

THE PROBLEM OF NATIONALISM: THE MORAL DIMENSION

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Abstract

Nationalism did not figure prominently as a philosophical problem till recently. Among the many dimensions of nationalism, the paper explores the moral dimension of the phenomenon. It looks at some questions like, Is Nationalism a reasonable doctrine? Is it amenable to moral reasoning or is it a morally neutral concept. The paper examines the issue of moral credibility of nationalism by considering the views of thinkers Partha Chatterjee, David Archard, Isaiah Berlin etc.

Nationalism in one form or another comprises the most powerful and omnipresent political force in the twentieth century. The nation-state remains, despite the challenge of an increasingly integrated global economy, the dominant form of political membership of our age. The aim of this paper is to examine one dimension of the philosophical underpinning of this phenomenon called nation and by implication the ideology of nationalism. It concerns the moral dimension of nation and the ideology of nationalism.

Nationalism as a Theme of Philosophical Inquiry

The intellectual engagement with nationalism virtually started only in the second half of the twentieth century. The intellectual engagement with nationalism are of

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two types: the empirical engagement is undertaken by historians, economists, sociologists, political scientists and the scholars working in the emerging area of cultural studies. The task here is to provide rich description and insightful explanation of nationalism in its various forms and manifestations as well as, to the extent possible make predictions regarding the changes it might undergo. The empirical studies have sought to identify the economic, sociological, political or psychological circumstances by which nationalism is to be explained. On this approach, the development and reception of nationalism is not to be sought in the attractions of nationalist ideas, but rather in the material conditions from which nationalism was more or less an inevitable outcome. The second kind of intellectual engagement with nationalism may be called non-empirical or to be more precise philosophical. The philosophical engagement with nationalism is a recent development. To many philosophers, nationalism was but an incoherent expression of group egoism, a non rational sentiment unworthy of philosophical scrutiny unlike Democracy, Secularism and even Socialism. However, in recent years there is a radical change in the attitude of philosophers regarding nationalism. The philosophical engagement which is more recent than the empirical one has three aspects: ontological, epistemological and ethical. Thus one can identify at least three problems regarding nationalism viewed from the philosophical perspective.

1. What is the ontological status of nation i.e. is it real or a construction? If not real, why not and if real why and in what sense?
2. What is the epistemological status of nation i.e. can it be said to be an object of knowledge? If it is, how is it known and what is the character of such knowledge?
3. Does nation have an ethical basis? If it has, what is its nature?

We briefly discuss the first two questions and deal with the third question in detail subsequently.

The ontological question arises because some philosophers consider nation 'to be given', a reality deserving a protracted philosophical reflection. According to them, it is not just an anthropological fact like kinship since nations through the ideology of nationalism permeate the significant aspects of our thought and action. But since they are not objects like physical entities and mental states, their precise ontological status needs to be delineated. More importantly such philosophers seek to establish that nations have an ontological status in view of the claim of the rivals who question the ontological status of nations which they consider to be mere constructions. For instance, Gellner maintains that nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not

exist. This means according to Gellner nations are mere inventions or fabrications. At best it is only a surface phenomenon of a homogenous culture necessitated by the modern industrial society whose functional requirements are served by such a culture. A more nuanced version of such a view is provided by Anderson who unlike Gellner thinks of nation as a genuine creation. The political community of nation supplanted the cultural systems of religious community with their dynastic polity. In the process there occurred "a fundamental change ... in modes of apprehending the world, which, more than anything else made it possible to 'think' the nation" (Anderson 1991, 28) Anderson's convincing arguments showing that a coalition of Protestantism and Print Capitalism as the roots of communities' imagination of themselves as nations is, philosophically speaking less important than his claim that nations are products of imaginations. It is this claim which deprives nations any ontological status. As Partha Chatterjee points out when we look closely we see no substantive differences between Anderson and Gellner since "Both point out a fundamental change in ways of perceiving the social world which occurs before nationalism can emerge [...]. Both describe the new cultural homogeneity which is sought to be imposed on the emerging nations" (1999, 21). In other words, in different ways they treat nations as constructions. In fact, both of them go a step forward. Constructions might achieve some amount of ontological status if they are associated with some intellectual process which may be driven by some ontological considerations. Hence neither of them recognizes any such intellectual process. The straight forward sociological determinism of Gellner comes in the way of such recognition. But, Anderson fares no better. According to him the phenomena of nation and nationalism "is all a matter of a vanguard intelligentsia coming to state power by 'mobilizing' popular nationalism and using the 'Machiavellian' instruments of official nationalism. Like religion and kinship, nationalism is an anthropological fact, and there is nothing else to it" (Chatterjee 1999, 22).

