

Introduction: Questioning the Ethnic/Civic Dichotomy

MICHEL SEYMOUR

Université de Montréal

with the collaboration of

JOCELYNE COUTURE

Université du Québec à Montréal

and

KAI NIELSEN

University of Calgary and Concordia University

1 A Daunting Task

Students of nationalism now face the daunting task of renewing their subject matter. In the last two decades, nationalism has become a multiform and complex phenomenon which no longer seems to correspond to the accounts given just a few years ago by sociologists, political scientists, and anthropologists. Whether they merely want to understand this phenomenon or whether they want in addition to assess it from legal, moral, or political standpoints, students of nationalism face the challenge of re-examining in a different world the very categories through which nationalism has been understood in the past decades.

Such is our contention – a contention that in the first place motivates the very existence of the present volume, which contains, we believe, some of the most innovative samples of present reflection on nationalism. It includes, moreover, contributions from a variety of disciplines, from different parts of the world, often reflecting very different ways of thinking about nationalism and sometimes reflecting very different methodologies, substantive beliefs, and underlying interests.

We seek here to set the stage for these discussions. We want to show how most accounts of nationalism have been explicitly or implicitly

based on the dichotomy between ethnic and civic nationalism. In our view, these accounts trace a truncated picture, and yield in important ways a distorted understanding, of the complex phenomenon that nationalism has become. Yet despite the vast number of books and articles that have recently appeared on the subject, that dichotomy – and the understanding of nationalism that it reflects – is still a, if not the, prevalent one.¹ Moreover, such an understanding of nationalism provides the basis for normative assessments, which in some cases can be no more than tragic mistakes, and for policies that can have disastrous practical consequences.

Although a growing number of philosophers and social scientists feel that any acceptable conception of nationalism should attempt to steer a course between the two opposite views which form that dichotomy, this is not, as we shall see, easily done. In the last sections of this introduction, we attempt to argue for our own characterization of nationalism, a characterization which breaks free from what has become a hallowed dichotomy, as revered in circles discussing nationalism as the analytic/synthetic dichotomy once was in analytic philosophy. But let us for the moment consider the two traditional accounts.

II Two traditional conceptions

The *civic* conception of nationalism is often associated with the name of Ernest Renan.² It is exemplified in the events of the French Revolution; it is based on the idea that a nation is a voluntary association of individuals. As Renan puts it, it is a 'daily plebiscite.' According to this view, individuals give themselves a state, and the state is what binds

1 For recent surveys of the literature, see John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994), Gopal Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation* (New York: Verso 1996), Omar Dahbour and Micheline R. Ishay, eds., *The Nationalism Reader* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press 1995), and Gil Delannoi and Pierre-André Taguieff, eds., *Théories du nationalisme* (Paris: Éditions Kimé 1991).

2 Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (Paris: Calmann-Levy 1882)

together the nation. It is usually said, by people taking such a general orientation, that that concept of nation is subjective since it emphasizes the *will* of individuals. And it is individualistic since the nation is nothing over and above willing *individuals*.

The *ethnic* conception of nationalism is often traced back to Johann Gottfried Herder,³ and is exemplified by the German nationalism that arose during the period of German Romanticism. It is largely based upon language, culture, and tradition, and thus appeals to more or less objective features of our social lives. According to this view the nation precedes the state, and is a collective body which transcends each individual. It has been interpreted as an ethnic conception because, at the time when Herder wrote, if people shared the same language, culture, and history they usually also shared, up to a certain point, the same ancestry, the same lineage, the same blood. Or at least so legend has it.

A careful reader of Renan and Herder will protest that this is an oversimplification of their views, for both authors integrate objective and subjective features in their characterization of the nation. For instance, Renan describes the nation as 'a soul, a spiritual principle.' On his conception, the nation also involves the past, not only the present. It is a 'legacy of remembrances,' and not only a will to live together. As far as Herder is concerned, we must acknowledge that he does not altogether reject the civic aspects of a nation. Moreover, he cannot justifiably be accused of irrationalism, as we often do accuse when we say that someone is an ethnic nationalist, though, as André Van de Putte aptly shows in this volume, the same cannot be said for all German Romantics who took a generally similar line to Herder on nationalism. Finally, it should be said that, when taken literally, Herder's views are much closer to what could be described today as a 'cultural nationalism,' and this conception is much less problematic than a purely ethnic conception.

Why should we want to transcend such an opposition? It is not our purpose to provide, immediately, a complete answer to this question; this introduction as a whole can be regarded as an attempt to explain

3 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (London: 1800)

why the dichotomy should be rejected. But we can perhaps at this point explain some of the general motivations behind this attempt. It could be argued, first, that there are conceptual difficulties involved in having to choose between the two accounts. There are a large variety of nationalist movements in the contemporary international arena. As it is sometimes said, there are nationalisms and nationalisms, and a simple dichotomy such as the one under consideration may prove to be conceptually too weak to account for such a wide spectrum of phenomena. We most probably need to enrich our conceptual tools and make our notions more complex if we want to grasp such a complex reality.

It could also be argued that there are conceptual and empirical difficulties involved in theories that fail to account for the pluricultural nature of contemporary liberal societies. We need to reflect on the changes that these new sociological facts entail for our understanding of the nation. It could be argued that the traditional dichotomy fails in this respect, for neither the ethnic nor the civic conception can easily incorporate a recognition of the multicultural diversity within modern societies.

There are also what, arguably, are moral failings involved in both accounts of the nation. In order to see clearly what is at issue here, we must first notice that the adoption of a certain conception of the nation can, wittingly or unwittingly, play a role in our normative discourse, and can in effect serve as a rule of conduct. It is by relying upon a certain conception of the nation that we adopt a certain behaviour or a set of attitudes toward nationalism. There are thus important moral consequences that follow from endorsing a particular account, and it could be argued in particular that both ethnic and civic nationalisms lead to some form of exclusion. The demonstration has often been made in the case of ethnic nationalism, so we need not belabour that point. But it is now being argued in some quarters that similar kinds of remarks apply to an exclusively civic nationalism. Since they see only one alternative to the civic conception of the nation, civic nationalists are tempted to describe all forms of nationalism coming from a subgroup within a sovereign state as ethnic in character. And since they are unable to conceptualize the cultural diversity that we now frequently encounter within sovereign states, they also tend to minimize the importance of pre-civic national ties, i.e., ones that can take place independently of citizenship in a sovereign state. Another problem is that they very often, wittingly or unwittingly, conceal the way that

nations that form majorities dominate other nations and groups within such multination states. This domination is, in effect, supported by civic nationalism and, where civic nationalism is institutionalized, it tends to induce frustration on the part of the minority nations within those states.

There are those who think that the above remarks give us good reasons for rejecting nationalism altogether. They tend to agree that the dichotomy provides the only available alternatives, and conclude that the root of the problem is with nationalism as such. They are for that reason inclined to seek to ban nationalism itself, no matter what form it takes. This attitude is very different in intention from civic nationalism, but it has the same moral consequence: it also leads to exclusion. Whether we like it or not, we live in a world where the politics of recognition is becoming increasingly important, and it is thus naive to expect that the problems are going to disappear simply by arguing that nationalism should be banned. In our day and age, adopting such an attitude is also adopting an extreme position. What is morally and conceptually problematic is thus not only to adopt one of the two options imposed by the dichotomy, but also to adopt the dichotomy itself.

These moral and conceptual failings thus provide motivation for trying to formulate a new conception of the nation and of nationalism. It appears that if we don't, then we fall prey to a logic of exclusion, and we, as well, will fail to grasp one important cause of nationalist tensions.

There are many reasons why the ethnic and civic conceptions remain the prevalent ones, and why it is so difficult to come up with a new characterization of the nation. We might at first sight be inclined to think that the new and correct account must simply incorporate both subjective and objective features, and, by uncritically acquiescing in that, we might mistakenly be led to believe that we already have at our disposal a conception that overcomes the traditional dichotomy. Indeed, according to what many think, a nation involves sharing a common language, culture, history, and ancestry, but it also involves subjective elements such as a national consciousness and the will to remain together. This is the most common characterization, and it is in a way partly 'ethnic' and partly 'civic.' But it is not enough to transcend the ethnic/civic dichotomy, since both civic and ethnic conceptions must themselves be understood as a compound of subjective and objective features. The difference between ethnic and civic national-

ism rests, not on one being purely objective and the other purely subjective, but in the insistence with which authors characterize certain relatively objective features rather than others as being constitutive of nationalism, or at least take one rather than another cluster of features as being the most salient for nationalism. For example, the ethnic characterization of nationalism may include some of the civic properties of the nation, but these are very often considered secondary. In the same way, the proponent of a civic characterization of nationalism may acknowledge the fact that there are other features apart from those that are civic, but she will very often ignore them or treat them as 'private matters.' They are not, on the civic conception, what is salient for our understanding of nationalism.

So one of the reasons why the ethnic/civic dichotomy appeals so much to so many people might be that it is implicitly involved in the hybrid characterization we arrive at when we give what appears to be the most adequate conception. Our dichotomy is not an easy one to overcome even if we are apparently able to articulate a characterization that seems to supersede it in a way.⁴ By coming up with a new characterization that would incorporate some elements belonging to the two conceptions, we tend to enhance the importance of the dichotomy itself. When a conception of the nation integrates objective and subjective features (as indeed most of the conceptions of nationalism do), it usually still remains under the spell of the ethnic/civic dichotomy, and the reason is that any new account will almost invariably lead to a hybrid account that exploits ethnic and civic features, and so exploits the dichotomy itself instead of truly transcending it. This is the first difficulty that we encounter in trying to go beyond the dichotomy.

A second reason why the dichotomy is so hard to overcome is that both ethnic and civic nationalism, however they are construed, seem adequately to fit a predominant – but increasingly outdated – model of political community. Many theoreticians belonging to either of these groups are willing to consider the nation-state as the only available model of a state. They favour an international arena in which the partners are all

4 For a clear case of such an hybrid characterization, see Frans De Wachter's contribution to the present volume.

sovereign nation-states. But this, in our view, is more of a reason to be suspicious of these accounts of nationalism than a reason to rely on them.

To illustrate the point, those who subscribe to an ethnic characterization of nationalism must endorse the *nationalist principle*, i.e., the principle according to which each nation should have its own sovereign state. Some even *define* nationalism as the view according to which each nation should have its own sovereign state. So it is clear that ethnic nationalists tend to promote the nation-state model of a political community. It is generally agreed that a systematic application of the nationalist principle would lead to chaos. No wonder those who fall prey to that account of nationalism see nationalism *per se* as automatically generating incessant conflicts and wars between nations. Such a conception of nationalism – many of whose exemplifications in the political arena Carol Prager has aptly called ‘barbarous nationalisms’ – has prompted many others to the view that only civic nationalism could be politically and morally acceptable.

The situation seems less clear, however, in the case of civic nationalists. They do not accept the nationalist principle as such; they only accept a principle which asserts the ‘sovereignty of the people.’ A nation is viewed principally as a purely legal and political reality. This is quite different from ethnic nationalism, since it means that power should ultimately be in the hands of all citizens, and these need not be part of the same ethnic group. But as it turns out, behind most if not all existing nation-states, there is a majority of people sharing a certain comprehensive culture, mother-tongue, history, and set of traditions, and these cultural features, as Ross Poole has well argued in this volume, strongly constrain the hand of the nation-state. Civic nationalists are almost forced to conceal the fact that very often ‘the people’ is composed of a majority which, through an elite or dominant class, is in control of the state. If an exclusively civic nationalism were to exist (or even could exist) somewhere, it would have to conceal these indisputable facts. As we said before, civic nationalism tends to ignore cultural factors and relatedly to ignore, or at least to minimize, the existence of minority groups. By ignoring or concealing these facts, it tends to exclude these minority groups, and this creates favourable conditions for their assimilation. When assimilation succeeds, ‘the people’ becomes linguistically and culturally homogeneous. As Barrington Moore, Jr., remarks, “peasants were turned into Frenchmen.” Eventually, we might

even come to a point where the vast majority of the population represents itself – though in an illusory way – as sharing the same ancestry. So even if it cannot be admitted, the civic nation-state that offers the best prospects for survival is the one in which ‘the people’ coincides with a fairly homogeneous national group. Therefore, civic nationalists themselves have tended to reinforce the credibility of something that looks very much like the nationalist principle. Very often, the viability and political stability of the civic nation-state itself lead to an indirect defense of the nationalist principle.

Whether someone is an ethnic or a civic nationalist, then, it seems that she is forced to accept the idea that to each and every ethnic nation should correspond a sovereign nation-state. The common idea exemplified in the ethnic and civic accounts is that of the nation-state, understood as an ethnic nation in a sovereign state. Both views tend to promote, though for different reasons, the nation-state as the most important model of political community. If this picture is accurate, then transcending the opposition between the two approaches is tantamount to transcending a theoretical fixation on the nation-state itself, as the sole state form and only possible model of the modern political community. But as we all know, this is a very difficult task indeed. The multiplication of nation-states in the twentieth century shows how well entrenched that conception of the state is. The difficulty is not just theoretical. It is not enough to announce, as in some kind of mantra, that national sovereignty is becoming an illusion or that we are about to witness the end of the nation-state. The facts stubbornly persist against these pronouncements. And if anything, globalization serves to reactivate nationalist inclinations. So the tenacious persistence of the nation-state model, a model which is shared by the two views, is perhaps a second reason why it is so hard to overcome the opposition between them.

