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BIOGRAPHY

In his research, Professor Jeremy Webber explores the constitutional structure of democratic governance with a keen eye for the challenges and opportunities of cultural diversity. The great task of any society is how to affirm principles and rules to govern society—how to maintain mechanisms for making public decisions that can claim to be legitimate—in the face of continual disagreement over what those principles should be. In highly diverse societies, disagreement is often grounded in different cultures of social debate and decision, indeed often in different practical ways of life. The process of engaging with those differences is difficult, essential, and exhilarating. It forces us to reconsider preconceptions. It reveals aspects of our lives that we might otherwise overlook. It challenges us to find ways to live together, in peace and respect, with people who are different from ourselves. Professor Webber has explored those issues across the domains of labour relations, the interaction between Quebec and the rest of Canada, rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada and Australia, issues of nationhood and cultural minorities generally, and questions of constitutional design and interpretation. He has published widely in all these fields.

Professor Webber was raised in British Columbia. He has degrees from the University of British Columbia (BA in political science), McGill University (LLB and BCL), and Osgoode Hall Law School (LLM). He taught at McGill University from 1987 to 1998, in a faculty that drew value from the fact that it internalized the encounter between two major legal traditions (common law and civil law) and among Canada's linguistic, cultural, and political communities.

He was then recruited to be Dean of Law at the University of Sydney. Professor Webber had a long association, personal and professional, with Australia. His time at Sydney enabled him to speak to constitutional theory in a new context and to contribute, as dean, to a very fine faculty of law. In 2002 he returned to take up the Canada Research Chair in Law and Society at the University of Victoria, attracted by that faculty's quality, its commitment to social justice, its engagement with Indigenous traditions of law and social order, and its desire to bring those lessons into political and legal theory. Victoria is now his home. He was nominated a Trudeau Fellow in 2009.

ABSTRACT

Much of the literature on nationalism, especially cultural nationalism, takes the position that nationalism is an abomination, productive of much harm in the world. Many of the defences of nationalism, including many defences of Quebec nationalism, take refuge in some notion of civic nationalism, in which the nationalism is said to have no cultural content whatever but to be concerned purely and simply with attachment to a nation defined in institutional terms alone. In this lecture, Professor Jeremy Webber takes issue with both of these positions. He argues that nationalism cannot be defined in purely civic terms—or at least, that such definitions misstate the true foundation and driving force of contemporary nationalisms, including Quebec nationalism, the quest of Indigenous peoples for self-government, anticolonial struggles in the Third World, and even the commitment of Canadians to their continued separate existence from the United States of America. At the same time, he argues that there is a form of cultural nationalism that does not fall into the pathologies often associated with nationalism—that is neither chauvinistic nor closed. Drawing upon an analogy to national traditions in music (among other things), he sketches the nature and justification of that form of nationalism and shows that such nationalist commitments, rightly conceived, can allow us to cherish what is most valuable in national communities and nevertheless guard against xenophobic and oppressive deformations.

LECTURE

A Nationalism Neither Chauvinistic Nor Closed

Université Laval

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I am delighted to be delivering my Trudeau Lecture in Quebec City. It was here that I began my long engagement with the topic of this lecture: how we should understand the encounter of languages and of cultures, and what that encounter tells us about the significance of culture to political life what it tells us about nationhood.

I first came here in the summer of 1979 on a work exchange between the governments of Quebec and British Columbia. It was an interesting summer—two years after the adoption of Bill 101 and less than a year before the referendum on sovereignty-association. I was posted to the Service des études économiques of the Ministry of Agriculture. I will forever be indebted to two people: Mme Danielle Lafrenière, my supervisor in the service, who was welcoming of a rather incompetent and not very bilingual assistant; and Mlle Julia Hunter, a woman who, although she was of a certain age, made clear that she was nevertheless mademoiselle, for she had never been married. She came from a rural area of L'Islet, had only a little schooling, but explored the world of knowledge through her crossword puzzles, assisted by her Larousse. She lived in the second unit on my floor of the modest apartment building on rue Richelieu. She was infinitely gracious and generous, willing to speak with me even when I

was unable to answer back. Under her tutelage, I began the hard but rewarding apprenticeship in learning a second language.