Be it as it may, as all ontological controversies are domain specific the ontological controversy alluded above concerns the political domain. It is an issue regarding whether nations can be accorded an ontological status in order to make sense of our political discourse and political endeavour.

The ontological controversy has naturally a bearing on the epistemological question whether nations are worthy objects of knowledge or merely amenable to beliefs. Those who maintain that nations can be objects of cognitive claims, and hence nationalism to be a cognitive system must accept the ontological status of nations as axiomatic or at least justifiable derivation. However, their opponents cannot merely sit back after claiming that nations, being merely shadows can only be objects of doxa and not episteme. Since they maintain that nations and nationalism are products of the imposition of a new culture they have to explain how the new

belief system which has nation as its focal point could supersede the old belief system without such a focal point. The transition is more palpable and traumatic when such a new system of beliefs is an alien imposition as in the case of colonized societies. As Partha Chatterjee recognizes there is, "a problem of incommensurability and inter-cultural relativism which the new national culture must overcome" (1999, 6). Gellner even while recognizing such a problem does not consider it to be a serious one. According to him, universal acceptance of the demands of Industrialism itself enables pre-modern societies to overcome incommensurability and relativism. In his view, "The question concerning just how we manage to transcend relativism is interesting and difficult, and certainly will not be solved here. What is relevant, however, is that we somehow or other do manage to overcome it, that we are not hopelessly imprisoned within a set of cultural cocoons and their norms, and that for some very obvious reasons (shared cognitive and productive bases and greatly increased inter-social communication) we may except fully industrial man to be even less enslaved to his local culture that was his agrarian predecessor" (1983, 120). In this way Gellner seeks to ensure that nationalist thought "does not pose any special problems for ...epistemology" (Chatterjee 1999, 6). Gellner's attempt to overcome relativism is somewhat knee-jerk. It is to his credit he recognizes that the cognitivist with his realist stance towards nation does not face the problem of incommensurability where as his own view does. But he could have denied that the incommensurability implies relativism. In his last writing Thomas Kuhn who was the first to propound and ably defend the incommensurability thesis in philosophy of science, makes a penetrating observation that nullifies any charge of relativism. He says, "There are things that can be said in one language that cannot be articulated in another. Recognition of that point has increasingly enabled me to temper those aspects of my original work which have seemed to justify charges of relativism. It is not the case that a proposition true in one language (or within one paradigm) can be false in one language cannot even be formulated in another. It is not truth value but effability that varies with language" (Kuhn 1999, 35).

Deploying this argument of Kuhn one can circumvent the problem of relativism by saying that incommensurability does not imply relativism. This is epistemologically a better move than recognizing relativism as a consequence of incommensurability and then tries to explain it away in sociological terms. This is not to say that the epistemological move is free from problems. However, the move keeps alive by its very problematic character the epistemological aspect of the problem of nationalism.

The Moral Credibility of Nationalism

We shall now come to the core of the philosophy of nationalism which concerns the moral dimensions of nationalism and which pertains to the question whether

nationalism has any moral basis. For quite sometime, the ethical engagement with nationalism was carried out within a framework which was not rich enough as to make the discussion charged. So long as ethics in its modern phase was dominated individualism its central concerns was with the question "what is morally right for an individual?" (What is normatively permissible rather than what is good; that is, what are the most desirable ways to live a wholesome human life?) Rationally enlightened self interest was supposed to provide a sufficient moral fulcrum for any collective including the nation. After all, an individualist is convinced that any group identity is detrimental to an adequate ethical order, national identity being no exception. Hence, for fairly long time the moral dimensions of nationalism did not even pose a problem. Perhaps the realization of the inadequacy of the individualist ethics and the realization of the need to look at the prospects of nationalism as morally credible form of life or interrelated.

