



GROUP CULTURE AND INDIVIDUAL CULTURE

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Cultures are talked about as though they were definable *things*. That's delusive, a fancy that philosophers describe as *reification*. The supposed attributes of a culture become a *stereotype*. That abstract, hypothetical cultural stereotype then becomes a straight-jacket or Procrustean bed when individuals are described or counted as belonging to it.

Once a border is drawn it becomes a barrier. People, however, can transcend borders and cultures *just so long as they are not forced to be cultural stereotypes*. Romeo and Juliet could love one another though their reified clans could not. Individuals can hold citizenship in more than one country, but those countries would not dream of sharing with each other any part of their sovereignty.

It's long been said that religion and science are incompatible. It's easy to define "science" and "religion" as intellectual cultures with no commonality. There are extremist groups who oppose one another on those grounds (secular humanists at the one extreme, fundamentalist creationists at the other). Yet between those extremes stretches the vast majority of humankind who partake of both the scientific and the religious culture: many ministers of religion take a delight in knowing something about science and many practicing scientists are devoutly religious. *Individuals* find it easy to belong to many different cultures simultaneously, even as those reified cultures stand rigidly separate and often in opposition.

“Cultures” clash because in order to define them one has to focus on what’s *different* about them. What’s been described as “political correctness” (PC) harps on cultural *differences*. Group activists seek to assert and uphold “their culture” by *contrasting* it with other cultures; they attack and deride members of “their” group who want to speak and behave as individuals instead of groupies.

Harmony can ensue only when commonalities are seen to transcend differences. That comes when people are seen as individuals first and representative of groups only by the way. In focusing on *intrinsic individual* character, literature – the story of Romeo and Juliet, the myth of Procrustes, and much, much else – can encourage and enable us to empathize with people who may differ greatly from us in outward ways. Good literature reveals that what humans share is more important than what sets them apart: “If you prick us do we not bleed? If you poison us do we not die?”

As the enemy of harmony is reification and the group-think that follows from it, I shall draw here on literature and on personal experience to help me speak in individual voice and in concrete terms rather than in abstractions and generalizations.

BEYOND RACE

“There’s a piece you must read in the *Aufbau*”, my father had said to me.

Aufbau is a bi-weekly newspaper founded in 1934, published out of New York for German-speaking refugees from the Holocaust. “Emigration and Identity”, the article my father had recommended, was written by the American Max Knight who had formerly been the 29-year-old Austrian emigré Max Kühnel. The essay asks, “What am I? Austrian? American? Jew?”¹

No wonder that it moved my father. No wonder that it moved me. I had been six, my father had been thirty-four, Max Kühnel had been twenty-nine when we shared the uncanny experience of ceasing to be Austrians. Everything was topsy-turvy. Once required to attend school, now I was forbidden to attend. Friends were no longer friends. Suddenly there was no longer a basis for plans, hopes, ambitions; we

could not understand the present and could not believe that there might again be a future. If we wanted to live, we had to go somewhere else and we had to become someone else.

Having moved somewhere else, we found that it was not our choice who we were to become. To the Nazis we were Jews, not because we practiced Judaism or had been nurtured in a Jewish culture but because the documents of our heredity showed a certain number of our ancestors to have been Jews. And the anti-Nazis, those who took us in, knowing no better also accepted that classification, took it for granted. So we found ourselves expected to conform to mores to which we had not been raised, for which we had no natural affinity. We were in but not of: misfit to the misfits, outsiders among the outcast. We were expected by everyone, by those who wished us well as much as by those who didn't, to manifest an identity that we happened not possess.

Years later, a psychiatrist told me that I had "a problem of identity". It was a couple of decades further on before I saw what he had meant, and I came to see it through reading *The Content of Our Character*, written by a black man – Shelby Steele – who happens to be an individualist and not one of the black groupies. In all the heated discussions of Steele's essays, most neglected have been the very things most worth remarking and that qualify it as significant literature: that Steele's insights illuminate the universal human condition as much as they do the particular black condition².

