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Nationhood in the Global Era:

An Inquiry into Contemporary Political Self

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Contents

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Abstract

Debates on nationalism highlight loyalty and solidarity as the main benefits of a shared national identity, at the same time contrasting nationhood with universalist models of political action. This interdisciplinary thesis attempts to show nationalism as part of a broader project of modernity. In doing so, I defend a comprehensive view of nationhood, which, I argue, accounts for the recent transformation of nationhood, and explains the potential of national identity to open to universal values and norms. First, I put forward my view of nationhood, which defines nations as forms of political experience. I argue that nations have an ability to create a common public world. Second, by investigating the idea of the modern self and its relationship with individual autonomy, this thesis shows that modernity is characterised by a tension between rational autonomy and subjectivisation. This political self, I argue, develops in a bounded political community. Third, I argue that nations provide access to a common world in which everyone is recognised as moral and political agents. The paradoxical nature of the modern self takes advantage of the capacity of nations to be a source of solidarity that transcends national borders.

Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is entirely my own work, and that no part of it has been submitted for any other degree or qualification.

Signed_____ Date_____

Introduction

Liah Greenfeld wrote in her essay 'Nationalism and the Mind' that when she asked her students to draw pictograms of nationalism in one of her seminars, they came up with images of armed men fighting each other. However, by the end of the seminar, her students no longer perceived nations as inherently militant and agonistic. When asked to repeat the activity, they represented nations as different colours and cultures living side by side.[1] This story can be interpreted in two ways. Greenfeld's own interpretation suggests that the common and predominantly negative view of nationalism is one-sided and inadequate - if we knew enough about nations, we would not think of them as inherently militant or exclusive. On another level though, this story can also be interpreted as an expression of two competing notions of the nation – one political and the other one cultural. What the students identified is that national differences are easier to accept if we think of nations in cultural terms as 'colours', or cuisines or different music traditions, etc. The trouble with nations is that they are both political and cultural.

Nations are valuable to us because of the way they organise social life and allow us to participate in shared traditions and practices that are also constitutive to many political communities. The shared cultural heritage of national communities allows us to celebrate diversity while being at home. Additionally, the plurality of different national identities represents a rich diversity of cultures, values and ideas of a good life.[2] Nevertheless, cultural distinctiveness comes at a price. National identity is often formed through rejection of what is 'alien' or 'foreign'. Nationhood is then

[1] Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind: Essays on Modern Culture,* Oxford, Oneworld, 2006, p. 204.

[2] Also within nations themselves, as every nation recognises a level of internal cultural diversity. For example out of different features of an Englishman, there is a particular type of Englishman that comes from Yorkshire. These sets of features do not contradict each other, though certain local identities might be associated with higher social status than others.

characterised by a paradoxical tension between openness and closeness, between the apparent plurality of national cultures and the uniformity of national identity.

This PhD offers a critical study of the concept of nationhood that addresses this paradoxical tension. But instead of trying to eliminate the paradox, I will defend a comprehensive view of the nation, which can be described by referring to its three dimensions: 1) That nations are neither simply civic or ethnic, exclusive or inclusive, particularistic or universalistic, but instead represent a dialectic tension between those qualities; 2) A comprehensive view also acknowledges that nations are historical concepts, rather than ready-made models. National identity is not a fixed social phenomenon but one of the key projects of modernity. This point is particularly important when we consider that the world is becoming increasingly interconnected. Thanks to the contemporary globalised culture, the lives of foreigners are more accessible than ever before. The radical difference of national belonging seems to be becoming tamed.[3] Finally, I will argue that 3) the paradoxical nature of national identity allows nations to have the capacity to be a source of solidarity that transcends national borders while promoting the development of moral and political agency. In that sense nations represent a political project of intrinsic moral value.

I should state here - and this is indeed what differentiates my argument from the majority of contemporary theorists of national identity - that my defence of nationhood is not limited to liberal nationalism. In fact, the whole point of a comprehensive view of the nation is to show that there is no such simple way of classifying nationalism. National identity has an important role in developing moral and political agency regardless of whether we talk about liberal or non-liberal forms of nationalism, as long as the society is a democratic one.

My defence of nationhood is not uncritical as I will acknowledge some of the most commonly recognised problems with national identity. There are many reasons

[3] However, while nowadays citizenship seems more open than ever before, questions about who should be 'in' and who should be 'out' are as politically vivid as ever. Migration, asylum seekers, multiculturalism and the emergence of supranational bodies – all of these challenge the classical understanding of a liberal nation-state.

why political theorists may be particularly cautious when it comes to the concept of the nation. These can be organised into three main lines of criticism: a) That national identity is collectivist and undemocratic; b) That national bonds are apolitical and arbitrary; c) That nations are an obstacle to the moral progression of mankind.

My thesis is constructed as a dialogue with these criticisms. I will start with an attempt to define the concept of the nation as a form of political experience (Chapter One) rather than simply an identity. In subsequent sections I will explain my understanding of the nation as a paradox constitutive to the modern political self. I will then move to responding to the critics of national identity. In particular, I will argue that: Ad. a) While creating a sense of belonging, nations promote individual autonomy. The modern self thrives on a tension between subjectivity and community. In that sense, modern individualism is based on a concept of bounded rationality (Chapter Two). Ad. b) National bonds are political; they represent bounded rationality which allows us to engage with 'the political' through social practices and institutions that make the common good accessible to us (Chapters Three and Four). Ad. c) Nations transcend their own borders and allow us to open up to the universal. In this sense, universalism (particularly cosmopolitanism) and nationalism are not mutually exclusive (Chapters Five and Six). I will also address the claim that nations, and the type of subjectivity associated with them, are in decline due to global factors (Chapter Seven).

While nationhood does provide a way for citizens to participate in a common political world through shared practices and political imagination, it can also exclude aliens who by the same virtue fall not only outside the borders of the community but also outside of the borders of what can be imagined as common. This is why it is so much easier to ignore the suffering of those who are alien to us – because we cannot imagine their pain as clearly as when this suffering is shared by our compatriots. Furthermore, I will show that nation-states should not be viewed in terms of necessity. While there probably could have been better ways of creating social solidarity or maintaining political values, historically it is the nation that worked. This does not mean that the question 'Why can we not create a common world in virtue of being human?' is pointless. But it does mean that issues concerning the

limits of political community should be asked not simply in abstract moral terms, but in also in concrete political terms. Who is the modern individual? How does she express herself politically? What empowers her?

Method

'Nation' and 'self' are historical concepts and they should be studied in their historical depth. In my enquiry I am going to be drawing heavily on the history of ideas. Contemporary normative political philosophy has a tendency to avoid drawing on socio-historical arguments or history of ideas. There are indeed certain problems with using these types of arguments when engaging in a normative debate. First, interpretations of history are often difficult to verify – there might be multiple equally persuasive stories concerning the same concept or phenomenon. A philosopher is in a particularly difficult position here as she lacks the tools to investigate many of the claims she has to take for granted. Secondly, the relationship between history and history of ideas is not clear. Would individual freedom exist without the ideas of individuality and freedom?

However, the above issue highlights the special position of nationhood as a historical concept. Nationhood, as I argue in Chapter One, would not exist without the idea of the nation. Nationhood exists only because some of us have a shared belief in the nation. This is why investigating the origins of this belief is so important for the understanding of the concept itself. As for the first reservation – my 'narrative' is indeed contestable. Things can be interpreted differently. One should say that there are actually certain ways of choosing one narrative over another. There are various reasons why a story can be more persuasive – coherence, simplicity, plausibility etc. But the purpose of the present critique is not to establish historical truth but to use socio-historical critique to highlight certain conceptual problems or links between ideas.

Before I move on, I will introduce the key concepts in this thesis: nation, self and the 'subject'. These will be working definitions – a starting point on a longer journey. But they will help the reader understand some of the issues I will need to

address within this work. While the first two chapters expand on these definitions, the first part of my thesis (Chapters One through Four) addresses common lines of critique of the concept of nationhood. I will briefly introduce these critiques further in this section.

What is a Nation?

There are obvious difficulties in defining the term 'nation'. Like all historical concepts, its use has evolved and a purely semantic analysis would be pointless. Romantic definitions of nationhood in terms of blood, belonging and natural bonds present a stark contrast to the enlightenment tradition which views nationhood in civic terms. Furthermore, it is often difficult to state with absolute certainly whether we are actually dealing with nationalism in specific cases. Are the Roma a nation or an ethnicity? What about Jews and Silesians? Defining nationality through a shared characteristic is another dead end. Nations do not have to share a common language, territory or other cultural features. While there is a tradition of talking about national character (e.g. the Italians are affectionate and lazy; The English are cold and sarcastic), these are clearly stereotypes that do not take into the account the huge internal differentiation of nations. An upper middle class man from Oxford may have much more in common in terms of culture with his counterpart in Edinburgh than with someone from a council estate in Coventry.

Even though there doesn't seem to be a single unproblematic definition of the nation, one can aim to find some common features amongst the key conceptualisations. I discuss these theories in more detail in the thesis. Here however I will limit myself to introducing the key similarities I find. There are three fundamental dimensions of my understanding of the nation. These are: i) that nations are constituted by belief; ii) that nations provide a basis for mutual recognition between individuals and iii) that nations are uniquely modern. The first claim means that nations do not exist independently of our ability to recognise them and cannot be simply thought of as groups of certain inherent characteristics. The perception of nationality has been allowed to evolve and indeed is still evolving. The second

dimension is crucial for nationhood – in that nations are not only imagined but also that they are a way of imagining others. This is where stereotypes can become useful because they allow us to have access to the lives of others and care about them. In fact, without those pre-judgements based on a shared nationality social interaction would be greatly limited. Thirdly, nations are uniquely modern in the sense that they represent a specifically modern cultural framework. While this thesis does not engage in the debate about the origins of nationalism and industrialisation, I will be in agreement with Gellner who showed how nations became vehicles of modernisation.[4] It is within the national framework that individuals were offered the possibility of social mobility, advancement and pride. The mobility that came with nationhood in the name of the shared prosperity of the people allowed individuals to define themselves in terms that transcended social class and local sources of belonging. Nationalism was, from the beginning, a force fighting other particularistic identities.

I will propose to understand nationhood not simply as an identity but as a form of modern political experience. By this I mean that nations should not be simply seen as a movement inwards but as sources of bounded rationality that allow individual agents to define themselves morally and politically as well as to bond with others. This is clearly a communitarian view of nationhood. But rather than focusing on the roles of tested practices and traditions in forming our moral sources, I want to highlight the political value of the thus-constructed self in a way that allows us to participate in global discourse.

Finally, one should note that while in the sense I will be using the term 'nation', it refers to communities of shared cultural and historical heritage which, while political, are not identical with states. National boundaries do not always overlap with state boundaries.[5] There are theorists, such as Gellner,[6] who do not

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[4] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford 1983. One should note here that Gellner also argues that neither nationalism nor capitalism could create the modern society without the role of the state.

[5] Although nationality and citizenship can coincide.

[6] 'Nationalism is primarily a political principle that holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.' Ernst Gellner, *Nationalism*, London, Blackwell, 1983, p. 1

make this distinction explicitly, because they regard the state as the main motor behind the formation of nations. But while the link between the state and nation can indeed be strong, they are distinct concepts.[7] I understand nationalism as a term that relates to a set of modern movements, where citizenship is derived from an inclusion in the nation rather than in a 'mere' state where citizenship is derived from cultural norms.

Definition of the Self/Subject

This PhD is also about the modern self and how it 'fits' within the political framework of nationhood. I will refer to 'the self' to mean the entirety of the subjective individual experience of a person as opposed to the life of a community. Since the 18th and 19th centuries the term 'subject' has also gained popularity and we can often find it used with a similar meaning as the word 'self'. While I will indeed use these words interchangeably at times, they are often not the same. 'Self' refers to a self-reflective part of our subjectivity, or in other words the word 'self' denotes what we perceive when we say 'I', 'me' or 'us'. In that sense, self is intrinsically linked to identity. However, I will also use the term 'subject' to refer more specifically to a modern model of the self (as opposed to the classical one).

The term 'subject' itself is notoriously ambiguous. I will list only three main meanings here. First, in everyday language it can mean 'topic' or 'theme'. This is however not the meaning that is discussed in this work. The second, philosophical use refers to a self in a moment when it is directed to the world as an object of knowledge. In philosophy, the opposition between 'subject' and 'object' is particularly central to modern epistemology. The subject here refers to a self actively withdrawing itself from the world in order to know the world. This is also the meaning in which I will use the word 'subject' - the thinking mind as differentiated from the objects of thought. I will use inverted commas to distinguish this meaning

[7] I will discuss the work of many scholars whose definition of the nation varies from mine and in these circumstances I will use the term nation in the meaning specific to these authors. I will however explain how their understanding of this term varies from mine.

from the first one as a 'topic' or 'theme'. The third meaning is political and relates to the original Latin root of the word *subjectus*, which stands for 'placed beneath' or 'inferior to'. It is a distinct use of the word subject to the one previously described in that it refers to individuals as agents of actions rather than thinking selves.

Is National Identity Inherently Collectivist and Undemocratic?

This thesis addresses three traditional lines of critique of nationhood. The first one evaluates nations as being both collectivist and undemocratic. The two claims are in fact connected. It is widely accepted that democracy requires an individualist framework. Individualism, on the other hand – at least in the European tradition – generally comprises beliefs in the moral value of individual agents and the priority of individual interest over group ones. It presupposes then that individuals are free to form and express their own interests. In contrast to this, membership in a nation is involuntary in the sense that we are born and educated into a national community, and as a result acquire certain features that are hard to change. Even though 'hard' substantive models of nationhood based on 'soil and blood' are becoming a rarity, the concept of 'common origin' remains one of the key characteristics of the nation. Unlike religion, we cannot choose different national identities at will. These depend on the acceptance of others. There are thus various forms of conditions and rituals that normally accompany naturalisation.

Furthermore, while many authors highlight the importance of civic participation to democracy, there is something uneasy about the expressions of national unity. Perhaps this can be exemplified by the internal contradiction we often experience in all mass events – i.e. the contrast between manifesting individual freedom of expression and the uniformity of the masses. But there is another reason for concern. I will refer to authors who show that the principle of national unity was often used against different types of partisanship – both in the nation building processes (for example French Revolution)[8] and in state building processes or

[8] Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1997, p. 79-83.

secession (where ethnic minorities were targeted).[9] Expressions of national sentiment seem to represent not the political unity (the many in one) that we find in a compromise, but rather a process of social uniformity and conformity – often leading to xenophobia towards those who do not conform to what is seen as normal.

In recent years, and perhaps as a result of globalisation, the expressions of national sentiment in the West seem to have become more inclusive. Societies are more multi-cultural which also allows increased access of non-nationals to positions of social status. Furthermore, as I will argue in Chapters Six, the sense of belonging and unity brought about by the nation is not contradictory to, but interdependent with, individual autonomy. This is because: a) The modern self is not purely rational. It thrives on a tension between rationality and subjectivity (Chapter Two). b) National identity is not purely emotive. It transcends particular subjectivities through forms of bounded rationality (Chapters One and Six).

Ad. a) In Chapter Two I will show that the modern 'subject' is characterised by a dialectic relationship between its passive (non-reflective) and active (reflective) dimensions. What this means in practice is that our individual identities are equally shaped by our sense of distinctiveness and the social images that are available to us. Nations offer a positive framework for the modern self through a set of shared practices and strategies of forming identity. Although, the individual often asserts her uniqueness and sense of worth through rebelling against the perceived features of the national framework, the framework itself is crucial for that process.

Ad. b) In Chapter Six I will argue that the concept of the nation itself provides a framework that promotes individual autonomy. This is because nations are constitutive to moral and political agency. In both Chapters Two and Six, I explain the link between self, agency and autonomy.

[9] *Op. cit.*, p. 83-85.

Are National Borders Apolitical and Arbitrary?

The second line of criticism I address in this thesis is the most complex. This critique ranges from theorists who attack the concept of the nation as being anti-political[10] and a threat to democratic life, to those who ignore issues related to national identity on the basis of these issues being apolitical or historically contingent.[11] I will now briefly outline these two types of critique.

First, as national bonds are often defined in terms of ethnicity or historical belonging, we may think of the nation as a natural community as opposed to the state which is a positive or constructed one. While we can imagine a contractual beginning to a state, nations are *ex definitione* resistant to this sort of intellectual experimentation. Instead, nations usually have founding myths that place them in some sort of historical antiquity. As a result, the nation is perceived in these accounts mostly as a natural (pre-political) force or sentiment, which demands a certain type of homogeneity and unity. In contrast, politics is portrayed as a public, legal activity that only makes sense under the conditions of diversity.

Secondly, we might think of national bonds as arbitrary and historically contingent. This claim refers to a limited idea of political association. A political community is here understood as a formal relationship. Members of such a commonwealth are not required to share beliefs, interests or opinions about anything apart from the rules of living together. The purpose of politics is to create a many-in-one while maintaining the diversity of interests. While nations do provide a basis for recognition of authority, they should specifically not be treated as such because they transform what should be a formal/civic relationship into one based on belonging. As nation-states are in fact never uniform, the idea of basing political identity on the concept of national identity can be exclusive or oppressive.

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[10] For example: Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics*, 2nd edition, London, Penguin books, 1982.

[11] Margaret Canovan offers the most comprehensive account of omission of nationhood within the liberal tradition; Margaret Canovan, 'Sleeping Dogs, Prowling Cats, and Soaring Doves: Three Paradoxes of Nationhood,' in: Michel Seymour (ed.), *The Fate of the Nation State*, London, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004.

In Chapter Three I will draw on Oakeshott's, Hobbes's and Arendt's critical approach to nationhood to address the above issues. I argue that the idea that national community represents a natural bond is heavily contested and it cannot be the basis of a viable critique of nationalism as a political principle. In fact the very distinction between political and natural is useless when applied to the nation. Furthermore, while I agree with the claim that a political association represents a special type of relationship based on something more than a business-like venture, I will also claim that this relationship can experienced precisely because it is made available to us within a common language of national belonging.

Are Nations an Obstacle to the Moral Progression of Mankind?

The third and final line of criticism I will address in Chapters Four and Five is that nations represent an obsolete moral or political order and are as such an obstacle to the moral progression of mankind. This argument has been used since the end of modernity, in particular by different versions of humanism. It focuses on a line of criticism which views the nation as representing a particularistic paradigm. What does that mean? It means that the national principle delimits the borders of politics to groups of people defined by a shared identity, ethos and institutional practices. Furthermore, it is often argued that we owe special duties to those who are members of our own community precisely because they engage in a close cooperative scheme with us.

This can, however, be criticised, as national boundaries can seem morally arbitrary. It often seems counter-intuitive that I have special duties to a fellow national on the other side of my country than I do to a person living across the border five kilometres away from me. Furthermore, with the progress of globalisation, the argument from cooperation seems to lose its strength. Indeed, political action becomes universalised with the growth of global political movements, migration, and the empowerment of further minorities. National borders are arguably less significant than they used to be. There are two questions here: 'Do we need nations anymore?' and 'Are nations indeed particularistic?'.

The answer to the first question will be indirect. In Chapters Four and Five I argue that a universalist alternative to the nation-state is viable. Politics itself is a limited activity. Our political dilemmas, problems and interests do not come from a void or even an original position, but can only be recognised thanks to the common language and practices that define our being together. Politics is not merely the administration of problems, but a communal process of pursuing ideas of the good life. These ideas are, however, dependent on the community in question. Politics, in other words, requires practical reason. Nation, I shall argue, represents that bounded rationality which allows us to engage with the political through social practices and institutions that make the common good accessible and tangible to us, because nations are politically meaningful. They matter as a source of moral and political identity. The alternative up-rootedness does not provide a viable basis for political agency.

As for the second question, I will show that national identity is not as particularistic as is often claimed. As I argue in Chapter Six, nations can be seen as key to promoting individual autonomy. There are no reasons however why our recognition of autonomy of others should be limited only to our fellow nationals. It is true that nationalism as the historical process of nation-formation has been, and often still is, politically exclusive and thus anti-universalistic.[12] In particular, the ethno-linguistic type of nationalism dominating the 20th century is not suited for the global era.[13] However, the concept of organising political communities into nations has proven both practically and theoretically open. This is partially because national citizenship can be 'tamed' and made accessible. More importantly however, this is because nationhood expresses an ability to open up to others.

A closer analysis of the changing role of nations and the language of nationhood will challenge the idea that nations are artefacts of an old era and as such are becoming obsolete. I will defend the political role of the concept of the nation by

[12] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 168-9.
[13] Anthony Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, Cambridge, Polity, 1995, p. 11.

showing its changing value in the increasingly global world. Nations transcend their own borders and allow us to open up to the universal.

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The task I have undertaken is not limited to the history of political thought, even if large parts of the argument draw heavily on the history of ideas. I believe that political theory has a vital explanatory role in providing us - the users of political language - with an understanding of the general concepts that form our political world. Furthermore, my project relates to the current debate between cosmopolitans and nationalists in the sense that it attacks some of the theoretical assumptions of both sides. I criticise cosmopolitanism not on ethical grounds but by showing it is a weak political project. It does not account for the modern self, which is formed in the framework provided by bounded communities. My thesis also has normative implications. It offers a political explanation of nationhood consistent with modern individualism. In fact, I will argue that the nation remains the most important vehicle for 'the political' precisely because of the concept of self that underlies it.

This thesis is interdisciplinary in the sense that it draws upon debates rooted across different literatures. In particular, the core of my argument focuses on making philosophical use of the research on nationhood developed within nationalism studies. My thesis will be most useful to political theorists working in cosmopolitanism, globalisation and citizenship as well as to a wider audience of intellectuals interested in modernity and nationalism.

1

Defining the Nation as a Form of Political Experience

The bonds of nationhood are central to the way modern polities function in the West, and yet the concept of the nation received little theoretical attention until the second half of the 20th Century. It is not surprising that the term 'nation' itself remains ambiguous. The purpose of this chapter is to attempt to tackle the immense diversity of understandings of this complex concept. This is further complicated by the fact that nationalism itself is not a uniform phenomenon. The way the German nation came into existence is quite different than that of the French or the English. The historical diversity of nations and the nation-building processes has made it particularly difficult to conceptualise nationhood. Whether or not members of the same nation share a set of common features (so called national character) has been a subject of philosophical debate since Hume.[14] But is has proven hard, if not impossible, to identify such features. Not all nations share a common language or territory and it is very difficult to determine how we would identify common cultural features.[15] For instance, both the Jewish and Roma nations lack a common territory and other nations, such as the Swiss, have incorporated multiple languages into their national heritage.

However, the way we perceive national identity and nationalism has been greatly transformed since the time of Hume. In particular, the ethno-linguistic model of nationalism has been affected by the diffusion of traditional sources of identity by global cultural and social trends.[16] I no longer see my national identity as necessarily pivotal in determining my political choices and views. Increasingly we also meet individuals who do not have a single national identity and the conditions of making a

[14]David Hume, *Political Essays*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2003, p. 78-92.
[15] This is not to say that attempt have not been made, even recently, to appeal to some sort of shared cultural heritage. Statements of this kind are often made by representatives from the entire political spectrum, as one classic publication on English cooking by George Orwell illustrates. George Orwell, *In Defence of English Cooking*, London, Penguin,2005.
[16] Zygmunt Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist-or a Short Story of Identity,' in: Stuart Hall and Paul de Gau (eds.), *Queestions of Cultural Identity*, London, Sage, 1997.

successful claim to membership in some national communities seem to have weakened.[17] Even in places where ethnic identities are relatively strong, such as Eastern Europe, these identities develop in recognition of, and response to, the global processes of internationalisation.[18] The language of national belonging has survived many transformations. It is not clear how much of the original vocabulary has remained unchanged. But as with any language, once the network of meanings shifted, so did the things we can express with it. We must then ask whether that language continues to offer a meaningful way of understanding and being in the world in relation to both our moral and political existence.

In this chapter I argue that the concept of the nation is a key form of modern political experience. I will defend a specific understanding of nationhood, which goes beyond the distinctions between ethnic and civic definitions of nationalism on the one hand and particularistic and universalistic visions of politics on the other. In that sense I am striving to go beyond the limited understanding of the phenomenon of the nation offered by liberal political theory, but also to offer a normatively more useful one than is currently found in nationalism studies. I will show that viewing nationhood as a type of political experience offers a more comprehensive account of the the nation than when the nation is discussed simply in terms of national identity. Furthermore, as I will show later on in this chapter, my definition of nationhood highlights the ability of nations to create a common world.

In this chapter I want to answer a basic question: 'What sort of thing is the nation?'. Section one of this chapter briefly surveys the key types of answers to this question to show that even though there does not seem to be a single definition of the nation, one can find some common features amongst key conceptualisations. Section two examines these common features which are: 1) that nations are constructs; 2)

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[17] For example Rogers Brubacker claims that in Western Europe after 'decades of heavy labour migration and subsequent family reunification, public attention has focused on immigrant ethnicity, while ethnic claims have not generally been framed as national claims.' Rogers Brubacker, 'Ethnicity, Migration and Statehood in Europe,' in: Michel Seymour (ed.), *The Fate of the Nation State*, London, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004, p. 359.

[18] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 164; See also similar comment in: Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Cambridge, Polity, 2006, p. 4.

that nations provide a way of organising our political experience by providing a framework of bounded rationality; 3) that, understood in this way nations represent a particularly modern tension between the universal and the particular. Framing the nation in this way leads me to evaluate the political and moral role of nation-states as 'limits' of political action in the third section. I claim that nationhood has offered the most historically successful basis for a common conceptual language which in turn is crucial to modern democracy.

1.1. A Problematic Definition

The ambiguity surrounding the definition of the terms nation and nationalism precede the discipline of nationalism studies by roughly two centuries. In the 17th and 18th centuries we find a vast literature on national character with Montesquieu and Hume being just two key examples of the voices in the debate.[19] This is where we can recognise the basic landscape of the contemporary discussions – the questioning of the substantive character of national characteristics. Recent debates in nationalism studies focus on the process of nation-building, national self-determination and secession. While even now politicians and thinkers often tend to use the words 'nation', 'ethnicity' 'people' and 'state' almost interchangeably, the development of nationalism studies in the 1960s highlighted complex dynamics amongst these concepts. The study of nationalism rather than the nation-state highlight the fact that 1) not all nationalisms are successful as a) not all ethnic groups succeed (or aspire) to become nations and b) not all nations acquire statehood; as well as that 2) there is not a single type of nation.

We can find different dimensions of this debate represented within nationalism studies in the discussion between primordialists[20] and modernists[21] as

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[19] Charles Montesquieu, *The Spirit Of The Laws* ,Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, David Hume, *Political Essays*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2003.

[20] Primodarialism is a theory within nationalism studies that claims that nations are primarily defined by ethnicity and as such are ancient. See for example: Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, London, Fontana, 1973.

[21] Modernists, in contrast, believe that the emergence of nations was linked to the modern state and transformations in industrial economy. See for example: Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*,

well as in the distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism.[22] The above debates, while being predominantly sociological in character, have bearing on a number of philosophical problems, such as to what extent nations are exclusive or inclusive, individualist or collectivist. In particular, an overwhelming body of research shows that different types of nationalism transcend these binary distinctions. For example, Greenfeld argues that English nationalism has always been more liberal and hence both more individualist and civic than German nationalism which represented the romantic organic model.[23] Furthermore, the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism has been repeatedly criticised as misleading.[24]

Jonathan Hearn, in his comprehensive analysis *Rethinking Nationalism*, lists just a few main definitions of the concept of the nation. It can be understood for example as: 1) a combination of social solidarity, historical contingencies and collective will (Renan),[25] 2) a community of perceived common destiny and frequency of social communication (Anderson)[26] and 3) a community based on kinship and descent (Connor).[27]

I agree with Hearn that while these different perspectives on the idea of the nation might often seem exclusive, they represent different aspects of the complex phenomena of nationalism. Nationalism, according to Hearn, can be seen as a feeling, an identity, an ideology, a social movement, or a historical process. Depending on which 'lenses we choose' we can uncover a different aspect of the nation. [28]

This complexity of both the nation and nationalism is often unappreciated by political philosophers, including those whose work focuses on matters to do with

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Oxofrd, Blackwell, 1983; A very good discussion of both views can be found in: Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernity*, London, Routledge, 1998.

[22] Jonathan Hearn, *Rethinking Nationalism. A Critical introduction*, London, Palgrave, 2006.

[23] Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism. Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2003.

[24] Dominique Schnapper, 'The Idea of Nation', *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1995.

[25] Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*, in: John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 17.

[26] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 2006.

[27] Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994.

political identity. The understanding of the term 'nation' can be easily limited to a cultural community of shared history and heritage. In the liberal tradition, Mill's account of nationhood which seeks the meaning of nationality primarily in the 'identity of political antecedents'[29] became archetypical. In other words, Mill's view of the nation was framed in terms of a common history of a people that recognise themselves as a nation. National identity is for Mill not a substantive bond but one that allows us to assign value to an individual commitment to particular community. Margaret Canovan argues that in this sense, liberal political theory developed a defence of nationalism based on viewing nationhood as a value of individuals more so than a type of collective identity. We should respect the desire of individuals to belong to a nation if their commitment is beneficial for their self-realisation.[30] This understanding of nationhood is indeed useful because it highlights both the political (self-determination) and personal (individual identity) aspects of nationhood. However, there are other dimensions of the concept of the nation that the above definitions omit which I will now explore.

1.2 Recasting the Question: What Is a Nation?

The following section discusses the ontological problem of what nations are as well as the historical role of nations in providing a framework for political community in the form of the nation state. I argue that rather than conceptualising the nation simply in terms of identity, it is more accurate to think of the nation as a form of modern political experience.

An individual can have many identities. Depending on social context, some of these identities will be more important than others and will have a more formatting impact on the individual. But nations are only partially sources of

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[28] Jonathan Hearn, *Rethinking Nationalism. A Critical introduction*, London 2006, p. 4-5.
[29] J.S. Mill, *On Representative Government*, London 1962, p. 360-361.
[30] Margaret Canovan, 'Sleeping Dogs, Prowling Cats, and Soaring Doves: Three Paradoxes of Nationhood,' in: Michel Seymour (ed.), *The Fate of the Nation State*, London, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004, p. 24-25; MacCormick, 'Is Nationalism Philosophically Credible,' in W. Twining (ed.) *Issues in Self-Determination*, Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Press, 1991.

identity. They provide a framework of recognition that exists beyond individual identification Whilst I can renounce my 'Polishness' and consciously adopt another identity or I can reject the notion of identifying myself in national terms, this choice makes sense only in the light of my recognition of the claim that I am Polish. In other words, while we can consider identity a choice to a certain extent, the experience of belonging to a national culture is itself something that we do not choose and can merely take a stance towards.

This commits me to a particular, yet relatively broad modernist view of the nation. I will now explicate three dimensions of nationhood as I define it as a modern form of political experience: 1) the nation is constructed - its existence is discursive (yet not completely, as will be argued later); 2) the nation allows us to participate in a common political world through cultivating concrete forms of practical rationality and language;[31] finally, nationhood is 3) a modern form of experience which has developed as concept aspiring to be universal.

1.2.1. First Dimension: Nations as Constructs

The first widely accepted dimension of nationhood is that nations are 'imagined' or 'constructed'. While members of the same national community share certain rituals, symbols etc., these practices themselves are a result of a process of invention. Nations are constructs also in the sense that their existence is constituted by belief. For example, Renan famously defined the nation as an 'everyday plebiscite'.[32]

Even though nations are constituted by belief, we conceive of them as substantive entities with historical depth. When I think of Poles, I do not imagine simply those fellow nationals who live now, but I am somehow directed in my thoughts towards all the Poles that lived before me. In particular, I might be inclined to think of the famous Poles who died in battles, wrote books in Polish or contributed in one way or the other to what we sometimes call national heritage. However, while it is often the case that national communities perceive themselves and their practices

[31] Which does not make the nation identical with a civic community.

as ancient, their antiquity is contested.[33] Anderson saw the ability of nations to create their own antiquity as a nation's central feature. He defined the idea of the nation as an 'imagined community moving through time'.[34] Nations thrive on stories created about their own past. Even today there is a tendency of talking for example about the history of Poland in the ninth century B.C., while the names Poland or Poles were not even used then.

One should perhaps note that a nation's ability to create their own history is not necessarily unique. Rogers Smith argues that all types of political people could be understand as 'imagined communities'. The nation is, for Smith, simply the strongest type of modern peoplehood which can claim sovereignty over others, be it class groups, religious groups, or political movements such as Oxfam. [35] However, Smith's approach to explaining national imagination in terms of powerful narratives tells us only part of the story.

Thus, nations should not be understood simply as constructs. The power and longevity of nationalism could not be fully explained if the concept of the nation referred simply to an order created by discourse. What is then the non-discursive element that nationhood refers to? I find Žižek's reflections on national identity quite useful here. He defines national identity as a bond that links members of a community to the 'national Thing.'[36]

> The national Thing exists as long as members of the community believe in it; it is literally an effect of this belief in itself. The structure is here the same as that of the Holy Spirit in Christianity. The Holy Spirit is the community of believers in which Christ lives after his death: to believe in Him equals believing in belief

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[32] Ernst Renan, *What is a Nation*, in A. Zimmern (ed.), *Modern Political Doctrines*, London, Oxford University Press,1939, p. 186-205.
[33] While Anderson perceives the nation as a specifically modern phenomenon, some other nationalist scholars would say that all effective modern nationalist movements are in fact based in antiquity. For example: Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994.
[34] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 2006.
[35] Rogers Smith, *Stories of Peoplehood*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 19-32.
[36] Žižek Slavoj, *Tarrying with the Negative. Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1993, p. 201.

> itself, i.e., believing that I'm not alone, that I'm a member of the community of believers.[37]

Žižek's analogy with the Holy Spirit (which becomes 'materialised' in the institution and practices of the Church) seems to suggest that the nation materialises itself in the institutions, practices and ritual of its members. According to Žižek, the national Thing itself has no substance, but it cannot be reduced to belief. The relationship between the members of the nation and the national Thing takes the form of 'enjoyment', which refers to a specific lifestyle or set of practices that the community sees as their 'thing'. In short, while nations themselves are constructed, they evoke practices that create substantive ways of life. The relationship between us and the ways of life developed by our particular national community can, according to Žižek, be threatened by aliens.[38]

> Slovens are being deprived of their enjoyment by "Southerners" (Serbians, Bosnians...) because of their proverbial laziness, Balkan corruption, dirty and noisy enjoyment, and because they demand bottomless economic support, stealing from Slovens their precious accumulation of wealth by means of which Slovenia should already have caught up with Western Europe.[39]

Žižek's point then is, that nationality not only expresses a common thing, but also establishes what the common thing is. This seemingly paradoxical form of national identity explains the difficulties we encounter whenever we want to come to a definition of what nationality is. Furthermore, there is no such national community in which all members enjoy the same unique lifestyle. According to Žižek, the nation externalises these differences amongst fellow nationals. So instead of recognising what differentiates me from other Poles in such a way that could prevent me from enjoying my way of life, I identify myself in relation to other national identities that do not share my way of life. These foreigners are not simply 'others' as not all foreigners can be related to our way of life to the same extent. Žižek's framing of

[37] *Op. cit.*, p. 202.
[38] *Op. cit.*, p. 201.
[39] *Op. cit.*, p. 204.

national identity allows us to account not only for xenophobia, but also for the fact that many nations seem to have a specific 'other' that becomes either the enemy or a scapegoat (depending if it is external or internal).

Much of Žižek's analysis of the nation, while expressed in a 'new' language, tells an old story. In the end, the implications of the way he frames nationhood are that nationality is recognised in terms of exclusive identities built on our fantasies about our uniqueness. This view of the nation corresponds not only to certain types of ethnic nationalisms, but can also be expanded to cultural or civic nationalism. For example the national 'Thing' that the English enjoy could be connected to a certain way of doing politics – the specific representative institutions, monarchy etc. So we can imagine that it would be particularly frustrating that the French also have a similar claim to being a political model.

Regardless of how convincing Žižek's language is, he seems to highlight a crucial aspect of nationhood. This is that it is equally wrong to think of nations as pure constructs as it is to think of them as substantive entities. While the concept of the nation cannot be identified with any objective biological, geographical or cultural features, nations do give rise to concrete practices and ways of life that are themselves not the constructs of those who follow or use them. In turn, members of a national community often receive their identity through their engagement with those practices.

1.2.2. Second Dimension: *Sensus Communis*

The second dimension of my understanding of nationhood is that, apart from being constructed by discourse, nations organise discourse. Social reality originates from the network of meanings through which people communicate, give themselves a common identity, and determine their attitude towards institutions. Social life creates values and norms along with systems of imaginings which articulate and conserve these norms. It is from the way people imagine their bonds and mutual duties that political language originates. Nationhood became a particularly powerful way of imagining our bonds in modern societies. In this sub-section I briefly explain how the nation serves as a community that allows us to participate in a common political

world. I will also argue that the concept of the nation represents an intrinsically political community. First I will establish that politics requires a common world. I will move then to exploring how this common world is formed. Finally, I will argue that the nation is a successful example of a framework that promotes the formation of a political realm.