That the sovereign nation-state is the only form of political community that fits the ambitions of any sort of contemporary nationalism – or even of any plausible sort of such nationalism – is the improbable picture given by these accounts based on accepting the civic/ethnic dichotomy. And that nationalism of any sort is a detestable phenomenon is what we should apparently conclude from both ethnic and civic ‘descriptions’ of nationalism. But this message has introduced more confusion and more disputes in the public forum than it has shed light on the nationalisms now emerging in the contemporary world.

Perhaps nationalism is altogether a despicable phenomenon that should clearly, once and for all, be seen as and assessed as such. But before we can justifiably come to such a conclusion we have to make sure that we have discovered all the various forms that nationalism can plausibly take and in various circumstances have taken. A number of contributions to this volume show that at least some forms of nationalism can, and indeed should, be argued for from the point of view of justice, democracy, and equity between peoples or, alternatively, as a matter (*pace* Liah Greenfeld) of genuine *de jure* political legitimacy. While some, Harry Brighouse for example, argue that nationalism in even its most benign forms diminishes autonomy and equality, others, such as Ross Poole, argue just the opposite.

We have already mentioned two reasons why the ethnic/civic dichotomy is a hard one to abandon, but we are inclined to believe that the main reason why it is so difficult to get rid of the distinction lies elsewhere. The debate over the two views is in a way over, and it has been won by the partisans of the civic conception. Since the Second World War, nobody can seriously put forward an ethnic conception of the nation. More precisely, in the ambience of liberal democracies, no one can seriously *promote* ethnic nationalism. In such societies, the German conception of the nation has been thoroughly defeated and discredited once and for all. Since then, for almost everybody in the literature, the only acceptable conception is the civic one. The ethnic conception is the view held by the bad guys. The opposition remains, but it is now between ethnic nationalist *movements* on the one hand and intellectuals or academics defending the civic conception on the other. The ethnic conception is still very widely discussed as a prevailing phenomenon, but it is theoretically supported by virtually no one in liberal societies. Since the civic conception has definitely won, there does not seem to be a need to revise it. To criticize it, some think, is in effect to betray an implicit inclination towards its opposite, the ethnic conception. So even if there is a growing resistance to an exclusively civic conception, it has up to now been a fairly unsuccessful attempt, at least in the political arena. Civic nationalists have been able to counterattack by characterizing any defense of nations within multination states as an instance of ethnic nationalism. It will be the burden of our argument to show that there is here more ideology than social reality and intellectual cogency.

In the next two sections we want to show how the dichotomy between ethnic and civic nationalism has been enhanced and indeed reinforced in some of the most influential studies on nationalism. A main source of such reinforcement has been, in our view, theories purporting to give an historical account concerning the origin of the nation, and it is to a brief examination of that literature that we shall now turn.

III The Origins of the Nation

As we shall now see, there is another reason why the ethnic/civic distinction remains the prevalent option. An important literature was developed on nationalism after the contributions of Renan and Herder, but the focus of the discussion has moved away from the problem of the definition of the nation to the question concerning its origin. How does the nation come to existence? There are two important groups of writers that give opposite explanations depending on whether they see nationalism as a modern phenomenon or not. The most well known authors defending the modernist explanation are Benedict Anderson, John Breuilly, Karl Deutsch, Ernest Gellner, Liah Greenfeld, E.J. Hobsbawm, and Elie Kedourie. Amongst those who defend one version or another of the premodern origin of the nation, we should mention John Armstrong, Clifford Geertz, Susan Reynolds, Hugh Seton-Watson, Anthony D. Smith, and Pierre Van den Berghe. These two groups do not necessarily reinstate the opposition between the civic and ethnic views at the level of historical explanation, but do not try to transcend it either. These contributions are the works of historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists. They provide very deep and insightful contributions, but they almost never try to develop a new conception that would go beyond those of Renan and Herder. They offer a clinical observation of the phenomenon, attempt to interpret it, offer an explanation of its origin, and very often do not *intend* to be normative or prescriptive about how we should assess the legitimacy of the nation. Indeed some but certainly not all of them may, as Greenfeld does in this volume, regard the very idea of *de jure* legitimacy as a mirage and *de facto* legitimacy as the only intelligible form of legitimacy, thus leaving no conceptual space for normative arguments or normative issues.

Some of the authors who favor a modernist explanation believe that national sentiments depend on the intensity of personal exchanges on a given territory. According to Karl Deutsch,⁵ national sentiments manifest themselves for a variety of reasons which are all related to the various features that make communication possible between the members of the community. These features could be urbanization, mail, road systems, or commerce. Nationalism goes hand in hand with the development of a communication network, which in many respects is a function of easy access to available resources of the modern era. It could thus not have been a powerful force in premodern times.

The same sort of remarks can be found in Benedict Anderson's⁶ influential contribution to this debate. Anderson goes so far as to link the occurrence of national sentiments with the beginnings of the printing industry, which, alongside an emerging capitalism, allowed individuals to become aware of the presence of other individuals whom they had never met. For that reason, national sentiments are, according to Anderson, to a large extent a product of the imagination.

E. J. Hobsbawm⁷ is a Marxist historian who sees the nation as an invented tradition, an ideological product of modern states. He sees it as the result of a process of *state-nation* building, i.e., of a process in which the nation is created by the state. This process took place in Europe in the nineteenth century. The French state of the Third Republic, for instance, used *instituteurs*, invented public ceremonies, and produced public monuments in order to enhance in the population a sense of belonging to a single nation. It is clear that in the case of France, the state created the nation. Of course, it is often thought that, contrary to France and England, nations sometimes precede states. It is then suggested that the process must instead be characterized as one of *nation-state* building. According to that view, it is this kind of process that took place for Germany and Italy. But Hobsbawm argues that the so-

5 Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1966)

6 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso 1991)

7 E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992)

called 'preexistence' of the nation is itself an invention of the state. William II, for instance, tried to establish a view according to which the Empire of 1871 was the realization of the national aspirations of the German people. And in order to do that, he constantly referred to so-called common past experiences of Prussia and of the rest of Germany. According to Hobsbawm, the exploitation of an already existing national consciousness was itself an ideology forced on the population in the course of a state-nation building process.⁸

Ernest Gellner⁹ thinks that nationalism can only take root in societies in which education is a universal virtue. And if the masses are to be educated by the elites, a certain amount of homogeneity must exist between them. In particular, it must be possible for them to communicate in the same language. But it is much easier to adopt the vernacular language spoken by the ordinary people than to try to introduce into very large populations the use of Latin, for instance. This is why nationalism coincides with the emergence of vernacular languages. Another constraint is that the community must be large enough to sustain an educational system. All these factors – the intelligentsia, the proletariat, a common language, and the educational system – are the basic ingredients involved in the nation, and they determine the minimal size of the political community. But how are we to gauge how large it can be? What are its upper limits? Why is it impossible for the nation to be a very large political unit? In order to provide an appropriate answer, we have to understand modernization and industrialization. For Gellner, nationalism is a result of their uneven diffusion. It is the existence of social conflicts that causes the members of a given community to form a national community. Gellner endorses the proposed connection between the occurrence of less-favoured industrial societies and the emergence of nations. The mobilization of the work force,

8 For an alternative approach in the Marxist tradition, see Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, 2d ed. (London: New Left Books 1977). See also Kai Nielsen, 'Cultural Nationalism, Neither Ethnic nor Civic,' *Philosophical Forum* 28:1-2 (1996-97) 1-11; 'Secession: The Case of Quebec,' *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 10:1 (1991) 29-43.

9 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell 1983)

which is an inevitable consequence of an uneven industrialization, creates national sentiments if the population in question feels as though it must fight against the hegemony of another community. So it is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way around. And so we must not see nationalism as a source of economic development; it is, rather, the economic development which generates nationalism. In conclusion, for Gellner, the occurrence of nations and of nationalism is to be explained causally by the emergence of modern states and capitalism.

Elie Kedourie,¹⁰ by contrast, conceives the nation as a product of an ideology. It is the result of an elite diffusing a certain number of key ideas in response to the needs of a large population, ideas which enable them to identify with a stable organization. This ideology, he believes, would never have come to exist without the contributions of modern thinkers such as Kant, who established the autonomy of the human agent, and of all those who contributed to the separation of politics from religion. And it would never have been possible without the influence of thinkers such as Fichte and Herder, who insisted upon natural language differences between the communities.

John Breuilly¹¹ sees nationalism as a political ideology of the nineteenth century which has its origin in the historicist arguments of intellectuals such as Herder and Frantisek Palacky, arguments which were designed to provide an answer to the conflict that occurred in the seventeenth century between the state and the civil society. Breuilly is willing to concede that there might have been a certain amount of national consciousness before the modern era, but nationalism as such is also for him a modern creation. He defines it as essentially aggressive and expansionist. When it is described in this way, nationalism indeed appears to be intimately related to the large-scale nationalist movements that began to occur after the French Revolution in Europe. As the Ottoman, Habsburg, and Tzarist empires began to decline, Napoleon III, Bismarck, Cavour, and many other political leaders entered into a complex

10 Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Blackwell 1994)

11 John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1994)

interplay of territorial advances, colonial ambitions, and aggressive behaviours that are characteristic traits of nationalism. Breuilly thus situates the birth of nations and nationalism in the middle of the nineteenth century.¹²

Liah Greenfeld¹³ has offered the most recent systematic historical survey on the origin of nationalism. In her *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, she describes how nationalism occurred in the case of five distinct countries: Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and the United States. She sees it as essentially occurring for the first time in Britain in the seventeenth century. According to Greenfeld, it was in Britain both an individualist and a universalist phenomenon. That is to say, nationalism served in Britain to promote, above all, the autonomy of each and every individual member within society, and to treat these values as universal. It was, she suggests, only after this first inception in Britain that nationalism became ethnic, collectivist, authoritarian, and rooted in resentment. It was especially so in the case of Russia and Germany, and less so for France, which tried to be at once both civic and collectivist. But for Greenfeld this is an unstable position, and the choice is most of the time between the two following models : the individualist, universalist, and civic, on the one hand, the collectivist, particularistic, and authoritarian, on the other.

The contributions of Deutsch, Anderson, Hobsbawm, Gellner, Kedourie, Breuilly, and Greenfeld have many important points in common. The nation, according to them, is more like a deliberate construction than a spontaneous occurrence, and it is the result of modernization. Without always reducing it to a mere collection of individual wills, all of them (except perhaps for Greenfeld) underline the subjective aspect

12 For recent comprehensive historical surveys, see Yves Santamaria and Brigitte Waché, *Du Printemps des peuples à la Société des nations. Nations, nationalités et nationalismes en Europe 1850-1920* (Paris: La Découverte 1996), Patrick Cabanel, ed., *Nations, nationalités et nationalismes en Europe, 1850-1920* (Paris: Éditions Ophrys 1995), Pierre Saly et al., eds., *Nations et nationalismes en Europe 1848-1914* (Paris: Armand Colin 1996), and Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism, from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell 1996).

13 Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1992)

of nationalist sentiments, and these are themselves to be explained in relation to circumstances which came into existence with the modern era. Thus while the nation is not merely a legal entity, as in the traditional civic approach, still the phenomena to which the ethnic nationalist alludes in support of her views is not something inherent to human societies. The so-called objective features (common language, common culture, same tradition, same history, same ancestry) are to a large extent mythical, since they are the result of projecting onto reality our nationalist sentiments. Of course, the presence of such nationalist sentiments cannot be denied, but it is a phenomenon that has to be explained. The subjective dimension of the nation may perhaps not entirely be reduced to Renan's 'daily plebiscite.' It is found far deeper within the personality of the individual, since it takes the form of nationalist sentiments. But these are not primitive feelings common to all humankind at all times and places, and they can be explained as projections, since they arose and were maintained because of the circulation of books and newspapers, the development of an educational system, the expansion of trade, the power of the state, or the influence of an educated elite. They are very often seen by the modernists as functional requirements of industrial societies.

In a way, the modernist account of the origin of nationalism leaves the distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism intact, since what it does essentially is to consider certain aspects generally associated with the ethnic view, and explain them away as not being founded upon an objective reality. This is something that Andrew Levine repeats in a sophisticated way in this volume. According to these authors, Levine included, we really cannot appeal to a common tradition, history, ancestry, or culture without simultaneously falling prey to a mythical illusion. These features of the ethnic nation no longer appear as objective realities. Yet the opposition between ethnic and civic nationalism remains. The only difference is that we are now demystifying the objective reality on which the ethnic conception was supposedly founded. However, it may also be added that the account is not so innocent and neutral, since it says something about the validity and legitimacy of nationalist movements.

Perhaps the clearest example of this is given by the work of Benedict Anderson. He is, moreover, one of the most influential of the modernist authors. As already suggested, he develops a view of the nation as

an imagined community, and offers an account which enables him to explain its deeply subjective nature. What looks like a primitive phenomenon happens to be something that was possible only because of a certain development in the circulation of the printed word at the beginning of capitalism. The sense of belonging that was generated should then partly be explained by the influence of the elites, who were confronted on a regular basis with the printed word. But how does this affect the ethnic/civic distinction? It does not seem to affect it very much, except perhaps in the sense that it proves useful in trying to underline the subjective origins of ethnic nationalism and to explain them away. If Anderson is right, there are no such things as nations, there since the dawn of history, and no historically invariant nationalist sentiments. What looks like an objective reality turns out to have its roots in our imagination, though there are social, political, and economic facts which constrain the emergence of such a subjective phenomenon.