I had just been reading Steele's essays (for the wrong reasons, as I shall explain later) when my father showed me Knight's piece in *Aufbau*. Nothing could be plainer, it seemed to me, than the commonality of experience shared by Steele, Knight, my father, me: that of belonging seemingly but not meaningfully to an outcast group. It is far from the only significant thing about Shelby Steele, that his skin is black in a society that has long denigrated black skin; millions of others share that experience with him. It is far from the only significant thing about my father, that all of his grandparents practiced Judaism; millions of people share that with him. There is no good reason why my father or I should support Zionism: it really is not the only possible response to being victimized by anti-Semites. There is really no good

reason to expect Shelby Steele to favor affirmative discrimination: that is not the only conceivable response to America's history of racial interaction. There are much better reasons why Steele, Max Knight, my father, and I might understand and empathize with one another, for we share a somewhat less common experience than that of being black or being Jewish: the Double Outsider's experience of being other than what people hold them to be.

BEYOND SEX

The elsewhere to which my family moved from Nazi Austria was Australia. About the same time as I read Steele and Knight, I also read *The Road from Coorain*. Manifestly the journey to adulthood of an Australian girl, it quite transcends ethnicity and sex in illuminating – among much else – the interaction of environment and personality that molds us all, if only we knew it. Jill Ker Conway's portrayal of the anti-intellectual, macho, parochial Sydney of the 1950s spoke powerfully and directly to me, a non-Australian-born, non-female. We shared significant things: having been serious students of intellectual bent and therefore outsiders; rather lonely, for one thing because, as Conway recalls, the self-styled Free Thinkers at our university demanded as price of admission to their group a casual promiscuity that attracted neither Conway nor me³.

OUTSIDERS

Colin Wilson has tracked the literary theme of the person who doesn't belong: with a "sense of strangeness, of unreality", "self-divided", suffering "denial of self-expression", "the Outsider is not sure who he is". "The Outsider's first business is self-knowledge"; seeking that, Outsiders may discover that they are "not what they had always supposed themselves to be". Striving for identity, the Outsider "starts from a point that everybody can understand, and very soon soars beyond the general understanding"; yet the insights gained along the way are common to all human beings, for "the exploration of oneself is usually also an exploration of the world at large"⁴.

An Outsider isn't a foreigner. The Outsider is torn between belonging and not-belonging because he is at once a member of the group but not stereotypical of the group; and Colin Wilson's Outsider resolves the tension by becoming an individual.

Some people with Outsider tendencies suppress them, of course, and become Groupies instead, like the peripatetic adviser-to-all-leaders in the film *Viva Zapata*, equally comfortable (or uncomfortable) advocating ruthlessness by the revolutionaries and by the counter-revolutionaries⁵. In the contemporary climate of political correctness – PC – political cleansing⁶, one finds a plethora of such vagrant would-be Groupies. Thus innumerable White, European, Male activists and bureaucrats parrot the propaganda of multi-culturalism and group identity notwithstanding the multi-culturalist postulate of exclusivity, that only blacks can understand blackness and only women can understand women. Whence do these male WASPs think to procure the dispensation that enables them to understand what other male WASPs are supposed to be congenitally incapable of understanding? To speak for “victims” even as they assert that other non-victims cannot comprehend or speak for victimhood?

Insiders who claim to speak for their group are just as guilty of a similar hypocrisy. The discrepancies are striking between the public preaching and the private actions of many self-styled black “leaders”. Similar discordances are to be found in union leaders, in those elected to political office, in student leaders. It is simply another case of human universality encountered in particular circumstances. No sooner does our vocation become so consuming that we must also make our living at it, than we become influenced by self-interest as well as common interest; and we can then find innumerable rationalizations for making our personal lives more pleasant: because we symbolize or represent our groups, say, and must supposedly impress others to the benefit of our group. So Soviet leaders could come to enjoy privileges earlier reserved for kings and emperors, and university administrators enjoy perquisites unknown to the faculty.

The most significant thing about being an Outsider is the experience of feeling outside, not what brought it about. There are many specific grounds for feeling outside, contingent on all sorts of circumstances: interaction among siblings, talent or lack of talent for a particular game, unusual appearance. There are also many degrees of feeling outside. Those who feel *particularly* outside, for whom outsideness has been an important factor in life, have that as a particular basis of common understanding. So I empathize with Shelby Steele and dare claim an authentic understanding of what he says, for the excellent reason that we have both been doubly put outside. To be excluded by the herd, and then to feel excluded from the group that has been excluded by the main herd, is a wonderfully powerful incentive to devise an individual identity. Those of us who have had some trouble with it can feel with others in the same boat, no matter that the grounds for herd-classification may be entirely different in our particular cases.

