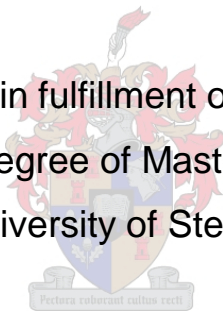


Social and Natural Reality:
Prospects for a Consilient Theory of Nationalism

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Thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
at the University of Stellenbosch




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March, 2008

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bryce Swerhun', is written over a solid horizontal line.

Bryce Swerhun

November 1, 2007

Abstract

Nationalism is quite easy to understand, but somewhat difficult to explain. In terms of understanding nationalism, we do not need to know anything more about society and sentiment than what is taken for granted in everyday life. An individual who 'drops' into a foreign culture may know absolutely nothing about its people's songs, rituals, amusements and traditions: why some customs evoke tears, and others, bravado. This person would feel no sense of collective awe or inspiration when touring historic battlefields and monuments of an unfamiliar country. Nevertheless, he or she would likely understand and appreciate that all of these things are steeped in meaning and identity. These instances of meaning and identity may not be felt, shared or even fully known, but their role as expressions of nationalism can be readily appreciated. The global spread of nations entails an array of mutually unfamiliar national identities, but the actual phenomenon nationalism is rarely foreign to anyone. From an outsider's perspective we do not know how certain expressions are significant to a particular group, but we do understand that they are expressions of national belonging.

Explaining nationalism is more difficult for the simple reason that experiencing and recognizing a phenomenon is not sufficient to account for its existence. Customs and rituals are two suggested properties of nationalism, but what is the causal relationship between such properties and the end phenomenon (how does custom actually lead to nationalism, if at all)? The answers to these questions are still a matter of debate. The situation is only made worse by the fact that most theories explaining nationalism seem to rest on a tower of abstractions. For instance, it may seem uncontroversial for some to argue that nationalism is an outgrowth of ethnic identity. However, this just begs the question. What is ethnicity? The potential for regress to abstraction is a major impediment to theory.

This thesis will examine the problem of explanation: the reasons why theories of nationalism have struggled with explaining nationalism, and a discussion on how to overcome these difficulties. Specifically, this thesis will show that:

- 1) The problem of explaining nationalism is due in part to the 'classical' problem found in the literature: whether nationalism is an 'ancient' social phenomenon, or a 'modern' phenomenon which can be dated (roughly) to the late eighteenth century.
- 2) Debates regarding the classical problem are closely affected by philosophical issues in the social sciences.
- 3) The incorporation of a consilient methodology (i.e. a research program that unifies theories of social science with theories of natural science) can provide a new strategy for future theories of nationalism and work to solve the classical problem.

Opsomming

Nasionalisme is taamlik maklik om te verstaan, maar ietwat moeiliker om te verduidelik. Ten einde nasionalisme te verstaan, hoef ons nie enigiets meer oor die samelewing en sentiment te weet as wat in die alledaagse lewe as gegewe aanvaar word nie. 'n Individu wat haarself in 'n vreemde kultuur bevind mag absoluut niks van sy mense se liedere, rituele, en tradisies weet nie: hoekom sommige gebruike trane en ander bravado tot gevolg het nie. Hierdie persoon sou geen sin van kollektiewe ontsag of inspirasie ervaar wanneer sy historiese slagvelde en monumente van 'n onbekende land besigtig nie. Nietemin, sou hy of sy waarskynlik 'n waardering hê vir die feit dat daar 'n diepe betekenis en identiteit onderliggend aan al hierdie dinge is. Hierdie gevalle van betekenis en identiteit mag dus nie ervaar word, gedeel word, of selfs ten volle geken word nie, maar die rol wat hulle speel as uitdrukkings van nasionalisme kan geredelik waardeer word. Die globale verspreiding van nasies behels 'n reeks wedersyds onbekende nasionale identiteite, maar die verskynsel van nasionalisme is vir min mense 'n vreemde konsep. Vanuit die perspektief van 'n buitseander weet ons nie hoe sekere uitdrukkings belangrik is vir 'n spesifieke groep nie, maar ons verstaan dat hulle uitdrukkings van nasionale samehorigheid is.

Om nasionalisme te verduidelik is meer ingewikkeld, vir die eenvoudige rede dat die ervaring van 'n fenomeen nie genoegsaam is om vir die bestaan daarvan rekenskap te gee nie. Wat is die saamgestelde eienskappe van nasionalisme? Wat is die kousale verhouding tussen hierdie eienskappe en die uiteindelijke verskynsel? Die antwoorde op hierdie vrae bly 'n saak van debat. Die situasie word boonop vererger deur die feit dat meeste teorieë wat nasionalisme verduidelik berus op 'n toring van abstraksies. By voorbeeld, mag dit vir sommige skrywers onbetwisbaar wees dat nasionalisme 'n uitgroei van etniese identiteit is. Dit lei egter dan tot die vraag: Wat is etnisiteit? Die potensiaal vir agteruitgang tot abstraksie is 'n aansienlike belemmering vir teorie.

Hierdie tesis gaan die probleem van verduideliking ondersoek: die redes hoekom teorieë van nasionalisme tot dusver gesukkel het om die verskynsel te verduidelik, asook hoe hierdie struikelblokke oorkom kan word, sal bespreek word. Meer spesifiek sal hierdie tesis wys dat:

- 1) Die probleem met die verduideliking van nasionalisme het sy oorsprong in die 'klassieke' probleem binne die literatuur het: naamlik of nasionalisme 'n 'antieke' sosiale fenomeen, of 'n 'moderne' fenomeen is wat (naastenby) uit die agtiende eeu dateer.
- 2) Debatte oor die klassieke probleme word noustens geaffekteer deur filosofiese kwessies in die sosiale wetenskappe.
- 3) Die inkorporasie van 'n verenigende metodologie (m.a.w. 'n navorsingsprogram wat teorieë van die sosiale wetenskappe verenig met feite in die natuurlike wêreld) kan 'n nuwe strategie vir toekomstige teorieë van nasionalisme voorsien.

