

Ethnarchy and Ethno-Anarchism*

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ALL human societies are, from time to time, rendered open to interrogation by political crises or changes in moral outlook. The questions, “Why should precisely *these* people live together, between precisely these actual boundaries,” or “Whatever *specific* binds together precisely *these* people into precisely *this* community,” or “What is the true nature of the link that makes this apparently random set of individuals to be a nation or a republic,” are then answered variously by defenders or detractors.

The traditional view of politics supplies some replies that had become obsolete or unconvincing under the onslaught of liberalism, socialism, and nationalism.¹

The traditional view asserted that communities were moral communities; their essence was exhausted by an adequate description of a collective activity aimed at the common good. The elucidation, interpretation, and execution of that common good found *en route* gave birth to a community engaged in a common venture that had been launched by supranatural forces, customarily heroes, thus engaged in an unescapable common experience. The political community was supposed to be both Fate—since initiated by irresistible forces, superior to and stronger than us—and a deliberate end that sprang from an open hermeneutical process in the course of which we discovered and understood ourselves as citizens.

Our duty to be faithful to our political community was not

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necessarily thought to have been the outcome of a contract. Obligations were thought to be able to come into being spontaneously, by virtue of the very fact that we participated in the political adventure begun by gods or heroes. This idea was analogous to the idea of love.

Love is deliberate, but it is not voluntary. People attracted erotically to each other may remain silent and chaste, but this will not deny the fundamental interior fact of passion called forth by the mental presence of the beloved. But when people in love turn deliberately toward one another, they are free agents not obligated to any particular kind of behavior. Still, from love obligations arise. People who one day were still indifferent to each other will tomorrow be held disrespectful of the unwritten rules of love if they are distant and cold. Exhibitions of affection and desire become an obligation without any prior engagement and promise. Failing to fulfil these obligations would have meant that the lovers were not sincerely in love. Loving means that you acknowledged obligations there was nobody to enforce, that were ordained only by the convention regulating what was thought to define love as different from the duties of law and piety.

Similarly, obligations arose from the involuntary but deliberate and conscious endeavor called politics. Solidarity with your fellow citizens that went beyond the uniform, common, and mutual obedience to supreme authority, the origin of which was invariably deemed to have been divine, was supported by the intuition that the political community was teleological, namely, that it was supposed to have been aimed at a common goal construed and interpreted as moral in two senses.

The first sense or meaning of the putative common goal was moral, that is, citizens were supposed to be striving toward and yearning for a good society, something better than their present condition. Moral betterment and the betterment of the lot of mankind, a final triumph in an ethical *agon* with rival communities proved also through mastery and pre-eminence,

was inherent in the idea of a moral community of citizens linked together by something that transcended the contest between private individuals, their envy and rivalry, and their fervent desire to dominate their fellow humans, gain their respect, admiration, attention, and subservience.

The second sense or meaning is moral as well. Even if the goal was unattainable or elusive, the rational moral debate concerning the nature of the good, the ongoing struggle that Count Tolstoy called the only task of mankind—to give itself an account of the laws that are governing its moral life—creates an intellectual community of men engaged in understanding why they should obey and conform, why they should eschew barbarity and selfish separateness to the detriment of their immediate interest and to the advantage of a life of association with its imposition of limitations, self-abnegation, and sacrifice. Moral reasoning itself was thought to have been the glue of political society, a kind of shared suffering caused by the deliberate overcoming of anarchic selfishness and carnal passion. The resistance to and harnessing of animal nature was thought to have created a bond between the founders of cities whose self-denial and active heroism was a sacrificial offering, the perhaps unintended result of which was the edifice of a civilization dominated by reason rather than desire (see Oakeshott, 1991, pp. 196–266; Oakeshott, 1993a, pp. 46–62; 74–96; Oakeshott, 1993b; esp. pp. 16–44).

The habitual answer of *nationalism* to all those questions—that, unlike the traditional reply, tried to address the aspect of specificity—is that a given community praised by its committed members is both *natural* and *superior*.

This answer is, of course, dependent on whether any of the following assertions are reasonable: (a) Not all communities are natural. (b) Not all political régimes are arranged according to nature. (c) Some communities and political régimes are artefacts. (d) All political régimes are artefacts. (e) No political régimes *can be* natural: politics as such contradicts any conceivable natural order. (f) Human nature is *gradual*: you might be able to *ascend* to veritable human nature—living according to

the latter makes a community superior to its competitors or neighbors. (g) Human nature is so *radically* gradual that if you *descend* low enough on the scale of natural human perfection, you might exclude yourself from “humanity” that is obviously not defined simply as a *species*. (h) Superiority and inferiority and the desirability of belonging to one given actual community thus can be defined by substantive (moral and political) criteria that at the same time need not obliterate the givenness and natural-historical origin of a nation or “*ethnie*.”

The qualitative difference between Greek and barbarian might be regarded as both intelligible and empirical. Different values adhered to by communities can be thus *ascribed* to communities and *described* by the impartial observer (see Herodotus on Persians, Thucydides on Lacedaemonians, Tacitus on Germans, Montesquieu on everybody, Tocqueville on democratic Americans).

The idea that there are communities and political régimes that are not according to nature is a revolutionary idea stemming from modern natural right. Liberal nationalism—like socialism—is an attempt to invent a manner of political action which is likely to restore the community to its naturalness purported to mean its true humanity.

Nineteenth-century liberal nationalism was *political*. However it defined naturalness—a particular and parochial humanity for each separate community—and this was done usually in terms of shared history and cultural tradition, liberal nationalism had an ambition to reach the highest degree of naturalness, submitting its hoped-for success to universal criteria plainly visible also to the foreigner.²

Liberal nationalists did believe in the superiority of their people, but who says superiority says comparison, and who says comparison accepts universal criteria.³ The *agon*, the contest of nations, imagined by liberals as the public counterpart to the private competition of individual interests in bourgeois society, was thought, unlike the former, to have consisted in a moral race of wills.

Recognition from an Archimaedic, “objective” point of view for what nations strove for has made liberal nationalism into a tendency or style of political action reconcilable with reasoned political and moral argument. Moreover, it did not exclude the classical republican ideals of public interest, common good, civic virtue, and patriotism. Although not even nationalists of a decidedly liberal hue believed that all men are equally capable of attaining a high moral degree of communal excellence, freedom, and dignity (they had to prefer, after all, their own), they could not believe that the members of their particular community necessarily attained that high quality—that would have made political action superfluous—but conceived of the chances of their own people as better than others’. Provided always that their fellow citizens could be led to their true nature. This is why in the political imagination of liberal nationalists education, especially civic education, played such a prominent part.

They did not see education as a philosophic activity, but as a violent or coercive interference by the government representing national virtue with the spontaneous intellectual pursuits of knowledge-thirsty youngsters in order to make them ascend to the uniform spirit of that nation’s historical essence, thus transforming them into superior, enlightened political beings who had acquired civic virtue spiritually, prior to their future political exercise of it. National culture was deemed to have been a prelude to virtuous political action, self-discipline, self-abnegation, readiness for heroic sacrifice, generosity, and solidarity with their fellow nationals before the love for your neighbor.

The success of patriotic education for liberal nationalists such as Humboldt, Renan, or Arnold of Rugby depended on whether the substance of that education was good and true. It was not planned as an education for xenophobia but an education in the spirit of an historicized republicanism looking up to classical ideals. In a way, it was a question of who will be the best Greek among the moderns.

There must be reasons, they thought, why belonging to your own nation must be good. The “being” of your nation is parochial, but its *calling* is universal: it both represents something (usually the best notion of liberty as in Fichte) at its best, so others can possibly beat it to that moral best, and it *does* something beyond merely being what it is: it *enacts* that good.

Nationalists in the nineteenth century thought that the Enlightenment and the preceding medieval, renaissance republican and absolutist orders were not wholly natural, and nationalism was born to redeem mankind from those versions of servile condition. Nationalism was a liberation movement allied to liberalism. Its typical early representatives were the *carbonari*, plebeian Jacobin conspirators against the cosmopolitan order of the Holy Alliance between throne and altar symbolized by the accursed court at Vienna.

What were the liberal-nationalist accusations against those varieties of political order?

The sin of the Middle Ages appeared to have been the compartmentation of virtue. Monks, knights, and peasants had to subscribe to a wholly different set of moral precepts each; they were not united by a mutual obligation for the common good. Politics was subordinated to other concerns as the calling of a particular estate, linked by hereditary, that is, random and illegitimate ties to the duty of performing every political or legal *officium*. “Feudalism,” “the Dark Ages” were held to be politically inferior because they cut up the unity of political virtue aimed at the common good into artificial bits; political communities were steered by alien princes of the papal or imperial purple and their cosmopolitan viziers and clerical counselors; Latin, Byzantine Greek, or classical Arabic were forced upon natural human groups expressing themselves in the vernacular (the struggle against ancient Slavonic lasted until the beginning of this very century in South-Eastern Europe).