Many people fail to guess my heritage. I've lived in four countries, and my mongrel accent of somewhat Austrian consonants and somewhat Australian vowels is accurately placed by very few. When I first went to the United States, it amused me that my tanned skin, luxuriant mustache, and "British" accent were often taken to indicate an origin in the Indian sub-continent. Quite regularly, then, I encounter anti-Semitic utterances from perfectly pleasant, likable people unaware of my Jewish heritage. The father of a good friend told a story about "a Jew, you know, the sort who spits when he talks". One of my early dates in the United States, a light-skinned mulatto, explained that the quality of the student newspaper was low because it was run by "a bunch of Jews". The Japanese with whom I shared a room for half a year, I was startled to discover, knew (and had found no reason to disbelieve) all the unpleasant attributes stereotyping Jews. People tell me of having been "jewed down".

Experience affords similar opportunities, of course, to people who can pass as either black or white⁷. So I can understand what it's like sometimes for Shelby Steele. I can understand that when he's with whites, he knows that they're likely thinking of him as "one of those", and not as the person, Shelby

Steele. I can understand that when he's with blacks, he's on constant guard, waiting for them to say things that they expect him to empathize with when really he doesn't. And I know how he feels when that happens. Can he contradict without offending, without wounding? Is there any point in trying to reveal himself, dare he hope that it might lead toward mutual understanding rather than away from it?

He and I know what it's like for anyone who is beneath the surface different from what the surface is taken to show: the homosexual who isn't known to be homosexual, say, or the red-neck or the good-ol'-boy who happens to be a sensitive intellectual. And we also know that this situation, so prominent a factor in our lives, differs *only in degree* from the situation of every other human being – for who does *not* feel in some way different from their public persona?

Still, twice-outsiders like Steele and me are particularly well-placed to learn that there's no hope for any of us in any world that deals in group identities and not in individual identities. I know that we're all at risk so long as we're counted by sex or race or creed, by heredity or skin-color, so long as that single attribute is taken to be the only important thing about us. I know that it's evil to separate – as was done by Black fanatics in Minnesota and some other states – loved and loving little children from loved and loving foster parents just because the latter are white and the former black⁸. Those who preach and practice that sort of thing are no different from the Nazis: nothing about people is more important – they assert unthinkingly and without warrant – than their supposed race, their *Blut* or their Negritude, their allegiance to *Volk* or to Afrikanism. They don't know, as I however do, what a little child feels when his world turns topsy-turvy. Like all fanatics, they know things only abstractly and do not feel as concrete people do, nor feel with them. And so they can participate in genocide without feeling qualms, for they are eliminating an abstract group and not actual human beings.

REVIEWERS, IDEOLOGUES, AND LITERATURE

The many reviews of Shelby Steele's book attest that I am far from the only one to have read it for the wrong reasons. Many of those who protest political correctness have turned to Steele and to such

other black individualists as Stephen Carter, Glenn Loury, Thomas Sowell, Kenny Williams, for a generic sort of ammunition: “You claim to speak for the minorities”, we throw at the PCers, “but you’re wrong; here are some blacks who disagree with you”. But in doing that, by treating those individuals not as individuals but as a generic voice, we participate in the very thing we wish and claim to resist.

Not that it’s easy to come to read Steele for right reasons. The publishers advertise his book as a treatise on race; the book’s sub-title is *A New Vision of Race in America*. Almost all the reviewers, preoccupied with politics and ideology, fall neatly into two categories: those who praise the essays because they agree with what they take to be Steele’s politico-social beliefs, and those who castigate the essays because they disagree with what they take to be Steele’s politico-social beliefs. You’ll find Steele largely commended if you read *Commonweal*, *Economist*, *Human Events*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Monthly*, or Juan Williams in *New Republic*; albeit commended, as I’ve already said, for wrong – or at least inadequate – reasons. But to Marxists, feminists, and other ideologues of such bents, Steele is anathema. I’ve rarely seen such perverse misreading of an author or such viciously personal attacks as from Adolph Reed, Jr. in *The Nation*⁹; Martin Kilson in *Dissent*¹⁰; Jerry G. Watts also in *Dissent*¹¹; and Patricia J. Williams in the *New York Times Book Review*¹².