Subsequently, nationalism was thought to be a specific manifestation of a general framework namely the modern western conception of knowledge. The latter was considered to be a "universal framework of thought...which proclaims its own universality; its validity, it pronounces is independent of cultures. Nationalist thought, in agreeing to become 'modern', accepts the claim to universality of this modern framework" (Chatterjee 1999, 11). It is this framework which goes in the name of Enlightenment. Hence, it is not surprising that it was thought that the moral character of nationalism was taken to be self-evident. However, this perspective faced the problem of explaining the fact that in many cases nationalism took forms that were anti-enlightenment in the sense they debunked the modern notions of rationality, progress, universality etc. In short, nationalism which was supposed to have its moral locus in modernity and hence not being in need of a moral justification took an anti-modern form at different places at different times. This phenomenon is called 'ethnic' or 'eastern' forms of nationalism in contrast to the 'civic' or 'western' versions of it. The anti-modern forms of nationalism are most palpably expressed in the craving of nationalists for a return to the pre-modern ethos. The nationalist struggle has been quite often backed by romantic versions of the past. For instance, "In India [the] romantic yearning for a return to an idealized ethnic and religious past which was being eroded by Westernization and Capitalism was to be found in late nineteenth-century intellectuals like Tilak and Aurobindo and in movements like the Arya Samaj" (Hutchinson 1994: 8). In a certain sense, Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* is also an example of such a trend though this work is a philosophically pregnant critique of modern western civilization. But, such a deviation of the essentially modern phenomenon called nationalism was not given a philosophical explanation since such a deviation was not considered to be germane to nationalism rather the deviation was given a sociological explanation. The deviation of nationalism from its 'normal' path charted by Enlightenment was attributed to the

factors typical of traditional societies with their inherent tendency to resist change. The conditions in the non-western world that are unfavourable to Enlightenment's vision of rational and progressive society were taken to be the domain of 'explanans', i.e., the basis of explanation for the deviation of nationalism which was in itself beyond moral reproach. Thanks to its locus in Enlightenment. This reminds us of the attempt of rationalist philosophers of science to neutralize the attack of the social constructivists on the rationalist image of science. The social constructivist or the sociologists of science like David Bloor and Barry Barnes (1996) claimed that the actual practice of science does not fit the rationalist philosophers' description of science in methodological terms since science more often than not deviates from the canons of scientific method and hence science must be explained in sociological terms. Against them, the rationalist philosophers of science like Imre Lakatos and Larry Laudan maintain that only the deviant cases in science in the history of science be explained in sociological terms while science in its 'normal' form must be explained in methodological terms.

The explanation of deviant nationalism in sociological terms that is in terms of social conditions can be absolutely unacceptable to the thinkers of nationalist thought and movements which are at variance with nationalism as construed by the philosophers committed to the ideology of enlightenment. Such thinkers of alternative nationalism might claim cognitive superiority of their brand of nationalism by taking resort to intellectual systems that are indifferent to or even antagonistic to the philosophy of enlightenment. To dub such alternative intellectual systems to be irrational and unenlightened and anti-progressive is to simply beg the question.

Further, the view that nationalism is a pure product of Enlightenment and hence inherently ethical and its deviant forms are due to the extraneous factors such as social conditions in backward countries has naïve understanding of the relation between Enlightenment and the so called deviant nationalism. As we have already seen, Partha Chatterjee captures succinctly the complex relation between two when he portrays the so called irrational nationalism as the Enlightenment's 'Other' without which the Enlightenment fails to assert itself as the universal ideal (Cf. Chatterjee 1999, 17).

Be it as it may. It was realized that nationalism cannot be defended by simply tracing it to the Enlightenment philosophy and claim its moral self-evidence. Hence attempts were made to delineate the reasons on the basis of which the moral claim of nationalism was sought to be established and in doing so to enquire into the moral dimension of nationalism.

One of the main charges levelled against Gellner by Partha Chatterjee is that Gellner treats nationalism as a part of sociological determinism necessitated by

industrialism in the West. Chatterjee points out that Gellner did not put nationalism for a moral scrutiny. While Chatterjee does evoke the notion of morality, instead of pursuing this point about morality, he goes on to problematise nationalism in the context of Indian nationalism. This preoccupation of Chatterjee, it must be noted, has deflected from raising the question about morality of nationalism. That is, Chatterjee's point about lack of moral scrutiny of nationalism rests largely on application of nationalism outside the West. In addition to problematising the moral basis of nationalism in the transplanted context, it is also necessary to take back the discussion of moral basis of nationalism to the West where it has its origins. One of the recent writings that can provide an entry point into the moral dimension of the problem of nationalism is that of David Archard who in his "The Ethical Status of Nationality" seeks to evaluate the moral grounds of nationalism, though Archard's focus is the moral claim of 'Unions' and 'Nationalists' on the Irish issue. Archard relates the ethical arguments in favour of nationalism to Gellner's claim that the essence of nationalism is a political principle namely the political and national unit should be congruent. This makes it clear that Archard considers political nationalism as the proper form of nationalism rather than cultural nationalism though as we shall see shortly the question of culture does figure in the moral defense of political nationalism provided by many philosophers whose view Archard does not accept. According to Archard, the ethical defense of nationalism, i.e. of the political principle mentioned above has proceeded in the past on two lines of reasoning which Archard calls Reductionist and Non-Reductionist. The Reductionist line of reasoning argues that the political and the national unit should be congruent in order that some non-nationalist good may be realized and/or some non-nationalist bad can be avoided. The non-reductionist line of reasoning argues that there just is some value inherent within the political-national congruence and this value cannot be reduced to non-nationalist goals. The non-nationalist goods are those "whose relationship to the success of nationalist project is contingent. They may be secured by the success of nationalism but they need not be. Nationalist goods, on the other hand, are those which are constitutive of or internal to the nationalist project; they can be secured only by the success of nationalism. Put another way, non-reductionist nationalism urges the value in and of itself of the congruence of the political and the national. Reductionist nationalism urges the value of that which can, only or most effectively, be secured by such a congruence" (Archard 1999, 151). Thus, Archard's perspective makes a distinction, ethically speaking, between the reductionist nationalism and non-reductionist nationalism.