Politics can be defined in many ways, but whatever definition we use, they all seem to assume the existence of a common world - i.e. a universe in which we can communicate with others, make our interests known to them and give meaning to rights, duties and obligations. It seems to follow that we should be able to give account of an ability to identify that which is not common. Politics can be then seen as a bridge mediating between what is personal and not common on one hand and that which is public and common on the other. This function of politics was already appreciated by the Ancient Greeks, to whom the question of the relationship between the personal and the common was particularly problematic because of the distinction between *doxa* and *episteme*.[40]

Classical philosophy identified *doxa* with opinion, which it understood as particular and subjective. *Doxa* is limited to practical judgements about our world and cannot lead us to true knowledge. *Episteme* is opposed to *doxa* not only because *episteme* is knowledge about what is universally true, but also because it undermines the validity of practical judgement. Plato's metaphor of the cave, for example, illustrates this tension between opinion and true knowledge with the figure of a philosopher, who longs for the light of the sun but cannot bear to expose himself to that light.[41] Pure thought cannot relate us to the world – in Plato's metaphor *episteme* is blinding. This is why the pursuit of true knowledge was often associated with a retreat from the world or even from ourselves to the universe of abstract thought.[42]

Consequently, neither *doxa* nor *episteme* could have become the basis for conceptualising politics. When politics was discovered as a unique manner of

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[40] Giovanni Reale, *Storia della filosofia antica Vol. 2, Platone e Aristotele*, Milano, Vita e pensiero, 1979.
[41] Plato, *The Republic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.
[42] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, New York, Harvest, 1978, p. 72, 75.

organising human affairs, Ancient Greeks referred to it in terms of *logos* – a term that stands for language as well as reason.[43] *Logos* represents the ability of mankind to communicate private interests publicly through language, making them inter-subjective. Communicating and sharing our interests allows us to engage in a common world which is a condition of politics.

The common world and our ability to engage in it are neither obvious nor natural. In fact, our natural dispositions are unable to take us above the level of the particular without reason. Consequently, that which is common in thinking can become problematic. If indeed *episteme* represents absolute knowledge of the universal and the eternal, and *doxa* can only relate us to subjective opinion, then neither of these can constitute the common world. The latter, because it does not relate to the experiences of others; the former, as it does not relate to experience at all.

This raises the question of whether there is a type of thinking or reasoning that affirms our being in the world. One possible line of investigation is the idea that we can engage in the political world through practical reason. The nature of practical life is that our knowledge of our interests does not come from universal considerations but from specific choices we make within our community. The ability to make these particular judgments within a community that recognizes them as right or wrong has to come from somewhere.

Klaus Held suggests we should seek the origins of that ability in the notion of practical reason (Greek *phronesis*).[44] This is part of a wider tradition that refers to what Kant has called in *The Critique of Judgment* 'a broader type of thinking'[45] – a type of reflection that allows us to move between epistemic horizons of individual human actors. In other words, the ability to take the position of someone else can allow us to make judgments and make them intelligible to others.[46]

Since Aristotle, political theory has resisted claims to found politics on

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[43] Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek–English Lexicon*, Logos, 1889.
[44] Klaus Held, *Fenomenologia swiata politycznego*, Warsaw, IFiS PAN, 2003, p. 23.
[45] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1952, para. 4.
[46] Klaus Held, *Fenomenologia swiata politycznego*, Warsaw, IFiS PAN, 2003, p. 27.

universal knowledge. Although truth remains an important issue, especially in normative political theory, true knowledge is anti- political as it negates the plurality of opinions and horizons.

So where does this ability to move between epistemic horizons come from? The humanist tradition, represented especially by Vico, Shaftesbury, and Hume will look for it in what they refer to as *sensus communis* or common sense.[47] Contrary to popular opinion, *sensus communis* is not necessarily a group of shared belief. The origins of the concept are twofold. On one hand we can look for it in the notion of *phronesis* which means an ability to apply general notions to particular situations and is responsible for practical reasoning. On the other hand we have Aristotelian 'common sense', which combines data from all five senses: sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing, in order to make it possible for us to recognize objects as 'things' rather than random sets of sensations.[48]For example, when I see my friend Anna, I don't see an accumulation of isolated colours, smells, sounds and so on - but I can almost instantly recognize her as Anna (perhaps even before I receive all the sensations).

The modern use of the term 'common sense' takes something from both these notions, though it is certainly closer to the first one. These two meanings constitute our ability to perceive the world as given. Common sense is common because, unlike sensual data it perceives things as coherent examples of general types (a brick a stone, a stick) but unlike pure reason common sense does not undermine the sensual world. In short, *sensus communis* is an ability to recognize particular standpoints and make judgements in recognition to what is common and universal.

> The many as citizens, who form judgments based on the common sense, transcend their imprisonment in private worlds thanks to their openness to *doxa*, and not by practicing episteme. The political world is something "more" and something different than the plurality of the private worlds.[49]

[47] David Hume, *Political Essays*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.
[48] Aristotle: *De Anima*, Book III, Part 2.
[49] Klaus Held, *Fenomenologia swiata politycznego*, Warsaw, IFiS PAN, 2003, p. 33, author's translation.

This type of rationality that allows us to make and justify particular judgements cannot be grounded in universal knowledge. It requires an understanding of what is particular and yet can become intelligible to the community.

Historically nations have been able to provide a type of common language and common set of practices and institutions to provide a basis necessary to create this type of common world. The nation, as I explained in the previous section, is itself a construct which allows us to recognise others as members of the same community mediated by national identity regardless of whether we know them or not. In the same way, nationhood allows us to relate to fellow nationals thanks to the shared practices and ideas of life.

1.2.3. Third Dimension: Universality

The third and final dimension of the nation as a form of political experience is that it represents a particularistic model of community that nevertheless creates a framework that opens up to universal values and norms. This is because, as I will argue in this section, nationalism promotes a model of an individual liberated from the old hierarchies of feudalism and, as a result, created a sphere in which political agents can interact under conditions of equality.

While the primary experience of the individual in classical thought was the world and its order (*kosmos*), the primary experience of the modern individual is that of self. It is no longer possible to maintain the naturalistic disposition to the world. On the contrary, the world becomes more and more a world of experience - subject to the laws of human intellect. As I will show in Chapter Two, modern identity originates from the quest for self-knowledge and control. The equality of membership that is characteristic of modern societies[50] means that this quest becomes even more difficult, as the only way of meaningful differentiation by referring to an external or absolute order has been lost.

[50] *Op. cit.*, p. 209.

Nationalism fills out this empty space created after the destruction of the concept of natural order by providing a space of equality for individuals in which they can seek to realise their notions of a good life within the limits of a community. These norms are ultimately embodied in the principles that define citizenship within the liberal nation-state. Nations unify, individualise, and universalise their experience with the modern state leading to recognition of certain values and norms as universal.

Equality among members of a national community is a crucial disposition allowing for universality of political action.[51] In pre-modern societies, other types of group membership (family, local community, nobility) limited the life options of individuals much more strongly than social status does in national communities.[52] For example, it is not unusual in most of today's liberal democratic states that a son of a farmer can become a politician or a civil servant. This has been made possible by the unifying power of nationhood.

The link between nationalism and thus conceived individualism is not an obvious one. One theorist who supports this view is Liah Greenfeld, who argues that nationalism can be understood as the form of modern culture, inseparable from the development of the self. She claims that what we perceive as a plainly socio-economic process, the formation of nation, inhibits the formation and normal functioning of the human mind.[53] This, however, has both positive and negative effects, on one hand promoting the development of individualism and individual autonomy, and on the other hand leaving the individual without any 'map' or 'guide' according to which she should live her life. The lack of strong moral sources leads, according to Greenfeld to *anomie*.[54]

> The greater the choice one is given in forming one's destiny, the heavier is the burden of responsibility for making the right choice. The more opportunities one

[51] Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind: Essays in Modern Culture*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2006, p. 207.
[52] *Op. cit.*, p. 208
[53] *Op. cit.*, p. 213.
[54] Greenfeld's use of the term anomie seems to be borrowed from Durkheim. However, Durkheim did not associate anomie with nationalism, but in fact with any context in which a crisis of the social order leads to anxiety caused by a vicious cycle of endless aspirations; Emile Durkheim, *Suicide*, Glencoe, The Free Press, 1970, p. 41.

> is offered to "find oneself," the harder is to decide where to look. Life has never been so exciting and so frustrating; we have never been so empowered and so helpless. Modern societies produced by nationalism, because of their very secularism, openness and the elevation of the individual, are necessarily anomic.[55]

I agree with Greenfeld's account of nationhood to the extent in which it shows that nationalism is not simply a product of modernisation but represents a more comprehensive modern mindset. Chapter Two will explore the type of self that came into being with modernity, and which I believe is at the heart of nationhood. However, understanding nationhood mostly as a function of identity as Greenfeld does, takes us away from understanding the political structure of the nation. In other words, Greenfeld's definition of the nation does not set sufficient limits allowing us to differentiate between nation, modernity, the modern state, or civil society.

Greenfeld's claim that nationhood has special implications on the mind of the individual and on mental health seems to be exaggerated. While it seems reasonable that by marginalising the role of close-knit organic communities' nationalism could have some negative effect on how we experience certain mental disorders, it seems far-fetched to say that a secularised and more open world needs to be a source of anxiety. In fact, Dusan Kecmanovic claims that there are no studies that would show a correlation between modern, nationalist culture and increased likelihood of mental disorder. Any such research would in fact be contestable as there is no comparable data across different time periods.[56] Kecmanovic makes a further point in his discussion with Greenfeld – namely that 'many people feel more at ease when they can choose (no matter how large the range of options) rather than when they are offered just one option.'[57] The new range of options that came with nationalism should not be treated as necessarily frustrating or confusing.

One point of agreement between theorists is that nationalism provides an unprecedented unifying force. The integration of various types of peoples into one

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[55] Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2006, p. 332.
[56] Dusan Kecmanovic, 'Nationalism and Mental Health: A Critique of Greenfeld's Recent Views on Nationalism,' *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, No. 13, 2007, p. 274-275.
[57] *Op. cit.*, p. 281.

community of citizens would not have been possible without nationalism. Dominique Schnapper sees this aspect of the nation as a crucial condition for the development of modern democracy.[58]

> The citizen (in the idea of modern nationhood) is defined precisely by his ability to break with determinations that would stifle him in a culture and a destiny imposed by birth. It releases him from prescribed roles and imperative functions. It is this tension between the universalism of the citizen and the particularism of the private man as a member of civil society which shapes the principle – as well as the values – of the democratic nation.[59]

One should note that this egalitarian status of the democratic nation is strongly contestable. First, nationalism is often characterised as a top-down process. National consciousness was developed and indeed popularised by the educated urban elites.[60] Secondly, the process of creating an egalitarian national culture had arguably less to do with intellectual individualism and more with enforced homogenisation.[61]

But if we take Schnapper's point not as an explanation of the origins of nationalism but the description of a new kind of experience brought about by nationhood, then it shows us something important about why nationhood has such strong claims defining membership in a political community. Modern citizenship originated from a tension between the particularism of the nation-state and the notion of universal equality that it brings about as a result. Without it, neither universal suffrage nor conscription would be possible. These practices are both central to the development of nationalism and to our understanding of citizens as equals.[62]

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[58] Dominique Schnapper, *Community of Citizens. On the Modern Idea of Nationality*, London, Transaction Publishers, 1994, p. 35.
[59] *Op. cit.*, p. 73.
[60] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford 1983, especially p. 99-100; Tom Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited*, London, Verso, 2005.
[61] Daniele Conversi, '"We are all equals!" Militarism, homogenization and "egalitarianism" in nationalist state-building (1789-1945),' *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 31 No. 7.
[62] The above analysis of nationhood as a form of modern political experience is similar to Beck's claim that nationalism represents a type of syntax, language or outlook. According to him, nationalism as an ideology should be distinguished from methodological nationalism, which simply implies societies in plural. In other words, wherever we look, we see nations and peoples rather than 'mankind' or 'global civil society', the study of which is still often phrased in nationalist language.

1.3 Implications for Supra-national Governance and Citizenship

Framing the concept of the nation as a form of modern political experience highlights two aspects of nationhood significant to political theory. These are: 1) that nations are contingent social constructs representing a type of imagination typical of modernity. In this sense things 'could have turned out differently' as the relationship between the state and the nation is not the only possible way of organising political community. In that sense, nations cannot be a necessary or a universal answer to the problems of the globe. However, 2) nations also create a framework which allows solidarity amongst fellow-nationals imagined as equals in liberal western democracies.

What, then, does the above understanding of nationhood mean for the problems of supra-national governance and citizenship? Firstly, if nationhood represents a type of experience, then the language of national belonging is under attack. This is due to the growing importance of supra-national governance, particularly human rights, international bodies and the implications of these institutions for national sovereignty. Moreover, increasing multiculturalism in contemporary liberal democracies has led to a blurring of individual national identity. What nationality shall we assign to an individual who holds a British passport, is a Muslim, is fluent in two languages, and has an Indian mother and a Polish father?[63]

It seems that if our language was only national and did not open up to other levels, we could not fully understand contemporary society. There has to be a space for cosmopolitan emotions, allegiances and duties, but also for an inter-cultural dialogue. But what my exploration of the concept of the nation shows is that a primarily cosmopolitan language misses out on some of the key aspects of modern

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While Beck thinks this language of nationalism is misleading and problematic, I do not think we can simply try to get 'rid of it' as he does. (Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Cambridge, Polity, 2006.)

[63] For a further discussion of multiple identities see: Bhikhu Parekh, 'Discourses on National Identity,' *Political Studies*, XLII, 1994, p. 496.

politics. Nations are contingent but crucial aspects of modernity and any attempt to move beyond them should be based on an outlook that respects the place of nations in forming our moral and political agency as I argue in Chapter Six. This seems to suggest that supra-national governance is only possible if we do not discard national language completely. I will explore this intuition in more detail in Chapters Five and Six.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that our understanding of the phenomenon of nations should not be limited to framing nationhood as an identity but rather we should think of the nation as a modern form of political experience. This is because nations exist only in terms of 1) a constructed relationship with (to use Žižek's term once more) the 'national Thing' and, 2) an established framework of bounded rationality;[64] in doing so 3) this constructed framework allows all its members to participate in the political world on equal terms. Nationhood allows us to go beyond the particularity of our own experience and reach into the political world in virtue of a shared world rather than just a shared identity. Instead of inquiring whether national identities are exclusive or not, a more pressing question is whether we can find an alternative form that allows us to participate in the political world. While the language of nationalism still frames much of our discourse, with the emergence of international law and supra-national bodies such as the EU, we often find ourselves confused by the very syntax of language.

In the following chapters I defend the concept of the nation against its most powerful criticisms. In Chapter Two I refute the claim that the concept of the nation is inherently collectivist by showing that modern individualism is in fact facilitated by the idea of nationhood. This will be explored further in Chapter Five, where I

[64] The term 'bounded rationality' has been first coined by Herbert Simon to refer to a situation when choices have to be made between relative rather than absolute goods. However, I am using this term in a different sense which I explain in the course of my argument. See for example H. Simon, 'Theories of Bounded Rationality' in: C.B. McGuire and R Radner (eds.), *Decision and Organization*, North-Holland Publishing, 1972.

show that nations have historically been valuable to the promotions of individual autonomy and universal norms, such as human rights. The key elements of Chapter Five will be re-examined in the following chapter, where I argue that nations are key to the formation of moral and political agency due to their ability to mediate individual experience and create a common world.

2

On the Modern Idea of the Self and Individual Autonomy

'At no time did identity become a problem; it was a problem from its birth – was born as a problem (that is, as something one needs to do something about – as a task), could exist only as a problem'[65]

In the previous chapter I showed that the nation is a constructed community which has the ability to transcend particular epistemic horizons and provide a framework in which individuals can recognise universal norms and values. I will look now at the conceptual mechanism that made this transition from the particular to the universal possible by looking at the construction of the concept of the modern self. I will argue against abstract individualism that promotes an isolated view of the self as a subject by attempting to show that the self is dependent on both internal and communal tensions.

Throughout the course of this chapter, I investigate the transformations of the concept of the self and the resulting implications for the modern discourse on individual autonomy. This discussion shows that the modern self is characterised by a tension between its passive/non-reflective and active/reflective dimensions. I argue that this tension is necessary and crucial to our understanding of modern politics because this dual nature of the self resonates in a paradox of individual autonomy – that is, though autonomy is defined as self-determination,[66] autonomy relies on a notion of a self developed in a social context.

The first part of this chapter explores the transition from the concept of the pre-modern self to (modern) subjectivity. I show that the modern self is defined by a type of dualism that was partially alien to the pre-modern understandings of the self.

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[65] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and self-identity: self and society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge, Polity, 1997, p. 18–19.

[66] This is the most general definition of autonomy. Further discussion of the concept is offered in section 2.1.; Richard Lindley, *Autonomy*, London, Macmillan, 1986.

Moreover, in modernity, the conceptualisation of the self was often based only on the active dimension of 'subject'. The two approaches to the 'self', classical and modern, correspond historically to two different sets of political problems. The classical understanding of the self as a soul equipped with a body represents the problem of a grand 'order'; classical thought traditionally perceives the role of political philosophy as legitimizing the role of the political body as an extension of the natural order.[67] However, in the modern secularised world where nature and politics are no longer perceived as elements of the same order, an individual's place in the world is not determined by a grand order. Politics is perceived as placed at the intersection between freedom of the man-made world and the determinism of nature.

The second part of this chapter is concerned with the consequences of the modern dualistic view of the self for the concept of individual autonomy. I discuss the concept of individual autonomy and its relationship with the modern self. Drawing on a number of authors, including Schneewind, [68] Lindley,[69] and Dworkin,[70] I argue that autonomy rests on 'a notion of the self which is to be respected, left unmanipulated, and which is, in certain ways, independent and self-determining'.[71] However, the paradox of individual autonomy is that the self develops in a complex context based on tradition, emotional ties and authority. I illustrate this paradox by exploring two 'illusions' of the modern self: absolute beginnings and authorship. I conclude that the paradoxical nature of the modern self is unavoidable and places necessary limits on the individual. As a part of this context, an individual can aspire to exercise autonomy within a political community.

By showing the concept of individual autonomy as paradoxically rooted in a model of the self requiring a framework of bounded community, these reflections lay

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[67] This has been noted by many scholars, most notably Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre and Benedict Anderson. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989; Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue – A Study In Moral Theory*, London, Duckworth, 2004; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 2006.
[68] J. B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
[69] Richard Lindley, *Autonomy*, London, Macmillan, 1986.
[70] Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p.11-12.
[71] Ibid.

the basis for a defence of nationhood against the accusation of collectivism. The claim that the concept of the nation is collectivist is a common criticism.[72] It means that national identity has often been associated with a model of assimilation, where, in order to belong to a nation, one has to adjust one's beliefs to fit the national model.[73] The collectivist critique can also be framed by thinking of the nation as a structure that imposes itself on the individual in the form of oppressive subjectivity. In essence, the 'collectivist' accusation means that the nation infringes on the self's ability to construct itself and be a master of its own actions. The conclusions present in this discussion suggest that when we accuse nationalism of collectivism we offer an unrealistically strong interpretation of the concept of individual autonomy and rely on an overly narrow and unrealistic concept of the self. I will now discuss both types of selfhood (classical and modern) and explain the roles they play in transforming demands on the political.

2.1. Two Types of Dualism

The following section is concerned with our understanding of the concept of the self, which in modernity has had many synonyms such as *ego* or 'subject'. In the simplest terms, the self refers to 'what distinguishes me from others' and 'persists through changes'.[74] It is what we invoke when we say 'I'. Modern culture has been particularly pre-occupied with pursuing self-knowledge which is seen to be able to bring liberation and power over one's fate. However, our existence is socially and

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[72] For example: Andreas Johansson Heino, 'Democracy between collectivism and individualism. De-nationalisation and individualisation in Swedish national identity,' *International Review of Sociology*, Vol. 19, No. 2; While the above author seems to consistently identify nationalism with a form of collectivism, he recognises the recent transformation of Swedish national identity as an example of national individualism: *Op .cit*., p. 11.

[73]While many authors attempted to reconcile national identity with liberalism (David Miller, *On Nationality*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995; Will Kymlicka, 'Liberal Nationalism and Cosmopolitan Justice' in: Benhabib Seyla (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford 2008.), there is also a strong current of thinkers, such as Karl Popper who see nationhood as intrinsically collectivist, substantive and tribal: Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies: Hegel, Marx and the Aftermath*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974; See also: Andrew Vincent, 'Nationalism and the Open Society,' *Theoria*, August 2005.

[74] Jerrold Siegel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge , Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 3.

biologically dependent on others. Family, national belonging and other types of strong emotional ties call our self-determination into question.[75] However, the self and subjectivity do not always have to be seen in opposition to other sources of identity. Subjectivity itself can sometimes be interpreted as a strategy of identity or a way in which we constitute and defend our distinctiveness as selves. [76]

While the term 'self' has been widely used throughout Western thought, the term 'subject' is specific to modern reflection.[77] Those of us, who were brought up within the Western tradition, have a certain understanding of what 'subject' is and some meanings are implied in words such as 'subjective' and 'subject-object'.[78] Yet how precisely should we understand this term? Is 'subject' the same as the self? Some discourses certainly use the two terms in a very similar way. One undisputed point is that the idea of 'subject' is modern. The concept of 'subject' rests on an idea alien in the classical world: that truth is not an attribute of what really is, but a relationship between the knowing mind and external objects.[79] The circumstances of the birth of this distinction will be analysed later on in this section. The word 'subject' derives from Latin and means something that lies beneath.[80] It can then be understood as a foundation or basis of something else. In psychological terms for example, subjectivity is the continuous basis of the processes that allow individuals to negotiate, acquire, and renounce their identities.

> Although identity is often seen as intersubjectively produced or, in other words, formed through social interaction, what is meant by this is sometimes no more than that a pre-existing (but uncultured or pre-linguistic) subject is socialised into

[75] *Op cit.*
[76] For example, a very typical strategy of identity is thinking of oneself in terms of one's own history and memory. The recollections of our goals, dreams and values form when we were little and 'uncorrupted' by others often serve as a basis of maintain a feeling of self-worth and self-ownership.
[77] Having said that, the actual use of the term 'subject' was popularised much later, in particularly by Heidegger.
[78] Jerrold Siegel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge , Cambridge University Press, 2005.
[79] Vasilis Politis, 'Invoking the Greeks on the Relationship Between Thought and Reality: Trandelenburg's Aristitle – Natorp's Plato,' *The Philosophical Forum*, 2008, p. 192.
[80] Or is thrown underneath something else.

> particular cultural settings. In this view identity then becomes something the subject acquires – and a subject may have many different identities.[81]

As in the case of all historical concepts, 'subject' has to be studied through a historical perspective. It is a particularly difficult exercise in recollection, as subjectivity is part of how we perceive ourselves. The fact that we understand ourselves as subjects is crucial to the analysis of subjectivity. And where would we look for the concept of the subject? Is it the Cartesian *Cogito*[82] as defined by self-knowledge, Husserl's 'immanent sphere'[83] or perhaps Freud's *ego*?[84]

These are just a few models of selfhood. What they have in common is that they serve as a basis for understanding modern identity. Thus, it is worth asking: what is the modern subject? What is the importance and value of the modern subject? Is it worth defending today?; perhaps it would be easier to herald the death of subjectivity - especially as the language of subjectivity is being challenged by more fluid models of selfhood.[85] The modern self ('I') has to constitute itself in a world to which it does not belong; this can mean either remaining in constant conflict with what is not 'my own' or by transforming the world around 'me' so that it becomes 'my own'. And this ability is deeply embedded in our political and moral self-awareness. Hence, to defend subjectivity does not mean so much to promote a particular type of personhood or political identity, but to defend the western intellectual tradition itself.

In order to better understand the development of the modern self I compare the self with the way it was framed in classical thought. In the following section, I attempt to show both the continuity and discontinuity between the concept of 'subject' and its pre-modern equivalent – the soul. I will first look at the continuity

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[81] Jenny Edkins, Veronique Pin-Fat, 'The Subject of the Political' in: Jenny Edkins et al, *Sovereignty and Subjectivity*, London, Lynne Rienne Publishers, 1999.
[82] Rene Descartes, *A Discourse on Method Etc.*, London, J.M. Dent & Sons, 1937.
[83] Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, London, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001, p. 154-157.
[84] Sigmund Freud, 'The Ego and the Id,' in: Sigmund Freud, *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, London, Penguin, 1991.
[85] Zygmunt Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist-or a Short Story of Identity,' in Stuart Hall and Paul de Gau (eds.), *Queestions of Cultural Identity*, London, Sage, 1997.

between the two concepts by analysing the Ancient Greek concept of the self. Authors such as Siegel and Perkins agree that that we can trace the roots of the idea of a rational reflective self back to Plato and Aristotle.[86] I then move on to show the limits of that narrative. I argue that the pre-modern concept of the self is based on a different type of dualism than the one we find in modernity.

2.1.1. The Classical World: Soul and Body

One of the earliest stories about the pre-modern self can be found in Homer's tale of Odysseus and the Sirens.[87] In this story, Odysseus and his crew face the threat of creatures which have the ability to bewitch passing sailors with their voices and cause them to forget who they are. The danger is of losing one's identity, losing the self.

> So far so good,' said she, when I had ended my story, 'and now pay attention to what I am about to tell you- heaven itself, indeed, will recall it to your recollection. First you will come to the Sirens who enchant all who come near them. If anyone unwarily draws in too close and hears the singing of the Sirens, his wife and children will never welcome him home again, for they sit in a green field and warble him to death with the sweetness of their song. There is a great heap of dead men's bones lying all around, with the flesh still rotting off them. Therefore pass these Sirens by, and stop your men's ears with wax that none of them may hear; but if you like you can listen yourself, for you may get the men to bind you as you stand upright on a cross-piece half way up the mast, and they must lash the rope's ends to the mast itself, that you may have the pleasure of listening. If you beg and pray the men to unloose you, then they must bind you faster.[88]

While Homer's story does not provide a conceptual definition of the self, the self is identified with memory and identity. In this story, the desire to follow the song of the

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[86] Jerrold Siegel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge , Cambridge University Press, 2005, Jean A. Perkins, *The Concept of the Self in the French Enlightenment*, Genève : Droz, 1969.

[87] I am aware that there are many interpretations of this story. My interpretation does not aspire to establish a historically accurate translation. It serves as an illustration and example that the above-mentioned understanding of the self was present in larger Ancient Greek culture and not only Plato's and Aristotle's work.

[88] Homer, *The Odyssey*, London, Penguin, 2003, Book 12.

Sirens is clearly threatening the coherency of the sailors' lives. The danger is that they can forget who they are if they surrender to their immediate desire.

The same example was used by Horkheimer and Adorno in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment.* For them it represents a politically significant narrative.[89] In Homer's story the sailors are forced to cover their ears so that they cannot hear the song; nonetheless, Odysseus asks to be tied to the mast so that he can hear the call at the same time, remaining safe from the voices that call him to the sea. The sailors avoid the danger of oblivion because their ability to hear the song is taken away from them,[90] whereas for Odysseus the song of the Sirens becomes an object of contemplation. What saves him is his ability to discipline and restrict himself. The apparent strength of his ego is based on denial. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the character of Odysseuss embodies the higher self (pure reason-contemplation) and the sailors represent the lower self (passions).

What this parable illustrates outside of the context of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is a model of the hierarchical self based on the opposition between reason and passion. Like Horkhemier and Adorno, I believe that this model is archetypical to how mainstream Western Culture envisioned the self at the time. The Homeric understanding of the self was already quite complex as it referred both to the bodily (desires) and spiritual or reflective (reason). However, as Jarrold Siegel notes, it is unclear from the parable whether in Homer's world individuals can indeed exercise any rational control over their desires.[91]

Conditions of rationality of the self were expressed differently but consistently by both Plato and Aristotle.[92] However, for both of them, rational self-determination was a condition of political autonomy. Plato's view that philosophers should be rulers is usually seen in the literature[93] as a direct translation of his view of

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[89] Adorno, Theodor W. and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London, Verso, 1997.
[90] *Op. cit.*, p. 33.
[91] Jerrold Siegel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge , Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 45.
[92] George E. Karamanolis, *Plato and Aristotle in Agreement?, Platonists on Aristotle from Antiochus to Porphyry*, Oxford Scholars hip Online, 2006, p. 2-3.
[93] For example: Bernard Williams, 'The Analogy of City and the Soul in Plato's Republic,' in: Richard Kraut (ed), *Plato's Republic. Critical Essays*, Oxford, R&L Publishers, 1997.

the soul where reason is given rule over passions and desires.[94] Perhaps more importantly, in some of his writings Plato identifies the soul solely with intellect.[95] And even though his writings on the soul are not consistent about this relationship, the crucial texts that elevate the place of intellect in the internal order of the soul are *The Republic* and *Phaedrus*.[96]

In the parable of the cave it is through the light of reason that we are able to move ourselves away from the images created by senses and into the world of true ideas.[97] Moreover in one of his later writings, *Letter 7*,[98] Plato clearly separates intellect from the other faculties. While the progression from the senses to common sense and *phronesis* is continuous, the passing from reason (*dianoia*) to intellect (*nous*) is 'a spark of the gods'.[99]

Even Aristotle, who does not believe in the duality of the two worlds of appearance and being as Plato does, could not escape from giving some sort of autonomy from the material world to intellect (active reason).[100] In his treatise *De Anima*, Aristotle says that even though individuals possess passive reason as part of their natural ability to grasp the qualities of the world, it is through active reason that individuals are able to abstract and construct knowledge.[101] This form of reason is what Aristotle calls the divine element[102] and he seems to suggest that it is the only part of the human soul that is immortal.[103] However, it is unclear if active reason can

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[94] Plato, *The Republic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.
[95] Reale, Giovanni, Storia della filosofia antica Vol. 2, Platone e Aristotele, Milano, Vita e pensiero, 1979, p 95-99.
[96] We can find varying descriptions of the soul in Plato's work. The ones I refer to are: the definition Plato gives in The Republic, where he defines the soul as having three parts: rational, spirited and appetitive; and the image of the soul from Phaedrus, where it consists of a good horse, a bad horse, a chariot and a charioteer. Plato, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, *The Republic*, 439d-443b; Plato, *Phaedrus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 246a-247c.
[97] Plato, *The Republic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, Book 7.
[98] Plato, *Plato's Seventh & Eighth Letters*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1947.
[99] *Op.cit.*, 341c-d.
[100] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, London, Dent, 1956, Book XII, Ch.7-10.
[101] Aristotle, *De Anima*, Book. III, 430a10-25.
[102] *Ibid.*
[103] *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

indeed be seen as part of the soul because, as Siegel notes, depending on how we read Aristotle, active reason is not always portrayed as individual.

In fact, Siegel argues that in many ways the Aristotelian concept of the soul was not much different from the modern idea of the self, meaning the individual entity every person is. He goes on to say that because the human soul was seen by Aristotle both as the principle of life and the principle of thought, Aristotle's theory did not separate mind and body as radically as Descartes later did. [104]

However, Taylor argues that the classical concept of the self rests on the distinction between what is immaterial and material, invisible and visible or 'immanent and transcendent', 'worldly and heavenly'.[105] This is why the self is often identified with the soul, even in the case of the writers who found the whole distinction between soul and body problematic.

Classical philosophy understood our cognition of the world as mostly passive, so that falsity was a product of the inaccuracy of our senses and not of any structural fault in cognition.[106] As a result, our place in the world becomes unproblematic. Society was supposed to imitate and be an extension of the natural order. Thus, we can see the analogy between the constitution of the soul, our bodily organs and society in the works of such philosophers as Plato and Aristotle. For them, the question about the best type of government was intrinsically linked to the problem of what it means to be a good man. Charles Taylor describes this as the key feature of pre-modern societies:

> Traditional societies were founded on differentiation: royalty, aristocracy, common folk; priests and laymen; free and serf, and so on. This differentiation was justified as a reflection of a hierarchical order of things. [...] Man could only be himself in relation to a cosmic order; the state claimed to body forth this order and hence to be one of man's principal channels of contact with it. Hence the

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[104] Jerrold Siegel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge , Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 47, 49.
[105] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989, Introduction.
[106] Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy, Vol. 1: Greece and Rome From the Pre-Socratics to Plotinus, Garden City*, Image, 1993, Introduction.

> power of organic and holistic metaphors: men saw themselves as parts of society in something like the way that a hand, for instance, is part of the body.[107]

The problem of the relationship between man and the cosmic order, which was mirrored by the distinction between visible and invisible, was one of the main issues for both ancient and Christian philosophy. If there is a classical problem of the self, then it can be summarized in the ancient proverb, allegedly set on the temple in Delphi: 'Know Thyself'.[108] By understanding the internal order of the soul, man is promised to find harmony with himself and with nature. This is a point Taylor makes in *The Sources of the Self* when he says that it is through understanding the duality of the world which consists of things eternal and changing[109] and through concentrating on the former that we can lead a good life.[110]

In contrast, the next section argues that the modern concept of 'subject' rests on the opposition between the inside and the outside which partially springs from a separation of the spiritual and the bodily.

Classical thought represents a holistic and passive [111] representation of the self. First, it is holistic because, while acknowledging the distinction between the spiritual and the material, classical thought sees the soul as encompassing both the spiritual and the material. Second, classical thought is passive as it treats our cognitive engagement with the world as essentially unproblematic and because it places moral sources outside of the individual. In fact, Siegel argues that it is precisely because the self is not radically separate from the body (for either Plato or Aristotle), the self has to be seen as part of a broader teleological order.[112] As a result, we need to seek the idea of a good life, which may be external to any moral

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[107] Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 112.
[108] H. Parke, D. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle*, London. Basil Blackwell, 1956, vol. 1, p. 389.
[109] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 121.
[110] *Op. cit.*, p. 122.
[111] Having said that, I agree with Siegel that we should not think of the classical concept of self as free of internal tensions. See: Jerrold Siegel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge , Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 50-51.
[112] Op cit., p. 49.

reasons – for example because that is what God wills, or because it expedient.[113] For instance, Gerald Dworking argues that, while the classical view based morality on obedience (as it assumed that people are too weak-willed to behave badly), in modernity morality becomes about self-governance.[114] This aspect of the classical self will be particularly important to my discussion on autonomy in section 2.2. Having briefly portrayed the idea of the self in the classical world, I will now move on to the evolution of the idea of the self in modernity.

2.1.2. Modern Self: 'Subject' vs. 'Object'

Before we can investigate the modern self, we should first define what we mean by modernity. I will understand modernity very broadly as the intellectual framework that was mostly shaped in the period between the 15th century and the early 20th century. It starts with the fall of scholastics (such as Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Abelard and Thomas Aquinas)[115] and the reinstatement of philosophy as a discipline independent from theology. Its end is marked by the fall of the great philosophical systems and the emergence of the anti-humanist movement (such as Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger).[116] In that sense modernity should not be confused with contemporary thought or modernism, which is a particular strand within contemporary debates. However, apart from marking a historical period, modernity can also be understood as a specific form of predominantly Western and, at its origins, European culture, which does not belong solely to the past. There are still values and concepts that we understand as 'modern' in that sense, among which there are rationality, secularism, and tolerance. Therefore, some current writers can be classified as modern.[117]

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[113] Gregory Millard , Jane Forsey, 'Moral Agency in the Modern Age: Reading Charles Taylor through George Grant,' *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Volume 40, No. 1, p. 184.
[114] Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 509, 513.
[115] Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy, Vol. 2: Medieval Philosophy From Augustine to Duns Scotus*, Garden City, Image, 1993.
[116] Anti-humanists oppose the modern project of philosophical anthropology. As a result, they reject the view of humans as autonomous subjects.
[117] I am aware that while this is generally the most conventional time frame for modernity, it is not the only one. See: Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002; However, that level of detail is not

One of the key concepts of the thus-defined framework of modernity is the 'self' or 'subject'. In a way this is surprising because the term itself was not popular in philosophical literature until the late 17th century; even through the 18th century it was rarely and narrowly used, principally in opposition to the subjective-objective.[118] The term 'subject' only became crucial to modernity retrospectively and as a concept attributed to conscious beings.[119] To be 'subject' meant first and foremost to have a privileged and active epistemological position in the world.[120] In order to further unpack this concept of the modern 'subject' the following section addresses the birth and development of the idea of the modern self. I will examine briefly the route that led to identifying the self with consciousness. I will then show that modernity produced alternative understandings of the self and that the tension between them is deeply political.

While both Platonic and Aristotelian thought place politics in a broader framework of the order of being and the structure of the human soul, the modern concept of the self is uprooted.[121] With secularism, the world ceases to be internally ordered. There is no cosmic principle to discover; the only way for an individual to find their place in this world is to look into themselves. As we no longer have a pre-given place in the world, we have to reinvent that order instead, and define ourselves in relation to what is 'outside' of us. This binary nature of modern identity divides the world into 'outside' and 'inside', 'I' and 'other'. It is exactly in that binary tension that the modern self develops.[122]

One theorist who attempts to give a detailed account of this process of forming the modern self is Charles Taylor. In his book, *Sources of the Self. The*

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relevant to my current project. My interest in modernity is more in the intellectual formation(s) it represents.

[118] Jean A. Perkins, *The Concept of the Self in the French Enlightenment*, Genève: Droz, 1969.