Many of the reviews, including favorable or well-disposed ones, seem as though written about some other, different essays than those Steele wrote. He is castigated for things he doesn’t say and praised for things he doesn’t believe. Only once or twice does one find in the reviews some indication why Steele’s work qualifies as significant literature: “not really a disputatious work.... a kind of universality, managing to explain the dilemmas and vulnerabilities not only of blacks, but of others who present in their very person (whether by color, sex, features, language, or manner) the badges of some ancient persecution or ascribed inferiority”¹³; “the most important challenges confronting us as individuals derive not from our racial condition, but rather from the human condition”¹⁴.

Some things are universal among human beings: wanting to live, wanting to be secure, wanting to belong, wanting to know who one is. Other things are contingent: one may feel insecure through being physically weak, or through being mentally weak, or through being black in a white society, or white in a black community, or Jewish in a Christian society, or non-Jewish in Israel, or female in a macho society, or for countless other reasons. Good literature speaks *universally* to all human beings when the *contingent* experiences of *particular* human beings are described so authentically that others can translate them into their own personal, contingent idioms. Steele's essays do that.

Of course – as Bernard Shaw among many others has pointed out – an author is not necessarily aware of the full significance of what he writes. Steele himself may not have been clear about the extent to which he speaks universally. When he talks of race-holding, of clinging to a generic racial identity in lieu of an individual identity, for example, he fails to point out that he is speaking of a particular instance of *group*-holding: every human being, not only a black one, finds it easier to cling to a herd identity than to go it alone. When Steele talks of racial shame and anxiety, he does not point out that this is a particular instance of *group* shame and anxiety: the *noblesse oblige* of a Nelson Rockefeller may well mask or be coupled with or have been stimulated by shame at having robber-barons as ancestors, by uneasy fear of some genetic tendency toward being a crass exploiter, by worry that unconscionable social beliefs might hold sway in his subconscious.

THE OUTSIDER'S ADVANTAGE

Being an Insider is not entirely to be desired, Colin Wilson points out. Insiders never wonder about their identities because they are so commonplace; they are (after T. S. Eliot ¹⁵) “the hollow men... the stuffed men... leaning together”. “These men are in prison... quite contented in prison... *they think they are the prison*” [italics in original ¹⁶]. Some unusual stimulus is needed for us to understand our own situation, because normally we take it for granted; we regard as inevitable what actually are just our own familiar happenstances. “What should they know of England, who only England know?”, asks the poet ¹⁷.

Outsiders are driven to notice and strive to understand what Insiders presuppose and (therefore) misunderstand.

Truly, white children who never encounter children of color are thereby culturally disadvantaged: integration of schools made sense for the whites as much as for the blacks. But this benefit of integration is undone if it is accompanied, as all too often nowadays, by propaganda that no one can transcend their background, race, sub-culture. The experience of Others is *universally* useful only if it stimulates *individual* thought and identity-building. The black who believes he can experience only blackness is as ill-served as the Englishman who knows only England. The person who adopts a group identity as an act of rebellion against the Insiders has altered the terms of the description on his label without gaining individual liberty from the tyranny of group-labeling. The Afrikan-Amerikanist or the PCer is as much an unthinking prisoner as is the white racist or any other “-ist”.

The Outsider is helped and driven to discover a self when no group identity is available. It isn't really a matter of discovery, though, so much as creation. Human beings are not born with an identity waiting to be discovered. Those who tell us that they are in the process of finding themselves, who wait to discover who they are before doing anything, turn out to remain year after year still vacuously waiting. Identities are the created, cumulative results of all our actions and experiences.

Colin Wilson's Outsider is the person who has persevered in the face of loneliness and alienation to build a character strong enough to survive in a world that appears to reject him. Without the loneliness and alienation, there would not occur the character-building. Admittedly, bad experiences early in life – leading perhaps to alienation and loneliness – seem to psychologically or socially maim some people; yet others summon the will to triumph over the adversity and they emerge all the stronger for it. We don't know how much and what sort of hardship is right to stimulate the development of will and character and how much more would instead be crippling; undoubtedly it varies widely from child to child. But it is

surely plain that a child raised in a bubble, shielded from any even momentarily unpleasant stimulus, grows up forever narcissist, ignorant of the world and unable to deal with it.

SENSITIVITY

One of the great absurdities of PC is the effort to shield every member of any “protected minority” from any possibly insensitive speech by others. Thereby the shielded ones would not only be prevented from learning what life is really like, they would also be denied the opportunity to build a robust and insightful self. “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me”, I learned in childhood; and I think it helped me put many things into perspective, so that – for instance – I can now converse comfortably with people who talk about being “jewed down”. What would my life have been like if, whenever I heard such a phrase, I felt duty-bound to rush to the nearest Rights Office to turn the culprit in? What sort of person might I have become if I’d been coached, drilled, trained to be ever on the alert to feel insulted by such idioms?