The main categories of non-nationalist goods recognized by reductionist nationalism are cultural, economic, social and political. The cultural goods concern preservation and celebration of cultural artifacts such as art, music, and literature and so on associated with a particular community as a hallmark of its identity. But a nationalist

claim based on such cultural grounds is not strong enough for two reasons: the cultural needs can be met within the community without having a national autonomy; that is national autonomy and cultural identity are not logically related. Secondly, it is a fact that many diasporic communities retain cultural identity without constituting a nation i.e. cutting across national boundaries. Moreover, establishing the moral credibility of nationalism on the basis of cultural autonomy becomes even more problematic if one calls into question the moral basis of cultural autonomy itself. After all morally benign nature of cultural autonomy is not all that self-evident. In fact the talk of a global culture is not pointless either epistemologically or ethically. Epistemologically it may get linked to relativism. Ethically it may encourage insularity rendering self-criticism highly limited and even impossible. Since substantial criticism of one's own culture more often than not takes a vantage point that lies outside their culture's framework.

Economic goods pertain to income, property and other assets, that is to say, nationalists might claim that their achieving nationhood results in the cessation of economic drain and thereby, promotes economic advance of the community. They may even add that the achievement of nationhood will lead to fairer distribution of wealth since the so called outsiders promote elite who function as their hand-made. However this recourse to the economic goods does not sufficiently justify the nationalist's claim for autonomy. It is true that many times nationalist claims take economic form. In India theoreticians of the freedom struggle starting from Dada Bhai Nauroji kept providing economic reasons as the major plank of their movement. But many of them for quite some time did believe, on adequate grounds, that India could be given a relative autonomy within the British Empire which on the whole was benign. It is of course true that their hopes were shattered by the imperialist power. However, there was nothing logically necessary about that frustration. That is to say economic autonomy and national autonomy are not logically related though the relation is not merely tenuous. If the relation were logical the view of the early nationalists that India's economic autonomy within the British Empire was possible would have been an outright absurdity. In the case of national secession the economic argument would be even less convincing because it is more possible that economic needs of people can be met within a national framework if the relation between a community demanding secession is not colonized by those from whom secession is sought. Further, it is factually wrong to say that in all cases of success of nationalist elitism has been dismantled. In none of the Third World countries which have achieved nationhood and in none of those which has achieved nationhood through struggle for secession elitism has not reduced and in some cases it has increased and inequalities have been deepened leading to shattered hopes. Partha Chatterjee has provided poignant examples of this point through his interviews with the participants of the freedom struggle (cf Chatterjee

1998, 1-5). But from this it does not follow that the freedom struggle was futile and achievement of nationhood a meaningless exercise. In short, the relation between nationalism and the economic reasons provided for it are not so organically related as to morally justify the former in terms of the latter.

The social goods concern valued attributes such as esteem, respect and status. However, since these can be achieved by equal access to political rights cultural goods and equal economic opportunities, it may be argued that they do not constitute an independent category. Hence the reductionists who invoke the category of social goods include practices, activities and associations such as religion. Though religion can also come under the category of cultural goods, this means that the demand for nationhood can be morally justified because it promotes the religion of a people seeking nationhood. But this view can be questioned by pointing out that there can be "a rich enough understanding of religious liberty to ensure that one's faith is not only one that can be practiced, but one that is esteemed. Tolerance extends beyond mere sufferance to recognition. Then, once again, the nationalist principle receives no support from the existence of social goods" (Archard 1999, 153). To this, it may be replied that a people seeking nationhood or national autonomy might want something more than mere tolerance and even complete religious freedom. They may want their own religion to be the official religion of the state. But this is highly objectionable since, "doing so runs foul of familiar liberal criticisms of governments whose laws and policies violate a principle of neutrality on religious and moral matters. Moreover the argument is not as such a nationalist one but rather represents the very particular (and objectionably illiberal) form a nationalist argument might take" (*ibid.*, 153-4). Thus, the attempt to establish the moral credibility of nationalism by invoking the category of social good with religion as the focal point is weak.