Most of the modernist accounts emphasize material conditions which explain the emergence of nationhood. The sense of cultural belonging is to be explained by the creation of a uniform educational system, by the circumstantial solidarity of an economically disadvantaged group of people, or by a strategic ideological program aimed at mobilizing the masses. There are, of course, important differences between these accounts. For instance, if most of them stress the social and economic forces behind the creation of nationalism, some, like Kedourie, give much more importance to the influence of ideas. Another important difference is that some authors see nationalism as a phenomenon that will continue to prevail, while others believe it is bound to disappear. But two things are certain: it has deeply subjective roots, and it is the result of modernity. In sum, the modernists have shown that the roots of nationalism are historically conditioned, and that nationalist sentiments are functional for these material conditions, i.e., help develop the forces of production.

Contrary to this approach, there are those who formulate a premodern explanation of the origin of the nation and who see nationalism in the nineteenth century as something that followed it. The nation, that is, had this premodern origin, and the later formations of nationalism were something that arose from it and in important respects were rooted in it. But whether or not they see the nation as a

social construct, they do more than simply disagree on the time when it came into existence. They also disagree about the essential components of the nation. The premodernists maintain that ethnicity is the core of nationality. Hugh Seton-Watson,¹⁴ for example, distinguishes between old and new nations. Among the old European nations, he mentions the English, Scots, French, Dutch, Castilians, Portuguese, Danes, Swedes, Hungarians, Poles, and Russians. In particular, the existence of French and English nations was a reality by the year 1600.

Susan Reynolds¹⁵ argues that the reason why historians explain the origin of the nation as a modern phenomenon is that they wrongly associate nationalism with aggressive, xenophobic, and deplorable political movements. In her view, if we don't make this wrong association, then we can uncover the existence of nations in many medieval societies. This premodern account need not be interpreted as suggesting that nations exist as an entirely objective phenomenon. Nations can exist only because individuals believe that they exist. Reynolds also rejects the suggestion according to which the Latin word *natio* was used only to refer to different groups of students in the universities. In addition to that use, she insists, the word also meant 'a people.'

John Armstrong¹⁶ underlines another mistake made by the modernists. Since European nationalism was preceded by absolutism, it is thought that it is essentially a recent phenomenon. But as a matter of fact, he claims, there was a form of national consciousness long before that. Another related problem is that nineteenth-century nationalists have tried to specify the essential characteristics of national identity, and this has influenced our understanding of nationalism. We have been led to ignore the fact that ethnic identity is strictly oppositional. Members of a national community are individuals who share the same 'perceived boundaries' and who define themselves by excluding other communities. When the group is understood this way, many of its im-

14 Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States* (London: Methuen 1977)

15 Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe (900-1300)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1984)

16 John Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1982)

portant characteristics may disappear without affecting its identity. The reason is that the group maintains its identity by opposition to the other communities. We can thus explain why a single national community may undergo important modifications in its national character. Moreover, different types of characteristics may be relevant for the national identity of different groups. Some types of characteristics may be important for one community and not important for some other. Some will insist on language and culture, while others will find more importance in their historical heritage. Once again, the main reason is that all these people share the same opposition to other communities. When things are seen from this perspective, we are in a position to recognize the existence of nations in premodern times.

Clifford Geertz¹⁷ adopts an explanation which stresses certain permanent and 'primordial' features such as religion, culture, race, and language. These features are perennial, and they very often clash with the need to maintain civic ties. The debates surrounding nationalism come from a confrontation between these two fundamental sorts of allegiances. As a primordialist and perennialist, Geertz finds himself clearly siding with the premoderns.

Anthony D. Smith¹⁸ rejects Geertz's account, which involves reference to primordial features, but he nevertheless shares with him a concern for the ethnic origin of the nation. Smith underlines the ethnic origins of nations, and also tries to understand the process by which ethnic groups became nations with the dawning of the modern age. He is willing to grant that nations as such came into existence in the modern era, but he insists that an important aspect of the nation, the *ethnie*, was there long before it. Nations were forged on the basis of ethnic groups through diverse influences of traditionalist, assimilationist, and reformist groups, each of which reacted differently to modernity. Ideology also played an important role according to Smith,

17 Clifford Geertz, 'The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States' in Clifford Geertz, ed., *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa* (New York: Free Press 1963)

18 Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell 1986) and *National Identity* (London: Penguin 1991)

but nationalism is not just an ideological construct. Nations would never have come to existence were it not for ethnicity. The nation is thus for Smith considered partly as a premodern phenomenon.

Pierre Van den Berghe¹⁹ describes ethnicity and race as extensions of kinship relations; they have a partially biological basis. This must not be understood as meaning that there is a gene for ethnocentrism. It is rather that groups that had institutionalized norms of nepotism and ethnocentrism had a strong selective advantage over those that did not. He is willing to agree that race is essentially a social construct and that it must not be understood as referring to subspecies of *Homo sapiens*. He recognizes that the trivial phenotypes used in distinguishing races are social constructs, and do not count as objective means of dividing human beings into different groups. Moreover, cultural traits, and not biological traits, are what most of the time differentiate one ethnic group from another. However, he sees these cultural traits as having been historically instrumental for maintaining kinship relations intact. Phenotypical traits vary only by degree from one region to another, and there can very often be more differences within the group than there are with members of other groups, so they are an unreliable means of discriminating between members and non-members of the group. This is why humans have relied upon cultural traits such as language, customs, and traditions. But the key point is that cultural traits have historically been instrumental in the maintenance of kinship relations. It is in this sense (arguably a rather strained sense) that Van den Berghe's concepts of ethnicity and race are partly biological notions. They are to be understood in evolutionary theory as extensions of kinship relations. His account is compatible with the fact that kinship relations may have become putative and not real. He is also willing to agree that intergroup relations, understood in this way, are typically antagonistic. Nevertheless, he is still inclined to say that there is a continuum between kinship relations and ethnic groups.

Here again, we are confronted with authors who have many diverging points of view but agree on a central premise. Contrary to the mod-

19 Pierre Van den Berghe, 'Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1:4 (1978) . See also *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (New York: Elsevier 1979).

ernist authors mentioned above, there are, these authors all agree, fundamental ethnic components in the basic characteristics of a nation. It has, that is, an ethnic core. This is so for Armstrong and Geertz as well as for Smith and Van den Berghe. And since nations are at their core ethnic in character, nationalism must in part be ethnic. This ethnic component is explained by the fact that a whole community represents itself as sharing the same ancestry. Most of these authors agree that such an 'ethnic core' existed long before nations were created, and that it is still an important feature of contemporary nations. It does not, they believe, matter whether this self-representation of the community is mythical or not. Talking about such an ethnic core does not necessarily mean that there really exists a common ancestry. There are nowadays very few, if any, examples of nations in which all the individuals have the same ancestors. The claim is rather that the mythical sense of sharing the same ancestry was important even before modernity, and cannot therefore be explained by features of modernity. Some of these authors may be willing to admit that this aspect of nationalism is up to a certain point mythical and invented, but they emphasize the importance of these myths and show that they existed long before the modern era.

Smith challenges all primordialist approaches, and puts forward a subjectivist explanation. But he insists along with Geertz on the tight connection between nationalism and ethnicity. And in any case, Geertz himself often speaks of primordial *sentiments* that are not entirely objective. Indeed, Geertz sometimes gives to some of his so-called primordial features a subjective twist that should not pass unnoticed. So almost all these authors are willing to agree that nationalism has a partly subjective source. The differences between Geertz and Smith are thus actually smaller than would at first blush be thought. What is generally agreed upon by those who take this premodernist turn is the idea that nationalist sentiments prevailed in some form or another as ethnicity long before the birth of the modern era. What is important, whether or not they agree on the partly subjective nature of the nation, is that national sentiments should not be explained exclusively by recourse to features of the modern era.

We are not happy with this notion of an ethnic core, because we are skeptical about its adequacy as a device of representation for our present social world. Nowadays, the cultural, linguistic, and historic cores of

national communities no longer coincide with ethnicity, whether it is founded upon objective or subjective facts. And the myth of a common ancestry surely seems to be less and less important to Western cultures. But there is nevertheless considerable merit in these accounts. The authors that we are now considering are perfectly right in emphasizing the point that national sentiments rest upon an attachment that cannot entirely be explained as an instrument of modern ideology. Nationalism is not just an ideological construct, nor is it simply an instrument to mobilize the masses. It is, in part, rooted in ancient group identities of people with distinct cultural patterns.

However, since the additional ingredients involved are very often described as 'ethnic,' we are perhaps justified in concluding that the premodernist authors do not wish to transcend the opposition between the ethnic and civic conceptions. It is not only the word 'ethnicity' that is at stake here, but also the suggestion that a nation is made out of people who represent themselves as sharing the same ancestors. Most liberal societies are composed of individuals having different origins. So even if premodernist authors are getting closer to a description of the modern nation as an hybrid entity, it is very often understood as a compound of ethnic and civic features. Their view on the origin of the nation, then, only deepens the importance of the opposition between the civic and ethnic characters of the nation.

There is another peculiar feature of the premodernist account that we wish to underline. When Smith speaks of ethnicity, one would be wrong to interpret his position as entirely critical of nationalism. Nationalism, on his view, must not entirely be rejected even if it is partly ethnic. In his most recent book, for instance, Smith argues that the nation-state is probably still the best model of political community.²⁰ For most authors, the words 'ethnic nationalism' are pejorative, but not for all the premodernist authors under consideration. Is there anything wrong with that? Well, the problem is perhaps not to be located in their appraisal of nationalism; it has more to do with the conceptual resources with which they appreciate it. By appealing to ethnicity, they

20 Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Oxford: Polity Press, Blackwell 1995)

present a weak case for their own view. Indeed, by describing the missing element in the modernist account as 'ethnic,' the premodernist explanation indirectly serves to confirm civic nationalists in their position.²¹ It is true that their historical insights involve an implicit criticism of the exclusively civic approach, and that by insisting on the ethnic core of the nation they draw attention to something that is concealed by the civic nationalist. But when they describe this missing element as being in essence 'ethnic,' they at the very least encourage the civic nationalist to emphasize civic traits at the expense of all others. The reason is that appealing to ethnicity in a justificatory context is nowadays correctly seen as morally problematic, to put it in mild terms. So in spite of the deep divide that sets them apart from the modernist explanation, this second group of authors have also unintentionally contributed, albeit indirectly, to a rejection at the normative level of all the non-exclusively civic forms of nationalism. This is at least the conclusion that can be drawn by those who condemn ethnic nationalism, and, as we have seen, they comprise today the vast majority of intellectuals and academics in modern liberal societies. We submit that this appreciation is not totally unfounded, given the extremes to which ethnic nationalism can lead. If all nationalist movements are in essence ethnic, then so much the worse for nationalism, and this reinforces the point of view according to which the nation *should* be exclusively civic.²²

Be that as it may, it remains clear that both groups of authors have not been concerned to question the legitimacy of the ethnic/civic

21 An important exception is perhaps Susan Reynolds, who tries to avoid as much as possible using words like 'race' and 'ethnicity.' See Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, 251-6.

22 Of course, the situation is not as simple as the one that we have just described. Almost all of the modernist authors mentioned above (except perhaps for Kedourie) tend to recognize the importance of *national sentiments*. When Benedict Anderson, for example, speaks of the nation as an imagined community, he is not entirely denouncing the phenomenon. He is not suggesting that all manifestations of nationalism are bad and that they must be overcome. The division between moderns and premoderns is not always sharp. In their anthology, *Nationalism*, Hutchinson and Smith classify Seton-Watson as a premodernist, while in the present volume, Allen Buchanan describes him as a modernist.

dichotomy. On the contrary, if we are right, they have indirectly contributed to its continued acceptance and currency.

IV The Prevalence of the Ethnic/Civic Dichotomy

The ethnic/civic dichotomy has not really been challenged in the literature on nationalism. On the contrary, it has often been reinstated in different terms via other distinctions. First, it more or less coincides with the traditional German distinction between *Kulturnation* and *Staatsnation*. Another old view, which used to be applied to Europe, distinguishes between historical nations and those that do not have a history. The historical nations are those that existed as political communities whether or not they were part of a larger empire, and whether or not they were sovereign nation-states. Non-historical nations were characterized merely in terms of language, culture, and ethnicity.²³ So this distinction clearly seems to be an instance of our initial dichotomy. Finally, Hans Kohn²⁴ suggested a distinction between Eastern and Western views of the nation, but this once again is an instance of the ethnic/civic dichotomy.

Even when new conceptions are introduced, they are often compatible with the initial distinction we made between the ethnic and the civic. For instance, some have proposed to distinguish between instrumentalists and primordialists.²⁵ The first insist on the idea that nations were created for a specific mediated purpose, whether it is political stability, ideology, social solidarity, or control of the masses. It is a view

23 The distinction between historical and non-historical nations was designed for the case of Europe, and was especially in vogue among thinkers like Marx and Engels in the last century. Germany, Poland, and Hungary, for instance, were described as historical nations. They were nations which were thought to have been from the very beginning in the process of becoming states. The non-historical nations included Ukraine, Slovakia, and Slovenia, and were perceived as never being able to become states. For a discussion, see Stéphane Pierré-Caps, *La multination* (Paris: Odile Jacob 1995), 37-45.