The common language in Australia, where I lived my formative years, was anything but “sensitive”. We foreigners and immigrants were “reffos”, “Chinks”, “Dagos”, “Frogs”, “Pommies”, “Wops”. Those were not exactly terms of respect, but they were used in the same context that had as a common greeting among Australian friends, “How are you, you old bastard?”. Quickly we learned that Australians are singularly prone to treat people as *individuals* and singularly kind and helpful to *concrete individuals* as they encounter them in day-to-day life, even as they disparage abstract groups to which those individuals may happen to belong. It was an excellent lesson for me to learn, that people who make stereotypically denigrating remarks about refugees, Jews, people with accents, intellectuals, people who don’t play rugby, and so on, might still be kind and helpful to me personally even though I belong in all those categories.

We can only deal with the world through generalizations, because the number of particulars is overwhelming, for our purposes infinite. It seems instinctively human to discern patterns, regularities,

similarities, categories. So we stereotype whatever we can; it's an eminently useful thing to do. But that does not render us unable to recognize exceptions to generalizations, to note *mixtures* of stereotypes and the infinity of resulting nuances. In practice it is only a mercifully few fanatics who think and act purely by stereotype; the vast majority of human beings is able to recognize as also human those others who happen to have a different sex, skin color, religion, accent, or the like.

The attempt to forbid all generalizing about blacks, or Jews, or women, or WASPs, or Brahmins, or any other identifiable group is absurdly ill-conceived. But of course this Political ("sensitivity") Cleansing is not really an attempt to wipe out stereotypical thinking, it just seeks to replace one set of stereotypical valuations by another: white males, after all, are routinely stereotyped by the PCers as racist, sexist, Eurocentric, and altogether unworthy. Here is most apparent the affinity of Political Correctness with the self-flagellating attitudes of the 1960s and the fellow-traveling-with-the-Communists of earlier years; Beichman's *Nine Lies About America* of the early 1970s could have been written yesterday, among the lies being that "The American People Are Guilty" and "America Means Genocide" ¹⁸.

THE TYRANNY OF GROUPS

Given the choice, we generally prefer to belong to the group than not to belong. As soon as a group is defined, automatically defined as well are those who *don't* belong to that group: barbarians, heretics, pagans, inferior beings. To avoid the stigma of inferiority and undesirability, one wants to be a member of the Group.

But all Groups are totalitarian tyrants. They each have their common denominator that easily becomes a *lowest* common denominator, lacking nuance or flexibility. Even at their most benign, group identities are burdensome. Every salesman must be "hail-fellow-well-met", no matter how uncomfortable some individual salesmen may be with that. Republicans must be for "family values", adherents of the

Constitution must be against gun-control laws, and so on and so forth. Each Group has its own litmus test with but two possible outcomes: red for acid or blue for alkali; yes or no; right or wrong.

The PCers have an inkling of truth when they praise diversity and see true democracy and equity in the greatest degree of diversity. They are entirely wrong, however, in defining diversity in terms of groups and not in terms of unaffiliated individuals. Surely the finest, most civilized notion of diversity is that attained in British culture, where sophisticated respect and freedom are accorded eccentrics, where the most truly eccentric individuals are often described also as the most truly British.

Group identities are blinders. Certainly whites should learn to understand and be sensitive to people of color; but that can happen only when *individual* whites are able to see *individual* people of color as *individual* human beings, as multi-faceted and nuanced human beings. And by the same token, blacks should learn to understand and be sensitive to people who lack color, which can happen only when individual blacks are able to see individual whites as individual human beings, nuanced and multi-faceted. The group identity of any minority, sex, or other class is just as tyrannical, totalitarian, destructive of selfhood as the group identity of any prevailing "majority". "Minority", moreover, is defined in explicit opposition to "majority", which immediately entails polarization and conflict; everything is oversimplified into a dichotomy.