[119] Jerrold Siegel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge , Cambridge University Press, 2005.

[120] *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

[121] By this I do not intend that the modern idea of self developed solely in separation from broader theological or metaphysical thought. On the contrary, the modern self developed in a dialogue with traditional sources of order. See: Jerrold Siegel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge , Cambridge University Press, 2005, especially p. 55-58.

[122] I explain in the later sections that this alleged independence of the self is unsustainable.

Making of the Modern Identity, he traces the genealogy of the key elements of modern identity. These are: 1) modern inwardness, or the sense of ourselves as beings with inner depths and the connected notion that we are 'selves', 2) the affirmation of ordinary life and 3) an expressive notion of nature as an inner moral source.[123] Here I will only focus on the first element, modern inwardness, as the other two are more relevant to Taylor's own investigation of the moral sources.[124]

According to Taylor, the concept of the self is particular to modernity and is an invention limited both historically and geographically. As he notes: 'In every language there are resources for self-reference and descriptors of reflexive thought, action, attitude [...]. But this is not at all the same as making 'self' into a noun, preceded by a definite or indefinite article, speaking of 'the' self, or 'a' self.'[125]

It is exactly this transformation of the self into a noun that, according to Taylor, differentiates the modern moral world from the ancient. Taylor shows us that the notion of respect for human beings - which is at the centre of modern ethics – is emblematic of the changes in our understanding of identity. In the classical world, we were subject to the law of nature. But with modernity, Taylor claims, we no longer recognise a grand moral order, and the self became the source of subjective right.[126]

This point becomes clearer when we look at Locke's theory of natural rights. What distinguishes this theory from the classical concept of natural law is not the 'religious bit', but the location of 'right' within 'subject'.[127] The passing from the law of nature to natural rights is a step towards political recognition, but also represents a move toward inwardness. Thus, the modern notion of respect that comes from this concept of the self is different to the classical one. Being based solely on

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[123] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989, p. X.
[124] Taylor's investigations of moral sources of the self aim to show that our identities are made up of moral commitments which refer to who we think we should be and how we ought to live our life. For a more detailed discussion see: Gregory Millard, Jane Forsey, 'Moral Agency in the Modern Age: Reading Charles Taylor through George Grant,' *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Volume 40, No. 1.
[125] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 113.
[126] *Op. cit.*, p. 11.
[127] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

the recognition of the moral autonomy of individuals, it cannot be earned or lost.[128] Taylor tries to show how these notions of moral autonomy and modern identity evolved together in early modernity.

> To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose.[129]

Charles Taylor traces the origins of the concept of the modern self in three major theoretical steps. The first step is Plato's notion of self mastery. Taylor explains how Plato's moral theory is based on a hierarchical model of the soul. According to this model, we are virtuous only when our desires and emotions are subject to reason.[130] The rule of reason in the individual soul mirrors the rational harmony of the universe (*kosmos*) and through knowledge of that rational order we can exercise our own reason. Virtue, then, comes from knowing about good. According to Taylor's reading of Plato, acting on emotion or desire takes us away from the truth and from good. For Taylor, this is the origin of the modern idea of rationalism: 'to consider something rationally is to take a dispassionate stance towards it. It is both to see clearly what ought to be done and to be calm and self-collected and hence able to do it [...].'[131] Thus, to be rational means to be truly a master of oneself.

In Plato's theory, the self can be located in a single place – the mind. In earlier Greek writings - and especially in Homer - the soul would be identified with bodily locations.[132] It could be divided just like the body and did not differ from it substantively. Plato also uses the term 'soul' in this way. However, he starts using the same word to refer solely to the higher human faculty of the mind. Unlike reason,

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[128] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 12.
[129] *Op. cit.*, p. 27.
[130] *Op. cit.*, p. 115.
[131] *Op. cit.*, p. 116.
[132] Jerrold Siegel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge , Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Plato perceives the mind as a unitary space.[133] For Plato, to be ourselves is to be in control of our faculties and to be thoughtful and conscious of ourselves. The opposite of the self is not the outside world but is instead the body. Sleep, rage, sorrow and thoughtlessness are all for Plato moments when we lose ourselves.

The opposition between the 'inside' and the 'outside' becomes central to the concept of the self much later with the development of Christianity. This transformation that Taylor calls 'internalization' consists in a replacement of Plato's understanding of the dominance of reason by another - 'in which the order involved in the paramountcy of reason is made, not found.'[134] In order to show this, Taylor refers to Augustine's concept of the inner light (*lumen naturele*).[135] In Taylor's reading of Augustine, even though good and truth are aspects of God, they cannot be found through exploration of the outside world. God's creation speaks of God's might; however, the only true road to God lies inwards.[136] This is perhaps why Augustine's inquiry takes the form of confessions, as confessions are a type of personal journey. According to Taylor, this cognitive turn is the beginning of a road leading to the concept of radical reflexivity.

> Radical reflexivity brings to the fore a kind of presence to oneself which is inseparable from one's being the agent of experience, something to which access by its very nature is asymmetrical: there is a crucial difference between the way I experience my activity, thought, and feeling, and the way that you or anyone else does.[137]

For Taylor, the final step in the process of internalisation was made by Descartes. What for Augustine was a search for transcendent sources of our existence by reaching into the human soul, for Descartes is, according to Taylor, an autonomous and self sufficient process. This is because Descartes identifies the self with the

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[133] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 119.
[134] *Op. cit.*, p. 124.
[135] Augustine, *Confessions and Enchiridion*, London, SCM Press, 1955, p. 78.
[136] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989, 129.
[137] *Op. cit.*, p. 131.

thinking substance. The aim of Descartes' enquiry was to establish what we can know for certain. In order to do that, he puts into doubt the validity of his own beliefs about the world, searching for a type of knowledge that can withstand this process. [138] He comes to the conclusion that even though we can doubt in the existence of the object of our doubting, we cannot doubt in the existence of the thinking subject without self-contradiction.[139] Thus, our own existence as thinking subjects is the first and most basic principle of knowledge. The existence of our body, however, according to Descartes, does not possess the same level of clarity and certainty.

> I rightly conclude that my essence consist only in my being a thinking thing, being a thinking thing [or a substance whose whole essence or nature is merely thinking]. And although I may, or rather, as I will shortly say, although I certainly do possess a body with which I am very closely conjoined; nevertheless, because, on the one hand, I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in as far as I am only a thinking and unextended thing, and as, on the other hand, I possess a distinct idea of body, in as far as it is only an extended and unthinking thing, it is certain that I [that is, my mind, by which I am what I am] is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it.[140]

Taylor's account of Descartes could be seen as somewhat one-sided. Siegel, for instance, notes that the Cartesian subject, in Descartes' own thought, is not as independent as is sometimes perceived. Siegel reminds us that it is God who, in the end, has to rescue the self from not being able to know the world.[141] In this sense, Descartes' theory is not entirely revolutionary and does not, according to Siegel, perceive the subject as the sole agent of activity.[142]

It could also be argued that Taylor's view of the development of the self overvalues the reflective element of selfhood. Taylor's aim in the end is to portray

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[138] Rene Descartes, *A Discourse on Method Etc.*, London, J.M. Dent & Sons, 1937, p. 85.
[139] *Op. cit.*, p. 86.
[140] *Op. cit.*, p. 132-133.
[141] Jerrold Siegel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge , Cambridge University Press, 2005, especially p. 56-57.
[142] *Op. cit*, p.72.

human beings as 'self-interpreting animals' who find their identity by existing in the space of moral questions.[143]

The moment in the history of philosophy when the self became identical with the thinking substance is crucial for the development of modern subjectivity. This is because consciousness is not part of the world in the same way as body is. Body is subject to laws of nature and, according to Descartes, it can be explained purely mechanistically. Consciousness, on the other hand, cannot be understood simply as a mechanism. Thinking is independent from body and is subject to its own laws. This concept of the independence of the self is a crucial step in a long process of forming the concept of the individual autonomy, as we will see further in the next section.

Descartes' move to place body outside of the self by objectivising it as an object of our experience as thinking subjects also meant that the universe no longer presented itself as a model for the self. The criterion of truth is no longer the reality outside of us but the clarity with which we think. In this sense the self becomes independent and cannot find itself in the world. Descartes' *cogito* situates moral sources within us.[144] But this now becomes a political problem, because there is no way of knowing other individuals than through their bodies. And Descartes does not provide us with a persuasive answer about how to conceptualise the connection between the thinking substance and matter. In other words, by making us think of ourselves as thinking 'selves', Descartes' model of the self does not offer an explanation as to how we can construct political subjectivity. How can 'I' transform to 'We'?

The three main features of the 'subject' understood as the 'thinking thing' are: inwardness, reflexivity, and rationality. Firstly, inwardness refers to the above-described localisation of the sources of the self within the 'subject'. It divides the world of our experience into the subjective and the objective. This dichotomy represents a type of dualism other than the classical opposition between soul and

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[143] Charles Taylor, 'Self-interpreting Animals.' In: *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 45.
[144] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 143.

body. As Taylor notes, in Plato's dualism (repeated in Christian thought), the world is divided between spiritual and material; self has to be located in relation to both. But with modernity, the division is between inside and outside.[145] This is because consciousness is not part of the world in the same way as the body is. The existence of our body, according to Descartes, does not possess the same level of clarity and certainty.[146] Thinking is then perceived as being independent from the body – it is 'subject' to its own laws. This is why inwardness results in a specific idea of autonomy of 'subject'.

Secondly, reflexivity can be understood as an ability of the consciousness to turn on itself. It is, as Siegel suggests, an ability of the mind to 'see cognition as a source of understanding not only of the things but also of the self'.[147] In this sense 'subject' has the inherent ability to take on both an active and a passive role. It is this ambiguity that will also make 'subject' a key political notion for modernity, because it allows us to question the 'necessity' of the existing political and social structures.

Having said that, different theories will assign various levels of activity to 'subject'. As Siegel notes, the radical empiricist tradition perceives the Humean stance on 'subject to be completely passive.[148] On the other hand, Kant views all experience as possible only because it is actively conditioned by the 'subject'.[149]

Finally, I differentiate between rationality and reflexivity to indicate another quality that springs from identifying 'subject' with consciousness. When Descartes differentiates between the thinking substance and what he calls extensive substance (matter), he also claims that they belong to different orders. The mind is a sphere of freedom limited only by reason. Matter, on the other hand, submits to mechanical laws of nature and is a realm of necessity. Therefore, the human condition is to be able to will everything, but be limited by nature in doing so. The role of reason is to

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[145] *Op. cit.*, p. 121.
[146] Rene Descartes, 'Meditations on the First Philosophy,' in *A Discourse on Method Etc.*, London, J.M. Dent & Sons, 1937, p. 127-146.
[147] Jerrold Siegel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 12.
[148] *Ibid.*
[149] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 67-69.

restrict our will by following a set of methodological steps that allow us to reach certainty. [150]

However, because the modern self is both rational and reflexive, it is a 'subject' of technical rationality. Our understanding of ourselves is also technical in the sense that our self-understanding can and does serve as a tool enabling us to transform ourselves.

This ability to reflectively redefine oneself is crucial to the modern notion of individual autonomy. In his book *Retreat from the Modern,* Nicholas Rengger identifies this as the main question of modern humanism: what should we will?[151] For Kant, this is the central question of philosophy and one he believes to be historically conditioned. Asking the above-mentioned question requires a certain level of autonomy that Kant believes only became possible in his time due to the progressive policies of enlightened monarchies in Europe.[152] Kant's generally pessimistic view of mankind is then balanced with his belief in a mutually perpetuated political and moral enlightenment.

However, one response to this view of the idea of individual autonomy is that the way we define ourselves is itself only meaningful in a social context; it is this interplay between subjective and inter-subjective elements which constitutes the modern 'subject'. However, we are then faced with the problem of whether this 'subject' possesses individual autonomy, whether it can be understood as its own author or whether it is a product of the power relations constituting society.

2.2. The Tension within the Modern Self and the Paradox of Individual Autonomy.

The previous section showed the inherent tension within the concept of the self, specifically between its active and passive dimensions. The idea of the emancipation of the individual based on self-creation is put into question by the existence of

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[150] Rene Descartes, 'Meditations on the First Philosophy,' in *A Discourse on Method Etc.*, London, J.M. Dent & Sons, 1937, p. 95-110.
[151] N.J. Rengger, Retreat from the Modern. Humanism, Postmodernism and the Flight from Modernist Culture, p. 82.
[152] Otfried Hoffe, *Immanuel Kant,* London, Beck C.H., 2007.

nations, communities, social classes and cultures. Or, as Siegel argues, by consequently showing the dependence of the allegedly independent and universal selves from biology, history, power or culture.[153]

The tension between the passive and active elements of the self is a key feature of modernity. The Cartesian *ego* which sprung as a radical consequence of dualism has grounded the way in which we think about our freedom but has not provided a way to understand both our belonging in the world and to society. If the self is identical with consciousness it becomes separated from the outside but also from itself. The self cannot know itself without division, and this is where the actual opposition of the subject and object is born. The combination of two worlds into one comes then with the price of dividing the subject. This translates into a political problem as modern society is based on both: the radical notion of freedom plus the modern self on one side and a deep sense of national belonging on the other.[154]

In this section, I explore the link between the idea of the modern self and individual autonomy. Here, I will show that the way we conceptualise the modern self views autonomy as the primary problem of modern selfhood.[155] I will start by discussing the definition of the concept of individual autonomy and then move on to how focusing on autonomy created dilemmas for the modern political self.

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[153] Jerrold Siegel, *The idea of the self : thought and experience in western Europe since the seventeenth century* , Cambridge , Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 4.

[154] Taylor notes that in Romanticism, this tension can be solved only through an expressive unity of the body and the spirit, individual and society. Not only is thinking not possible without language, but thinking is always confined to a particular language. Ultimately the unity of the self can only be achieved in a limited cultural world, in a community of words and images – the nation. As Herder argues, 'languages of different peoples reflect their different visions of things'. As a result, individual autonomy can be seen only in relation to the self-determination of the moral will of the community. This link, however, is only an illusion. Neither Herder nor any of his forerunners can explain the nature of the link between body and spirit. Instead, they tend to believe that matter and nature are themselves spiritual. Hence the choice of the language of heart and intuition which combines certain features of reason and perception. However, as Charles Taylor notes, 'if our unity with the cosmic principle was to be achieved by abandoning reason, through some intuition inarticulable in rational terms, then we have in fact sacrificed the essential.' (Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 12) The Romantic vision of a man as an expressive unity is powerful, but one sided. In the same way as rationalism has problems with understanding belonging, expressivism does not offer a language in which to talk about our choices, rights and duties.

[155] Even if complete autonomy is an illusion (it is impossible to think of individuals outside of any network of reference – human beings are biologically dependant on others), autonomy became one of the most pursued ideals in modernity.

2.2.1. The Concept of Autonomy

The word 'autonomy' comes from ancient Greek and generally is a combination of two Greek words: 'self' and 'rule' or 'law'.[156] It is, like most philosophical concepts, notoriously ambiguous and often used interchangeably with self-determination, freedom, self-creation, authorship and independence. Definitions of autonomy range from relatively narrow and strict to broad and weak. An example of the former can be Robert Wolf's view, in which he defines autonomous action as such that can only originate from one's own desires. In that sense, any external authority contradicts our autonomy.[157] Politics then is a sphere of subjugation. The latter is represented by Joel Feinberg's definition, in which he states 'I am autonomous if I rule me, and no one else rules I'.[158]

There are generally two elements common to most modern definitions of autonomy: firstly, that autonomy has something to do with being free and, secondly, that we can prescribe autonomy only to rational beings. I will explore both of these ideas in turn.

First, freedom is often confused with autonomy. This is partially because some historical conceptions of freedom do indeed relate to both terms. For example, in Berlin's famous discussion of positive liberty he states: 'I wish to be a subject, not an object; to be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes, which are my own, not by causes which affect me, as it were, from outside.'[159] Berlin develops an idea of freedom which seems to be co-extensive with autonomy or self-rule. In contrast, his concept of negative freedom does not include any requirements concerning autonomy, but is limited to the lack of coercion.[160]

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[156] Richard Lindley, *Autonomy*, London, Macmillan, 1986, p. 5.
[157] Robert Paul Wolf, *In Defence of Anarchism*, New York, Harper and Row, 1970, p. 14, 41.
[158] Joel Feinberg, 'The Idea of a Free Man,' in: R.F. Dearden (ed) *Education and the Development of Reason*, London, Routledge, 1972, p. 161.
[159] I. Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', in: *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 6.
[160] *Op. cit.*

However, Richard Lindley argues that freedom and autonomy are two quite different concepts. He uses the example of deceiving a patient in order to convince her to agree to a specific treatment. In this example, the patient is not restrained and, consequently, can exercise freedom of action. If we were to criticise deception in this case, it would not be on the basis of lack of freedom but because it interferes with the patient's autonomy.[161]

Second, rationality is often cited as a condition of autonomy. Lindley sees this view of autonomy as rooted in Kant's theory, according to which one needs to be a fully rational agent to be considered fully autonomous. However, Lindley argues that Kant's requirement of rationality is too strict because it assumes that the true will of an agent is purely rational and disregards the role of passions, desires and inclinations.[162]

Lindley suggests that the rationality condition should be treated more broadly. In his view, rationality is ascribed not when an individual's actions are motivated by desires, but by an individual's ability to choose which desires are motivational.[163] Rationality is thus a quality associated not with higher intellectual functions, but is simply the possession of will. Human beings are rational, according to Lindley, and prawns are not: 'Prawns cannot be judged in terms of autonomy/ heteronomy not because they are irrational but non-rational.'[164]

Autonomy is then a quality assigned to free and rational creatures. But these are only necessary conditions of autonomy. In order to call a person autonomous, we require one other quality – authorship. Dearden points to this quality when he mentions that 'a person is 'autonomous' to the degree that what he thinks and does cannot be explained without reference to his own activity of mind.'[165] When we demand autonomy, we want more than to be left alone, we demand (or claim possession of) the means to our own independent thought and action. It is this

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[161] Richard Lindley, *Autonomy*, London, Macmillan, 1986, p. 14.
[162] *Op. cit.*, p. 20-21.
[163] *Op. cit.*, p. 15.
[164] *Ibid*.
[165] R.F. Dearden, 'Autonomy and Education,' in: *Education and the Development of Reason*, London, Routledge, 1972, p. 453.

particular element of the concept of autonomy that is most interesting in relation to political theory. To become autonomous, we must first develop agency.[166] Thus, not everyone has the capacity to claim autonomy, because we can only claim authorship if we can claim agency. Infants, for instance, do not have this type of autonomy. This is where the concept of autonomy intersects with the idea of the modern self. As explained earlier in this chapter, the modern self is defined by its struggle to constitute itself as an active subject.

2.2.2. Authorship and the Dilemma of the Modern Self

Authorship is a concept central to both the concept of autonomy and the idea of the modern self. Within modern individualist society being an author is a unique quality. This section investigates what it means that the self is an author and explores the political implications of demanding authorship. Drawing on Eyal Chowers' concept of 'entrapment'[167] I will continue to show how the tension within the modern concept of 'subject' affects our understanding of the political and the demands we place on political community. I agree with Siegel, that the type of autonomy associated with authorship rests on a one-sided and largely inaccurate view of the self. We can only reach autonomy in the sense offered by authorship if we choose a fully reflective existence, detaching ourselves from the world and consequently being unlimited by it.[168]

The concept of authorship is ambiguous; it refers to two distinct phenomena which are often confused when we use the word casually. Firstly we refer to authorship when we want to say that a 'thing' – an article, a book, a piece of music – was written by a person or a group of people. The term authorship describes here a special relationship between the author and the world. An article, a book or a piece of music are supposed to represent something unique about the author.[169] They are

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[166] I discuss agency further in Chapter Six.
[167] Eyal Chowers, *The Modern Self in the Labyrinth, Politics and the Entrapment Imagination*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2004.
[168] Jerrold Siegel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge , Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 10.
[169] The idea that art represents individual authorship is itself modern. This is why it is often difficult to establish authorship of some of the medieval works.

expressions of his or her inner self, perhaps even the soul. When we think about authorship in this way, we assume that authors are somehow unique. And it is this uniqueness that grants special value to the author's words and deeds. As authors we are responsible for the final outcome of our work and, hence, we are entitled to ask Homer 'What did you want to say in your story about Odysseus and the Sirens?'. Moreover, on meetings with an author, we seek to learn something secret about their work, something otherwise hidden to non-authors.

The second meaning of the word author refers to the relationship the author has with herself. I understand this as a claim that the self is partly or completely in control of its interpretations. In other words, we are the creators of the image of ourselves and have the ability to transform ourselves according to who we want to be. This ability to reinterpret oneself is based on the belief that an individual can constantly 'start from the beginning'. The claim that this is, in fact, a key element of the modern 'subject' seems today a truism, particularly when we consider the link between individualism and authorship in popular culture and everyday life. The motto to 'be yourself' can be found not only in pop music or advertising but is used in all parts of culture as well as in education and politics. From a young age, we learn that we are unique 'subjects' and that the purpose of our development as selves is not to reproduce knowledge but to be original

We see then that the modern self is characterized by a permanent desire to reconstitute itself. The imperative to always start from the beginning has become a basic principle of science and – with the idea of the revolution[170] – of politics. Nothingness is its natural starting point. However, as nature knows no such thing as nothingness, it becomes the task of a theorist to create it. In a fight against prejudgment and prejudice,[171] everything that is has to be deconstructed. Fetishisation of the absolute beginning and its power is a product of the same metaphysical thinking that modernity and especially enlightenment were trying to

[170] For a detailed discussion of the relationship between the philosophical transformations of subjectivity and the idea of the revolution see: Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man*, Oxford , New York , Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 3-45.

avoid.[172] It would be impossible to understand the tensions that torment the concept of a rational individual without this idea of absolute beginning.

I differentiated between the two meanings of the word authorship: 1) as the relation between the author and the world and 2) as the relationship between the author and herself. What the two different meanings of 'authorship' have in common is that they both relate to a conception of 'subject' that is autonomous and in control of its representations and products. This conception is, of course, contestable. For instance, Foucault's essay *What is an Author?*, criticises the importance our culture attaches to authorship.[173] He suggest that we should think rather of authors as products of their times.[174] Moreover, he investigates why we see culture and society as expressions of individuality. One example Foucault gives is the customary order to display and search for books in a bookstore where books are ordered according to author. Foucault asks if it would not be equally possible to have books grouped according to writing styles, themes or length.[175] Foucault convinces us that this shows that the relationship between the individual and the world is conceptualised in terms of authorship.[176]

Moreover, one can argue that the language we use to reinterpret and develop ourselves exists only within a community. The words and images used to interpret ourselves carry meanings that we cannot necessarily intend or anticipate. In that sense we do not have full autonomy in the way we constitute ourselves because we are limited by the inter-subjectivity of language.[177] All in all, the danger of looking at the self mainly as an author is obvious – we simply do not possess the necessary kind of autonomy in our social and cultural environment.

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[171] Terms brought to their modern philosophical use especially by Gadamer: Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Continuum, London 2004.
[172] Agata Bielik-Robson, *Inna Nowoczesnosc. Pytania o wspolczesna formule duchowosci*, Krakow, Universitas, 2000 and Theodor W. Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London, Verso, 1997, p. 8.
[170] Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', 1969, in: Harari, Josué V., *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1979, p. 101.
[174] *Op. cit.*, p. 101-105.
[175] *Op. cit.*, p. 105-108.
[176] *Op. cit.*, p. 108-113.
[177] This point was argued for example by Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*, London, Routledge, 1958.

But it is the second meaning of the word authorship – the relationship between the author and self - that is most misleading. For the relationship between the self and the world is unlike the one between the self and one's own interpretation of the self. There is an inherent duality between 'I' and the world. But when we think about the self in terms of authorship, we inevitably understand it as split in two. As a result we objectify not only the world but also ourselves. The 'subject' exists in that divided space between the self-made 'I' and the self-made world. But this creates a paradox. How can 'I' be a passive 'subject' of society with a duty to conform to its norms, and also an autonomous individual?

This is the political dilemma of the modern self. According to Eyal Chowers, this is because 'only the I that I think and intuit is a person; the I that belongs to the object that is intuited by me is, similarly to other objects outside me, a thing'.[178] He argues that claims to authorship result in a conflict between the individual and the social world.

Chowers shows while individuals gained freedom and authorship in early modernity, they also became susceptible to the threat of subjection.[179] He argues that we should look for the causes of this phenomenon in the collapse of the idea of natural law in the 17th and 18th centuries which resulted in two different views. The first view, represented by Kant and Condorcet, claimed that the self was finally awaking from its slumber and with the progress of society, mankind will finally reach full maturity.[180] The second view, which Chowers assigns to Herder, states that mankind lacks the necessary knowledge and ability to control the social world it created.[181] As a result of these conceptual transformations, the later popular imagination of the 18th and 19th century exemplified the fear that the products of our reason will chain us to a uniform and degrading existence.[182] Chowers believes that the tension between reason and nature is something inherent to the modern 'subject' itself. This duality of the modern self was according to Chowers best described by

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[178] Eyal Chowers, *The Modern Self in the Labyrinth, Politics and the Entrapment Imagination*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2004, p. 22.
[179] *Op. cit.*, p. 3.
[180] *Op. cit.*, p. 9.
[181] *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

Kant's distinction between 'subject' and 'object'. For Kant, because we are 'subjects' we are free – we belong to the *noumenal* world (the world of things in themselves). However, as objects of knowledge we become part of the phenomenal world and are consequently bound by the laws of nature.[183]

Chowers' discussion sheds light on the idea of individual autonomy because it shows how this autonomy is dependent on a particular view of the self, which he sees as problematic. Thus, autonomy understood not simply as freedom but authorship, is not only impossible but counter-productive – it alienates us both from ourselves and the world. However, I do not think this is entirely the case. In the following section I seek a solution to the dilemma of entrapment.

2.3. A Way Out?

While it is true that there is a tension between the passive and active dimensions of the modern 'subject', it does not necessarily follow that we need to overcome it. What Chowers describes as entrapment is not a condition of the modern self but its primary experience – a way in which it defines itself within social and moral space and thus makes autonomy possible. In her article 'From Freedom without choice to choice without freedom: The Trajectory of the Modern Subject' Cornelia Klinger remarks:

> Modern subjectivity is torn between the impulse to rejoice at the loss of the fetters of origin, tradition, and conventional wisdom of all kinds on the one hand,, and the urge to re-establish certainty, orientation, and solidarity on the other.[184]

Klinger argues that modernity is characterised by two divergent directions: rationalisation and subjectivisation. Even though both currents within the modern culture spring from the same founding experience of liberation from the constraints

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[182] *Op. cit.*, p. 10.
[183] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, New York, Harper & Row, 1964, p. 120.
[184] Cornelia Klinger, 'From Freedom without choice to choice without freedom: The Trajectory of the Modern Subject', *Constellations*, Volume 11, No 1, 2004 , p. 126.

of the holistic order,[185] they understand achieved autonomy differently. Rationalisation, which refers to a belief in reason and rationality and the objectivity that these can provide, defines autonomy in terms of efficiency and utility. Subjectivisation on the other hand, referring to both the individual and the collective self, defines autonomy in terms of 'subject' no longer being assigned rank in a grand order.[186] In other words, rationalization represents the technical aspect of modernity. This drive for making the world rational and 'subject' to our will is reflected in modern science, economy and law. It is perhaps best understood in the image of an 18th century ethnologist who travels the world in search of new species of insects to catch, pin and catalogue. Klinger argues that rationalisation differentiates and divides. Subjectivisation is, according to her, the opposite process that centres on 'subject'.[187] Klinger's central claim is that in modernity the identity of the self is born from a search for re-embeddedness. So, according to her, Simmel's law that 'Individuality of being and doing unfolds [...] in the same measure as the social context of the individual expands'[188] is, for most of that period, correct.

More specifically, Klinger attempts to show that the modern 'subject' gained its 'inner depth' through maintaining an alterity[189] towards society and political institutions.[190] The modern 'subject' is on the crossroads between celebrating its uniqueness and the desire to be like everyone else. In my opinion, no one describes this burden of identity of having to be a self better than Nietzsche (see also Chapter Seven).[191] Heidegger also saw this tension, which he expressed in the concept of '*Man-selbst*' – the desire of the individual to shed her autonomy and act as 'one acts'.[192]

However, according to Klinger, Simmel's law loses its validity in the postmodern era. Klinger attributes this to the decline of family, class, nation and

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[185] *Op. cit.*, p. 121.
[186] *Op. cit.*, p. 121.
[187] *Op. cit.*, p. 122.
[188] *Op. cit.*, p. 122.
[189] I have taken this term from Cornelia Klinger. 'Alterity' refers to the 'otherness' of the entity in contrast to which the self's identity is developed. Cornelia Klinger, 'Freedom without choice to choice without freedom: 'The Trajectory of the Modern Subject', *Constellations*, Volume 11, No 1, 2004.
[190] *Op. cit.*, p. 124.
[191] *Op. cit.*, p. 126.
[192] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2005, p. 165-167.

other sources of substantive collective identities leading to a dominance of rationality over subjectivity. As a result, we find ourselves in what Klinger calls a no-win situation, that being a world offering neither freedom nor identity.[193] According to Klinger the modern 'subject' progresses from 'a freedom that proved to be without choice to innumerable choices without freedom'[194] because 'the subject that would be able to enjoy this new freedom vanishes'.[195] This is, of course, a variation of a well known argument that in the marketplace of contemporary culture the individual loses itself in its choices.[196] Klinger argues that in late modernity when the traditional sources of meaning were lost and replaced by a commercialised production of meaning, the distinction between subjectivity and rationalization was abolished.[197]

At the same time, Klinger's argument is set against both the mainstream postmodern theory of subjectivity and what she calls 'fundamentalism'. The former group sees globalisation as an opportunity to free the self from the constraints which were characteristic to the concept of the modern 'subject'.[198] The latter group represents an attempt to re-assert traditional foundations of identity – nation, class and family. While we often see the clash between these two outlooks as a debate between pre-modern, perhaps even classical, culture and postmodernity, Klinger does not believe this is the case. For her, there is no clear distinction between modernity and what is sometimes called the 'postmodern' era.

> While modernity is defined in sharp contrast to a pre-modern phase of history, by a clear-cut break in the flow of time, as expressed in the metaphor of revolution, no such rupture seems to occur in the present.[199]

In fact, Klinger argues that the decline of modern sources of subjectivity is part of the process of modernisation which is accelerating at a rate never before

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[193] Cornelia Klinger, 'From Freedom without choice to choice without freedom: The Trajectory of the Modern Subject', *Constellations*, Volume 11, No 1, 2004, p. 129.
[194] *Op. cit.*, p. 131.
[195] *Op. cit.*, p. 131.
[196] Gordon Mathews, *Global Culture/Individual Identity: Searching for Home in the Cultural Supermarket*, 2000.
[197] Cornelia Klinger, From Freedom without choice to choice without freedom: The Trajectory of the Modern Subject, Constellations, Volume 11, No 1, 2004 , p. 132.
[198] *Op. cit.*, p. 130.
[199] *Op. cit.*, p. 129.

experienced.[200] What is dangerous about this process is that, as I have shown above, Klinger believes that both subjectivity and rationalisation are necessary components of individualism.

A somewhat similar way of dealing with the tension between subjective and rational components of the self is offered by Siegel. In his opaque work *The Idea of the Self*, Siegel argues that we can find three separate dimensions of selfhood within modernity: bodily, relational and reflective.[201] The bodily dimension of selfhood places the sources of selfhood in individual passions and needs. The first dimension of selfhood is evoked when we identify ourselves with our deepest, often subconscious, desires and believe they are key to explaining our actions.[202] According to Siegel, the relational aspect is usually culture-specific and relates to our social identity and place in society, the most radical example being Marxism.[203] Finally, the reflective dimension of selfhood is defined by a specific notion of rational autonomy or self-determination. The self is here defined as being independent from passions and needs as well as external conditions. We are perceived as masters of our own fate.

For Siegel these three dimensions of the self are not exclusive but necessarily remain in a state of continuous interplay. He claims that even though the most radical and perhaps theoretically stimulating are one-dimensional versions of self, a more multi-dimensional model of the self avoids reductionism.[204] One-dimensional concepts of the self are faulty because they create disharmony between the self and the world. They create a false opposition between authorship and determination, 'masters and slaves, civilized and barbarians, saved and damned, oppressed and free'.[205]

What intrigues me is that Siegel believes that whenever we think of the concept of the self as primarily reflective, we place demands on it that that are

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[200] *Ibid.*
[201] *Op. cit.*, p. 5.
[202] *Ibid.*
[203] *Ibid.*
[204] *Op. cit.*, p. 7.
[205] *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

simply too high. The radical freedom of thought that the Cartesian ego postulates cannot be fulfilled in the world.[206] But that is an irrational expectation. In fact Siegel notes that the Cartesian ego itself 'suddenly enters into the truth of its own self-reflectional subjectivity just at the point when its subjection to worldly confusion and uncertainty seems complete'.[207] In order to bring harmony back between the self and the world we need to resign from this notion of radical freedom. Siegel calls this concept 'moderate autonomy'.

Both Klinger and Siegel evaluate the contemporary attempt to see the 'subject' mostly through its reflective, rational aspects and find this attempt misconceived. They show that if we understand the self mainly in its self-creative ability – its ability to choose identities and self-interpretations - we in fact amplify the strength of disciplinary power. It is not the state that is the main source of that power but the market. Consumerism ultimately leads to a loss of alterity towards society and transforms the hegemony of politics to that of economy.[208]

Conclusion

To conclude, by exploring the changes in the concept of the self and the origins of the modern political self, I have shown that the story of the self is more complex than it could seem at first sight. The modern account of the concepts of the self and autonomy is one-sided and reflects tensions between the idea of individual autonomy and community. I have shown that the tension within the self between its active and passive elements and the tension between the self and the world are not problems but are instead key fundamental accomplishments of modernity.

The self cannot exist in nothingness; it needs a bounded space of a political community (as explored further in Chapter Six). The dualism of the self that exists whenever it maintains an alterity towards society and itself is a condition of individual and political autonomy. Consequently, we should not think that individual

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[206] *Op. cit.*, p. 32.
[207] *Op. cit.*, p. 55.
[208] Cornelia Klinger, 'From Freedom without choice to choice without freedom: The Trajectory of the Modern Subject', *Constellations*, Volume 11, No 1, 2004, p. 134.

autonomy and national identity are mutually exclusive. I will develop this point further in Chapter Six, in which I argue that this dualistic view of the self requires the framework of nationhood in order to facilitate the development of moral and political agency.

3

Defending the 'Political' Dimension of Nationhood

Little has shaped modern European history more than the formation of nation-states and the accompanying belief that citizens should be nationals. The relationship between nationalism and state have proven useful not only because of the (questionable) value of nations as structures capable of generating loyalty and support, but also because of the way they allowed for the generation of social solidarity. Moreover, national identity offered an alternative to feudalism in terms of conceptualizing political authority both territorially and legally.

In the previous chapter I explored the development of the modern self and its link to nationhood and individual autonomy. My findings indirectly addressed the first line of criticism of national identity – that of collectivism – by showing that the modern self is in fact defined by a tension between its passive and active dimensions and, as such, requires a bounded community to resolve this tension. Therefore, autonomy is not something individuals gain once they free themselves from communal life, but in fact can only be gained in a bounded community.

In this chapter I move on to addressing the second line of criticism of nationhood – namely that it is 'a-' or anti-political. The Romantic tradition represented by Herder, Humboldt and Fichte was the first attempt to provide a philosophical understanding of the nation. However, Fichte's theory situated national identity almost entirely in a pre-political, natural force, effectively leaving the nation out from the normative debate on the structure and limits of political community. National identity has since often been framed in radical ethnic terms as an identity based on 'blood and soil' rather than common values or aims. In this chapter I will be in conversation with theorists who identify the concept of the nation with an apolitical community and resultantly perceive nationhood as a threat to politics.

The set of institutionalized practices that the state employs to define its citizens as nationals, or its nationals as citizens, is complex and multi-layered. However, these practices rest on the idea that rights of individuals can be articulated

and defended only through the principle of the sovereignty of the nation. This has been expressed both in the principle of modern democratic sovereignty of *demos* as well as in international law. But the identification of the state with its (ethnically defined) population is philosophically problematic. As Hannah Arendt points out, '[in the French Revolution] the same nation was at once declared to be subject to laws, which supposedly would flow from the Rights of Man, and sovereign, that is bound by no universal law and acknowledging nothing superior to itself'.[209] As a result, nationalism became a synonym for using the state as a tool of ideology. The employment of the state's administrative apparatus to manage immigration policy, education, propaganda, resettlement and segregation policies are just a few infamous aspects of nationalist ideology.[210] This deformation of the national principle, acclaimed to be the force behind many tragedies of the 20th century, was followed by a failure of political philosophy to adequately incorporate the idea of national identity into the theory of political community.

