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# CHANGE OF PARADIGMS? Comments on the crisis of ethnicity\*

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Hermann Bausinger

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## IZVLEČEK

*V eseju Ali se paradigme spreminjajo, zapiski o krizi etničnosti, pisec obravnava stičišča in razhajanja med etnologijo in folkloristiko na eni in državo na drugi strani, problemski sklop, tesno povezan s celotno zgodovino in mnogimi bolj sistemskimi vprašanji naše stroke.*

## ABSTRACT

*In the essay Change of paradigms?, comments on the crisis of ethnicity, the author deals with the issues where ethnology and folklore on the one hand and the state on the other hand either meet or diverge. This is an issue which is closely connected with the entire history of our discipline and with many of its systems issues.*

For folklorists and ethnologists it is not very common to speak about the state. Certainly, if funds have to be raised for folklore positions, research projects or Festschriften, state officials are an important address. The subject of our discipline, however, seems to be located not only below but also in deeper strata than the state. The discovery - in a more pointed way: the invention of folk and folklore was an answer to modernization, an answer emphasizing the durability and continuity of traditions and traditional ways of life; and as the elaborated organisation of the state has been one of the crucial elements of modernization one might even say that the interest in folklore and folklife has always implied a departure from state.

This did not exclude, to be sure, that states made good use of the endeavours of folklorists and ethnologist. In the very beginning of scientific orientation in this field during the period of enlightenment folklore was regarded a means of administrative reconnaissance - in order to govern people effectively one had to be aware of their ideas, attitudes and ways of life. Later on, folklore became a vehicle of political ideologies and, by this, an essential support of states. But for serious folklorists this was, as a rule, only a neglectable concomitant; their attention was focused on the inner structures of traditions seemingly untouched by political estrangements. In a third stage political manipulation of folk tradition was heavily criticized but even then this criticism was often foremost a springboard to arrive at cleaner parts of folklore far from politics.

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Several key concepts of folk and folklore have been developed in opposition to existing stately structures. In their early stage the idea of 'Volksgeist' played an important part in the construction and extension of folklore studies. The term was coined, following French forerunners, by Herder. In general, it is translated as 'national spirit'; but this translation misses the characteristic distance from all stately configurations. 'Volksgeist' meant the spirit of the people and was aiming at the vision of a new political order in which different people would get to their unity and to clear demarcations against other people. It is well known how influential this idea was for the national struggles in Central and Eastern Europe - or to put it in a less idealistic way: how precisely Herder anticipated the real development in his theory. And it is also well known that this idea of 'Volksgeist' became a challenge and an incentive for folklorists: they started to collect what they looked at as popular antiquities in order to support the new organic concept by traditions allegedly having evolved over the millenia.

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By and large, this seems to be an outdated view. But this antimodern and anti-state attitude has crept into other concepts. The term ethnicity, closely connected with one of the most usual names of our discipline, ethnology, aims at sociocultural units beyond or within a state. It is only in superficial discussions about working migrants that nationality and ethnicity are mixed up; in this context people sometimes speak of the ethnic identity of Italians and Turks, and they spoke even of Yugoslavians as if it were an ethnic group. In fact, ethnic groups differ from and often oppose the political units and details. To an ethnographer or folklorist it seems quite natural to assume or postulate at least cultural autonomy for ethnic groups; for her or him, state frontiers often cutting right through ethnic units, are just disruptive factors interfering with the free unfolding of the innate ethnic talents and tendencies.

Ethnicity is not an unambiguous term; but generally it aims at a social unit somehow defined by descent. It is, however, not only descent but also situation which sometimes combines subgroups of a national population against dominating tendencies and sometimes core values of a state. Therefore, political scientists have coined the term regionalism: regionalists stand up for the clearing away of real or alleged discriminations, foremost but not only in economic matters. The political opposition, as a rule, has its cultural implications and its cultural symbols - and again, folklorists and ethnologists sympathize with the centrifugal powers and their cultural manifestations.