There are so many lessons that I owe to Quebec, both the city and the province. I remember the landlord of that small apartment building telling me that, as a young man, he had worked in the Canada Lafarge cement plant in town. The crew was entirely French-speaking but the foreman spoke English, and so every member of the crew learned English in order to communicate with the foreman. For me, it was an early lesson in the importance of institutional structure to language rights.

Moreover, I returned to Quebec in 1980 to study law at McGill University. I later taught there from 1987 to 1998. The McGill Faculty of Law is resolutely bilingual and bijuridical, teaching in both English and French and both the Quebec civil law and the English-derived common law. Studying and teaching there was a continual education in linguistic and legal diversity, the significance of culture to law and government, and the challenges—and great benefits—of working across cultures.

Those challenges and those benefits have been at the core of all my work in constitutional law, Indigenous relations, and constitutional theory in both Canada and Australia. We are often tempted to think that the most perfect community is uniform in its culture and language, bounded by what its members agree upon and defined by a rich set of shared values. But that is wrong. Every human community contains within it diversity and disagreement, often over its members' most fundamental commitments. The miracle of human community is not that people organize themselves in societies because they are the same, but that they can sustain societies that are rich and satisfying despite their disagreements, despite their continual—and I will argue their invaluable—differences.

But how should one design a constitutional order appropriate to such a diverse community? Some people argue that one should

abstract from cultural differences, rigorously ignore them, and subject everyone to the same rules and procedures within a single polity. A government should be purely civic and decline to adopt any particular culture or language. But that is not the vision I will present to you today. On the contrary, that vision profoundly understates the role that culture and language already have—that they necessarily have—in shaping political interaction. It ignores the fact that we are always already working within a language and culture, that we can never get outside culture, even when we are engaged in a process of translation between languages or, when it comes to constitutions, when we are organizing a multilingual or multijudicial state. If we want to sustain a diverse constitutional order, we cannot simply ignore language and culture. We have to understand them, understand their social and political role and adapt our institutions accordingly.

This lecture is about nationalism. I will defend a form of nationalism that is not purely civic—not based, that is, only on adherence to a set of institutions—but a nationalism that has a real cultural dimension, demanding that political institutions be adapted to certain kinds of cultural difference. Cultural nationalism has a very bad reputation for some very good reasons. It is usually considered to be xenophobic, to be hostile to the value of diversity, to be closed and resistant to interaction, and to presume that by definition every country should consist of only one culture. Most forms of cultural nationalism do have these defects. They are deformations that I entirely reject, indeed, that I abominate. One of my principal tasks, then, is to distinguish the nationalism for which I am arguing from these chauvinistic, closed, and aggressive forms.

The task of articulating an open and tolerant form of cultural nationalism is crucial. If, as I will argue, culture is relevant to political organization, then we have to understand how that relevance should be manifested in institutional form. Otherwise we are

abandoning the field of culture to the chauvinists. We will be unable to understand and respond adequately to the non-chauvinistic and entirely acceptable forms of nationalism that exist in the world, such as the insistence of Indigenous peoples that they be able to govern themselves; the commitment of Canadians to maintaining a political existence separate from the United States; and the deep attachment of Quebecers to continued political autonomy within Canada.

Moreover, I will argue that the chauvinists fundamentally misunderstand culture. They would stultify culture, presenting a caricature of their country, offering only a partial and rigid idea of what it means to be a member of a nation, excluding many of their compatriots just as they seek to exclude outsiders. Think of the cramped and dead-end visions that ultra-nationalists have traditionally sought to impose on their own people. If we care about culture, we need to defend its dynamism against those who would freeze it, narrow it, and shut it off from the world.

The State of Nationalism

Let me start by describing where my argument fits within contemporary theories of nationalism.¹ One way to classify conceptions of nationalism is to focus on what makes the nation: What produces the nation? What underlies it? The literature contains a wide range of answers. It is useful to group them into three categories.

1. Naturalistic Theories

The first category might be termed “naturalistic” theories of the nation. In these theories, nationalism is the projection into political life of cultural identities that are given, not constructed. People are held to belong naturally to cultural, linguistic, or perhaps even racial

1. Examples of most of these theories can be found in good anthologies of nationalism. See, for example, *Nationalism*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

groups. These groups are the foundation of solidarity. They provide the sense of identification as a people—a people that is concerned with its own fate and that ought to be able to chart its own destiny in time.

This sense of nationhood is resolutely single. A citizen belongs to only one nation. Each nation has a right to determine its own future, free from domination or influence from any other. Each nation is committed above all to its own interests.

