

COSMOPOLITAN NATIONALISM

I

I want, some might say, to have my cake and eat it too for I want to be both a cosmopolitan and a nationalist, and, congruently with that, I think liberals and socialists, depending on the societies in which they live, should be either cosmopolitan nationalists or people in sympathy with liberal nationalist projects where these projects have a legitimate point. This includes people like myself who are liberal socialists committed, as all socialists are, to socialist internationalism and the international solidarity that goes with it. (Nielsen 1998b) How can—or can?—these things consistently go together? Beyond that—consistency being necessary but hardly a sufficient condition for adequacy—why go for cosmopolitan *nationalism*? Why not instead just go straight-out for cosmopolitanism and its internationalist outlook without the dangler ‘nationalism’?

In facing these questions let me first say what I take desirable—or at least putatively desirable—forms of cosmopolitanism and nationalism to be. It is sometimes said that to be a cosmopolitan is to be a citizen of the world. (Nussbaum 1996) However, absent a world state, “citizen of the world” must be a metaphor, but it is, as I think Martha Nussbaum evidences, a useful and important metaphor. Still it needs to be said what it is a metaphor of. To be a cosmopolitan—“a citizen of the world”—is to identify with and have a commitment to and a concern for all of humankind and not just for some subunit of it, *and* it is, as well, to have some reasonable understanding of, to prize and to take pleasure in, humankind’s vast, and sometimes creative, diversity. It is not just that a cosmopolitan will grudgingly accept, as an intractable fact, the great variety of forms of life, practices, art-forms, languages, religions, cuisines and the like that the world has on offer, but she will take pleasure in the very existence of them, feel at home with a goodly number of them and wish to see them prevail where their prevailing does not harm others.

Above all she will take an active interest in them, be reasonably knowledgeable about many of them and wish to see all of them flourish that are respectful of the rights of others, including, of course, alien others.

Someone who was simply an enlightenment humanist, without also being a cosmopolitan, would identify with, be committed to, and show concern for humankind, but it would be on an *assimilationist* model. She would be a One Worlder advocating a one-world culture—a single globally encompassing culture, including ideally a single language, for all humanity. In contrast with the cosmopolitan, she would wish to see humankind become as much alike as possible with some preferred model in mind as some French and some English enlightenment figures wished to see the whole world modelled, as the case may be, on enlightened Frenchmen or enlightened Englishmen—to carry the “white man’s burden” from one end of the globe to the other. The ideal of such an enlightenment humanist was to have a world of either Frenchmen, Englishman or Americans or the closest approximation attainable thereto of one or another, depending on which was their preferred ideal model for a proper humanity.

By contrast a cosmopolitan is not so ethnocentric (ideally is not ethnocentric at all) and is a *non-assimilationist* enlightenment humanist. She is a humanist prizing humankind in and for its diversity without denying that in this diversity there is some commonness as well. (Berlin 1980, 333–55, Appiah 1996 and Nussbaum 1996) Moreover, this diversity is not seen as something to be regretted (accepted with a sigh), but is seen as a source of human richness, a richness that enhances our world.

To be a nationalist is to regard nationality as being of deep and desirable human significance and to regard group identity, which (or so at least some nationalists believe) takes the form (in conditions of modernity) of a national identity, as something to be sustained as being necessary for human flourishing and for there to be a good and just polity. This requires not only the protection of individuals, but the protection of nations as well, and the guarantee, where this can be had, that they will have some form of self-governance. This self-governance will in the best case take the form of a nation having either a nation-state of its own or being a secure and equal partner in a multination-state with a considerable amount of autonomy of its own, the exact extent of which is to be negotiated between the component nations of the multi-nation state in conditions of fairness as equals. (Rawls 1993, 15–22)

However, for nationalism to make match with cosmopolitanism it must be a liberal nationalism. By “liberal” here I do not mean the neo-liberalism of *laissez faire* economics and the economic ordering of the world characteristic of capitalist globalization with its associated, severely individualistic libertarian or neoHobbesian social philosophies, but a *social* liberalism with its political exemplifications in social democracy or in genuinely democratic socialist societies (e.g., Chile during the time of Allende) and theoretically articulated now (though, of course, variously) by political philosophers such as Isaiah Berlin, Brian Barry, G. A. Cohen, Joshua Cohen, Ronald Dworkin, Jürgen Habermas, Stuart Hampshire, Thomas Nagel, John Rawls and Amartya Sen and, to reach back into recent history, by John Stuart Mill, T. H. Green, R. H. Tawney and John Dewey. There is a stress in such liberalism on the virtues of tolerance, on autonomy, on equality, on the protection of human rights and on the societal non-privileging of any comprehensive conception of the good. Such liberals will emphasise the importance of there being a recognition and a non-ruling out in the public domain of all conceptions of the good that respect human rights and are in accordance with the political principles of justice of such a liberal society. These are principles that, in a broad sense, are egalitarian: prescribing that the life of everyone is to count and to count equally. To give this moral equality substance, there is also the stress that there be a *roughly* equal sharing of resources (though making allowances for incapacities) and a commitment to attaining an equality of the life conditions that would as fully as possible, produce, and for everyone, to the extent that is possible, conditions of human flourishing for each person, taking into considerations their different capacities and capabilities, at the highest level for each person that they as individuals can attain. The idea is to produce conditions of life for everyone that would enable them to have the best life they are capable of having. It is the stress on these substantively egalitarian features that highlights the *social* nature of this liberalism in contrast with the *individualistic* liberalism of Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Robert Nozick and David Gauthier.¹