Renaissance-republican city-states appeared to have embodied selfishness and empty pride where military might was

made to serve base commerce and to ignore totally the pastoral and agricultural intercourse of man with nature. High artifice and overblown art with its fake religiosity covertly praising wealth and trickery took the place of the simplicity of free men, of their political, national, and religious piety and voluntary obedience to a high authority identified with the sovereign Good.

Absolutism was a brainchild of royal bureaucracy, mechanical, contrived, lifeless, and distantly benevolent, wherein medieval tradition and the separation of the estates or castes was replaced by the whimsical lawlessness of the monarchical will, political honor replaced by individual glory, public works aggrandizing the self-feeling (*Selbstgefühl*) of a nation destroyed, castles and palaces replacing the Forum, science of artillery, fortifications, public administration, and public finance replacing natural spontaneity conducive to a superior and simpler human livelihood realized instinctively rather than according to the book.

Enlightenment, with its cosmopolitanism and secularism, its reliance on mechanical science, seemed to sever the ancestral ties between citizen and earth, citizen and God, man and fellow man.

At the same time, liberal nationalism was one of the greatest equalizing forces in human history. Natural community defined by time and place could hardly exclude the ignoble or the passive citizen deprived of a say in politics: if a natural community was defined by a second nature to be found in tradition and in shared historical experience, the social and economic differences between people became secondary. Good members of a national community were graded according to their zeal and commitment, their spiritual and moral realization of the national essence. Their ancestors were irrelevant. In keeping with the general characteristic of modernity, liberal nationalism concentrated on will. Will was constitutive of merit, not station or condition or estate.

Exclusion of the poor and uneducated seemed to contradict

the naturalness of the community that was given its symbolic and political circumference by the *genius loci*, equally inspiring for baron and villain.

Liberal nationalists did not subscribe to the assertions (d) and (e) above, that is, they thought that there *can be* political régimes that are not artificial. Nineteenth-century liberal nationalism still trusted the ancient idea of a nation being a *subject*, a superior kind of person with a soul that is not universal. A subject or a person is a moral agent: they cannot be and they will not be judged on their own terms only. Nations have a nature that—as all human nature—can be falsified and can decay.

Human nature can be falsified or our understanding of it can be faulty simply because we are free: we possess autonomous will and reason. The Kantian construal of reason as analogous to the will may be wrong; nevertheless, it is quintessentially modern. It is small wonder that the greatest theorist of nationalism, the late Elie Kedourie, reckons that nationalism begins with Kant. (Although Kant himself was a diehard cosmopolitan.)⁴

Freedom of the will and indeterminacy of reason account for the notion that human nature is gradual, that you can be a better or worse human being and, therefore, a better or worse Frenchman.

According to liberal nationalists, nations embody ideas. That embodiment can be more or less perfect, depending on our moral strength, sense of purpose, patriotic commitment, and the like.

Liberal nationalists were rather old-fashioned in understanding patriotism as supererogatory moral and political action that went far beyond the call of legal duty. Law-abidingness is not patriotism. The patriot is a man who does things for his country voluntarily, who might be willing to sacrifice his leisure, his wealth, and his life for the good of the national community. Patriotism is a virtue, chosen for moral reasons and rewarded with public glory, motivated by *love*, by

love of the country. What can be legally and politically voluntary is not psychologically voluntary. Love of the country is caused by irresistible affection. It is involuntary, but deliberate in so far as it can be resisted for good and bad reasons (such as hatred of tyranny as in the case of anti-Nazi or anti-Communist resisters who chose to betray their unjust governments, or laziness, or the precedence our care for our dear ones may take over the performance of moral duty that is not legally obligatory). Our love for our country is natural, but we can be good or bad at it, since we are free agents.

A natural affection rooted in everybody being more or less confined within the narrow boundaries of time and space imposed by the brevity of human life—this limitation brings us together in a meaningful community of people who are able to ennoble nature into virtue. The recognition of this possibility, and the liberating influence this had on the fight against the untenable political inequality prevalent in early liberal societies, gave its revolutionary or “democratic” appeal to liberal nationalism. Liberal nationalists realized that human nature and all human practice were local but left the judgement as to its worth to philosophy. They were not the first to pride in wishing to gain Socrates’ favor. And they might well have been the last.

In order to understand the philosophical answer given by liberal nationalism to the questions raised by the eight initial assertions I enumerated, let us briefly consider what the *fons et origo*, Rousseau says (toward the end of *The Social Contract*), on the inability of Christianity to become a true civil religion. That might help us to have a glimpse of what the post-Napoleonic generation, the creator of the modern nation-state, had in mind when it tried to find the potent SuperGlue that could make the foundation of a nation or of a political community invested with the self-evident, irrecusable force of nature.

Rousseau says that this holy, sublime, and true religion makes men recognize that they are all brothers, this fraternal link not dissolved even by death. Christianity has no specific

relation to the body politic, leaves the laws with nothing more than their own intrinsic force without adding another force to them. Instead of binding the hearts of citizens to the state, Christianity detaches them from it: nothing more contrary to the social spirit. While a people of true Christians may be a perfect society, it would not be a society of men. By being perfect it would lack bonds of union; its very perfection would be its fatal defect. If the state is declining, the Christian would bless the hand of God which weighs down upon His people.

What is, then, the one thing needful?

It is obvious that the adversary is universality (the brotherhood of man) and immortality (spirituality). What we need to found a nation-state is limitedness and necessity. Piety can bound us together only if this piety defines what laws are allowed to do: not any and each legal system or constitution is reconcilable with our specific kind of piety or tradition. Also, no real obedience can be enforced if the bond is not mortal, nor a bond between mortals. If we want to make our régime so strong as to be possible for us to bequeath it to our offspring, thus creating some this-worldly constancy and stability, then we shall have to be constrained by our finite life-span. We cannot leave it to God. Only this finitude will give us the ferocious energy needed here. Finitude and imperfection will inspire men to make their polity enduring and durable. Temporal solidity needs energy. Indifference to the temporal is the enemy of politics, therefore the enemy of civilization. If death and the fear of death does not make us huddle together, fraternity becomes unnecessary, and individual selfhood will be paramount. The brotherhood of man is the enemy of political fraternity. But what Rousseau does not tell us is whether the moral effect of mortality, limitedness, and necessity is a cause for communities to be artificial. If the created or founded body politic is artificial, it is possible to pronounce a judgement on it by comparing it to other artificial bodies politic, understanding their various fundamental principles. But if the variety of political communities is in itself a natural fact, defined by

circumstance, wherein lies the uniqueness of our body politic in which we must believe if we do indeed experience piety for the *mos maiorum*? How does happenstance or serendipity account for necessity that alone can awake the feeling of naturalness? And if political communities are different by nature, is there at all a natural link between men which is not political? Is politics the only natural link between men that at the same time separates them radically?

The answer of liberal nationalism to all this is the following: all communities are natural (answer to [a]). But (b) not all political régimes are arranged according to nature, but some are (answer to [c]). Naturalness of the political community *can* be achieved (answer to [f]), therefore (h), that is, superiority and inferiority can be decided by substantive criteria.

What is then the philosophical doctrine of liberal nationalism? It can be, I believe, summarized in the following fashion: since the political régime and the natural-temporal community must be consonant and harmonious, the right form of the former can be established only through a *process of knowledge*. If we are to adapt our political arrangements to the nature of the natural-temporal community, we shall have to acquire a true knowledge of the latter, which true knowledge will then determine what we shall have to consider just according to nature, *our* nature. Rousseau even in the terrible Chapter X of *The Government of Poland* does not go so far as to say that this discovered nature will necessarily be radically dissimilar from other people's nature; he only forbids the knowledge of such similarities. Rousseau and Fichte did utopically ban any such knowledge in their ideal polities, but they do not say that it is untrue or impossible. In Rousseau's utopian Poland citizens are not permitted to look at other people's nature, they do not and cannot know anything about it, so human nature could be safely universal and uniform; the Poles will never find out. But this is not the liberal nationalist doctrine.