Naturalistic theories have been very influential. They have become much less popular in the academy because of the horrors that such nationalisms have produced, especially in the 20th century. Indeed, those very horrors made clear that nations are not very natural after all. States invariably contain, within them, elements that do not conform to the simplified image of a single language and culture. Citizens speak variant dialects; they have different ancestries; they profess different religious beliefs; they pursue different conceptions of the national good; they interpret the country's history and destiny in different ways. Are some citizens real and others imposters? We have seen all too clearly where that line of attack can lead.

Moreover, the very singleness of national attachment seems too simple. Our allegiances are always more complex than that. I am an Australian as well as a Canadian citizen, and both my original and my immigrant identities mean a great deal to me. But even beyond such obvious dual allegiances, we are attached to multiple communities—communities within communities that are concentric and overlapping. I was born and raised in British Columbia, and cannot think of the places where I grew up without remembering their particular histories and their particular character. I was marked by them. I am very much a British Columbian with roots in Vancouver, the Okanagan, and Kitimat. But I also established my life as a scholar in Montreal teaching civil law, labour law, and constitutional law, and became deeply engaged in the constitutional battles of the late

1980s and 1990s. Along with my friend Wade MacLauchlin, I organized a pan-Canadian group to fight for approval of the Meech Lake Accord. I am deeply attached to Quebec and feel part of this society, even though I now live at a distance. Moreover, for me, these two attachments are not independent. My country—our country—is made up of the conversation among these and other strains of the Canadian experience. It is constituted by their interaction: the great, sometimes frustrating, sometimes conflicting, but always stimulating interaction between French and English; the fundamental and still unresolved set of relationships with Indigenous peoples; the regional diversity and regional histories of this land; and the contributions of successive waves of immigrants. This country would not be what it is without those interactions, difficult as they have often been.

Comparable stories could be told of other societies. Purely naturalistic theories inevitably oversimplify. That does not mean they have lost their power. I suspect that they continue to exercise considerable attraction even in academia, despite the fact that they have fallen out of fashion. But they are too simple, doing violence to the complexity of our lives together.

2. *Constructivist Theories*

The second category—“constructivist” theories— is much more common in the universities. Instead of seeing nationalism as the natural expression of ethnic communities, it sees nationalism as a tool for political mobilization, embraced and developed because of its utility. Nations do not simply exist; they are constructed. Indeed, many of these theories claim that nationalism precedes the nation. Nationalism has created the nation.

In some of these theories, nationalism is consciously manufactured by elites in order to marshal support for those elites' projects. In others, the construction of nationalism might not be so deliberate; nationalism may emerge from propitious social conditions but, if so, it is then seized upon and developed because it serves elites'

ends. In either of these views, nationalism is created or sustained because of its usefulness to those in power.

Some of these theories take the idea of construction very far indeed. They doubt that nationalism has any foundation apart from the fabric woven by its own ideologues. For these theorists, nationalism is created out of whole cloth. Benedict Anderson captured this idea wonderfully in the title of his 1983 book *Imagined Communities*.² National communities are products of imagination; they do not simply exist.

What drives the construction of the nation? Again the views are diverse. Some argue that nationalism is tied up with economic growth and modernization. There are two versions of this thesis. In one, nations are built from above in order to expand markets and produce an educated, homogenous workforce. In the other, nationalism arises as a reaction against economic expansion, as people on the outside—peasants in an industrializing economy or linguistic minorities chafing in institutions that operate in the majority's tongue (my landlord's experience at Canada Lafarge)—use it as a way of clawing their way back in.

How does cultural identity count in constructivist analysis? Some constructivist theorists do emphasize humiliation as one of the drivers of nationalism. But most treat cultural identity as a product of these processes, not a cause, so that consciousness as an ethnic group emerges in the very process of economic modernization. Indeed, for all the constructivist theorists, identities are at least to a very large extent constructed, more often from the raw material of ethnic identities, more often from features of human beings—"markers"—that can be turned into ethnic identities.

Some theories take the idea of construction to the extreme. They believe that allegiance can be emancipated entirely from its ethnic

2. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

markers so that citizens unite purely and simply in support of a set of institutions. These are the “civic nationalists” or “constitutional patriots.” Civic nationalism is very familiar in Canadian political life. Pierre Elliott Trudeau was a civic nationalist, attempting to create through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms an ethnically neutral, purely legal focus of citizenship. It is a rich irony that many *indépendantistes* also claim to be civic nationalists.