Such a social liberalism (as does an individualistic liberalism) meshes with cosmopolitanism. The crucial question is whether cosmopolitanism is compatible with a *liberal* nationalism. There are paradigmatic social liberals (Brian Barry, for example) who are robust substantive egalitarians but strong anti-nationalists, and there are cosmopolitans who are social

liberals but not nationalists (Martha Nussbaum, for example). (Barry 1987 and Nussbaum 1996). I shall argue, by contrast, that the most adequate forms of cosmopolitanism and social liberalism will also be liberal nationalisms or accept liberal nationalisms as legitimate where there is a need for nationalist movements. I shall further argue that the most adequate nationalisms (and thus the most adequate liberal nationalisms) will be both social liberalisms and cosmopolitan.²

To argue this I first must specify what liberal nationalism is in line with my characterization of social liberalism. A liberal nationalist will *reiterate* (if you will, recursively define) her nationalism, taking it that, since group identity and cultural membership are key goods for all human beings (arguably, in Rawls's sense, a primary good), then it is something that, morally speaking, must *not* be recognised (acknowledged and accepted) *only* for her group but for all human beings. In that respect human beings (the whole bloody lot) are not relevantly different. And if national identity is the form that group identity takes under conditions of modernity, then sustaining or attaining, as the case may be, a secure national identity for the members of a nation should not only obtain for her nation but for all nations in such conditions. This reiteration only assumes the minimal and unproblematic conception of universalizability that if *x* is good for *A* then *x* is good for anyone relevantly like *A* in situations relevantly like those of *A*.

A liberal nationalism will not only be reiteratable. It will, as well, be tolerant of all other nationalisms that themselves accept reiteratability and are similarly tolerant. As a social liberalism it will have substantively egalitarian principles of justice that acknowledge the equal human standing of all human beings, the importance of coming to have the necessary means actually to have that equal standing, the necessity of designing programmes and policies aimed at achieving that, and to recognise as well the deep value of a commitment to equal respect for all human beings, keeping firmly in mind the considered conviction, deeply embedded in liberal belief, that the life of everyone matters and matters equally. (Nagel 1979, 105–27) So that that will not become a hollow human mockery, I will also argue for the necessity of there being material conditions for its realisation actually in place so that this ideal can become a reality and not simply remain an ideal. Here we do well to follow Rosa Luxemburg.

Keeping that firmly in mind, along with a recognition that cultural membership is a primary good, it should also be stressed that this primary good must (morally speaking “must”) be available to everyone. Not making it so available would be arbitrary, for it is something we all need, for, as a primary good, it is something necessary for the meeting of whatever ends or aims we—that is anyone—happen to have.³ As different as people are in some important respects they do not differ here. Some income and wealth, health, at least a minimal intelligence, some recognition and acceptance as well as cultural membership are all-purpose means—I did not say that is all they are—necessary for the realisation of the various ends that we have and the life plans (whatever they may be) that are ours. Primary goods, in fine, are something we all need. We will not, and morally speaking cannot, privilege (whoever we are) our own people with respect to them, but must argue that this egalitarian treatment should obtain for everyone, recognising that the people of our nation are not relevantly different from anyone else in this respect.

Being inescapably persons living in a certain place at a certain time, with certain attunements, within a certain culture, we should, and probably will, in this domain, direct much of our attention to sustaining conditions favourable (particularly where they are fragile) to the flourishing of our own society, to making continued cultural membership in the nation a secure possibility, without attempting or wishing to lock people into such a membership. We must have a conception of cultural integrity that seeks, within the confines of reiterability, the flourishing of our particular nation. But that is not because we regard our nation as more important—as our being God’s chosen people or the people with the one truly human way of ordering things—but we seek to further the flourishing of our nation, as we hope others will do as well for their nations, because that is where we happen to be and that is where some (though not all) of our very deep attunements are and where many of our commitments lie. And again this is clearly reiteratable and should be reiterated. Nationalists should be reiterative—they should be recursive—about nationalism and this is exactly what the very idea of a liberal nationalism commits the liberal nationalist to be. Their position is closely analogous to the position of parents *vis-à-vis* their children. Parents have special obligations toward them and they should lovingly care for them without (absurdly and counterproductively) trying lovingly to care for all—or even many—other

children and without their having the same obligations to them that they have to their own children. But in acknowledging this and acting on it, they need not—and indeed plainly ought not—to regard their own children as more valuable, more deserving or being owed (except by them and others close to them) special protection that is not similarly owed to all other children. In both cases, without needing to, or indeed being justified in, narrowing their moral vision, they are acting there on the ground where they are. Morality, as Hegel taught us, must have this concreteness and contextuality. Without it, moral life would be impossible. But this does not mean that morality should be against universalism and by doing so turn itself into tribalism. (O'Neill 1996 and Nielsen 1998–99)

Similarly, a liberal nationalist will stress the importance of self-governance for her nation, but not (*pace* Barry's portrayal of nationalism) at the expense of running roughshod over other nations or violating human rights. (Barry 1987) Just as self-governance is a very central good for her nation, so it is for every other nation as well. All nations, she will recognise, have—the members of the different nations not differing in their needs *here*—an equal claim to this good. Only if she thought, and *with very good grounds*, that they were, even with the aid of a little “affirmative action,” *incapable* of self-governance, would she be justified in rejecting this claim to an equal right of all nations to self-governance. But for that not to be an ideological mystification or a rationalisation for hanging onto privileges, it must be the case that there really is an incapability there that is not rooted in remediable poverty, ignorance and exploitation (past or present). “Ought” indeed implies “can,” but we have to be careful that the incapacity is not rooted in remediable contingencies. But it is necessary clearly to recognise that it is very unlikely that it could be rooted in anything else.