Knowledge here is historical. The study of history will offer the true description of our national inclinations, customs,

temperament, and ideals. From a congeries of disparate facts history can distill the mortal essence: the way we are as a nation. History is raw material. It is in need of improvement. The raw material can be perfected according to the idea inductively abstracted from the chronicle of our laws, political institutions, legal customs, and national myths, and all this has to be brought into accord with what is rationally knowable. National self-knowledge through history does not mean uncritical self-adulation; on the contrary, institutions will have to be designed to domesticate and ennoble our specific kinds of savagery and injustice, buried in the past and present selfishness of every people. But what can be perfected and ennobled is only what *is*, not anything or everything. Sometimes it is excessive pride that the lawgiver will have to tame, sometimes it is a tendency to torpor and timidity that will have to be dispelled by bold action and warm appreciation. Contentiousness must be disarmed by ruse and a firm hand aiming at tranquillity; servility should be discouraged by giving a free rein to rebellious ideas and a perspective of valor, even by paying the price of contumacy or sedition. In other words, the knowledge gained from history to serve political justice and nation-formation must be *critical*. The political régime can be outlined and established according to nature and justice only if it takes into account the passions which may destroy the body politic and at the same time give it sparkle. Liberty may be the common aim of mankind, but it can be attained differently among a nation forced to get accustomed to slavish habits, and again differently in a headstrong, independent, insubordinate nation that indulges in frivolous controversy. The right form of the political régime will be known (*erkannt*) and enacted only through the study of national passions, tempered or exacerbated as the case may be to achieve liberty, justice, and dignity.

It is not true that liberal nationalism taught the primacy of the cultural community in the manner of Herder and Tönnies. The revolutionaries of 1830 and 1848, the Tory

historiography of Hume, and the Whig monument of Lord Macaulay were all adamant in emphasizing how legal and political history has shaped cultural character—and it is the same impression that Marx gives in his journalism riddled with racial prejudice. If what is sought is what is natural, people's inclinations and predilections can be depicted realistically only through observing their actions, and history does not show people at repose nor is history a renarration of narratives that are independent of what they recount, as if the teller of tales were the protagonist, not the hero of the tale. Herder thought Homer was the hero; Socrates knew it was Achilles.

Nature is raw: the polity refines it and ennobles it, but it does not betray it. Its laws, sometimes precisely by their adverse effect, if just, show what manner of people had to be restrained or emboldened, made rich or taught frugality, sent to the fields to relearn simple virtue (the idea of Zionism and revolutionary Islam *intégrisme*) or shown exquisite manners, conversation, and good taste (as in the early Enlightenment). All this means that within this doctrine, human nature is seen as extremely malleable and supple. The political régime that does not react to what raw nature there is will be necessarily unjust, because it will encourage the foolhardy and restrain the timorous. Good laws—although their principle might be deductive-rational—do *refer* to what is there, and the interaction of legal and political institutions with, say, excesses their predecessors might have committed will adapt the idea of justice to the locally prevalent set of passions, and will mold the passionate character of natural man according to what is good and what is possible. This is not compromise, it is *paideia*. The *ascent* to veritable human nature (see [f]) that is justice, reason, moderation, courage, magnanimity, and the like can follow many routes, and indeed it does. But not all political communities are equally equipped to create institutions true to their nature. Montesquieu and Voltaire thought the English were better at it than the French, Gibbon thought Octavian was

better at it than Charlemagne. Races may be equal in worth—said the liberal nationalists—but polities are not; quite true, too: Denmark is a better place than Burma, albeit the Burmese are supposed to be considerably more charming than Danes.

So “nature” is in fact an admixture of nature to law, where nature is ennobled and law is bent to the needs of the nature it ennobles. If harmony did not prevail, nineteenth-century liberal nationalists spoke of alien domination. Universalist governance bereft of historical *knowledge* of the community, indifferent to its condition, customs, sensitivities, and memories could not be just, and corrupted people’s moral potential by imposing abstract decrees ignorant of what they should do in order to improve manners, increase justice, and defend dignity. Benevolence is of no consequence if not based on true historical (that is, natural) knowledge of passions and inclinations: the legal shape of a state is not sufficient to make it just and free.

If laws and political arrangements are considered “alien,” that does not necessarily mean the primacy of “culture,” ethnicity, or race. “Nature” in liberal nationalism does not have the connotation of biological determinacy or cultural relativism, much later developments. It is the criterion liberal nationalism would measure societies by, to wit, the harmony of law and history, that should define what is true to the idea of the nation and what is alien. Absolutist, dynastic, universalist, imperialist, or rationalistic disregard of that necessary harmony, especially of its historical component, will qualify as alien; but disregard of law and politics will be equaled with barbarity, meaning a fatal weakness, robbing the nation of the ultimate accolade of a talent for state-formation, of a gift for “founding.”

The obdurate work of founding and maintaining the state is the chief sign of primordial excellence in a political community. “Alienation” and “barbarism” are the two evil extremes which can befall a polity. The uprooting of historical

character—an ordered *anamnesis* of passions recorded and spent and of habits observed—kills the body of affect in a nation; the exclusive dominion of passion that subordinates politics to whimsical remembrance and capricious desire would kill its soul.

The aim in liberal nationalism was civilization in the classical sense: magnanimity and *virtù* mellowed by sagacity, justice, and the rule of law adapted to respond to custom and affective *anamnesis* of the community conceived as history. This is very similar to the Platonic idea of harnessing the Muses into the service of the political community. In Book VII of Plato's *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger says:

The songs and dances should be ordained thus. From the ancients have come many ancient and beautiful creations in music, and also for the bodies, dances of the same quality. There should be no hesitation to pick out from these what is fitting and harmonious for the political régime that is being set up. To make the choice among these, examiners should be selected who are not younger than fifty years of age. They should decide what seems adequate among the ancient creations and what is either deficient or wholly unsuitable. In the latter case they should cast it entirely away, while in the former case they should take it up again and rework it, seeking the aid of the poetic powers of these men, but they shouldn't be guided by their pleasures and desires, except in the case of a few of them; instead, by interpreting the intentions of the lawgiver, they should put together dance and song and choral performance as a whole in a way that comes as close as possible to the intention in his mind.

Every disorderly pursuit involving the Muse becomes better ten thousandfold when it attains order, even if it doesn't partake of the sweet Muse. Pleasure, after all, is common to all the Muses. If someone passes the time from childhood until the age of adulthood and prudence hearing a moderate and orderly Muse, then every time he hears the opposite he will hate Her and proclaim Her to be lacking in freedom; but if he's brought up with the common and sweet Muse, he'll assert the opposite to this is cold and unpleasant (Plato, 1988, 802a-d, pp. 193–94).

Patriotic art—disdained as *pompierisme* by the *décadents*—is, of course, what distinguishes liberal nationalism. “Poetic and

musical men” had reworked tradition, this is how we have gotten Ossian, the *Nibelungenlied*, *Heimskringla*, *Edda*, the *Frithjof Saga*, *Kalevala* and *Kalevipoeg*, and other edifying national epics and the even more openly educative versions of Scott, Kleist, Vörösmarty, Arany, Spitteler, and Hebbel. The last example is perhaps Buber’s *Die Erzählungen der Chassidim*.

It is precisely this mythical propensity of liberal nationalism—creating tradition *à rebours*—that attracted the scorn of the most potent of its fascist critiques, that of Carl Schmitt (the other one is that of Frantz Fanon. The source is common; it is Georges Sorel—they are both heralding ethnarchy and ethno-anarchism as we shall see in a moment). When Carl Schmitt is criticizing “political romanticism,” he expresses a hatred for the substitution of the citizen for the real sovereign. The citizen, according to Schmitt, is but an emptied version of the individual who sought escape from the community, but the individual as the servant of law is nothing else but the community personified; thus, the community will consist only in a mechanistic concatenation of its own simulacra. It is a parody of priesthood. Romanticism is “subjectified occasionalism” that tries to create—instead of a real tradition—a myth that attempts to hide the atomization of liberal society. “In this society, it is left to the private individual to be his own priest. But not only that. Because of the central significance and consistency of the religious, it is also left to him to be his own poet, his own philosopher, his own king, and his own master builder in the cathedral of his personality. The ultimate roots of romanticism and the romantic phenomenon lie in the private priesthood” (Schmitt, 1986, p. 20). And later he says:

[During the French revolution] [p]olitics becomes a religious matter. The political organ becomes a priest of the republic, the law and the country . . . [The Jacobins’] fanaticism had a religious character. [. . .] When an absolute monarch says that he himself is the state and when a Jacobin acts as if he could say *la patrie c’est moi*, this is not the same thing. The one represents the state with his individual person. The other substitutes his

person for the state. The more he himself wants to be, all the more must he conceal his private person and always emphasize vociferously that he is only the functionary of the sole, powerful, authoritative and superpersonal being (Schmitt, 1986, p. 59).⁵

