the other, democracia racial-informed side of the divide, seem strange and puzzling. For how is it possible that they cannot see the reality of discrimination? How is it possible that they do not come out as blacks and instead classify themselves with seemingly euphemistic terms such as **moreno** (a term used in a wide variety of ways, on its own or with other words, to designate people who range from

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[2] The survey was done in Sao Paulo (see Hasenbalg, 1994) and the research by Sheriff (1993).

[3] Centro de Estudos Afro-Asiáticos (1995). The figure for whites is 55.3%, **pardos** (a blanket category for 'mixed race') 39.3% and **amarelos** (Asians) 0.5%.

very dark-skinned to white)? The more we read the literature available and ponder on the issue, the more intricate it seems.

None of them can accept the 'myth' of democracia racial. Marcos, for instance, is very intelligent and appreciates the readings I give the group. Interpretations such as DaMatta's (1981), however, bother him, though he can certainly see the value of DaMatta's argument (namely, that Brazil is a hierarchical society where contact exists side by side with discrimination). The problem is that he is a political activist in the black movement and also someone who has constructed a black identity for himself (like Rogério, he sports an afro - afros are still far less common in Brazil than elsewhere. He is widely criticized by both family and friends because of it. He is also criticized by the black movement because he once took on a white girl friend). He does not see his personal experience mirrored in the texts we read. Both Marcos and Vantoan have told us about their experiences as blacks in Rio. When they take the underground, for instance, people at once look at them with aprehension. They have to avert their eyes. For instance, if they happen to look at someone's watch, he or she will think they want to steal it (especially if they are not wearing a watch themselves; in case they are, it may be feared that they want another one). In the minds of less dark-skinned people of all hues, very dark-skinned men like Marcos or Vantoan are potentially **assaltantes** ('robbers'). This in spite of the fact that many assaltantes are not dark-skinned and that neither of them looks destitute or poor (or dangerous for that matter). The problem is their skin colour. Wherever they go, Marcos and Vantoan have to brace themselves for the discomfort, fear and mistrust their presence provokes. So much for democracia racial.

Thus the 'myth' is denounced again and again. At the same time the pervasiveness and the commonality of oppression and black suffering is established cross-nationally. 'It is just like in the United States', some Brazilian blacks will say. Here we are in the realm of the black movements and also in the realm of a good deal of the social sciences (though the latter are usually not given to such sweeping statements. They limit themselves to denouncing the 'myth'). Black movement luminaries in Brazil claim again and again that discrimination is not only widespread but that one can even reasonably put forward a claim for genocide of the black masses in Brazilian cities at the hands of the police and death squads (see, for instance, Nascimento, 1979). That is, the implication is that there would be a deliberate plan of genocide on the part of the government (Marcos is very interested in the subject and is even carrying out research on it). However, if one looks closely, isn't what is sometimes dubbed 'racial strife' really absent in Brazil? For instance, the kind of riots in black neighbourhoods that once used to be so common in the United States have never, as far as I know, really existed in Brazil in recent times, nor has there been, after the abolition

of slavery in 1888, repeated and steady harassment of blacks as a group as the one that has been common in the United States well into this century (even though police persecution of blacks can be common in Brazil). All things considered, in spite of what Brazilian black leaders like Abdias do Nascimento have been claiming for quite some time now, is Brazil really on a par with the United States and its still continuing and intense negrophobia among the white elite or with South Africa's still very much segregated society? After all, even students who have been looking at both Brazil and the United States for a long time, though rejecting Brazil's 'myth' of democracia racial, and pleading for a serious re-examinantion of 'conventional wisdom' in the light of empirical data pointing to discrimination (particularly quantitative data), still acknowledge that there remains nonetheless an important difference between both societies (for instance, Skidmore, 1993:395-6). On the other hand, is it really legitimate to believe that blacks are not discriminated against in Brazil, or that such discrimination tends to be, say, 'soft' in comparison with discrimination elsewhere (something that is still widely claimed)? Just as both the 'myth' and the 'reality' seem to endure, so do the continued attack on the former and insistent stress on the primacy of the latter, in a tug-of-war that has been going on in academia and the black movements, in its present intensity, since at least the late seventies.

As I pointed out earlier, the difference that stands out in a comparison between Brazil, South Africa and the United States, is related to the predominance of essentialism in the last two. However, accommodating this difference discursively and theoretically in what concerns Brazil remains a thorny problem. At the one end of the spectrum you have the kind of discourse represented by the black movements (and often academia), at the other end the traditional discourse smacking of democracia racial. How do you encompass both kinds of discourse within the same perspective (as we must if we are to understand at all the language game here in its entirety)? The 'conventional wisdom' in the social sciences, at least in circles that deal directly with the issue of the relation between inequality and race, has been one of stating repeatedly that there is the 'myth', on the one hand, and the 'reality', on the other. The 'myth' would belong to the realm of ideology, and though it is important to describe and analyse it, ultimately it must be denounced and firmly rejected for 'covering up' actual discrimination. The 'reality', on the other hand, would be the daily discrimination suffered by blacks (read **negros**, **morenos**, **pardos**, etc) in Brazil, and the widespread inequality between blacks and whites in standard of living, education, job opportunities, etc that is evidenced more and more by analysis of quantitative data. Even otherwise subtle analysts such as Skidmore and Hasenbalg ultimately subscribe to this view of a 'split' between the ideological level and an underlying

reality that would belie the 'myth'.[4] On the level of local black politics, there are even some misgivings about paying 'too much attention' to ideology, the position being that what is called for is denunciation and outright rejection, not analysis. However, given the empirically verifiable fact that the black masses in Brazil have consistently refused to be interpellated by the black movements, that is, have refused to take on a politicized black identity on an essentialist basis, it seems worthwhile to probe further not only the split between 'myth' and 'reality' but also the ideological realm itself. For I have developed a growing suspicion that there is more to the matter than meets the social scientist's and black leader's eye, in spite of the fact that both do have a point as far as discrimination is concerned. In order to see that, however, one must go back in time.