24 Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan 1945)

25 Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, 30-35

held by most modernists. Primordialists, on the other hand, underline the pervasive traits of the nation that have followed humans through their evolution, whether it is race, religion, language, culture, or tradition. The champion of primordialism is Clifford Geertz. According to that view, the fundamental aspects of the nation cannot be explained away: they are fundamental characteristics of humankind. Notice that this account can be formulated in subjective as well as objective terms. It is true that Geertz's approach suggests an objective reading, but one could reformulate it in a way that turns all these features into subjective ones. At the core of nationalist sentiments, there may be primordial *subjective* features such as religious feelings, a sense of cultural belonging, mythical attachments to a race, or some groundless belief in a shared tradition.

This subcategorization into instrumentalists and primordialists perhaps does not simply reproduce our dichotomy in a new vocabulary, but it does nothing to break it either. It only captures some of the aspects involved in the two opposing views. Ethnic and civic nationalists may be grouped in many different ways, but a mere reshuffling of the cards will not help to go beyond the traditional views.

The same thing can be said about the debate over the fate of the nation. Some think that nations are here to stay and that they will survive the end of the modern era. They were there before, and they will remain after the demise of the modern world, if some 'postmodernist world' of some sort is to take its place. People who so construe things are known as perennialists. The most well known example of these thinkers is once again Clifford Geertz. Others think that since the nation is essentially tied to modernity, nationalism is a phenomenon that will disappear when the modern world disappears, if it ever does. Most civic nationalists fall into this category. Finally, there are those who think that even if the nation is a product of modernity, it has only a contingent existence and, as the modern world continues to develop, nationalism will slowly disappear. This is, for instance, the view held by E.J. Hobsbawm.

The debate concerning the fate of the nation is in a way the reverse of the one concerning its origin. It is only remotely related to our problem of trying to overcome the distinction between the ethnic and the civic conceptions of the nation. Still it is useful to mention these different approaches because they indirectly serve to show how pervasive the distinction is and how much it imposes itself upon our mentalities.

The traditional civic conception is also still very much present in the writings of contemporary 'continental' philosophers and social scientists. To mention just a few, Dominique Schnapper,²⁶ Pierre-André Taguieff,²⁷ and at one time Alain Finkielkraut²⁸ all have proposed a civic account. It is true that in her *La communauté des citoyens* as well as in her contribution to this volume, Schnapper also tries to overcome the traditional dichotomy. But she does so by suggesting that ethnic nationalists were themselves always motivated by a political agenda, as illustrated by the classical example of Alsace-Lorraine in the wars that set France and Germany against each other. She argues, in a manner similar to Hobsbawm, that the reunification of 'cultures' or of a population with a 'same ancestry' was in that case instrumental for expansionist political goals, and that in general it is an expression of a political nation building (of the state-nation variety). She is willing to admit that civic ties are not enough for social bonding and that political authorities use language, culture, and tradition in order to consolidate the sense of national identification, but these additional features do not belong to the 'analytical' concept of the nation. According to Schnapper, one must not confuse what goes into the characterization of the nation with what has historically been done by the nationalists. And if we make this distinction, we shall, she argues, come to see that all nations are the creation of the state.

She is also willing to admit that many civic nations tend to favour a certain homogeneity, and she describes this homogeneity in cultural terms. But she does not entirely remove herself from the traditional dichotomy. Even if she is ultimately led to a sort of synthetic approach that in a way transcends the traditional distinction, still, in the end, Schnapper is in effect proposing a civic account. She discards the *ideological* distinction between the two views because, as a matter of fact,

26 Dominique Schnapper, *La communauté des citoyens* (Paris: Gallimard 1994)

27 Pierre-André Taguieff, 'Nationalisme et anti-nationalisme. Le débat sur l'identité française,' in Coll., *Nations et nationalismes*, Les dossiers de l'état du monde (Paris: La découverte 1995), 127-35

28 Alain Finkielkraut, *The Defeat of the Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press 1995)

the only sort of nation that actually exists is the civic nation, and the only sort of nation building is the state-nation building. The ideological dichotomy has to be suppressed, because there is really no such thing as an ethnic nation. The struggles between different populations are always of a political nature, and when they are nationalist in character, they are specifically related to a policy of state-nation building.

A civic conception of nationalism is also implicit in the works of Jürgen Habermas where he defends a post-traditional form of nationalism which he calls 'constitutional patriotism'.²⁹ Unlike Schnapper, Habermas is more normative and less preoccupied with a sociological description. In taking this normative view, he is very critical of the continued maintenance of the traditional nation-state. His constitutional patriotism is something that could also be implemented in supranational states such as Europe.³⁰ And he speaks, in considering Europe, of a post-national identity coming into being.

All the accounts that we have described so far in this section share a certain feature. Whether or not they propose a defense of the traditional nation-state, they more or less endorse, where they make any endorsement at all, an exclusively civic form of nationalism. Now one cannot deny, at least initially, the plausibility of this conception. All the above civic nationalists argue that the only way to neutralize ethnic nationalism is to set it aside and replace it with a radically different conception. They confront their opponents with an enormous challenge. They predict that any attempt to replace the exclusively civic conception by some other form of account will lead to a vindication of ethnicism or ethnocentrism. They argue that their opponents are not entirely conscious of the enormous forces behind ethnicism. If they were, so the argument goes, they would realize that its replacement by an exclusively civic account is required and that civic nationalism is the only reasonable and morally or politically acceptable option left.

In our opinion, these arguments reveal the force of the exclusively

29 Jürgen Habermas, 'Historical consciousness and post-traditional identity: The Federal Republic's orientation to the West,' in *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historian's Debate* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1989), 249-67

30 For the distinction between nationalism and patriotism, see also the contribution of Andrew Levine to the present volume.

civic account. Many would argue that the events that took place around the world since the breakup of the Berlin wall confirm this diagnosis. There have been wars fought all over the world in which ethnicity seemed once again to be playing a major role. The worst recent cases are offered by the Serbs in Bosnia or by the Tutsis and the Hutus in Rwanda, but many other examples could be given to show that ethnicism is more than ever present. We have had a plethora of what Carol Prager aptly calls barbarous nationalisms. And paradoxically, their reemergence gives a renewed credibility to the exclusively civic conception.

There are, of course, new approaches which criticize the primacy of the exclusively civic nation-state, and some even challenge the coherence of such a conception, but many who make such criticisms are against all forms of nationalism, whether it is civic or ethnic. Many defenders of the Maastricht Treaty and some Canadian federalists find themselves endorsing this ultra-civic approach which turns individuals into citizens of a 'supranational entity.' Some, like Martha Nussbaum,³¹ even think in terms of an ideal conception in which individuals are thought of as citizens of the world. We suggested above that civic nationalists were in favour of the nation-state and it might look as though a supranational approach runs against such a conception. But this is not entirely accurate. Those who announce the end of the nation-state and who favour its replacement by an exclusively supranational organization might be characterized as simply wanting to reproduce a certain form of civic state at a higher level. So even if they are not just proposing a variant of civic nationalism, there is not much conceptual difference involved between this 'post-national' or 'supranational' model and the more traditional forms of civic nationalism. As suggested by Greenfeld, it is perfectly coherent for a civic nationalist to favour its implementation on a world scale. It is probably wrong, however, *pace* Greenfeld, to describe someone who subscribes to such a view as an ultra-civic nationalist in disguise, for we

31 Martha Nussbaum, 'Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,' in Joshua Cohen, ed., *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism* (Boston: Beacon Press 1996). In the same volume, Michael Walzer's trenchant criticism of these views should be noted.

must acknowledge an important difference between this approach and the traditional civic one. It is that those who defend such a supranational model often go as far as equating all nationalism with ethnic nationalism, or at least characterizing it in pejorative terms. They will condemn nationalism as such because, as François Mitterand used to say, "it can only lead to violence." Still this approach does not run counter to most of the essential aspects of the traditional civic conception.

At the other end of the spectrum, Walker Connor³² makes a correlation between all nationalisms and ethnicisms (he even coined the word 'ethnonationalism'), but he also argues that it has become a fundamental feature of our contemporary world. Without doubt the ethnically 'pure' nation does not exist anymore (if it ever did), but the fact that ethnonationalism has no objective import does not make it less important as a political phenomenon. Like Smith, he rejects Clifford Geertz's insistence on allegedly primordial traits, but he agrees that ethnonationalism is a fundamental driving force in contemporary politics. There are also, according to Connor, many 'non-rational' positive qualities within nationalist movements that must properly be recognized as such, and these must not be taken to be irrational. After all, what is non-rational need not be irrational. He rejects the premodernist account of the nation, but he also criticizes the modernist approach. In many of his papers, Connor effectively shows how intellectuals, both in North America and Europe, have failed to understand the reality of nationalism. Against those who think that it has been around for a long time, he argues that it reached the masses only at the beginning of the twentieth century. At the same time Connor thinks that intellectuals wrongly underestimate its actual force. So Connor thinks that both premodern and modern historians are wrong in this respect. They tend to concentrate only on the élites and fail to appreciate that the lower classes were until very recently indifferent towards the nation.

In any case, whether one defends a certain form of supranationalism or asserts the inescapable presence of ethnonationalism, we are still not able to go beyond our initial opposition. This is also true in the

32 Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1994)

context of Canadian politics.³³ We are still under the spell of the views held by Pierre Elliott Trudeau³⁴ and Ramsay Cook.³⁵ Trudeau has always seen Quebec nationalism as a tribal phenomenon, and Cook has for the same reason criticized the view that Canada is a pact between two founding nations. Quebec nationalism is still perceived by a majority of Canadians as ethnic in essence, and the only alternative seems to be civic nationalism.³⁶ There are indeed conceptual mistakes here, but there is much more involved.³⁷ Such remarks plainly have consequences in the political forum. But unfortunately, this is where things stand in Canadian politics at the moment. That is not to say that no other voices are being heard, but the main political orientations in Canada operate, whether wittingly or unwittingly, within the limits of an exclusively civic interpretation.

33 For recent philosophical contributions that are sensitive to the Quebec situation, see Michel Seymour, ed., *Une nation peut-elle se donner la constitution de son choix?* (Montréal: Bellarmin 1995).

34 Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Le fédéralisme et la société canadienne-française* (Montréal: HMH 1967).

35 Ramsay Cook, *Canada and the French Canadian Question* (Toronto: Macmillan 1966).

36 The reaction of Canadians towards the remarks of the former Premier of Quebec, Jacques Parizeau, on the referendum night of 30 October 1995, are quite revealing in this respect. The *Calgary Herald* spoke about Quebec nationalism as involving a 'tendency toward ethnic cleansing.' The *Vancouver Sun* talked about 'xenophobia,' 'ethnic superiority' and 'tribalism.' The *Hill Times* of Ottawa accused Parizeau of 'unleashed racism.' The *Edmonton Sun* said that Parizeau has admirers among members of the Heritage Front and Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front. The *Winnipeg Sun* suggested that Parizeau should go to Bosnia and ask the Serbs for a job. The *Vancouver Province* spoke of racism and suggested that Quebec nationalism is an instance of an ethnic nationalism that leads to gas chambers and apartheid, to Bosnia and Rwanda. The *Toronto Sun* spoke of 'ethnic cleansing.' The *Financial Post* spoke of hatred, and the *Ottawa Sun* denounced the sickness of the minister of finance Bernard Landry. These extreme statements go far beyond anything that Parizeau said or wanted to say. Those who make them paradoxically create the violence that they are purportedly denouncing. These reactions are so outrageously exaggerated that they cannot be explained solely by what Parizeau said, but must rather be explained by invoking a general misperception of Quebec sovereigntists as ethnic nationalists.

37 See Nielsen, 'Secession: The Case of Quebec.'

V Cultural Nationalism

The debate over the origin of nationalism should not be of primary concern to philosophers, for the questions raised by nationalism exceed such supposedly 'merely factual' concerns. Perhaps when we adopt a normative and political perspective it does not matter whether nationalism was at the beginning essentially an ethnic or a civic phenomenon. What matters is whether we *should* now adopt either of those conceptions in describing and interpreting social and political realities, and in our normative appraisals of nationalism. The question is to a very large extent a normative and critical one and not (if there is such a thing) a purely descriptive or explanatory one. Moreover it can be argued that in polyethnic, pluricultural or multinational societies, no conceptions that are founded upon exclusion can be justified. Cultural diversity has turned our contemporary societies into culturally diverse sociopolitical realities, and we need to develop complex notions in order to grasp this complex reality.

There are some authors who are now moving away from the ethnic/civic dichotomy and who defend a certain form of cultural nationalism. We could mention, for instance, the names of Yael Tamir³⁸ and David Miller.³⁹ These two authors are among the very few who have developed an account of the nation which is neither ethnic nor exclusively civic.⁴⁰ Because of them, we are beginning to understand why some non-exclusively civic forms of nationalism can be legitimate. Tamir and Miller emphasize the cultural aspects of the nation as well as its civic aspects. Both stress the importance of cultural belonging and underline its legitimacy in order to rehabilitate the concept of the

38 Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1993)

39 David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995)

40 There are many defenders of the cultural definition of the nation in Canada. We could mention, for instance, Charles Taylor in *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press 1993). Fernand Dumont develops similar views in *Raisons communes* (Montréal: Boréal 1995). Finally, we should also mention Will Kymlicka in *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1995).

nation. Of course, there are many other authors who have discussed the cultural features of the nation, but these two authors are distinctive, in the sense that they are among the very few who systematically argue for a certain kind of *cultural nationalism*.⁴¹ They are among those who do not condemn out of hand a nationalism that is more than 'a purely civic nationalism.' Both of them are philosophers whose books were published almost simultaneously, and they also make contributions to the present volume. In this section, we will briefly discuss their books.