But for all constructivists, cultural and linguistic identifications are contingent—a product of social processes and political action. There is nothing natural or necessary about them. There is much to be said for this perspective. Nationalism is a complex phenomenon. We can all come up with examples of how nationalist sentiment has been consciously created and manipulated. What is unique about constructivist theories is that they take these features to be dominant—the most useful and interesting features of nationalism.

They stress the **contingency** of nationalism. It does not have to be this way!

They alert us to **the contextual factors that generate nationalist movements and account for their success**. Those movements are not simply the projection of a cultural community, but gather strength as a result of economic development or ethnic oppression.

Contingency opens up the possibility of **agency**. There are ways to respond in order to maximize the possibility that one can construct peaceful and harmonious societies.

But while there is a great deal to be said for constructivist theories, is their account of the origin and role of nations sufficient? They tend to treat language and culture as though they were mere markers, mere tokens, with no political significance of their own. These are then seized by political elites, fashioned into a cohesive identity, and deployed for political or economic advantage. But even if elites do seek to work with language and culture, why do they find these markers useful? Why are they successful? Nationalist movements are effective precisely because they play off something real. Elements

of national cohesion—language, histories, religious traditions, and cultural references—have political consequences even before they are mobilized. That is precisely what allows them to be mobilized effectively.

3. *Hybrid Theories*

This brings us to the third category of nationalism: “hybrid” theories.

These theories acknowledge that nationalist movements take shape within particular political contexts. Nationalism, like any other political phenomenon, is the result of human agency. It is a product of argument and deliberation, formed by the power and resources that political actors bring to bear. There is no necessary equation between cultural identity and the structure of states.

But nationalist arguments do work with something real. Even if communities are always to some extent constructed, not just given, and even if culture is manipulated for other ends, nationalism obtains its force from the role of culture in political life. One cannot do justice to nationalism unless one understands that connection. One cannot understand what drives nationalism, what is valuable and what is reprehensible, what is justified and what should be strenuously resisted. Hybrid theories take the role of culture seriously.

As you will have guessed by now, I adopt a hybrid vision of nationalism. I take seriously the role of culture, seek to understand it, weigh what is valuable about it, and then argue for principles and institutions that build on what is valuable and resist what is not.

Nationalism Neither Chauvinistic Nor Closed

1. *Culture*

The linchpin of my argument is an understanding of culture. People often define culture—and by extension nationality—as though it were characterized by a rich set of agreements. People who

share a culture hold certain beliefs in common. But that is wrong. Commonality certainly exists within cultures, but it does not consist in members signing up to a set of beliefs.

Take the United States, for example. Liberty and equality have clearly been central to the national life of that country, but it would be hard to pick two values that are more fiercely contested, with very different meanings attributed to them, right up to the present day. Moreover, the fact that there is a fierce debate does not undermine the American national identity. On the contrary, the debate itself is very American—the terms in which it is phrased, the texts to which it makes reference, the history against which positions are framed. Americans share those terms even as they disagree profoundly. The debate over liberty and equality in the United States is very different from the invocation of those concepts in France, for example even though liberty and equality are just as central to French political identity. One might even say that Americans are defined by the terms of their disagreements, not their agreements.

Cultures are best understood not as sets of principles but by analogy to languages. Like languages, they provide their members with a set of terms, a set of concepts, which members then use to frame their positions. They contain particular ways of posing questions and an accumulated set of past answers. They share a particular history, which has itself been understood in terms derived from the language. And by sharing a language, one does not adhere to a common philosophy. On the contrary, one may still disagree vehemently. Rather, one shares a conversation through time, in relation to which one formulates one's understanding of the world.

This also means that cultures do not confine what one has to say. Like languages, they can be used to express a great variety of ideas—although, also like languages, the categories do shape what one says. Some concepts are much easier to express in one language than in another. Statements carry connotations in one that are absent in the other. I do not mean to exaggerate the separation. One can school

oneself in both, familiarize oneself with their histories, immerse oneself in the practices of each society, and carefully explore and explain distinctions of meaning. But translation that is at all faithful involves significant effort on the part of the translator. That effort reveals the extent of the gap.