Taken all in all, the basic attitude included in these concepts is a very acceptable and pleasant one: Ethnologists and folklorists stand by the side of the weaker groups; they plead for as much autonomy as possible and they oppose the levelling out measures of the powerful - the representatives of the state. They speak up or at least implicitly stand for the subjective dimension of culture, and they try to guarantee every group a life in accordance with its own principles; the word *Eigen-Sinn* has gained ground during the last two decades - written with a hyphen and thus indicating a sense and will of its own.

But one can write that word *Eigensinn* without a hyphen, and in this case it means stubbornness, a narrowminded insisting on one's own intentions and measures. And it seems to me that the question should be raised whether this other side of the coin has not been ignored too often. Or to put it in another way: Should the concepts mentioned above not be adapted to the structures and needs of modern society?

A few years ago Alain Finkielkraut called the idea of 'Volksgeist' the most dangerous explosive of the 19th and 20th centuries. He took the view that by this idea people idolize themselves and avoid the court of values; what Finkielkraut calls "the feeling for the universal" gets withered by the self-righteous sticking to particularized norms. This criticism is not totally new. It reminds of an older opposition sometimes cut down to a contrast between traditions arising from enlightenment versus traditions of romanticism. This is not quite correct: Herder for instance represented not only an early stage of romanticism but also important traits of enlightenment, and there was also romantic universalism transcending and sometimes opposing the idea of 'Volksgeist'. But it is true that the romantic coining of the ideas of folk, people, nation, has left its mark at least on the folkloristic currency up to our days. By concentrating on the inner nature and vigour of these 'organic' units the need for mediation and balance between them got out of sight, and it is only now that the scenery of world-wide conflicts originating in those 'natural' configurations calls for new perspectives.

And it seems that a turn to smaller and closer configurations doesn't bring about stable solutions. At first glance the concept of ethnicity and ethnic identity seems to evade the complacency of nations and people. But evidently this concept has also to be called into question. The high degree of mobility in the modern world makes the concept ambiguous. As soon as we depart from very simple and static structures of society it is always the question who has the power to define and control ethnic identity, and quite often ethnic identity is not a 'natural' concept but ideologically set up. In the discussions about migrant workers an emphatic upholding of the principles of ethnic identity seemed to be the theoretical solution for heavy practical problems. But apart from the pellmell of different ethnic denominations within nationality groups the postulate of ethnic adherence works as a bond and chain for people in transition - the daughters and sons of guest workers are no longer and can no longer be plain members of their original ethnic groups and do not either want to be plain members of the society they live in but something in-between or, more correct, on the way to a new identity influenced by both sides. In dynamic situations ethnic identity is often only a regressive answer to the differentiated challenges of society and the more refined needs and wants of individuals.

It is an answer which seems to present itself especially in stages and situations of high tension. In such situations there is an inclination not to accept people just as human beings and neighbours but to look at them as members of an other ethnic group with a clear tendency to fencing off and demarcation. The only way out often seems to be the homogenization of political and ethnic frontiers. Thus, the autonomy of ethnic groups is extended from cultural to political goals - and quite often exactly by this attempt minority groups are exposed to grave deprivations if not deportation or war. Needless to add that this is what's going on in several parts of Eastern Europe.

Not even regionalism is immune to unjustified group egoisms. Interestingly enough, political scientists have found out that it is rarely very poor and neglected areas which stand up against the monopolizing and alienating tendencies of the central power but often relatively prosperous and well developed regions. In states falling apart the most well-to-do regions or substates are generally the first striving for independence - which sometimes

means also independence from solidarity with neighbouring regions. Regionalism, to be sure, has been an unavoidable answer to diverse forms of imperialism; setting up signals indicating that social, economic and political problems cannot be solved by extending alienating super-structures over enormous countries or even continents. But the ongoing destructive actions of militant regionalism, often regardless even of greater parts of the population within the region, make clear that the reference to home or natural habitat can be as problematic as the reference to ethnic adherence or descent.