It should first be noted that Tamir and Miller do not entirely reject the traditional civic model, though their reasons for holding on to certain aspects of it are not the same. For instance, Tamir does not wish to distance herself from some crucial features of the traditional civic conception. Even when she emphasizes the cultural aspects of the nation, and stresses the importance of cultural belonging, she puts forward an ethical individualism which remains essentially tied to the traditional civic conception. Recall that this conception, as we characterized it, is essentially individualistic since nations are, to the civic nationalist, nothing more than compounds of individual citizens.

Tamir is willing to recognize the importance of cultural belonging, but she does not draw any anti-individualistic conclusions from these facts. It is for that reason that she devotes considerable space to criticizing collective rights and emphasizing the primacy of individual rights and liberties over any kind of collective interests. She puts all her efforts into showing the compatibility between nationalism and liberalism, but she seems to ignore the fact that some of the traditional liberal thinkers such as T.H. Green and John Dewey were not individualists. The liberal philosopher can, according to Tamir, acknowledge the value of cultural belonging while remaining an ethical individualist. And since a sense of cultural belonging is at the core of nationalist sentiments, nationalism can be accommodated within a liberal theory.

There are those who will feel some dissatisfaction with such an account. After all, some will think, there does seem to be a way to show that liberalism is compatible with the admission of an adequate balance between individual and collective rights. These two kinds of rights

41 See also John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* (London: Allen and Unwin 1987).

may compete with each other without leading to a rejection of basic liberties. Some collective rights may impose reasonable limits upon individual liberties, just as individual liberties may impose reasonable limits upon collective rights. It could be argued that a liberal should be willing – and indeed some are willing – to accept these mutual constraints imposed by both kinds of rights. It is essential for a liberal philosopher to promote individual liberties, but she need not give to them an absolute priority over collective rights. In short, a liberal philosopher need not be an ethical individualist.

Of course, Tamir does break away from some aspects of the traditional civic model. For instance, and we believe importantly, she does not see the nation-state as necessarily the best form of political community. She believes that liberal nationalism may be realized in multicultural political associations. However, since she rejects collective rights that are not reducible to or justified by individual rights, this could weaken the force of her claims. As we shall see in the next section, ethical individualism makes it hard to accommodate the rights of nations in multicultural political associations.

Tamir thinks that collective rights can be reduced to or justified by individual rights. But it could be argued in response that the rights of national communities to create, control, and develop their own basic cultural, political, and economical institutions can neither be reduced to nor justified by any appeal to individual rights. For instance, these national communities have a right to survive through time independently of the individuals who presently happen to be members of such communities, and this right goes beyond the rights of individuals to maintain their cultural belonging.⁴² The same kind of remarks apply to the rights to create, develop, and control their institutions. It seems that individuals are entitled to do these things only because they live in communities which have that right. This order of explanation (but more on that later when we discuss Will Kymlicka) is perhaps also needed if we are to justify the integration of immigrants in a welcoming community.

42 A similar point is made by Charles Taylor in 'The Politics of Recognition,' in Amy Gutman, ed., *Multiculturalism and 'the Politics of Recognition'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1992), 40-1, footnote 16.

Moreover, there seems to be another problem with the suggestion that the collective rights of nations must be reduced to or justified by individual rights. According to this view, the self-determination of a nation should either be reduced to or justified by the self-determination of the individuals that compose the nation. But if that is so, it is going to be difficult to oppose partitionism and irredentism. Most of these movements presuppose an individualistic interpretation of self-determination and give an absolute priority to it over the self-determination of nations conceived as competing claimants of rights.

There is yet another crucial problem that confronts many individualistic accounts which allow for the multinational model of political community. One wonders how it is possible to expect nations to enter into such a community if we also ask them to renounce political recognition as such. If we adopt the multinational model we should, in order to yield a perspicuous representation of the phenomenon, at the same time allow for the political expression, recognition, and emancipation of the nations that compose this political community. But how shall we do that if we are reluctant to recognize the collective rights of the component nations? This may not be a problem for all cultural nationalists, but it could confront those who are willing to envisage multinational political arrangements while remaining at the same time ethical individualists. Of course, Tamir does not want to reject collective rights as such. She simply believes that those which are compatible with liberalism (and thus on her reading those which are legitimate) are either reducible to or justified by individual rights to cultural protection; it remains to be seen whether this kind of ethical individualism creates difficulties for the cultural nationalist. We wish at this point, however, to postpone the discussion of this particular question, for we shall return to it in the next section when we discuss Kymlicka's contribution to the issue.

Miller does not have any kind of commitment to ethical individualism, since he is willing to accept a 'communitarian foundation to liberalism'.⁴³ He argues for a view of nationality based upon five different features. A nation is a community (1) constituted by shared belief and

43 Miller, *On Nationality*, 193

mutual commitment, (2) extended in history, (3) active in character, (4) connected to a particular territory, and (5) marked off from other communities by its distinct public culture.⁴⁴ He thus also endorses a cultural account of the nation. However, Miller concentrates most of his attention on a defense of the nation-state as the best model of political community in modern societies. For him, the nation is inherently political in the sense that it aspires to a certain autonomy. It is not identical to a political community, but it aspires to be one, whether in the form of a nation-state, as it should most of the time be, or some weaker form of self-government, as it is sometimes (exceptionally) compelled to be. This aspiration is built into the very nature of the cultural nation. As a social construct, it is essentially a cultural community, but we also have to acknowledge its aspiration to political expression, recognition, and emancipation.

Miller expresses his conviction that the nation-state is of central importance in our political lives.⁴⁵ He clearly favours nation-states over multination states. So even if he does not endorse the premise according to which nationalism is nothing over and above the promotion of the nation-state, he puts a lot of emphasis on this particular form of political arrangement. We are most of the time presented with arguments that explain why the nation-state is probably the best regime that there is. It is here that Miller appears to be still entangled in the traditional mold. We have seen that both ethnic and civic nationalists agree on the appropriateness of the choice of the nation-state as the basic political unit in modern societies, and it appears that Miller does not wish to break away from this idea. It is true that he thinks there are important exceptions to the principle of national self-determination, and in his contribution to the present volume, he gives us a good indication of his rationale for that, but he does seem to treat the multination state only as an alternative to the nation-state, and not as an equally interesting and equally basic form of political organization. It is only for pragmatic reasons that the multination state model should on some occasions be adopted.

44 Miller, *On Nationality*, 27

45 Miller, *On Nationality*, 98

There are two problems that we want to mention concerning Miller's account. First, there seems to be a tension between the simultaneous promotion of cultural nationalism and nation-states. We must first note that the cultural nation is in most accounts defined in terms of a common language and culture. Of course, when it is a liberal nation, it must also be inclusive, that is to say it must integrate incoming immigrants and, more generally, individuals with different national origins. But in most accounts, it does not include national minorities, i.e., extensions of other nations which happen to be on closely situated territories. For instance, according to cultural nationalists such as Miller, Taylor, and Dumont, there is a French Canadian nation that is situated mostly but not exclusively on Quebec's territory, and there is an English Canadian nation mostly but not exclusively situated in the rest of Canada. Now since cultural nations very often overlap in such a manner on different legal jurisdictions, it is unclear why we should in general favour nation-states if the nation is conceived as a cultural nation. And indeed, Miller is perfectly aware of the difficulty in the case of so-called 'French Canadian' nationalism. But more generally, how can we accommodate the cultural nation with a defense of the nationalist principle? How can these two conceptions be reconciled? There are many pluricultural societies in the world resembling Canadian society, i.e., societies containing one 'cultural' majority nation but many national minorities. By 'national minority,' we are not merely talking about individuals with a different ethnic origin, but rather about an extension on a certain territory of a nation closely situated on a different territory. What about these national minorities? Are they not a part of a political community along with a cultural majority? And is this complex reality not a more adequate conception of the nation? Miller will perhaps want to say that they might share the same citizenship, even if they are not part of the same nation, and this answer is perhaps a way out which shows the relative strength of the cultural account of the nation. And, indeed, when we consider states in which political sovereignty has already been achieved, that view does not appear to be problematic. But the problems with the cultural view of the nation become apparent as soon as we begin to reflect upon the conditions under which a cultural nation can become sovereign. This is the second difficulty of his account to which we shall now turn and it is one which perhaps

cannot so easily be answered. It may be the central difficulty that awaits any cultural account, including the one proposed by Tamir.

Miller's cultural nationalism leads him to say that when the membership in the 'nation' is numerous enough, has a national consciousness, and is determined to persist as a nation, then it should become sovereign if this is what its members democratically decide. Since nations are partly defined in cultural terms, it seems that it is the group formed by the conjunction of all the individuals sharing the same language and culture that should become sovereign. But what happens if the group in question is not all concentrated on the same territory? Very often, some of the members of the same 'cultural nation' form a minority on the territory of another 'cultural nation.' Does it then mean that, in the case of secession, this other nation should abandon some of its territory in order to accommodate the needs of the seceding nation? How does this differ from irredentism?

Another related problem concerns the fate of the national minorities that happen to live on the territory of the seceding nation. As we pointed out, in many if not most of our contemporary societies there are no culturally homogeneous groups of people occupying a single territory. And so it is hard to find a case where a single group of individuals sharing the same language and culture could aspire to self-determination on an already existing legally recognized territory without in effect, if not in intention, forcing some members with a different cultural background to follow them in the same adventure.

If cultural nations achieve political sovereignty, this could affect the existing territorial delimitations and the self-determination of other cultural nations. If nations are exclusively cultural, then subgroups belonging to the same culture as the seceding nation, but living on the territory of other cultural nations, will be part of the seceding nation and so will have to secede. The same holds for the national minorities that live on the territory of the seceding nation itself. If the cultural nation is the subject of the right to self-determination, the territory of the seceding nation should thus include all and only the territories on which the cultural nation is based, and hence, it should not include the territory held by the national minorities. This means, among other things, that most of the time the new territorial delimitations of the seceding nation cannot be those that it had, whether these are of a county, a state, a province, or some other kind of boundaries recog-

nized within the encompassing state. Secession will affect the territories of the other cultural nations, and it will also affect the territorial delimitations of the seceding nation itself. What could be the moral justification for such a seceding movement? This appears to us to be a *reductio* of such a purely cultural conception of nations.

These are some of the difficulties involved with the cultural account. There are many examples all over the world of sovereign states in which purely cultural nations cohabit with national minorities on the same territory. If one promotes the view according to which sovereign states should be composed of all and only the members belonging to the same cultural nation, this would entail a large-scale reform of international borders, and perhaps very extensive partitions. Why should we engage in such dramatic changes? Is it just to fit an *a priori* view of the nation as purely cultural? Let us suppose that we do not choose this course of action, and that most cultural nationalists would want to resist such a reform. Even if an extension of the seceding nation happens to be on the territory of another nation, let us suppose that we do not wish to include the territory of these minorities in the territory of the seceding nation. Let us suppose also that the minorities that are on the territory of the seceding nation should be involved in the seceding process. If we make these choices, choices that certainly seem reasonable, the question can now be asked: what is the use of adopting a purely cultural definition of the nation? If not all the members of the cultural nation are part of the process leading to sovereignty, and if members of another cultural nation are included, there does not seem to be any normative usefulness in the cultural conception of the nation. To put things differently, if the cultural nation is not the subject of the right to self-determination, why do we need to use such a concept? Perhaps we should instead conceive of the nation as a political community very often composed of a national majority and, if there are any on the territory, of national minorities and individuals with other national origins.⁴⁶

46 For such a conception, see Michel Seymour's 'Une conception sociopolitique de la nation,' *Dialogue*, 37:3 (1998). As conceptualized by Seymour, a nation or a people can be a political community which, on a (legally or conventionally) recognized territory, consists most of the time of a national majority (i.e., a majority on a given territory, which also happens to be in the world

The above difficulties of the purely cultural account concern the conditions under which nations become sovereign. It affects the cultural view of the nation whether or not we follow Miller in advocating the primacy of the nation-state over the multinational state. Even if, as Yael Tamir does, we allow for an alternative model such as the multinational state, the cultural account of the nation is still faced with difficulties related to the process by which sovereignty is achieved. Of

the majority of a group of people with a specific language and culture), along with national minorities (i.e., minority extensions of neighbouring nations) and citizens of other origins, if there are any such minorities and individuals on the same territory. (Of course, a majority within the political community must also share a certain national consciousness and a will to live together.) National majorities can be 'majorities' in two different senses of the word. They very often form a majority on a given territory, although this need not always be the case (e.g., the Catalans in Catalonia). But even when it is the case, it certainly is not sufficient, for if we were to include cities or districts among recognized territories, it would be possible to find an indefinite number of such majorities. More importantly, a national majority is a compound that forms a majority of the people having a certain language and culture when compared to all those who have the same language and culture but who live on other territories throughout the world. Of course, there can also be counterexamples to this. Indeed the 'national majority' could in principle be larger only in the sense that it is the largest sample of a group of people with a given language and culture, and thus not an *absolute* majority of such people. There could be more people outside the territory sharing the same language and culture. It could in some special circumstances even fail to be the largest sample, as long as it is the only one that forms a majority on its own territory. Even if there are larger compounds of people with the same language and culture on some other territories, these compounds will not become nations if they form minorities on their respective territories. In sum, in order to be a national majority, a group of people must either be the largest compound in the world of people with a specific language and culture or, alternatively, if it is not the largest, be the only compound of such a people that forms a majority on its territory.