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1. Introduction

This chapter explores issues related to theories of nationalism. It begins with a discussion on how perceptions of nationalism relate to actual debates in the literature: for instance, how nationalism's role in major conflicts informs our definition of nationalism. Afterward, the chapter will discuss a number of assumptions about the meaning of nationalism (specifically, what ideas comprise nationalist thought) and how these result in confusion over the origin of nationalism in history. The goal of this introduction is to introduce a number of competing ideas about the origin of nationalism, providing a framework for the literature review on theories of nationalism in Chapter Two.

1.1 OBSTACLES TO THE STUDY OF NATIONALISM

There is a certain ironic humour about the 1946 printing of Kohn's thesis on nationalism, *The Idea of Nationalism*. It was published subsequent to World War Two, but still in the shadow of wartime materials rationing policies in the United States and other countries. There is an interesting graphic and caption on the reverse of the cover page, just below the copyright information. The caption reads "A Wartime Book ... This complete edition is produced in full compliance with the government's regulations for conserving paper and other essential materials". The graphic just above the caption is of an eagle, probably the defining icon of American patriotism. With a look of rugged determination on its face (the arched eyebrow is artistic license of course) the eagle swoops down the page, a book held firm in its talons. In its beak it holds a banner that reads "books are weapons in the war of ideas". Humour and irony aside, there could be no better way to preface a book on nationalism. Even this simple and coincidental display serves to illustrate an important point: that nationalism is a really existing phenomenon, not a product of academic conjecture.

Hans Kohn is considered one of the most important twentieth century scholars on nationalism, and for good reason. No one writing on the subject at this time can hope to make a meaningful contribution without addressing Kohn's argument, that: "nationalism as we understand it is not older than the second half of the eighteenth century. Its first great manifestation was the French

Revolution, which gave the new movement an increased dynamic force.”¹ This is just the opening statement of his *Idea*, but it presents an argument on the origin of nationalism that has consumed the intellects, and in some instances careers, of many influential historians and social scientists since initial publication in 1944².

To be fair, Kohn was surely aware that his opening remarks would stimulate controversy. The statements are curt, but hardly off the cuff. His extensive referencing on the opening statement alone, drawn out in the endnotes, anticipates a lengthy and heated debate. The debate is about the very nature of nationalism: whether it is a product of modernity, i.e. a combination of historical development, cultural changes and technological advancement that came to bear on states and societies in the late eighteenth century; or a phenomenon whose origins can be traced back to the early civilizations of the ancient near east and which is either a natural component of social cohesion³, or a vehicle for individuating groups of people based on symbols and culture⁴. Discussion over the time and place of nationalism’s emergence and of its correct usage as a term, define the literature on nationalism theory in the twentieth century. These issues remain contentious to this day.

Refuting the ancient⁵ account, that nationalism is rooted in early civilization, Kohn writes that “the concern with nationalism in old times is a product of the years, when nationalism dominating all our thoughts makes us see nationalism everywhere”⁶. Kohn published these remarks in the closing years

¹ Hans Kohn, “The Idea of Nationalism” pg.3

² Although Kohn’s publication was not the first to suggest events in the eighteenth century such as the French Revolution as the beginning of modern nationalism, Kohn was considered one of the ‘founding fathers’ (Aira Kemilainen quoted in Anderson) of nationalism theory and his arguments for this timeframe are considered fundamental to subsequent debate. See Benedict Anderson’s footnote 4, “Imagined Communities” pg.4

³ Anthony D. Smith, “The Nation in History” pg. 20

⁴ Ibid. pg. 65. It should be emphasized that an ancient account of nationalism need not imply that nationalism is a natural component of societies.

⁵ For ease of reference, these opening remarks omit much of the jargon associated with nationalism. ‘Ancient’, for instance, bundles otherwise discrete and non-interchangeable terms such as ‘primordial’, ‘perennial’ and ‘ethno-symbolic’. ‘Modern’ is a term that could apply to a number of different theories which argue for the origin of nationalism as a recent phenomenon. Specific terms, beyond just ‘ancient’ and ‘modern’, will be discussed more fully in the first chapter as they relate to individual theories of nationalism.

⁶ Hans Kohn, “The Idea of Nationalism” pg. 579.

of World War Two, so perhaps we can sympathize with his position within that context. The excesses of nationalist sentiment were blamed for tremendous suffering in Europe and Asia, both in the lead up and the course of that war; and there was a strong desire amongst post-war historians to reject the racist, xenophobic and chauvinistic pre-modern mythologies that had served official nationalisms⁷.

Fascism's contribution to human suffering led many prominent commentators to equate nationalism with tyranny⁸. Elie Kedourie is well known for arguing that "nationalists are naïve, irresponsible ideologues who destroy political order for the sake of a theory, letting loose civil war, massacre, the creation of refugees and economic collapse"⁹. Nationalism, for Kedourie, is simply an error in human history: an anomaly created by short-sighted intellectuals in modern times and adopted by political opportunists and dictators¹⁰.

Returning to *Idea*, Kohn's remark about 'seeing nationalism everywhere' should make us stop to think about how our conceptions of nationalism get coloured by popular politics and the current states of affairs. Do the negative connotations of nationalism in the twentieth century influence our conception of nationalism as a social phenomenon? If nationalism is both a fuel for war and a fabricated mythology, then perhaps its contribution to the violence of the First and Second World Wars can be traced back to the French Revolution's impact on Franco-Germanic relations¹¹. Given the contribution of nineteenth century conflicts to the two world wars, we could be convinced that nationalism really is modern in origin. On the other hand, one could argue that political loyalties and violence are nothing remotely modern, that bloodshed could define the history of all civilization. If not for collective identity and a desire for self-determination (arguably two crucial aspects of nationalism), how could we explain Athens' resistance to the prospect of Spartan domination? It is not clear why ancient resistance to foreign

⁷ Lloyd Kramer, "Historical Narratives and the Meaning of Nationalism" pg. 536

⁸ James G. Kellas, "The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity" pg. 135.

⁹ Margaret Canovan, "Nationhood and Political Theory" pg. 12.

¹⁰ Lloyd Kramer, "Historical Narratives and the Meaning of Nationalism" pg. 536

¹¹ Brian Vick, "The Origins of the German Volk: Cultural Purity and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Germany" pg. 250

domination should be considered any different from ours. If nationalism goes hand in hand with war, especially wars over the right of self-determination, then perhaps its relationship to antiquity should be investigated more vigorously.