“His own priest” and “the priest of the republic” are indistinguishable for the fascist critic. Naturally, the priest is believed to represent something from outside the community, and a priest of mankind is a contradiction in terms, a contradiction lived to the hilt by every master of a masonic lodge. But one’s own and the republic’s legislator is not a priest and representing the body politic is not priesthood; it is a notion originated by the Romans in their concept of *officium*.⁶

Still, “political romanticism” is problematic, since the legitimizing myths wrought by liberal nationalists were not considered by them, as in Plato, an instructive-deistic falsehood but, irrationally, a form of deeper truth. The Platonic meaning has been restored with notable brutality (and voluntaristic romanticism) only by Georges Sorel, Carl Schmitt’s master. Liberal *Weltanschauung* combined with romantic *passéiste* myth was the view of the bourgeoisie (Hippolyte Taine), of the *intelligentsia* (Sir Lewis Namier), or, in one word, of the chattering classes (Don Juan Donoso Cortés). But the chattering classes did rather well and did not flinch from fight and created a large number of enduring states too tedious to list. Nor was liberal nationalism pedestrian and middle-class: it was an attitude of Whiggish aristocracy and, on the Continent, of petty to middling nobility, of rather dashing civil servants and of black-cloaked glamorous romantic plotters immersed in Byron, Shaftesbury, Hemsterhuis, Burke, Hamann, Solger, Jacobi, and Schleiermacher. Nothing plodding and banal about them. Quasi-religious rhetoric notwithstanding, there is a point to what Carl Schmitt suggests: there was a debonair lay priesthood there, precisely the kind *Staatrat* Schmitt was so fond of—he just stood liberalism on its head, as Leo Strauss so astutely observed many years ago—that is, bureaucracy. *Hegelian* bureaucracy.

Hegelian or *staatsträgend* bureaucracy—redefined according to the main tune of “subjectified occasionalism” by the romantico-tragic Max Weber as the bourgeoisie has been by the romantico-decadent Thomas Mann and the *noblesse de robe* by the tragic-decadent Proust—represented *Weltgeist*, *Zeitgeist*, and *Volksgeist*, and seen that way, this combination of communal spirit and humble subservience to law could not have been to Carl Schmitt’s liking, as it lacked the freedom for sovereign decision and the propensity and capacity to make “exception” rule. Gradual reform and “measures” were not dramatic enough for his taste. But was Schmitt right in judging the *Träger*, the carriers of liberal reform? I think not.

Modern civil service—French, Prussian, and Austrian—is a creation both Jesuitic and Napoleonic. But it was liberal nationalism that gave it an ideological shape that it has preserved to this very day, notably under the guise of the European Union. How to combine cerebral and abstract universalism, necessitated by service to an invisible mistress, Law, and practical sagacity and prudence based on empirical knowledge and psychological skill needed in administration? How were they able to implement the real constitution that was not a mere school essay, as described by Count Joseph de Maistre?

What is a constitution? Is it not merely the solution of the following problem? *Given the population, the mores, the religion, the geographic situation, the political circumstances, the wealth, the good and the bad qualities of a particular nation, to find the laws that suit it.* Now the Constitution of 1795, which treats only of Man, does not grapple with this problem at all. Thus every imaginable reason combines to prove that this work does not possess the divine seal. It is only a school composition (Maistre, 1994, p. 53).

The answer is liberal nationalism, since it is a living paradox, *a cosmopolitan or universalist nationalism*. It is an application of universal principles of justice and statecraft to a specific context defined by tradition and custom. In this view, nations have a universal mission as well: it might be an historical

accident that they happen to represent one major principle, but there is nothing accidental about their sacred duty to spread it all over the world. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that principle was the idea of liberty, and nations appeared to compete for its most perfect realization and representation with no surcease of mental fight. National independence and self-determination were not important because every *ethnie* on earth was equally entitled to have its own polity, but because polities competed to impose their own brand of liberty under the law; victory was deemed to have meant *liberation*, revolutionary war—as in the case of Bonaparte and Kossuth—was not supposed to mean solely conquest and dominion, but moral triumph over alienation and servitude, joining the French or the Hungarians signified a conversion to the forces of the Light (*lumières*) over the forces of darkness. Petöfi, the greatest poet of democratic nationalism, said if he were not born a Hungarian (which he, incidentally, was not; he was half-Serbian, half-Slovak, but no matter) he would become a Hungarian now (1848). To be French or Hungarian was not a mere fact: it was an idea. Tradition is spiritual—it is not inherited through blood, but through memory. It was this spiritualness and idealness that inspired the nascent modern civil service, accompanied by a feeling of chosenness or providential mission (an idea obvious for everyone in the Judeo-Christian *Kulturkreis*) and by a sense of duty, discipline, and rigor as befits the servants of an invisible, but awesome authority. It was not the individualist bourgeois “chattering classes” deprecated by Rousseau, Donoso Cortés, and Marx who represented liberal nationalism; it was earnest and dutiful *professeurs de lycée* and *Gymnasiallehrer*, who are civil servants in France, Germany and Austria to this very day, diplomats, officers, clerks, jurists, industrious and studious drafters, reformers, improvers and do-gooders, no bohemian voluptuaries they. These Napoleonic *étatistes* in the mold of Destutt de Tracy’s *idéologues* did not worship the state in the spirit of Carl Schmitt’s decisionistic voluntarism that puts

the political content of governance between brackets as if the sovereign decision of the exception were enough to define politics independent of what is good and just, this mindless cult of pure power in-and-for-itself, this reverse anarchism mimicking and parodying Husserl's rewriting of Kant. No, liberal nationalism was full of historical *matter* (centered on legal custom and the tradition of public law), it was based rather on a material ethics of values rather than on Kantian formalism (to use Max Scheler's well-known terms).

But the paradox remains a paradox. However spiritual, juridical, and political liberal nationalism might have been, it did not fail to inspire passion, hatred, enmity. Its main techniques (assimilation and conquest) were universalist since they did not presume absolute racial boundaries between ethnic groups—you could *ascend* to *Deutschtum* or *magyar-ság*—but this proud sense of mission, superiority, and chosenness was, of course, quite humiliating to those summoned to discard their previous identity in exchange for a more perfectly embodied idea of freedom and justice. As usual, the greatest enemy of liberal nationalism, Count de Maistre, puts it best, showing the very French roots of the whole idea:

I spoke, in the beginning, of the *magistracy* that France exercises over the rest of Europe. Providence, which always proportions the means to an end, and which gives to nations as to individuals the necessary organs for the accomplishments of their goals, has given the French nation precisely two instruments, two *arms*, so to speak, with which it stirs up the world—the French language and the spirit of *proselytism* that forms the essence of the nation's character. Consequently, France constantly has both the need and the power to influence men. The power, I almost said the *monarchy*, of the French language is visible; you can at most pretend to doubt it. And the spirit of proselytism is as obvious as the sun; from the fashion designer to the philosopher, it is the salient trait of the national character (Maistre, 1994, pp. 20–1).

National proselytism—something that now the United States stands accused of with some, not much, justification—is the

main political idea of the nineteenth century. Its symbolic figure is the Permanent Secretary. Now let us look at who represents in the twentieth century the new-fangled ethnarchy-cum-ethno-anarchism, in the flaming words of Frantz Fanon:

The constitution of a *lumpenproletariat* is a phenomenon which obeys its own logic, and neither the brimming activity of the missionaries nor the decrees of central government can check its growth. This *lumpenproletariat* is like a horde of rats; you may kick them and throw stones at them, but despite your efforts they'll go on gnawing at the roots of the tree. The shanty town sanctions the native's biological decision to invade, at whatever cost and if necessary by the most cryptic methods, the enemy fortress. The *lumpenproletariat*, once it is constituted, brings all its forces to endanger the security of the town, and it is the sign of the irrevocable decay, the gangrene ever present at the heart of colonial domination. So the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed, and the petty criminals, urged on from behind, throw themselves into the struggle for liberation like stout working men. These classless idlers will by militant and decisive action discover the path that leads to nationhood. They won't become reformed characters to please colonial society, fitting in with the morality of its rulers; quite on the contrary, they take for granted the impossibility of their entering the city save by hand grenades and revolvers. These workless less-than-men are rehabilitated in their own eyes and in the eyes of history. The prostitutes too, and the maids who are paid two pounds a month, all the hopeless dregs of humanity, all who turn in circles between suicide and madness, will recover their balance, once more go forward, and march proudly in the great march of the awakened nation (Fanon, n.d. [1963], pp. 129–30).

Yesterday the third world, now the post-communist zone: the great uprising against nineteenth-century European civilization (of which communism was, after all, only a subspecies [Tamás, 1993, pp. 54–68]) goes on.