The major and most often quoted (and most commonly attacked) source for the ideology is, of course, Gilberto Freyre's prolific oeuvre. He was the one who coined the term 'democracia racial' and gave it wide currency. His importance lies in the immense historical appeal of his work both inside and outside Brazil. Spanning seven decades, his is an enormously varied oeuvre, covering sociology, anthropology, literature, history, etc. There has been so far no overall appraisal of it in its entirety. However, by taking some fairly representative texts of his written in the following decades, we may be able to reconstruct his vision, if not in all its intricacies, then at least with reasonable accuracy for our purposes here.[5]

In the introduction to one of his works, one can see the 'myth' in the making, so to speak. Freyre, in a discussion about immigrant populations in southern Brazil, compares the process of 'nationalisation' or becoming a Brazilian to the process of conversion to catholicism (Freyre, 1940:33). It would happen mostly through the adoption of a certain usage (costume). It is important to note two things here: one is that Freyre states emphatically (undoubtedly in order to counteract German-Brazilian

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[4] See Skidmore (1991) and Hasenbalg (1994). Unsurprisingly, anthropologists tend to analyze the 'myth' (see DaMatta, 1981) whereas sociologists such as Hasenbalg have been far more intent on denouncing it.

[5] I have found it more profitable to steer clear from Freyre's earlier, better-known works and concentrate instead on later ones. The latter present more clearly the point of view that came to be associated with Freyre's thinking. For an excellent in-depth analysis of Freyre's major works of the thirties (that made him famous), see Araújo (1994). For an incomplete but extensive bibliography, see Fonseca (1977).

autonomist claims of the thirties[6]) that 'it would be ridiculous to wish that Brazil should exist independently from its Portuguese moulding [**formação**]; and equally ridiculous to wish that it were a country where another culture - another language included - should take root with the same rights as those of Portugal. This last colonized a part of America and secured in the tropics a civilisation with predominantly European and Christian elements.' (id, pp. 36-7). So far Freyre, with his emphasis on national origin, Europeanness and christianity, sounds little different from Cronjé and his Afrikaner nationalist views. For him, the civilisation the Portuguese established in the tropics is one that is both Lusitanian and Christian in character. However, Freyre adds a proviso that distances him from Cronjé's thinking when he declares that he does not believe that 'Brazil should shut itself inside its traditional Luso-Brazilian culture' (id, p.37-8). That culture should be defended (especially by greater 'solidarity' between Brazil, Portugal and the Portuguese colonies), but not insulated. In this sense, 'the German will integrate himself in the Luso-Brazilian tradition but, of course, without failing to bring into that tradition something new...' (id, p.36). The same would be true for every immigrant group (Italians, Poles, Ukrainians, Japanese, Jews, Syrians, Spaniards, etc). 'We are the beginning of a vast plural culture', Freyre boasts (ibid).[7]

The cornerstone here is laid-out in one of the lectures in the same book, appropriately called "**Aspectos da influencia da mestiçagem sobre as relações sociaes e de cultura entre portuguesees e luso-descendentes**" ('Aspects of the influence of miscegenation on the social relations and culture of the Portuguese and their descendants'), originally a lecture delivered at King's College, University of London, in 1937.

> If we are - as it seems to me - at the same time a psychological and cultural unit that is because essentially the same motives and styles of living have developed among us within that general tendency that, to me, has been the tendency towards miscigenation [**mestiçagem**]. The latter supposes an inclination to social democratisation (Freyre, 1940:47).

Freyre is interested in a democracy that is 'social, essential, human' and professes he could not care less about political democracy (id, p.51). The egalitarian ideal of modernity is shunned by Freyre in the name of democracia racial. Freyre postulates that there is a native or autochtonous system of

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[6] For these see Seyferth (1982).

[7] All translations from the Portuguese are my own.

thought and social practice that already replaces to advantadge any imported, merely **political** egalitarianism. The premise that allows this replacement is **mestiçagem**: it is a powerful metaphor in his texts because it stands for the openness of Portuguese culture in all its aspects. It is pliable, dynamic, flexible and therefore able to borrow freely from other cultures and create a new synthesis (with the Portuguese element maintaining its supremacy, though).

> It is the culture of Portuguese origin, of Portuguese traditions and traits that reinvigorates itself by enriching itself with new and diverse aspects within the psychological and cultural conditions created by a dynamic, active and difference-creating **mestiçagem** (id, p.54).

Whereas Cronjé cries out against blood-mixing (**bloedvermenging**) as the source of all danger and social chaos in his escathology of purity/impurity, Freyre praises miscegenation to such a degree that one becomes slightly suspicious. That is, Freyre's thought seems to be so neatly antithetical to Cronjé's that one starts to suspect there must be a close link between the two. Araújo (1994:27) gives us the necessary clue: in the preface to **Casa-Grande & Senzala** (1987), his major work, Freyre comments en passant about the ugliness of some mixed race (**mulatos** and **cafuzos**) Brazilian sailors he saw on shore leave in Brooklyn, New York. The sight reminded him of a sentence by some American or English traveller to Brazil about 'the fearfully mongrel aspect of the population' (quoted in Araújo, p.27). Freyre's point is that they are ugly because of miscegenation. This happens to be a very important clue, for it points to the reactive nature that is the foundation of all his thought. Araújo (id) says signficantly that one is left with the impression that the whole book (**Casa-Grande & Senzala**) was written to refute that negative judgement. His constant praise of miscegenation can therefore be seen as a direct response to exactly the kind of thinking represented by Cronjé. The point is to prove that Brazil, though a very mixed nation, is not only a workable nation but in fact a very superior one.

One must remember here that since the last century foreign visitors - from Count de Gobineau to Louis Agassiz - pointed out the very mixed character of Brazilian society, and accordingly made somber prognostics about it. The Brazilian elite, aware of these unfavourable foreign opinions, started taking stock of the local situation in terms of imported European racial theories, as shown by the debates about immigration in São Paulo in the last century (see Azevedo, 1987 and, for the influence of those theories, Schwarcz, 1993). As Azevedo (1987) shows, in São Paulo the elite debated lively among themselves whether the 'common people' (the mixed race and black freemen as well as freed slaves) were adequate enough material to build a citizenry from.