Tragically, where two nations have a valid claim to the same land—say, the Israelis and the Palestinians—this will lead, as we well know, to very difficult situations where there may be no ideal solution. But for liberal nationalists—and remember my kind of liberal nationalists are *social* liberals—there must be, respecting human rights and reasoning in accordance with substantively egalitarian principles of justice, a resolution by a fair compromise respecting equally the interests of everyone involved and discounting any bargaining from positions of superior strength. (Rawls 1993, 16–17)

Certainly, in practice, that is not how most nationalists have acted. They have not only sought (reasonably and correctly) to protect their nations' interests, but to see that they prevail over the interests of other nations and not infrequently at whatever costs to others. But that by definition, is not how a liberal nationalist can behave. A liberal nationalist must recognise that all nations are in the same boat here; they all want to protect their own nationhood and see it flourish. But they will also acknowledge, if they are liberal nationalists, that from the moral point of view equal consideration must be given to the interests of every nation and that no nation's interests can be privileged. However rare such a taking of the moral point of view is in real-life politics, however far it is from the dirty world of *realpolitik*, such liberal nationalist behaviour (such a taking of the moral point of view) is compatible with a robust, but reiteratable, nationalism. It is, that is, compatible with the firm valuing of nationality, with each nation seeking (though within the limits of fairness and certainly not at all costs) to protect the integrity of its own nation and to the sustaining of (where it is in place) or the seeking of (where it isn't) some form of self-governance for one's nation. But it is not, of course, compatible with the drive for my nation *über alles*: the running roughshod over other nations, the taking of one's own nation to have a manifest destiny. Hitler was a populist and a nationalist with, at least in his early days, a lot of popular support in Germany and Austria, and even to a certain extent beyond, but he was, to repeat a commonplace (and to very much understate the matter), a nationalist of the wrong sort. (Craig 1997 and Luckas 1997) If we wish to attain any moral and intellectual clarity, we must not, however, let this unforgettable paradigm, with its many down-scaled present-day barbarous incarnations, block our understanding of the possibilities of a liberal nationalism and a recognition of the occasional reality of their actual exemplifications. (Couture and Nielsen 1996, 579–62, Kymlicka 1995b and Nielsen 1996–97)

II

Why should a social liberal and a cosmopolitan be a liberal nationalist? I shall argue that, in conditions of modernity, or (if you will) "post modernity," liberal nationalism (where nationalism has some point) better anchors: 1) self-identity and, with that, increasing the possibilities of

human flourishing and 2) more adequately than the other alternatives, giving democratic empowerment to people, thus contributing to their democratic life. All this understood within the bounds of justice as fairness or justice as impartiality, or some improvements on these egalitarian and social liberal conceptions of justice. (Rawls 1971 and Barry 1995) I now turn to explicating and defending these claims.

I first turn to self-identity (the having a sense of oneself as being a certain kind of person). We human beings have a deeply embedded and ubiquitous interest in something that gets called, perhaps rather pretentiously, self-identification or self-definition. (Berlin 1991, 238–61, G. A. Cohen 1988, 132–54 and Nielsen 1998b) We have a very strong need to retain a sense of who we are and, in the doing of this, we need to see ourselves as a *we*. And, important as this is, it will not suffice *just* to affirm that we are human beings. It will not do to try to root our self-identification *just* to our humanness—what we have in common with *all* other human beings. In trying to gain some adequate sense of who we are we need a more local identity as well. We need—and this is the cosmopolitan and humanist impulse—to see ourselves as members of the party of humanity, but we also need to have a sense of our particular bonding. (Barber 1996) Without that, we are, humanly speaking, at sea. Anthony Appiah has well argued that we need, if we are to flourish, to have a keen sense of our local identities. (Appiah 1996) We need, along with whatever cosmopolitan identities we aspire to and, perhaps to some extent attain, also to locate ourselves as members of a particular human community, with its distinctive ways of being and doing. We need to know who we are and how our identity connects us with certain particular others, since, after all, we are not Hobbesian atoms. The very idea of such “cultureless *human* atoms” is incoherent. (Berlin 1976) Cultural membership and group identity is a fundamental need of all human beings. It fits, as Kymlicka has well argued, Rawls’s conception of a primary good. (Kymlicka 1989, 166–69)

In the complex societies of contemporary life, where the state form is either that of the nation-state or some form of the multi-nation state, our group identity takes the form (though that does not exhaust it) of a national identity. It is a central and inescapable element of our self-definition, of our sense of who we are, even though it sometimes, perhaps often, will play a rather minimal role in our actual conceptualisations of who we are, or in our sense of our moral identity. (Rawls 1993, 30–31) We may

care vary much more about our relations with very particular others (our being a father, a spouse, a colleague, a friend) or about our work, our particular political commitments and identities, or about our religion or lack thereof, than we do about our nationality. For me, for example, my political identity, my being a socialist and a social liberal, is much deeper than my sense of nationality as is, as well, my sense of my being (as part of a deep sense of vocation) a critical intellectual (to be pleonastic). But such things, however true they are, do not undermine the nationalist project or show that we do not need, in the societies in which we live, or could plausibly be expected to come to live, a sense of national-identity.⁴

However, this certainly does need an explanation. The liberal nationalist is not saying, or even suggesting, that we should reverse our priorities here and see our sense of nationality as the central thing: the thing that should be most important to us in coming to understand who we are or in setting our life priorities. But to say this is not at all to deny that national-identity is not important. Moreover, the weight we should give to considerations of nationality will vary with the security of our nation.⁵ The situation is very different for a Basque or a Kurd than it is for a member of a German-speaking or French-speaking Swiss canton (where their cantons as they are are perfectly secure). Similarly, it is very different for the First Nations in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States than it is for the dominant nations (the settler nations) that surround and dominate these First Nations. It is the elites of the latter and not the First Nations that have a grip on the state apparatus—the state in which the First Nations are embedded. But nothing of what I said above gainsays what I said about nationality and self-identification in modern societies. In such societies—as in all modern societies—national identity is a primary good, but in some circumstances it is secure, and in others it is not.