The contrast of the liberal to the now prevalent ethno-cultural "nationalism" could not be sharper. This wholly new phenomenon toward the end of the twentieth century had been explained (by usually reliable sources) as the rebirth of

tradition, the revenge of history, the restoration of memory, and a reaction to communist universalism. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Quite apart from the fact that the world-revolutionary, universalistic phase of the revolutionary workers' movement was defeated in 1914 and after a brief interlude was finished forever in the late 1920s (and it survives only in a few tenacious Trotskyite sects), the new ethno-cultural "nationalism" has very little to do with the past, its crude *passéiste* rhetoric notwithstanding. To understand the new nationalism that is largely a post-communist phenomenon (which shows surprising structural similarities with post-republican radical multiculturalism in more ways than one) we have to acquire a clear understanding of the changes wrought by the democratic turn in Eastern Europe and elsewhere in the realm of general political ideas—since the new "nationalism" is an outcome of those changes.

The collapse of communism, like all revolutionary events (and although it was mostly bloodless, it *was* revolutionary) is defined by the adversary. The adversary was communist autocracy. It does not matter whether or how revolutionaries might have misunderstood the nature of the adversary, as they certainly did both in 1789 and 1917. Their thoughts and actions were defined by a reading of the political character of the adversary régime. This interpretation ran like this: "Communist autocracy and tyranny was the result of a millenarian revolutionary utopia. This utopia was an abstract, highly philosophical doctrine that aimed at the obliteration of private life in favor of total mobilization and military discipline in service of a high-minded justice and an extreme cult of the public. To put an end to alienation, especially to the bourgeois separation of public and private, to the bourgeois separation of pursuits to the detriment of the unity of the human race through the social division of labor, to the separation of man from nature through industrialism and consumerism, to the separation of politics and the economy due to the pre-

eminence of finance capital, communism preferred fusion over liberty and equality and forced people to accept ideology in preference to felicity. Communism is philosophic, yet free societies are pragmatic. Communism was a blend of rationalism and blind faith, scientism and fanaticism. Communism forced secular, agnostic, critical discourse on pious peasant populations. Communism imposed high modernism onto traditionalist, deferential, naive *moujiks*. Communism was the work of a bunch of intellectualist adventurers in leather trench coats. Communism was the work of a heroic élite of doctrinaires. The source of all our troubles is *ideas*. Communism politicized society to an unbearable extent and, as a result, atomized it, fostering tragic grandeur perhaps but putting an end to common decency. Communism did not take into account 'human nature,' that is, egotism and greed. Communism ignored reality where there are no other rules than greed, lust, and a desire for absolute power. Communism was too generous, too cerebral, too noble: life is just not like this. Communism was a pretty dream: reality is tough and grim."

I do not happen to agree with any of this; nevertheless, this was how East Europeans, Caucasians, Central Asians saw the adversary. In short, citizens of the "new democracies" thought that their enemy was *politics*.

They did not care about the fact that it was Lenin precisely who said that the good society should consist in an infinitesimal public administration manned by rotation by anybody and a huge area of life that ought to be wholly private, personal, and emotional. The ideas of *The State and Revolution* are more alive in the former communist bloc than ever before without their author being cited or acknowledged.

The ideologies of *suspicion* so characteristic of high modernism are rampant, combined with a healthy dose of Central European paranoia, conspiracy theory, and persecution mania. Government cannot be anything else but a subservient agency of occult (usually foreign or alien) forces such as freemasons,

Jews, and Anglo-Americans. Culture is a semblance of a peculiar, particular, and parochial will to power (Foucault *folklorique*, that's what we are). Morals is a mask of oppression, principles are a disguise for interest, nations are tribes with flags, republics are gangs with charters.

From East Berlin and Prague to Vladivostok and Shanghai, the government is commonly called "the Mafia," property is considered in true Proudhonian fashion to be theft, wealth is abuse, morality tomfoolery, authority robbery, soldiers highwaymen.

Avant-gardist anarchism embraced by big-city intellectuals is undistinguishable from the nihilistic backwoods *jacquerie* of a Pugachev or a Makhno. All this is based on the irresistible assumption that nothing is what it seems to be. Freedom of expression caused, surprisingly, a growing disbelief in and dismissal of facts. The free press did not silence whispered rumors and gossip that was the main staple of political information under censorship. Superstitions abound.

It is this atmosphere of flamboyant individualism and primitive magic that serves as a background to the new "nationalism" (Tamás, 1994, pp. 129–48).⁷

Liberal nationalism was recognizable by its two main techniques: *assimilation* and *conquest*. You can assimilate alien populations or conquer them and make them accept it if the dividing line between "*ethnies*" is not absolute, that is, if the member of an inferior sept or tribe can ascend to the "national essence" of another. The belief in this possibility is the philosophic core of *liberal imperialism* ("white man's burden," "mission civilisatrice," and the like). This is due to the fact that liberal nationalism, albeit it recognized the importance of a shared history or tradition, was still political. The community of citizens was not exclusively defined and limited by cultural "identity," but also by the civic or political relationship of every citizen to one another and to the common good. Old-style nationalists, too, aimed at cultural uniformity, but they thought it could be achieved among people of different

origins. Culture did not seem closed as it would appear to a radical relativist, but was conceived in interdependence with politics that in turn would create history that will become the history of those who at the moment still appear as alien. The moral aim or end of the political community can be approximated by whoever shares the same activity and exhibits the same virtue. If someone is a true patriot, cultural peculiarity and prejudice are secondary.

The main technique of the new “nationalism” (or *radical provincialism*) in contradistinction to the old is not assimilation or conquest, but *ethnic cleansing*.

The new “nationalists” do not believe that anybody from a different cultural background, racial origin, or religious creed can be or ought to be assimilated, made into a citizen of a new political community; on the contrary, in a world devoid of ideas on political authority and political obligation, this is held to be impossible and undesirable.

The only task and only choice of an alien in *Our* national territory is to leave or to die.

There is nothing, literally nothing, be it moral or political, that can hold different ethnic groups together. The collapse of communism has proved in the eyes of the new ethnic or tribal warriors that there is no such thing as politics; crude personal interest is not mediated by anything like law that is the ridiculously and transparently mendacious device of the powerful anyway.

Citizenship is nothing; ethnicity is all. Only those ties between humans are recognized to be such that appear natural, that is, freed from rational and moral pretenses; in other words, it is only blood that counts, the spirit does not.

Old-style nationalism was famous for its role in propping up the state. Conscription, free state education, the universal suffrage created conformity, Bismarckian welfarism (“social policy,” as it was called), or Disraelian “Tory democracy” tied the members of the nation, especially the industrial proletariat, to the powers-that-be. Nationalism served as propaganda for

the liberal state, ferocious outwardly, mild and loving inwardly. Nationalist liberals were statist, conformist, patriarchal, authoritarian, puritanical, a mainstay of stability, liberty, and obedience.

The new “nationalism” is anarchistic, indifferent to the *raison d'état*, smashing up historic shapes of traditional countries with the greatest ease and indifference. It does not seek grandeur or glory, just the security of people who appear to each other as being identical, thrown together in a sub-political hut, liberated from politics, as Vladimir Ilyich Lenin promised them they would be.

The new ethno-cultural “nationalism” combines ethnarchy with ethno-anarchism. Ethnarchy means here that the source of all power is not the people, but the racially or ethnically pure dominant majority within any arbitrarily given territory that may or may not belong to a state, that may or may not be under the authority of a legally constituted government. Countries, states, nations can be reshaped at will, regardless of their ancient traditions or present interests, regardless of ancient ties between different linguistic, religious, or other groups through centuries. Only natural identity counts, an identity based on a “nature” that cannot be approached rationally, that is not desirous of having any outward or “higher” recognition, that is just what it is biologically and nothing else, nothing beyond. Any “beyond,” any transcendence of the culturally given through politics is considered mythical or, worse, a lie. And it was not ever thus (Koyre, 1976), even in Russia.

The new nationalists do not pretend that their “*ethnie*” is superior to any other. They are content with being themselves. They do not want to participate in the *agon*, in the contest of nations, beyond having established a turf of their own where total identity, total equality, total and magical non-politics reigns supreme.⁸

It is a truly radical tendency that, although it necessarily does not have a utopia, has changed the terms of political debate for a long time to come. Negotiators and conciliators

profess themselves puzzled when they notice that the policies and stratagems of the new ethnarchs appear and are known to be suicidal or grotesque. The old rules of diplomacy and warfare do not apply, because the aim is not pre-eminence, advantage, or control of alien territory, but delimitation, distance, detachment, exit from the world of politics where, by necessity, there are *Others*. The new ethnarchs have not taken leave of their senses, but definitely have taken leave of politics as we knew it and of a human universe that was complex, variegated, and offered the chance and the risk of victory.