The immigrantist view that saw the common people as worthless and pressed the need to replace them with foreign immigrants would end up prevailing in São Paulo. This view would reach its summit around the turn of the century, when Graça Aranha published his **Canaã** (1901), a novel where a vigorous foreign race (in this instance, Germans) would replace an old, withering race (Luso-Brazilians).

Towards the 1910s, however, a balance seems to have been stricken between the more ancient, traditional assimilationist view that believed that the local population could be educated to become good citizens and the newer, immigrantist view. In his **O Problema Nacional Brasileiro** ('The Brazilian National Problem'), Torres (1982) criticized in 1912 what he dubbed, after Aranha's novel, the 'Canaanite' view and emphasized instead the moral and intellectual equality between the races. In this sense, it may be said that Torres opened the way to Freyre's work in the thirties, and that this last represented in fact the end product of over a century of discussions on the nationality issue in Brazil (roughly from the early nineteenth century, a few years before independance in 1822, to the 1930's when Freyre's view of democracia racial started its long dominance). That is, Freyre's thinking was actually shaped by a long tradition that preceded him and is, fundamentally, a response to modernity, i.e., a response to contact with Northern European and North American conceptions of society, race and nationality. Freyre's relish in miscegenation in his texts is therefore a reaction to the likes of Cronjé who, though he never, to my knowledge, expatiated on Brazil, would certainly have regarded it as the ultimate incarnation of his much feared **mengelmoes-samelewing** or 'mixmush society'.

Just as Cronjé feels compelled to denigrate blood-mixing, so does Freyre feels compelled to defend and praise it (for instance, in Freyre, 1971:107, where he counters an English-speaking scholar's condemnation of blood-mixing). Freyre goes as far as condemning the Boers and Dutch colonisation in the tropics as inferior to Portuguese colonisation. He compares the Boers to the **bandeirantes** ('explorers') in Brazil. However, he says that, in spite of similarities between them, the Boers were 'intransigent in their whiteman's and Protestant's prejudices' (Freyre, 1980:320). Coming from an Africa that was as cold as Argentina, though the Boers tried to establish themselves in Huila in Angola, they failed because they were no match for the Portuguese (id, p.321).[8] In an essay called 'O Brasil como Civilização Européia

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[8] 'On the Huila plateau, in Angola, there was experimental evidence of the Portuguese's ability to peacefully win over the Nordic in the domain of tropical areas... the Dutch has shown himself, social and perhaps also biologically inferior to the Portuguese in his ability to settle once and for all, with his

nos Trópicos' ('Brazil as an European Civilization in the Tropics'), Freyre commends Brazil as a new type of civilisation adapted to the tropics: 'More than any other people, Brazilians are developing in the tropics new forms of civilisation whose fundamental traits are European but whose perspectives - it is necessary to stress - are extra-European, more-than-European [**mais-que-européias**]).' He goes on to say that the Portuguese 'found in tropical America the ideal space for the expansion and development of their ethnically democratic civilisation (Freyre, 1971:132).

Freyre attacks again and again the central premise of Cronjé's thinking, namely, that blood-mixing can threaten the survival of European civilisation (a point that Cronjé comes back to again and again, and that has been a stock preoccupation of South African racist thought). For him, the 'Brazilian case seems to deny beyond a doubt the theory - maintained by some whites in South Africa to justify their policy of apartheid - that, where a population mixes ethnically, there remains no possibility of survival of an eminently Caucasoid civilisation, as the one developed by Christian Europe' (id, p.137). Freyre is therefore very much aware of all the racial thinking of his time in English-speaking countries (he studied in the United States in the twenties, at Columbia under Franz Boas, as the legend goes[a]). That he was acutely aware of the impressions of his country on foreign minds is also shown by his apparently rather thorough knowledge of travelogues and diverse works written by English-speaking travellers to Brazil in the last century and this century.

Freyre also explicitly deprecates the essentialist model (just as he scorns the political democracy that he sees associated to it) and any 'pluralism' (1971:140-1) that, to him, only implies communities living side by side without any common interests except economic ones. For him, such 'plural societies' are the very root of apartheid. His is a model with hierarchical (as well as modern) traits. Portuguese European (and Christian) civilisation provides the overall framework, and within it all kinds of accomodation should be possible due to the historical flexibility in the Portuguese character and the prevalence of miscegenation in the Portuguese colonisation of the tropics. Freyre rejects here any equality after the modern, egalitarian and individualistic model. That is why his democracy is 'social'

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culture, in tropical lands and among tropical populations' (id, p.321). It should be noted that Freyre visited Angola in the early fifties, therefore over twenty years after most of the so-called Angola Boers who had trekked into Angola in the last century had retreated back into then South West Africa (Namibia).

[a] The fact has to date never been confirmed.

(or 'racial') and emphatically not political. Faced with the foreign accusation that Brazil would never become a civilisation in the tropics, Freyre argues that not only is it a civilisation on its own, but one superior to any other European civilisation in the tropics.

Unlike Cronjé's view, that in its imaginings (though not necessarily in its underpinnings) is only shared now by a minority (even within the white, traditional Afrikaner segment), Freyre's view, in spite of the fact that it is now rejected by serious scholars, in fact still informs powerfully Brazilian society as a whole. The usual view nowadays among scholars and the black movements alike is that it is an elite's view that was then diffused throughout society. In this sense, society would somehow be the dupe of this elitist 'myth'. The issue is still a thorny one in Brazilian academic debate, but one can summarize the current debate by stating that on the one hand, democracia racial's ghost is far from having been exorcized and, on the other, there seems to be little understanding of the actual workings of ideology and social practice. Since the early fifties, when UNESCO sponsored a large research project aimed at describing discrimination on the ground (see Bastide and Fernandes, 1955, Wagley, 1972), no major ethnographic work has been done in Brazil dealing with the issue (see, however, Sheriff, 1993). Though now good statistical analyses pointing to discrimination are available (after having been absent for decades), thanks to the pioneering and on-going work of Hasenbalg and Silva (1988, 1993), there are as yet almost no qualititave studies to show how the 'myth' actually works.