The category of political goods mainly concerns self-determination. Since its inception the nationalist principle is linked to the democratic principle. It is a widely shared belief that the democratic self-government of a people was inseparably tied to the national sovereignty of a people. However, the appeal of this belief has drastically reduced in view of two factors. That is, it is plausible now to delink the democratic principle from the nationalist principle. In fact, "this needs to be done not least because of the ambiguous scope of any principle of self-determination" (*ibid.*, 154). This is due to the fact that the 'self' which does the determining and that which the self determines are themselves indeterminate. Moreover the demand to be recognized as a distinct entity to justify the claim for nationhood already presupposes as Adams points out "[T]o prescribe self-determination for a national minority as a distinct entity from the rest of the nation is a mutation of the principle of self-determination" (*ibid.*). There is a further problem about self-determination. To the question, "Self-determination for what?" there can be two answers. If the

answer is that self-determination is for economic equality or cultural prosperity or social status, then it means that self-determination can be subsumed under any one or two or all of the three phenomena in which case self-determination becomes vulnerable to the criticisms which we have made against the attempt to justify nationalism based on the three categories of non-nationalist goods. The other answer to the question, self-determination for what, is that, it is in itself valuable and its inherent value lies in the fact that nationality "is a more evident principle of jurisdictional division than any other" (*Ibid.*). But, such an answer falls under the non-reductionist line of reasoning that seeks to establish the moral credibility of nationalism.

Let us see how non-reductionist line of reasoning that seeks to make a room for an ethical dimension for nationalism fares. As we have seen the non-reductionist line of reasoning claims an intrinsic value for nationalism, that is, for the principle of the congruence of the political and national. The philosophers who adopt this line of reasoning invoke the concepts of rectification of historical injustice, importance of being with one's own people and naturalness of the nation-state.

The argument from historical injustice has been invoked by nationalists both in anti-colonial struggles as well as secessionist endeavours. Even if we acknowledge historical injustice and the need for rectification, the argument does not take us far in establishing the moral claim of nationalism. As Archard points out, "The rectification of a wrong does not have to amount to a literal restoration of the situation which would exist had the wrong not been committed. Rectification does not require a reversal or overturning of the originally unjust act" (*Ibid.*, 159). This may be due to the fact that the original victims of the injustice may not still be alive to enjoy that rectification. Also, destruction of certain goods cannot be rectified by their restoration to the owner even if he is alive and that is why we speak of appropriate compensation, that is to say rectification of historical injustice can be effected by securing for the victims various rights and resources and not necessarily granting nationhood. Secondly, as Archard points out, "the principle of rectifying a historical wrong should operate only in conjunction with only relevant principles" (*Ibid.*). In other words, it is not acceptable that historical injustices ought to be rectified irrespective of the moral costs of such rectification. "[A] past injustice ought to be rectified only if there are no other stronger countervailing moral reasons not to do so" (*Ibid.*, 160). This means that rectification of historical injustice cannot on its own constitute the moral basis of nationalism.

The next two arguments which concern 'importance of being with one's own people' (which is taken resort to by secessionist nationalism) and 'naturalness of the nation-state' (which is restored to by anti-colonial nationalism) are important because the

idea of self-determination as an intrinsic value, which we mentioned earlier, has its locus in these arguments. Self-determination in this sense is taken to be equivalent to, not just, instrument for realizing the importance of being with one's own people and/or attaining a natural state that the nation-state embodies.