This chapter addresses this failure in two ways. It examines key arguments against understanding nationhood as a political concept by drawing on classical understandings of politics. It also shows why incorporating elements of the concept of nationhood into political philosophy is problematic. In the first part of this chapter I examine the reasons why nationhood is often seen as distinct from a relationship between citizens, i.e. is a non-political relationship. In the second part of the chapter I move on to a critique of nationhood as an anti-political phenomenon. I will draw particularly on Michael Oakeshott's theory of civil association, Hobbes's social contract theory and Hannah Arendt's and Berlin's respective concepts of 'politics'. These are not only an interesting selection from the historical point of view, but also all four authors are particularly convincing in their arguments against nationhood.

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[209] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, London, Penguin Books, 1990, p. 222.

[210] While this feature is not inherent only to nationalism, nationalist ideology seems to have been historically the most prominent in facilitating the expansion of the administrative apparatus in Western states. The process of nation-building benefits from a strong unified state and vice versa; creating a feeling of national unity and uniformity has assisted the development of centralised power (such as by ensuring that the populous knows the language of the administration). Shared national identity was also used to justify claims to the throne and was a major step in transforming military service to that based on conscription. See: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 2006, p. 19-22.

The reason why their accounts are ultimately flawed lies partially in the way they oppose the concepts of the nation and the political. The nation is perceived in these accounts mostly as a natural (pre-political) force or sentiment, which demands a certain type of homogeneity and unity. In contrast, politics is portrayed as a public, legal activity that only makes sense under the conditions of diversity. In this and the following chapter I will try to show why I think that both these concepts are misrepresented.

Based on the arguments projected thus far in this thesis, we can see why it is necessary to consider whether or not nationhood is a political concept and why this project goes beyond an exercise in the history of political thought. Within the most recent circles of Anglophone political thought, questions about national identity are of a predominantly moral character. Most of the literature focuses on the ways in which national identity affects our considerations about rights and duties towards other human beings.

However, in Chapters Two and Six I try to answer more fundamental questions about the nature of the relationship between nationhood and political subjectivity. The purpose of this is twofold: firstly to show that locating nationhood outside of political subjectivity cannot be a neutral basis for a normative evaluation of national identity because it already rests on a normative claim about the limits of 'the political'; and secondly, in thinking about nationhood, to do justice to the ambiguity of the notion which denominates both a kind of relationship between individuals and the consciousness of the political meaning of this relationship.

3.1. Why Nationhood is Not a Relationship Between Citizens

The idea that a degree of ethnic, cultural and historical homogeneity is beneficial for a political community is not novel. Common descent was an important element of many classical and modern models of political community. Even Plato, when trying to set up his ideal form of community, finds it necessary to tell a story about 'soldiers

from earth' to provide the commonwealth with a sense of brotherhood and unity.[211] As Smith points out, narratives about peoplehood are commonplace both in philosophical and religious literature.[212] Plato's story, however, is especially illuminating. He does not place the mythical origins of his community in any pre-historical state. Instead, he writes of the ancestors as being soldiers made of earth, placing them clearly in the natural order. It is this interplay between natural and political – earth, blood and right – that became crucial first to the concept of the political and then to the concept of national identity.

However, one may argue that only certain types of homogeneity are beneficial in politics. It has already been stated in previous chapters that national identity is a notoriously ambiguous notion. My focus in this chapter is on the notion of nationhood, which denotes a relationship between individuals defined in terms of national identity. In other words it is a relationship that exists when individuals recognize each other as members of the same nation.

There are two main philosophical critiques of nationhood as a relationship between citizens. Firstly, it has often been suggested that national sentiment is a pre-political, natural force and as such is alien to politics. This argument was put forward by Minogue and Berlin, who were writing in response to the dramatic events of the nationalistic ideologies of the early 20th century. They both see the unifying and homogenizing character of nationalism as a threat to democratic legitimacy. This is because they portray the nation as a natural community.[213] However, this notion of a natural community is so heavily contested today that it cannot be a viable critique of nationalism as a political principle.

Secondly, and more promisingly, a shared nationhood can be viewed as a different type of relationship than a shared civicness. The state, claim the proponents of this way of thinking, is primarily a legal community. Furthermore, political authority comes from something more than the recognition of common descent. Drawing on Michael Oakeshott's concept of civil association and Hobbes's concept

[211] Plato, *The Republic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, Book Three.
[212] Rogers Smith, *Stories of Peoplehood*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

of right I will examine these lines of thought to determine whether the distinction between national and civic/political can be maintained.

3.1.1. *Cives* vs. The Nation: Michael Oakeshott's Concept of Civil Association

The fact that the relation between citizens is identical to the bonds of nationhood is historically problematic as state boundaries are not the same as national boundaries. Furthermore, not all nations make claims to statehood (as opposed to other types of political autonomy), and there are many more nations than states. Nevertheless, national identity remains one of the strongest bases of political claims to citizenship. Is there not a link between the two?

One line of argument comes from Michael Oakeshott who argues in *On Human Conduct* that Modern European states have not originated out of any unity or ethnic homogeneity. [214] On the contrary, European politics was an arena of constant instability and internal differentiation. In fact, the most durable states in European history had the most internal differences.[215] The emergence of the state was, according to Oakeshott, not a product of the unifying force of the nation, but a result of the destruction of local law by centralised administrative structures. The population that inhabited the territory of a state did not form a community. Oakeshott remarks: 'the most that might have been expected was that some day, with luck, it might discover some sort of precarious identity and manage to be itself'.[216]

Oakeshott has a modernist view of nationalism (see Chapter Two). For instance, Gellner makes the same point but to a different end.[217] Unlike Oakeshott, he sees nation-building and state-building processes as interlinked. But just like Oakeshott, Gellner sees homogeneity as a product of the modern industrial society rather than shared national identity. Homogeneity is then not imposed by

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[213] K.R. Minogue, *Nationalism*, London, University Paperbacks, 1969, p. 11; Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current, Essays in the History of Ideas*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 9-11.
[214] Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2003, p. 186.
[215] *Op. cit.*, p. 187.
[216] *Op. cit.*, p. 188.
[217] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford 1983, p. 40.

nationalism, but 'rather that homogeneity imposed by objective, inescapable imperative eventually appears on the surface in the form of nationalism'.[218]

> It is not the case that nationalism imposes homogeneity out of a wilful cultural Machtbedűrfniss; it is the objective need for homogeneity which is reflected in nationalism. If it is the case that a modern industrial state can only function with a mobile, literate, culturally standardized, inter-changeable population, as we have argued, then the illiterate, half-starved populations sucked from their erstwhile rural cultural ghettoes in the melting pots of shanty-towns yearn for incorporation into some one of those cultural pools which already has, or looks as if it might acquire, a state of its own, with the subsequent promise of full cultural citizenship, access to primary schools, employment, and all.[219]

In this sense, the nation-state is clearly an illusion. National identity is a response to the changing form of political authority. The kind of changes in a constitution produced when passing from a feudal state to absolute monarchy required a new device for acquiring legitimacy. And this, according to Oakeshott, could be only acknowledged in a language of civil intercourse.[220] It is only through this type of legitimacy that the state can exercise its continuously growing power which rests mainly on administrative control.[221]

In order to understand Oakeshott's stance on nationhood, we need see where national groups fit in his theory of associations. In *On Human Conduct*, Oakeshott differentiates between two main types of association: enterprise association and civil association. They are identified not as historical models but different modes of association (ideal types). Enterprise Association is a voluntary association constituted by a common purpose or good other than its own existence. Civil association is a self-sufficient mode of association. It is not constituted to achieve any extrinsic purpose or good. I will now discuss these two types of association in more detail.

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[218] *Op. cit.*, p. 39.
[219] *Op. cit.*, p. 46.
[220] Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2003, p. 191.
[221] *Op. cit.*, p. 195.

First, civil association rests, according to Oakeshott, on the idea of autarky and thus shapes its own limits. Furthermore, this mode of association is not voluntary. We are born as members of a particular state. In fact, it is the state that recognises and records our birth, the process of which initiates a series of other administrative procedures that guide as through growing up and being educated and records and recognises our death.

The idea of autarky is principally an Aristotelian intuition. Aristotle uses the opposition of *oikos* (household) and *polis* in book one of *The Politics* to explain to the reader the subject matter of his enquiry.[222] The household is a domain of force, violence and subjection.[223] It is dominated by private interest and necessity. In contrast, *polis* is a space where those who are free and equal meet to discuss the affairs that matter to all of them.[224] The political is thus understood as public and free. But it is more than that. A household is a group of people related by blood or servitude. Members of the household have different roles determined by the will of the head of the household. This way of living together is instrumental – it provides for the basic human needs. Politics are exactly contrary to that. Political societies relate together those who are not otherwise related.[225] Citizenship is regulated by law, not by blood (*oikos* is defined by kinship).

Conversely, enterprise association is defined by Oakeshott in the terms of a common purpose and of the management of this purpose. Examples of such associations are easy to find. Oakeshott mentions a fire station or a tennis club,[226] both of which provide good ideas of the kinds of activities members of these associations engage in. To become a fireman or a member of a tennis club means to accept the rules of these organisations, but it also requires a will to play tennis or save people from fire. On this idea Oakeshott comments: 'Pursuing a purpose or promoting an interest is, however, nothing other than responding to continuously emergent situations by deciding to do this rather than that in the hope or the

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[222] Aristotle, *The Politics*, London, Penguin Books, 1992, Book One.
[223] *Ibid.*
[224] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1988.
[225] Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2003, p. 130.
[226] *Ibid.*

expectation of curing an imagined and wished-for outcome connected with that purpose.'[227]

Civil association is for Oakeshott not a relationship based on a common pursuit of a shared goal. In other words it is a formal and not a functional or a teleological relationship. Members of such a commonwealth are not required to share beliefs or opinions about anything. In fact such a community of beliefs could never be called political. The purpose of politics is to create a many-in-one community while maintaining the diversity of interests and views. Civil relationship is thus defined by Oakeshott as a relationship in terms of recognition of a common authority. Such recognition cannot come from loyalty or affection. It does not depend on our opinion of the person or people in authority. A political association is entirely based on the recognition of rules (laws) that bind it together.[228] This does not mean that tennis clubs or fire stations do not have rules or laws, but that they are not constituted by their rules or laws. The rules of an enterprise association codify an already-shaped engagement.[229]

Of course it might be said that the same can be applied to the state. It is in fact very difficult to imagine any kind of legislation that would not be to an extent a codification of some pre-existing practices. But Oakeshott would argue that even when these rules are deliberated, their desirability is not assessed solely in terms of a substantive result. Or as Oakeshott puts it: 'What relates *cives* to one another and constitutes civil association is the acknowledgement of the authority of *respublica* and the recognition of subscription to its conditions as an obligation.'[230] In other words, a civil relationship is a relationship among individuals solely in terms of their obligations to each other and to the community they are members of. These obligations do not determine the choices that individuals have to make, but prescribe the conditions of any actions they could take, both in their private and public

[227] *Op. cit.*, p. 155.
[228] *Op. cit.*, p. 124.
[229] *Op. cit.*, p. 129.
[230] *Op. cit.*, p. 149.

capacity. In contrast to with enterprise association, the recognition of these conditions occurs prior to consent.[231]

Oakeshott emphasises that both civic and enterprise association are valuable in political life, but notes that enterprise association can be seen to threaten politics as an autonomous mode of action. Even though it is the civil association that Oakeshott seems to identify with the political community *per se*, the plurality of voluntary groups (tennis clubs, political groups, social movements, religious groups) is valuable as it expresses the distinctiveness of individuals. In other words, enterprise associations allow us to explore the rich diversity of human life, without which these modes of action would not have any meaning.[232] Oakeshott's liberal individualism does not stand in opposition with membership in groups.

However, as Richard Boyd notes, there are many groups which, while not exercising coercion, have a semi-compulsory character. Examples of these are obligatory trade unions, established religions to which we are born to, and so on. It is these types of groups which individuals may be born into, and are, Boyd argues, based on substantive bonds of fraternity, which Oakeshott seems to perceive as homogenising and anti-political because they limit our choice. [233]

Consequently, in Oakeshott's theoretical framework, nationhood is treated neither as a type of civil relationship nor as an enterprise association. Nations are associations in virtue of a perceived shared identity and history rather than recognition of common authority. As such, they represent a substantive rather than a formal relationship. However, they are not generally regarded as voluntary associations. Nation, for Oakeshott, is not a community in a political sense of the word. What it aspires to be could be maybe called a community of wills. That however, would be misleading as the nation itself does not present a way to mediate individual will without the state.

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[231] *Op. cit.*, p. 152.
[232] Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2003, p. 490.
[233] Richard Boyd, 'Michael Oakeshott on Civility, Civil Society and Civil Association,' *Political Studies*, 2004, Vol. 52, p. 608.

Oakeshott chooses then to avoid referring to a language of national identity or belonging as anti-individualistic and destructive to the formal nature of civil association. Instead, he claims that politics is sustained by a notion of civility, in which individuals can participate if they set aside 'all that differentiates them from one another' to 'recognize themselves as moral equals'.[234] Richard Boyd argues that:

> Because civil association is defined by this relationship of morality, it requires more than just equal treatment in the eyes of a rule of law that makes its appearance only in situations of conflict or transgression. As a kind of moral relationship, implicated in shared 'moral' or 'adverbial' practices, civil association emphasizes the active recognition of others as our moral equals.[235]

In contrast, nationhood is, to Oakeshott, based on difference – we recognise fellow nationals not based on their moral equality as fellow human beings or moral agents but as members of a specific community.

3.1.2. State as a Legal Community: Hobbes's Concept of Right

Oakeshott's argument could be understood as a contemporary version of a similar pattern of thought in Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Oakeshott was a well-known authority on Hobbes as well as a highly regarded editor of his works.[236] *Leviathan* does not include the concept of nationality in the considerations of the state.[237] In fact, there seems to be no place for nationhood in the entire social contract. The state of war of all against all as described in the *Leviathan* can legitimize political authority only if it is understood as a state between individuals. The continuous readiness to war that remains inherent even in the state of civil society can only be mediated by a forceful

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[234] Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2003, p. 128.
[235] Richard Boyd, 'Michael Oakeshott on Civility, Civil Society and Civil Association,' *Political Studies*, 2004, Vol. 52, p. 612.
[236] However, Oakeshott's reading of Hobbes has often been criticised as strongly motivated by his own philosophical agenda. See: Ted Miller, 'Oakeshott's Hobbes and the Fear of Political Rationalism,' *Political Theory*, Vol. 29, No. 6, 2001.
[237] While Hobbes could not possibly have a modern view of nationhood, given that European nations were still in the process of formation at the time, the distinction between the state and the people identified by their common history and culture was one that could already be made.

ruler. The stability of civil institutions that guard the peace depends on this recognition of authority and nothing more.[238]

This is why we will not find much on national identity in Hobbes's work. If Hobbes talks about nations, he uses the term in the same way he uses the term state.[239] When John Stuart Mill wrote his essay *On Representative Government*, he too did not devote much attention to common descent; but for Mill, like many in the liberal tradition, organizing nations into states was a condition of social stability and of free institutions. He defined nationality as a type of sentiment or a set of sentiments that arise among members of a given historical community. These can originate as a product of cultural integrity but do not have to do so. Management of sympathy and antipathy among ethnically defined and historically formed groups is key to state-building.[240] These sentiments allow citizens to engage in cooperation within common institutions.

For Hobbes common sentiment has nothing to do with institutional order. On the contrary, the unifying power of institutions might make it possible for a community to identify with itself. The bonds of loyalty are not established prior to political community. The only kind of loyalty that can protect us from the state of nature comes from the recognition of the Right of the sovereign, either by institution or by conquest.[241]

In Foucault's interpretation of Hobbes this becomes even more evident. Foucault argues that, for the author of *Leviathan*, the quality of the will that recognizes the sovereign is irrelevant.

> It does not matter whether you fought or did not fight, whether you were beaten or not; in any case, the mechanism that applies to you who have been defeated is the same mechanism that we find in the state of nature, in the constitution of the State, and that we also find, quite naturally, in the

[238] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, London, Penguin, 1997.
[239] For example: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, London, Penguin, 1997, p. 115.
[240] John S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, London, Routledge, 1904. p. 360-361.
[241] T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, London, Penguin,1997, Chapter XX.

> most tender and natural relationship of all: that between parents and children.[242]

But this passage must sound strange to us. Europe has been immersed in conflicts that originated from the refusal of the conquered to recognize the authority of the conquerors' claim to power, often based on claims of national identity. This refusal to consider authority on national grounds comes, according to Foucault, from Hobbes's reluctance to recognize the discourse of historical politics, where authority is considered in relation to the understanding of political past, identity and domination. According to Foucault, Hobbes's theory becomes problematic whenever we encounter the problem of conquest: 'We may well have been conquered, but we will not remain conquered. This is our land, and you will leave it.'[243]

Oakeshott's remark that the history of Europe is the history of Poland can thus mean something more than the author intended.[244] He used it in the context of the constantly changing borders of Poland and its ambiguous history when it constituted a multi-national monarchy from the 15th to the 18th centuries and its territory stretched from today's Estonia to the ports of the Black Sea. But what is theoretically more interesting is what happens in the 19th century when the country disappears from the map of Europe.[245]

The reason why nationhood cannot be a relation between citizens for Hobbes is not so much that it is a different type of relationship, but that Hobbes wanted his theory to address situations when these two do not overlap. Both Hobbes and Oakeshott pursue a similar line of thinking by restricting the notion of political community to that of a rule-based association.

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[242] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended. Lectures at the College de France*, London, Penguin, 2003, p. 97.
[243] *Ibid.*
[244] Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2003, p. 250.
[245] This experience is one of the reasons why social contract theory has never gained any popularity in the Polish intellectual tradition. The experience of conquest makes it difficult to accept that when we consider questions of political authority and legitimacy, what we are talking about is merely a Hobbesian right to rule.

I have briefly drawn the key points of the arguments against understanding nationhood as a relation between citizens as can be found in Oakeshott's and Hobbes' theories. I argued that the former claimed that citizens can be related to each other as citizens only in terms of the recognition of rules. Furthermore, for Oakeshott, a political community exists only in virtue of this relation of civility. It is not constituted by common sentiment, blood or purpose. Hobbes, on the other hand, claimed that citizens can be related to each other only as subjects in virtue of the sovereign who binds them together. In fact, both these arguments are statements about political subjectivity. But before we explore that, I will present one more argument against nationhood, that of Hannah Arendt.

3.2. Nationhood as the Anti-Political: Arendt's Account of the French Revolution

The experience of 20th century totalitarianism, ethnic conflict and extremist nationalism has made political philosophy particularly sensitive to the threat nationalism poses to democratic politics. Berlin expresses it most clearly when he writes that nationalism is a principle of organic homogeneity in which the members of the national community have to submit their wills to the pursuit of common values and goals.[246] Those who are not member of a particular group or do not share particular values and goals are then forced to do so.[247]

Even today, one of the most popular British public intellectuals, Anthony Grayling, begins his essay on nationalism by stating: 'Nationalism is an evil. It causes wars, its roots lie in xenophobia and racism, it is a recent phenomenon – an invention of the last few centuries – which has been of immense service to demagogues and tyrants but to no-one else.'[248] This hostility towards nationalism is further justified by the opposition some scholars find between the concept of the

[246] Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current, Essays in the History of Ideas*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 338, 349.
[247] *Op. cit.*, p. 341.
[248] A.C. Grayling, *Ideas That Matter: A Personal Guide for the 21st Century: Key Concepts for the 21st Century*, London, Phoenix, 2010, p. 55.

nation and politics. The failure of nationalism in the third quarter of the 20th century was sudden and unexpected. As Berlin notes, most liberal thinkers tolerated nationalism because they believed it would disappear with the progress of the rationalist tradition with its source in the European enlightenment.[249] But this did not happen. On the contrary, national interest became one of the strongest factors shaping contemporary politics. Bernard Crick, in his famous work *In Defence of Politics,* identifies nationalism as one of the key threats to politics. When does nationalism become anti-political? According to Crick even though the existence of nations is morally ambivalent,[250] nationalism promotes two potentially anti-political ideas. These are: 1) that 'there are objective characteristics'; that 2) 'there can be a single criterion for organizing states'.[251]

However, this seems to be a very limited and one-sided view of nationalism. While it can relate to ethno-centric nationalism of the 20th century, or even certain contemporary forms of nationalism (for example in Eastern Europe), the reality is that many modern forms of national identity are much more fluid (see Chapter Seven). Crick's understanding of the concept of the nation relies on a very classical, Arendtian reading of the French Revolution as the origin of modern democratic politics. He sees it as the failure of the Revolution to produce a truly universal mode of politics.[252]

The French Revolution[253] is, according to Arendt, a key event in the history of the West.[254] It is also an ambiguous moment. Its meaning is mostly symbolic as it

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[249] Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current, Essays in the History of Ideas*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 340.
[250] Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics*, 2nd edition, London, Penguin, 1982, p. 77.
[251] *Op. cit.*, p. 75.
[252] *Op. cit.*, p. 78.
[253] I chose to use the term 'modern revolution' rather than the term 'revolution' or 'revolutions'. At first sight these three formulations seem similar. But they are not. The term revolution has been appropriated by Western discourse to denote any type of radical change. In that sense of course, revolutions are not modern. In a more narrow sense, historians and political scientists often write about revolutions specifically to distinguish between social transformations and political changes (reform), and violent changes of leadership (coup). But when we try to write the intellectual history of the West then we come across a different, but well-established meaning of the term revolution: one that understands revolutions as inherently modern because they have something to do with the erosion of the old grand order.
[254] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, London, Penguin Books, 1990, p. 215.

has become a point of reference for all other revolutions but also in all major political ideologies. She sees our political language, especially on the Continent, as revolutionary at its roots.[255] In this sense, Arendt's examination of the Revolution is intended to uncover the basic assumptions of this language: what it brought to political discourse and what has been lost. Arendt sees both the French and American Revolutions as unique moments of public spirit that presented an alternative form of government (direct democracy) to that of the centralised, representative democracy emerging from old monarchical institutions.

For Arendt, both the French and the American Revolutions were primarily expressions of public spirit. She claims that man could no longer be happy only in the private sphere,[256] so citizens demanded access to public life.[257] Arendt describes examples of revolutionary political forms that made that type of engagement possible: the Parisian clubs, town hall gatherings, German *rate* and Russian *rady*. These small communities were all formed spontaneously and worked without a constitution, according to a few general rules. Arendt gives an example of one of the Parisian clubs:

> The society will deal with everything that concerns freedom, equality, unity, indivisibility of the republic; [its members] will mutually enlighten themselves and they will especially inform themselves on the respect due to the laws and decrees which are promulgated; how to intend to keep order in their discussion: if a speaker digresses or gets tiresome, the audience will stand up.[258]

But the public spirit of radical (democratic) self-determination of the Parisian Clubs and Societies, Communal Councils, and then *Soviets* and *Räte* has been lost. In Arendt's view, liberal nation-states are not a success of the revolutionary movements, but a mark of their failure. The civil liberties, contemporary individualism, the welfare state and the rule of public opinion are concessions that

[255] Ibid., 1990.
[256] *Op. cit.*, p. 127.
[257] *Op. cit.*, p. 216.
[258] *Op. cit.*, p. 242-3.

the revolutionary movement made. They replaced direct public engagement, autonomy and representation.

The idea of Revolution is characterised by the perpetual need to start from the beginning. But there is an inherent tension between that type of radical self-determination and security. Hence the idea of the republic, on Arendt's reading, needs to be proposed in order to overcome this contradiction through the principles of sovereignty of the nation and democratic representation. However, she believes that this works as pretence for establishing a centralised apparatus of control.[259] As Elizabeth Fraser notes, Arendt's *On Revolution* is a 'sustained analyses of what happens when instrumentality replaces politics.'[260]

For Arendt this represents the tragedy of the Revolution, where newly gained political freedom could not be translated into a political will that could constitute a durable entity. The ability of the people to govern themselves was overcome by the need to create a stable entity, capable of protecting the rights of individuals. During the French Revolution, societies offered ways of accessing the public realm. Thus, the gap between the government and the governed was closed. But when the Revolutionaries were faced with the task of writing a constitution, they decided to do away with societies as enemies of the republic. Robespierre turned against them in the name of what he called the great popular Society of the whole French people.[261] This need for unity is not merely a concern about the strength of institutions. For Arendt it is a problem inherent in the act of Revolution. The idea of starting from the beginning is a powerful concept in modernity because it is linked to the concept of autonomy (see previous chapter). But in the act of revolting against the government it is precisely the principles under which the community is based that are recognised as both alien and oppressive;[262] it is this freedom understood as re-invention that can

[259] *Op. cit.*, p. 244.
[260] Elizabeth Frazer, 'Hannah Arendt: The risks of the public realm,' *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2009, p. 213.
[261] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, London, Penguin Books, 1990, p. 232.
[262] For a discussion of Arnedt's account of the exclusivity of the modern state, and how this exclusion has been also been present in the discourse of human rights see: Patrick Hayden, 'From Exclusion to Containment: Arendt, Sovereign Power, and Statelessness,' *Societies Without Borders*, No. 3, 2008.

be the source of public spirit. However, the act of creating a constitution involves a tension between revolutionary freedom and questions of stability.

> The act of founding the new body politic, of devising the new form of government involves the grave concern with the stability and durability of the new structure; the experience, on the other hand, which those who are engaged in this grave business are bound to have is the exhilarating awareness of the human capacity of beginning, the high spirits which have always attended the birth of something new on earth.[263]

It is not clear whether Arendt actually believed that the public spirit of the Revolution could be preserved without the need to constantly renew it. As Jefferson put it, 'the tree of liberty must be refreshed, from time to time, with blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.'[264] Arendt's sympathy towards Jefferson's concept of a wards system and towards French clubs and societies was justified mostly by her hostility to the concept of representation. Apart from the many theoretical difficulties that it produces, representation for Arendt is a device which destroys the autonomy of politics in the modern nation-state. Representative democracy, which was supposed to be the answer for preserving the newly gained freedom of the people, transfers all power to the nation but simultaneously limits the ability of individual citizens to act in the public sphere.[265] As a result, the public sphere becomes dominated by private interest, and the only way of protecting the people from the corruption of their own government is to limit it.

All of this has to be done in the name of the nation through the unifying force of the state. Because even though the nation, in its modern sense, comes into being in a different way than the state, they become closely linked in the act of a Revolution. The state was formed by the changes within political institutions of the medieval

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[263] Elizabeth Frazer, 'Hannah Arendt: The risks of the public realm,' *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2009, p. 223.
[264] Thomas Jefferson, *The Complete Jefferson*, ed. Padover, Modern Library, p. 295, quoted in: Arendt, *On Revolution*, London, Penguin Books, 1990, p. 233.
[265] *Op. cit.*, p. 253.

realm (*regnum*). It inherited the function of a supreme legal institution that protects all inhabitants in its territory. As Arendt puts it:

> The tragedy of the nation-state was that the people's rising national consciousness interfered with these functions. In the name of the will of the people the state was forced to recognize only 'nationals' as citizens, to grant full civil and political rights only to those who belonged to the national community by right of origin and fact of birth. This meant that the state was partly transformed from an instrument of law into an instrument of the nation.[266]

As we can see, in Arendt's interpretation of the French Revolution, nationhood presents itself as an alternative to public spirit – to citizenship. And in this sense national identity becomes deeply anti-political. While Arendt does not disregard the value of identity in politics, she criticised the nation-state for identifying politics with instrumental control under the label of sovereignty of the people.[267] But the nation-state does not represent the people, but rather the interests of small group of individuals who become identified with the national interest.[268]

Arendt's account of the idea of the modern revolution is in many ways ingenious and persuasive. This is partly because she accurately identifies the main problem of the revolution as the struggle between radical autonomy and social order, democracy and representation, freedom and stability. However, her account is one-sided and her historical analysis tends to disguise philosophical interpretations as facts. First of all, Arendt's ideal of the democratic spirit and its value for the revolutionaries might be over-stated. Christopher Hobson for instance notes that the democratic ideal was in fact 'dead' until the invention of representation.[269] The classical Greek (Athenian) democracy was deemed impossible in a large state and,

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[266] *Op. cit.*, p. 230.
[267] Hannah Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism* .Cleveland, London, World Publishing Company, 1961, p. 127; Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 244.
[268] Elizabeth Frazer, 'Hannah Arendt: The risks of the public realm,' *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2009, p. 213.
[269] Ch. Hobson, 'Revolution, Representation, and the Foundations of Modern Democracy', *European Journal of Political Theory,* 2008, p. 457.

thus, is *de facto* obsolete; in his article 'Revolution, Representation, and the Foundations of Modern Democracy'[270] Hobson argues that when the French Revolution started, democracy was still perceived as the system that had brought Athens to its doom.[271] Furthermore, he claims that in the 17th and 18th centuries, Plato's and Aristotle's criticisms of democracy were still largely regarded as accurate. Democracy was perceived as a social rule[272] under which the people (*demos*) are interpreted as the mob rather than the whole political society.[273] Hence, until the French Revolution, the only positive equivalent of democracy was a mixed form of rule. This has changed, according to Hobson, thanks only to the introduction of the idea of representation, which would not be possible without the concept of the sovereignty of the people.[274] If we follow this account, then even though the French Revolution was the origin of modern democracy, democracy was not its main objective. Revolution brings the two previously antithetical concepts of rule by the people and representative government together in the idea of a nation.

But Arendt's account is also one-sided in the sense that it offers a far too narrow understanding of the idea of the modern revolution. Israel, one of the key scholars of the Enlightenment period, blames Arendt for convincing a large part of the academic world that the term 'revolution' is specifically modern and in fact was not even used in its 'proper' sense before the French Revolution. But the author of *Enlightenment Contested* provides many examples of the word 'revolution' being used before the 17th and 18th centuries.[275] The difference, he claims, between pre-modern and modern revolutions is that the latter 'quintessentially legitimize themselves in terms of, and depend on, non-traditional and newly introduced, fundamental concepts'.[276] The social and political revolutions of early modernity only gained their meaning by being part of a broader strand of revolutionary thought. The most stereotypical example of that thought is Descartes' model of

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[270] *Ibid.*
[271] *Op. cit.*, p. 452.
[272] *Op. cit.*, p. 452.
[273] *Op. cit.*, p. 453.
[274] *Ibid.*
[275] Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested : philosophy, modernity, and the emancipation of man*, Oxford , New York , Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 10.
[276] *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

methodological scepticism. However, it was part of a general philosophical shift, observed not only by Descartes but also Hobbes, Spinoza and Leibniz.[277]Moreover, while ancient revolutions referred to a cyclical notion of time, in which forms of government keep changing, modern revolutions seem to represent a rupture in time.

The key difference between Israel and Arendt is that while Arendt sees the American and French Revolutions as contingent historical acts (acts of free will) which led or contributed to the processes of modernisation, for Israel it is modernity that produced the Revolution in that modernity is itself 'revolutionary'.[278] However, as Israel notes, the Revolution was not necessarily welcomed by all intellectual circles. In fact 'traditionalists' were stronger in numbers at that time. The revolutionary agenda of what Israel calls the 'radical enlightenment' was promoted by a handful of philosophers. Israel identifies two Enlightenments, radical and conservative.[279] The former is based on an idea that reason should be the guide of human action, while the latter represents a belief in a mixture of reason and tradition.

By understanding revolution as part of a broader process of modernity, as Israel and Hobson do, we can see that its main effect was not the re-creation of direct rule but the harmonisation of the radical autonomy of the subject produced by the radical enlightenment and a new type of political community.

3.3. Nationhood and the Limits of 'The Political'

The purpose of this short excursion to the two lines of thought was to show how this study of nationhood and modern subjectivity is conditioned by an understanding of the limits of 'the political'. Both Arendt and Oakeshott, and to a certain extent also Hobbes, attempt to present politics as a separate domain of conduct and, more importantly, a domain only discovered under specific circumstances in Europe. It is not my aim here to evaluate Arendt's or Oakeshott's concepts of politics, but a brief description is helpful. Both have known faults. Arendt's idea of the public realm has

[277] *Op. cit.*, p. 6.
[278] *Op. cit.*, p. 13.
[279] *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

been criticised for being exclusive, and idealistic in its artificial distinction between public and public.[280] Not only does it represent an attempt to project a traditional, classical definition of politics onto modern societies, but it remains unclear whether her interpretation could be accurate even when applied strictly to classical political theory. If politics was indeed a separate and independent domain of the free and equal, then what exactly would it do? In other words what is the content of politics if it is not entangled with society or economy?

Furthermore, Arendt's separation of politics as an autonomous and fragile sphere of human action is problematic, because, as Elizabeth Fraser notes, there are nevertheless some non-political actions that can bring about desired political effects. It unclear why political actors should avoid non-political means and how autonomous politics can actually be. [281]

Oakeshott's notion of politics is more plausible. He defines it as 'an engagement to consider the desirability or otherwise of the conditions prescribed in a practice where the practice itself is the terms of association and where these conditions are susceptible of deliberate change'.[282] As such, he differentiates this understanding of politics from what he calls a vulgar satisfaction and management of wants. We can imagine Oakeshott's *cives* as simply individuals negotiating with persons of authority.[283] The content of politics as an engagement seems clearer than in the case of Arendt as well. It consists of issues concerning the community. However, it is not the content that distinguishes political activity, but its form. Politics is concerned solely with rules, not with wants or needs. There has to be a procedure of translating wants and individual aims to interests that can engage in the public deliberation of the rules, but that is another problem. Politics is here differentiated from decision-making or ruling.[284] But it has also to be separated from

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[280] Elizabeth Frazer, 'Hannah Arendt: The risks of the public realm,' *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2009; H. Pitkin, *The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt's Concept of the Social*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 12-16.
[281] Elizabeth Frazer, Kimberly Hutchings, 'On Politics and Violence: Arendt Contra Fanon,' *Contemporary Political Theory*, 2008, No. 7, p. 104.
[282] Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2003, p. 161.
[283] *Op. cit.*, p. 163.
[284] *Op. cit.*, p. 166, 174.

other types of association among people. 'It is the idea of association as intelligent relationship enjoyed only in being learned and understood, distinguished (for example) from relationship in terms of propinquity, kinship, genes, or from organic or so-called 'social' integration'.[285]

The problem with the way Oakeshott sets limits to politics is that it is not clear whether what he describes is an ideal type or something he would want to recognise in the political reality of the modern state. Furthermore, his commitment to plurality as a political value is undermined by his critical stance on the role of certain types of enterprise association.

Conclusion

To sum up, in this chapter I argue that each of the above three explanations seem insufficient to explain the role of the nation in modernity, partly because they have overlooked something about the notion of nationhood and partly because their concepts of 'the political' seem too restrictive. As a result theorists such as Oakeshott, Hobbes, Berlin or Arendt have problems with explaining the phenomenon of national consciousness both as a political phenomenon and as something embedded in the experience of the modern individual.

The concept of the nation cannot be adequately represented solely in ethnic terms as a natural community as opposed to a political community. This does not mean, however, that the national community and community of citizens are or should be identical. The relationship between them is much more complex than that. Even if nationhood is not or should not be a relationship between citizens, it can still be understood as having a key political role, for example as a source of obligation.

In the next chapter I defend the political role of nations by showing they provide a crucial framework for bounded rationality. I will draw on the limited understanding of the political, which I hinted to in this chapter. Nations are bounded communities in a different sense than states are. While states have territorial borders,

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[285] *Op. cit.*, p. 182.

I will argue that nations allow members of national communities to participate in common practices and beliefs, and provide them with a bounded framework which makes the common political world intelligible (Chapter One).

4

Why Politics Requires a Bounded Community.

It might seem strange that at a time when politics seems omnipresent, it is also perceived by many to be in peril. In fact, in itself the idea that politics is something that can be in crisis or in need of defence is a sign of our time. If we were to point out the causes of this phenomenon, among them we would have to name the crisis of participation, political trust and the privatisation of public life.[286]

These three factors pose questions about both the nature and value of contemporary liberal democracy as well as about the state of contemporary political culture in relation to the processes of globalisation, multiculturalism and social atomisation. A particularly theoretically interesting line of argument comes from a strand of thought characteristic to the second half of the 20th century. It is represented by a group of otherwise unrelated thinkers, such as Carl Schmitt,[287] Michael Oakeshott,[288] Hannah Arendt[289] and Chantal Mouffe,[290] who perceive modernity as a progressive retreat of the political before the private or social.

In fact the word 'crisis' can be seen as one of the distinct features of philosophical thought until recently. Some authors, such as Fukuyama, explicitly herald the end of politics, history and art.[291] In a sense, this is a position of theoretical reflection European thought fell into following Nietzsche and after Husserl brought the notions of 'end' and 'crisis' to moral and scientific discourse.[292] However, it is also indicative of a problem for political philosophy because the threat to politics

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[286] B. Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984; R. Putnam, 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, No 1, 1995.
[287] Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1996.
[288] Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2003.
[289] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1998.
[290] Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, London and New York, Verso, 1993.
[291] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, London, Penguin, 1992.
[292] See especially Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1970, and Frederick Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 2003.

allegedly derives from the way we conceptualise political life. On one hand, authors such as Schmitt and Mouffe point out the problems that liberal politics has with conceptualising and responding to conflict.[293] An example of this being that many western liberal states have changed the name of their Ministries of War to Ministries of Defence though they do not intend to entirely halt their role in initiating conflicts. On the other hand, authors like Arendt and Oakeshott, as we have seen in Chapter Three, are concerned about the progressive deconstruction of politics as a unique way of organising public life.