There is so far no black mass movement in Brazil, and there has never been one. Also, the politicisation of the racial issue that culminated in the civil rights movement in the fifties in the United States and in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa is very much absent in Brazil. Instead of mass leaders, Brazilian black leaders have never been more than a very small group with no considerable following. This situation is clearly related to the prevalence of democracia racial (and therefore does not necessarily imply any lack of political competence on the part of Brazilian black movements). Within the artificialist holistic framework of democracia racial, it is not possible for separate, essentialist racial identities to emerge as they historically have in the United States and South Africa. The racial issue in Brazil, therefore, in the arena of national politics is still a minor one that does not concern much the government nor any political party or mass movement in the country. Though there has been a changing perception of race discrimination lately (namely, a growing awareness of its existence), this situation is unlikely to change in the near future.

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What does Freyre have in common with Cronjé? Perhaps mainly the fact that both wove a reactive ideological framework to counter modern egalitarian ideology. However, Cronjé's views seem to be more closely related to that modern framework than Freyre's. This must certainly be due to the fact that South Africa was a British colony, and therefore was exposed to the ideology in a much more forceful way (and much earlier) than Brazil was. Nowadays, neither of their views can be accepted without much trouble by the modern mind. However, the underpinnings of Cronjé's view - essentialism - are still very much present in South Africa. In spite of apartheid as a juridico-political system having been finally dismantled, South Africa is far from being a society where racial or ethnic issues are of scant importance (the same could be said about the United States, after over twenty years of affirmative action). In Brazil, on the other hand, in spite of all attacks, the ideology of democracia racial is still very much prevalent, making for a country that is strikingly similar to South Africa in terms of statistics (highly industrialized and with huge inequalities in income distribution and widespread poverty) and at the same time quite different because of the prevalence of a different ideological framework and different social practices.

To return to the statistical country, the problem with it is that it flattens out differences and nuances. It is very useful to point out inequality in income, education, job opportunities, etc, but it also leaves aside all the nuances of a society such as Brazil's. In statistical tables, 'black' in Brazil might be comparable to 'black' in statistics about South Africa, for instance, whereas on the ground they do not actually have the same sociological import. Being black in an essentialist country is one thing, being black in an assimilationist one, another thing. This is shown, for instance, in the highly metaphorical character of race in Brazil that can influence census results to the extent that income inequality between whites and non-whites may actually appear to be wider than it actually is.[10] This is due to the fact - that escapes the measuring power of any statistics - that poor Braziliians who would be white in other circumstances some times classify themselves as mixed race (or **pardo**), whereas people higher up in the income ladder tend to 'whiten' themselves when asked about their race (namely, they will say they **are pardo** or white rather than black, what also explains the incredibly small number of blacks shown by the census results). There is a tendency to talk about people's 'real colour' in Brazil. The problem would be that people would not

[10] Carlos Hasenbalg, Centro de Estudos Afro-Asiáticos, personal communication.

declare their 'real colour' but instead a 'putative one' (or a 'social race', as Silva [1994] put it, as if there were any other 'race' at issue here other than a social construct).

The problem here, however, is that the world of statistics is the world of modern individualism with its emphasis on a hard-core underlying reality (underpinned by essentialism) that would be found once all 'myths' were scrapped away. In this sense, the enduring debate in and about Brazil has to do with this difference in the language game between individualism and the ideology of a hierarchical society. The modern ideology deals in the supposedly hard currency of 'reality', whereas societies seem to weave 'myths'. In fact, the use of 'myth' between quotes throughout this chapter points to my objection to a lack of understanding on the part of many scholars on the nature of democracia racial. It is a myth, but in the anthropological sense of the word, not the more commonsensical one that is current in political science, history or sociology. That is, a myth is an all-encompassing view that informs as much as it supposedly deludes. Perhaps it is only the essentialism that seem to be inherent in the social sciences themselves that could allow the use of 'myth' as synonymous with false conciousness: for we do not seem to have strong objections to the fact that Amazonian Indians or New Guineans should have myths, but we do not accept that modern or modernizing societies should have them. When we come up with myths in a modern context, we tend to assign them a thoroughly negative value. We tend to see them as a mere coverup for political or economic interest, or for domination. For we are not 'primitives' and therefore it is not really understandable that we should have myths.

There can only be a 'real colour' (and a 'false one') in terms of an ideology that sees the world as consisting of a divide where on the one side you have empirically verifiable truth (such as that evidenced in statistics or in essentialist race classification smacking of scientific categorisation) and on the other you have myths and imaginings that are not really 'true'. The problem with modern ideology is that it is also at bottom a mythological system, though it historically has been shot through with the ideal of reason and rationality. That is, it also tends to create imaginings of its own, as the powerful theme of colonial domination pervading South African history (and historiography) shows. Here, the important thing is not to look only at domination as a reality, but also as a theme that spins itself out in several directions and under several guises. However, as I can feel myself as I write these lines, trying to relativise modern ideology is a daunting task. One is at once liable to being accused of wanting to deny reality (say, the reality of domination), as Stöckenstrom was perceived to be doing by John Philip and Thomas Pringle in nineteenth-century South Africa, and as it is widely believed in academia and the black movements in Brazil that Freyre was doing. And, indeed, as you try to

...AFRO-ASIATICO
BIBLIOTECA

relativise modern ideology you immediately find yourself more and more cornered. Then you also start spinning increasingly reactive webs of signification that later may eventually solidify into full-fledged ideologies.

However, it is also very much difficult to keep one's mouth shut and just swallow modern ideology's views as they are. For they, like the statistics that may often come together with them, flatten the world into a sameness where everywhere one sees the same thing under several thin guises - say, 'domination' or 'racism'. It is then the task of the enlightened human scientist and political activist to lift the veil and expose the 'underlying reality' that is supposedly very much the same everywhere. Also, of course, by laying things bare it is hoped that change of some kind will have been at least suggested, if not rhetorically (or otherwise) enforced. At its worst, this process depicts a world that is a vast stage where the same drama of oppression, domination and struggle towards liberation is being enacted again and again (the world of most international media, for instance). Though very powerful and compelling, it is also unfortunately a very impoverishing way of looking at society for its universalism does away (or at least tries to) with specificity or context.