What liberal nationalists are reminding us of is that, in a world of nations embedded in nation-states or multi-nation states, the nation of which we are a part provides the framework in which these other sides of our identities are formed, sustained, conceptualised and realised. Nations are encompassing cultures, that, in being encompassing, are political communities (though not in Rawls's strong sense of "community") which are almost invariably associated with a homeland (perhaps only an imagined homeland) and which aspire to some form of self-government, though not necessarily to independent statehood. (Rawls 1993, 42, 146 and 201) The

people in a nation (where they are not in a condition of very deep alienation) recognise themselves as belonging to the same community, as sharing a common history, typically speaking a common language and having a common public culture. These are things which, taken together, differentiate them from their neighbours. Moreover, this is a common culture which structures the way in which their other relations are formed and realised in the nation. How one is a mother, a colleague, a friend, an artist, a nurse, a businessman, a priest, a painter, a postal worker or what not is significantly (sometimes deeply) affected by this comprehensive (organisational) culture. Globalization has not wiped that away. Or perhaps we should say, with a shudder, "At least not yet."

In modern societies such a comprehensive culture is very much in the background of the beings and doings of their members. It provides their cultural context of choice without which they could not make sense of their lives or, to put it more actively, we could not make sense of our lives. For us, situated in the context of modernity, there would be no cultural membership, no group identity, without a sense of nationality structuring it, providing the organisational comprehensive culture framing and sustaining our other identities. Our situation is very different from that of the people living in the stateless societies of medieval Iceland as they are depicted in the *Sagas*. Without our distinctive national identities we would be lost: there is no standing outside these comprehensive cultures and living a life. (Berlin 1976). The very idea of doing this makes no sense at all. (Wittgenstein 1969, Davidson 1984, 183–98 and Rorty 1991, 93–172)

We have, as I have argued, a need—a very deep need—for self-identification and self-definition. In the context of our particular, distinctively historically situated lives—something that is inescapable for everyone in our societies—national-identity will be a non-negligible part of that, even though it is not a part that in most circumstances we are adverting to, but its import for us will be felt when it is threatened or thought to be threatened. It is something which, at least strategically and instrumentally, is central in the lives of people in modern societies. Nations are not about to wither away, and a post-national identity is not just around the corner.⁶ Having a sense of national-identity is a key element, but surely not the sole element, in our retaining a sense of who we are.

Most of us do not change our identities or at least we only change them in superficial ways. Even where we are the exception and not the

rule, and we do over time gradually (most of us are not like Saul on the road to Damascus) in good Parfitian style change our identities rather deeply—become rather different persons with different priorities, commitments, different ways of reacting and responding to the world—still, for all of that, we do not, *individualistic* liberalism to the contrary notwithstanding, *just* choose our identities. The identities that we have are normally not even experienced as being matters of choice. Rather, where they change, though typically to some extent marked by our own endeavours, that change is deeply affected by our circumstances—often conflicting circumstances—and our change is not something chosen out of the blue.⁷ And even in the case in which individuals change some bits of their ways of being and doing, it is misleading to say that they choose a new identity, that what comes into place is just chosen. Rather, what happens is that an individual in extensively altering her life is responding to a host of things in her culture and environment that affect her, and typically in conflicting ways. In responding to all of these pressures and considerations, she changes some ways in which she lives and how she views herself. But she hardly “chooses herself” or chooses a new identity. As a deeply culturally embedded person (something we all are) she makes, working with what she has, some renovations.

In the standard case the comprehensive culture of which we are a part, along with (in many instances) even more localised cultural effects, such as our religion (or lack thereof), our ethnic group (if any), our class, our sexual orientation, our more specific political orientation (being a Communist, Libertarian, a Green) provide the cultural context in which we make our choices. But among the choices we make there is no choice of our identities, though we may deliberately, and sometimes reasonably successfully, seek to alter them. But this change will always be within limits, limits hardly specifiable in advance and certainly not rigid. Still, our identities pretty much come with our distinctive socialisation. We grow into the world speaking a certain language and, with that language or languages, absorbing a certain culture. In some rare instances, like the two main characters in Andrei Makine’s *Le testament français*, people are split between two conflicting comprehensive cultures (in this instance Russian and French) and the people involved are tugged in different directions and develop various blind-spots and ambivalences, but still, as in the above instance, these conflicting national identities are both deeply

there, though probably for most such people one is more deeply there than the other. But it is not that such people are without a national identity, have (*pace* Omar Dahbour) their basic-identity in some subunit more local than a nation. (Dahbour 1996, but see Couture and Nielsen 1996, 592–612) But in these rather rare cases their national identity is to some extent a poly-national identity. They have, that is, cultural membership in two nations, sometimes with senses of nationality that are at war with each other within their own breasts. Still, they have national identities, though not a single one. It isn't that they have gone *überhaupt* to a "post-national identity."