The new ethnarchs do not want to win—this is why nobody in the West understands the Yugoslav conflict—but want to leave, to be forgotten and left alone. The new ethnarchies do not want ideas. They cannot be classified as “left” or “right.” They are using eclectically communist, Nazi, and traditional symbols as they do routinely in Moscow nowadays where the main fascist newspaper is called *Pravda*. The new ethnarchs do not have any traditional political ideas, they do not know yet whether their hordes will have to live in servitude or in freedom, nor are they interested. “Let us be *Us!*”—that is all.

The new ethnarchic power is very frail and volatile, precisely because there are no real arguments there to argue for obedience to authority. After all, anybody within the group is *Us* and can and does lay claim to power; secede, create new fictitious ethnic identities if need be.

This is the main reason why I am emboldened to call the new nationalism *ethno-anarchism*: it is by now absolutely impossible to give any reasonable definition as to why precisely these people want to live together. It is very interesting to see that in Moldova (Bessarabia or former Soviet Moldavia), where the Stalinists tried in vain for fifty-five years to create a separate Moldavian identity as separate from the Rumanian, once the moment came when reunification would have become possible, the Moldavians suddenly renounced their age-old aspiration: a Rumanian state, full of unknown Western imbroglio (such as in half-Hungarian Transylvania), appeared

to be complicated. It would have needed historical and political imagination. So the perfectly Rumanian Moldavians now are denying they are just that, and a new “nation” was born made distinctive only by a partial and temporary Russian occupation and not much else (Tamás, 1995a, pp. 183–86 [*The Wilson Quarterly*, loc. cit., pp. 77–81]).⁹

This is again why ethnarchy (absolute power legitimized by pure ethnicity over an arbitrarily established polity without proper institutions) and ethno-anarchism (destruction of states through incessant ethnic separations and withdrawal of recognition from state institutions by great masses of citizens) combined do not show the pattern of a great war, the main fear of the relatively wealthy, safe, and free island called the West. Continuous conflict, yes, but like after the fall of the Roman Empire, no rival is to be expected yet. On the one hand, ethnarchy and ethno-anarchism with their crazy exclusiveness and xenophobia, on the other, gigantic demographic pressure from the East and from the South and incipient migrations. These two tendencies, of course, contradict each other. While Croats and Serbs are quite punctilious and finicky about how many old ladies can remain in a given valley after a light cannonade, in the cities little Chinatowns are springing up. Migrations will make the populations more mixed, and the caravans from the Orient may pass, without noticing, pockets of astonishing ethnic purity.

What is taking shape is a post-political world. Islets of liberalism and republicanism remain. But on the whole, private life has been liberated from institutional interference to an extent that excludes *Biedermeier* or Victorian plush and cosiness. The bourgeois undefended by the republic is just a savage. We bump into him every other day.

At the beginning of this essay, I enumerated a few assertions in which nationalists of the old and of the new kind might or might not believe. To elucidate the political views of ethno-anarchists, I could find only a few political theses in which they most definitely do *not* believe. Perhaps in this

negative way, the reader can have a glimpse of the beliefs of the new rulers of the earth.

(a) The political régime is *relevant* to the definition of a political community. No, they say, Hungarians will be Hungarians no matter who rules them; Americans would be Americans also under a Soviet-type system without a Constitution and other accoutrements.

(b) Belonging to a political community is defined apart from the aleatoric accident of birth, by what you do and think. No, they say, cad and traitors are also members, provided they are not of alien origin.

(c) It is a good thing if our country is glorious, victorious, admirable. No, they say, this is immaterial: there are no universal criteria according to which a winner can be declared. Admiration is illusion, no foreigner understands *Us*.

(d) It is a good thing if our state is strong, awe-inspiring, fearsome. No, they say, we do not need a state, only a militia; states are abstract, organized according to universal, therefore alien principles. If the state is *Ours*, we do not need justice: *We* are *One* and equal without alienating interference from a mediating-intermediate artificial agency; *Our* instinct as to what is fair is unerring, because *We* are *Family*; *One* is good to *One's Own*.

(e) High culture and religion are good for the well-being of the political community. No, they say, these are again necessarily contaminated by strangeness and alien influence; what we need is merely the celebration of identity. We tribal warriors do believe in multiculturalism, the only *subject* unsubordinated to hegemonic (alien) discourse is the cultural group identical to itself that cannot be transcended. Because nothing, no fact of earthly existence can be transcended.

Resistance to transcendence—this is after all *the* twentieth-century idea. Like all ideas, it is of course inherited. It is a successor to the glorious European technique of dividing up evil if you cannot confront it squarely in the face. Guelphs and Ghibellines fought over how to divide ecclesiastical and

imperial power. Liberals devised a political division of powers; moreover, Marx believed that the social division of labor, the frittering away and fragmentation of *the* Human Pursuit into specialisms, based on the separateness expressed by private property, was the root of oppression. The domestication and humanizing of power proceeded through separations and divisions. If you could not (thought our forebears) obliterate the evil of domination, you still could weaken it, water it down, dilute it, cut it up into warring parties, subordinate it to a near-immutable law (constitutionalism, rule of law, and so on), shackle it with severe interdictions of the arbitrary and of the capricious and, most of all, by strengthening the individual. Modern liberal politics attempted to relegate raw power and domination to areas where government was to deal either with immorality (fighting crime, say) or with the suppression of the non-citizen (war).

Since authoritative power was supposed to limit human autonomy rather like predestination, establishing rights and liberties must have felt like cutting up God.

In the modern age, reuniting what had been separated was tantamount to setting up an unauthorized tyranny. In this respect, totalitarian dictatorships are only diabolically aping liberalism. They engage in a depraved gnosticism, pretending that whatever transcends the primary group of people personally known to each other and related to one another in some kind of primordial, "natural" way is *occupied* by the Enemy, the bourgeoisie, the Jews, whatever. From this it is but a short step to have the vague intimation of transcendence as such being the Enemy, of all universals inherent in human thought, behavior, language being alien and threatening. By this conceptual leap, all of a sudden deicide is permitted, nay, virtuous.¹⁰

The Graeco-Roman notion of civic liberty is replaced with an inverted, satanized version of the Judaeo-Christian hope of deliverance or liberation. It would be foolish to deny the grandeur of this hope, the inspiration behind modern radical

revolutions. After the defeat of revolutionary totalitarianism, it is too easy to forget its tragic greatness and to eschew the close examination of that grandiose hope, the crisis whereof has led to the present crisis.

The idea of deliverance is neatly formulated in the 1QH/IX thanksgiving hymn of the Dead Sea Scrolls thus:

For as a light from out of the darkness
so wilt Thou enlighten me.
[Thou wilt bring healing] to my wound,
and marvellous might in place of my stumbling,
and everlasting space to my straitened soul.
For Thou art my refuge, my high mountain,
my stout rock and my fortress;
in Thee will I shelter
from all the [designs of ungodliness,
for Thou wilt succour me] with eternal deliverance (Vermes,
1990, p. 191).

As it must be obvious, the idea of deliverance here is inseparable from enlightenment. But the modern radical idea of liberation is linked to the hunch that the hope of enlightenment might be fraudulent. Let us see first, however, what the notion of deliverance or liberation really means.

Liberation is the act whereby man passes from the condition of servitude to the high estate of freedom. This passage or transformation is traditionally associated with illumination or conversion. Servitude means that we are hampered in exercising our rational and moral faculties, and in acting upon what we know and think as rational beings and free agents. The obstacle before this free exercise of our faculties can be moral or social. It is moral if what makes us unable to think and act righteously is our being enslaved to passion or prejudice or superstition or idolatry. It is social if the powers-that-be are trying to prevent the free exercise of our mature judgement and the righteous actions flowing therefrom. It is from both that we are supposed to be freed, and if this escape is made good with divine assistance, it might be

called deliverance. Even if divine interference is forthcoming, the conscious and deliberate assent of the human agent is plainly required; faith, yes, but righteous deeds also. The conversion or *metanoia* that is necessary to be effected in order to have human mind enlightened and human will delivered from the gaol of passion and ignorance is of an intellectual nature and connects the fallible individual to something that transcends selfish immediacy.

But the modern radical idea of liberation aims precisely at this state of immediacy beyond which nothing is presumed to exist but *myth*, that is, socially necessary lies offering reasons for continuing oppression and domination by an élite randomly selected by historical accident, masquerading as an embodiment of universal reason circumscribed by the interests of whoever happens to be stronger and more adept in persuading the oppressed that he has their faculty of reasoning in his purview.