On the other hand, there is no way we can really escape it. As shown by the work of both Freyre and Cronjé, the alternative to it are imaginings that are also in themselves highly problematic as templates for either social action or social description. It is not for nothing those imaginings have become the object of ridicule among serious scholars (a ridicule that may conceal an amount of fear and incomprehension that such things should exist at all). However, the endurance and powerfulness of such imaginings is also something that cannot be brushed aside, nor easily discounted. Nazism here comes to mind. In spite of the enormous literature that has been devoted to unravel the Nazi phenomenon, it still has an enduring grip on the imagination (and not only the academic one). We are still far from putting the matter to rest (see the review of the relevant and prolific literature in Burleigh and Wippermann, 1993). Where does the truth, the 'real colour' lie then? In a continuing narrative of oppression and liberation created by modern egalitarian values or in the reactions against it sprouting again and again all over the world in more or less traditional societies? Were the Boers really the oppressors of the natives as John Philip pretended or rather were they turned (by others and by themselves) into oppressors in the very process of repeatedly denying having consciously and deliberately oppressed anyone? It is not irrelevant to remind the reader here that Cronjé explicitly devised apartheid as a system that would finally put an end to the domination of one racial group by the other - and therefore also put an end to accusations of domination levelled against the Boers. As for Freyre, he claimed that Brazil did not need North

America's and Northern Europe's unsatisfactory democracy (for didn't it allow for the continuance of segregation, oppression and colonialism?) because it already had a superior 'social democracy' of its own.

That is, somehow the dominance of modern ideology seems to elicit again and again exactly what it supposedly abhors, namely, domination. In an attempt to keep something of their societies' **difference** (and that was the whole point - the **difference** of Afrikanerdom, the **difference** of the Portuguese way) in the face of the onslaught of a modernizing and homogenizing universalist ideology that tended to see the world as a flattened field, both Cronjé and Freyre tried to build up alternative views by reworking (and reinventing) the traditions and history at their disposal. That this process seems to have been far more 'artificial' in the case of Afrikanerdom (I am always reminded in this regard of Afrikaans nationalist Preller's **volkspele** or entirely made up Afrikaans national dances) than in the case of Brazil is beside the point. The important thing to retain here is the reactiveness and the need to preserve a difference (a need perhaps pursued with much more obsession in the Afrikaner case than in the Brazilian one, but nonetheless, ultimately a need keenly felt in both cases). And with this need came also a high degree of assimilation of that which was being fought. Namely, modern ideology itself. Just as in the case of German thought (Dumont, 1986:113-132), here too the object that is fought is in fact also incorporated into the reactive framework. It is not for nothing that Freyre's musings about 'the Portuguese' or 'the Brazilian' sound like a kind of home-grown version of essentialism. He tried to construct a Portuguese (or Luso-Brazilian or Luso-tropical) identity that would encompass Portugal, Brazil and all the then Portuguese colonies in Africa and Asia. Because it was a reaction to essentialism, it also, inevitably incorporated elements of essentialism: Freyre's 'Portuguese' sounds therefore not entirely unlike the Afrikaner nationalist's 'Afrikaner'. Namely, it was a homogenizing construct too. Is Freyre's democracia racial then just another kind of essentialism at bottom? It does have essentialist elements, but it is also a reworking of a tradition that was not originally essentialist, on the contrary, it was fairly hierarchical and survives to this day among the masses of the country. Therefore, even more than Cronjé's, Freyre's narrative is a curious hybrid, halfway between one thing and the other (this situation, by the way, is far from uncommon, as witness Dumont's studies on Germany and India). The powerfulness of his narrative can perhaps be ascribed to the very fact that it did provide a successful answer to modern ideology in its time (and even nowadays, as shown by its widespread influence in Brazilian society). It blended ingeniously elements from traditional Brazilian thinking and a good knowledge of contemporary social and human sciences, not to mention history (Freyre was clearly a far more competent scholar than Cronjé. Though there is a lot of chaff in his work, some of it is still

unbelievably original, fresh and relevant).

In Cronjé's case, though his cosmology as such is only shared by some very conservative Afrikaner rightwing groups, one might say the assumptions on which his model rested - identity and autochthony - are still very much part of the South African scene, if under different guises (say, Pan-Africanist ideology or Inkatha's Zulu nation-building). Accordingly, today's South Africa is less new than one would suppose judging from all the media attention it has been receiving and the changes that are happening now. The essentialist premise is still at work. Nobody seriously argues, for instance, that the country should have only one official language (say, English), just as nobody seriously argues on the opposite side of the South Atlantic that any other languages should be officially acknowledged in Brazil other than Portuguese. On the contrary, as the current existence of eleven official languages in South Africa shows (each of them more or less expected to fight for its life just as Afrikaans did, namely, by building their own institutional network and support groups, at the same time that 'liguistic equality' is assured by a coming Pan-South African Language Board), the assumption of separate identities and the refusal of any assimilationist model is still very much there. The issue of autochthony is also a pressing one, as shown by the call to Africanise the staff at universities that were officially white under apartheid. It must be borne in mind that this is much more than merely a redressing of past injustices: it amounts to a call that if the nation is not African in all its main corners and nooks, then it is not true to itself. The same goes for what is usually called 'European culture' in South Africa. Take, for instance, opera and classical music. Unlike in Brazil, where different musical genres occupy different spaces and are assigned different values in a common whole (with classical music labeled as **música erudita** and other music as **popular**), the assignment of an essentialist identity to music goes on in South Africa just as before. For, differently from what happens in Brazil, there are no different values assigned to different genres within a common framework. In this sense, 'African' music should elbow out 'European' music say, in radio broadcasts, because South Africa is after all an African country. The point is not only the justice of such practices, but the fact that any universal, assimilationist value is denied here. In Brazil, classical music is not labelled as 'European' and therefore un-Brazilian. That is, it is not thought of as a genre pertaining to only one sector of the population, in spite of the fact that it is far less popular than other kinds of music. Here it matters less to point to past injustice and past exclusions (real as those have been), or to evaluate practices of redressment of historical inequality in terms of their efficacy than to point out that the whole discourse (even, as in the instances mentioned, in the educational and cultural field) turns around essentialist premisses that are fundamentally the same as those in Cronjé's and other essentialist discourse.