There is another (trivial) case of a 'national majority' that fails to be a majority. It is when there are no national minorities and no individuals of different origins on its territory (e.g., Iceland). But most of the time, if not always, there are at least some individuals with a different national origin. It must also be noted that the national majority is composed of individuals who share the same language *and* culture, and the cultural component is perhaps more important. So even if there are more English-speaking Americans than there are English-speaking Canadians, English Canada could still form a national majority since

course, we have described these difficulties as though Miller and Tamir were not aware of them, and this is certainly not the case. For instance, Miller responds to those difficulties by arguing that when nations are spread on many different legal territories, they should not secede from the encompassing state. These are, for instance, the reasons that he gives for rejecting secession in the case of Quebec.⁴⁷

But why should we introduce such a conception, if the nation, so characterized, cannot consistently exercise her right to self-determination under any conditions? The purpose of introducing a new conception of nation should be at least in part normative, and not only descriptive. If cultural nationalists propose a new characterization, it must be in part for normative reasons, which in the present case amount to political and ethical reasons. It means among other things that it should play a role in a discourse reflecting upon the moral reasons for exercising self-determination, and upon the moral conditions under

it has a different culture. If such a conception were accepted, then Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, and Canada would offer clear cases of multination states. According to that conception, there is within Quebec's territory a Quebec nation which includes a national French-speaking majority, a national English-speaking minority, and Quebecers of other national origins. Eleven Native nations also live within that same territory. Of course, this conception is just one among many. It could and should be introduced simultaneously with the conception of the nation as a diaspora. This last conception is as important as the first one, and it does not fit the model according to which the nation is identical with a certain kind of political community. We could roughly define a diaspora nation as a group of people sharing the same language and culture which does not have a national majority in any sense of the word 'majority' (e.g., the Kurds). For an even wider conception, indeed a deliberately extended conception of a nation, distinct from the ones articulated here, see Brian Walker's contribution to this volume.

47 Miller, *On Nationality*, 114. We agree with Miller that in such a case, our first choice should be to try resolutely to adopt reforms within the confines of the multination state. And, as a matter of fact, Quebecers have precisely sought to do just that for more than 130 years. From the very beginning of the Canadian confederation, they thought they could maintain multiple identities by preserving their national identity within a multination state. But the question to be asked now is the following: what should be done if, after all that time, most Canadians still reject any kind of constitutional, political, and administrative reform that would entail a recognition of the Quebec nation within Canada?

which this process can rightly be achieved. But if there is almost never a case of a purely cultural nation that can morally be justified in exercising its right to self-determination on a given territory, then there are reasons to doubt the adequacy of such a conception. Indeed, given some reasonably deeply embedded considered moral judgments of most people in liberal democracies, it is a kind of moral *reductio*.

The cultural nationalist seems to be confronted with a dilemma. If the cultural nation is allowed to achieve sovereignty, it will almost always affect, in the present world anyway, the self-determination of another cultural nation and always affect its territory. But if, given the situation in the modern world, e.g., the pervasiveness of multicultural societies, secession is almost never justified, then it throws into very considerable question whether the use of such a purely cultural conception of the nation, running against our considered moral judgments as it does, can play a useful normative role. Furthermore, if we consistently stick with that conception, it seems that we encourage the project of a Great Serbia as envisaged by the Serb leaders. It is not only their systematic violation of human rights which is morally unacceptable, but also the expansionist notion of *la Grande Serbie*. Moreover, cultural nationalism seems at least to encourage those with partitionist and irredentist ambitions. All this serves to show that cultural nationalism is perhaps too closely related to ethnic nationalism. As things stand, it creates enormous tensions. And if we choose instead not to follow that line and come to reject the aspirations of 'cultural nations' for sovereignty, then it appears that cultural nations which do not already have a sovereign state cannot hope to find moral reasons justifying the exercise of their right to self-determination. So it is hard to see how the concept of a purely cultural nation could play any fruitful role in a normative evaluation of contemporary nationalist movements.

However, we should not prejudge the issue here. It is in large part an empirical one. Miller can challenge the claim that, some very exceptional cases apart (e.g., Iceland), there are no homogeneous cultural nations on legally recognized territories. For instance, if we leave aside the Brussels region, the Flemish and Walloons each occupy five distinct provinces in Belgium. There is almost no overlap between the two communities, except for a very few regions. Some, like the Fouron community which occupies a part of the Flemish territory, are the exceptions and not the rule in Belgium. The same remarks apply to the

different nations in Switzerland. With more than two-thirds of the population, the German part of Switzerland, for instance, occupies 19 cantons out of 26. Similar arguments could be made regarding Scotland and Wales in Great Britain. However, the situation as described only appears to favour Miller's account, for it is also implicitly suggested that if nations like the Welsh, the Scottish, the Flemish and the Walloons were to become separate political entities, they would occupy territories that roughly coincide with their actual borders.⁴⁸ We might agree with the above description in most cases, but for very different reasons. The question that must be asked, supposing that secession is justified for a given nation, is whether, in the process of achieving sovereignty, we should preserve the *territorial* integrity or the *cultural* integrity of the seceding nation. It is clear that in international law, the successor state exercises its sovereignty over the territory that the nation had as a political community before it became sovereign. This suggests that we should in general use actual territorial delimitations and not cultural identity as a criterion for determining the territory of the seceding nation. If there are apparent examples of fairly homogeneous cultural nations which could become sovereign on specific territories, it is perhaps not because they are culturally homogeneous, but rather because the territorial delimitations of the nations are rather clear.⁴⁹ These territorial boundaries, by the way, need not be legally recognized as is the

48 Actually, we should be careful not to draw any such conclusions in the case of Belgium. In addition to the Fouron community, we should take into consideration the fact that Brussels is part of the Flemish Brabant, and that more than 80% of its population speaks French. There are also more than sixty thousand German-speaking individuals living in the Walloon region.

49 This is not to say that we endorse a territorial conception of the nation, for there could be many nations partly occupying the same territory. This is, for example, the case of Quebec in which there are eleven aboriginal nations in addition to the Quebec nation. Even if they constitute only a small proportion of the Quebec population (74 000 out of seven million), each of the eleven aboriginal nations have a right to self-determination. This could in principle create a problem in the context of Quebec's secession from Canada, but it is generally agreed from a political point of view, as well as from the point of view of international law, that aboriginal nations should have a somewhat limited moral right to self-determination which includes self-government, but does not include a (moral

case for federated states within federations. If nations are conceptualized as certain sorts of political communities, there will very often be an internal or international recognition of its territory, whether this recognition is legal or a mere convention, since a political community, by definition, exercises a certain authority on a determinate territory.

But, of course, Miller could challenge the suggestion that the conception of the nation has to be introduced essentially for normative reasons. He could argue that even if we were left with almost no normative uses, the descriptive cultural concept of the nation would be the only reasonable one to hold. He could also claim that his conception does have practical implications, but suggest that these are not confined to the process of secession. In his *On Nationality*, for instance, he discusses the relationship between national solidarity and social solidarity which could be invoked as having important ethical consequences. Miller can claim in addition that his own conception has a dual aspect. It is both descriptive and normative, for he is after all able to distinguish questions about the nature of national identity from the politics of national identity. True, perhaps there are now very few purely cultural nations that can claim justification for sovereignty. But this does not show that his own notion has no normative or prescriptive import. The apparent lack of normative import may be explained by the fact that prior secessions of actually sovereign cultural nations were less problematic than the cases of cultural nations which now share the same aspirations. In other words, the previous cases of seceding cultural nations were the result of a difficult but viable equilibrium between a cultural nation and their minorities. Most of the remaining cultural nations that are not politically sovereign are perhaps in a more delicate situation, and sovereignty might not be the solution to their problems. The idea of a cultural nation cannot easily be useful in such cases, but generally it is not useless. Quite the contrary. It is just that, as it stands, it is becoming more and more normatively useless, since there are almost no cases left of cultural nations that could have a reasonable moral

or legal) right to secede or any right to violate the territorial integrity of the encompassing state. There could, of course, be important exceptions to this rule, but it is generally agreed that the self-determination of aboriginal nations is compatible with the territorial integrity of the state.

justification for exercising a full right of self-determination. We mentioned earlier Miller's view concerning the case of Quebec, but he also has reasons for resisting the independence of Wales, Scotland, and Catalonia. Miller could argue that the norms introduced show that these nations do not have a right to secede. The cultural view of the nation is useful since it helps us in showing why these nations should not secede.

Miller can also argue that a certain normative use of the cultural nation could still be made even if there are now very few examples of cultural nations which can legitimately aspire to sovereignty. For they can, alternatively, at least aspire to a certain political autonomy. Even if, in general, the nation-state remains the best model of political community, there might be exceptions to this general rule. And for these remaining cases, the cultural conception of the nation could still play a role in normative discourse because it could lead one to formulate conditions under which a given nation may achieve a certain form of self-determination, even if it is less than full sovereignty. If Miller were to pursue this line of argument, and there are many places in his book where he does follow that line, there would be less difference between the position that he holds and the one held by Tamir or most of the other proponents of the cultural conception. Most of them tend to develop simultaneously the idea of a multicultural citizenship, and thus of cultural nations in multinational states. It is, for instance, a line pursued by Will Kymlicka and Charles Taylor.

However, such a vindication of the cultural account of the nation has little force, because it leaves out an important aspect of contemporary liberal societies. Nations are becoming more and more pluricultural political communities. And for that reason it may be thought that the diagnosis offered by Miller against the secession of those 'cultural nations' that are not yet sovereign could in certain cases at least reveal, more than anything else, the outdated character of the purely cultural conception of the nation. If nations were conceived instead as pluricultural political communities, then the presence of national minorities on different territories would no longer be seen as a moral obstacle to secession.⁵⁰ And among those nations, some could in very special

50 However, it might be seen as a moral obstacle against a complete separation. When two sovereign nations have national minorities that are present on each

circumstances be justified in seceding. The most appropriate political regime for such nations might be the multination state, but it is not the only available option. If this is a correct diagnosis, then we may have to think of another normative conception in order to deal with all the political communities, sovereign or not, in which a national majority cohabits with different national minorities. In other words, we are perhaps compelled to provide a new account of the nation that can accommodate the cultural diversity of our contemporary societies. It can also be replied that the suggestion concerning the previous cases of secession is empirically false. It simply is not true that most previous secessions were the result of a process in which a purely cultural nation became independent. A very large number of sovereign states contain national majorities, national minorities, and individuals of different origins.

Given the above criticisms made against the cultural account of the nation, it is not surprising to note that, among those who defend that view, most authors clearly favour the multination state model of political community. As we pointed out, in contemporary liberal societies the cultural conception enters into tension with the promotion of the nation-state. Those who, like Miller, still express a preference for the nation-state tend to be conservative concerning those 'cultural nations' which have not yet achieved independence. But, as we shall see in the next section, we have to ask whether it is the nation-state model as such, not the purely cultural view of the nation, which is responsible for the problem. If the nation-state appears to be a bad way to accommodate cultural diversity, it is perhaps not because there is something inherently wrong with the nation-state: it might rather be because there is a problem with our purely cultural account of the nation.

Our purpose here is not to settle the issue, but rather to raise it, and it is with that in mind that we shall now turn to an examination of multination states.

other's territory, they should perhaps engage in some kind of political partnership with each other.

VI Multination States

In discussing recent accounts of the multination state, we shall once again restrict our attention to two important recent works: *La multination* by Stéphane Pierré-Caps⁵¹ and *Multicultural Citizenship* by Will Kymlicka.⁵² These two authors make a very considerable effort to think about the accommodation of cultural pluralism within actual sovereign states, and attempt to reflect upon the conditions under which multination states could be acceptable. It is important to note that there is a deliberately prescriptive dimension involved in their writings. These authors argue that, in already existing multination states, an explicit recognition of national communities can and must be made. Thanks to these writers, we are getting close to an explanation of the causes behind nationalist movements. We are forced to recognize that, very often, sovereign states do not recognize their own multinational character. We thus also begin to understand that nations must be recognized within the encompassing states, and that their exclusion is not a morally or perhaps even a politically viable solution. We begin to understand that, if nations are not granted such recognition, they could have a moral justification for secession. If Pierré-Caps and Kymlicka are right, the *status quo* in already existing multination states that do not recognize themselves as such is unacceptable.

These two works present many advantages over the works we have previously examined. Pierré-Caps and Kymlicka reflect upon the moral problems raised by the cohabitation of many different nations within a single sovereign state. And in so doing, they indirectly help us to reflect upon the moral justifications for secession. Moreover, these two works offer a criticism of already existing nation-states, especially the work by Pierré-Caps, who vehemently denounces the unwillingness of many different countries which have invoked self-determination in order to achieve their own sovereignty, but which refuse to grant even a minimum of self-determination to national groups living on their own territory. Pierré-Caps also offers a radical criticism of the exclu-

51 Pierré-Caps, *La multination*.

52 Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*.

sively civic nation-state, one that we seldom find in the literature on the subject. To be sure, these are not trifling qualities but, while we acknowledge them, we shall concentrate on a major difficulty which we feel both authors have not adequately faced.

This is not the place for a detailed discussion, so let us state very bluntly and succinctly some central plausible arguments against these two works. Both fail to draw an appropriate distinction between national minorities and nations and, for this reason, both are unable to account for the possibility of nations which would include national minorities. Recall that by a 'national minority' we mean a partial extension of a closely situated nation on the territory of another nation.⁵³ It is a minority group that lives on a territory where there is a national majority, but not just any kind of minority, for there has to be a closely situated nation with which it shares a certain language and culture.