The sovereign contempt exhibited by the purveyors of high modernism, when confronted with the claims of humanism or religion, scornfully regarded as banal bleatings of *faux naïfs* cloaked in the vulgar livery of the Princes of this world, testifies to the idea of liberation having become exclusively social. It is not any longer the darkness of personal separateness and the concomitant passionate bias that appears as the opposite of the condition of freedom; on the contrary, it is exactly this obscurity which is defended as the fortress of the true self.

But should the surmise of the defense of the darkness of personhood prove correct as a description of what an effort to achieve liberty must be concentrated upon, no general criterion is likely to emerge according to which we could tell the difference between the state we were in before and the state we are going to be in if liberation happens. What we *shall* be able to tell is the name of the enemy. The enemy is whoever prevents us from being whoever we were prior to liberation, in our unredeemed pre-rational state. Liberation is nothing else

but the assurance that we can be unperturbed in whatever confinement of private fantasy we may be ensnared in, servants to an instinctual image we formed of ourselves in the elusive chiaroscuro of the personal encountering similar selves offered for observation and, perhaps, to tenderness by propinquity. Anything beyond this, pretending to be necessary or rational or both, is oppression. This is the ancient idea of deliverance stood on its head. It is the twilight of a biography cut back to raw emotional fact by the suspicion of reason as alien. Suspicion of pretend-universalistic reason *as alien* is the inception of modern racism.

In the post-communist world even the mock-transcendence of the revolutionary myth falls into disrepair and obsolescence: the condition attained by the alleged obliteration of exploitation and oppression is tainted by the same suspicion and nihilistic disbelief that once assured the success of revolutionary radicalism against liberal-capitalist societies of the past.

The destructive work of radical revolution is an ongoing process that was by no means halted by the collapse of communism, this hoped-for counter-revolution or restoration of a free society. Free societies have indeed been established in Eastern Europe and elsewhere in the absence of any powerful alternative, mostly as a shallow and incompletely conceived imitation of a half-understood Western model according to political folklore and popular myth, but this re-foundation of a free society has not been accompanied by the fundamental articles of faith necessary for such a founding. The main tenets of radical criticism are everywhere in place: nobody even dreams of pretending that property rights are not just a hypocritical description of exploitation and organized theft, nobody in the so-called new democracies doubts for a moment that the rule of law is but the pseudonym of class rule, and supposedly democratic statesmen would say every week in their neo-Ruritanian parliaments that pluralism, human rights,

and toleration are nothing else but bourgeois manipulation instigated by meddling foreigners.

In other words, *the critical function of revolutionary theory is intact*. However, its constructive and edifying function is not. Robbed of utopia, the subterranean work of the old mole, *la vieille taupe*, revolution, is becoming pure, unadulterated nihilism. Liberation is effected by an agency that is impossible to define because all reasonable approximations as to the nature of a body politic are being subverted by a tenacious refusal of everything that smacks of the abstract or the conceptual. The rejection of transcendence results ultimately in tentatively groping toward a nexus of human relations that can be felt (and acted upon) without words, so that historical knowledge (let alone illumination or enlightenment) becomes superfluous.

Ethno-anarchism sports no political hue. You could—once upon a time—tell what, say, Napoleon or Kossuth stood for, but it is impossible, nay, meaningless to associate Bosniac or Chechen ethnic warriors to any set of political views; emphatically not because these people are in any sense “primitive,” they are not. But because any given coherent set of political ideas by virtue of the very fact that they are *political* and that they are *ideas* are considered *ipso facto* alien, as everything transcending the warm obscurity of personal immediacy is deemed to be alien to whatever or whoever “*We*” may be, since “*We*” do not belong to anything but to each other, “*We*” only belong to “*Us*.”

“*Us*” is inimical or, rather, indifferent to statehood. Politics is believed to be little more than an apparitional epiphenomenon that has little or nothing in common with essence that is “*Us*.” Decorum might demand that we call ourselves a republic and we might dabble in notions such as sovereignty, familiar to Westerners, but meaning for “*Us*” only a licence to be “*Us*” beyond which there is only death.

The absolute unquestioned power of ethnarchy is apolitical and antipolitical. Nineteenth-century liberal nationalism has

built states, caused mergers and unifications, created uniform high culture and edifying education. Late twentieth-century ethno-anarchism destroys states, smashes them into smithereens, and fails to replace them with *anything*. The sheer fact of collective physical existence suffices.

Although in all that there is a discernible element of Pugachev-style peasant anarchy, the implacable enmity of the *moujik* toward the *boyar* and the “*burzhuy*,” the illiterate iconoclastic hatred against incomprehensible abstract, complex, suprapersonal edifices visible and invisible, still, the transition from liberal nationalism to post-communist ethno-anarchism is impossible to explicate without an analysis, however succinct, of the “dialectical middle,” Nazism and of what it has wrought.

As it is well known, National Socialism is based on the double primacy of the Will and of Race. The problem of a possible contradiction between the individual will of a member of the nation and the general will that will have to be anchored in an unstructured, pre-political community (because Nazism repudiates the rational and the moral link as fraudulent, just like the other brand of revolutionary socialism) is solved by the supremacy and the unconditional sovereignty of the Führer who does possess a personal will, who is a physical person tied to the community by biological/genetic facts; but he is still a person, his will is not abstract. But since every other kind of political will is obliterated in National Socialism, his is unique and exclusive. If you cease to believe in the possibility of the body politic wanting something as a body of men, then politics that needs will is reduced to the will of the leader—a will that is personal, is the will of a person, but it is not individual, because the leader *is* the nation *schlechthin*, being the only member who *has got* a will, everyone else being forbidden to have one. So politics is limited to the sovereign will of the Führer and nobody is a citizen: everybody is a private person whose political will is subsumed to and identical with that of the leader.

The principle of race means very simply that central authority can tell whether anybody, outside any consideration that is moral, political, or juridical, is a fully-fledged member of the community or not. The protection of law extends only to those who have been selected as such by the supreme authority. The body politic is no longer thought to have preceded, at least logically, the decrees of government which, henceforth, can redefine it, reshape it at will, and declare people who have previously been members of the community not to be any longer such. Thus, all rights acquired are put into abeyance: this means, quite graphically, that membership in the community is a function of the will of the supreme authority only which, therefore, does not have any automatic obligation toward the members of the community, only to those it selects for that purpose for itself. This might—and it did—increase loyalty toward this authority since it is in everybody's interest to be so selected. This is a situation known also under communism, but with the salient difference that, at least in principle, by changing your belonging to an adversary class (the bourgeoisie, usually) by an act of will (cutting your inherited ties, joining the Party, volunteering for hazardous and arduous jobs) you could re-become a member of the community. Under Nazism you could not because members were selected according to a criterion independent of human volition or moral attitude—since only *one* will was of any consequence, everything else was determined by one's existential status.

This is how National Socialism has purchased its Schmittian power of determining who is friend and who is foe and gained absolute liberty for the Führer in the sense of Camus's Caligula. But this surmise works only if you accept—and why should you?—that the body politic is what the Nazis say it is. If you take the body politic as it existed before the Nazi takeover (*Machtergreifung*) and ask what this redefining of it, according to the Nuremberg laws, did consist in, you find that Carl Schmitt has at last been refuted, because *the boundary between*

friend and foe does no longer coincide with the demarcation line between citizen and non-citizen, between our own and the foreigner.

This is the end of politics as we know it. If the Nuremberg laws (or the idea of the class struggle upheld in a classless society) will determine who among the citizens is not deserving of protection, if you declare war against the citizens of your own polity—and the enemy has to be suppressed, annihilated, or neutralized—then it cannot any longer be clear who is friend and who is an enemy, you cannot any longer tell who are the subjects to and protected by law, authority becomes discretionary power, and law becomes, *contradictio in adiecto*, arbitrary.

This precedent is very important in understanding the nature of contemporary ethno-anarchism, the successor to liberal nationalism in our age. The so-called ethnic cleansing (“cleansing” here in good Serbo-Croat meaning “purge,” the old Stalinist term; in all East European languages the two expressions are identical, and rightly so) has been initiated by the Nazis, learnt by Stalin who applied it to the Chechen and the Ingush in 1945, and applied assiduously by the short-lived East European democracies against the ethnic Germans in the late forties, then by the Khmer Rouge against the ethnic Vietnamese (Cambodian citizens!) and ethnic Chinese, by several West African governments against Hindu immigrants, and nowadays everywhere in the former communist tyrannies and in many parts of the Third World. One could say that mass murder of allogenes (think of the Armenians or the Greeks of Smyrna) has always been a habit of mankind. This is true, but the helots in Sparta were not citizens. Nor were the Jews in the Middle Ages.