The argument from the 'importance of being one's own', as it is called by Archard, is characterized by Judith Lichtenberg as 'flourishing argument' (1997, 160). According to this argument human beings flourish, when they belong to communities and this flourishing achieves its fullness if and only if the communities to which they belong achieve nation-state. As Archard points out, "there is some Aristotelian warrant for the final move in his view that the polity (polis) is the supreme and fundamental form of community or association (koinonia) to which humans can belong" (*Ibid.*, 161). In other words, the nation-state is valuable because it fortifies and promotes a sense of communal belonging which is necessary for collective flourishing. It must however be noted that 'the importance of being with one's own people' is not taken in an instrumentalist sense. For example, according to Mill such a fortification of communal belonging is necessary for free institutions. On a similar line David Miller argues that a shared sense of membership which would be strengthened by the nation-state is necessary for legitimising a fair distribution of goods and services. Thus, free institutions for Mill, fair distribution for Miller are the ends to be served by the sense of collective membership which in turn is fortified by the nation-state. However, those who put forth the argument from the 'important of being one's own people' consider collective membership to be intrinsically valuable and the nation-state which fortifies it is inherently moral. The question is whether the nation-state is related to collective life as organically as the argument construes. It is a historical fact that the achievement of a nation-state by a community many times results in creating fissures and thus breaks the community. That is to say, the achievement of nationhood quite often results in the weakening or even undermining of the unitary character of a community. Further, the argument presupposes the prior existence of a community with a unity which is subsequently fortified by the emergence of a nation-state, that is, 'that nations exist prior to their achieving statehood' borne out of a nationalist struggle. That is, nations exist before nationalism. Such an assumption is countered by philosophers like Gellner according to whom nationalism "invents notions where they do not exist" (1964, 18). In fact, the assumption is ill-at-ease with a less radical claim of Anderson that the nations are "imagined communities" whose members feel bound by certain shared ties and not by face to face contact (1991, 14-16). If the nation is the most remarkable instance of a community which can sustain its identity across time and across great members of physically separated individuals without noticeable attenuation of that identity...It seems correspondingly implausible to think that the nation is dependent upon the state for its continued existence (Archard 1999,

162). Further, even in Europe nation-states came into existence even before there was much sense of nationhood. At best, a pre-existing national consciousness was only among many reasons for the rise of nation-states in Europe. As Glover points out, "In Africa [...] Many state boundaries were lines drawn on maps by colonial governments and administrators, often cutting through the middle of territories inhabited by Africans who felt part of a single community" (1997, 12-13). In fact, calling those collective entities 'nations' is itself questionable though the very talk of nations existing prior to the nation-states which only come subsequently in order to fortify the former is quite misleading. This is because nations without nation-states are like Hamlet without the prince of Denmark. This is not to deny the existence of what are called 'multi-national states' or stateless nations. It is only to assert that in the primary sense of 'nation', nations and nation-states are two sides of the same coin. It is this sense which must wear the trouser. Deviation from this sense which enables us to talk of a nation existing before it achieves nation-state may not be incoherent but such a deviant use cannot take the burden of proof but the argument from the 'importance of being with one's own people' cannot have even initial plausibility unless it characterizes as 'nation' the collectivity which exists prior to the nation-state. This is not to identify the nation with nation-state. The relation between the nation and the nation-state, even in the primary sense of nation is one of identity-and-difference. By construing the relation between nation and nation-state in terms of temporal priority of the former, the argument is guilty of construing the relation in terms of difference exclusively. The relation in terms of fortification of the former by latter in no way brings in the relation of identity.

The third argument advanced by those who adopt the non-reductionist line in defending the moral claim of nationalism is woven around the idea of the 'naturalness of the nation-state'. According to this argument, nationality supplies a handy and ready to be used partition of humanity into bodies of citizens. In other words, the principle of division on the basis of nationality is the most natural principle. This is because political societies of today cannot be either village communities or Greek states, nor is it reasonable to attempt to realize a global polity. First of all, it is difficult to understand what the term, 'natural' implies. In fact, the critics of nationalism question the very naturalness of nations when they suspect the moral claim of the nationalists. Hence the argument becomes otiose. In order to avoid the emptiness of their argument, its proponents must give some content to the term natural such as natural boundaries or racial distinctness, etc. Such a 'natural' construal reduces nations to tribes. In fact, Europeans drew national boundaries on the basis of tribal divisions which they thought to be the most natural one but as Basil Davidson (1992) suggests, the word tribe does not have any clear meaning and colonial rulers' intent on dividing Africans into tribes sometimes had to invent tribes. In other words, natural is more often than not a construction. Even if what is identified

as natural one are factors like a common feeling or a principle of sympathy generated by a shared life. This in no way renders the nation-state itself as a natural phenomenon. Further, we rarely see nations recognizing the naturalness of other nations. Since no bounded territorial jurisdiction contains or has ever contained a naturally homogenous population, efforts to secure a natural homogeneity to achieve nationhood within a given territory led to morally intolerable consequences. Moreover, the proponents of this argument curiously endow nation with naturalness even though they know that nation is typically a modern phenomenon. It is significant to note that the defenders of capitalism characterizes capitalism as the most natural form of society, capitalist profit as the natural profit, acquisitive tendency so central to capitalist system to be the most natural human tendency. It is a familiar practice to consider something to be natural in order to establish its moral credibility. Those who do so unknowingly rationalize the ill effects of certain socio-economic formations. Considering capitalism to be natural buttressed its exploitative character. Considering nations to be natural amounts to forced movements and even ethnic cleansing. The proponents of two-nation theory in India considered the distinction between Hindus and Muslims to be natural, thereby implying that the two communities by their very nature are inherently different.