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I think they should ask themselves where and when it is reasonable to hold aloft the old flags and where and when it is appropriate to change - well, maybe not paradigms but part of their perspectives. The model according to which folk culture or popular culture is a continuous struggle against estrangements and infiltrations from above is highly problematic even for the past (it is not very helpful - and comes rather close to national socialist ideologies - to look at the diverse ways of Christianization only as colonization of life worlds). And it is still more problematic with regard to present conditions and actual developments. It is acceptable and even wishable that folklorists and even ethnologists take care of the more traditional ways and items of culture, but they should avoid the trap to look at them as totally autonomous and untouched by elite or mass culture and they should never try to extrapolate cultural conditions to political designs without any discussion of intervening variables.

In my opinion cultural identity and political identity should be decidedly uncoupled. Saving or fostering cultural heritage does not necessarily refer to the heritage of an existing political unit, and the existence of special cultural traditions is neither a licence nor an obligation to demand the establishment of a political unit around these traditions. This is the logical complement of the expectation that every state will acknowledge and respect different cultural manifestations and traditions within its boundaries.\* These assumptions seem to lessen the importance of cultural traditions - and I am a bit suspicious that this is the reason for their hesitant acceptance. If vernacular culture has no counterpart in political autonomy the word compensation is quickly at hand - and it is often used with pejorative connotations. This is part of the delicate discourse on authenticity. But in a world based, totally on the principle of the division of labour one may well claim relative independence for the different realms of human existence. And as to compensation, one could provide strong arguments for the thesis that it is *the* human characteristic.

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\*The problem treated in this little essay is interconnected with the whole history of folklore and many of the more systematic questions of our discipline. Thus, it could have been discussed very lengthily upholstered by many quotations and garnished by legions of footnotes. As I intended only a concise sketch of the main problem I have dispensed with details.

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## ALI SE PARADIGME SPREMINJAJO? Zapiski o krizi etničnosti

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Za folkloriste in etnologe ni ravno običajno, da govorijo o državi. Država je seveda pomemben vir, kadar je treba zbrati sredstva za folklorne predstavitve, raziskave ali izdajo častnih zbornikov. A predmet naše stroke ni samo pod državo, ampak, tako se zdi, tudi v globljih slojih. Odkritje, ali nekoliko zbadljivo rečeno, "izum" ljudstva in narodopisja je bil odgovor na modernizacijo. Poudarjal je stanovitnost in kontinuiteto tradicij in tradicionalnega načina življenja. Ker pa je bila kompleksna organiziranost države eden izmed ključnih elementov modernizacije, bi lahko rekli, da je zanimanje za folkloro in folklorno življenje vedno pomenilo razhajanje z državo.

Vendar to nikakor ne pomeni, da se države niso znale okoriščati s prizadevanji folkloristov in etnologov. Že na samem začetku znanstvene usmeritve stroke - v dobi razsvetljenstva - so narodopisje imeli za sredstvo administrativnega izvidništva. Kdor želi učinkovito vladati, mora biti seznanjen z mislimi, mnenji in načinom življenja svojih podložnikov. Pozneje je narodopisje postalo nosilec političnih ideologij in je s tem bistveno podpiralo državo. Za resne narodopisce pa je bilo to sožitje nepomembno, ker je bila njihova pozornost osredotočena na notranje strukture tradicij, ki jih, kot je bilo videti, politično odtujevanje ni prizadelo. V tretji fazi so strokovnjaki postali hudo kritični do političnega manipuliranja s folklorno tradicijo, a vendar je bila tudi ta kritika pogosto predvsem izhodišče za iskanje čistih sestavin folklore, daleč od politike.