The crucial thing to see here is that they have not transcended these national identities into some "post-national identity." Moreover, these are unusual cases; in the more standard case as our socialisation proceeds—as the comprehensive culture becomes more firmly a part of us as we grow into adolescence—we come, usually, without thinking about such matters very much, to have ("adopt" would make it too voluntaristic) certain customs, ways of looking at things and characteristic attunements. In Makine-like cases socialisation, of course, also goes on, but it comes from two conflicting sources, producing a keen awareness (sometimes mixed with self-deception) of these disparate national identities. In, for example, the case of the narrator in *Le testament français*, his Russianness is much more dominant than he realises. (Tolstoya 1997) But my central point is that, both in the typical case and the non-typical case, the national identities are there and deeply embedded. And it is a Nussbaumian cosmopolitan prejudice to think they must be hostile or even enfeebling to cosmopolitanism. These identities, though not as iron bonds, are prime generators of our reflective sense of self, our sense of who we are. We cosmopolitans cannot set aside our local identities as we change our clothes, for they are crucial to our lives—as they are to the life of any person—and hardly voluntary. Part of our identity, and as something which is inescapable, is particular and local. It can change, and sometimes deeply, but it is still, in one form or another, something which is powerfully there and a locality (a habitation and a home) remains though it may in time come to be a very transformed one. But in certain ways local it will remain. We cannot become *just* citizens of the world. We cannot *simply* be, though it is, normatively speaking, also vitally important *that* we be, of the party of humanity.

The point is that we—or at the very least most of us—have this need for having a particular culturally determinate identity. It is not enough for

us to think we are members of the biological species *homo sapiens* or that we just identify (more accurately attempt to identify) with humanity at large without at the same time identifying with some particular subunit of that humanity. It is not enough because we need, as well, whatever our universalistic commitments, to have a sense of who we are. To have this sense is to have some more particular identification, an identification which is, and must be, historically and culturally rooted. We should, of course, be cosmopolitans, but *rooted* cosmopolitans—the only kind that it is in fact possible to be. (Mitchell Cohen 1995, Appiah 1996 and Barber 1996).

To attain clarity and some reasonable moral adequacy, we must firmly recognise that our self-identifications can be, and often are, illusory and ideologically distorted and that either religion or nationalism, or both working together, have been, and not infrequently, the source of such distortion: the source of what Marxists call “false consciousness.” But that does not gainsay the Herderian point that we cannot (extreme circumstances apart, and then only in a particular context) *just* relate to our fellow human beings as members of the same biological species. If we are socialists and (to be redundant) cosmopolitans (Stalin’s campaign against cosmopolitanism notwithstanding), we may *try* to be something like that. However, if we are tolerably clear-headed, it will not be exactly that, for that is impossible. We will, and rightly, be egalitarians and egalitarians of a robustly substantive sort, and we will take an interest in, and be in solidarity with, the struggles of the various peoples around the world. (Nielsen 1985) We will not, *in a fundamental sense*, put our compatriots first. (Pogge 1996) We must be like that—by definition, if you will, must be like that—if we are to be social liberals or socialist cosmopolitans. (The ‘or’ here is, of course, not exclusive.) But, if in doing this, we try to set aside local attachments, we will impoverish our lives and have as well an impoverished view of the world. We should, of course, struggle to escape ethnocentricity. But ethnocentricity is one thing, local attachments another. If we would be socialists, or more generally social liberals, we need to align our local attachments with cosmopolitan ideals. We need coherently to integrate our local attachments with a universalistic moral point of view that is committed to moral equality. (O’Neill 1996) That is to say, to a moral point of view which takes it as settled that the life of everyone matters and matters equally. (Nagel 1979, 106–127) So, at least in this way, even to be persons, we must have our local attachments as

well. Without them we will have no sense of who we are and we will be unable to have any attachments, including, of course, larger more universalistic attachments.

III

I turn now from arguing for the importance of national identity as providing grounds for claiming that liberal nationalism (where there is a need for it) is the best carrier of cosmopolitanism, to arguing for it as furthering democracy more fully than the cosmopolitan alternatives which are not liberal nationalisms.⁸ (I speak here of those contexts where there is a need for liberal nationalism. As we have seen, where a nation is secure there is no need for a nationalist movement. But there is still a need on the part of its members to have a good sense of national identity, to be aware of its importance, and it is as well important for the people in such secure nations to recognise the validity of liberal nationalist movements where a nation is insecure.)

There is an impediment to so considering things which I must first discuss. It is both tempting and easy for us, particularly if we live in the rich capitalist democracies, to be cynical about democracy. We will not, if we are reasonable, wish for the abandonment of universal suffrage (or tolerate its abandonment when we can do anything about it) or the abandonment of representative democracy, no matter how much we would wish to see some more participatory elements come on stream. But while so responding, and here we respond as the vast majority of our fellow citizens do, we can still readily, and consistently with this, come to think of our actually existing democracies as farcical, standing at a very great distance from the attractive conceptions of democracy articulated—and variously articulated—by John Stuart Mill, John Dewey, Joshua Cohen, Frank Cunningham, Andrew Levine, Jürgen Habermas, John Rawls, Klaus Offe and Michael Walzer. Actually existing democracy largely consists in spending a few seconds marking a ballot or operating (as in the United States) its mechanical equivalent. The democracy that we live with and which controls our political lives consists, for the most part, in doing that and in passively listening to “political discourse” as brief, usually silly, sound-bites on radio or television, of our viewing negotiated and managed unspontaneous “debates” between our major political candi-