The above discussion has shown how inadequate are the two lines of reasoning both of which sought to establish the moral credibility of nationalism. This does not mean that nationalism lacks moral credibility like religious sectarianism or is morally neutral like tribalism. Isaiah Berlin seeks to establish the moral credibility of nationalism and the conditions which must be met by nationalism in order to claim such credibility. Berlin stresses antagonism between the philosophy of Enlightenment with its claim of a universal human nature and nationalism with its philosophical moorings in the counter-Enlightenment philosophy called Romanticism. Very interestingly, Berlin acknowledges that the Enlightenment philosophy had a better value system though it had a poor understanding of human psyche where as nationalism and romanticism had a better understanding of human psyche though their value system is not appealing. Moreover, in the history of ideas and particularly in the history of political ideas the right value system does not go with right psychology. In fact, the relation is inverse: the better the value system, the shallower the psychology and vice-versa. However, from this, it does not follow according to Berlin that nationalism lacks a moral credibility. It can achieve such credibility in spite of lacking a value system comparable to that of Enlightenment philosophy.

This is because Berlin, unlike the anti-nationalists does not think that nationalism is not based on hostility towards the other nor does he share the view of these pro-nationalists who adopt a positive view of nationalism on the basis that nationalism does justice to an inherent human need to make a distinction between 'we and

they'. According to Berlin, nationalism is based on the incommensurability of values. For him, not all of the values that are important to us are reconcilable. That is, not all of those values which we value can be realized in one form of life. On the basis of this contention, Berlin makes a case for pluralism of values. Value-pluralism looks upon other forms of life as possessing internal values. Each of us ought to be aware, hence, that other forms of life embody values which are important to us and valorized by us but can not be realized in our own form of life or at least to the same degree. A nationalism that is founded upon such pluralism can claim moral credibility.

The irreconcilability of values is not merely a psychological fact, as the conflict between the values of an active life and a contemplative life but also a conceptual one as the conflict between the monastic life and family life. More importantly, pluralism of values does not mean relativism since relativism implies tolerance and not pluralism. According to Berlin values that are realizable by other forms of life are important not only to people who belong to that form of life but also to us who do not belong to that form of life. To choose a set of values is to choose a way of life. Mostly, we choose a way of life we are born into. National belonging is the outstanding example of this truth. The irreconcilability of values which Berlin characterizes as incommensurability of values implies the status of a value for pluralism which in ordinary terms may be called variety. Berlin maintained that the valorization of plurality and variety is a recent phenomenon. According to him, "the view that variety is desirable, where as uniformity is monotonous, dreary, dull, a fetter on the freely-ranging human spirit [...] stands in sharp contrast with the traditional view that truth is one, error many, a view scarcely challenged before-at the earliest-the end of the seventeenth century" (1980: 333). Thus, plurality of values is not a necessary evil to be somehow tolerated for the sake of a conflict free world but is something to be desired and nurtured. In fact, it is an existential necessity since more than one form of life must exist in order for values we consider worthwhile to be realized. Every form of life has its own constraints within which individuals in that form of life make their choices. Belonging to a national form of life means being within a frame that offers meaning or significance to the choices people make between alternatives and thus acquire an identity. A national form of life gives a set of choices in every area of life. Two national forms of life might have somewhat overlapping sets of choices yet they differ not only in the range of choices but also in the degree of freedom.