Nekateri ključni koncepti ljudstva in narodopisja so se razvili v opoziciji do obstoječih državnih struktur. V zgodnji fazi tega razvoja je pomembno vlogo v oblikovanju in širjenju narodopisnih študij odigrala ideja o "Volksgeistu". Pojem, ki ga je po vzoru francoskih predhodnikov skoval Herder, se na splošno prevaja kot "ljudski duh", vendar ta prevod popolnoma spregleda značilno distanco do vseh državnih konotacij. "Volksgeist" izvirno pomeni duh naroda in označuje vizijo novega političnega reda, v katerem bi različni narodi dosegli vsak svojo enotnost in se jasno ločili od drugih narodov. Dobro vemo, kako močan vpliv je imel ta koncept na nacionalna gibanja v Srednji in Vzhodni Evropi - ali, če govorimo malo manj idealistično: kako natančno je Herder v svoji teoriji predvideval dejanski razvoj. Prav tako nam je dobro znano, da je ideja o "Volksgeistu" postala izziv in spodbuda za folkloriste: začeli so zbirati reči, ki so

jih imeli za ljudske starine, zato da bi novi organski koncept podpirali s tradicijami, ki so se menda razvijale tisočletja.

V splošnem se nam zdi ta pogled danes zastarel. A vendar se je ta nesodobna in protidržavna drža razširila tudi na druge koncepte. Pojem etničnost (angl. ethnicity), ki je tesno povezan z enim izmed najbolj običajnih imen za našo stroko - etnologijo - označuje družbenokulturne enote znotraj neke države ali prek njenih meja. Le v površnih pogovorih o tujih delavcih se pomešata nacionalnost (državljanstvo) in etničnost. V tem kontekstu včasih govorijo o etnični identiteti Italijanov ali Turkov in celo o Jugoslovanih se je kdaj pa kdaj govorilo kot o etnični skupnosti. Dejstvo pa je, da se etnične skupnosti prostorsko ne ujemajo s političnimi enotami in z njihovo razmejitvijo ter ji pogosto nasprotujejo. Za etnografa ali folklorista je povsem naravna predpostavka ali domneva, da etnične skupnosti uživajo vsaj kulturno avtonomijo. Zdi se jim, da so državne meje, ki sekajo etnične enote, razdiralni faktorji, ki ovirajo svoboden razvoj naravnih narodovih sposobnosti in teženj.

Etničnost (angl. ethnicity) ni nedvoumen pojem, na splošno pa vendar označuje družbeno enoto, ki jo nekako določa skupni izvor. A ne samo skupni izvor, tudi položaj neke podskupine nacionalnega prebivalstva jo včasih združi v odpor proti prevladujočim težnjam ali temeljnim vrednotam države. Zato so politologi skovali pojem regionalizem. Regionalisti se bojujejo za odpravo resnične ali domnevne diskriminacije predvsem, ne pa zgolj na gospodarskem področju. Politično nasprotovanje ima ponavadi svoje kulturne vsebine in simbole, folkloristi in etnologi pa simpatizirajo s sredobežnimi silami in njihovimi kulturnimi manifestacijami.

Na splošno je temeljna drža etnologov in folkloristov v teh konceptih zelo sprejemljiva in prijetna: so na strani šibkejšega, zagovarjajo čim večjo avtonomijo in nasprotujejo izenačevalnim ukrepom močnejšega, tj. države. Zagovarjajo ali se vsaj implicitno zavzemajo za subjektivno razsežnost kulture in skušajo vsaki skupnosti zagotoviti življenje v skladu z njeno opredelitvijo. V zadnjih dveh desetletjih se je močno uveljavila beseda *Eigen-Sinn*, napisana z vezajem, ki poudarja lastni smisel in voljo.

Poznamo pa tudi besedo *Eigensinn* (brez vezaja), ki pomeni samovoljo ali trmasto vztrajanje pri lastnih namenih in merilih. Zdi se mi, da se moramo vprašati, ali nismo morda pogosto spregledali tega drugega pomena. Z drugimi besedami: ali ne bi kazalo zgoraj omenjenih konceptov prilagoditi strukturam in zahtevam sodobne družbe?