Ethno-anarchism is a new version of evil. Not all evils are identical. Ethno-anarchism is the ultimate consequence of the secularized version of the age-old idea of deliverance. According to it, what is ours therefore by right cannot be established by moral criteria, and law is only an expression of group interest. This is a general belief in the contemporary world, even of those who would not dream of violence and

deliberate injustice. That belief is wrong philosophically, and it is wrong in the light of so much useless suffering. The dream in which freedom means an end to politics is the dream of an assassin.

Notes

¹ My historical view of nationalism—before and after I have finished, in the mid-eighties, my own work about the topic (Tamás, 1991)—has been shaped by Smith, 1991, 1994; Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1993; Hobsbawm, 1992; Kohn, 1960; Balibar and Wallerstein, 1992; but especially by Acton, [1862] 1985 and by my detailed study of Hamann and Fichte, whom I think more important in the philosophical history of nationalism than Herder. Cf. Berlin, 1981, pp. 162–87; Berlin, 1990, pp. 91–262; Berlin, 1993, *passim*. See also Berlin, 1976, pp. 143–216. See also Troeltsch and Meinecke.

² Cf. Tamás, 1991, pp. 29–50, 55–78, 96–119.

³ See Tamás, 1996, pp. 27–32.

⁴ See Kedourie, 1993, *passim*. This most important, perhaps crucial study will be analyzed in a forthcoming essay by the present author. On Kant and historicity, see Heidegger, 1991, §§ 36–8, pp. 205–17.

⁵ Cf. Klemperer, 1968.

⁶ Cf. Meier, 1988, 1994, 1995; Sombart, 1991; Noack, 1993; and Dumont, 1994, pp. 39–68. Compare Green, 1988. The understanding of Carl Schmitt is probably very important if we wish to grasp the role of Nazism in the demise of liberal nationalism and the rise of ethnarchy and ethno-anarchism. Green's and Sombart's books (two exciting, stylish, bold, and unjustly neglected works) show how the defeat of the *first* sexual revolution in the 1920s that coincided with the defeat of socialist revolution in the West influenced people (Martin Green's protagonists, apart from the ubiquitous von Richthofen sisters, are D. H. Lawrence, Max Weber, and the mysterious Otto Gross) in singling out as the main reason for decay female and homosexual eroticism. The predecessor of this view, the misogynistic and anti-Semitic Otto Weininger (famous author of *Geschlecht und Charakter*), much admired by Adolf Hitler and Ludwig Wittgenstein (the former said Weininger was the only honest Jew he ever came across), following in Nietzsche's footsteps, thought that that decline of the West was a decline of manliness, male bonding,

and military virtue. The influential theory of the matriarchy devised by the greatest Romantic, Johann Jakob Bachofen (a Swiss, like all the great and awesome republicans, Calvin, Rousseau, and Gottfried Keller), developed in his immortal works, *Versuch über die Gräbersymbolik der Alten* (1859) and *Das Mutterrecht* (1861)—cf. Erwin Rohde on the Eleusinian mysteries in his *Psyche: Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen* (Freiburg, 1898, pp. 279–300)—seems today the greatest ever challenge to Prussian militarism that was seen by Prince Bismarck and his acolyte, the Jewish arch-conservative Maximilian Harden (a less talented version of Karl Kraus in Vienna), as being attacked from within by Emperor William II's (Kaiser Wilhelm II) homoerotic cterie (cf. Sombart, *passim*, also *Die Fackel*, *passim*). Attack from within and from without—the noble voluntarism of Gustav Landauer's *Revolution* (1907) and *Aufruf zum Sozialismus* (1911), as opposed to the base and nihilistic voluntarism of Bakunin and Sorel, was never acknowledged by Carl Schmitt; too loving, perhaps?—convinced somehow the revolutionary Right that female sexuality was an *anomie*. The occult feminine domination that promised to transmogrify human nature could be resisted only by a radical counter-revolution: racial purity meant effectively the neutering of the female sex. Bachofen's, D. H. Lawrence's, Otto Gross's love for, and adoration of, women was felt terribly threatening. Otto Weininger's idea that the Judaic principle was in a way the “passive,” feminine principle (a great surprise to the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, Lord Jakobovits) offered the explanation: the neutering of women can be achieved only through the destruction of Jewry. Ludwig Klages, the hero of *die kosmische Runde* in the cosmopolitan/avant-garde Munich/Schwabing was enormously influential in thinking that mind was masculine and soul feminine (in his *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* and *Goethe als Seelenforscher* that begat Gundolf's *Goethe* and Korff's *Geist der Goethezeit*, of course *sans* acknowledgments). Everything that was bad and revolutionary (such as the Slavonic soul, ambiguously praised by Moeller van der Bruck, celebrated author of *Das Dritte Reich*) was felt to be female. Will, thought Carl Schmitt, will have to be liberated from ratiocination and affection, things female and pederastic. The rule of law was believed to be a manner of faggotry. And the most dangerous fifth column, Jewish men who love women, will have to be extirpated. Strangely enough, romanticism that celebrated men's love for women was thought to be somehow gay, since loving women—for the fascists—is a weakness. *Gynaecocracy*—to use J. J. Bachofen's term—is the future

if Jews and Romantics are not put to death. The chaste masculinity of Stefan George, Carl Schmitt, Ernst Jünger, Martin Heidegger (challenged by the Babylonian revolutionary, the warmhearted Jewess, Hannah Arendt) was meant to preserve the purity of the Will, of the *liberum arbitrium* of the licence to kill. The licence to distinguish between friend and foe, the basis of politics according to Carl Schmitt, is made indeterminate by the relativising of citizenship he who has got only a soul is no citizen. For a liberal critique of Schmitt and Heidegger, see Holmes, 1993, pp. 37–60; Wolin, 1990, *passim*; and Wolin, 1993. For a conservative critique, see Leo Strauss in Meier, 1988; Meier, 1995; and Lowith, 1995.

⁷ The road to “post-modern” ethno-anarchism is shown by Talmon, 1965, pp. 11-63; Cohn, 1961, 1993; Lasky, 1985; Talmon, 1991, 1993; Trachtenberg, 1993.

⁸ See Broch, 1986; Ory, 1976; Elias, 1994, pp. 159–222, 295–516; Schmitt, 1994; Nolte, 1994; Tamás, 1995b; and Botho Strauss, 1994. Botho Strauss, one of the very few great contemporary German writers, is doubtlessly a neo-Nazi. In his famous *Spiegel* essay, traditional Nazi Anglophobia is replaced by anti-Americanism. He deserves to be quoted in the original. “*Die heile Welt des Schmunzel-Moderators: 'das bunte, gemütlich beieinander wohnende Völkchen der Prostituierten, Drogensuchtigen, deutschen Hausfrauen, Asylanten und Intellektuellen . . .'*” (p. 23). “. . . *Wie gierig der Mainstream das rechte Rinnsal stetig zu vergrößern sucht . . .*” (p. 36) “. . . *Der linke Terrorismus seine Rolle im play of kingship gespielt . . .*” (p. 39). “*Das mediale Pokerface und die verzerrte Visage des Fremdenhassers bilden den politischen Januskopf . . .*” (p. 37). “. . . *von Dante zum Computerszenario . . .*” (p. 38). “*Die High-Touch-Intelligenz, alle immer miteinander in Tuchfühlung . . .*” (p. 31). “. . . *Der kollektive Befindlichkeitsstrom der Rock- oder Underground-Szene . . .*” (p. 29). “. . . *Wirklichkeitsbezwingende Gefüge von Simulacren und Simulatoren . . .*” (p. 40). In the same book, Hans Jürgen Syberberg, the director of the famous *Hitler* movie (cf. Susan Sontag, “Syberberg’s Hitler,” in her *Under the Sign of Saturn*, London: Writers & Readers, 1983, pp. 137–168) and author of the infamous anti-Semitic tract, *Vom Unglück und Glück der Kunst in Deutschland nach dem letzten Kriege* (Munich, 1991) avers that foreigners are robbing Germany of its tragic grandeur. Perhaps Professor Paul Hollander should add a new chapter to his *Anti-Americanism: Irrational & Rational* (New Brunswick, 1995). Cf. Jaspers, 1987; Heidegger and Jaspers, 1992, pp. 166–168; Lyotard, 1990.

⁹ See Szücs, 1983, pp. 131–84; Ronen, 1979; Verdery, 1991, 1993, pp. 180–203; Venturi, 1983; Volovici, [1991] 1995. It seems that the characteristic addition from Eastern Europe to the cultural history of nationalism is anti-politics. Compare Claude Karnoouh's extraordinary book (1987).

¹⁰ Cf. Voegelin, 1987, 1993, Jonas, 1991.

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Ethnarchy and Ethno-Anarchism

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