That is, here we are faced not with a revolution in thought or politics, but with a reworking both in thought and social practice of a cosmology whose premisses remain very much the same. Just as Afrikaners took power in 1948 and launched a vast affirmative action scheme based on state action to promote their own group, the very same racial/ethnic strategy is being put into place once more, half a century later, this time for the benifit of the African population. For a Brazilian, it can be very hard to understand why there should be Afrikaans businesses such as SANLAM (created, as O'Meara shows, within the project of a **volkskapitalisme**) or African businesses such as Thebe Corporation (ANC-controlled). That is, it is hard to understand why essentialism pervades all spheres of life in South Africa, from music and education to government and big business. It is only by looking at some nationalist premisses in Brazil pertaining not to specific, separate spaces within the nation, but to the nation as a whole, such as, for instance, the previously legally enforced preminence of 'national' entreprise over 'foreign' enterprise in areas as diverse as coastal navigation and the computer industry (now abolished), that a Brazilian scholar can see a pattern that seems similar to that of South Africa.

This brings us to an important point: change. Pointing to culture and recurring patterns of thought is seen as a conservative strategy, for it underplays (or even altogether rules out) change. This is probably the most common charge levelled against Dumont's work, either on India or Europe. An Indian scholar at UNESCO in Paris once told me that he thought that Dumont's **Homo hierarchicus** (1980) was a very good description of India's 'high tradition' but that it did not show you how Indian society actually worked. Another Indian, a prominent anthropologist, T.N.Madan, though professing to be an admirer of Dumont's work, also claims that the latter is not 'wholly free of problems' (Madan, 1994:156).[11] Dumont's and other work (such as that of Srinivas, the 'doyen of Indian anthropologists') concentrate on caste as the 'typifying social institution' and renunciation as 'the highest cultural ideal' in Indian society (ibid, p.160). However, Madan says:

> ...I have a problem. My own experience and upbringing as a Hindu Indian speaks to me in another idiom - the idiom of moral responsability rather than karmic choicelessness, of the family rather than caste, and of plenitude rather than renunciation. At first I thought that my experience was less important than the general picture, the former being a result of the peculiarities

[11] I am grateful to Mariza Peirano from the department of anthropology of the University of Brasilia for having introduced me to Madan's work.

> of a regional subculture rather than of an overall Hindu perspective. But the more I have read and thought about the matter, the more doubts about the emphases incorporated in the 'established' picture bothered me. (ibid, p.161)

He then goes on to mention alternative studies being made on 'auspiciousness as a value in domestic life' (id) that elicited great interest on his part because - one assumes - they tell something about his own experience as an Indian. Interestingly, I once (1992) attented a seminar in Paris presented by Dumont's research group, where it was pointed out that 'auspiciousness' was in fact not a native concept in India (and therefore was objectionable as a category in sociological analysis).

Without entering into the details, the important point to retain is that Dumont's is a very analytical framework belonging in the great tradition of French sociology and anthropology going back to Durkheim and Mauss. Dumont's work is also empirically rich, but ultimately, it is my impression that, in spite of its theoretical sophistication and its overt attempt at making a place for specific instances inside itself, it does not allow enough space for specificity. That is, it suffers from the same limitations of all great theories of the past, be they Parson's or Durkheim's sociology. Madan's problem is, in this sense, also ultimately my own problem. The 'general picture' is there - at least, I have tried to delineate it here - and is very important. Just as Madan, I admire it. However, there is a specificity that nonetheless remains as some intractable residue. Madan's mention of his own personal experience as an Indian Hindu (and a Brahmin at that, one should add) is meaningful here, for what could possibly be more specific than one's personal experience? My own personal experience, if I may invoke it here, of having been in contact with Dumont's group in Paris, is also one that leaves me uncomfortable. The grand scheme is there and yet one is left with a persistent feeling that something is missing.

I must say I personally cannot accept an anthropology, no matter how politically correct it may be, such as that proposed by West (1979) that is in the main only a sociology of change. I believe such an anthropology succumbs to the great narrative of freedom from oppression and the continuing struggle waged by the oppressed all over the world against domination by the powerful. It is hard to say, especially because I have not really looked carefully into the matter, but perhaps one might venture the hypothesis that the apparently somewhat paltry state of anthropology in Southern Africa (where anthropological objects are being increasingly taken over by historians with no training in the discipline) is due to exactly such a politically correct choice on the part of local English-speaking academia (see the discussion in Bekker, 1993:89-93). However, if one is not going to stress change, then what? Are we going to be stuck to the

'general picture'? For change here also has to do with specificity, with the personal experience. I remember that, when I was writing my master's dissertation about apartheid ideology at the University of Brasilia, Klaas de Jonge, a Dutch anthropologist turned freedom fighter in South Africa, objected strongly to my 'general picture' because I simply left out all the suffering and most of the politics. What about the oppression, the resistance, the liberation struggle, the change?

There is no easy answer here. I must confess I have no personal version of 'auspiciousness' to offer. I have tried to include the personal within the general picture that I cannot let go of, interweaving both as much as possible. I have tried to see and depict some of my friends in South Africa as both individuals on their own right, bearers of their own personal experience, and members of a wider framework. I may not have been always successful. If one is to leave aside the general picture, then, paradoxically or not, one tends to fall into a narrative that is very much generalizing, a narrative enmeshed in the themes of struggle and freedom, oppression and liberation, a narrative that could have been enacted anywhere else other than South Africa. The catch here is that it is the general picture - arrived at within a comparative framework - that provides the focus on specificity. That is, without the former, one somehow also loses sight of the latter. However, a tension does remain, and is perhaps there to stay. Maybe the problem, perhaps, is that our discipline is - and can only be - an a posteriori exercise with little scope for successful prediction. I am always reminded in this regard of predictions of an impending blood-bath in South Africa (a prediction that many believed in and that turned out to be wrong, in spite of all the violence that did happen before the elections in 1994). Interestingly enough, few or no one seems to have predicted that, in spite of political change, there would also be a high degree of continuity, as I have tried to point out here.