dates, of our viewing, hearing, or reading undetailed, unnuanced and for the most part unreflective media discussion of what gets selected out as “the issues” with little attention to input from the grass roots. There is in our mass democracies, with their staged political events, little concern for actual citizen participation. Indeed it is exactly that that is not wanted. What is desired is just the opposite: a passive and ignorant electorate. Candidates are selected by elites largely, but not entirely, from elites. It is necessary for a candidate with any real chance of winning to have massive campaign funding. And the sources from which much of this money comes is not even remotely democratically determined, though some of the rich capitalist democracies (e.g., the United States) are worse here than others (e.g., Sweden). But generally wealth calls the tune. This, and other things cut from the same cloth, is what democracy is for most citizens of such societies. And things are usually even worse—sometimes much worse—elsewhere. Moreover, things of this sort are reasonably evident to most of the educated population of the rich capitalist democracies. And rather more inarticulately to many others as well, notwithstanding their lousy media sources. But still such knowledge causes no great stir. “So what else is new?” is a not unlikely reaction.

All that notwithstanding, we would still struggle very hard to keep “the vote,” thinking with horror of countries without it or effectively without it, like the old South Africa, the former Soviet Union or present-day Burma, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. We are likely to repeat to ourselves, when feeling the force of such considerations, some version of the old saw that democracy is the worst system imaginable except for all the others. Still, if not in its details, at least in its general thrust, something like Noam Chomsky’s view of political life in the rich capitalist democracies, and most particularly in the United States, is very compelling.

So the prospects for democracy are bleak and may well be getting bleaker. (Nielsen 1995) But, as Antonio Gramsci will not let us forget, we are participants in our world and not just spectators. However cynical we are about democracy, still, if we could have it, or even something which approximates it, we would want something very like what John Dewey persistently portrayed and what John Rawls models with his conception of political liberalism (though we would pay much more attention than he to workplace-democracy and to issues concerning power). There are vast structural differences of power in all our liberal societies. If they are in-

escapable, there will be little equality in other domains as well, or autonomy either. What anguishes us, and prods us to rethink what is to be done, is our recognition of the great distance our actual democracies are from such conceptions as we find in Dewey and Rawls.

My contention is that in modern industrial (“post-industrial,” if you will) societies, cosmopolitan liberal nationalisms can achieve, where nations are insecure, if their projects for society are successful, more adequately some little something of democracy than their alternatives in such situations. All of our societies are badly off and their democratic prospects are bleak. They *may* even be getting bleaker, though that is not so sure. But the prospects are a little less bleak for social democratically-oriented liberal nationalisms as well as for societies such as Norway and Finland, which are secure nation-states (secure in their nationhood and comprehensive culture), and thus in no need of a nationalist agenda and movement.

Democracy is essentially about popular self-governance: about the governance of “we the people.”⁹ Nation-states and multi-nation states, having nations as component parts, are for us the most likely democratic options. Both are made up of either a nation or of nations. When we speak of a nation we are, as we have seen, speaking of a people organised as a political community. (Kymlicka 1995b) Popular self-governance and sovereignty is, of course, talk about you and me and the rest of us having control over our lives, including very centrally control over, as far as that is humanly possible, what our society is to be like and how it will develop. But, while remaining individuals—what else?—with all the value that accrues to individual autonomy, we are also members of a nation (in some instances nations) and, as we have seen, our very identity is tied up with that. It is as *a people* (a nation) that we primarily exercise *political* self-governance. And it is nations that can claim sovereignty and sometimes have it. In wishing to be *maître chez nous*, it is centrally for us as a people (as members of this “we”) that we wish to have it, though, as well, we wish to have it (or at least many of us do) for ourselves as individuals. Many of us despair of getting anything like this. We tend to think belief in it is an ideological illusion. But for most of us, if we could have something in that neighbourhood, we would grab it with both hands. It would be of crucial significance for us without at all being the whole of our lives. But while utopia is certainly not around the corner, it is not clear that nothing can be done that would yield a little bit more by way of self-governance

than what we now have. And, where nations are at risk, a robust and intelligently designed and carried-out liberal nationalism will further democratic aspirations without at all undermining individual rights.

I will flesh this out a little. Given the strategic importance of nations, democracy is best attained by a liberal nationalism or by a people, generally with social liberal commitments, organised in a nation-state or multi-nation state, which would be nationalistic if their nations were threatened. Both realise democracy more adequately than the other forms of political liberalism, including its anti-nationalist cosmopolitan forms. People are, though, of course, variously, *a people*; they always have a group identity and, under conditions of modernity, this takes the form of a national identity. With their distinctive interests and an understanding of their own culture, when they can freely act politically individually and as a people, they are more in control of their lives than they otherwise would be. This being so, they can better govern themselves than if they are governed by others (alien others). The same thing obtains where, as the smaller unit in a much larger political unit, they end up, concerning the bargaining and compromises that go on between the bigger and smaller units, having less say than their bigger brothers. This obtains where there are two or more nations of unequal size and strength in a single state which is not a genuinely multi-nation state. This can be overcome, or at least ameliorated, where these nations split into independent nation-states or organise themselves as a genuinely multi-nation state with equal status for each component nation and with significant self-governance for each nation regardless of size as an equal sovereign nation in a multi-national federation. Here we should also recognise, particularly in our interdependent world, that there is nothing like “absolute sovereignty.” (Pogge 1994)

So, with all of democracy’s discontents, nations remain crucial to democracy under conditions of modernity—under, that is, foreseeable conditions for us. Where a nation lacks self-governance, where people cannot be *maître chez nous*, to that very important extent, democracy is undermined. Where we have a *pseudo*-multi-nation state—Canada is arguably an example—where some of the component nations lack such self-governance and equal status, then, to that extent, democracy is weakened.¹⁰ It is in bad shape anyway, but without, where nations are endangered, the effective ethos of liberal nationalism, it is in even worse shape. A pseudo-multi-nation state cannot help but be a very imperfect

democracy in a very imperfectly democratic world—imperfect, for among other reasons, the reasons to which I have just adverted.