To say that politics is omnipresent can mean two different things. Firstly, the omnipresence of politics can be understood as a statement about the growing scope of the state. It is an article of faith today that the state performs many new functions and the list has been growing more rapidly than ever since the mid 19th century. This is partly because of the advancement in technology as well as the *techné*[294] of governing. But this expanded scope of state control could not be justified without a compatible concept of the self and its role in politics. A technical approach to governing presupposes a self that is rational and 'amendable', otherwise we could not hope to predict the effects of political decisions. Secondly, 'omnipresence of politics' can simply mean that politics has become a word used much more broadly in modern society than in any other century. Thus, this is no longer only a statement about the scope of the state or political institutions, but about the self-understanding of the political world. Based on this understanding, our everyday experience is deeply politicised. Previously non-political choices or differences are now seen as political. Here 'political' no longer means 'concerned with the affairs of the state', but is described through other categories such as 'oppressive', 'unjust' or 'risky' which relate to the economic and intimate.

This second way in which the omnipresence of politics affects us is not necessarily a product of the growing scope of the state. It is something that became noticeable with the universality of political action that came with the birth of the

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[293] Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, London and New York, Verso, 1993; Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1996.
[294] From ancient Greek 'craft' or 'art'.

nation-state. By universality of political action I mean that in modern democracies, the political class is recruited from across the society. The fact that anyone can become a politician or be otherwise engaged in politics is a great achievement of modern liberal democracy. However, the work of authors such as Schmitt, Arendt or Oakeshott can be seen as a warning that the concept of universality of political action comes with a danger of perceiving politics itself as being universal. As a result, antinomies between economy and politics, morality and politics, private and public, and so on, cease to exist.

So far I have established that the concept of the nation cannot be simply discarded as being anti- or apolitical. This was, I argued in Chapter Three, due to too narrow an idea of what politics is as a sphere of activity. In this chapter I want to move on to defending the idea that regardless of the apolitical nature of the nation, politics has to be bounded and that nationhood provides an appropriate framework for doing so. In particular, the nation enables us to participate in the 'political' world through shared social practices and institutions which in turn allow us to develop a language of bounded rationality. Universalism, I will argue, is as equally dangerous to politics as particularism.

The aim of this chapter is to show why politics is not a universal activity. The argument is divided into three sections. Section one investigates the notion of politics as a limited activity defined through the concept of 'the political'. Drawing mainly on Arendt and Schmitt, I will show the perils of extending the notion of politics to the non-political. However, I will also criticise their models as insufficient in explaining the universality of political action brought about by the idea of nationalism. In section two, I examine the limits of politics from the perspective of the concept of bounded rationality. I show that the idea of political community indicates a specific form of common experience. I use the concepts of *phronesis*, and *sensus communis* to provide my definition of bounded rationality. This leads me, in the final section, to investigate how bounded political rationality finds its place in the modern form of political community as 'the nation'.

4.1. Politics and Its 'Enemies'

The title of this section alludes to Robert Dahl's *Democracy and its Critics*.[295] Both 'democracy' and 'politics' originate from the same historical term of the Ancient Greek *polis*. Even though both of these terms have changed dramatically since the original conception of *polis*, it would be problematic to attempt to define either of them without the context of their origins. This is not just because of the role history plays in forming political concepts, although its influence is indeed often overlooked in contemporary political philosophy. This is due to an understanding that political notions are purely theoretical concepts and can be treated as such, as noted by Voegelin.[296] But the reason why it would be impossible to define politics or democracy without any reference to the idea of *polis* is that *polis* has remained a model for the understanding of both these concepts throughout most of modern history.

In this section, I investigate the notion of politics as limited activity. I begin with a brief analysis of the origin of the term as used by Aristotle. This will show that politics at its root was not only referred to as a limited realm of word and deed, but as a concrete form of life distinguishing free government from despotism. I then move on to discuss the link between this classical notion of politics and its modern meaning. Drawing on Arendt's work, I discuss the concept of 'political' as 'public' and show how in Arendt's view the notion of politics has become privatised through the development of society and the modern state. I will then discuss Schmitt's concept of 'the political' and compare it with Arendt's.

4.1.1. The Classical Concept of Politics

The term 'politics' in its original sense - just like all other political notions – is polemical. Aristotle uses it to distinguish the Greek way of life from that of barbarians. The latter are defined by Aristotle as those who do not know politics and

[295] Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, New York, Yale University Press, 1991.
[296] Vogelin Eric, *The New Science of Politics. An Introduction*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 29.

because of that can exist only as slaves.[297] By this, Aristotle means two things: Firstly, they are not free because their lives do not belong to them but to the despot. Secondly, they cannot *become* free because, in Aristotle's view, they are incapable of rational speech (*logoi*). Hence violence is, in Arendt's reading of Aristotle, the only way of guaranteeing their obedience. By opposition, according to her, politics is defined as the realm of free word and deed.[298]

The exclusiveness of politics in Aristotle's theory is a product of a strong distinction between the private and the public. In other words, it is a result of a restriction on what and who can appear 'publicly'. In fact, the ability of citizens to distinguish between their private interests and the common good is constitutive to Aristotle's categorisation of forms of government.[299] In this analysis, he envisions democracy as the least preferable political system because it is almost bound to corrupt its citizens by allowing them to pursue individual interests instead of the common good.

Aristotle's theory of politics does not have to be seen as so distant from Plato's vision drawn in 'The Republic'.[300] This is because for Aristotle, as for Plato, the political project rests entirely on a theory of the human soul. And this is why Aristotle's investigation into politics is preceded by *Nicomachean Ethics*. For Aristotle, the ultimate purpose of the state is, just like for Plato, the creation of a good citizen,[301] just as it is for Plato.[302]

The invention of politics in the ancient world was a reaction to a crisis of moral language. This is clearly visible in Plato's dialogues which represent a struggle to define notions no longer recognised as clear and common. In fact, his entire project can be seen as an attempt to objectify the increasingly divisive language of the Greek *polis*. [303] For Aristotle, this separation or objectification is, of course, a

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[297] Aristotle, *Politics*, London, Penguin Books, 1992, Book I, Chapters 3 and 7.
[298] Arendt Hannah, *The Human Condition*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 20-21.
[299] Aristotle, *Politics*, London, Penguin Books, 1992, Book IV.
[300] Plato, *The Republic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.
[301] Aristotle, *Politics*, London, Penguin Books, 1992, Book III, Chapter 4.
[302] Plato, *The Republic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, 613e—621d.
[303] Vogelin Eric, *The New Science of Politics. An Introduction*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1987, Chapter One.

futile effort because he does not believe that general concepts could exist or have any meaning outside of their concrete representations.[304] *Polis* becomes a place where many opinions can co-exist. Politics is thus a unique device allowing us to accept a diversity of interests and opinions without destroying them. It is in this sense that we can talk about defending politics as defending a specific, historically developed way of living in community with other individuals. I will use the term politics in this limited sense and not in the popular sense when it is synonymous with decision making or managing.

In a more contemporary context however politics is no longer so clearly defined. Politics is not an exclusive activity; thus, the traditional ways of defining it through the distinction between private and public, or in the Aristotelian terms, 'household' and '*polis*', are no longer relevant as many elements of the private sphere are now seen as potentially political. In fact, the problem of what can and cannot be considered political, has become one of the key political questions distinguishing various ideological and theoretical positions. In other words, even though theorists broadly agree what politics is in its broadest sense, we find it problematic to determine which areas of human action should be present in the political domain. This confusion is a reflection of the historical development of the state.

The Aristotelian view is neither the only nor the dominant understanding of politics. For example, Elizabeth Fraser and Kimberly Hutchings point at two main traditions of framing politics: one in which political power is identified with domination and another, which attempts to exclude domination from politics.[305] The former, they claim, has in fact been the dominant trend within how we think about politics in the West and can be associated with Machiavelli.[306] The latter has gained ground in modernity since the birth of contractual political theory wherein politics

[304] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1999, 038b9-11.
[305] Elizabeth Frazer, Kimberly Hutchings, 'On Politics and Violence: Arendt Contra Fanon,' *Contemporary Political Theory*, 2008, No. 7, p. 91.
[306] N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1961, p. 95-98.

constitutes the domain where individuals entrust the power of the use of force to the judiciary function of the state.[307]

Thus, I do not wish to lead the reader into thinking, that the classical view of politics is the only view of politics. However, it is the one most relevant to my thesis because it represents a way of thinking about the political as unique, precious and fragile. It is unique, because the political way of life is specifically human and thus distinguishes us from the natural order. It is precious, because it allows us to live together in conditions of freedom, and finally it is also fragile, because it is threatened by non-political modes of conduct.

4.1.2. Hannah Arendt and the 'Invasion of the Social'

One of the thinkers who offered the most convincing defense of a limited, classical vision of politics is Hannah Arendt. Arendt sees politics as unique sphere which allows us to present ourselves to others in conditions of freedom. Drawing on the previously discussed Aristotelian understanding of politics, Arendt argues that it is speech and the ability to persuade that defines the political relationship between citizens. According to Arendt, the equality of public speaking (*isegoria*) was what distinguished the political system of Athens.[308]

As shown in Chapter Three, Arendt follows Aristotle in her description of the household as a natural relationship in the domain of subordination and violence. But as Arendt says – 'sheer violence is mute'.[309] It cannot be communicated and in that sense cannot participate in creating a common public realm (see discussion in Chapter Three). Frazer and Hutchings further argue that Arendt excludes violence from the public realm because violence is instrumental, but politics is not. Violence is a tool used to a particular end. [310] However, for Arendt, politics is not an end-driven activity.

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[307] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960, p. 308.
[308] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 25.
[309] *Op. cit.*, p. 26.
[310] Elizabeth Frazer, Kimberly Hutchings, 'On Politics and Violence: Arendt Contra Fanon,' *Contemporary Political Theory*, 2008, No. 7, p. 99.

In *The Human Condition,* Arendt argues that with the birth of the concept of society, this classical distinction between 'natural' and 'political' is destroyed. In fact, for her, the sole term 'society' assumes a type of mutual dependence between individuals forced to live or co-operate together to satisfy their needs and wants.[311] We can see this most explicitly in the classical social contract theory. Both for Hobbes and Locke, the contract is a product of striving for survival and the need of protection or co-operation.[312] Arendt argues that with the coming of 'society' as a key political concept, private interests gained public significance.[313] The final expression and culmination of this process is, according to her, the invention of political economy and the language of national identity.

The reason why Arendt's analysis is relevant to my argument is that it shows how the growing scope of the private sphere in early modernity has changed the way we perceive politics. The purpose of government became securing and providing for the needs of the individual. Modern politics is, according to Arendt, about managing society. She argues that the consequences of this phenomenon are dangerous both for the individual and for 'politics' itself. The reasons for this are twofold.

First, the growing scope of the state and society means that it is no longer possible for the individual to maintain a holistic perspective in decisions and actions. By this I mean that the knowledge required to solve most political or social problems is so advanced, one individual is unable to comprehend it. Thus, it is this world that becomes characterised by *anomie.*[314]

Secondly, according to Arendt, the modern concept of politics as management of the affairs of society leaves the political sphere empty and neutral. The decisions become impersonal and bureaucratic.[315] And in this sense they become

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[311] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1998.
[312] T. Hobbes, *Leviathan,* London, Penguin,1997; John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.
[313] Furthermore, Hayden argues that this focus on bureaucratic efficiency created a model of the state underwritten by a 'racist ideology', in which many categories of people both internally and externally became seen as 'superfluous'. Patrick Hayden, 'Superfluous Humanity: An Arendtian Perspective on the Political Evil of Global Poverty,' *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, No. 35, 2007, p. 282.
[314] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1998.
[315] *Ibid.*

similar to the laws of nature. For Arendt, the invasion of the social onto the political ultimately threatens to destroy the latter through privatisation of the public and the reduction of politics to economy and social management.

It could be said that what Arendt describes as the corruption of politics was actually one of the greatest achievements of the modern age. It is necessary to question the border between the private and the public sphere in order to see that the classical distinction between them was exclusive and oppressive. By excluding the affairs of the household from the public space, the *polis* reinforced politics as the domain of men. This model did not allow for public discussion of gender-specific questions because of the fact that the intimate could not appear publicly. The feminist slogan 'private is public' stood in clear opposition to the classical notion of politics.

However, what Arendt claims is not that this process of politicisation of the private sphere was wrong in itself. She seems to try to show us that the notions of private and public are mutually dependant. In this sense, the destruction or corruption of either notion brings down the distinction. The danger that the destruction of the distinction between public and private presents, is that Arendt believes that politics can be only understood as a public activity and can be valued only in a world that values public life.

4.1.3. Carl Schmitt's Concept of 'The Political'

We can find a somewhat similar argument about the danger of losing the distinction between public and private in Carl Schmitt's writings on political thought. Schmitt criticises liberalism (or in fact the liberal consensus) for constructing a language that confuses politics and society. He claims that as a result, the political enemy becomes confused with an economic competitor, private adversary or a partner in a discussion.[316] In this process, Schmitt argues, everything becomes political and

[316] Schmitt Carl, *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 71.

consequently nothing is no longer specifically political.[317] In other words political issues become expressed through non-political language. Modern society is described in *The Concept of the Political* as a product of a bourgeois consciousness. Schmitt shows how the appreciation of the apolitical private sphere becomes part of the middle class ethos. The bourgeois 'rests in the possession of his private property, and under the justification of his possessive individualism he acts as an individual against the totality'.[318]

Schmitt's negative evaluation of the liberal model of politics rests on his definition of 'the political' as an autonomous category. The political distinction between friend and enemy cannot be derived from any other entity.[319] He writes: 'The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transactions.'[320] For Schmitt, the concept of political community rests on the ability to distinguish ourselves from others. The only distinction strong enough to legitimise political power is one between friend and enemy. As much as this may seem an obscure empirical observation, it is not. The distinction between friend and enemy is for Schmitt much more than a general statement about human nature. Schmitt uses it to show the distinct nature of 'the political'. Friend and enemy is a similar dichotomy to good and bad or beautiful and ugly, which are distinctions characteristic to moral and aesthetic discourses. The political distinction between friend and enemy is, according to Schmitt, existential and cannot be solved or erased by means of persuasion. The difference in terms of which this distinction is drawn is not necessarily a substantive difference of interests or values. Schmitt argues that political enemies need not be hated personally or be defined in terms of conflict of interests.[321] In the crudest sense, political enemies are just those who do not belong to 'us'. This is why, political community is the highest form of association; political community is sovereign, because it has the ability to produce the 'highest unity'. As

[317] *Op. cit.*, p. 20.
[318] *Op. cit.*, p. 62.
[319] *Op. cit.*, p. 26.
[320] *Op. cit.*, p. 21.
[321] *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

Schmitt states, 'not because it is an omnipotent dictator, or because it levels out all other unities, but because it decides, and has the potential to prevent all other opposing groups from dissociating into a state of extreme enmity – that is, into civil war.'[322]

The concept of the political in the form which Schmitt proposes, is closely linked with the concept of the modern state. First, this is because while Schmitt is not a theorist of the state[323], he sees states as historical expressions of the political to the extent that states function within a plurality where the existence of the state presupposes the existence of other states.[324]

The term 'state' itself refers to a neutral status that can be applied to talk about different types of government. In this sense 'state' replaces words such as '*regnum'*, '*imperium'* or '*res publica'*. It was John Pocock[325] who first argued that in fact the word which in western languages is spelled 'state', '*der Staat*', '*l'etat*', originally comes from Italian '*lo stato*'.[326] Quentin Skinner offers the first use of the word 'state' to Machiavelli, who used '*lo stato*' to mean a neutral political state that could refer to any government.[327] Skinner claims, the word 'state' originated from the diversity of Italian political entities, constitutions, boundaries and loyalties. The word itself means 'a base', 'ground' or 'foundation', and because of this 'state' can refer to the continuity of existence of a political entity, regardless of changes in the forms of government.[328]

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[322] Carl Schmitt, 'Ethic of State and Pluralistic State' in: Chantal Mouffe (ed.), *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*, London, Verso, 1999, p. 195.
[323] In fact, Schmitt thinks that the era of statehood is coming to an end. See Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1963, p. 10, cited in: Ingeborg Maus, 'From Nation-State to Global State, or the Decline of Democracy,' *Constellations*, Volume 13, No 4, 2006.
[324] *Op. cit.*, p. 25.
[325] J. Pocock, *The Machiavellian moment : Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975.
[326] Barbara Markiewicz, *Panstwo albo stan, czyli o podstawie nowozytnej formy polityki*, in *Panstwo jako Wyzwanie*, Osrodek Mysli Politycznej, Krakow 1998, p. 27.
[327] Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Volume I: The Renaissance, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978.
[328] J. Pocock, *The Machiavellian moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975.

Secondly, Schmitt defines the state as an entity of a people[329]; the state *is* the political status of a people. Hence, in Schmitt's view, the existence of the state presupposes the distinction between friend and enemy. Thus, 'state' is a political distinction which ultimately manifests itself in the right of a government to wage war. This is what distinguishes the state from all other types of organisations in society such as tennis clubs, political parties or churches.

Schmitt sees liberalism as the force behind a progressive destruction of the political dimension of the modern state. He seems to be especially critical of the type of pluralist theory which understands the state as just one of the many social organisations; if the state is to be understood as a political community, it must be sovereign. In the pluralist perspective, Schmitt argues, the state not only ceases to be the most important type of human organisation, as individuals might see their membership in the church or in the tennis club as in fact more central to their lives, but it also strips the state of its political dimension.

Perhaps more importantly for Schmitt, liberalism presents a threat to politics because of its inability to incorporate radical conflict in its political language. As a consequence in liberal democracy, as Schmitt writes, the 'adversary is not an enemy but a disturber of peace'.[330] In other words, for Schmitt liberalism fails to see that political language is in fact antagonistic and polemical.[331] All political notions have the ability to turn the world into the dichotomy of friend and enemy.[332] 'Every religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other antithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively according to friend and enemy.'[333]

Schmitt's theory is problematic perhaps most visibly because of the one-dimensional explanation he offers regarding the way the political people are constructed. However, his criticism of the liberal concept of politics is persuasive.

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[329] Schmitt Carl, *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 19.
[330] *Op. cit.*, p. 79.
[331] *Op. cit.*, p. 30.
[332] *Op. cit.*, p. 32.
[333] *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

Like Arendt, Schmitt believes that the eradication of the distinction between the private and the public, and consequently between a personal and political enemy, is destructive to the concept of politics itself.

Having said that, we must remember that the issue of the distinction between the private and public is in fact at the centre of modern liberalism (as seen in the above section). It is an important part of the principle of limited government that is vital to the liberal understanding of individual freedom. Without this distinction, individuals become vulnerable to the abuse of power. But it is precisely the value of private life in the liberal model that is criticised by Arendt and Schmitt. They argue that once we all cease to have the need for public engagement politics becomes nothing more than a managerial activity.

Furthermore, Agnes Heller claims that Schmitt's conception of the autonomy of the political is a misleading approach to theorising politics. In particular, she argues that Schmitt's theory attempts to transform everything into a political thing, thus reducing the abundance of forms of life to one single political form.[334] As a result, in Heller's analysis of Schmitt, his concept of the political is not autonomous, but in fact parasitic.

Both Arendt's and Schmitt's accounts of the concept of 'the political' are perhaps least convincing when it comes to nationhood. They fail to acknowledge the role of the nation in creating a framework for a political community (Chapter One). In contrast, for Arendt it is precisely the notion of the *nation-state* that finally threatens the idea of politics as a limited public activity. In the following two sections I will discuss how well-founded her suspicion is.

4.2. Why Politics Cannot Be Universal

Let us now move to the problem of the universality of politics itself. I will show that politics cannot be universal because it ultimately rests on an idea of bounded

[334] Agnes Heller, 'The Concept of the Political Revisited,' in: David Held (ed.), *Political Theory Today*, Cambridge, Polity, 1991, p. 102.

rationality. This issue seems to be at the heart of both Arendt's and Schmitt's arguments. For Schmitt, politics is a limited activity *ex definitione* as the political entity presupposes the real existence of an enemy and therefore coexistence with another political entity.[335] Politics cannot be universal. It is a 'pluriverse'[336], meaning that political community has to be limited. For Arendt, politics can only be understood as a limited sphere of human action which is, in essence, a bounded activity. Politics is conceived as a place where individuals choose to appear publicly among others. But the creation of this public space is conditioned by the forms in which we are able to appear to each other. In *polis* this was made easier because of its size. With the birth of the nation-state this can only be achieved through the representation of the nation, as I discussed in Chapter Three.

The question of the universality of politics has become particularly significant in the context of the contemporary globalised world. Globalisation does not only mean a change in the way we perceive the nation's place among other nations. It also transforms our understanding of political action. This is due to two phenomena; firstly, our lives are increasingly affected by global factors such as global warming or an international credit crunch. These phenomena are universal because they affect us all. As a consequence the national perspective becomes insufficient from which to tackle many of the most significant issues on the political agenda of Western countries. Secondly, with globalisation comes an awareness of certain issues evoking a sense of compassion or solidarity. Issues such as poverty, human rights abuses, genocide and other types of mass suffering are increasingly perceived on the grounds of common humanity transcending national or racial boundaries. The universalist view can be summed up by saying that with this notion of humanity, politics should enter a new era which makes traditional state boundaries obsolete.

According to the universalist view, the limitation of political community to a specific ethnic or cultural entity is based on prejudice. It rests on an irrational

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[335] Schmitt Carl, *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 53.
[336] *Ibid*.

attachment to what is ours and what David Miller calls the ignorance of the outside world.[337] However, language is much more than an instrument of communication. It represents the network of meanings through which people communicate, give themselves a common identity and determine their attitude towards social and political institutions. Social life creates values and norms which articulate and conserve these meanings. Thus, language originates from the way people imagine their bonds and mutual duties; political concepts resemble these images. As Barbara Markiewicz points out, - 'if they do not - we become unable to articulate new situations'.[338] Faced with nationalism, terrorism and the risk society,[339] the task of political theory is to incorporate these phenomena into our political language in a way that will enable us to talk about them, make judgments and eventually express our interests.

The position I am advocating comes, just as in David Miller's case, from an assumption that there is no universal language and that rationality is based on sentiments and practices which originate from living together as individual actors within the political realm.[340] In fact, this does not necessarily lead to a strictly conservative or nationalist political philosophy as discussed in the upcoming section. Instead, what I wish to highlight here is that the claim about limited rationality can be compatible with a concept of citizenship based on a *formal* rather than a *substantive* relationship.

A good example of this is the discussion in Chapter Three regarding Michael Oakeshott's concept of civil association. There, I explained how he defines the concept of civil association in contrast to enterprise association,[341] or a substantive relationship based on needs or wants. Members of such an organization have to share specific beliefs, values or views.[342] Once the wants are satisfied, there is no further

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[337] David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000, p. 25.
[338] Barbara Markiewicz, *Zywe Obrazy. O ksztaltowaniu pojec poprzez ich przedstawianie*, Warsaw, IFiS PAN, 1994, p. 21.
[339] The term 'risk society' is taken from Ulrich Beck's work. I discuss Beck's contribution to the discussion about the future of nationhood in Chapter Seven. Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Cambridge 2006, p. 5.
[340] David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000, p. 25.
[341] Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2003.
[342] *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

need for this relationship. Consequently, an enterprise association is not a political association. The membership in this type of organization is highly exclusive because it requires a prior agreement on a substantive goal or goals – an agreement that is usually expressed before joining such an association.

Conversely, I explained that civil association is a relationship in terms of practice and not in terms of substantive wants.[343] In other words, civil association is an agreement on rules as the conditions of the association but not on specific choices and is understood solely in terms of its own authority.[344] However, even though such a relationship is not based on a common substantive good or bonds of blood, it is still a bounded view of the political community. This is because the rules that constitute civic association are intelligible to its members only through the common practices and the language of civil intercourse.[345]

A somewhat different argument against the universality of politics comes from Chantal Mouffe. Mouffe argues that the concept of universality belongs to the moral and not the political order.[346] Drawing on Schmitt in her reconstruction of the concept of the political, Mouffe shows that the political requires an underlying antagonism without which pluralism becomes an empty slogan. She argues that if we are to take democracy seriously, we need to encourage a higher level of meaningful difference. 'A healthy democratic process calls for vibrant clash of political positions and an open conflict of interests. If such is missing, it can too easily be replaced by a confrontation between non-negotiable moral values and essentialist identities.'[347] To say that pluralism depends on antagonism is to say that politics is not only a way of transforming conflict, but that conflict is a condition of politics in general in the sense that it provides the options necessary for political choice. This is why Mouffe is critical about liberal democracy as well as liberal cosmopolitanism. The notion of humanity as a community is not political because it does not allow for the recognition of meaningful difference.

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[343] *Ibid.*
[344] *Op. cit.*, p. 180.
[345] *Op. cit.*, 188.
[346] Chantal Mouffee, *The Return of the Political*, London and New York, Verso, 1993, p. 1.
[347] *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

Mouffe sees politics as a domain of practical reason rather than universal moral values and thus her argument rests on the idea of bounded rationality.[348] Drawing on Arendt and Aristotle, she refers to the distinction between *episteme* and *doxa*. Politics is not the domain of truth or being, but is instead constituted by the world of appearances. Hence, to have an opinion means to choose to appear in a certain way in the public sphere.

The concept of bounded rationality reaches far deeper than the conservative liberal, Oakeshottian concept of a practice or tradition. It is rooted in the conditions of possibility of the political community itself. Based on my exposition of Mouffe's argument, we can now see why the universalist position cannot be accepted. In the next section, I discuss the problem of bounded rationality in the context of the modern nation.

4.3. Nationhood and Bounded Rationality

Even if we agree that politics is a bounded activity, this still does not eliminate the normative question regarding the appropriate way of setting limits to political community. Setting the limits of political association according to ethnic or historical boundaries is problematic. In particular, it might seem strange that the benefits of the universality of political action that has recently been achieved in most liberal democracies are not to be extended to all. In this final section, I examine reasons why national boundaries should be defended as both adequate and historically necessary conditions of modern political community. I argue that nationality is foundationally political and, in this sense, cannot be understood in solely ethnic or cultural terms.[349] Firstly I will present Miller's argument regarding bounded rationality. Then, I will move on to discuss Anderson's definition of the nation as imagined community and explain why it can only be imagined in political terms. I want to defend two claims:

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[348] *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

[349] By this I do not mean that I am promoting a civic definition of nationhood or that I am attempting to identify the nation with the state (see Introduction)/. I simply mean that the nation, which I understand as primarily a cultural community of shared history, has as such the ability to bring about a political world.

1) That nationhood provides a framework of bounded rationality because it creates a world that is familiar to us by shared practices, and because 2) it creates a world in which we can imagine others as fellow member of the community without having to directly interact with them.

David Miller's argument can be briefly summarised as follows: Nationality relates us to a particularist perspective, where 'my place' becomes more valuable than the outside world. This view is based on an idea of bounded rationality which gives preference to subjective knowledge based on sentiment and practice rather than reason. As a result, the nationalist view produces the distinction between *us* and *them* understood in the framework of what is known and tamed, and the wilderness of the outside world.[350] However, this distinction is key to producing the kind of community of responsibility that the modern state requires.[351] In this sense, the statement 'mine is better' should not be considered as a claim proceeding from a prior truth. It is in fact a solely normative statement about the nature of our obligations.

Andrew Vincent criticises Miller's defence of national identity as a necessary unifying force for statehood. While he agrees that nation can indeed create a community of responsibility, so can other forms of particuralistic bonds and commitments such as religion, ideology, class and moral ideals, all of which can 'generate belonging'. [352] I agree in principle with Vincent's statement that the nation is not the only source of belonging and political partiality and do not think this assertion undermines Miller's argument. This would be the case if Miller perceived nationhood simply as a type of personal identity; however, his defence of national identity goes beyond conceptualising it in terms of a group of individuals unified by shared beliefs.

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[350] David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000, p. 24.
[351] *Op. cit.*, p. 29.
[352] Andrew Vincent, *Nationalism and Particularity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 60.

Miller distinguishes what he calls the three dimensions of nationality. The first dimension is that nationality is part of personal identity.[353] This is the most evident level of nationality, as it relates to the way we understand ourselves as members of a concrete historical community. The second dimension is ethnic, which means that as far as the nation embodies historical continuity,[354] it is based on a set of shared values or beliefs that broadly constitute an ethnic group. But the third dimension is specifically political and is key to understanding the previous two dimensions.[355] This is an assertion that the nation is constituted and maintained by belief and not a substantively understood set of shared features or values.[356] The historical continuity of a political people is mythical and its perception changes constantly throughout history. What constitutes a nation as a political community is then not common identity but a shared attachment to a mythically defined homeland which is linked to a geographical place.[357] This notion of a homeland is the source of the nation's claim to self-determination.

Miller's argument is, however, still an incomplete expression of the political dimension of nationhood. By claiming that a shared national identity is necessary for mobilizing people to provide collective goods, he seems to be allowing the nation to remain within a contractual theory of society. Miller argues that a contractual understanding of citizenship as an exchange of public goods would be impossible if we were to base it on the idea of a shared humanity.[358]

Miller's account of national identity focuses on the individual who needs a familiar world in order to make practical judgements. However, the nation provides much more than just familiar practices and habits. It also allows us to recognise others as equal members of our community. This point is best shown by Benedict Anderson. He argues that to understand nationalism in terms of what he calls an 'imagined community' is to imagine it as both inherently limited and sovereign.[359]

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[353] David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000, p. 27.
[354] *Op. cit.*, p. 27.
[355] *Op. cit.*, p. 27.
[356] *Op. cit.*, p. 28.
[357] *Op. cit.*, p. 29.
[358] David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000, p. 81-96.
[359] Anderson Benedict, *Imagined Communities*, London and New York, Verso, 2006, p. 6.

Nation is an imagined community because none of the citizens will ever be able to know all of its members;[360] thus, the relationship with others is 'imagined'. In this sense, nation is not the only type of an imagined community. All types of political peoples could be understood in that way. In fact, it was only in the case of the ancient Greek *polis* where the political space was limited to a hill where all citizens could meet and see each other. Since then, as Robert Dahl skilfully described, political space changed dramatically. It becomes mediated through the idea of representation.[361]

For Anderson, the element distinguishing nations from other types of imagined communities is the idea of time characteristic to national consciousness. As I mentioned in Chapter One, nations are understood as historical entities moving through time.[362] Anderson's analysis is set to spell out the conditions under which such an act of imagining becomes possible. He argues that with the collapse of the religious paradigm, history lost its eschatological character and is no longer understood as part of the divine plan. Nationalism has put history in the place of God.[363] Within the nation, individual members find the meaning of their worldly existence in homogenous and empty time:

> 'The century of Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness. With the ebbing of religious belief, the suffering which belief in part composed did not disappear. Disintegration of paradise: nothing makes fatality more arbitrary. Absurdity of salvation: nothing makes another style of continuity necessary. What then was required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning.'[364]

Anderson argues that nationalism responds to our need for the divine and transcendent because even though we are individually mortal, nations are not.

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[360] *Op. cit.*, p. 6.
[361] Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, Yale University Press, 1991.
[362] Anderson Benedict, *Imagined Communities*, London and New York, Verso, 2006, p. 8.
[363] *Op. cit.*, p. 10.
[364] *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

This brings us back to the point that David Miller also made: the origins of national identity are always mythical. Nations are not supposed to have historical births or deaths, although they may have mythical ones.[365] Anderson attempts to show that only through this 'immortality in history'[366] could rulers demand their citizens to sacrifice their lives in the name of the nation. Nationhood postulates an imagined community between the past, present and future. This relationship is symbolic and can be found in institutions and monuments such as the tomb of the unknown soldier.[367] However, it is also narrative in the sense that in the empty homogenous historical time in which nations exist and develop the meaning of our actions is determined by their order in time.

In this sense, history is the same form of organising meaning as is the 19th century novel.[368] The kind of continuity that this notion of history presupposes allows us to think of ourselves as part of a collective historical entity moving through time. 'These societies are sociological entities of such firm and stable reality that their members (A and D) can even be described as passing each other on the street, without ever becoming acquainted, and still be connected.' [369]

Nationhood is, for Anderson, a *community of imagination* in which 'everyone' participates. I will not go into details of how Anderson thinks this community of imagination became historically possible as this is not part of my argument. Suffice it to say that it is this type of imagination that makes the entire state machinery possible. Not only because it provides historical limits of the political community, but also because it serves as a source of obedience and sacrifice.

[365] *Op. cit.*, p. 25.
[366] *Op. cit.*, p. 27.
[367] *Op. cit.*, p. 15.
[368] *Op. cit.*, p. 26.
[369] *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

Conclusion

To summarise my argument, I have discussed the main reasons against a universalist view of politics. In the first part I have reconstructed the narrow concept of politics as a public activity. Drawing on Schmitt and Arendt I showed that this narrow view of politics is fragile and remains in contradiction to the liberal model of politics, in which the political is not autonomous from the social. In the second section I examined the reasons why politics in this narrow sense cannot be a universal activity. Finally, in the third section I argued that the nation can be seen as an embodiment of the political principle of bounded rationality.

It must now be examined whether the nation is an adequate horizon for political community. In Chapter Five I argue that it is precisely because nation has the ability to create an identity that incorporates universal values and ways for political activity to transcend state borders. I will show this by analysing the opposition between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, which, I shall claim, is superficial.

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Cosmopolitanism vs. Nationalist Particularism:[370] Beyond the Alternative

The historical role of the nation in providing a framework of bounded rationality and thus promoting individual autonomy, which I discussed in Chapters Two and Four, faces challenges today. On the one hand, nations continue to stimulate our political imagination, contrary to what the propagators of the 'decline of the nation' in the second half of the 20th century[371] attempt to make us believe. In particular, globalisation (or the set of processes we generally call globalisation) arguably has not led to an erosion of national politics. Far from it - while it is true that issues such as migration have effectively transformed the rules of access to citizenship and nationality, these same issues have encouraged the growth of regional identities in places such as Scotland, Wales, Quebec and Catalonia.[372] Moreover, the post-Soviet resurrection of nationalism in 1989 represents a separate issue, as Eastern European nationalism is often described as being more ethno-centric than the Western version of nationalism.[373] On the other hand, the emergence of international norms, transnational identities, migration and the growing awareness of global risks (economic, environmental, etc.), challenges the limitations of citizenship to national boundaries by putting into question the special value we assign to shared national identity. In view of such challenges, there is a growing need to reconceptualise the limits of political community.

In previous chapters I showed why the concept of the nation was and remains central to modern politics. I argued that nations are political constructs creating a

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[370] I am using the term 'nationalist particularism' to distinguish those normative positions which attach value to national boundaries and loyalties from 'nationalism' understood as a social mass-phenomenon.

[371] For example: Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State*, Free Press, New York, 1995.

[372] Montserrat Guibernau, 'National identity, devolution and secession in Canada, Britain and Spain,' *Nations and Nationalism*, 12 (1), 2006.

[373] Hans Kohn, 'The Origins of English Nationalism,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, No. 1, 1940, p. 69-94; Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: its Meaning and History*, Malabar, Krieger Publishers, 1982, p. 64, 84.

framework of bounded rationality promoting the development of individual autonomy and reflecting the tension within the modern self. I now move on to responding to the third and last line of the criticism of nationhood[374], which is that nations are an obstacle to the moral progression of humankind. This objection is raised particularly by cosmopolitans, who challenge the idea of national boundaries as being morally arbitrary.[375] In fact, some cosmopolitans often perceive the emergence of the new transnational order as a step towards cosmopolitan norms. The nation is either seen as an obstacle on the way to that order or as an artefact of the past.

To be clear, globalisation is neither a component in nor a condition of cosmopolitanism, but instead provides a crucial context for cosmopolitanism. Globalisation challenges our views about what a political community should be and facilitates the emergence and protection of cosmopolitan norms. These include not only high profile norms such as human rights, but also, as Jeremy Waldron notices, various forms of economic and trade conventions, rules and practices.[376] In this chapter, I argue that the debate and the alleged disagreement between nationalist particularism and cosmopolitanism is largely rooted in a distorted view of what nations are. Contrary to some of the assumptions made in this literature, for example in Nussbaum,[377] the dichotomy of nationalist particularism and cosmopolitanism does not mirror the relationship between particularity and universalism in modernity. That dichotomy fails to acknowledge that while the nation remains the key framework for our political experience, this experience opens up to new transnational and global dimensions.

I will begin by defining both concepts: 'nationalist particularism' and 'cosmopolitanism', in order to outline the tensions between them. Drawing on Samuel Scheffler's distinction between 'cosmopolitanism about culture' and

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[374] As discussed in the Introduction.
[375] Martha Nussbaum, *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism,* Boston, Mass., Beacon Press, 2002; Simon Caney, 'A Reply to Miller,*' Political Studies*, Vol. 50, 2002.
[376] Jeremy Waldron, *Cosmopolitan Norms* in: Benhabib Seyla (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford 2008.

'cosmopolitanism about justice',[378] I will discuss both categories in turn. Defining nationalist particularism is even more problematic than cosmopolitanism both because of the abundance and diversity of the literature on the nation, as well as the enigmatic position the concept of the nation has in political philosophy. I, however, will concentrate my efforts on liberal nationalism as it is the most relevant to the debate. In the second section, I will examine each one of these views in more detail.