Pred nekaj leti je Alain Finkielkraut o "Volksgeistu" govoril kot o najbolj eksplozivnem pojmu 19. in 20. stoletja. Po njegovem mnenju se narodi s tem konceptom postavljajo na oltar in se izogibajo vrednostni razsodbi. To, čemur Finkielkraut pravi "občutek za univerzalno", se izgublja zaradi pravičniškega vztrajanja pri partikularnih normah. Ta kritika ni povsem nova. Spominja na starejše nasprotje, ki mu včasih poenostavljeno pravijo nasprotje med tradicijama razsvetljenstva in romantike. Vendar to ni točno: Herder ni bil samo predstavnik zgodnje romantične dobe, ampak tudi pomembnih razsvetljenskih značilnosti. Poleg tega je obstajal tudi romantični univerzalizem, ki je presegal misel o Volksgeistu in ji včasih tudi nasprotoval. Vendar drži, da je romantično kovanje pojmov: ljudstvo, narod in nacija pustilo sledove v jeziku, s katerimi še dandanes manipulirajo v folkloristiki. Z osredotočenjem na notranjo naravo in življenjsko moč teh "organskih" skupnosti je izginila potreba po posredovanju

in ravnotežju med njimi. Šele sedanji prizori konfliktov povsem svetu, ki izvirajo iz teh "naravnih" skupnosti, kličejo k iskanju novih perspektiv.

Kaže, da usmeritev v manjše in ožje skupnosti ne daje stabilnih rešitev. Na prvi pogled se morda zdi, da se s konceptom etničnosti in etnične identitete izognemo samozadovoljnosti nacij in narodov. Vendar je jasno, da moramo dvomiti o njegovih pravilnosti. Zaradi visoke stopnje mobilnosti v sodobnem svetu postaja namreč dvoumen. Brž ko se oddaljimo od najbolj preprostih in statičnih struktur družbe, se vedno zastavi vprašanje, kdo določa in preverja etnično identiteto. Ta identiteta pa pogosto niti ni "naraven" koncept, ampak ideološka tvorba. V razpravah o tujih delavcih se je zdelo, da je poudarjeno ohranjanje načel etnične identitete teoretična rešitev za hude praktične probleme. Ne glede na množico različnih etničnih nazivov znotraj nacionalnih skupin deluje postulat etnične pripadnosti kot vez in povezava za ljudi "na prehodu". Sinovi in hčere tujih delavcev niso in ne morejo več biti navadni pripadniki svojih izvirmih etničnih skupin, niti ne želijo biti navadni člani družbe, v kateri živijo, ampak nekaj vmesnega, ali bolje rečeno: na poti k novi identiteti so pod vplivom obeh strani. V dinamičnih situacijah je etnična pripadnost pogosto le regresiven odziv na različne izzive družbe ter bolj rafinirane potrebe in zahteve posameznikov.

Tak odziv je najbolj očiten v zelo napetih časih in situacijah. Takrat so ljudje nagnjeni k temu, da sosedov ne sprejemajo zgolj kot soljudi, ampak jih vidijo kot pripadnike druge etnične skupine, in sicer z izrazito težnjo ločiti se in ograditi od njih. Edini izhod pogosto vidijo v homogenizaciji političnih in etničnih meja. Tako se avtonomija etničnih skupin razširja s kulturnih na politične cilje - in prav pogosto se dogaja, da zaradi takih poskusov narodne manjšine trpijo hudo prikrajšanje, izgon ali celo vojno. Prav to se danes dogaja v raznih delih Vzhodne Evrope.

Pa tudi regionalizem sam ni imun za neupravičen skupinski egoizem. Zanimiva je ugotovitev politologov, da so območja, ki se uprejo monopolističnim in odtujevalnim težnjam osrednje oblasti, le redko revna in zanemarjena. Ponavadi gre za razmeroma uspešna in dobro razvita območja. Ko neka država razpada, prvi težijo k neodvisnosti tiste regije ali deli države, ki so najbolj razviti. Neodvisnost pa jim pogosto pomeni tudi konec solidarnosti s sosednjimi regijami. Seveda je bil regionalizem neizogiben odziv na razne oblike imperializma. Regionalizem je "oddajal" znamenja, da družbenih, gospodarskih in političnih problemov ni mogoče reševati s širjenjem odtujevalnih superstruktur čez velike države ali celo celine. Vendar nam sedanje pogubno ravnanje militantnega regionalizma, ki pogosto ne upošteva niti večinskega prebivalstva v regiji, jasno pove, da je sklicevanje na domači ali naravni habitat lahko enako vprašljivo kot sklicevanje na etnično pripadnost ali izvor.