To translate into the concrete what I mean by the very imperfectly democratic world faced by nation-states, genuine multi-nation states and pseudo-multi-nation states alike, consider the present situation of Quebec. It is as thoroughly a liberal democratic society as most societies in the rich capitalist democracies and more so than some. Still, to suggest how imperfect as democracies our rich capitalist democracies are, consider the fact that Quebec may gain its independence while still continuing to be ruled by elites (though now by its own governing elites). Moreover, without democracy coming to the workplace, Quebec (like all the other rich capitalist democracies, though some more so than others) will still continue to be dominated by a capitalist class. And democracy may not (most probably will not) be extended to smaller units of people, so urgently argued for by socialist anarchists and “greens,” smaller units that would have, where they become active elements in the civil society, the solidarity so essential for democratic life, and which would give us something on which we can build, so that with them we would come to have effective units—or so the belief goes—to resist neo-liberal capitalist globalization. (Dahbour 1996) Quebec might gain independence without gaining any of those things. Put more bluntly, Quebec sovereignty, if it becomes a reality in a few years, is not likely to bear any of *those* democratic fruits.

Some think I am being too pessimistic here and that with the somewhat social democratic orientation of some of the key players on the sovereignist side and, more importantly, the actual civil society of Quebec, there might be more resistance to capitalist globalization and the like than I believe is likely. I remain sceptical here, but it is something that we can hope will obtain. However, even *if* my pessimism is a telling it like it is, it does not at all mean that sovereignty would not inch democracy along in Quebec. Just that, given that it is liberal nationalism that is at issue—as it is—, would justify Quebec’s secession. (Nielsen 1996–67 and Nielsen 1998a)

Still, liberal nationalism is not, nor is anything else, a magic wand that will solve all our—that is Quebec’s—political ills, yielding the full component of democratic life so essential for human flourishing. If in the next few years Quebec gains its independence, it will not carry with it these wonderfully democratic things—things that surely would enhance

human flourishing. The most that can be hoped for is that it will move its citizens an inch or so closer to being able to achieve them. But, even without such an inching, it will to some extent advance democracy. If sovereignty is gained in Quebec (and this can and should be generalised to other nations similarly situated), if, that is, its liberal nationalist agenda pays off, it will give a people—and that is what Quebeckers are—a little more control over their lives than they would otherwise have. And that certainly is not nothing.

It is essential to remember here that we have been speaking of a liberal nationalism construed as a social liberal nationalism and not of nationalism *sans phrase*. As a social liberalism, it will, fitting the model of political liberalism profoundly articulated by Joshua Cohen and John Rawls, have a political conception of justice with its determinate principles of justice for our basic institutions and social practices. (Joshua Cohen 1989 and 1994 and Rawls 1993) There are here principles which are designed to protect equal basic liberties for all and, with them, the civil and human rights of individuals. It will, while seeking solidarity as well (something underplayed in our societies), seek a proper balance of equality and liberty while protecting both and seeking to extend them. This model will make us see how very deeply equality and liberty depend on each other. We cannot have one without the other. (This is the central thrust of the work of John Rawls and of central portions of the work of Ronald Dworkin, G. A. Cohen, and Amartya Sen.) This means that the liberties of the ethnic and national minorities in a sovereign nation (sovereign in either their own nation state or in a *genuine* multi-nation state) will be fully respected. They will either actually have full citizenship or have available to them (as immigrants) the unencumbered right, once they have met certain clearly specified conditions, to attain full citizenship. It will also be the case that their civil liberties will be protected, their distinctive ways of life as ethnic minorities respected, their historical rights as national minorities protected and neither group will in any way be excluded from the life of the nation. This is, if you will, analytic of liberal nationalism. Nationalism cannot be liberal without having all these features. To the extent that it lacks any of them, then, to that very extent, it will *not* be a liberal nationalism. Such things are built into the very idea of liberal nationalism.¹¹ Moreover, liberal nationalism is not just an *idea* in the heads of some intellectuals, but has exemplifications (imperfect though they be) in some

liberal societies. Scotland, Belgium, Quebec, Catalonia and Wales come to mind. And Norway, Iceland, and Finland were exemplifications in the past when there was the need for a nationalist agenda in those societies.

I have argued not only for the compatibility of cosmopolitanism and liberal nationalism, I have argued as well that liberal nationalism—as a social and political liberalism—more fully realises the ideals of cosmopolitanism (where nations are insecure or reasonably believed to be insecure) than a non-nationalist, to say nothing of, an anti-nationalist, cosmopolitanism. Here the idea of a political liberalism, as opposed to neo-liberalism, is important and was stressed. In articulating this liberal nationalism, the role and import of both national identity and the democratic self-governance of nations in enhancing human flourishing was argued for. Cosmopolitan liberal nationalism is not an oxymoron. Quite to the contrary, “a cosmopolitan liberal nationalism” is a pleonasm.¹²

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NOTES

1. Sometimes these individualistic liberals are also libertarians, but not all individualistic liberals would feel comfortable with the label ‘libertarian’, so I use the more inclusive designation.