Is culture then a straight-jacket? Will those Zulus in Msinga, KwaZulu/Natal, be condemned (by themselves and anthropologists alike) to be forever fighting their feuds? The problem is: how can anybody really know? The ressurgence of bloody conflicts in several areas of the world seems to bewilder again and again international opinion and academia alike. For we cannot accept that it should be so. I think this lack of acceptance is an enduring feature of modern life. However, we surely could have been somewhat better prepared to face all that. Dumont, in his to date lastest collection of essays on German ideology (1991) has an interesting final chapter on French ideology (pp. 249-294) where he shows a striking continuity from the time of the French Revolution down to the Second World War. The French remained firmly universalist even in the face of defeat at Germany's hands and several important drawbacks in their history in a period of over a century and a half. Is there no way out, then? Is ideology

a cosmology that emprisons whole societies (not to mentions individuals)? Dumont also provides, if unwittingly, an answer to that question in the same essay when he describes the changing seating arrangements at the French parliament just before the Revolution, when there was suddenly an inversion between the right and the left (p.253). That is, the historical prominence of the right was changed into the new prominence of the left, if not always in political practice, at least as an ideological principle, a prominence that remains ingrained in French national ideology down to the present day (for, as Dumont shows, the national ideology is invested in the symbols of the republic, the revolution and the French mission in spreading the gospel of human rights to the world. This framework is not really contested by either right or left). That is, the French, in spite of the existence of conservative groups and governments, have remained a nation professing universalist and egalitarian values (though, it is important to note, not necessarily with a universalist or egalitarian practice: Dumont stresses that he is here talking about principles). The important, fundamental change that has occurred has been the shift in prominence from the right (the right of the king as he took his seat in parliament) to the left. That is, the change was a historical event that can only be described: it is not really part of the analytical framework. That is, change - and its description here - is inevitably a posteriori. One can describe and interpret the events leading to it, and give the impression of pattern and perhaps even inevitability, but to see history as a pattern leading to social change is an impoverishing technique for, ultimately, change occurs outside the framework of description. Unless one takes a more pedestrian view of change (say, consider it as happening quite often more or less every time there is political change), in-depth change is a fairly rare event in any society. It is in this sense that I claim that South Africa has in fact changed far less than has been widely acclaimed. Certainly no revolution has taken place there; rather, what happened can be primarily seen as a power shift from one group to another. A momentous, welcome and long awaited shift, but nonetheless one that has not brought about a change in values of the caliber of the one triggered by the events leading to the French revolution.

Arthur has been to Copenhagen for the UN's World Summit on development in March 1995, and he tells me that there are great expectations in regard to South Africa now. The country has been catapulted from being the world's black sheep to being the world's darling. Arthur is somewhat apprehensive about this sudden change. Will South Africa and South Africans be able to deliver the goods? The counterpart of all the euphoria before and after the elections is coming up already. Several of my friends have expressed disappointment that things have not changed over a year after the election (the most commonly heard complaint is that whites still run a lot of things). For my part, I have the feeling that South Africa now is expected to perform an act for

which it may not be prepared. Now the country, after having borne for decades the burden of international opprobrium because of apartheid, is bearing a new burden: to be Africa's developing nation, the only part of Africa that has come out right (both in the eyes of Africans and non-Africans who expectantly turn their gaze towards the south of the continent), whereas the rest of the continent sinks further into its quagmire. Also, it is expected to play to everyone's expectation (both internally and externally), to prove that all the support the liberation struggle received worldwide was not in vain, on the contrary, was very good value for all the trouble it took. Once more, a specificity may be in the process of being lost. South Africa has become the homeland of freedom and liberation, from gay rights to equity for women, from the regulation of big business to land redistribution. And, when it is realized that the country is having serious trouble delivering the goods, the world may be startled into incomprehension once more.

In this way, the specificity of personal experience, though important, has to be put side by side with the general picture (that is far from being a rosy one). And that is the point: it is not that a new 'myth' is being woven (namely, the 'myth' of an egalitarian, progressive South Africa), nor is it that 'reality' (disparity in income distribution, educational opportunities, etc) has actually changed little (for it is changing). Rather, the point is what Geertz (1983) has famously called 'hermeneutical tacking' and Dumont (1991) 'comparison' or a movement of coming and going (as in the subtitle of his work on German ideology: **France-Allemagne et retour**). That is, it is necessary to move (and keep moving) between two or more different 'shores' if one wants to catch the deeper meaning of things at all. It is not for nothing that Geertz (1983:167-234) plays Moroccan Islamic **haqq** against Indonesian-Malay **adat** and Hindu-Balinese **dharma** in order to elicit the specificity of each form of jurisprudence, or that Dumont has used India to look back at the West and Germany to look back at France. For it is in the movement of comparson itself, in the **aller-et-retour**, in the 'tacking' between two different 'shores' that the character of each system will come out. In this, in spite of the great difference in their theoretical frameworks (one an avowedly hermeneutical one, the other an avowedly analytical one), Geertz and Dumont come close to each other. For the 'reality' is to come out exactly in this movement, and no other. It is only by playing cosmologies (a term that in fact I far prefer to either 'ideologies' or 'myths') against each other that we will be able to not only situate our own discourse but also make judgements and interpretations about each language game.

The idea of movement here - be it hermeneutical or otherwise - is most important. For it is exactly this movement, what Madan (1994) calls the 'mutual interpretation of cultures', that allows us not to be stuck in any one paradigm or system of values. There