The question is how nationalism fulfils a deeply felt human need by providing us with a complete form of life. The obvious answer is that it is by providing a sense of 'belonging'; the question is what is this sense of 'belonging'? In the first sense in which Johann Gottfried Herder uses the term, belonging concerns what makes it

possible for a person to express his or her selfhood. In this sense of belonging "people make use of different styles to express their humanity. The styles are generally determined by the form of life to which they belong. There are people who express themselves "Frenchly", while others have forms of life that are expressed 'Koreanly' or 'Syrianly' or 'Icelandicly'" (Margalit, 1997, 84) belonging in the second sense concerns not expression but the sense of feeling at home. 'To belong' in this sense means to be 'accepted by others as you are' (and not because of your achievements or failures in achieving) belonging to a family is the best example of this as opposed to belonging to a professional group. The third sense of national belonging lies between belonging in the second sense and achievement. Such a sort of belonging provides one with a reflected glory connected with achievements of gifted members of one's nation. According to Berlin, it appears the sense of belonging that is belonging in the sense of being at home is crucial for a national form of life. A nation-state fortifies the values germane to a national form of life and herein lies its moral credibility and in doing so it does not demean the values of other national forms of life because of its acceptance of value pluralism. The moral credibility of nationalism has its root in the success of nationalism in recognizing and fulfilling a deeply felt psychological need of human beings to feel at home by belonging to something beyond the drab mundane personal world.

Berlin is aware of the feelings of national superiority associated with nationalist feeling. To the charge that nationalism gives way to the feeling of superiority because of nationalism's particularistic character as opposed to universalistic character of ideologies like Marxism. According to Berlin, the feeling of superiority is neither historically given nor ontologically necessary. Berlin's point is that though the notion of essential superiority which each nation associates with it might lead to destructive political consequences and thus making nationalism morally questionable. The feeling of superiority has nothing to do with the particularism of nationalism. Non-particularistic ideologies, secular ones like Marxism and religious ones like Christianity claim superiority in spite of their universalism.

The above discussion sought to establish that nationalism as a concept and as a movement can find its place in the moral domain so that unlike non rational phenomenon like spontaneous feelings and the categorized like sentiments and kinship it deserves a moral evaluation and need not be driven into a morally neutral domain. In fact, as ably substantiated by Berlin nationalism passes the litmus test of ethical evaluation and can claim moral credibility. But this only establishes the initial credibility of nationalism in ethical terms. For, there are aspects of nationalism which do not lend themselves so easily to an ethical ratification. Commitment to nationalism implies a partiality towards co-nationals. Secondly, nationalism with its communitarian ethics is pronouncedly ill-at-ease with individual autonomy which is central to individualist ethics in particular and liberalism in

general our commitment to which, albeit a good deal of reservations and qualifications. Thirdly, nationalism while being an expression of self-determination of a people realized in the achievement of a nation-state seeks to maintain its sovereignty by discouraging and even suppressing as aspiration of self-determination by the minorities within the nation. The moral issues which emanate these aspects of nationalism need to be discussed and justified on their own merit.

We may end by pointing out that the moral credibility of nationalism depends upon our answer to two questions that constitute the core of moral philosophy namely, is our commitment to nationalism normatively permissible, and the question, whether the commitment to nationalism embodies the most desirable way to live a human life. The two questions are distinct because the first question concerns 'right' and the second question concerns 'good' using Rawlsian distinction. This is obvious from the fact that even while granting that nationalism is morally right, that is, it does not violate our standard/s of morality one might claim that it cannot be constitutive of a morally wholesome conception of life. The first question dominates much of contemporary western political philosophy and hence the philosophical discourse on nationalism. This is not surprising because ethics in modern times is almost exclusively concerned with the question of moral standard since modern ethics is organically linked to the philosophy of liberalism and philosophical liberals, with their commitment to individualism are "reluctant to extend the reach of political philosophy beyond questions of the first kind for fear of presuming to second-guess how individuals choose to conceive their own ends of life" (Beiner 1999, 15). Though the second question has not been given equal prominence as the first one, its importance should not be underestimated. Ronald Beiner aptly calls it 'Existential Question' and rightly traces it to the Greek thought: "Philosophical reflection on nationalism must therefore seek somehow to offer an answer to the problem of how to orient oneself among the diversity of life's possibilities" (1999, 16). Our discussion of Berlin's views has shown that *prima-facie* a positive answer to this question is a plausible one.

Further, responses to the question that concerns moral permissibility of nationalism cannot be only positive or negative. Neither a positive answer nor a negative answer to the Existential Question about nationalism is self-evident or trivial. The positive answer is not self-justificatory and obviously true because the ideal of 'citizen of the world' has never lost its appeal to a great many. The negative answer is also not readily acceptable because nationhood is an achievement unlike race which is given and more often than not the attempt at achieving it is fuelled by morally edifying aims. After all, nation in many third world countries was and has been a site of struggle for autonomy and solidarity vis-à-vis imperialism, old and new, and, hence, the force of the question and the significance of the answer.

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