1.2 PERCEPTIONS OF NATIONALISM AND ARGUMENTATION

Kohn chides scholars who write about matters of historical relevance while only thinking in the present state of mind. He does not offer a clear explanation as to why this line of thought is so problematic, so perhaps the idea of adopting a bias for current events simply runs contrary to his sensibilities as an historian. Perhaps he did not wish to see his own modern theory of nationalism confined to the rhetoric of anti-war attitudes. Whatever his motivation may have been, we can arrive at a few good reasons on our own as to why popular ideas about nationalism can be misleading.

The role of violence in nationalist struggles, as illustrated in the previous section, borders on argument by association: attempting to defend an explanation for something in terms of another distinct phenomenon, by way of a common attribute. The ancient history of violence can be associated with ancient accounts of struggles for self-determination, that much could be true, but concluding that nationalism is as old as violent conflict simply because the two phenomena may share the attribute of self-determination is going a step too far. Equivocation is another risk. Societies have fought off invading armies and have risen up against unpopular despots throughout history, but these facts do not necessarily imply a sense of nationhood. Not all soldiers in history have gone to war with a belief that they were defending a national interest, or a homeland. Carlton J.H. Hayes, an historian who argued for the nation as a product of modernity before the publication of Kohn's remarks, notes that:

“for centuries, ever since the rise of the oriental empires of antiquity, it has been the exception, rather than the rule, for an independent state to embrace one and only one nationality. The individual had normally been patriotic about his city, his locality, his ruler, or

his empire, but not about his nationality. The ancient Greek had been supremely patriotic about Athens or Sparta, but not about Greece.”¹²

Tempting as equivocation may be, Hayes’ account shows us that it is still no substitution for historical rigor. Violence, self-determination and patriotism can be found in pre-modern history, but if the concept of a Greek national identity did not exist for these peoples, if the Greeks did not see themselves as Greeks, then it makes little sense to speak of Greek nationalism as an ancient phenomenon¹³.

1.3 THE PROBLEM REFRAMED

Given the pitfalls of association and equivocation, it seems unfeasible that we could apply terms such as nationalism correctly to civilizations predating our modern context. Even if the current state of affairs might influence our perceptions of nationalism, we receive no substantial insight into the latter’s origins. It would seem then that the historians have won, but this would be a hasty assessment. The historians ‘have yet to lose’ would be more fitting.

Returning to the issue of argumentation, it would be fallacious to cite errors in the ancient account of nationalism as grounds for accepting the modern account. This sort of ‘either-or’ thinking implies a sort of false dichotomy. Modern and ancient accounts of nationalism may sound like polar opposites, but there is no reason to treat them as such. Genuine polar opposites entail an excluded middle: a choice between all of A and none of B, but this is not the case with ancient and modern accounts of nationalism. Hayes’ argument, that the Athenians and Spartans felt no sense of national belonging as Greeks, should not preclude the role that ancient civilizations, cultures and ethnicities play in the development of nationalism. His argument that “if the

¹² Carlton J.H. Hayes, “The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism” pg.6-7

¹³ There is some reference in ancient Greek texts to what is often translated as the Greek ‘nation’. In addition, Herodotus “held that the Greeks formed one people, in spite of their geographical and political fragmentation, because they were of common descent, had a common language, common gods and sacred places, sacrificial festivals and customs, mores or ways of life” (Hobsbawm 59). However, Eric Hobsbawm questions the validity of the conclusion that early Greeks formed the equivalent of a modern nation, because such beliefs were likely just the conjecture of literate elites and had little to do with the sentiments of the Greek population as a whole”. Eric Hobsbawm, “Nations and Nationalism Since 1780” pg. 59.

Greeks did not see themselves as Greeks, then it makes little sense to speak of Greek nationalism as ancient” is sensible if one is concerned about maintaining an accurate conception of how people thought, conducted their relations and referred to themselves in their own time; however, there is an alternative to the historian’s perspective.

Suppose we set history aside. Instead of focusing on ‘what words mattered when and to whom’ we might become more interested in the process of how nationalism actually came to be: to explain the origins of national sentiment, rather than just situate its occurrence in the proper context. For the historian, it just makes sense to apply the term ‘nationalism’ to societies who refer to themselves in terms of nationalism; and for the sake of argument, that might as well be eighteenth century France, just as Hans Kohn claims. The new question is about where nationalism comes from. Ancient societies arguably did not constitute nations, but nevertheless, perhaps they are the source of nationalism. Why are the people in France ‘French’ and not some assorted group of loosely affiliated city states? In addition, why are they ‘French’ and not ‘German’? Graham Day and Andrew Thompson do an excellent job in summing up the sorts of problems that theorists arguing for ancient sources nationalism find so engaging:

“In its account of French history, Microsoft’s *Encarta* refers to the ‘emergence of France’ during the reign of the Merovingian King Clovis in the fifth century AD. Elsewhere, Gutierrez shows how Mexican schoolchildren are taught that the history of Mexico as a nation dates back to the fourteenth century, and the founding of what today is known as Mexico City, and that the peoples of this region were ‘our ancestors’. Consumers of these narratives are encouraged to see the earlier people who inhabited the same physical place as themselves as being Mexican or French, as somehow *like us*. Whether these people were early Mexicans, any more than Clovis was the first Frenchman, is questionable, but in both instances ‘France’ and ‘Mexico’ are presented as identifiable entities, the national histories of which stretch back into the distant past.”¹⁴

Clovis certainly predates the historical advent of nationalism in eighteenth century France and yet there is something coherent in ascribing him a foundational role in the development of French nation, just as we may refer to the Franks as early Frenchmen. There is no good historical reason for doing this, because Clovis would not have considered himself a Frenchman, just as

¹⁴ Graham Day and Andrew Thompson, “Theorizing Nationalism” pg.63

Athenians and Spartans would not have considered themselves members of a Greek nation. Furthermore, not all Franks ultimately became French, either. Some of the early populations of the Frankish Kingdom never lived in geographical area that became home to the modern day French nation, such that many Franks went on to become German¹⁵, yet the Franks in general might still be considered forebears of the French nation as a matter of historical continuity.