Cosmopolitanism about culture (which I will call cultural cosmopolitanism) can be very broadly defined by the *melange principle* – recognition that a cosmopolitan culture can incorporate multiple particularisms. Cosmopolitans about culture perceive the development of a cosmopolitan self as a necessary condition of the individual's capacity to flourish.[379] Specifically, I will look at Jeremy Waldron's interpretation of Kant's Cosmopolitan Right and supplement this discussion with Beck's concept of cosmopolitanisation.[380] Cosmopolitanism about justice, which is sometimes seen as 'proper' philosophical cosmopolitanism, is defined by its opposition to restricting the scope of the conception of justice to bounded communities.[381] In its political form, cosmopolitanism about justice rests on the claim that there are cosmopolitan norms providing foundations for a global institutional order.

I will focus on Held's model of cosmopolitan democracy and Benhabib's idea of democratic iterations.[382] Both make a claim that nation-states provide an arbitrary and insufficient container for democratic citizenship and suggest the need of extending the demos globally. This will lead me to reconstructing the defence of the national case. There are two main lines of this defence: that nations are necessary

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[377] Martha Nussbaum, *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, Boston, Mass., Beacon Press, 2002.
[378] Samuel Scheffler, 'Conceptions of Cosmopolitanism,' *Utilitas*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1999, p. 255.
[379] Ibid.
[380] Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Cambridge 2006; Jeremy Waldron, 'Cosmopolitan Norms' in: Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford 2008.
[381] Samuel Scheffler, 'Conceptions of Cosmopolitanism,' *Utilitas*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1999, p. 256.
[382] Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford 2008.

elements of social cohesion and solidarity (David Miller)[383] and that nation-states provide the best framework for liberal democratic citizenship (Will Kymlicka).[384]

However, as I will argue in section three, the battlefield indicated by this debate is misplaced. The debate between cosmopolitanism and nationalist particularism should be phrased neither in a language of universality (of norms) versus particularity (of political identity) nor by national and post-national politics. Neither is a defence of the nation contradictory to certain types of moral and political universalism. In the fourth section I show how my comprehensive view of nationhood as a form of political experience allows us to overcome the tension between cosmopolitan norms and national sentiment.

In short, nations do matter more than some advocates of 'celebratory cosmopolitanism' want to admit.[385] They remain the most persuasive political container and a source of the modern political self. Cosmopolitan norms are nevertheless becoming increasingly central to the way we understand politics. Nation-state and *cosmopolis* are not logically exclusive. At best, the opposition between the two is dialectic. And, as with any dialectic opposition, the answer to the tension between the two will most likely incorporate elements of both terms.

5.1. Definitions

5.1.1. Cosmopolitanism

As a result of globalisation, the way we lead our lives increasingly transcends national boundaries and other local political or cultural identities. This has been recognised in the sociological literature, where 'cosmopolitanism' does not refer to a

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[383] David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.
[384] Will Kymlicka, *Liberal Nationalism and Cosmopolitan Justice* in: Benhabib Seyla (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford 2008.
[385] Term taken from Klinger's article 'From Freedom without choice to choice without freedom: The Trajectory of the Modern Subject', *Constellations*, Volume 11, No. 1, 2004; Celebratory Cosmopolitanism refers here to a branches of modern thought that celebrate new forms of transnational identity.

normative theory but a lived experience of a 'denationalised' self.[386] This empirical 'cosmopolitanism' is increasingly seen as a fact of ordinary life.[387] However, the allegedly 'cosmopolitan' lifestyle, which can be experienced in the centres of international trade (such as London or New York), is nevertheless only distantly related to normative cosmopolitanism. The term 'cosmopolitan', certainly does not mean the same as 'global'. However, contemporary globalised culture does have a cosmopolitan dimension in the philosophical sense as well. The term *cosmos* comes from the ancient Greek word for 'order' and referred to the idea of an ordered universe. In that sense, to be cosmopolitan, means to seek order within the global processes surrounding us. Cosmopolitanism cannot be identified with the hybrid forms of identity which I discuss in Chapter Six, but does refer to the world in which people who have these identities interact with each other in a certain way. A definition of cosmopolitanism must then be put on two separate scales. On one hand, cosmopolitanism is always a type of universalism. This is what sets it apart from different forms of patriotism and from post-modern concepts of hospitality that are particularistic, like those found in Derrida.[388] On the other hand, cosmopolitanism also represents the belief in a rational order unlike, for example, the theory of global capitalism and Empire advanced by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, discussed in Chapter Seven.[389]

The term cosmopolitanism, in a relatively broad, modern sense, refers to a claim that a recognizable universalistic moral order exists and places demands on both individuals and polities. The precise nature and status of these demands depends on the variety of cosmopolitan thought. One should note that the universalistic character of cosmopolitanism is somewhat paradoxical. As Nicholas Rengger notes, it relies on an understanding that we are able to recognise certain norms as

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[386] S. Sassen, 'Globalization or denationalization?' *Review of International Political Economy*, 10, 2006, p. 1-22; U. Beck, & J. Williams, *Conversations with Ulrich Beck*, Oxford, Polity, 2004.
[387] B. Szersztnski, & J. Urry, 'Visuality, mobility and the cosmopolitan: inhabiting the world from afar,' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 57, 2006, p. 113-131.
[388] Jacques Derrida, *On cosmopolitanism and forgiveness* , London, Routledge, 2001.
[389] Michael Hard, Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000.

universal.[390] However, we who supposedly recognise these universal norms can only do so from a specific time and place.

There are several classifications of cosmopolitanism, most of which distinguish between moral and political variants.[391] The former demands recognition of universal moral norms that apply both to states and individuals but are non-mandatory.[392] The latter represents a group of theories arguing for institutional change[393] in such as they recognise the existence of global norms that should take priority over domestic law. This basic distinction is relatively useful as it highlights the difference between global ethics and global justice. While ethics can be personal and do not require an institutional framework (though institutions can be based on ethics), if we understand cosmopolitan norms as principles of justice, this necessitates the emergence of adequate global institutions.

For the purpose of my discussion, I adopt the afore-mentioned Scheffler's distinction between cosmopolitanism about justice and cosmopolitanism about culture.[394] I will use the term 'cultural cosmopolitanism' interchangeably with 'cosmopolitanism about culture'. This cultural type of cosmopolitanism is particularly interesting, as it does not seem to be easily included either in moral or political models of cosmopolitan thought but is instead based on the concept of identity relating to both. The claim here is not that globalisation results in a cosmopolitan state. It is rather that globalisation brings out the natural hybridity of our individual selves. We, according to this view, have a natural capacity to create our own identities, to which national borders neither give justice nor provide sufficient space.

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[390]N.J Rengger, *Retreat from the Modern. Humanism, Postmodernism and the Flight from Modernist Culture*, p. 768.
[391]Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford 2008.
[392]For example, see: Martha Nussbaum, *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, Boston, Mass., Beacon Press, 2002.
[393] David Held, *Democracy and the New international Order* in: Daniele Archibugi and David Held (ed.), *Cosmopolitan Democracy. An Agenda for a New World Order*, Cambridge, 1995; Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006. 2008; T. Pogge, *Global Institutions and Responsibilities*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2005.
[394] A different classification is offered by Benhabib who further identifies cosmopolitanism as an 'attitude of enlightened morality', 'hybridity and fluidity of human selves' and 'universalistic norms'. Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford 2008, p. 10.

To sum up, although the term 'cosmopolitan' is hard to define, the cosmopolitan theories I have discussed share a belief in the existence of universal norms (ethical and judicial). Some theories require a more institutional approach than others. A discussion about cosmopolitanism is critical to this discussion on national loyalties because national loyalties can clash with cosmopolitan norms, particularly when duties to our fellow nationals take priority over those of strangers or prevent the establishment of cosmopolitan institutions. Having said that, there are also those variants of cosmopolitanism which reconcile national loyalty with cosmopolitan norms (such as Beitz or Appiah).[395] Cosmopolitanism does not need to be a theory according to which our only allegiance is to humanity, but we can also conceive of cosmopolitan allegiances as additional to national allegiances.[396]

5.1.2. Nationalist Particularism

The concept of nationalist particularism is even more ambiguous than that of cosmopolitanism. This is partially because the concept of the nation did not receive much theoretical attention until the development of nationalism studies in the late 1960s. I alluded to the many contesting definitions of the concept of the nation in Chapter One. However, the relatively minor role of the nation in political philosophy until the late 20th century is another factor contributing to the confusion. Arguably, the term 'nation' has only come to the forefront of philosophical debate three times: first, in German Idealism, which represented its romanticised version. Its second appearance is found in Mill's work on Representative Government,[397] and its most recent appearance is in the debates around identity politics, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. These three 'entries' of the language of the nation to philosophy

[395] Charles R. Beitz, 'Cosmopolitan Ideals and National Sentiment,' *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 80, No. 10, p. 591-600; Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'Cosmopolitan Patriots,' in Martha C. Nussbaum (ed.), *For Love of Country*, Boston, Beacon Press, 2002.
[396] Samuel Scheffler, Conceptions of Cosmopolitanism , *Utilitas*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1999, p. 257.
[397] John S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, London, Routledge, 1904, p. 360-365.

were quite independent from each other and in that sense do not constitute a coherent line of thought.

According to Chowers, the romanticist vision of identity operated with distinctions between nature and culture, which placed the nation firmly within the former.[398] Mill's understanding of the nation is perhaps expressed in a more accessible language, but it also firmly places nations in the apolitical realm as an individual preferred choice.[399] The contemporary philosophical debate focuses on a relatively modern interpretation of the nation. In fact, most philosophical discussions of normative status of national bounadries are quite limited, in the sense in which they see it simply as a type of patriotism. The main components of nationhood are then a) a common identity that provides a basis for b) collective political claims to autonomy and c) a sense of a shared duty to fellow nationals. This is close to David Miller's understanding of national identity explicated in Chapter One. I will refer to nationalist particularism as a position that recognises a) and b) as the primary conditions of modern politics and makes a normative claim about c). I will be only interested then in the normative aspect of the debate on nationhood.

It should be noted that the deficit of theoretical reflection on the nation in modern political thought does not mean that the nation did not pose a problem to political thought before. On the contrary, as Margaret Canovan recently showed, the existence of nations is a 'tacit presupposition of most current discourse in political theory'.[400] While many mainstream liberal theorists dismiss nationhood as a topic,[401] their focus on the institutions of the state fails to account for the fact that, as Rogers Brubaker argues, we live in a 'world in which nationhood is perversely institutionalised in the practices of states and the workings of the state system.'[402]

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[398] Eyal Chowers, *The Modern Self in the Labyrinth, Politics and the Entrapment Imagination*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2004, p. 29-34.
[399] John S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, London, Routledge, 1904, p. 54.
[400] Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, Glos 1996, p. 13.
[401] R. Goodin, P. Pettit (eds), *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1993, p. 3.
[402] Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in New Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 21.

The paradox of western political thought and the dominant liberal democratic discourse is that its universalist liberal democratic values originate from a particular set of political institutions and forms of identity. Canovan evokes the example of Rawls here, whose *A Theory of Justice* was supposed to abstract from particular social circumstances, but according to Canovan, it took for granted that the principles of justice apply only within a bounded national community, 'recruited primarily by birth'.[403]

5.2. The Debate

In this section I discuss what I see as the two central variants of cosmopolitanism and the nationalist particularist response to those variants. I will focus on the problem of whether national boundaries should play a central role when setting the limits of individual political obligation. The first part of this section is concerned with cultural cosmopolitanism where I show that cosmopolitanism is not only about norms and duties, but can relate to ways of managing identity. The second part of this section discusses cosmopolitanism about justice and in the third part I present the nationalist particularist response to these ideas.

5.2.1. Cultural Cosmopolitanism

Philosophers can easily be tempted to disregard the ambiguities of notions originating from the social science world. However, as I have shown earlier in this thesis, cosmopolitanism is not simply a philosophical concept. Like all political ideals, it springs from concrete and existing forms of moral, aesthetic and political life.

The idea of a world citizen is classically seen as a normative ideal. While membership in political communities developed historically through building loyalty

[403] Margaret Canovan, 'Sleeping Dogs, Prowling Cats, and Soaring Doves: Three Paradoxes of Nationhood,' in: Michel Seymour (ed), *The Fate of the Nation State*, London, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004, p. 21; The same point is made by Tamir. Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 117-121.

around ethnic and territorial identities, cosmopolitanism often remained an abstract concept. Hence, some authors oppose the 'cold' rationality of cosmopolitanism with 'warm' feelings of national belonging and patriotism.[404] That distinction can only partly hold true. While it is right to say that cosmopolitanism represents a rational order that classically could be thought rather than felt, cosmopolitanism should not be treated as an abstract ideal. In fact, both Kantian and Stoic models of cosmopolitan thought represent a reaction to pre-existing social and political processes. For stoics, this was the experience of legal unification brought about through the Holy Roman Empire and, for Kant, the new realities of colonialism. As Waldron notes:

> [Kant's] convictions in the realm of cosmopolitan right were not just some bright normative idea that he thought up (in the way that a modern political philosopher in New England might think up a new theory of justice). His work on cosmopolitan right has a positive, expository dimension that addresses norms that he recognizes would exist in the world whatever some philosopher in Konigsberg thinks.[405]

Cultural cosmopolitanism specifically recognises pre-existing transnational identities. There are at least two types of cultural cosmopolitanism which I will call a) methodological and b) anthropological. Both types recognise that the lifestyle of the contemporary individual is only moderately influenced by national boundaries and geopolitical allegiances; both claim that the current state-centric system is a product of an obsolete outlook. In this sense, the normative question of whether we should have any special duties to our fellow nationals is preceded by what seems to be a more basic question: what is the ontological status of nations? The argument here is that these duties make no sense in much the same way as we cannot have special duties towards elves or gnomes. However, there is a crucial difference between methodological and anthropological cosmopolitanism. The former is a passive response to current global transformations. It does not make a normative

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[404] See: Kate Nash, 'Cosmopolitan Community: Why Does it Feel so Right?,' *Constellations*, Volume 10, No. 4, 2003 or Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Cambridge 2006.

claim against nationalist particularism, but rather shows national boundaries as having increasingly less explanatory significance when trying to understand social structures and agents. The latter corresponds to an inherent quality of human interaction. In this view, all social boundaries are, in a sense, artificial. Cosmopolitan norms are simply rules of engagement originating from our interaction with others when they are not our compatriots. I will argue that only anthropological cosmopolitanism is cosmopolitan in the normative philosophical sense highlighted in Section One.

Methodological cosmopolitanism is a term most adequately associated with the work of Ulrich Beck. This sociological account of globalisation takes the nomadism and instability of contemporary identity as its starting point.

> One constructs one's identity by dipping freely into the Lego set of globally available identities and building a progressively inclusive self-image. The result is a proud affirmation of a patchwork, quasi-cosmopolitan, but simultaneously provincial, identity whose central characteristic is its rejection of traditional relations of responsibility.[406]

There are two reasons why Beck's view can be called cosmopolitan rather than simply a theory of globalisation. Firstly, the new 'liquid' reality means that identities are not only more complex but also less exclusive. This means that cosmopolitan norms can become 'felt more'. Or, in other words, our duties to aliens become less problematic as the opposition between citizen and alien loses its substance. Secondly, the liquidity of modernity means that we recognise global phenomena on a political level as well. This requires political action on a supra-national level.

> The globalization of politics, economic relations, law, culture, and communication, and interaction, networks, spurs controversy; indeed, the shock generated by global risks continually gives rise to worldwide political publics... In world risk society – this is my thesis, at least – the question concerning the

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[405] Jeremy Waldron, *What is Cosmopolitan*, The Journal of Political Philosophy: Volume 8, Number 2, 2000, p. 94.
[406] Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Cambridge 2006, p. 5.

> causes and agencies of global threats sparks new political conflicts, which in turn promote an institutional cosmopolitanism in struggles over definitions and jurisdictions.[407]

However, the idea that contemporary life is more cosmopolitan is ambiguous. On one hand, this idea is often used in reference to a consciously chosen lifestyle. It signifies a way of life to which contemporary man is seen to aspire. Part of this lifestyle is the ability to 'make the world our home'. However, realistically, that type of lifestyle is available only to the wealthy few.[408] For a majority of the contemporary international workforce, mobility is not a result of freedom but is instead a necessity. They are not 'at home', nor are they strictly 'away'. This other face of cosmopolitanism represents the mechanistic response of international institutions and movements to global threats and risks as well as the involuntary movement and mixing of the people.

Finally, even if we do accept that contemporary life is imbued with some sort of cosmopolitan quality, it is difficult to understand what sort of implications this could have for normative cosmopolitanism. One suggestion that seems to flow from this is that an individual who lives a life limited to one culture could not be cosmopolitan. Having said that, Beck's intuition that new transnational forms of identity and cosmopolitanism are related is justified. But the explanation does not lie in unprecedented globalisation or in the emergence of global risks, or even in global publics. I would rather argue with Jeremy Waldron that the link between cosmopolitanism and the cultural aspect of globalisation is that identity can be defined as 'the way we present ourselves to others in a non-negotiable way'.[409] Cosmopolitan norms both originate from, and are intended to regulate, this encounter. The alleged liquidity and openness of post-modern identities is not cosmopolitan in itself. As Jeremy Waldron notes, many cultures already have a

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[407] *Op. cit.*, p. 15, 16.
[408] C. Calhoun, 'The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers: Towards a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,' in D. Archibugi (ed) *Debating Cosmopolitics*, London, Verso, 2003, p. 86-116.
[409] Jeremy Waldron, 'What is Cosmopolitan', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*: Volume 8, Number 2, 2000, p. 230-1.

cosmopolitan aspect and there is something about human nature itself that is explorative in the cosmopolitan sense.[410] This is what I call 'anthropological cosmopolitanism'.

According to Waldron's model, the cultural dimension of cosmopolitanism becomes apparent once we cease to understand cultural particularity as based on non-negotiable identities. Conversely, the nationalist framework often encourages individuals to identify inherent differences between cultures by emphasising national uniqueness.[411] These differences, according to Waldron, are not correctly perceived. In fact, most neighbouring cultures should be rather more similar than distinct[412] as they take a lot from each other. (For example, every Polish child is taught about the uniqueness of its country's cuisine. What a disappointment to discover that *pierogi* are equally Russian, *sekacz* German, and most of the Christmas herring dishes are widely served in Sweden![413]) Consequently, Waldron states that: 'there is nothing excusive in culture – dancing, worshiping does not say anything about other cultures, or rather the relationship between the two is problematic'.[414]

Thus, the choice between nationalist particularism and cosmopolitanism is not only a question of norms. It is a decision about how individuals understand and approach culture and, as a result, what principles will apply when dealing with aliens who do not share it. For example, in a radically nationalist framework, my values are non-negotiable. I am monogamous because I am Polish. However, Waldron argues that this non-negotiability is rarely the case. Human beings need reasons to justify claims about who they are. But these explanations, unlike identities, are negotiable. So perhaps it happens that being Polish makes me more likely to be monogamous. However my commitment to monogamy is not justified by my 'Polishness' but by my belief that monogamy is morally or practically superior to polygamy.[415] The

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[410] *Op. cit.*, p. 231.
[411] *Op. cit.*, p. 232.
[412] *Op. cit.*, p. 231.
[413] One should note that the opposite can also be persuasively argued. In general, there simply does not seem to be any reason to think that neighbouring nations are inherently culturally similar or distinct.
[414] *Op. cit.*, p. 233.
[415] *Op. cit.*, p. 234-5.

actual justification might take various forms. It might be that I prefer monogamy because of the value I attach to a particular model of family based on a loving relationship between two individuals that makes their love unique etc. Or, it might be because I do not think that polygamy is particularly time-efficient. Waldron argues that as long as we can provide reasons for our commitment to certain values and norms, moral universalism 'is not an affront to cultural particularity'.[416]

Waldron's approach to culture as a crucial issue when imagining our duties to aliens is rooted in his reading of Kant's theory of cosmopolitan right.[417] Waldron defines cosmopolitan right as the area of law regulating relations between individuals and states, finding that cultural diversity and proximity are the circumstances of cosmopolitan right.[418] While the Hobbesian idea of social contract accounts for a diversity of interests, Kant's political philosophy is concerned with a more basic conflict about the ideas of right and justice.[419] According to Waldron, Kant suggests that because the world is a sphere and we are forced to live in proximity to other cultures [which do not share our concept of right] cosmopolitan right regulates the way we share this world with other people.[420] Benhabib criticises this interpretation of Kant by claiming that the link between cultural diversity and cosmopolitan right is contingent.[421] However, it seems intuitive that cosmopolitan right is not simply a normative idea but, as Waldron argues, responds to an area of human interaction. More specifically, it is an answer to the political and moral question about how to accommodate diversity. Cosmopolitan right, according to Waldron, represents then the rules that originate from law-generating practices across cultures and polities rather than some sort of abstract universalist moral order.

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[416] *Op. cit.*, p. 235.
[417] *Op. cit.*, p. 242.
[418] *Op. cit.*, p. 235-7.
[419] *Op. cit.*, p. 240.
[420] *Op. cit.*, p. 242.
[421] Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford 2008.

5.2.2. Cosmopolitanism about Justice

Let us now move on to cosmopolitanism about justice. While cultural cosmopolitanism opposed the idea that closed communities are necessary for the development of individuals and advocated new forms of hybrid identities, cosmopolitanism about justice opposes national particularism on altogether different grounds.[422] It is based on the conviction that national boundaries can, as Nussbaum claims, 'oppose justice and equality' and that 'nation is about morally irrelevant differences that only cosmopolitanism can overcome'.[423] The idea that individual's primary allegiance should be to humanity has been criticised for being based on an abstract and unrealistic view of the self. Nussbaum's view of cosmopolitanism presupposes the existence of universal norms and values which can be identified through the virtue of simply being human.

It is important to note that even a commitment to a universalist view of morality does not imply the negation of importance of national boundaries. As Miller notes, national boundaries might still be relevant in implementing universal duties because they create communities of 'widest feasible membership, and therefore with the greatest scope for redistribution in favour of the needy'. [424] In this section I will discuss cosmopolitanism about justice mainly by referring to Held's theory of cosmopolitan citizenship and Benhabib's theory of democratic iterations.

Held argues that if we understand democracy as simply the ability of the people to make decisions for themselves, then this cannot be achieved solely within the limits of national boundaries.[425] In his work, Held tries to clarify the difference between international forms of life in the past and present. While it is clear to him that certain forms of cosmopolitan life are not novel, we are currently experiencing the erosion of national boundaries. More specifically, Held argues, our political

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[422] One should note that cosmopolitanism about justice and cosmopolitanism about culture are not mutually exclusive and can in fact be related.
[423] Martha C. Nussbaum (ed.), *For Love of Country*, Boston, Beacon Press, 2002. P. 4-5.
[424] David Miller, 'The Ethical Significance of Nationality,' *Ethics*, No. 98, 1988, p. 661. Robert Goodin makes the same point in Robert Goodin, 'What is So Special about Our Fellow Countrymen,' *Ethics*, Vol. 98, No. 4, 1988, p. 686.
[425] David Held, *Democracy and the New International Order* in Daniele Archibugi and David Held (ed.), *Cosmpolitan Democracy. An Agenda for a New World Order*, Cambridge, 1995.

actions can no longer be limited to one state. Issues such as security (terrorism, international crime), environment, energy or scientific advances cannot be successfully tackled at state level. This, according to Held, poses questions of legitimacy as our lives are increasingly dependent on decisions made outside the state (whether that is the European Union, United Nations or a result of an action taken by a different country). [426] For instance, country A's commitment to cutting greenhouse gas emissions can be effective only if countries B, C, or D follow the same move. In short, Held claims that nation-states do not make decisions only for themselves[427] and that this creates a deficit of democracy. The only just way to address this problem is to propose an institutional framework that would lead to a broadening of citizenship so that national rights of people are in line with cosmopolitan law.

Benhabib has a different starting point than Held but in a sense she arrives at the same destination. Unlike Held, her primary goal is not to address the political or democratic deficiencies of the international system. This is partly because she is concerned with individuals rather than with states and partly because she believes that 'the democratic' is in a sense secondary to our idea of citizenship.

In *Another Cosmopolitanism,* Benhabib sets out her understanding of the status of cosmopolitan norms: 1) Cosmopolitan norms are about the relations between individuals within a global civil society; 2) they exist as neither moral nor legal rights but somewhere in-between; lastly, 3) because of their in-between state, they are conditioned on the existence of national communities.[428] This in turn defines the main problems we encounter with cosmopolitan rights. If they are indeed neither moral nor legal, then are they binding? Naturally, this leads readers to question further whether cosmopolitan rights are morally or politically binding and whether they apply to individuals or to states or both. If they are about individuals in a global civil society and they do not originate from our duties to each other as members of a state, then what are their philosophical foundations? Finally, if cosmopolitan rights

[426] *Op. cit.*, p. 102.
[427] *Op. cit.*, p. 99.
[428] Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford 2008, p. 20.

are conditioned by the existence of the state, then how is that compatible with a global civil society?[429] This dilemma is at the heart of Benhabib's theory:[430] How can we have a global civil society together with self-confined communities? The paradox is that they cannot exist any other way. Benhabib argues that universal claims are integrated into the will of any sovereign citizenry in that the legitimacy of a constitution is conditioned by its adherence to basic human rights.[431] But also, historically, the democratic rights of a particular nation were understood as rights of man. The paradox here is that democracies require borders. In short, democratic rights exist in a tension between the universal will of the people and the particularity brought about by the self-defining quality of that will.

Benhabib's solution to this dilemma is innovative. She suggests that we mend or at least narrow the gap between cosmopolitan norms and particular politics 'through renegotiation and reiteration of the dual commitments to human rights and sovereign and self-determined nation '.[432] This can take various forms, from linguistic, to legal and political reinterpretations.[433] Thus, the concept of democratic iteration claims to describe an actual process in which the increasingly disaggregated citizenship[434] provides a bridge between cosmopolitanism and particularity.[435] The normative claim is that we should encourage these processes wherever they emerge from opening up citizenship, to transforming the rights of immigrants.

The concept of democratic iterations, while theoretically interesting, does encounter problems. Benhabib wants us to believe that the authority of cosmopolitan norms ultimately rests on 'the power of democratic forces within the global civil society'.[436] Identifying what these democratic forces are and where they are located is problematic. If indeed we accept that democratic iterations are legal, cultural and political[437] then why are they not also commercial, or anti-political? When Benhabib

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[429] *Op. cit.*, p. 25-6.
[430] *Op. cit.*, p. 32.
[431] *Ibid.*
[432] *Op. cit.*, p. 35.
[433] *Op. cit.*, p. 48.
[434] *Op. cit.*, p. 45.
[435] *Op. cit.*, p. 50, 70.
[436] *Op. cit.*, p. 72.
[437] *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

claims that these norms are neither moral nor political but morally constructive,[438] she does so in an attempt to escape moral universalism. But arguably her attempt fails. It seems, at the very least, problematic to claim that this process is democratic where democracy implies the equal ability to participate, and the seaming of such abilities is so variable across the globe.

Perhaps more importantly, the idea that cosmopolitan norms are in-between moral and political norms is difficult to comprehend. If cosmopolitan norms indeed escape such categorisations, how can they be binding? Furthermore, it is unclear how a norm can be morally constructive but not moral in itself. Are then cosmopolitan norms the only example of the former? It seems that Benhabib's solution raises more questions than it solves.

5.2.3. The Case for the Nation

As I noted in the introductory chapter, there is a deficit of philosophical reflection on the political role of national identity. As explained in Chapter Three, this is partially due to the alleged 'a-' or 'anti-political' status of nationhood in much of political thought until the late 20th century.[439] In the following section I will discuss three notable contemporary defences of the case for national particularism: Miller's concept of national identity as a basis for solidarity, Kymlicka's idea of the nation as the 'proper' container for democratic citizenship and Tamir's notion of the cultural nation. I have chosen these particular models partly because they are representative of the most successful lines of defence of nationhood within this debate. In addition, all three of the above accept the core assumptions of cosmopolitan discourse. In that sense, focusing on them will make the case for incorporating the nation into philosophical debate clearer.

I am intentionally leaving out the non-liberal defence of nationhood that Margaret Canovan calls 'romantic' or 'collectivist nationalism'.[440] According to that

[438] *Op. cit.*, p. 72.
[439] See Chapter 2
[440] Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, Glos 1996, p. 5.

tradition, represented by Fichte,[441] Mazzini[442] and the Polish Messianism[443] (to mention a few), nationalism is a sacred calling.[444] On this view, individuals are bound by a sacred duty to a nation, rather than to each other. 'Nation' is understood as a moral entity, which has an equivalent substance as individuals. Consequently, in romantic nationalism, it is claimed that states should mirror the way in which God divided mankind into peoples.[445] Canovan lists three objections to this model of nationalism: 'historicism, collectivism, and that humanity does not divide into nations'.[446]

There are, however, stronger reasons why we should reject the view that nations somehow represent natural collective entities with special rights. Even if humanity did 'naturally' divide into nations, nations still remain contingent (though crucial) elements of modern identity. But the contemporary self can no longer relate as easily to that identity. As I show in Chapters One and Two, the transformations within modern subjectivity paralleling the development of nationalism, are not 'natural' elements of the human condition, but products of a particular framework of the modern mind. I will thus focus on three authors who represent different versions of liberal nationalism – Miller, Kymlicka and Tamir. In broad terms, liberal nationalism is defined by two beliefs: that national identity is valuable because individuals require a sense of national belonging to lead autonomous lives; and that government requires the consent of individuals which translates into a right to collective autonomy.[447]

For David Miller[448] national bonds provide a crucial foundation for social solidarity, which in turn allows people within modern states to participate in

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[441] Johann G. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, Chicago, Open Court, 1922.
[442] Giuseppe Mazzini, *Essays: selected from the writings, literary, political, and religious, of Joseph Mazzini*, London, Walter Scott, 1887.
[443] Eugen Weber, *Apocalypses: Prophecies, Cults, and Millennial Beliefs Throughout the Ages*, Boston, Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 128.
[444] Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, Glos 1996, p. 6.
[445] *Ibid.*
[446] *Op. cit.*, p. 8.
[447] *Op. cit.*, p. 9.
[448] I discussed Miller's approach to national identity in Chapter Four. In short, for Miller, nations are groups of people who share a belief in a common history expressed in a public culture and tied to a specific territory. David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, Cambridge 2000, p. 3, 28, 29.

providing collective goods.[449] In that sense, the nation plays the role of the missing link in a certain version of social contract theory. In the classical liberal version, as found in Locke, we entrust ourselves to others based on the recognition of a common rationality. In contrast, Miller sees the idea of reason as the basis for social trust as implausible. In *Citizenship and National Identity*, he follows Hume in arguing that sentiment is more important than reason in forming social bonds. The nation, he argues, represents 'my place'. But it also represents the known world,[450] hence everything that is outside the nation seems alien and irrational. For example, it is puzzling for many non-British that most British sinks have a hot and cold tap rather than one tap for both hot and cold water. This type of trivial encounter with otherness illustrates how nationality limits our perception of the world. However, Miller would argue that this limitation is necessary and that a truly universalistic view of the world is impossible.[451]

National identity for Miller is the sentiment that acts as glue for the construction of larger, more diverse modern societies requiring more unity across greater distances. It is an unprecedented phenomenon. Ancient empires were larger in terms of territory but were also based on huge inequalities between social classes and dependencies between the centre and periphery. The nation provides the first framework for social mobilization based on an imagined equality of the entire populace. The only way to achieve this equality is by constructing an imagined bond based on mythical history. According to Miller, nations represent such bonds, because his understanding of the nation based on ethnicity

Kymlicka, on the other hand, focuses on the capacity of nationalism to accommodate ethnic, cultural and political diversity, because Kymlicka has a civic-based definition of nationalism. The key problem of nationhood as a basis of setting political boundaries is that while successful in providing a framework for democratic citizenship and security, it is simultaneously often exclusive towards aliens –

[449] David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, Cambridge 2000, p. 31.
[450] *Op. cit.*, p. 23.
[451] *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

foreigners, immigrants and sub-state minorities.[452] But Kymlicka's defence of national identity rests on the fact that, according to him, we are limited to two possible ways out: either we tackle the exclusiveness of national boundaries by building 'post-national or cosmopolitan citizenship' or we reduce the risk of liberal nationhood by diffusing it.[453] Kymlicka notes that both features of modern citizenship, namely rights and responsibilities together with membership in a national community, are very recent.[454]

Kymlicka's argument is a response to Benhabib's analysis of the European Union's model of citizenship. In *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Benhabib discusses the disassociation of social and political right within the EU as an example of democratic iterations leading to cosmopolitan right.[455] In contrast, Kymlicka argues that 'Far from transcending liberal nationhood, the EU is universalizing it, reordering Europe in its image'.[456] What Benhabib sees as disassociation, Kymlicka interprets as one of the strategies of 'taming' liberal nationhood. Through widening access to citizenship and the reasonable accommodation of immigrant ethnicity,[457] the model of national identity can be transformed to a point where it can accommodate transnational loyalties.

In contrast to both Miller's and Kymlicka's theories, Tamir argues for a separation of nationhood from the principle of the political self-determination or self-rule. Instead, she offers a cultural interpretation of the principle, where individuals should have the right to 'express their national identity, to protect, preserve and cultivate the existence of their nation as a distinct entity'.[458] While, for Tamir, nations represent genuine and valuable historical and cultural identities, these are neither the only identities nor the only ones with political significance. They should

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[452] Will Kymlicka, *Liberal Nationalism and Cosmopolitan Justice* in Benhabib Seyla (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p 129-30.
[453] *Op. cit.*, p. 130-1.
[454] *Op. cit.*, p. 128-9.
[455] Seyla Benhabib, 'Democratic Iterations: The Local, the National, and the Global,' in Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 46-47.
[456] Will Kymlicka, *Liberal Nationalism and Cosmopolitan Justice* in Benhabib Seyla (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 135.
[457] *Op. cit.*, p. 136-7.
[458] Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 72-73.

not be confused with membership in a state. Tamir sees a transformation in the role of nationalism. Nations, according to her, can no longer be seen as homogenous. Furthermore, they have lost their ability to facilitate modernisation and, thus, no longer represent the key motor of progress in contemporary democracies.[459] However, I agree with Margaret Canovan, who criticises Tamir's view for striding away from a discussion on how nations actually behave. Canovan states that:

> The weakest feature of the notion that the problems inherent in the politics of communal identity can be solved by displacing them from the level of the nation-state is the assumption that an overarching political structure without the support of communal identity will be able to contain these conflicts and preside over them with benign impartiality.[460]

According to her, while the state can command authority without being founded on the national principle, historically nations are the main sources of political power in modern western liberal democracies. Furthermore, Tamir's view of the relationship between nationalism and the state is also contestable. Firstly, she does not clarify in what sense nations were ever homogenous. The process of nation-building requires a parallel process of state unification. Most of the successful nationalist movements in which the nation secures power in its own state are not homogenous. Secondly, it is not clear how national identity would be distinguished from other types of cultural, ethnic or religious identities without the drive towards political determination.

Canovan also criticises other liberal national theorists for similar reasons. Both Miller and Kymlicka recognise the dynamic nature of nationhood. Miller's view offers an alternative to a conservative justification of patriotism. Nationality, he claims, can incorporate diverse political ideals and is subject to rapid change.[461] Kymlicka's argument serves a similar purpose, but goes farther in establishing duties to widen access to citizenship to non-nationals. However, according to Canovan, the

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[459] *Op. cit.*, p. 165.
[460] Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, Glos 1996, p. 118.
[461] David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, Cambridge 2000, Cambridge University Press, p. 32.

definition of the nation within liberal nationalism is too vague. While the Scots are a relatively unproblematic example of the liberalisation of nationalism, Yugoslavia is not.[462] Canovan shows how liberal theorists have taken for granted the existence of nation-states, particularly when 'they say that distributive justice is restricted in scope to communities in which citizenship is a matter of birth and not choice'.[463]

While Canovan agrees with Miller that national identity is not fixed but is open to interpretation, she argues that this is not a beneficial feature of nationalism. Nations have always been subject to some kind of ideological manipulation. Canovan mentions Hitler, but that is just one example in which the openness of nationalism to interpretation can be dangerous.[464] On a smaller scale we always face the danger of the consequences of redefining our own identity through a revision of history or patriotic education, both of which can have beneficial or harmful dimensions.

I agree with Canovan that reconciliation between nationalist particularism and liberal universalism is difficult and perhaps not completely feasible.[465] It is a paradox unique to liberal theory because, as Canovan states, it is the nation that is ultimately supposed to provide the power necessary for the state to administer social justice and guarantee rights. Liberal attempts to substitute national allegiances with patriotism are, according to Canovan, unsuccessful as they either present us with a model of a community that is too weak or 'as congenial as nationalism'.[466] But the liberal response to the problems posed by the nation has to be complex because any attempt at a universal answer overlooks the fact that nations do not exist universally.[467] In the final section, I try to address these concerns by an approach to nationhood that I see as a partial solution to the problems noted by Canovan.