Pierré-Caps uses the word 'national minority' to describe both a nation that happens to be outnumbered within a larger encompassing state and a minority of people which is the extension on a given territory of a close neighbour nation living on another territory. Consequently, for him, there is no distinction to be made between nations that happen to be outnumbered and national minorities. So what we classify as national minorities can, on his conception, be treated as nations, and appear to have self-determination, just like all nations do. He is thus unable, theoretically, to distinguish between secession (an act performed by a nation) and partition (an act performed by a subgroup within a nation). Of course, he is opposed to partition, but it is for no other reasons than the ones invoked in the case of secession. Secessionist movements and partitionist movements are all to be explained, according to Pierré-Caps, by the unfortunate prevalence of the ideology of the nation-state. These movements are in certain circumstances illegitimate, if the actors fall prey to the ideology of the

53 For a discussion of the distinction between nations and national minorities, see Seymour, 'Une conception sociopolitique de la nation.' According to that view, the Russian populations in the Baltic states, the Hungarians in Romania or Slovakia, the Croats and Serbs in Bosnia, the Arabs in Israel, the French Belgians in Flemish Belgium, the Anglo-Quebeckers in Quebec, and the French Canadians in English Canada are all national minorities.

nation-state, and they may be legitimate in others, if the actors are *victims* of the ideology of the nation-state. In both cases, the guilt is to be found on the side of those who defend the nation-state.

It could be argued, on the contrary, that the appropriate criticism of an exclusively civic form of nationalism should invite us to redefine the complex reality of the nation outside of the civic/ethnic dichotomy, and not necessarily to condemn nation-states altogether. Of course, if nations are not exclusively civic, we must therefore think of them independently of their existence in a sovereign political community, and this should force us to acknowledge the possibility of multination states. But the problem with the purely civic account also concerns the concept of the *nation*, and there might be no problem as such in the very idea of a *nation-state*, once nations are conceptualized in a new way. Going beyond the civic/ethnic dichotomy certainly requires, as we have seen, entertaining at least the possibility of alternative models to the traditional nation-state, but it does not necessarily mean that we must reject the legitimacy of the nation-state as such. What is wrong in the traditional model is to restrict the notion of a nation-state only to a homogeneous ethnic (or purely cultural) group in a sovereign state, but nation-states can perfectly be acceptable if they allow also for the possibility of nations which are culturally plural. If we distinguish between nations and national minorities, as we can do if the nation is seen as a particular sort of political community, then it becomes coherent to allow for a single 'nation' to contain 'national minorities.' In other words, there are many ways to accommodate the pluricultural character of contemporary liberal societies. We can allow for multination states, but we can also have an open mind toward the nation-state in which the nation is seen as a pluricultural political community.

Pierré-Caps has what is arguably a bias against nation-states, and this influences his understanding of the political problems he is trying to explain. We should perhaps focus our criticisms on the exclusively civic, ethnic, or cultural conceptions of the nation, and remain in this context as neutral as possible concerning the different possible models of political authority. We should adopt a pragmatic approach to the problem, and Pierré-Caps is perhaps not sufficiently pragmatic. In his *La multination*, he systematically attacks the legitimacy of the nation-state and promotes the multination as the best model of political community. But this could be seen as a misconceived diagnosis of the

problem. He clearly discerns that both the civic and ethnic conceptions assume the primacy of the nation-state. But if a critical approach should rule out such a primacy, it should not also denounce the very legitimacy of the nation-state as such, for it is not clear that the best model is always the multination. The difficulties with the ethnic and civic conceptions are in their supposition of what it is to be a nation, and this is what should change.

If Pierré-Caps would argue for a conception of the nation as a political community involving a national majority and – if there are any on the territory – national minorities and individuals of other national origins, he would then be in a position to distinguish nations from national minorities. By so doing, he would be able to distinguish between genuine multination states and the case where a nation happens to contain national minorities. The two cases are quite different and both should not be categorized as multination states.

Actually, there are many different sorts of cultural diversity to be accounted for. We must first take into consideration the phenomenon of immigration and reflect upon policies of multiculturalism that provide ways to accommodate these groups within the larger community. We must also try to reformulate a view of the nation that can allow for the existence of national minorities. We must then think of the different ways to accommodate nations within multination states. These states contain many different nations forming political communities which are not sovereign. We must also find a way to accommodate aboriginal nations within those states. And we must finally reflect upon the possibility of supranational states, where sovereign states enter into larger political organizations. All these different levels must carefully be distinguished from one another. They present different challenges to the political recognition of cultural diversity. Allowing for cultural diversity at all levels does not lead to a rejection of the nation-state as such. It certainly leaves room for multination states and for supranational forms of political organization, but it should not rule out a redefined nation-state, now recognized to be in almost all cases pluricultural and multiethnic. A nation may be pluricultural if it contains one or more national minorities on its territory, and it may be polyethnic if it contains individuals of different national backgrounds who still in some way identify themselves in terms of the language, culture, and tradition of their country of origin.

The reasons why Kymlicka fails to make the distinction between nations and national minorities are quite different. Let us take an example that may help to simplify things a little. For Kymlicka, the Quebec nation is composed of the francophones living in Quebec; it does not include Anglo-Quebeckers. This exclusively francophone community is not to be described as ethnic because, as Kymlicka correctly stresses, many different ethnic communities have integrated into the French population of Quebec. Language is itself ethnically neutral. The second reason why the Quebec nation should not be described as ethnic is that it is also territorially based, since it does not include francophones living elsewhere in Canada. Like Tamir, Miller, Dumont, and Taylor, Kymlicka endorses a cultural view of the nation. But he differs slightly from them in the case of Quebec by restricting the cultural nation to francophones living inside Quebec.

For Kymlicka, the Quebec people, or the *Québécois* as he calls them, may simultaneously be described as a cultural nation and as a national minority within Canada, and this is simply because they are outnumbered by a majority of English-speaking Canadians. The Quebec nation is, in the context of Canada, a culturally defined minority. For Kymlicka, a national community is a national minority if it is outnumbered by a larger group on a given territory. It seems that nothing more is involved in his conception of a national minority. So he does not feel the need to make any distinction between nations and national minorities.

There are many difficulties involved in putting national minorities and nations into the same bin. For instance, we doubt whether Kymlicka would be theoretically able not to treat the anglophones living in a sovereign Quebec as a distinct nation entitled to secession. As things stand, the anglophones living in Quebec must, for Kymlicka, be part of the English Canadian majority. But wouldn't they be a national minority in a sovereign Quebec? And, since there seems to be no difference in his account between nations and national minorities, there seems to be no reason not to treat Anglo-Quebeckers in a sovereign Quebec as a distinct nation. But this is surely counterintuitive. Anglo-Quebeckers have never described themselves as a nation, and they have never behaved in this way. In addition, there is a problem related with this account similar to the one that was raised against Pierré-Caps. Since Kymlicka draws no clear distinction between nations and national minorities, he also runs the risk of being theoreti-

cally unable to distinguish between irredentist movements and seceding movements. Both groups aim at full self-determination and both groups seem to be able to exercise this right under special circumstances.

However, this criticism is to a certain extent beside the point. Even if Kymlicka does not actually draw any distinction between nations and national minorities, there is nothing that prevents him from doing so, as long as the two sorts of national communities are treated as minorities. Nothing in his theory prevents him from introducing two sorts of national minorities, those that are nations and those that are extensions of a nation on another territory. It is only the first ones which could, under special circumstances, be entitled to exercise a full right of self-determination. If he is able to do so, then he is at least in principle able to distinguish between groups of people that may be the subject of secession and those that would perform a partition. But even if we avoid the difficulty by introducing a new distinction within his theory, we would only be able to locate more precisely where Kymlicka still partly remains, his intentions to the contrary notwithstanding, in the traditional mold of the purely civic model. As we shall see, Kymlicka is an ethical individualist and it is in that sense that he remains tied to the traditional civic account. He can only allow groups to have collective rights if they are a *minority* within a larger group. And since he wants at least certain nations to have collective rights within the encompassing multination state, he must treat them as minorities. Presumably, the majority nation within the state also has some collective rights, but only relative to the larger international community. We have now arrived at the point where we are in a position to uncover the deep motivations behind Kymlicka's temptation to conflate nations and national minorities. *It is because the only acceptable candidates for collective rights are minorities.* But why does he find it necessary to restrict collective rights to minority groups? The reason is that these are the only collective rights that are reducible to, or justified by, individual rights to participatory goods. Kymlicka rejects collective rights that would impose restrictions on the individual liberties of the individual members of society. He rejects collective rights if they involve internal restrictions imposed upon the members of the group and accepts them only if they involve external protections for a minority against a majority. It is, according to Kymlicka, only by pro-

ceeding in this fashion that we can develop an account of collective rights which is compatible with political liberalism. Collective rights can be accommodated by liberal theories only if they involve external measures to protect a minority from a majority. They are – indeed on this conception *must* be – illiberal if they impose restrictions on individual liberties.

But why does he think that the only acceptable conception of collective rights for the liberal is the one that involves only external protections and never internal restrictions? The reason is that Kymlicka mistakenly thinks that political liberalism is intimately linked to ethical (or political) individualism, the view according to which individual rights have an absolute priority over collective rights and interests. As mentioned above in the case of Tamir, Kymlicka's individualism thus ultimately explains why he treats nations as national minorities. He wants to accommodate collective rights for nations within the framework of liberalism. But, according to him, it is illiberal to impose internal restrictions on the liberties of citizens. So he must only accept rights that offer external protections for minority groups. Since the rights of cultural minorities are reducible to or justified by special rights given to individuals, this account is indeed compatible with ethical individualism. So ethical individualism requires that nations be equated with national minorities.

Kymlicka can consistently claim that all collective rights may be accepted within his model, including the right to self-determination. It is just that, contrary to the 'collectivist,' he believes that they are all reducible to (or justified by) individual rights. He also argues that there should not be too much emphasis placed on the subject of rights. What is important, according to Kymlicka, is the object and not the subject of rights. It does not matter whether the subject of rights is an irreducible collectivity, or whether it is just individuals. According to Kymlicka, these are ontologically vexing questions that should be put aside and not allowed to intrude in the political debate. If nationalism is to be accommodated within a liberalism which is political and not metaphysical, it must itself be political and not metaphysical. But as a matter of fact, there is nothing wrong, still according to Kymlicka, with the so-called liberal conception according to which individuals must be the sole bearers of rights. For in one sense of 'collective rights,' they are rights belonging to individuals, and it is in this way that we can accom-

moderate them within a liberal framework. A right is treated as 'collective' not because the owner of the right is a group, but rather because the object of the right is a participatory good. When collective rights are understood in this way, they are compatible with a liberal approach. The conclusion is that a liberal state can (and perhaps should) promote and protect the rights of 'cultural groups,' as long as they are reducible to, or justified by, the rights of individuals to cultural protection.

Kymlicka is certainly right to separate political liberalism from metaphysics and (if there is any difference) ontology. This is the essential feature of John Rawls' political philosophy.⁵⁴ Liberalism should not, according to Rawls, be founded upon a theory of human nature or on any contestable metaphysics. It involves only a certain political conception of the person. By 'political conception of the person,' Rawls means a certain political self-representation of the person. The adequate conception is that of the 'moral person' who is both rational, in the sense that she behaves in accordance with her own conception of the good, and reasonable in the sense that she is endowed with, and is able to act on, a certain political conception of justice. So there is nothing metaphysical about such a liberal account. But does it mean that we should not for that reason discuss matters related to the subject of collective rights? Must we avoid altogether all references to collectivities at the level of normative political theory? Here, we are afraid, Kymlicka goes way beyond all the restrictions that Rawls would want to impose on political liberalism. In order to recognize collectivities as the subject of collective rights, one (*pace* Ware) need not enter into an ontological discussion concerning the status of collectivities. We can simply register the fact that some groups *represent themselves* as nations. The approach adopted by Rawls concerning the person may also be deployed for the group. An ontological account of nations is not needed. The only thing required is a certain conception of the nation.⁵⁵

54 John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press 1993)

55 Indeed, Rawls does not seem to have Kymlicka's qualms about collective rights applied to peoples or nations. See 'The Law of Peoples,' in Stephen Shute and Susan Hurley, eds., *On Human Rights, The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 1993* (New York: Basic Books 1993).

Since he is not able to allow for collective rights that impose restrictions on individual liberties, Kymlicka is unable to give a perspicuous expression, a perspicuous realization, and a perspicuous recognition of nations within multination states. It could as well be claimed – though this is a distinct kind of claim – that there is a paternalistic attitude involved in treating the rights of nations as ‘minority’ rights, and in treating the objects of those rights as external ‘protections.’ It seems, to underestimate it, problematic to treat the right to self-determination as a ‘protective’ measure. Peoples should be treated as equals, and the principle of equality between nations should not involve treating them as minorities that require external protections.