The Frankish cultural and social heritages are the historical antecedents of the present French nation, so whether the Franks were aware of it or not, their society provided a footing for French nationalism. They provided the French a myth of origin¹⁶. In so far as they provide that myth, the Franks constitute an ancient basis for nationalism. The Celts offer the same situation. Celts populated the land now occupied by the Franks and the modern French nation, but as a group they are also considered the forebears of the Britons and the Gaels, amongst other groups¹⁷. In each instance, members of modern nations identify with ancient peoples who would never identify with them. As Day and Thompson point out, distortions of history seem to go hand-in-hand with our sentiments for nationalism.

1.4 NATIONALISM AND IDENTITY

The process of national identification with ancient societies would carry little currency with historians, who insist on keeping terms like nationalism within the appropriate historical context: a difficult position to maintain, it turns out, when one considers how ancient societies, not to mention their early languages and cultural uniqueness become absorbed into the concept of a modern nation. Identification is a key component of understanding nationalism and, not surprisingly, it is central to the debate on the ancient/modern divide.

¹⁵ Anthony D. Smith, "The Ethnic Origins of Nations" see map plate 6

¹⁶ The term 'myth' is used, because, as stated, the Franks were not Frenchmen.

¹⁷ Ibid. see map plate 4

The process that causes and steers the creation of nationalist identities is a hotly debated topic. As one would expect, the ancient/modern distinction is a central theme in the debate. Theorists who argue for the modern development of nationalism often appeal to historically emerging events, such as the decline of agrarian rural societies in the case of Ernest Gellner, or the pace of technological innovation and social transformation in the case of Benedict Anderson¹⁸ and Eric Hobsbawm¹⁹. Although these authors do not summarily dismiss roles for ancient peoples and texts in providing the content of nationalist beliefs, their emphasis is on the transformative role of economic development and resulting hierarchical economic systems as the prime developers of nationalism. The traditions and ethnic identities handed down by ancient societies give us the idea that nationalism is an old phenomenon, but these very sentiments actually owe a great deal to modern material factors²⁰.

On the ancient account, mythology, symbols and ethnicity have a causal role in developing nationalism. The pressures of modern development and economics are, in kind, not summarily dismissed, but emphasis is placed on ethnic lineages and durable identities as the prime developers of nationalism²¹. Nations are not 'invented' or 'imagined'. Their existence, and the existence of nationalism as a social phenomenon, depends on the resilience of stable community relationships and identities²². Theorists working on this side of the debate include John A. Armstrong, Boyd Shafer and Anthony D. Smith.²³

¹⁸ Anderson's theory borrows from Marxist theory, but he is quick to point out the inability of various Marxists to fit the role of nationalist conflicts into a Marxist account of history. See Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities" pg. 3

¹⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, "Nations and Nationalism Since 1780" pg. 46

²⁰ Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities" pg. 26

²¹ Craig Calhoun, "Nationalism and Ethnicity" pg. 227

²² Anthony D. Smith, "The Nation in History" pg. 57

²³ To be fair, Anthony D. Smith does not fit neatly into either camp as much of his work attempts to establish an account between ancient and modern nationalisms. However, his emphasis on ethno-symbolology tends to put him in better comfort with theorists who concentrate on ethnicity, symbolology and other factors generally associated with ancient nationalism. See Day and Thompson, pg.64

1.5 PROBLEMS DEFINING 'NATIONALISM'

The previous section gives a good indication as to why the origins of nationalism are still debated. Considering all of the possible factors contributing to the emergence of nationalism, it is hard to pin down one exact answer that could please everyone. Throughout its academic history, the study of nationalism has yielded many novel theories on national identity's relationship with social cohesion and behaviour, but none are truly incontestable. There is still no definitive account of what nationalism is. Why has the debate over the categories of ancient and modern nationalism burned steadily, with no lasting resolution in sight?

The difficulty of defining 'nationalism' is at the heart of the problem. Quite often, a theorist's definition of nationalism is inseparable from their arguments on the origins of nationalism. Barrington notes that "one problem with definitions of 'nations' in [the] literature is the combination of definition of definitions and causal arguments"²⁴. Anthony D. Smith's theory illustrates this problem in his definitions of 'nationalism' and 'nation'. For Smith, nationalism is "an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity, and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'"²⁵. This conception of nationalism may initially appear fairly unproblematic, because it denotes a series of theory-neutral qualities and behaviours that a social group must display in order to participate in nationalism. However, problems emerge when we factor in Smith's definition of 'nation': "a named human population occupying a historic territory or homeland and sharing common myths and memories; a mass, public culture; a single economy; and common rights and duties for all members"²⁶. While it is true that some aspects of this definition may have broad appeal in some respects, such as the inclusion of a "mass, public culture", some other aspects are undeniably theory-laden.

²⁴ Lowell Barrington, "'Nation' and 'nationalism': The Misuse of Key Concepts in Political Science" in "Political Science and Politics" pg. 712

²⁵ Anthony D. Smith, "The Nation in History" pg. 3

²⁶ Ibid. pg. 3

The sharing of common myths and memories is an incidental feature of nations for those who argue for a material origin for nationalism. Ernest Gellner, for one, argues that “cultural and social organization are universal and perennial. States and nationalisms are not”²⁷. On Gellner’s line, it does not follow that cultural products such as myths and memories alone could have caused the development of nationalism. Gellner’s own conception is arguably the most accepted definition in the current literature: “Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent”²⁸. This definition would probably satisfy most critics, but once again, debates emerge when one is asked who are what determines that the political and national should be congruent: is it a popular and culturally driven uprising, or a product of elite manipulation?

The same problem of definition is found with the claim that nations entail common rights and duties for all members: it could be interpreted to mean that all nations are egalitarian. While this liberal value may have a great deal of moral appeal for some theorists, it stands at odds with the possibility of a nation forged by elite manipulation and economic inequality (as would be the case with a Marxist theory of nationalism).