Of course, languages are more than simply a good analogy to cultures; they are an important determinant of cultures. But I want to insist on their relative independence—on the fact that although languages are an important constituent of cultures and have a substantial impact on them, cultures are not reducible to linguistic difference pure and simple. Think, for example, of France and Quebec. The two nations share a language and in large measure a common literature. But there are also points of real difference, where the expectations, arguments, and cultural resources of Quebecers are marked by the experience that has occurred here. To take one example from the field of constitutional law, Quebecers have certainly accepted that it is appropriate to recognize national differences within a single state—that Quebec constitutes, for example, a distinct society.³ For many French constitutionalists, that would be anathema. In 1991 the Conseil constitutionnel rejected the invocation of the “people Corse” on the grounds that the people of France must be indivisible.⁴ The experience of sustaining a vibrant French-speaking society in a multinational federation has shaped the sense of political possibility of francophone Quebecers. And this is just one striking example. Scholarship and political debate within Quebec have their own concerns and concepts, producing a rich and distinctive discourse that has things to teach us all, including, of course, scholars in France.

3. This was the phrase used to describe Quebec in the failed set of constitutional amendments known as the Meech Lake Accord: Peter W. Hogg, *Meech Lake Constitutional Accord Annotated* (Toronto: Carswell, 1988), 11.

4. Cons. constitutionnel, May 9, 1991, Statut de la Corse, Recueil 1991. 50, 91-290 DC.

One could multiply the identification of cultures and subcultures, even within Quebec: different regional cultures; the rural/urban divide; Quebec and Montreal. And those very comparisons point toward another dimension of Quebecers' experience: the fact that it has been marked by the interaction of French and English—certainly at the boundaries of Quebec, as Quebecers interact with leaders and citizens from other parts of Canada, but even more within Quebec, contributing to the contrast between Quebec and Montreal, or engraved in the very name of my neighbour, Julia Hunter. Some cultures cross linguistic lines in Canada. They are rocky and unevenly distributed (a little like the land itself), involving frustration as well as understanding and collaboration, but all parts of this country, even my home province of British Columbia, have been marked by them.

Cultures are, in short, federal in character. There are cultures and subcultures, concentric and overlapping. Indeed, any context in which there is repeated interaction over time—even our workplaces, religious institutions, villages, and neighbourhoods—will generate their own distinctive terms and histories, their own cultures, which are then reinterpreted and deployed.

2. The Value of Culture

Obviously, with such a capacious definition of culture, not all cultures will have the same significance for political life. In a few minutes I will discuss the ways in which culture should shape political institutions, but let me first address the reasons we should care about the persistence of cultures.

First, of course, we care about our own cultures. They have provided the terms in which we have come to understand ourselves, debated our future directions, and sought to organize our societies. Our aspirations have been framed in their terms. It can be disorienting to be cut off from them and have to develop new ones, as generations of immigrants have discovered. Of course, it is possible

to learn new ones. That too is part of the immigrant experience. But the capacity to master another language and to find one's place in another culture—while immensely enriching—does not diminish the value of one's acquired cultural expertise. There is an obvious advantage to using terms through which one has already defined one's positions and over which one has established mastery.

Moreover, if we are forced to abandon those terms, we end up severing our connection to our predecessors. One crucial way in which we orient ourselves in our lives is through narrative, by weaving stories of how we came to this point and projecting those stories into the future. That is how we incorporate experience, draw lessons, and determine ways of acting more effectively. If those stories come to an abrupt end, it can be devastating.

By maintaining our cultures, we are not simply trapping ourselves in the past. On the contrary, we are preserving our capacity for present agency. We maintain our knowledge, our social skills, our understanding of institutions and processes, and our sense of a trajectory through life. We draw upon the past so that we can put it to work today.

Above all, then, cultures are important to their members—and as individuals, not simply as people who identify with a collectivity. But beyond that, cultures hold value for the world at large, accessible (with effort) to people who are not members. Let me say a word about this value, because its recognition is essential if we are to avoid a closed and chauvinistic form of nationalism.

The body of concepts, debates, accumulated reflections, and considered experience that makes cultures distinctive carries distinctive insights, insights that are not present in the same way in other cultures. A culture carries knowledge. By engaging with another culture, one accesses that knowledge, expanding the stock of reflection on which one can draw. That holds three benefits. First, one comprehends the insights expressed within that culture. Second, one gains access, through the culture, to the body of experience on

which it relies. And third, by engaging with a different view of the world, one can often see with greater clarity elements of one's own.