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[462] Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, Glos 1996, p. 11.
[463] *Op. cit.*, p. 116.
[464] *Op. cit.*, p. 123.
[465] *Op. cit.*, p. 13.
[466] *Op. cit.*, p. 114.
[467] *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

5.3. Moving Beyond the Alternative

The problem that emerges from the debate I discussed in the previous section can be described as follows: cosmopolitanism rightly brings our attention to the artificial nature of national boundaries both in terms of justice and in terms of identity. We are increasingly urged to consider our duties to strangers, re-examine the special relationship we might have with fellow nationals and to open ourselves to other identities and ways of life. But, this vision of *cosmopolis* is contested, because it seems that our ability to recognise cosmopolitan norms from a position in which both our power to act politically (institutionally) and individually (as moral agents) is conditioned by the existence of nation-states. This dilemma is described by Canovan:

> By generating collective power and thereby establishing islands of firm ground among the treacherous swamps of political affairs, nationhood has allowed Western liberal theorists and publics to develop ideals and principles that are global in scope and to perceive them as projects rather than utopias. But the problem is not only how to build Jerusalem among the swamps. More seriously, we cannot easily reconcile the commitment to build Jerusalem for all mankind with the defence of our own patch of firm ground (which may itself be subject to erosion).[468]

In this last section, I want to point towards an alternative to the above dichotomy by arguing that the conceptual position of the idea of the nation has changed. I claim that the reason why cosmopolitanism and nationalist particularism may seem mutually exclusive is contingent on the definition of nationalism. In fact, even this is misleading. I already established in Chapters Two and Three that the nation is intrinsically political. Nationalism, then, becomes the movement to assume control of political boundaries as established by the state. Thus nationalism is the historical process of modern state-formation and is, politically exclusive and thus anti-universalistic. However, the concept of organising political communities into nations has proven both practically and theoretically open. This is partially because, as Kymlicka says, national citizenship can be 'tamed' and made accessible. More

[468] *Op. cit.*, p. 139.

importantly, however, this is because nationhood expresses an ability for individuals to approach others as equals. As I show in Chapter Two, the tension within the modern political subject is crucial to our understanding of individual autonomy.

One could object that it is impossible to separate the historical process of nation-building and the concept of the nation itself. This is partially true. The concept of the nation has undergone various transformations and is not solely derived from nation-building. But perhaps the most important transformation has taken place recently.

Ulrich Beck, whose position I analyse in more detail in Chapter Seven, offers a sociological analysis of this phenomenon. As I mentioned earlier, his book, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, shows how the national outlook is gradually de-ontologised by the growth of global identities. This new reality is not simply an amendment to the membership criteria but, according to Beck, requires a completely new language to describe it.

> During the national phase of modernity cosmopolitanism could only be grasped intellectually, in the head, but could not be felt as a living experience. Nationalism, by contrast, took possession of people's hearts. This head-heart dualism is turned upside down in the second modernity. Everyday life had become cosmopolitan in benign ways; yet the insidious concepts of national-ism continue to hount people's minds almost unabated, not to speak of the theories and research practices of the advanced social sciences.[469]

While I do not agree with Beck that what he describes is really a cosmopolitan world,[470] I do think that he is 'on to something' when he claims that the syntax of social science does not allow us to grasp the new complex reality. If we perceive nations methodologically as a way of framing our political experience, then we can also imagine experiencing nationality in a way that transcends national boundaries.

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[469] Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Cambridge, Polity 2006, p. 19.
[470] The cosmopolitan vision he draws is very idealised – based on an equal recognition of difference without sameness. See Chapter Two.

Kate Nash makes a similar claim when she says that traditionally cosmopolitanism is associated with human rights as opposed to political community.[471] However, more recently, we can witness the development of 'popular cosmopolitanism' in which we see fellow nationals also as fellow human beings.[472] This represents an inherent trait of nationhood often constructed within a moral order where 'real' emotions are figured as 'human'.[473] The fact that nationhood has that capacity to universalise our experience is recognised by Kymlicka and Benhabib,[474] amongst other scholars.

To sum up, nation-centred outlooks do not have to be opposed to cosmopolitan norms. At the same time, the role of the nation has been changed substantially by globalisation and as a result the language that we use to express our national allegiances is not always adequate.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that both cosmopolitan and nationalist particurist perspectives leave philosophical gaps, particularly when considering cosmopolitan norms. While, as Held and Benhabib suggest, it is true that democratic citizenship has the capacity to create norms transcending the limits of a particular polity, Kymlicka's position seems more convincing. However, his view of nationhood should be amended. The distinction between liberal citizenship and the concept of national belonging is blurred by the fact that, as Nash claims, nations are becoming 'cool'.[475] If we understand the nation as a form of political experience, this becomes

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[471] Kate Nash, 'Cosmopolitan Community: Why Does it Feel so Right*?,' Constellations* Volume 10, No4, 2003, p. 508.
[472] *Op. cit.*, p. 510.
[473] *Op. cit.*, p. 509.
[474] Will Kymlicka, *Liberal Nationalism and Cosmopolitan Justice* in Benhabib Seyla (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford 2008, p. 128-130; Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 35-40.
[475] Kate Nash, 'Cosmopolitan Community: Why Does it Feel so Right?*', Constellations*, Volume 10, No4, 2003, p. 508. Further discussion of the transformations of the psychological experience of national and cosmopolitan identities can be found in: J. Clifford, 'Mixed Feelings' in P. Cheah and B. Robbins (eds.) *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation.* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

even more evident. While nations still organise people's lives, our perception of the political extends beyond national borders. This does not represent a new paradigm, but rather represents a radicalisation of the modern ideal of politics in which the universal has to be mediated by a limited political community.

6

In Defence of a Comprehensive View of the Nation

Throughout the thesis, my argument has been focused on situating the idea of the nation into modern political thought and defending the concept of the nation from its critics. What has been achieved as a result is a series of claims about the nation that clearly seem to link together into a whole, and now need to be re-ordered. What I have shown is that major critiques of the nation (both liberal and cosmopolitan) manifest a certain deficiency in their understanding of the idea of 'nation'. This is either because they overlook something about the concept of the nation itself (for example when they presuppose a radically ethnic view of nationhood) or because they fail to recognise the significance of the framework of nation-ness to their own argument.[476]

I want to move now beyond the critical part of my task and show where it has led me. In this chapter I defend what I call a comprehensive view of the nation. It is an attempt to go beyond the limited capacity in which the concept of the nation seems to be present within mainstream contemporary (predominantly liberal) political theory. I have already identified the crucial components of this view throughout the earlier chapters of the thesis.

First, I argue in Chapters One and Two that the concept of the nation refers to a phenomenon that should be understood as neither simply exclusive nor inclusive; instead, it embraces both particularism and universalism concurrently. While nationhood cannot be conceptualised in terms of a purely civic or legal relationship, neither can it be seen as a natural, a- or anti-political identity. In fact, nations provide a crucial element of political power, because they have the ability to motivate citizens to take on burdens they otherwise would not.[477]

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[476] The argument that nationhood is a tacit assumption of liberal theory was best put forward by Margaret Canovan in her book *Nationhood and Political Theory* (1996) which I discuss later in this Chapter.

[477] Canovan makes this claim: A modern polity can be expected to wield a great deal of power with very little use of force. Margaret Canovan, 'Sleeping Dogs, Prowling Cats, and Soaring Doves: Three

Secondly, I argue in Chapter Two that the dichotomy within the concept of the nation reflects a similar dichotomy within the modern self. The project of radical autonomy based on the ideals of authorship and absolute beginnings is futile. Modern individualism rests on dialectics between passive and active components of the self. The individual subject is formed through a position of alterity towards common shared institutions.

And thirdly, I show that the nation represents a form of bounded rationality which is a necessary condition of politics.[478] This is not only because our political language (which enables us to express our interests) is itself a product of a limited community, but also because politics is a sphere of practical rationality dependent on a set of shared practices and institutions.

Now I want to develop this position further and explicate to what kind of claims we are now committed. In particular, I will show that if we take this comprehensive view seriously, it then becomes evident that nations have the capacity to provide sources of recognition and solidarity reaching beyond national borders. Furthermore, I will argue that the very paradoxical nature of national identity mediates between universal and particular, allowing us to relate to each other both as individuals and as members of a perceived historical community.

I should note that the defence of national identity is a difficult task. Firstly, because the burden of proof is on the side of those who defend what seems to be the *status quo*. Contrary to what seemed to be the general feeling in 1970s and 1980s, nations do not seem to be in decline. In fact, there are many new nationalisms and some of the old nationalist movements have been recently re-invigorated.[479] Furthermore, it is easy to criticise political cosmopolitanism for being utopian, unrealistic or lacking in detail - most innovative thinking about politics is. Secondly,

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Paradoxes of Nationhood,' in: Michel Seymour (ed), *The Fate of the Nation State*, London, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004, p. 21.

[478] This claim is explored further in this Chapter when I explain why bounded rationality is crucial for the development of moral and political agency.

[479] Hobsbawm takes a different approach. He argues that even though nationalisms continue to spring, they no longer play the central role they did in the 18th and 19th centuries. While previous nationalisms were linked to modernisation, current ethno-centric nationalist movements represent a regressive sentiment and are not politically useful. Anthony Smith (ed.), *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, Cambridge, Polity, 1995, p. 51.

any plausible defence of nationhood should give an account of the dynamic nature of nationalism, including the changing role of nations in the global era. While it is not my goal here to assess the impact of globalisation on the role of national identity, I want to show how nations can constructively participate in, and in fact are crucial to, a more cosmopolitan international community.

The argument in this chapter builds on my definition of the nation as a form of modern political experience from Chapter One to show that nations have the ability to create and sustain public worlds. These public worlds are crucial for the development of the moral and political agency of individuals because they provide a framework in which the self can be rooted. I draw here on Margaret Canovan's work, and in particular her view of nations as 'mediators'[480] which allow citizens to participate in a 'public world'.[481] This also links back to my own examinations of nationhood as a form of political experience as suggested in Chapter One. I believe that it supplements Canovan's own view and explains in more detail how nations can constitute the public world.

In the second section of this Chapter, I explore why political agency requires bounded rationality (which the nation represents) of the common world brought about by nations. This leads to the final section where I reinforce my claim from Chapter Six, that in creating the framework for contemporary moral agency, nations have the ability to transcend their borders. It is then possible to think about a universalist nationalism or a rooted cosmopolitanism.[482]

6.1. Nations Mediate Between the Self and the Public World

In Chapter Two, I explore the tension within the modern self between the desire to constitute itself as an autonomous individual and the need to belong to a community. I show that this tension, while often leading to a conflict of values, is indeed

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[480] Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, Glos 1996, p. 69.
[481] *Op. cit.*, p. 71.
[482] For a discussion of whether there is, in fact, a difference between cosmopolitan nationalism and rooted cosmopolitanism, see: Simon Caney, 'A Reply to Miller,' *Political Studies*, Vol. 50, 2002.

necessary and constitutive to the modern individual, who defines herself precisely through a position of alterity to the society. In the context of nationality, this relates to the fact that a Pole or an Englishman does not possess, or even identify with, any of the features that they associate with being Polish or English. However, the process of identification takes place in a dialectic with those features. While it is common to emphasise that personal identities are often defined negatively in relation to other nationalities (I am Polish in virtue of being different from 'Scottish' and 'Jewish'), it is less commonly noticed that on an individual level national identity can also be framed in opposition to one's own national group. For instance, my identity as a Polish immigrant living in Britain is framed neither as acceptance of purely Polish, nor purely English or Scottish features. My 'Polishness' is unique, in the sense that, contrary to a stereotypical Pole, I am not a Catholic, do not like vodka, and prefer eating Pad Thai to Bigos.

I also make a related point, that this tension within modern identity is a result of how the modern subject (the active epistemic self)[483] is framed. The duality between the passive (non-reflective) and active (reflective) elements of the subject constitutes the modern self which is always a self-in-the-making. Even though modernity defines the tasks of 'the individual' in terms of authorship, absolute autonomy in self-creation is beyond our reach. The modern self requires a framework of bounded rationality to be able to productively engage in a process of self-creation. I argued in Chapters One and Three that the nation offers that kind of bounded rationality.

However, while there are alternative languages and groups that can offer a foundation for the modern individual in terms of practices or traditions, it is specifically the nation that successfully combines cultural norms with the ability to create and maintain a public world. I have already discussed this function of nationhood in Chapter One, where I discuss the nation as a 'form of political experience'. I discuss the concept of the nation in terms of its three dimensions: that it is a 'non-thing', refers to an ability to create a common world by transcending individual horizons and finally that it is characterised by a principle of universality. I

will go a step further here and claim that because of the three above features of the concept of the nation, nationhood creates a public world. By this I mean a realm in which individual actors can participate freely in debating issues beyond their private interest.

Without the capacity of the nation to provide a public world, the tension with the self could not be successfully mediated. In other words, we do not have the ability to define ourselves in universal terms. For example, Butler argues that because standards of universality are historically and culturally articulated, the very idea of detached self is unintelligible.[484]

Nor is a detached self desirable. The ability of nations to provide a bridge between cultural, political, ethnic, religious and practical elements of our identity allows for democratic deliberation and for liberal politics in the sense that nationhood outweighs all other types of group membership and, as a result, creates a framework in which individual interests compete with each other. Within the nation, at least in theory, we are all directly connected primarily as individuals and not as members of families, churches, trade organisations and other partial associations.

My analysis of nationhood is similar to Canovan's idea of nations as mediators.[485] In *Nationhood and Political Theory*, Canovan suggests that instead of thinking of the nation as either civic or ethnic, natural or artificial, particularist or universalist, it is more accurate to think of it as a phenomenon that holds these alternatives together.[486] Or, in her own words: 'A nation is a *polity* that feels like a community, or conversely a cultural or ethnic community politically mobilised.'[487] Debates about whether the nation is a cultural or political concept are then futile. What we need instead is a better understanding of how national identity can express different dimensions of the experience of the individual.

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[483] See Chapter One.
[484] Judith Butler, 'Universality in Culture,' in: Martha C. Nussbaum (ed), *For Love of Country*, Boston, Beacon Press, 2002, p. 47.
[485] Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, Glos, 1996, p. 69.
[486] *Ibid.*
[487] *Ibid.*

The mediating function of the nation, for Canovan, enables them to serve as 'worlds'.[488] By acting as a bridge between various aspects of individual experience, national bonds constitute political communities by bringing all aspects of the life of an individual together.[489] The national world is rich not only because it is a collective of individuals, but precisely because it represents their collective experience embodied in shared institutions, practices and the enjoyment of a common cultural heritage.

> We are British not in virtue of conforming to some particularly British way of thinking but because (either by inheritance or by adoption) we jointly own the complex legacy of the nation, from institutions like Parliament, and the BBC to less tangible legacies ranging from Shakespeare's plays and a history of overseas empire to traditions of gardening and agitating against cruelty to animals – all of which are 'our' heritage as British people even if we detest the lot of them.[490]

Both my and Canovan's account of nationhood stand in contrast to otherwise similar accounts that also highlight the mediating function of nationhood but limit it to a cultural function (such as Tamir's for instance).[491] Nonetheless, we see that the nation has a political dimension because it creates a common world in which all kinds of interests and demands can be stated regardless of class, ethnic background, church affiliation, etc.. The nation as such is not a political entity but always strives to have some kind of political presence. This can be either through independence as a nation-state or some other kind or recognition via different levels of regional autonomy or minority representation.

While my account is similar to Canovan's, I believe I go further in explaining the way in which nations mediate different types of experience to constitute a common political world. This is because my analysis shows that a comprehensive

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[488] *Op. cit.*, p. 71.
[489] *Op. cit.*, p. 71.
[490] *Op. cit.*, p. 72.
[491] For such an example, see Yael Tamir, *Liberal nationalism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993.

theory of the nation should include an analysis of the modern self. Nationhood has two main sources of reference: political community (the modern state – Chapter One) and the individual (the modern subject – Chapter Two); we need both objects to provide an adequate account of this phenomenon.

The mediating function of nationhood is indeed crucial to the establishment of the modern liberal democratic state. Without it, modern societies would be collectives of different groups: professional, class, racial, ethnic, religious, to name but a few. However, the nation can help negotiate individual interests over and above these affiliations by providing a shared identity, and creating a realm in which all these identities are recognisable through shared practices and institutions. Hence, the liberal project of making politics a sphere which brings together individuals is only made possible by the particular historical circumstances brought about by the *nation-state* (specifically in the 'West').

Nevertheless, Canovan's notion of nations as mediators might suggest that nationhood is somehow a neutral bridge between politics and culture, ethnicity and citizenship. Further analysis suggests that this is not seem the case. Nations do not simply mediate or translate our experience, they can also corrupt or mistranslate it, which has the potential to result in harmful forms of exclusion.[492]

By constituting a common world, the nation provides a framework in which we can recognise other individuals as members of the same political community regardless of their membership in other groups. In the next section I will argue that nations are then constitutive to modern moral and political agency.

6.2. Nationhood as a Source of Moral and Political Agency

My definition of the concept of the nation aims to show how nations create a world in which individual political and moral agency can flourish. Nations offer much more than a source of solidarity based on a feeling of a shared fate or bonds of kinship. As

[492] In the latter case, once could use the example of the position of some ethnic minorities in France who enjoy the status of French citizens only upon assimilating certain political and cultural norms. M. Billing, *Banal Nationalism*, London, Sage, 1995.

I have shown, national identity is constitutive to the way we define ourselves. This can be understood in two ways: Firstly, nationhood provides a framework for the process of self-creation; secondly, it sets the conditions of recognition of our relationship to others.

In this section I explain why moral and political agency requires a self rooted in a community and why the mediating function of nations is so important for the idea of individual autonomy. I will first define the term agency and explain its relationship to the concept of autonomy. Then, I will show that moral agency requires a bounded community, and, consequently, so does political agency.

In the simplest terms, the word 'agent' refers to the self when it is viewed as a 'doer' or, in other words, when we examine the self's capacity to act. Moral agents are 'individual human actors who have the capacity for deliberating over possible causes of action and their consequences and then proceeding on the basis of this deliberation'.[493] The concept of moral agency allows us to view individuals as capable of action which can be viewed in terms of 'right' and 'wrong' and who are morally responsible for those actions. Political agency can sometimes be seen as a sub-type of moral agency as it relates to the same domain of practical rationality. In short, the concept of political agency refers to the ability of individual actors to deliberate over their interests and communicate them to other individuals. Agency cannot be assumed. The capacity for deliberating over possible causes of action and acting on that basis is not something we are automatically born with, but that we need to develop.

As I have shown in Chapter Two, there is a strong strand within western philosophy that sees the self mostly as a thinking substance and as such withdrawn from the world. However, the concept of agency refers to a notion of an acting self that is already in-the-world (because it has the ability to change it).[494] How are these two ideas about the self related? On one hand thinking and doing are often seen as opposing activities. To be able to think about an action we need to distance ourselves from that action (this is how the 'subject' is recognised). On the other hand, as

[493] Toni Erskine, *Embedded Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 25.

MacMurray notes, 'to act and to know I am acting are two aspects of the same experience'.[495] The self is then neither solely a thinking thing nor solely an agent, but is instead both. How are moral and political agents constituted?

I will adopt a communitarian view of moral agency, meaning that I claim that becoming an agent is only possible within a community. Millard and Forsey explain that agency could not be possible without the 'acquisition of language, and through this acquisition we are already laden with certain understandings and prejudgements about the world.'[496] Furthermore, Alasdair MacIntyre argues that our moral actions are unintelligible unless we place them within a coherent and inter-subjectively available story (it is not enough if that story makes sense only to an individual).[497]

MacIntyre uses the example of someone digging in the garden. The question 'What is he doing?' can have multiple answers which do not depend on the actual observable activity. He might, for example, be 'gardening', 'pleasing his wife', 'doing exercise'. All of these activities can be represented by digging but to say that 'digging' is the only thing that is going on would not be an adequate account of the meaning of his actions.[498]

What MacIntyre is trying to show is that the meaning of an action can only be worked out if we know the intentions of an agent as well as the activity the agent is performing. But to have intentions or plans involves having a coherent story about why we do what we do. This story has to be expressed in a common language in order to be recognisable. There are cases when agents act in a coherent way but in a language that is not intelligible to us. This is especially characteristic of different types of psychological disorders and anti-social behaviour. In the end, social trust is based on our expectation that others will act in a rational and predictable way.

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[494] John MacMurray , *The Self as Agent*, London, Faber and Faber, 1956, p. 91.
[495] *Op. cit.*, p. 102.
[496] Gregory Millard , Jane Forsey, '.Moral Agency in the Modern Age: Reading Charles Taylor through George Grant,' *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Volume 40, No. 1, p. 184.
[497] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue – A Study In Moral Theory*, London, Duckworth, 2004, p. 207-208.
[498] *Ibid.*

Political agency can be treated analogically to moral agency in the sense that it is difficult to imagine a way individuals could make sense of their own interests or communicate without a coherent narrative that would not require some sort of coherent story or narrative. National bonds represent the kind of bounded rationality that enables us to engage with 'the political' through social practices and institutions which make common language accessible.

Nations provide the means through which the self-agent can constitute itself in a coherent way in relation to set and tested ways of life. This does not mean that the self becomes identical with some sort of nationalist cliché, but it does mean that our identity can be recognised by others meaningfully only if it is presented in a way that relates somehow to these shared ideas of life. Nations promote the development of moral agency because they offer a framework of bounded rationality through traditions, practices and institutions.

6.3. Universalist Nationalism or Rooted Cosmopolitanism

Even if we accept the most inclusive (or perhaps simply the weakest) theories of nationhood, the normative problem concerning the limits of our moral and political duties to others who are not members of our community, remains pressing. While questions of national interest and sentiment often require us to make partial choices, the values nationalism promotes are often perceived as universal. Nationalism has historically promoted individual autonomy by helping to equalise the rights of persons who belong only to the same national group.[499]

This is both a moral and a political problem.[500] On the ethical level, the problem is how we can reconcile a commitment to the nation with recognising the

[499] Arguably, the same function can also be assigned to citizenship (T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1950). However, while citizenship carries an universalising impulse in theory, Andrew Vincent argues that empirically citizenship is a 'technique of exclusion'. Andrew Vincent, *Nationalism and Particularity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 79.

[500] One should note that local allegiances are not logically contradictory to universal ones.

equal moral standing of strangers (individuals out-with the nation).[501] On the political level, this is about the choice between national interest versus an impartial (global) perspective. The tension between duties to fellow nationals and to fellow human beings, as well as between the national community and the global community, is not new but has been highlighted by emergent global problems such as poverty, terrorism and environmental threats. Our awareness of these issues has made questions of the limits of our duties more acute.

One theorist who attempts to reconcile these two extremes on the ethical level is Toni Erskine. Erskine's critique focuses on ethical cosmopolitanism[502] and international relations communitarianism[503] as two opposite poles in the debate about the limits of duty. Her argument against ethical cosmopolitanism follows similar lines as Miller's. Erskine argues that ethical cosmopolitans have an unrealistic view of the human condition (specifically of how moral agents are constructed), because people are not simply isolated individuals but are always embedded in groups and allegiances.[504] Erskine defines ethical cosmopolitanism as a position characterised thus:

> What unites these positions is an adamant denial that cultural, national, religious, and ideological divides can demarcate a class of 'outsiders', or a group to whom duties are not owed, to whom considerations of justice are not extended, and with whom solidarity is not shared.[505]

According to Erskine, commitment to ethical cosmopolitanism necessitates an account of moral agents that is both detached and dispassionate. In contrast, she

[501] One should note that assigning equal moral status to strangers does not mean that we automatically have to accept that there are not any special duties towards fellow nationals. We can still argue that we have additional moral duties to those who we have more connections with. See for example: Beitz, Charles R., 'Cosmopolitan Ideals and National Sentiment,' *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 80, No. 10.
[502] Ethical cosmopolitanism believe that all human beings have equal moral standing, regardless of their group affiliations.
[503] IR communitarians limit the equal moral standing to members of a particular community.
[504] Toni Erskine, *Embedded Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 20.
[505] *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

argues in favour of what she calls an embedded self which is a concept of an agent formed by its particular view.[506]

Erskine borrows the concept of the embedded self from Walzer's communitarianism. While Erskine builds much of her argument on Walzer's theory of moral agency, she does not agree with the way Walzer decides to limit the borders of communities to geographical ones.[507] Conversely, Erskine argues that our commitments to groups are often exterritorial in character and often overlap. There are, in her view, many types of communities that are morally constitutive. For example, I belong to the community of Poles, community of academics, community of Europeans, community of atheists and so on and so forth. All these communities have their own languages and customs, norms and ideas related to a good life.

Erskine attempts to promote a middle ground between cosmopolitanism and IR communitarianism by claiming that it is possible to assign an equal moral standing to all humans while recognising that moral agency requires an embedded self. In other words, we can think of our commitments to universal norms through deliberation between individuals who are rooted in such multiple and overlapping communities. This, according to Erskine, would allow the inclusion of strangers without repression of their differences.[508]

Instead of trying then to devise universal principles of justice in an abstract model, Erskine would want them to be a product of a deliberation of individuals representing different communities. Erskine says that, thus defined, embedded cosmopolitanism has the capacity to give an account of principles that grant equal moral standing not only to fellow nationals but also to outsiders or enemies. One example of such principles is that of restraint towards one's enemy,[509] in particular in a situation of war. Ethical cosmopolitanism argues that such principles would be justified because we are all members of humanity. But Erskine's solution abandons this impartialist perspective as implausible. Instead, she suggests that the

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[506] *Op. cit.*, p. 10.
[507] *Op. cit.*, p. 35.
[508] *Op. cit.*, p. 41.
[509] *Op. cit.* p. 182.

(transnational) community of soldiers has produced its own set of practice, values and rules. Hence, she imagines that if soldiers came together, they could come up with such principles.

While Erskine's idea of overlapping communities is original, it fails to account for the fact communities can also come into conflict with each other. An obvious example is that every soldier at the same time belongs to a community of soldiers and a state community. This may lead to conflicts of action-guiding principles.[510] Unless we recognise some sort of morally and politically superior community, as Michael Walzer does, then it is difficult to understand how we could solve problems arising from conflicting values of different communities to which individuals belong.

Erskine's perspective does not account for the special role of the nation as a political community (rather than just one of the other groups). However, as I have shown in the previous section, the mediating function of nationhood allows it to create a common world in which all our identities can exist on equal terms with each other. It is also the key framework in developing individual moral and political agency. While Erskine is right that it is impossible to have a viable theory of global citizenship without accepting that people are somehow embedded in their communities (an abstract view of individual agents is unintelligible), she does underestimate the political role of nationalism in forming a bridge between different types of group membership. Historically, nation-building was often associated with the need to abolish certain group antagonisms (such as between churches or castes).

As I have shown in Chapter Five, nations do have an inherent ability allowing us to recognise norms that go beyond national borders. Having said that, while nations still do organise our lives, the way members of a national community can engage with the political extends beyond the nation. This does not in it itself represent a new paradigm, but rather is a natural consequence of the modern ideal of politics in which the universal has to be mediated by a limited political community.

[510] However, such conflict is not necessary if national military organisations act in accordance to transnational norms.

One could argue that, to slightly rephrase Canovan's idea, the concept of the self embedded in a nation is a tacit assumption of liberal cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan outlook is individualistic in the sense that individuals are the main actors and bearers of rights and so on. This is because liberal cosmopolitanism is centred around a concept of individual autonomy which is historically conditioned by the development of nationhood as argued in Chapter Two. Here, I showed that the processes creating the modern concept of individual autonomy are also responsible for the development of the concept of the nation.

As I explained earlier on in this chapter, Canovan approaches the same argument from a different side, showing how liberal politics require national bonds. This is because, as she rightly shows, politics is originally about relations between groups and not individuals.[511] Thus, an attempt to create a theory of the state where the state mediates primarily in conflicts between individuals requires a 'balancing act'. The liberal state has to somehow 'outweigh the bonds of kin, caste, and religion'.[512] This, according to Canovan, is done by the nation, within which all group identities become generalised and diffused.[513] If not for the mediating function of nationhood, it would be difficult to recognise the rights and needs of individual citizens. The resulting 'self' is paradoxically both rooted in a bounded community but also gains the ability to detach itself from other identities.

Conclusion

To sum up, what I attempt to show in this chapter is that the comprehensive view of nationhood allows us to understand the phenomenon of nationalism and its role in modern politics in a better way than if we were to simply frame it terms of national identity or allegiance. In my conception of comprehensive nationhood, the concept of

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[511]Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, Glos 1996, p. 39.
[512]*Ibid.*
[513] Canovan also mentions two other reasons why liberal theory tacitly assumes the existence of national communities: 1) Because social justice has to be that d in order to make it possible to redistribute collective resources and 2) Because democracy need an ability to act as a people. *Ibid.* p. 44.

nation refers to more than merely ethnic or civic bonds. The nation has the ability to mediate not only between individuals (Chapter One) but also different types of experience. As a result, the primary political value of nations is that they have the ability to create public worlds. The act of mediation itself is not morally neutral and should be subject to scrutiny as it can lead to misrepresentation and oppression.

By creating a world in which all fellow nationals can participate on equal terms, nations have the capacity to mediate between different types of experiences within a framework of bounded rationality and create an intelligible world in which moral and political agency can flourish. In that sense, nationhood is constitutive to modern individualism. In the last section, I showed that nationhood has the ability to embrace global and transnational identities and that, in fact, the only viable cosmopolitanism is one based on individuals who are somehow rooted in their communities.

I should perhaps note that the above reflections have intentionally omitted the problem of the state. I do not think that a commitment to nationhood as a basis for a public world has to imply statehood based solely on national identity. There are new possibilities opened up by the European Union as well as different levels of political existence within national communities. My point is limited to the fact that there is a certain value in a national self as a basis for political community. The appropriate form of such a community is a matter that should be discussed separately.

The reason why nationhood remains central in this process is that, while globalisation means that there are new sources of identity, the nation remains the primary boundary of our political world. Unless we can think of a way in which the ‘global’ can become ‘political’ through a similar mediating process as the nation, it seems to me that the ‘global’ exists only as an abstraction of the ‘local’. It is also true, however, that nations themselves have to (and indeed do) re-orient themselves to address new types of identities and transnational challenges. They will however, for the time being, remain the primary political source of our understanding of these issues.

7

Post-National Thought: Is National Identity in Retreat?

Analysis in earlier chapters has shown that the nation is both a historical and contingent phenomenon. This begs the question whether the form of political identity represented by nationhood can continue to offer the ability to construct public worlds (as explained in Chapter Six). The place and status of national identity has become problematic as a result of globalisation and the reactions to it. This chapter examines some non-liberal models of post-national thought. I will argue that these rest on a flawed deconstruction of subjectivity.

Recent social and cultural changes have led to a new critique of the concept of the modern subject. Globalisation, migration, multiculturalism and the alleged decline of the nation-state[514] have all led to the erosion of traditional sources of identity. A significant part of this was played by the recent critique of subjectivity by authors such as Foucault and Deleuze, who accused modern thought of constructing a concept of self that is 'ahistorical', 'fleshless', 'male' and 'oppressive'. In this debate, the subject was often identified with the Cartesian *Cogito* which became both a historical reference to Descartes and a metaphor of a broader theme within modern philosophy where subjectivity is conceptualised as an empty, transparent space.[515]

But this wave of criticism had its sources in the intellectual movements at the turn of the 20th century. The end of modernity saw a sudden retreat of some of its core principles. Theorists such as Nietzsche,[516] Freud,[517] Heidegger[518] and Marx[519] identified the same paradox of modernity: that the concept of the autonomous self coexists with increasingly stronger frameworks of moral, social and political

[514] Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State*, Free Press, New York, 1995.
[515] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: an archaeology of the human sciences*, London, Routledge, 2002, p. 352-353.
[516] Frederick Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996.
[517] Sigmund Freud, *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, London, Penguin, 2002.
[518] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2005, p. 165-167.

institutions. The above-mentioned philosophers used varying resources of modern thought to criticise this contradiction in the name of the same core values of modernity that produced it.

By this I mean that they did not discard the concept of the 'subject' or self all together; in fact one could argue that the idea of selfhood was of central concern for these philosophers. Nietzsche tried to defend the idea of the self from the unifying forces of Christian Middle Class morality.[520] Freud described the oppressive influence of culture on the self.[521] Heidegger identified '*Man-selbst'* as the greatest enemy of the self – because 'man' stands for what 'one does'.[522] Finally, Marx's criticism of capitalism was written equally in the language of exploitation as well as dehumanisation through alienation.[523] These authors argue that the concept of the 'subject' is both in a submissive and oppressive position because it relies on the assumption that human beings are purely rational agents and it puts us in conflict with what romanticism calls 'nature'. In other words, they saw a rift between the concepts of individual freedom on one hand and family, nation, class and mass culture on the other.

What these two waves of critique of the modern 'subject' have in common is that they both see the modern self as entangled in a struggle between two opposite cultural forces: universalism and individuation.[524] The former represents an intellectual attempt to establish norms and rules reflecting the universal laws of reason. The latter mirrors the desire to strengthen and develop personal and collective identities. Rationalisation ultimately leads to sameness and a state of normality, while individuation is guided by difference and exception. While at the turn of the 20th century, criticism was mainly directed at the concept of reason and

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[519] Karl Marx, *Essential Writings*, New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1972.
[520] Frederick Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996.
[521] Sigmund Freud, *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, London, Penguin, 2002.
[522] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2005, p. 165-167.
[523] Karl Marx, *Essential Writings*, New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1972.
[524] This classification draws on one provided by Cornelia Klinger in her paper 'From Freedom Without Choice To Choice Without Freedom: The Trajectory of the Modern Subject', *Constellations*, Volume 11, No. 1, 2004, which I also discuss in the last section of this chapter. However I prefer to use the term 'individuation' rather than her choice of 'subjectivisation' as this is consistent with my terminology in which subjectivisation is seen as a sub-category of individuation.

rationality, late 20th century philosophy sees the concept of the self as equally deceptive.

As a reaction to these intellectual transformations there seem to exist at least three theoretical positions: 1) traditional particularism, 2) progressive universalism and 3) post-modern particularism. Traditional particularism encompasses those theories which oppose the diffusion of strong, substantive identities, personal and collective, and believe that we should protect them. Progressive universalists believe that the process of rationalisation will finally overcome our attachment to identity; they celebrate the decline of nation-state, family and other traditional sources of social roles and identities.[525] Finally, post-modern particularists (and I use the term post-modern very loosely here) also perceive the diffusion of traditional sources of identity as a process of emancipation of the individual. However, they are equally sceptical about the ability to adopt new universalist or cosmopolitan identities. This is because, according to post-modern particularists, all identities are oppressive at some level.

However, I do not believe that any of these attempts to accommodate the modern subject are successful. In particular, the third position seems to be overlooking the fact that the debate between cosmopolitanism and nationalism is not embedded in a post-subject world but is precisely a debate about the nature of modern political subjectivity. In this chapter, I argue that the contemporary changes within subjectivity are consistent with the project of modernity and, in fact, do not present a new post-national world.

To give an overview of this chapter, I will begin by reconstructing the critique of the subject. Drawing on a strand of Foucauldian thought, I will show how the emergence of the subject is conceptualised within this critique as a result of

[525]Ulrich Beck is of the most well-known public intellectuals representing this line of thought. Apart from his academic work on Risk Society and Cosmopolitanism, he is also the author of numerous newspaper articles that call for a 'cosmopolitan education and upbringing'. For example, he suggested in *The Guardian* that the number of history lessons in the curriculum should be reduced as history (understood as history of nations) is divisive. Instead, pupils should be offered lessons in cooking and Mandarin (Ulrich Beck, *The Guardian*, Friday, 13 July 2007).

specific practices, and in particular power relations within a state.[526] This is important to my investigations because the post-national world is primarily one in which 'the subject' in politics lost its ontological position of primacy. I argue that while Foucault himself offers a nuanced theory of the relationship between state and the subject, his critique of subjectivity served as a starting point of many who attempted to theorise about ways to 'free ourselves' from the oppressiveness of such defined subjectivity. I claim that the attempt to free ourselves from subjectivity is an illusion because the void this attempt conjures cannot provide any sort of grounding for political action. In the second section, I discuss the emergent nature of the current global order in which national boundaries become diffused. I give examples of two post-national theories: Hard and Negri's 'Empire' and Beck's 'Cosmopolitan Outlook'. In the third and final part of the chapter, I will argue that none of the above views are entirely persuasive as they rely on an assumption of inherent contradiction between nationhood as a form of political identity and individual autonomy.

I will show that while it is true that individual identity have become less rooted, this is not a contradiction, but is rather a logical development within the modern subject. Unless we recognise this distinction, we risk misrepresenting the real processes within our society where national and global outlooks become increasingly fused and dependent on each other. Perhaps more importantly, we risk confusion as to how do these changes affect our reasoning about the moral challenges in a globalised world. Ultimately, I claim that there is nothing particularly new or revolutionary about the transformations described by post-national theorists. In fact, theories can be better described as a radicalisation of the process of modernity which brought about the nation.

[526] Power is only one of the three ways of constructing subjectivity that Foucault identifies alongside scientific discourse and self-constituting practices (history of sexuality). Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1982, p. 779.