Smith’s definitions fall short because his understanding of ‘nationalism’, although fairly satisfactory, is made dependent on his understanding of ‘nation’, which is only intelligible in terms of his particular argument. Other problems are found in definitions that denote a variety of attributes, but no deeper understanding of the terms ‘nation’ or ‘nationalism’ beyond the meaning of those attributes. James G. Kellas defines ‘nation’ as: “a group of people who feel themselves to be a community bound together by ties of history, culture, and common ancestry”²⁹. Again, it is a definition that will work for some, but not for all. Suppose you agree with the first two attributes, but take issue with the notion of ‘common ancestry’? Suppose one agrees with Kellas’ categories, but wishes to add a fourth, ‘common language’. Would

²⁷ Ernest Gellner, “Nationalism” pg. 5

²⁸ Ernest Gellner quoted in Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “Ethnicity and Nationalism” pg. 96

²⁹ James G. Kellas, “The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity” pg. 2

that necessarily conflict with his original definition? What to do when comparing theories of nationalism, Kellas' and Anderson's? There is no common definition of nationalism, so we cannot not establish whether theorists are writing on the same subjects.

1.6 “THE TYRANNY OF WORDS”

The difficulty of establishing a working definition of ‘nationalism’ does nothing to the truth value of any of the theories mentioned so far. Kellas and Gellner may both be ‘correct’ in so far as their arguments follow from the particular world they have defined. Smith would be justified to invoke ethnic symbology, given that his conception of ‘nation’ is defined by a society’s “common myths”. Indeed, it is difficult to see how one could argue against him. There is a problem with loose or unstable definitions, because they make theories difficult to criticize.

Arguments regarding the origins of nations remain so tense partly because it is hard to establish a working definition of ‘nationalism’ that is not couched in theory. The theorist who best captured this quandary over definitions was Louis L. Snyder, whose 1954 book on nationalism opened with the telling chapter ‘The Tyranny of Words’. Snyder writes at length about the difficulty of properly defining nationalism and offers a number of explanations. First, simply enough, is his contention that nationalism:

“means different things to different peoples—British liberals hailed it as a force for liberation and freedom; German Nazis welcomed it as a means for aggression and as a weapon against democracy; Russian Communists denounce it as a tool of capitalism and, and the same time, while claiming to be internationalists, seek to make use of it in satellite countries behind the Iron Curtain...On occasion, different parties within one country utilize the word nationalism to express totally divergent views”³⁰

Snyder’s frustration then takes a darker turn, his remarks becoming more cynical and menacing in tone. He claims that “much of the confusion may be attributed to nationalists who have a vested interest in maintaining a

³⁰ Louis L. Snyder, “The Meaning of Nationalism” pg. 4

vagueness of language as a cloak for their aims”³¹. This conspiratorial turn is rather unoptimistic, raising the possibility that our somewhat benign categories of nationalism such as mythology and industrialization are perhaps just the tools of some greater power and whose true meaning will always be masked by hidden motives. Another less sinister but equally gloomy prospect is a state of relativism. Snyder suggests that nationalism is “an organism, a spiritual entity” and quotes George P. Gooch as saying that “all attempts to penetrate its secrets by the light of mechanical interpretation break down before the test of experience”³². Quoting H.L. Featherstone, Snyder effectively throws up his arms and declares that “nationalism is not capable of scientific definition”³³.

Snyder may overstate his case somewhat, but there’s a sense that concern is warranted. Without an impartial definition of nationalism, it is difficult to elevate perfectly reasonable theory above the unhelpful static of relativism and nihilism. Ultimately, a useful theory of nationalism must achieve more than internal coherence and logical consistency. It must also be true of the social world it claims to explain.

1.7 NATIONALISM AND ‘BORROWED’ IDEAS

Snyder is also somewhat correct in arguing that nationalism is incapable of scientific definition. Scientific claims generally refer to natural facts, whereas all theories of nationalism must make reference to the social world. Whether the focus is history, culture or economics, all societies and organizations are based on social ideas. Also, unlike natural facts, social realities are always ‘of our own making’ to some degree. As beings guided by forethought, people are able to realize and therefore control great parts of their destiny. Myths, for example, may form an important basis for nationalism, but if and how myths will be interpreted in such a way that leads to nationalist sentiment is very difficult to predict. There is too much change in the social world to

³¹ *ibid.* pg.4

³² *ibid.* pg.5

³³ *ibid.* pg.5

accommodate universal theories of prediction on topics such as nationalism. It is hard to substantiate any idea that nationalism emerges in all societies in a fixed and predictable fashion.

Nevertheless, there is still a very strong sense that there is something we can know about nationalism 'in general'. For instance, all theories of nationalism seem to involve a component of group identity. Whether that identity is forged by economic or cultural forces is debatable, but most would agree that national identity is a particular variety of group identity. 'Universal' is not a popular word in any social science, but it is unlikely that any meaningful theory of nationalism could lack a statement on identity. It is just the matter of 'how it is formed' that seems to be at issue. Why has there been no resolution over how and why national identities emerge?

'Borrowed' ideas are the main reason why theories of nationalism have stumbled over this question. If the study of nationalism suffers from just one fault, i.e. a burden that seems to hold back most theories of the phenomenon and definitions of the term, it is a heavy reliance on ideas 'borrowed' from a variety of academic fields (often fields that have no specific interest in nationalism per se): philosophy, anthropology and psychology/linguistics in particular. Whenever a theory of nationalism refers to 'ethnicity', 'culture' or 'common language', it makes use of ideas taken from a wide array of academic disciplines.

It is inevitable that nationalism will be subject to other areas concerning social behaviour and organization, but this arrangement does present a challenge: namely, the quality of any theory of nationalism depends a great deal on the quality of the ideas it borrows. Many of the unsolved issues between theories of nationalism, the debate on origins in particular, can be traced to problems about particular ideas (such as the nature of language or ethnicity). Any discussion about the relative strengths and weaknesses between theories of nationalism must also examine the 'roots' of all borrowed ideas.

1.8 ARGUMENTS AND SUMMARY

This introduction has mentioned a number of issues that could be examined in more detail, so clear objectives are needed. First, it is important to mention that this thesis does not propose a new theory of nationalism: such an investigation would require a sociological analysis of actual national communities and requires a more empirical research scope.

This thesis focuses on existing theories of nationalism and explain the following: how the debate on origins (ancient, modern or some alternative) have come to define the literature on nationalism; how theories of nationalism relate to ideas found throughout the humanities and social sciences (with a particular focus on philosophy, anthropology and related issues of language); and how a new consilient³⁴ methodology could better equip future theories to explain the social phenomenon of nationalism without succumbing to erroneous concepts of human commonly found in the humanities and social sciences.