Interaction across cultures therefore holds great benefits. The presence of Quebec within Canada contributes a distinctive perspective to this country, one that would not be present if Canada were monocultural and monolingual. I am not thinking so much of the body of high European culture in French, although it is true that that culture has much more salience in Canada than would be the case were it not for Quebec. I think especially of French Canadians' distinctive reflection on the North American experience, on settlement, relations with the First Nations, the encounter with the United States, and the successful struggle to maintain a vibrant society in the face of pressures for assimilation. I think of Quebec's tradition of labour militancy and social action, and its scepticism of foreign wars. I think of its history of religious belief and the ways in which it has distanced itself from that belief. All those things have marked and continue to mark Canada.

It is easy to think of a culture's contributions as consisting of sets of ideas but, important as those are, we draw upon much more than that. Cultures often reflect ways of ordering society or interacting with the natural world. Cross-cultural encounter expands the body of human experience from which one can draw, sometimes permitting one to envisage alternatives with a definition that would otherwise be impossible. I have had the great privilege of working with people deeply knowledgeable about Indigenous forms of social ordering. It has been a continual revelation, disclosing so much about the possibilities of law and governance, especially the nature of law in highly decentralized, non-state communities. And, of course, the encounter with Indigenous peoples is not merely academic; it is a fundamental part of our present and our future.

Members of other cultures are our resident experts. There are times that we may not like what we find. There may be things that we cannot tolerate. But we should not be too quick to condemn; we

should first learn. We may find that the reality is more interesting than we had expected. The hijab may not be simply about gender inequality and Islamic extremism. It may be about modesty, a turning away from sensualism, or a walking declaration of faith. Or it may be some complex combination of good and not so good, as might be said of many cultural phenomena—relations within marriage in western history, for example. My point is that it is worth inquiring. We might learn something, and out of the encounter of Muslim piety and western secularism we may develop new, more subtle positions that speak to both.

The diversity within our societies is not a curse. It is a resource, a reservoir of experience from which we can learn. If we value the body of knowledge within our own cultures, we should also value the body of knowledge within others. Nationalism of the kind for which I am arguing and toleration go hand in hand. The same impulsion underlies both.

3. *Musical Interlude*

I have been approaching culture very much as a constitutional theorist. It is now time for something different: a brief musical interlude. Well, not exactly. I am a constitutional theorist after all. I will therefore talk about music, not play it.

An engagement with national traditions in music is instructive at this point, especially because I want to make clear that cultures are not just about sets of principles. In fact, culture is not really about a defined accumulation of cultural stuff at all. It is about the ways in which we engage with experience, think about it, interpret it, seek to express what it is all about, and contrast our interpretations with others. That is why any sustained interaction produces its own distinctive culture or subculture.⁵

5. See Jeremy Webber, "Culture, Legal Culture, and Legal Reasoning: A Comment on Nelken," *Australian Journal of Legal Philosophy* 29 (2004), 27-36.

The same thing happens in music. There is a marvellous study of the great Finnish composer Sibelius by Lisa de Gorog. Sibelius came from a Swedish-speaking family, though his ancestors had probably once spoken Finnish. Early in his career, he immersed himself in Finnish folk poetry, the *runos*. His music drew heavily on those influences and on occasion he incorporated folk tunes directly into his compositions. Generally, though, the elements were more subtle and allusive: the rhythms of the Finnish language and folk poetry, and repetition in the structure of phrases akin to the chants of the *runos*. De Gorog gives many examples. She refers to Sibelius's "common melodic pattern of a long note followed by a triplet" and suggests that it is easy to see this "as a reflection of enclitic personal endings of verbs and case endings or possessive endings of nouns" typical of the Finnish language. Sibelius used sounds that evoked Finland's folk culture: choral ensembles and pizzicato strings to suggest the Finnish *kantele*.⁶

One can draw many lessons from the comparison: the continual reworking and deepening that is typical of the way people engage with their traditions (fidelity does not mean stasis); and the richness that comes from the encounter between traditions, in this case between folk and high classical cultures, or indeed Sibelius's own encounter with a tradition that was expressed in a language other than his mother tongue. But let me emphasize two lessons. First, the power of the work is a product of its engagement with the tradition, its distillation of a form of life elaborated in language and song. Second, it does not have to be our language to speak to us. There is something in the fidelity of Sibelius's interpretation that communicates the possibilities of that life to us, even if it is not our own.