2. What I intend by ‘adequate’ here will become clear, I hope, as my argument unfolds. I am generally here speaking of forms that will be adequate from a reflective and informed political and moral point of view: forms that we would, as moral agents, reflectively endorse when we are well informed and being impartial.

3. That is the sense that the idea of a primary good has in Rawls’s thought. See John Rawls (1971, 62 and 92–93) “primary goods . . . are things which it is supposed a rational man wants whatever else he wants. Regardless of what an individual’s rational plans are in detail it is assumed that there are various things which he would prefer more of rather than less. With more of these goods men can generally be assured of greater success in carrying out their intentions and in advancing their ends, whatever these ends may be.” (92). A page later Rawls adds “Now the assumption is that, though men’s rational plans do have different final ends, they nevertheless all require for their execution certain primary goods, natural and social. Plans differ since individual abilities, circumstances and wants differ; rational plans are adjusted to these contingencies. But whatever one’s system of ends, primary goods are necessary means.” (93). As he puts it in *Political Liberalism*, primary goods are “general all-purpose means.” (188) They are things that we need for whatever it is that we may want to do.

4. National identity is a central form of group identity in conditions of modernity. But it might be responded that claims about group identity being a primary good sit badly with the above argument in my text. However, I think not, for a primary good is a strategic good. It is something that is necessary for our achieving our aims, but it does not follow from that that it is what we value the most highly, but rather it is something that we, if we are thinking at all clearly, will recognise is necessary (causally necessary) for us to have in order to attain our ends, whatever they are. A primary good is, that is, as I have quoted Rawls saying, a general all-purpose means. But it need not be the case that we see our nationality (our comprehensive cultural membership) as being the most important thing in our lives. Indeed its being so would be very strange. What is strategically central *may* also be an inherent or intrinsic good, but it need not be. I take no position about whether a primary good (any primary good) is also an inherent or intrinsic good. Moreover, it could be an inherent or intrinsic good without being the highest good, if indeed there is such a thing. What it is vital to recognise is that there would be little in the way of securely realising our life plans, whatever they are, without cultural membership, without a secure national identity.

5. It is important to keep firmly in mind the difference between (1) the importance that we give (consciously and deliberately) to our national identity and (2) the strategic importance, often unnoticed by people, of national identity in the formation and the sustaining of their personal identities. In speaking of the importance of national identity and of how it is a primary good, we are concerned with (2). That is compatible with people not giving it a high priority in their lives and its not being much of a factor in their *sense* of self. They may well only come to recognise how important it is to them when they are threatened with its loss. I owe this, or something rather like it, to Jocelyne Couture.

6. It is not crystal clear what is meant by "post-national identity," though I do not think it is bandied about as loosely as "post-modernity." I think "post-national identity" is something like the idea of people coming to have a sense of their being Europeans as distinct from being French, German, Italian and the like or being Latin Americans (Bolívar's dream) as distinct from being Argentineans, Brazilians, Colombians, Chileans, Cubans and the like. The idea is that their being (for example) good Europeans is far more important to them than their being good Germans. To have such a sense of identity is to have a post-national identity. The idea seems to me to rest on a false contrast, for why should there be a conflict, for example, between being Dutch and being European? Only if our sense of nationality was non-liberal or the nation state of which we are members is illiberal would there be a necessary or even a presumptive conflict.

7. This might be thought to conflict with my Rawlsian stress on autonomy. People, and as something of their own doing, have their own life-plans, goals, and ideals. And these things are important to them and to their sense of who they are. All of this is true, and importantly so, but it does not contradict or even stand in tension with my claim that we do not choose our identities and that what we are grows out of our circumstances. We are not prisoners of our circumstances, but they provide us with the context of cultural choice. Human beings, Marx well said, make their own history, but not in circumstances of their own choosing. Situated selves and autonomous selves are not alternatives. There is no anti-Rawlsian commitment to communitarianism in what I am saying here.

8. One reader has responded in the following way to my argument in II. "Your argument," this reader remarked, "principally shows that even cosmopolitans need local identities, but that we would be better cosmopolitans if we are also liberal nationalists (or

will stand in solidarity with liberal nationalists where our own nation is secure and their nation is insecure) is another matter altogether and has not been established by your argument." But, *au contraire*, if my argument is sound that in conditions of modernity, group identity, and with that, local identity, requires national identity, then to show, as the objection accepts, that cosmopolitans need local identities is to show that they need national identities in the circumstances of contemporary industrial or "post-industrial" societies. The only way to have a local identity, or at least a secure one, in such circumstances is to have a national identity.

9. Though we must add as well, as Rawls stresses, the need for a firm constitutional basis with what he calls "constitutional essentials" in place. (Rawls 1993, 165–67.)

10. It may be that they have a *de jure* equal status, but not a *de facto* equal status, but for the multi-nation state to be a genuine one the component nations must have both *de jure* and *de facto* equal status. Otherwise talk of equal status is a fraud.

11. It is a blemish on the democracy of the United States that no immigrant can become President of the United States. This means that full citizenship is denied immigrants and so there are legally sanctioned grades of citizenship, some full and some not. This hardly becomes any democratic nation and most particularly not a settler nation.

12. I am grateful to Jocelyne Couture for her perceptive criticism of earlier versions of this essay.

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