There are certain limitations to the investigation. This thesis analyses theories that are most representative of particular debates in nationalism (modern accounts, ancient accounts, etc.). It does not presume to speak for all theories of nationalism that comment on these debates. In addition, although many theories of nationalism make reference to the histories and development of particular communities, this thesis is primarily focussed on issues related to general statements on human nature (language, group identity, etc.). Therefore, this thesis is not in a position to comment on the accuracy of each theory's portrayal of individual communities.

A final limitation concerns an issue that is relevant to all studies of nationalism. This thesis makes reference to research conducted in certain academic disciplines (philosophy, for instance). Future developments in

³⁴ A full definition of 'consilient' will be offered in the fourth chapter. A brief description of consilient is 'unified knowledge': an idea or theory that is applicable to a variety of academic disciplines and consistent with methodologies in both natural and social sciences.

these disciplines may have an impact on the arguments presented, so the value of this thesis to future research projects is subject to developments in the fields under study. Despite these limitations, this thesis will contribute to the study of nationalism by examining how the latter relates to the history of ideas in the social sciences and humanities.

This thesis is framed by a general argument. Complete theories of nationalism must resolve the classical problem (nationalism's origins in time and history) by addressing underlying philosophical and social scientific errors in the literature on nationalism and adopting a research methodology that is consistent with aspects of evolved human nature: specifically, language and group identity.

1.9 ORGANIZATION AND CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- Chapter One: Introduction
- Chapter Two: The literature review will discuss a number of key concepts in the study of nationalism: primordialism, perennialism, modern, and other categories related to the debate on origins. This chapter will explain how the debate on origins has come to define the study of nationalism and why a lasting resolution has not been reached.
- Chapter Three: This chapter discusses the relationship between early theories of nationalism and their relation to philosophical arguments of numerous Enlightenment and Romantic era thinkers. It also discusses the legacies of these thinkers and theories and how their respective ideas laid the foundations for both the modern social sciences and studies of nationalism.
- Chapter Four: New developments in theories of nationalism are presented in the context of early to late twentieth century developments in the social sciences: specifically, the emergence of anthropology and the reformulation of linguistic and cultural determinism. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how the implementation of a consistent research methodology (avoiding errors of constructivism discussed throughout the chapter) can work to resolve the debate on origins in future theories of nationalism.

Chapter Five: The conclusion will provide renewed justification for the importance of resolving the debate on nationalism's origins and discuss an alternative method for defining nationalism.

2. Themes in the Study of Nationalism: a Literature Review

Theories of nationalism are defined by a common debate: at what point in history did societies acquire the necessary attributes to define themselves as nations and to express their identities in terms of nationalism? This is a contentious issue, because there is great variation between 'what counts' as necessary components of nationalism. Is ethnic identity more important than geography? What is the nature of a society's relation to its past? These are two common issues raised in the debate.

This chapter will discuss the central arguments in the debate and will analyze an important issue: the reasons why a resolution to the debate has not been forthcoming.

2.1.1 INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

This chapter offers a brief introduction to nationalism as a subject of academic inquiry. At this stage our concern is not with nationalism 'as it really is', i.e. the really-existing phenomenon of nationalism 'out there in the world' which theory tries its best to explain, but with how this really-existing nationalism has been analyzed within the body of literature that has grown around it over the years. There are a number of paths that could help us construct such an account, some better than others, so it is important to settle on distinct goals and methodology at the outset.

The first step in spelling out goals and a methodology is defining the terminology they must accommodate. The introductory chapter divided theories of nationalism into two broad camps, 'ancient' and 'modern'. That division was useful for outlining nationalism's biggest sticking point, its origins in time and history, but the literature on nationalism is more nuanced.

2.1.2 PRIMORDIALISM

Primordialism is generally considered the earliest group of theories on nationalism: not in terms of when they placed the origins of nationalism, but

when they were written, in the mid-eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries¹. 'Primordial' refers to a particular conception of 'ancient' nationalism. A primordialist argues that nationalism is an inherent feature of social organization, such that it can be found in any distinct² society, regardless of economic or historical conditions³. Wherever and whenever you find individuals living in common with some individuals, apart from other individuals who live in common with other individuals, the situation is always understood as arising from a collective sense of belonging that has always existed, in some form, between the members of that group.

Individuals have lived in groupings that are distinguishable from one another, whether by language or social custom, throughout recorded history. Since nationalism is really just an expression of social belonging and cultural distinctiveness in this reading, its existence is best explained as an 'ancient' conception. Whether living in a tribe, city or state, an individual is always somewhat a product of group membership. National movements or particular doctrines of nationalism can emerge within the community at any time, but they will always be expressions of a more deep-seeded sense of collective identity; the 'volk' precedes the formation of the nation-state⁴. In qualitative terms, one might say that 'there is something that it is to be German, such that it is totally unlike being French'. The distinctiveness of each nation is 'organic', suggesting it has an inherent quality. The nation is not a random circumstance, but a sort of spirit⁵. Most would agree that groups are just different from one another in general, but strict primordialists are somewhat less prone to generalizations. What counts is that 'German' is unlike 'French', in particular.

¹ Brian Vick, "The Origins of the German Volk: Cultural Purity and National Identity in Nineteenth Century Germany" in "German Studies Review" pg. 241

² What counts as 'distinct' is variable, although most primordial accounts tend to go by linguistic distinctiveness. See Lloyd Kramer, "Historical Narratives and the Meaning of Nationalism" in "Journal of the History of Ideas" pg. 526

³ Graham Day and Andrew Thompson, "Theorizing Nationalism" pg. 39

⁴ Anthony D. Smith, "The Nation in History" pg. 9

⁵ Ibid. pg.9

2.1.3 PERENNIALISM

'Perennial' accounts generally agree that nations and nationalism are 'ancient' phenomena, but differ from primordialists in that they do not define nationalism or national belonging as inherent to a group of people⁶. This may come across as either vague or case of splitting hairs, so here is a more straightforward distinction: a primordialist would argue that unique collective identities are inherent to their respective groups, so there is something about being German that makes you unlike the French; a perennialist would argue that groups inevitably develop their own distinctive identities, but that there is nothing inherently unique about one identity or another. Primordialists see the German nation as the embodiment of 'German-ness'; perennialists would see Germany as a nation with a predominant ethnic group referred to as 'Germans'.