In reality there are innumerable human groups that have some characteristics in common. All teachers have some similar experiences and some similar attitudes. People in the middle classes share some things that the very poor and the very wealthy do not. People who enjoy hunting share some things that bridge-players do not; etc. etc. But any given human being is at once a member of many different groups, of many different cultures. He belongs to one group defined by sex; to another defined by a certain age; another by a certain occupation; an ethnic heritage; a particular education. Married people share a commonality that singles do not; divorced people an experience that singles and marrieds do not. There is no end to it. Every human being is a unique amalgam of umpteen different group identities. As

Louis Menand pointed out, political correctness makes into nouns, words that ought to be adjectives – black, white, male, female, homosexual, heterosexual –, thereby treating persons merely as interchangeable symbolic units of one of the groups they belong to¹⁹. That is dehumanizing in the most literal sense, to be treated as though one had only a single stereotypical identity, be it oppressor or victim or anything else.

By insisting on mutually exclusive cultures, Political Correctness implies the absence of a universally human condition. This is a retreat from the achievements of the Western tradition in which “one achieves one’s maximum intellectual individual potential by coming to see oneself as part of a universal human species with a universal human culture”²⁰.

INDIVIDUAL VOICES

There are many blacks beside Shelby Steele who refuse to be nothing but interchangeable bits of Black Culture, who deny with Stephen Carter that “the price one must pay for dissent is one’s birthright: if you take the wrong position, you are thinking white; and if you think white, you are not really black. ... [Yet] not only must an intellectual refuse to pay the stated price for the right to think; an intellectual must refuse to acknowledge anyone else’s authority to decide that the price must be paid”²¹. Many other blacks beside Steele and Carter are pointing out in the public arena how demeaning affirmative action is for the *individuals* who supposedly benefit from it.

And not only blacks, of course; all “minorities”. Take the anthropologist Ruth Behar: “turned down for a faculty position as a minority scholar ... [not] authentic-enough Latina – even though I was third-generation Cuban – because my grandparents had been European Jewish immigrants to Cuba.... [But in any case] it wasn’t Cubans that the administration needed to fill the ‘target of opportunity slots’ [22] ... they already had at least two.... [But later at the same university] As soon as I took the job ... I was tabulated into the list of new minority hiring. There are still so few minority people on campus that even an impure Cubana like me counts for something”²³.

Everyone whose parents were of two distinct “races” or “cultures” – and that’s a lot of people! – is invisible under the present scheme of public accounting of employment, education, and state of victimization; where, for instance, does a Nisei fit? ²⁴ “But ... a growing number of mixed-race people ... are waging a war of their own against America’s concept of race” ⁷, insisting that they exist and belong *as what they are*. “Most mixed-race people ... have been constantly besieged by others to choose one identification or the other ... But those very people who want you to choose are never happy about whatever choice you make because you are mixed and they know it” ²⁵. Sometimes the choice is forced by circumstances, of course, as for Greg Williams who grew up white as a boy in Virginia but became black at age 10 when he had to live with his black relatives in Indiana: “a boy who was trying to cope with a world in which everyone wanted to make life as hard as possible because he did not fit in a category” ²⁶.

The same dilemmas of human society as apply to racial categories, apply also to categorization in terms of ethnic or national heritage, life-style, religion, class, occupation, and all else that lends itself to Group-making. The point of central importance for the *individuals* concerned is to realize their individual identity in the face of society’s continuing pressure to force them into groups. There is a burgeoning literature about this from the millions who emigrated to Australia in the middle of the 20th century²⁷, in the most diverse ways: “Conceived in Indonesia, ... born in Holland of Dutch parents ... became a naturalised Australian. ... [Then] married an American ... The fearful question ... ‘Am I Australian?’” ²⁸. The problem of identity seems just as difficult to a German born just after World War II who “grew up within silence. That period of history was not taught in schools”. One such woman now writes about “living in two cultures and not really belonging to either of them... words like ‘disciplined’ get me defensive. ... I want to ... say ‘Look, I’m not! I’m not!’ But, yes, I am” ²⁹.

There are as many individual voices as there are individual people; but – or therefore – the voice of Individuality has been little echoed by the media, by comparison with the coverage given to self-styled

spokespeople for Groups. Yet perhaps in time the sum of the individual voices will make itself dominant. We are after all, each and everyone a member simultaneously of many “cultures”. I belong in some way to Jewish culture and to Gentile culture; to Austrian and Australian and American cultures; to the culture of academe and the culture of the intellectuals (which are not by any means the same); to C. P. Snow’s scientific culture and yet also to the literary one to which he contrasts it³⁰. In various ways and at various times I adapt my behavior to that of family member and parent; of voter; of intellectual maverick; of administrative apparatchik; of political rebel. Sometimes one of those roles predominates and sometimes another. What’s constant is the juggling of those roles. No one else, I’m sure, does exactly the same juggling – but everyone else shares with me the essence of the experience, that of juggling many distinct roles. I’m unique – and so is everyone else. We are all first and foremost, unique human individuals.