V tem kontekstu so potrebna nova razmišljanja in novi koncepti države. Z "državo" pri tem ne mislimo samo na upravno in izvršno oblast obstoječih nacij, ampak tudi na razne mednarodne skupnosti, zavezane pravici in miru. Ne mislimo pa na dvomljive kolektivne skupnosti, ki temeljijo na domnevni duhovni enotnosti, krvi ali zemlji. To je seveda politična trditev, vendar ni brez posledic za koncepte in delo etnologov in folkloristov.

Menim, da bi se ti morali vprašati, kje in kdaj je razumno dvigati stare zastave in kje in kdaj bi bilo bolj primerno nekaj spremeniti: morda ne paradigem, ampak vsaj del njihovih perspektiv. Model, po katerem je ljudska

kultura nenehen boj proti odtujevanju in infiltraciji od zgoraj, je hudo problematičen celo v zvezi s preteklostjo. Le malo koristi je namreč od stališča - ki je blizu nacionalsocialističnim ideologijam - da so bili razni načini, na katere se je širilo krščanstvo, samo kolonizacija življenjskega prostora drugih. Tako stališče je še bolj problematično v zvezi s sedanjim stanjem in razvojem. Sprejemljivo in celo zaželeno je, da folkloristi in tudi etnologi skrbijo za bolj tradicionalne kulturne običaje in predmete, vendar bi se morali izogniti pasti, da nanje gledajo kot na povsem avtonomne pojave, ki jih je elitna ali množična kultura pustila nedotaknjene. In nikoli ne bi smeli poskušati kulturnih pogojev razširiti na politične načrte ne da bi obravnavali vse možne različice.

Po mojem bi morali kulturna in politična identiteta ostati povsem ločeni. Gojenje in spodbujanje kulturne dediščine ni nujno povezano z dediščino neke obstoječe politične skupnosti. Obstoj posebnih kulturnih tradicij pa ne pomeni nujno pravice ali dolžnosti, da se zaradi njih zahteva vzpostavitev posebne politične skupnosti. To je le logično dopolnilo pričakovanj, da bo vsaka država priznala in spoštovala različne kulturne manifestacije in tradicije znotraj svojih meja.\* Zdi se, da te predpostavke zmanjšajo pomen kulturnih tradicij, in nekako sumim, da je prav v tem razlog, zakaj jih tako obotavljivo sprejemajo. Če ljudska kultura nima vzporedne politične avtonomije, se zelo hitro omenja beseda kompenzacija, ki jo pogosto uporabljajo z negativnim prizvokom. Vse to spada v občutljive razprave o pristnosti. Vendar so v svetu, ki v celoti temelji na načelu delitve dela, zahteve po relativni odvisnosti za različne svetove človekove eksistence vendarle upravičene. Glede kompenzacije pa bi lahko dobili močne argumente v prid tezi, da je to *glavna* človekova značilnost.

Iz angleščine prevedel Franc Smrke

#### AVTOR

Hermann Bausinger, emeritus profesor empirične znanosti o kulturi (Empirische Kulturwissenschaft) na Inštitutu Ludwiga Uhlanda na Univerzi Eberharda-Karla v Tübingenu.

#### THE AUTHOR

Hermann Bausinger, Emeritus Professor of Empirische Kulturwissenschaft at the Ludwig-Uhland Institute, at the Eberhard-Karls University Tübingen.

\* Problem, ki ga obravnavam v tem kratkem eseju, je tesno povezan s celotno zgodovino folklore in z mnogimi bolj sistemskimi vprašanji naše stroke. Lahko bi ga obravnaval obširneje, lahko bi utemeljeval svoje trditve s številnimi navedki in vse skupaj okrasil z množico opomb pod črto. Ker pa sem v mislih imel le zgoščen oris glavnega problema, sem se izogibal podrobnostim.