For the perennialist, unique social customs or conventions will spring up between groups just as a matter of course; the differences are fairly arbitrary. The fact that certain German humour does not translate well into French should not imply that being German is inherently different from being French. The idea that groups will distinguish themselves from one another (just insert your criteria) is the real source of nationalism. The actual differences are incidental.

Anthony Smith divides perennialism into two accounts: the first, 'continuous perennialism' maintains that a group's national identity persist over time, even if the distinctive aspects of that identity shift⁷. Factors such as common culture are the root of nationalism, because the history of any nation's culture can generally be traced back to a founding culture (which is usually pre-modern). Nationalism is really just one long causal chain, where one society adopts the customs of its predecessor while simultaneously laying the groundwork for its successor. The roots of nationalism are ancient, because

⁶ Anthony D. Smith, "The Nation in History" pg. 34

⁷ Ibid. pg. 34

identification can ultimately be traced backwards to some antecedent group along a line of common descent. This form of nationalism is perennial because no one spot along the chain can really claim to be the sum total of that particular nation⁸.

For example, consider the assertion that a twenty-year old, Fred, 'could not have been Fred at the age of five, because Fred is a grown man'. If Fred is a grownup, then he cannot be a five year old. At the same time, we cannot say that the five year old was never Fred, because that five year old became the grownup: the Fred that we see today. Fred is always Fred, even if he seems like (for all intents and purposes) a completely different person at each different stage of his life. Nations take different forms throughout history, but their causal relations make them perennial in time. 'Modern' accounts of nationalism are successfully refuted, but there is no need for primordialism. A primordialist would likely claim that Fred embodies an inherent 'Fredness' in order to exist, but a perennialist would be happy saying that Fred just happens to be a different version of himself as every stage of his life.

'Recurrent Nationalism' differs slightly. Although it does not outright deny that nations could come and go and return once more along a causal chain (refuting primordialism in the same way as continuous perennialism does) it insists that nationalism is 'unstuck' in time, because it is a timeless sociological phenomenon⁹. Cultural lineages may stretch back a long way, but it is the sociological inclination of people living in the present time to relate back to the past that gives nationalism its causal force. The past exists at one point in time, but it is causally meaningless to nationalism, because it cannot force the future to establish an identity with it (because it no longer exists, of course). Therefore, regardless of whether or not a nation is connected to a cultural lineage, it can nevertheless be individuated by its own particular existence in time. It may relate itself to the past, but it only exists in the present. Continuous perennialists would refer to the coming and going of nations as elements of a greater causal lineage, whereas recurrent

⁸ Anthony D. Smith, "The Nation in History" pg. 34

⁹ Ibid. pg. 35

perennialists would refer to each point on a common cultural lineage, or each coming and going, as a distinct manifestation of nationalism along the cultural lineage¹⁰.

Returning to Fred, we would have to recognize that five-year-old-Fred loses has no causal role (in terms of identity, but not existence) over grownup Fred. Suppose Fred lost his memory at the age of twenty and could no longer remember anything about his past as a five year old. We would not say that he no longer has the means by which to form a new identity. His five year old self may have been necessary for his existence, but the loss of his past would not doom the grownup Fred to being a 'nobody'. Likewise, it is just the case that nations do have a past, but the sociological ability to establish an identity (the true causal agent of nationalism) is omnipresent.¹¹

2.1.4 THE MODERN ACCOUNT

The 'modern' account of nationalism is similar to recurrent perennialism insofar as it sees particular nationalisms as distinct manifestations, but it differs significantly in arguing that the factors contributing to the emergence of nationalism are unique to a particular time. The dates differ slightly from scholar to scholar, but the preferred timeframe is usually at the end of the eighteenth century or early nineteenth century¹². Although most modernist theories would not go so far to suggest that the idea of cultural lineage or shared cultural history do not factor into peoples' individual perceptions of nationalism (indeed it is difficult to conceive of a nationalism that does not centre around the perception of these shared values) they would argue that modern agents are necessary for unifying these concepts into a coherent nationalism.

¹⁰ Anthony D. Smith, "The Nation in History" pg. 35

¹¹ This extended account of perennialism illustrates the differences that can emerge between theorists of the same general 'camp'. Although the two varieties of perennialism discussed by Smith do present opposing viewpoints in terms of time and causation, this thesis will generally refer only to 'perennialism' as a whole, meaning a theory that claims the origins of nationalism are 'old' or 'ancient', but not inherent to the nature of a community's characteristics (in other words, opposed to primordialism).

¹² Elie Kedourie, "Nationalism" pg. 9

It is really a matter of external impetus, not cultural solidarity or lineage, that serves as the causal agent of nationalism. While either variant of perennialism will likely argue that the necessary tools for establishing nationalism are omnipresent, a modernist is likely to say just the reverse, that there are causal factors preceding nationalism situated at very specific points in human history which then allow for permit social groups to see themselves as a nation¹³. Ernest Gellner demonstrates this thinking very well in arguing that “we are not mobile because we are egalitarians, we are egalitarians because we are mobile”¹⁴. We do not create nations with a perennial concept of nationalism in mind. We have a concept of nationalism in mind because of modernizing factors that have us living in nations. Louis Snyder would argue that Hans Kohn makes very much the same point, that “the rise of nationalism was preceded by the formation of the future national state”^{15, 16}. Although the factors of modernizing differ from theory to theory, many include changing governing structures and economic growth¹⁷. Modernists do not exclude culture whatsoever. Cultural changes certainly play an important role in the emergence of nationalism in the sense that they provide the content of common identity, but they do not play a causal role. Modern factors give culture its sense of commonality.