6. Lisa de Gorog, with the collaboration of Ralph de Gorog, *From Sibelius to Sallinen: Finnish Nationalism and the Music of Finland* (Westport CT: Greenwood, 1989), quotation at 86.

4. *Political Institutions*

How does all this relate to political institutions?

First, it should be clear by now that cultures are eminently social phenomena. They are created and sustained through interaction—through speaking, interpreting, disagreeing, deliberating, singing, and a host of other interactions. They exist in between people. Their sustained vigour is entirely dependent on their use. If opportunities to use them are foreclosed, a culture is stifled.

Now, many cultures can be left to themselves as long as a number of individual freedoms are available. They can be sustained by the autonomous effort of individuals. But other cultures are intimately tied up with institutions. This is true because, whether we like it or not, institutions are infused with culture, and the cultural choices they embody feed back into social life. Schooling, for example, has to be offered in a language or languages, and the language one chooses will have a huge influence over the students' future lives. One could say the same about the workplace. If one has to learn English to keep one's job, as my landlord in the rue Richelieu did, then whole patterns of language use will be skewed by the power relations of the workplace. It is this reasoning that underlies the principal provisions of Quebec's Bill 101.

Governments too have to work in a language or languages. In this I am thinking not so much about the provision of services (though this too is true) but about the essence of democratic self-government: political debate, the consideration of future policies, argument, and the formulation of law. Again, the language one chooses will be fundamental to citizens' participation. If French isn't at least one of the primary languages of political debate—if everything important occurs in English—, then there will be a disconnect between political debate in Quebec and political decision. French-speaking citizens will continually be forced to work in someone else's language, dependent on translation instead of direct communication.

It makes very good sense, then, to adjust political decision making to our various cultures by framing government institutions in ways that allow citizens to participate. That does not mean that every political institution has to have a single culture. I believe strongly in the maintenance of a political community in which French and English Canadians come together. That community has been immensely stimulating. But we sustain that community not by studiously ignoring language, but by developing institutions in which English is dominant, institutions in which French is dominant, and institutions in which we actively foster deliberation in both languages. We pursue, in other words, a deep and culturally informed federalism.

What I have just said about language also goes for certain other cultural phenomena. The very arguments that support Quebec's autonomy support autonomy in Indigenous governance. Indigenous peoples also have distinctive languages of public debate, traditions of social ordering, their own procedures, their own forms of family life, and their own way of relating to the land. They have held to those traditions with great tenacity. Shouldn't there be institutions in which their cultures can find expression in, for example, distinctive patterns of land management or child protection? We have insisted that they work exclusively through our institutions, in which their traditions are overpowered by a majority that does not speak their languages and often does not know the first thing about their cultures. If we want to put the colonial age behind us, we have to support structures in which Indigenous peoples can govern themselves.

Conclusion

This is the nationalism, then, for which I argue. Note that it does not depend upon the coercion of other people to conform to our culture. On the contrary, it recognizes that institutions are necessarily already imprinted with culture and that, if that is someone else's culture, individuals will be systematically excluded and democratic

self-government undermined. Not only that, but the very existence of those institutions will tend to discourage the cultures in society at large. It is important, then, to consider how institutions should be adjusted to culture.

In doing so, we have to avoid measures that would impose a narrow and restricted vision of culture. We must not be chauvinistic or closed, for if we are, we will be cutting ourselves off from the sources of knowledge and stimulation that other cultures provide and, even more importantly, we will be making caricatures of ourselves—imposing a narrow and limited idea of what it means to be a Quebecker, or a Canadian, or a Cree, or some complex combination of all of those identities. Our institutions have to be framed with a light hand. They have to be open to the changing contributions of their members. And they have to enable the richness that results from dialogue across cultures.⁷

You—the citizens of Quebec—have been responsible for setting me on this path and for teaching me many lessons about the challenges and benefits of communication across cultures. The foundations for my work were laid here in Quebec City. I remain forever in your debt.

7. For specific institutional recommendations, see Jeremy Webber, *Reimagining Canada: Language, Culture, Community and the Canadian Constitution* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994) and my many papers on Indigenous governance.