is here a discourse of positions but, differently from the more common kind of discourse of positions, there is also an all-encompassing view that arises from the movement to and fro itself (a kind of holistic approach, if one will). For the issue here is not merely the advocacy of one position over others, of the dominance of one discourse. The point is eliciting a difference but, instead of keeping to it as, for instance, traditional Afrikaans discourse advocated, one uses it as a point of reference or point of departure in a movement outwards that will eventually turn inwards again (hence Dumont's **France-Allemagne et retour**). For in this movement there is also a mechanism of compensation, a system of checks-and-balances. As we saw in Freyre's works and in Stockenström's writings, the perception of a difference can lead step by step to a reworking of this difference that can then turn into a full-fledged cosmology. However, the difference is contextually there, and universalism of any kind will not be able to erase it once and for all. Hence, I believe, the continuing importance of, say, ethnicity in South Africa or democracia racial in Brazil. However, looking outwards, to other shores, with an eye for difference of perspective (such as that provided by a truly anthropological perspective), should allow us to look at ourselves with different eyes too. In this sense, if relativism is still a system worth invoking at all, it must be because it contains the possibility of turning the anthropological eye towards our own selves. Even if, as I and others (for instance, Madan) believe now, this relativizing gaze is far from being value-free (on the contrary, as Madan points out, it conceals a strong value judgement), then at least we will be able to confront ourselves with difference in value without having to resort exclusively to either universalizing or particularist discourses. My (utterly unoriginal) proposal here is, therefore, that of a fundamentally hybrid perspective where there is no 'myth' contrasted to a 'reality' as in commonsensical usage, but rather cosmologies who face each other and, more importantly, feed and change each other in unexpected and novel ways. For, by contrasting them with each other, one is hopefully prevented from digging one's heels too deep in one's own position and thereby weaving visions of tropical racial democracies or perfectly compartmentalized plural societies, as well as seeing landscapes of unbound freedom and sweeping social change relentlessly flattening all primordialism on their way.

The point here is to slow down the flattening process through comparison, for there is in fact no locus safe from the flattening process that can serve as a vantage point. Hence the need for constant movement. In my opinion, it is the flattening process contained in the general picture that produces reactions such as Madan's or that of my student, Marcos. For, just as Madan had difficulty locating his own experience as a Hindu within the framework of Dumont's work, Marcos also has difficulty accepting DaMatta's interpretation of Brazilian society because - I believe - it did not provide him with enough room for his own experience

as a black activist. If individual practicioners' own personal experiences as members of their society have invaded the academic scene to stay - as I believe they have - then something more (and less) than all-encompassing analytical frameworks such as Dumont's will be needed to render that experience. And it is perhaps in this very specific and very contextualized locus and its confrontation with a wider, universalist framework where most anthropology is going to be done (if it is not already being done). Also, it is perhaps in this context that change will possibly be gleaned, namely, in the movement back and forth between a very personal, experience-informed view, and a wider, social context approached both via ethnography and academic literature. Here, perhaps, one need not go as far as Geertz (1988) and simply plunge into 'authorial techniques' and their construction and concentrate on the strictly personal. However, I believe that analytical frameworks such as Dumont's, no matter how sophisticated and no matter how much they may accommodate specificity, are perhaps doomed to be side-tracked or remain only as a source of inspiration (that is how I hope I have used Dumont's work in this comparison between Brazil and South Africa).

How does one frame personal experience within a wider framework? That question is perhaps at the root of Madan's (and my own) uneasiness with general pictures. In South Africa, whenever someone wanted to disparage what he or she thought were my peculiar opinions or outlandish interpretations of local society, he would unfailingly resort to that deadliest of sins for a social scientist, namely, he would accuse me of indulging in a personal view. It was all **my** opinion. It ran counter what he had read and what he thought, and consequently I was perhaps deluded, a little deranged or, worse, had a hidden agenda of defending unacceptable positions (in this regard I am always reminded of the South African gentleman who may have thought I was a Latin white supremacist because I did not agree with him that Brazil and South Africa were the same kind of society just because 'whites were on top' in both countries). In South Africa the rhetorical domination akin to an ideological dictatorship that apartheid attempted was often matched by a rhetorical intolerance from its opponents that was often equally dictatorial. I was often under the impression that South Africans, more than any other people I have come across (well, perhaps I should make provision for Americans here), are locked into more or less rigid positions and at bottom unwilling to listen to other points of view whose acceptance may threaten their own. This rhetorical intransigence may yet turn out to be the most enduring legacy of the apartheid regime. Often people seemed to be jumping from one ideological straight-jacket into the other. There was comparatively little room for lingering around more or less unattached, or for indulging in one's curiosity, hesitation or doubt. By individualizing my voice and singling it out, some South Africans were telling me right away that I did not fit their

preferred orthodoxy. And, consequently, I - and my voice and opinions - had to be sent into exile to a locus of my own that they would construct for me. No assimilation was possible.

However, I think that ultimately the accusation of it all being a personal view is worth facing, in South Africa as elsewhere (I am always reminded of Malan's book in this regard). That is so especially if we accept that, according to Coetzee (1991:30), there is really no ultimate root to be dug up, no final explanation, but only a process of reading that is a following (and not a position):

> It seems to me that there are only two viable positions one can take with regard to the notion that ideas ('ideological' ideas) are not self-aware constructions used as means to ends, but instead float in the air, ready to infect either whole societies (...) or intellectuals, selected or self-selected for their particular kinds of obsessiveness, who as rhetorician-propagandists (carriers) receive, intensify, dramatize and retail them to whole societies (...). One position is that the whole description is a convenient professional metaphor for a process about whose workings we are more or less ignorant. The other position is that it is philosophically naive to believe that metaphors stand for things that are more real than the metaphors themselves, that if we trace the equivalences far back enough we ultimately come to solid meanings. On the contrary, there is ultimately no 'ultimately' in language; metaphors slide into (or interpret) other metaphors which slide into yet others, and so on. If we follow the latter course we may be in a better position to read racism, but we are in no position to eradicate it, not only because it has no root (no 'ultimate' root) but because a reading position is not a position at all: it is what I can only call a **following** (emphasis in the original).

There should be here enormous scope for personal views here. Moreover, a personal view here is at bottom also part of a 'following'. Namely, it is perhaps at its best when it not locked into rigid positions, but is instead a vehicle moving around different territories and hopefully acquiring some luggage in the process. The itinerary is more or less open and there can always be a further stage to the trip. For, if one stops along the way and puts down roots, ultimately what one is going to be doing is implementing apartheid's project of preventing the flow. By firmly placing oneself anywhere and constructing a staunch position, one almost as firmly displaces everybody else to other locations. Keeping on the move may sound like an unlikely undertaking to some, and a particularly difficult one to defend in the field of politics. However, what else is there to do if we are

not going to indulge in apartheid's project of constantly and obsessively displacing impurity to some far away place where it will supposedly not threaten us again?

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