It is also doubtful whether one can *reduce* collective rights to individual rights to participatory goods, or *justify* the former by the latter. If individuals have the right on a given territory to have access to a certain number of participatory goods, it is because there is on that territory a collectivity who is the primary bearer of the right. It is the collectivity who has a right to self-determination, a right to the creation, maintenance, and development of specific cultural institutions, a right to have a distinct political community, a right to control its own specific economic development, etc. Without the existence of such a group, individuals cannot claim a right to these specific participatory goods. Moreover it appears – or so some are inclined to believe – that if these rights were reducible to or justified by individual rights, we would then be unable to justify the linguistic integration of immigrants into their new community and their insertion into a public common culture. The immigrant comes equipped with a particular language and a particular cultural background, and so, if we ignore the collective level, she is in the same situation as the welcoming individuals who are also equipped with a particular language and cultural background. Presumably, both take their language and culture as a primary good. Why should we want to say that the welcoming individual has a right to force the immigrant to integrate into his own linguistic institution and his own culture? Kymlicka has no answer to give as to why there is such a right except to say – it seems to us weakly – that the immigrant who decides to adopt a new community chooses to abandon her own individual right to cultural protection. This is certainly what happens in the vast majority of cases, but why do immigrants feel this way? Isn’t it because in order to acquire citizenship,

they are willing to integrate into the culture of the welcoming *community*? And by doing this are they not implicitly recognizing the collective rights of the welcoming community? Why should they simply abandon their own individual right to cultural protection in favour of those held by the welcoming *individuals*? Why should our rights as welcoming individuals be superior to the individual rights of incoming immigrants? Without an appeal to the collective rights of the welcoming community, Kymlicka has no justification to offer in order to explain why the immigrants must integrate into the welcoming community. This problem is by no means just a theoretical one. Kymlicka is certainly right to suggest that in practice the vast majority of immigrants do integrate. But it is most probably because they recognize the rights of the welcoming community. Kymlicka's individualistic account leaves the welcoming community without any justifiable recourse to impose any internal constraints whatsoever on its individual members, and thus on its immigrants. The individualist justification for collective rights is therefore a dangerous idea from a practical point of view. Of course, we do not have any such difficulty if we think that the welcoming community, and not the individuals within it, is the primary bearer of the right.

It may, however, look as though Kymlicka can after all provide a justification for the integration of immigrants within the welcoming community. Recall that, as a minority, the nation may implement measures in order to protect itself from the majority within the encompassing state. Among these measures, there could be different integrative measures regarding incoming immigrants. Kymlicka allows external protections, and it is on that basis that he can, for instance, justify the specific measures introduced by the Quebec government. But this way out is not entirely successful. Because these measures restrict some of the liberties of the immigrants, namely their freedom to speak their own language at work, the freedom to choose the language of school education for their children, and the freedom to use their own language on public signs, it appears that these restrictions should become morally problematic from Kymlicka's own point of view.

Of course, Kymlicka can answer that an immigrant is, by definition, someone who chooses to abandon these rights, or to subordinate these rights to other rights. By choosing to live in a new country, she expresses her will to integrate within a new political community. She

must therefore agree to behave in accordance with the prevailing laws, and agree to integrate into a common public culture. If she does not, then she does not know what it is to be an immigrant. But this answer won't do because we have to ask why it is clear that an immigrant is 'by definition' someone who accepts integration into a common public culture. There would not be such restrictions if *most* of the people within the welcoming community spoke the language and shared the culture of the incoming immigrants. Integration is, so to speak, a matter in which numbers count. The individual rights of the members belonging to the welcoming community don't by themselves overrule those of the immigrants. It is rather because they belong to a community which forms a majority of people with a certain language and culture on the welcoming territory. This is why, in matters of integration, it is impossible not to refer to the collective rights of the welcoming community.

This last point reveals a further general difficulty with Kymlicka's account. It is not easy to separate generally measures that would count as external protections from those that involve internal restrictions. Specifically, it looks as though all the measures that count as external protections are simultaneously measures that impose restrictions upon individual liberties. Think for instance about the linguistic laws of Quebec which restrict the use of English on commercial signs, or about the obligation on the part of immigrants to send their children into French-language schools, or about the measures implemented in order to favour the use of French in the work place. These are all measures that, from one perspective, can count as external protections, but they simultaneously count as reasonable internal restrictions on the civil liberties of Quebec citizens and landed immigrants. If internal restrictions cannot be accepted, then these measures cannot be accepted. But since all the external protections simultaneously involve internal restrictions, then Kymlicka's individualism should force him to be 'extremely skeptical' about any kind of collective rights.

All the above difficulties have a common source. Kymlicka endorses ethical individualism, and this is the reason why he is unable to extract himself entirely from the traditional civic model. He is thus unable to provide an adequate moral justification for the recognition of a deep diversity within multination states.

VII Three Constraints

We shall end by formulating some different constraints on any acceptable conception of the nation. We shall only describe three of these constraints. The previous discussion should have brought to the surface some of the most important ones that should be accepted. We should try to avoid as much as possible the traditional dichotomy between the exclusively civic and the ethnic account. These two opposing views describe two extreme positions: abstract universalism and extreme particularism. A balance should be reached between the two. On the one hand, as Rawls has powerfully argued, contemporary pluralist societies require a government and a constitutional law that can transcend particular views about the good life and that will not take sides on these matters. On the other hand, there is, especially within actual multinational states, a need for cultural protection. So a constitution cannot simply refer to universal principles, and governments must do more than promote mere constitutional patriotism.

In a way, this moderate intermediary approach is already present in what was earlier described as 'cultural nationalism.' However, there is an ambiguity between two different uses of the word 'culture.' As emphasized by Kymlicka, we must distinguish between the structure of the culture and the character of the culture. By the 'structure of culture,' we mean a particular set of institutions (a language, a constitution, a judicial system, an educational system, and specific cultural institutions like museums, newspapers, libraries, etc.). All these institutions are involved in what can be called, to borrow another happy phrase from Kymlicka, a particular 'context of choice,' i.e., a particular set of political, cultural, and moral options that offer themselves to the national community. These options are often the result of influences exercised by foreign countries who share the same language, or the same history, or which are in a certain geographical proximity. The character of the culture, by contrast, is the particular colouration that a structure of culture may acquire during a certain period. A majority within the national community may at a given time endorse a particular set of values, and this is what gives a character to the culture. From time to time, the character of the culture may change, but these changes may take place within the same structure of culture. Once that distinction is made, there does not seem to be anything illiberal about a state which

would provide protection for different structures of cultures. It would certainly be illiberal to impose upon the state an obligation to promote and protect a specific character, but nothing can be said against protecting the different structures of culture with their specific contexts of choice.

The more we think of the nation in terms of a structure of culture and context of choice, the more we are inclined to move away from a purely cultural account of the nation in favour of one in which the nation is seen as a political community containing very often a national majority and different minorities, whether these are national minorities or individuals with different national origins. We arrive at this conclusion if we first acknowledge the fact that the cultural component involved in the so-called 'cultural nation' has to be an encompassing one. It must be able to accommodate individuals of different origins and among them new incoming immigrants. It must be granted that all cultural nationalists admit that point. But there is no reason not to also include in the nation those who belong to national minorities, if there are any on the territory, for they too can integrate and share a common public culture with the majority, up to a certain point. So it appears that even if there must be a common public culture, the nation is or can be (again if there are any national minorities on the territory) pluricultural from a sociological point of view. Finally, the common public culture must be understood in structural terms and not in terms of character, and a structure of culture is nothing but a set of institutions (a language, a constitution, a parliamentary system, an educational system, courts of justice, and specific cultural institutions such as museums, theatres, newspapers, etc.). In other words, it is a political community.

Now since the common element involved in the nation so conceived is a political community, and, as the nation may be pluricultural, it is at best misleading to call this view a 'cultural' conception. If a label must be used, it is perhaps more like a 'pluricultural' conception. It is plain that there would not be a nation if there were not a national majority, i.e., a group which forms a majority on a given territory and which represents on the surface of the globe the largest sample of a community with a certain language and culture.⁵⁶ And it is clear that

56 For a discussion of the notion of a national majority, see Seymour, 'Une conception sociopolitique de la nation.' See also footnote 46 above.

the common public institutions reflect to a large extent those of the national majority. This is certainly a fundamental aspect that was captured by the cultural account, but it must not blur the (possibly) pluricultural character of the society as a whole and the political character of the community. In any case, it is clear that this conception of the nation would perhaps enable us to properly meet the first constraint, namely the one which suggests that we should transcend the dichotomy between the ethnic and the civic definition.

There is a second constraint that must be satisfied by any acceptable conception of the nation. We should not have any bias in favour of either the nation-state or the multination state. We should adopt instead a pragmatic and contextual approach to that problem. There are some cases where the only option is to remain within an encompassing multination state, but there may be other cases where nations should secede from encompassing states. And there are nations which could, and perhaps should, remain within a multinational state if their collective rights are recognized. Without such a recognition, however, the reasonable option would be for them to secede. Of course, one must not think only in terms of sovereign nation-states and multination states. Sovereign states may enter into an economic and political union with others, as for example the European community. There are also different sorts of multination states, depending on the sort of political autonomy which can be reached. It could involve a massive decentralization, a special status, or an asymmetry in the distribution of powers. Too often, those who discuss nationalism have already made up their mind about a particular model of a political community, but we should be as flexible as possible in this regard. We have to reach a delicate balance between theory and practice. In many multination states, there is no *a priori* answer whether the component nation should secede or not. It all depends on the capacity of the encompassing state to recognize its multinational character.

The third constraint comes from our previous distinction between national minorities and nations. For reasons that we have seen, any adequate definition should allow us to make such a distinction. Here the suggestion is that there are different forms of cultural diversity. Quite independently from the choice of a particular political organization for different groups, we must also distinguish between different kinds of cultural groups, identify their needs, and spell out the par-

ticular obligations towards them. Specifically, there are, first, communities involving individuals of different national origins. These are often called 'ethnic communities.' The states that contain them are polyethnic. Second, there are national minorities, and the states that contain such communities are pluricultural. It means that in addition to the structure of culture of the cultural majority, which happens to be the common public culture (which is also sometimes called the 'encompassing' or 'comprehensive' culture), there may be national minorities that have their own particular cultures, and they must somehow also be promoted and protected. Or so it should be argued from a moral point of view. Then there are states which contain many nations, i.e., many political communities often composed of a cultural majority and minorities. These are multination states.⁵⁷ Then there are sovereign states which may all at once be polyethnic, pluricultural, and multinational. Finally, there are supranational states which contain many different sovereign states which are to some extent limited by the authority transferred to the supranational state.

These distinctions are crucial for many different reasons. Different sorts of communities with their own sets of problems require specific solutions. It is a superficial understanding of cultural diversity which leads us to confuse them all or run them together. To give a dramatic illustration of the problem, it is important in our evaluation of the nationalist principle to distinguish between multination states and states which contain only national minorities. If we confuse national minorities and nations, then we run the risk of being unable to stop, at least on a theoretical basis, the never-ending applications of the nationalist principle, and this could lead to chaos. The nationalist principle is clearly unacceptable in the absolute, without restriction, but it is especially so if we think that it can be applied to any subgroup within the

57 Very often, states are sovereign countries, but in federal systems, the federated entities may also be called 'states.' This is at least something that follows from an understanding of federalism which implies sharing the sovereignty between different levels of government. It may be correct to establish a strong connection between a 'state' and the possession of sovereignty. But, precisely because of that, since the federated entities share sovereignty with the federal state, they can also be understood as 'states.'

state. Too many authors use only one conceptual category to contain all cases of cultural diversity within a sovereign state. But, as we have seen, there are many different sorts of varieties to be accounted for. Different sorts of communities require different sorts of political arrangements. Only nations could be entitled under special circumstances to exercise a full right to self-determination. If we confuse individuals of different national origins, national minorities, and nations, then it will look as though very few sovereign countries are genuine nation-states, since almost all are 'culturally diverse' in some way or other, and it will look as though the nationalist principle could never be applied without engendering chaos. But this is a conclusion that we can draw only if we confuse different sorts of populational variety. If we do not confuse these, then we shall perhaps be able to identify among the different communities within a state those that can count as nations, and specify the nature of their collective rights. We are consequently also going to be in a position to draw the appropriate conclusions if it appears that their collective rights are not respected. In short, the only way to perspicuously accommodate pluralism into our contemporary societies is through a policy that acknowledges its deep diversity. It is only in this way that one reaches a delicate balance between individual and collective rights.⁵⁸

These are then the three main constraints that we wanted to mention in the conclusion of this introduction, since they are in a certain way implied by the discussion of the literature in the previous sec-

58 In Canada, the champion defender of deep diversity has certainly been Charles Taylor, and there used to be a time when he was the only one to speak in favour of recognizing the multinational character of Canada. See, for instance, Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes*. Nowadays, there are a large number of intellectuals who share this idea. We could mention, for instance, Ken McRoberts, Phil Resnick, Don Lenihan, and Will Kymlicka. These are just a few among a long list of English Canadian authors that now recognize the multinational character of Canada. One could also mention Curtis Cook's collection of essays in which all the contributors acknowledge that Canada is a multination state. See Cook, ed., *Constitutional Predicament. Canada after the Referendum of 1992* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press 1994), 5. Unfortunately, this open-minded attitude is for the most part restricted to an élite of philosophers and social scientists, and it is not shared by the vast majority of Canadians.

tions. Of course, there are many other constraints that could have been introduced and discussed. For instance, it is clear that any acceptable conception of the nation must involve an adequate balance between subjective and objective features. It is also clear that it must be compatible with liberalism, and must be the result of a wide reflective equilibrium. Our conception must also somehow jibe with the uses of the word 'nation' made by a critical mass of individuals within the population. Perhaps even more important than anything else, there must be valuable moral consequences that follow from adopting one conception rather than another. It was not our purpose in this introduction to precisely formulate such a conception. We rather sought to show that there was a need for such a formulation. Our argument is precisely that there are important moral as well as conceptual failings with the traditional conceptions that have until now been prevalent in the literature. It is our hope that the reader will find in the following collection of essays the occasion to reflect upon the need to accomplish such a daunting task.