7.1. Critique of Subjectivity: Foucault and his Disciples

In his analysis of the history of punishment, Foucault offers an explanation of how a genealogy of political practices can lead us to an examination of the individual self. The study of the prison becomes a study of practices that came to be seen as a natural and self-evident part of the modern idea of the penal system – the most immediate and barest expression of state power.[527] For Foucault, the purpose of the new administrative techniques used by the state to classify and document the activity of its citizens, such as birth registers, statistics, school exams and medical examinations, is to control the individual to an extent that was not possible in earlier times.[528] The ultimate goal of prison, according to his argument, is no longer retribution but re-socialisation. Foucault's analysis shows how the subject was formed in a tension with disciplinary power expressed in the changes in penal practices. The originality of Foucault's thought lies in his claim that in this process, punishment is revealed as a condition of bad conscience.[529]

Foucault extends his analysis of the subject to three types of subject-forming practices, specifically: language and science, power and care of the self.[530] His work is then a refusal to limit the understanding of the subject to either abstract theories of the self or to theory of power. Instead, he attempt to trace specific modes of being a subject, that is to say, he discusses subjectivity with references to fundamental experiences of the self. These experiences include the way the self directs attention to itself. In particular, in Foucault's later work, we can find the analysis of techniques relating to 'the care of the self', which he analysis by looking at the status of bodily pleasures in his *History of Sexuality*.[531] For example, Foucault shows how the principle of restraint from excessive bodily pleasures in ancient Roman thought was not the result of a universal ethical principle but a particular value attached to practicing care of oneself. According to him, the principle of self-restraint was

[527] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, London, Penguin, 1991.
[528] *Op. cit.*, p. 170-177.
[529] *Op. cit.*, p. 73-135, 149-151.
[530] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1982, p. 779.
[531] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality 3: The Care of the Self*, London, Penguin, 1990.

considered here not universal (and thus did not require legal status), but one that differentiated oneself from those who lead a life as throngs, [532]

The goal of Foucault's genealogical work is then to, critique a metaphysical and ahitsorical notion of the subject, and expose techniques of subject formation in order to open up new possibilities of being a subject.

> 'The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state and from the state's institutions but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries.'[533]

Foucault's analysis of subjectivity takes advantage of the ambiguity of the word subject, which, as mentioned before, can be understood either as 'subject of someone's control' or 'tied to his own identity'.[534] By showing these two aspects of subjectivity as mutually dependent, through specific practices of the state, Foucault argues that there is no escaping subjectivity or power.

> 'The relationship between power and freedom's refusal to submit cannot, therefore, be separated. The crucial problem of power is not that of voluntary servitude (how could we seek to be slaves?). At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential freedom, it would be better to speak of an "agonism"*--of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal in-citation and struggle, less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation.'[535]

This final point of Foucault's theory has not always been fully appreciated and many of those, who claimed to continue or apply Foucault's work, have focused primarily on his concept of bio-power, marginalising the agonistic conception of the subject. This is certainly true in the case of two theorists: Michael Mahon and Michael

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[532] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality 3: The Care of the Self*, London, Penguin, 1990, p. 40-41; further elaboration of practices of care of oneself can be found on p. 45-47.
[533] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1982, p. 785.
[534] *Op. cit.*, p. 780-781.
[535] *Op. cit.*, p. 790.

Clifford. For Mahon, the surveillance techniques of the modern state create a space that solidifies the modern self and allows us to perceive ourselves as subjects. This in turn shows the ambiguity of the epistemic revolution of modernity. According to his reading of Foucault, the formula of Descartes' *cogito* not only allows us to think of ourselves as calculating animals, but has also made us calculable.[536] 'They were reduced to thinking, inferring, reckoning, coordinating cause and effect, these unfortunate creatures; they were reduced to their 'consciousness', their weakest and most fallible organ.'[537] The weakness of understanding ourselves primarily in terms of 'consciousness' lies in the way it makes us vulnerable to the disciplinary power of the state. It is through analysing this type of disciplinary power we understand that it is not individuals who bring society together, but that society produces a totality.[538]

According to Clifford, the ambiguity of the word subject, meaning both an autonomous individual and the subject of political power, is not accidental. It is not a paradox that the French Revolution could be at the same time perceived as an act of freedom and yet constitute a totality (the nation) that transformed everyone into subjects. Michael Clifford argues that this transformation is in fact at the heart of liberal political theory, where the political state is justified by the passage from the state of nature to a state of civil society. The state of nature in a classical Hobbesian model is a state of constant threat and danger. According to Clifford, it is only this discourse of threat that transforms the noble savage into a savage noble – an individual.

> 'Disciplinary' power – that would seize the body in its every aspect and transform it into a form of political subjectivity that quietly makes a mockery of autonomous individuality. This power is silent, quotidian, ubiquitous, and irresistible – moreover, it uses the political identity of the savage noble, of free individuality, as an ideological veil to conceal its machinations.[539]

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[536] *Op. cit.*, p. 134.
[537] *Op. cit*, p. 216
[538] Michael Mahon, *Foucault's Nietzschean genealogy: truth, power, and the subject*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 132.
[539] Michael Clifford, *Political Genealogy After Foucault. Savage Identities*, London, Routledge, 2001, p. 34.

Thus, for Clifford, the emergence of the subject is inseparable from the emergence of the modern nation-state. The meaning of 'subject' (from Latin 'to place or throw under') is according to him – 'a place, an imagined political community'.[540]

> The nation delimits a space of political subjectivity; it gives subjects an identity by virtue of their identification with the nation: as an American or German, as Japanese or Bengali. It is a place both real and ideal: real to the extent that it designates fixed or disputed) geographical boundaries, ideal in that it is a place whose boundaries are defined less by fences, rivers, or mountains than by political subjects who share what Walker Connor calls an 'essential psychological bond.[541]

Nation appears to be then – as a result of Clifford's analysis – a form of the ideological disciplinary power that produced the modern subject.

To sum up, in both Mahon's and Clifford's analysis, the modern subject appears to be a product of either the disciplinary power of the state (Mahon) or the discourse of threat created by the nation (Clifford). This focus on power as the main factor in subject-formation goes against the intention of Foucault's philosophy, as I explained earlier. For Mahon and Clifford, the concept of the 'subject' stands for a modern paradox where the very feeling of freedom and autonomy we experience as subjects equipped with rationality and individual identity is, at the same time, a condition of strong and oppressive group identities. By revealing this, the 'genealogist' claims to act as a revolutionary who unmasks the mechanism of exploitation, giving us the tools to overthrow it. Genealogy is then not simply an alternative history or another narrative about the past.

However, freedom from continuity and substantive identity is a promise as dangerous as it is unrealistic. The idea that by deconstructing the subject we will be able to somehow resist the powers that form it is misleading as subjectivity is the only strategy of resistance available to us. One author who identified this flaw is Agata Bielik-Robson, who, in her book *Inna Nowoczesnosc* (*The Other Modernity*),

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[540] *Op. cit.,* p. 58.

attempts to show the paradoxes of post-modern thinking about subjectivity.[542] She understands subjectivity as a reflective engagement with ourselves as beings-in-time. In this sense, we experience ourselves as subjects especially when we feel the passing of time – in a special type of relationship that individuals have with history. We look into the past with pride or regret, experiencing guilt and melancholy. Melancholy, or an attempt to hold on to what is already lost, is especially characteristic of modern subjectivity for Bielik-Robson. Without melancholy, she argues, we would not feel the need to remember the dead, nor would we be able to fight for the honour of our ancestors.

Nonetheless, it is precisely melancholy that presents itself as a burden to the modern subject. It was Nietzsche who, in *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, reflected that:

> Observe the herd which is grazing beside you. It does not know what yesterday or today is. It springs around, eats, rests, digests, jumps up again, and so from morning to night and from day to day, with its likes and dislikes closely tied to the peg of the moment, and thus neither melancholy nor weary. To witness this is hard for man, because he boasts to himself that his human race is better than the beast and yet looks with jealousy at its happiness. For he wishes only to live like the beast, neither weary nor amid pains, and he wants it in vain, because he does not will it as the animal does. One day the man demands of the beast: 'Why do you not talk to me about your happiness and only gaze at me?' The beast wants to answer, too, and say: 'That comes about because I always immediately forget what I wanted to say.' But by then the beast has already forgotten this reply and remains silent, so that the man wonders on once more.[543]

The post-modern remedy to the oppressiveness of modern subjectivity expressed in melancholy, or what Deleuze calls neurotic subjectivity,[544] is, according to Bielik-Robson, 'ecstasy'. Ecstasy is an escape from the monotony of being a continuous self, a rebellion from repetition. In this sense, post-modern identity is at constant war

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[541] *Op. cit.*, p. 58.
[542] Agata Bielik-Robson, *Inna Nowoczesnosc. Pytania o wspolczesna formule duchowosci*, Krakow, Universitas, 2000.
[543] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, NuVision Publications 2007, p. 1.
[544] Agata Bielik-Robson, *Inna Nowoczesnosc. Pytania o wspolczesna formule duchowosci*, Krakow, Universitas, 2000, p. 63.
[544] *Ibid.*

with any type of 'heaviness', seriousness or boredom.[545] Contemporary society in Bielik-Robson's view is tired of memory, history and the concept of time in general; individuals within that society desire the lightness of a-historicity which offers an escape from the limits of ordinary existence.[546] This is why 'the postmodern self lives most intensively, when in a moment of ecstasy it places itself outside of time and far from herself, from her self-image, from everything that it wrongly thought to be a defining part of its identity – in an utopian and ephemeral imaginary place.[547]

But for Bielik-Robson 'ecstasy' – the essential desire of postmodern subjectivity - is a false remedy. This is because the opposition between heaviness and lightness is itself a misleading discrepancy. In his famous book, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being,* Kundera targets this exact problem of contemporary culture. As in the case of his other books, he chooses the opposition of 'heavy' and 'light' only to show that it can easily be reversed. Initially for Kundera 'heaviness' is the boredom of being a subject and, similar to Bielik Robson's work, is constituted by melancholy and memory.[548] Without memory, the individual self cannot be in danger of carrying the weight of its history. The lightness of forgetting about being a subject intuitively seems to offer an escape from boredom. However, both for Kundera and Bielik-Robson the lightness of a-historicity is misleading. In fact, boredom is an inescapable feature of a post-modern society. That boredom does not result in any type of self-reflection, as it does in the case of melancholy. Contemporary boredom is not associated with an engagement with the past. For Bielik Robson boredom is pure negativity, the tiredness of the ordinary life. In fact, according to Bielik-Robson, the only time the post-modern self is not affected by boredom is in the short moments of ecstasy when it is completely outside of itself.[549]

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[545] *Ibid.*
[546] *Ibid.* p. 64.
[547] *Op. cit.*, p. 80.
[548] Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, London, Farber and Farber, 1995.
[549] *Op. cit.*, p. 85.

7.2. Post-National Thought

The recent emergence of new, hybrid forms of identity and political membership, multiculturalism, the lack of clear borders between political, economic and cultural phenomena and the non-territorial character of the new world order all have a bearing on contemporary political thought. The post-modern critique is an attempt to deal with the descriptive inadequacy of the old, state-centred political language. On a political level, de-ontologisation of the nation-state outlook is a result of a deconstruction of an essentialist view of the self.

Beck claims that thanks to the postmodern critique of subjectivity, nationhood has become historicised and 'stripped of its inner necessity'.[550] As a result, the idea of having special duties to fellow-nationals is undermined. When identity ceases to be a significant source of moral obligation, the cosmopolitan project of rationalization naturally goes forward. The relationship between the post-modern critique of subjectivity and cosmopolitanism is ambiguous. On one hand, without a global, post-national outlook, we would not be able to, as Bauman says, dip 'freely into the Lego set of globally available identities' and build 'a progressively inclusive self-image'.[551] On the other hand, the resulting new identity is only passively quasi-cosmopolitan. While drawing on a number of formerly exclusive identities, it remains provincial in character. In that sense, even though living in a multi-cultural environment involves being opened up to the world in a broad way, it does not lead to a universalist perspective. The post-modern, post-national outlook is, at heart, particularistic.[552]

Bauman describes this as part of a wider process of fragmentation of contemporary life[553] by noting that

> The passage from 'solid' to a 'liquid' phase of modernity: that is, into a condition in which social forms (structures that limit individual choices, institutions that

[550] Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Cambridge, Polity 2006, p. 17.
[551] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times. Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 5.
[552] Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Cambridge, Polity 2006, p. 54.
[553] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times. Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 3.

> guard repetitions of routines, patterns of acceptable behaviour) can no longer (and are not expected) to keep their shape for long, because they decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them, and once they are cast for them to set.[554]

According to Bauman, there is not really any way to identify the new global community favourably. The processes we observe in the emergence of international institutions and global civic movements are simply reactions to the globalisation of the market that affect us.

7.2.1. Post-modern Particularism: Hardt and Negri's Empire

The decline of the nation-state does not have to signify a beginning of the 'road to freedom'. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri are, for instance, two thinkers whose book *Empire* presents a modern alternative in the intellectual debate on globalisation.[555] Hardt and Negri draw a vision of empire understood as a new, post-national (and post-imperial) model of sovereignty. The global order that emerges from the UN Charter is, according to them, no longer international, but is instead defined as a supra-national legal and ethical order.

Hardt and Negri attempt to show that the supra-national order originates from a rationalisation of relations between states.[556] It is perceived to be a teleological process perpetuated by the necessary progress of mankind. This new world order, which Hardt and Negri call 'Empire', aims to establish global peace through unified legal order which becomes identified with "justice".

> In Empire there is peace, in Empire there is the guarantee of justice for all peoples. The concept of Empire is presented as a global concert under the direction of a single conductor, a unitary power that maintains the social peace and produces its ethical truths. And in order to achieve these ends, the single

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[554] *Op. cit.*, p .1.
[555] Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000.
[556] Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

> power is given the necessary fore to conduct, when necessary, 'just wars' at the borders against the barbarian and internally against the rebellious.[557]

But Hardt and Negri's thesis is that the opposite is true. Due to the diffusion of borders and democratisation of global space, power achieves its total stage. Unlike in modernity, it is no longer bound by the principles of sovereignty which also establishes the 'ground rules' of legitimate power. On the contrary, the new global bio-power is based on the ability to determine the state of emergency, i.e. an event that requires intervention.[558] In Hardt and Negri's view, Empire does not lead to wars as there is nothing external to Empire. All types of force become internal; they come to be understood as civil wars, humanitarian interventions, or a policing action against the murderers, criminals and terrorists. Ultimately, the nature of the global bio-power of the new Empire is not so different to that of the modern state. Like the modern state, Empire still retains the power to identify an enemy, though all enemies become internal enemies. This new form of order can take political, social, or even cultural forms as Empire is an order that administers the production of identity and difference.[559] This pessimistic diagnosis seems to leave little hope of resistance. Because of the total nature of bio-power, any opposition against the Empire is doomed to fail, as Empire automatically consumes any type of difference and opposition represented by any of the identities within.[560] According to Negri and Hardt, so far, the only successful resistance to the Empire has been individual: activities such as 'radical mutation' of our bodies through piercings, tattoos[561] have served as way of "fighting back" against the homogenising force of the emerging global order.

Hardt and Negri's work represents a warning against a world without subjectivity. The new political order exists in a vacuum where there is no recognised

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[557] Hardt calls this process of rationalisation a continuation of the project of "Perpetual Peace". Michael Hardtack, Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 10.
[558] *Op. cit.*, p. 48.
[559] *Op. cit.*, p. 59.
[560] *Op. cit.*, p. 62.
[561] Hardt, Michael, Negri, Antonio, *Empire*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 216.

political leadership and, consequently no authority able to grant citizenship.[562] The oppressiveness of the Empire is then inherent in its structure. It signifies political authority and a system of redistribution without a recognised class of right-bearers.

The goal of the authors of *Empire* is then to promote new ways of resisting by promoting citizenship.[563] As there is no global state, Hardt and Negri introduce the concept of the 'Multitude'[564] which represents the global class of subjects. The multitude does not have a legal status but it has been recognised through a series of revolutions and solidarity of those revolutionary groups against the Market.[565] The empowerment of the multitude, according to Hardt and Negri, requires three postulates to be met: recognition of global citizenship, the right to free movement of people, and a global social wage.

It is not my goal here to assess the validity of Hardt and Negri's model of global citizenship. However, their analysis of the global order or subjectivity does not seem to rest on firm enough ground. While Hardt and Negri try to convince us that they are describing a substantially new type of exploitation, take away bio-power, and their analysis seems to be using a language we know all too well.[566] Even the account of bio-power in *Empire* seems to be problematic as by losing the distinction between state and economy, the Marxist categories of production suddenly seem blurred.[567] However, surely the way we perceive and understand the global order depends on the linguistic toolkit we decide to apply. While Hardt and Negri's toolkit is certainly an interesting one, it lacks the kind of detail that would allow us to assess the usefulness of their model. It seems to me that precisely at a time when the nature of contemporary political subjectivity is being heavily debated,

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[562] *Op. cit.*, p. 394.
[554] Jonathan Havercroft, 'The Fickle Multitude: Spinoza and the Problem of Global Democracy,' *Constellations*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2010, p. 112.
[564] Hardt, Michael, Negri, Antonio, *Empire*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 394.
[565] *Op. cit.*, p. 395.
[566] Hardt and Negri's style of theorising also seems to be much closer to traditional Marxism than they willingly admit as suggested in: Gary K. Browning, 'A Globalist Ideology of Post-Marxism? Hardt and Negri's Empire,' *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2005, p. 194.
[567] Paul Thompson, 'Foundation and Empire: A critique of Hardt and Negri,' *Capital and Class*, No. 84, p. 77.

Hardt and Negri's is too reductionist. I tend to agree with Beck that the new global (or as he calls it, cosmopolitan) order requires a new syntax[568] or, to put it in other words, new political categories. However, the search for these is immensely difficult, especially as there is still little clarity and much confusion as to our relationship with modernity. I will now examine an alternative 'narrative' to that offered by Hardt and Negri.

7.2.2. Postmodern Particularism: Beck's Cosmopolitan Outlook

The assault on the World Trade Centre in 2001 represents a change to intellectual discourse. The idea of a 'War on Terror' has undermined the classical understanding of conflict. At the same time, we observe new ways of thinking about the 'national' and the 'global'. One such example is Beck's theory of 'global risk society'. In Beck's own terminology, the adjectives 'global' and 'cosmopolitan' are closely linked and in this section I will use these in the above meaning, rather than in the philosophical one. Beck's approach to cosmopolitanism is closely related to his work on risk. As a social theorist, Beck is largely focused on the distinction between cosmopolitanisation (a dimension of globalisation) and cosmopolitanism.

> The globalization of politics, economic relations, law, culture, and communication, and interaction, networks, spurs controversy; indeed, the shock generated by global risks continually gives rise to worldwide political publics...In world risk society – this is my thesis, at least – the question concerning the causes and agencies of global threats sparks new political conflicts, which in turn promote an institutional cosmopolitanism in struggles over definitions and jurisdictions.[569]

Beck sees the emergent nature of global risk as a key factor in constructing a global public sphere which in turns leads to a process he calls cosmopolitanisation. It is thanks to these changes that the 'human condition has itself become cosmopolitan'.[570] Naturally, Beck is aware of the recent revitalisation of nationalism

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[568] Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 19.
[569] Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Cambridge, Polity, 2006, p. 23, 22
[570] *Op. cit.,* p. 22.

and sub-state nationalism in Eastern Europe, Canada, Scotland and elsewhere. Nonetheless, he claims that there is a significant difference between modern nationalism and its current post-modern form. Whilst in modernity, political identity is formed in opposition to that which is 'alien' or 'other', contemporary national identities do not seem to be necessarily exclusive in the same way.[571] Thus, it is possible to be both Polish and German. Moreover, Beck claims that these new forms of nationalism develop in response to (and perhaps even opposition to) the globalised world. For Beck, the era of xenophobic, particularistic nationalism is over.

> [...] identities which are perhaps too quickly labelled as 'neonational' but which, in contrast to the explosive fascistic nationalisms of the twentieth century, do not aim at ideological and military conquest beyond their own borders. These are introverted forms of nationalism which oppose the 'invasion' of the global world by turning inwards, though 'introverted' here should not be confused with 'harmless.[572]

In that sense, contemporary nationalism develops in an already globalised, cosmopolitan world. However, unlike the old cosmopolitanisms of Marcus Aurelius[573] and Immanuel Kant,[574] cosmopolitan life is no longer a matter of 'cold' reason. Beck describes the process as an increasing spring of cosmopolitan empathy.[575]

So why is this link between emergent global factors such as risk (or perceived risk) and the cosmopolitanisation of contemporary life important for a political theorist? The answer is twofold. On a philosophical level, Beck's analysis is critical because, firstly, it implies that the opposition between normative cosmopolitanism and nationalism is historical, rather than theoretical; while recognising that society becomes increasingly cosmopolitan, Beck's argument avoids a naive model of

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[571] *Ibid.*
[572] *Op. cit.*, p. 4.
[573] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, London, Wordsworth, 1997.
[574] Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.
[575] Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 5-6.

cosmopolitanism.[576] Secondly, as far as social theory is concerned, the distinction that Beck makes between cosmopolitanism as a normative view and the empirically observable cosmopolitanisation is useful as it provides an alternative understanding of the relationship between increasing internationalisation and cosmopolitanism. It also avoids antagonism between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. The problem of subjectivity is only hinted at in Beck's writing and mostly in so far as he discusses the notion of identity.

However, let me first briefly reconstruct what Beck calls the cosmopolitan outlook. He focuses not on the institutional aspect of globalisation nor the increasing need for international cooperation in policy-making. He lists five principles of the cosmopolitan outlook. These are 1) the experience of crisis in world society, 2) recognition of cosmopolitan differences, 3) cosmopolitan empathy, 4) the impossibility of living in a world society without borders and 5) the melange principle.[577] The first principle refers to the perception of global risks and threats which, thanks to the widening of international public opinion, help shape our understanding of a common 'human' fate. The second and third principles are related in the sense that they represent the idea that since we recognise that we think in the same way and know how others think,[578] we are capable of respecting difference without defining it in terms of otherness or exclusion. Finally the melange principle refers to the liquidity of contemporary identities and the increasing multiculturalism of our societies, both of which result in the world being much more 'colourful'. The melange principle means in practice that we perceive mixings of cultures, races and cultures as inevitable elements of contemporary societies.

All of these principles are defined in terms of social perception rather than immediate political phenomena. Arguably, however, these cannot be so easily separated. In Beck's view, the transformations of our perceptions of national and transnational forms of life does, in fact, affect both policy and normative thinking.

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[576]This is not to say that cosmopolitanism must necessarily be associated with naive universalism. I have already discussed examples of a more balanced view in Chapters Five and Six (Erskine, Appiah).
[577] Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 7.

[578] *Op. cit.,* p. 8.

One example Beck gives is one of a Brazilian footballer playing for a Bavarian team. Even thought we recognise the player as being Brazilian, he still manages to ignite a patriotic spirit among Germans.[579] Beck takes this as evidence that the cosmopolitan outlook does not replace national sentiment but can co-exist with and in fact strengthen it.

Beck's account is contestable. While we observe a variety of processes which could loosely be termed 'globalisation', 'internationalisation', 'cosmopolitanisation' or the diffusion or de-aggregation of identity, these are accompanied by a counter-force of reignited nationalism, anti-globalisation movements and the intent to defend or even create strong local, and specifically national communities. The allegedly cosmopolitan world is not equally hospitable to everyone. While high profile professionals may find it easy to move and find their places in various communities, most migrants feel up-rooted and homeless.[580] So is Beck's diagnosis one-sided?

This is where Beck's distinction between normative cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitanisation (or the cosmopolitan outlook) becomes crucial. While normative cosmopolitanism requires active participation through the recognition of cosmopolitan norms, a cosmopolitan outlook represents the passive self-awareness of the global masses of an emergent world cosmopolitan order.[581] Beck claims that even though forms of life become increasingly cosmopolitan, our understanding of them is limited by a nation-centred worldview. Methodological nationalism, says Beck, implies societies in plural[582] and, consequently, forces us to make choices that become less and less meaningful. If cosmopolitanisation is only passive then as such it does not necessarily mean an expansion of human freedom.[583]

> Really existing cosmopolitanism is deformed cosmopolitanism. As Scott L. Malcomson argues, it is sustained by individuals who have very few

[579] *Op. cit.,* p. 11.
[580] C. Calhoun, 'The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers: Towards a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism,' in D. Archibugi (ed.) *Debating Cosmopolitics*, London, Verso, 2003, p. 86-116.
[581] Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Cambridge, Polity, 2006, p. 21.
[582] *Op. cit.,* p. 27.
[583] *Op. cit.,* p. 19.

> opportunities to identify with something greater than what is dictated by their circumstances...A non-deformed cosmopolitanism, by contrast, results from the sense of partaking in the great human experiment in civilization – with one's own language and cultural symbols and the means to counter global threats – and hence making a contribution to world culture.[584]

This opposition between deformed and non-deformed cosmopolitanism is, in my view, very weak. First of all, if we understand non-deformed cosmopolitanism in terms of participation in the 'great human experiment' and the 'ability to contribute to the world culture', then there are very few of us who could potentially fit in that image. Beck's view of 'non-deformed' cosmopolitanism is highly idealised and vague just as his definition of nation not always consistent. For instance, when Beck says that, in a cosmopolitan model, recognition of difference should not imply sameness or affirmation of difference,[585] he does not provide the reader with a positive definition or guidelines on how this could be achieved. While it is true that, as Beck says, the nationalistic outlook is essentialist,[586] there is not enough in Beck's theory of cosmopolitanism to show that this essentialism could not be part of the cosmopolitan outlook.

7.3. Analysis: The Not-So-New Modernity

While the two examples of post-national thought I describe in the above sections offer alternative visions of the world order, Beck, Negri and Hardt claim that individual autonomy and national belonging are a contradiction which should be resolved through recognising the larger community of humanity or through depoliticizing difference. However, I think that their diagnosis is only partially true. The contradiction between individual autonomy on the one hand and national belonging on the other is a historical, not a logical, contradiction as I have shown in previous chapters.

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[584] *Op. cit.*, p. 21.
[585] *Op. cit.*, p. 29, 58.
[586] *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

Furthermore, neither of these examples offers a coherent and plausible account of the contemporary self. In the last section of this chapter I want to explain why I think Beck, Hardt and Negri are wrong. My reasons are 1) that there is a contradiction between nationhood and individual autonomy and 2) that we live in a time when that contradiction is being diffused by history. I will draw on two accounts I found especially convincing, those of Kate Nash and Cornelia Klinger.

The first claim is indeed quite awkward because either it puts too much strain on the notion of individual autonomy or it relies on a narrow understanding of national identity. Cornelia Klinger argues that the idea of an autonomous self developed largely thanks to the way in which the subject had to maintain an alterity towards the rules and mechanisms of modern society (see Chapter Two). The inner depth that we perceive as fundamental to our understanding of what a self (as discussed in Chapter Two through the engagement with the work of Taylor, Klinger, and Siegel) is not a product of un-embedded self-affirmation.[587] While the modern subject embraces the ideals of autonomy and self determination, it also seeks to give direction to this idea in the idea of a community of fate. In fact, according to Klinger, both the individual and the collective self have to assume a position of alterity to be fully formed.[588]

Nietzsche is well aware of the fact that the modern self experiences both the burden of identity as well as the desire to get rid of its own individuality.[589] This explains why the diffusion of the nation-state as a source of substantive identities is accompanied by ambiguous feelings of both freedom and melancholy:[590] 'Modern subjectivity is torn between the impulse to rejoice at the loss of the fetters of origin, tradition, and conventional wisdom of all kinds on the one hand, and the urge to re-establish certainty, orientation, and solidarity on the other'.[591]

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[587] Klinger Cornelia, 'From Freedom without choice to choice without freedom: The Trajectory of the Modern Subject', *Constellations*, Volume 11, No. 1, 2004, p. 124.
[588] *Ibid.*
[589] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, NuVision Publications 2007, p. 1.
[590] Klinger Cornelia, 'From Freedom without choice to choice without freedom: The Trajectory of the Modern Subject', *Constellations*, Volume 11, No. 1, 2004, p. 126.
[591] *Ibid.*

The second claim, that contemporary life deconstructs modern sources of identity, is only partly true. While it is true that contemporary identities are hybrid and that politically we do live in much less homogenous societies than before, to a philosopher these changes do not have the characteristics of a revolution similar to those which led to modernity. On the contrary, national identity has always had both exclusive and inclusive components. The modern outlook is neither essentialist nor particularistic.

Cornelia Klinger claims that due to the decline of family, class and nation, traditional sources of identity became weak and this, in turn, led to a paradoxical crisis of a self that is on one hand free to define itself and lacks the resources to do so. According to Klinger, this leads to a no-win situation, as the very subject that was supposed to enjoy the newly achieved freedom to shape life disappears.[592] Klinger's argument refers to a problem where identity itself becomes a product, both because it can be manufactured and because it can be acquired. This leads to the dilemma where the subject is neither beyond its choices nor can it find itself in them:[593] 'When the production of meaning is commercialised the division of functions between the sphere of subjectivised meaning and the rationalized sphere of instrumental reason as the sphere of means is abolished.'[594] Subjectivity cannot be separated from rationalization. All modern political notions contain this ambiguity inherent in their modality; thus, the word 'subject' has both an active (agent) and passive (subject to) meaning.

If Klinger is right, then there is nothing inherently exclusive about the idea of nation. Kate Nash makes a similar point when she states that national identity can and often does have a universalist dimension. The old opposition between 'hot' national sentiment and 'cold' rationalist cosmopolitanism is now becoming obsolete.[595] Nash argues that national feelings are based on personal emotions and

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[592] Klinger Cornelia, 'From Freedom without choice to choice without freedom: The Trajectory of the Modern Subject', *Constellations*, Volume 11, No. 1, 2004, p. 129.
[593] *Op. cit.*, p. 131.
[594] *Op. cit.*, p. 132
[595] Kate Nash, 'Cosmopolitan Community: Why Does it Feel so Right?', *Constellations*, Volume 10, No. 4, 2003.

understood as common to all humans.[596] Hence, we are able to sympathise with foreigners in times of crisis. Nash gives the example of the 9/11 attacks . She claims that the global response was so strong because 'In some significant cases at least, national feeling is constructed within a moral order in which 'real' emotions are figured as 'human'.'[597]

Conclusion

To sum up, in this final Chapter I have shown why it is too early to talk about a post-subjective or post-national world. The alleged transformations within the contemporary self are indeed significant, but they are not revolutionary. There is no thick line separating modernity from the contemporary, post-modern society. In fact, it can be argued that the contemporary self is a radicalised version of its original project, what Klinger calls 'radicalisation of modernity'.

The conceptual place of nations within this framework has certainly changed. It does not mean that nations are becoming weaker, but that they are adjusting to the transformation within our own conception of the political self. Because we increasingly have the ability to recognise ourselves through abstract features rather than particular ethnic or cultural differences, national identity itself becomes universalised.

[596] *Op. cit.,* p. 512.
[597] *Op. cit.,* p. 509.

Conclusion

I began this project by laying out a view of nationhood which linked nationhood with the modern self, showing that the nation plays a key role in forming the boundaries crucial to the forming of the political world. I also defended national identity from three critiques laid out in the Introduction. Each of the resulting three analyses focused on a different element of nationhood and its relationship with the self, identity and political community. This chapter concludes my overall argument by summarising the key findings of my defence of a comprehensive view of nationhood, assesses the contribution of my argument to the broader literature on national identity and cosmopolitanism and highlights the relevance of my analysis for future research.

Findings

While each individual chapter has its own conclusions, I will now draw out the key findings present over the entirety of this work. In this thesis, I argue that one of the key reasons for a superficial treatment of nationhood by political theorists is that nationhood is primarily conceptualised as a type of identity. However, this does not allow us to account either for the central role of nationalism in the processes of modernisation, or the fact that nations themselves play a role in the development of our concept of the self (Chapters Two and Six).

Instead of focusing merely on national identity, this thesis introduces the development of what we can now call the national self. The three main features of the national self are that it is modern in the sense that it originates from the decline of the theistic order, it exists in a tension between its passive and active elements and it supports a type of identity which is both individual and collective at the same time.

This being the case, it was important that Chapter One offer an alternative understanding of the nation as a unique form of political experience. This makes nations both historically contingent and politically valuable for the modern liberal state. In the final two chapters, Chapters Six and Seven, I address the changing role

of nations in an increasingly global world which often contests national limits of political or moral duties in favour of cosmopolitan norms.

My aim is to expose the superficial way in which the concept of the nation is often opposed by theorists, primarily, but not only, of liberal cosmopolitanism, based on the notion of individual autonomy. While much of liberal political theory has traditionally viewed the nation as an obstacle on the road to modernisation, my analysis of nationalism has shown that nationhood and the moral value of nation-ness is at the heart of the modern self. Therefore, the first macro finding is that the boundedness of the modern self shapes the way we perceive political community and that the nation represents a politically meaningful boundary to the self.

The second key finding is that the nation is not only a boundary for the self, but it is the primary political boundary for the self. This thesis examined how nations have the capacity to mediate individual experience within a framework of bounded rationality (Chapters One and Six) and consequently have ability to provide the self with the means to participate in a common world. Through offering a model of bounded rationality in virtue of a shared relationship to a national non-thing, nations allow individuals to recognise others as moral and political agents. They offer access to a common space in which all co-nationals are recognised in such a way that they can relate to each other; this explains why nations permit the formation and support of individual autonomy. Through nationhood, political agency is derived from an inclusion in the nation rather than in a 'mere' state, where citizenship is derived from cultural norms.

The third finding is that nations can promote solidarity not only amongst fellow nationals but also beyond the borders of the particular national community. I argue in Chapter One that nations provide a source of solidarity which allows us to engage with others in building common institutions. This is also a moral principle in the sense that in order to show solidarity with others, we have to commit to the principle that we will not leave them to fend for themselves in time of need.

Another question arising in my thesis is whether the type of social cohesion and unity that nationhood brings is desirable. It is true that national unity is at the heart of some of the most corrupt and malicious totalitarian policies and ideologies of

the modern world. While I accept that members of political communities need a notion of a common world, it seems that nations provide more than just that. The sense of unity created by belonging to a national community is often portrayed in terms of natural features (ethnical, cultural, and physical). The naturalising of identity and difference can lead to dangerous forms of exclusion.

However, one could additionally argue, as I show further in Chapter Four, that the nature of the political world is such that we need a certain degree of solidarity and unity. Political decisions are not merely immediate administrative corrections, but have long term consequences. This is why the concept of political community has to extend to those future generations which will be affected by our decisions. Nations provide the idea of a community of fate that allows their members to mobilise themselves towards a perceived common good and look after current and future generations. Unlike Oakeshott's enterprise association presented in Chapter Three, the nation is not a co-operative and does not cease to exist once a task is completed. Nevertheless, the nation provides a bounded space for co-operation.

Lastly, and critically, my work illuminates the fact that, while global identities are increasingly important, the nation remains the primary political boundary for the self. In Chapters Five and Seven, I show that the borders of both states and nations are already challenged by new forms of post-national identity and global politics. However, this does not necessarily undermine the political role of the nation, as we are increasingly able to define ourselves as subjects in terms of abstract features rather than ethnic differences (Chapter Seven). This universalisation of national identity does not represent a completely new paradigm, but should be perceived as a radicalisation of the modern ideal of politics in which the universal is mediated by a limited political community (Chapter Four).

Relevance of Findings and Avenues for Future Research

The advantage and the challenge of this research project is that it accommodates two different approaches: normative political theory and nationalism theory. The advantage of this kind of analysis is that it highlights gaps in both literatures and identifies areas in which they could be mutually beneficial to each other.

In particular, while most nationalism scholars discuss nationality as a mass function, my approach shows that nationalism is inherently linked to the individual. I also highlight the value of an in-depth understanding of the nation for normative political theory by showing it to be both different from an ethnic identity and a civic community.

My work contributes to the debate on cosmopolitanism in two ways. The first is that it shows how the normative debate on the value of national boundaries is significantly affected by the underlying conceptions of nationhood. Political theorists who want to write about the significance of national boundaries should investigate the complex role the nation plays, not only as a type of identity but also as a way of organising the experience of individuals. The second is that my work provides further evidence to those who believe that the defence of nationhood does not have to be formulated on particularist grounds, but are simultaneously sceptical about an abstract model of an up-rooted self. The view of nationhood presented in this thesis presents such a middle ground.

Given the breadth of this thesis, future research could focus on any of the various aspects of my work. It is however especially important to further evaluate the consequences of my analysis of nationhood to the normative debate on the status of non-nationals. Does the comprehensive view of nationhood which I developed in Chapter Six commit us to a particular normative theory of the nation? This is certainly an issue that should be addressed in a separate book project. There are further issues to consider. One of these is the relationship between nationhood and citizenship, to which I could not devote enough space here. It would also be interesting to see what implication does my view of the national self have for nationalism studies.

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Nations have the capacity to create bonds of solidarity based on a perceived shared history and heritage rather than short or medium term goals. However, the ability of nations to create those bonds is not necessarily limited to the boundaries of

the state. This gives us hope that as the processes of globalisation becomes stronger, nations will be able to embrace and provide the basis for global solidarity.

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