We should not allow ourselves to be pigeon-holed. All cultures can exist in harmony when they are not misconstrued as separate compartments but recognized as overlapping communities of individuals.

NOTES

¹ Max Knight, “Emigration und Identität”, *Aufbau*, 25 October 1991, pp. 8,14.

² Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990.

³ Jill Ker Conway, *The Road from Coorain*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.

⁴ Colin Wilson, *The Outsider*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1956.

⁵ Played by Joseph Wiseman. *Viva Zapata* (1952) was produced by Elia Kazan, script by John Steinbeck, and remains a powerful illustration of how revolutions degenerate back to the pre-existing tyranny.

⁶ “Political correctness”, commonly abbreviated to “PC”, has become the recognized epithet for authoritarian excesses euphemized as “affirmative action”, “sensitivity”, “diversity”, “multi-culturalism”, and the like. “Political cleansing” seems more descriptive, as suggested in *U. Magazine* of January/February 1995 (p. 24).

- ⁷ Robin Wilson, "At the racial dividing line", *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 27 January 1995, p. A17.
- ⁸ Recounted for example on the television program, *Sixty Minutes*, CBS, 25 October 1992.
- ⁹ Adolph Reed, Jr., *The Nation*, 4 March 1991, pp. 274-81.
- ¹⁰ Martin Kilson, *Dissent*, Fall 1990, pp. 519-22; see the marvelously cool reply by Steele on pp. 522-23.
- ¹¹ Jerry G. Watts, *Dissent*, Winter 1991, pp. 78-81.
- ¹² Patricia J. Williams, *New York Times Book Review*, 16 September 1990, pp. 12-13.
- ¹³ Diana Schaub, *Commentary*, February 1991, pp. 58-61.
- ¹⁴ Glenn Loury, *Academic Questions*, 5 #4, Winter 1992, p. 22.
- ¹⁵ T. S. Eliot, *The Hollow Men*, I.
- ¹⁶ Pages 154-55 of Wilson, note 4.
- ¹⁷ Rudyard Kipling, *The English Flag*.
- ¹⁸ Arnold Beichman, *Nine Lies About America*, New York: Pocket Books, 1973.
- ¹⁹ Louis Menand, "Books — Illiberalisms", *New Yorker*, 20 May 1991, pp. 101-7.
- ²⁰ John Searle, "Is there a crisis in American higher education?", *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences*, XLVI #4, January 1993, pp. 24-47.
- ²¹ Stephen L. Carter, *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby*, New York: Basic Books, 1991, p. 112.
- ²² The very term "Target of Opportunity", so widely used in this context, illustrates the ignorance of those who devise such policies and what a demeaning effect their ignorance so often has. The phrase was in common usage in World War II: when weather or determined defense kept bombers from hitting their designated target, they would drop their bombs wherever they might do some useful damage. "Targets of opportunity" are second-best or even less desirable – better than nothing, that's all.
- ²³ Ruth Behar, "Arroz con MacArthur", *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 4 November 1992, p. A44.

²⁴ Lydia Yuri Minatoya, *Talking to High Monks in the Snow —An Asian American Odyssey*, New York: HarperCollins 1992

²⁵ Terry P. Wilson, cited in David L. Wheeler, “Helping mixed-race people declare their heritage”, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 7 September 1994, p. A8.

²⁶ Cited in note 7; see also Gregory H. Williams, *Life on the Color Line: The True Story of a White Boy Who Discovered He was Black*, New York: Dutton, 1995.

²⁷ As representative of this literature, see Andrew Riemer, *Inside, Outside: Life Between Two Worlds*, Australia (Pymble NSW): Angus & Robertson (division of HarperCollins), 1992.

²⁸ Hermine Clouser, “Identity crisis in the Antipodes”, *Newsletter of the Sydney University Graduates Union of North America*, Spring 1993.

²⁹ Ursula Hegi, cited in Peter Monaghan, “A writer confronts her German ghosts”, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 7 December 1994, p. A6.

³⁰ C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures: and a Second Look*, New York: Mentor Books, 1964; also Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1963.