2.1.5 ‘ETHNIE’ AS AN ALTERNATIVE

‘Primordial’, ‘perennial’ and ‘modern’ are fairly straightforward terms, because it is easy to divide them into the ‘old’ and ‘new’ arguments over the origins of nationalism. Some other terms are trickier because they do not fit so neatly into either camp. The role of ‘Ethnie’ in some theories, for instance,

¹³ Ernest Gellner, “Nationalism” pg. 26

¹⁴ Ibid. pg.26

¹⁵ Louis L. Snyder, “The Meaning of Nationalism” pg. 118

¹⁶ It would seem that Day and Thompson misspoke on this point. Although they very much defend the modernist conception of nationalism as a product of modernizing factors, they erroneously write that “for the large part, the [theories] discussed in these chapters are of the view that nationalism necessarily precedes the nation...For the reasons outlined in the preceding [theories] ...the common view is that nationalism is a modern phenomenon”. See Graham Day and Andrew Thompson, “Theorizing Nationalism” pg. 82

¹⁷ Benedict Anderson, “Imagined Communities” pg. 41

appeals to both old and new ideas of nationalism. Anthony D. Smith defines *ethnie* as “a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of shared culture, a link with a homeland, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites”¹⁸.

At first glance this definition looks like a clear-cut example of ‘old’ nationalism, as most of its elements refer to events and ideas that take place in the past. For Smith’s theory of nationalism, however, it is just half of the story. Nationalism, he contends, is a phenomenon that is “relatively recent” and that it first emerged “after the late eighteenth century”, but that so-called modernizing factors such as industrialization could not have given shape to the identity of modern nations: the common cultures and customs that people recognize as parts of their nationality¹⁹. The identity of nations could only be filled in by *ethnie*²⁰. In other words, it is at least conceivable to have a ‘blended’ theory of nationalism, with both ‘old’ and ‘new’ aspects of nationalism playing causal roles²¹. One might be tempted to argue that the appeal to ‘*ethnie*’ is just a variation of continuous-perennialism, but this is not quite right. Like most other theories of nationalism, continuous perennialism entails a form of social organization, whereas *ethnie* does not. The Jewish *ethnie* applies to a group of people, over time, who have lived in a variety of social organizations (some which successfully engendered a sentiment of nationalism and others which did not)²². Jewish identity through *ethnie* is ‘old’, but certain appeals to nationalism are novel: such as the perceived need for a Jewish state after the Second World War, which was, in itself, entailed a very recent mobilization toward nationalism²³. In other words, the Jewish people existed as a distinct group of people before the modern era of nationalism and this Jewish *ethnie* formed the core identity that contributed to Jewish nationalism in the modern era. Nationalism is neither ancient nor modern, but

¹⁸ Anthony D. Smith, “The Nation in History” pg. 65

¹⁹ *Ibid.* pg. 65

²⁰ *Ibid.* pg. 66

²¹ Dual causation makes the theory truly blended, distinguishing it from other theories which may contain both ‘old’ and ‘new’ elements toward the origin of nations but which nevertheless ascribes the actual causal factor to just one source.

²² Anthony Smith, “The Nation in History” pg. 45-47

²³ *Ibid.* pg. 49.

a combination of the two: ancient in terms of ethnics, modern in terms of mobilization.

2.1.6 SUMMARY

These definitions provide a rough outline to the discourse on nationalism. The list is not complete, of course, because theorists tend to break down these ancient and modern ideas into even more specific arguments. Nevertheless, most theories relating to the origins of nationalism can be partnered with these terms. The main task is to show how an understanding of these terms, and the theories they best represent, can give offer a comprehensive overview of the study of nationalism. The next step is to settle on some specific questions that we can use to further the discussion on the theories of nationalism.

2.2 GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

What counts as a good introduction to the study of nationalism? As discussed in the first chapter, one of the defining issues in nationalism is its origin: modern, ancient, or some combination of these conceptions. We discussed the role that definitions of 'nationalism' have played in the ongoing debate in the introductory chapter, but a more thorough investigation into the study of nationalism must go deeper and explain how and why different theories of nationalism conflict, and in terms of the actual ideas they present. This chapter will be a success if it can (1) help explain why debates over the origins and nature of nationalism are still unsettled and (2) how these debates have come to define the study of nationalism. Finding an answer to these two problems will be the first goal.

If we set out with a view that nationalism's origin is fundamental to nationalism as a subject of academic inquiry, and there really is no problem in claiming that it is²⁴, then this chapter must investigate an additional problem: what

²⁴ For instance, Day and Thompson address conflicts over the origins of nationalism as the "Classical" approach to nationalism (pg. 7). They contend that there are further issues in

factors contribute to a theory's swinging to a particular camp, i.e. are there some factors that make a theory more amenable to ancient conceptions than modern, and if so, why? Since the framework of this chapter is confined to the literature on nationalism, not the phenomenon itself, the focus will be on the conflicts between primordial, modern, perennial and alternative theories of nationalism as they have advanced over time: some of their respective intellectual origins, the impact of these origins on shaping theories of nationalism over time and in framing the debate over the origins of nationalism. The second goal is to explore the factors that determine whether a theory will ultimately advance a primordial, perennial, modern or some alternative theory of nationalism.

In terms of methodology, the best path must accommodate a robust comparative analysis. By comparing and contrasting theories of nationalism, we can demonstrate how primordial, modern and accounts came to dominate the literature and offer possibilities as to why a resolution to the origins of nationalism has not been forthcoming, thus satisfying our goals. For successful comparisons, however, one must establish commensurable aspects between groups of theories, preferably something deeper than a common interest in explaining nationalism. On what basis can we compare differing theories of nationalism and what are the options for methodology?

A chronological methodology would offer some benefits, such as a clear rendition of how the study of nationalism has emerged and changed in reference to time (an ideal measuring stick, since time in itself is unbiased²⁵), but it is not the best strategy in this case. Although a proper inquiry must not mistake historical contexts or subvert the timeline of scholarly output to suit its own purposes (two standards which must be satisfied regardless of a preferred methodology) a strictly chronological account of studies on nationalism would provide little material for a robust comparative analysis.

nationalism not directly related to the question of origins, which they group together as "Post-Classical" approaches to nationalism (pg. 12), but the validity of origins as a central concern of nationalism is confirmed (pg. 16). Graham Day and Andrew Thompson, "Theorizing Nationalism"

²⁵ This could be debated, but for the purposes of this chapter 'time' just refers to the strict sequence of theories as they were originally advanced.

Establishing 'who said what, when' is insufficient to demonstrate how ideas and theories relate to and influence one another over time. It is also unclear how this methodology could help us understand the greater question: why some theories of nationalism propose a primordial account while others propose some other account.

To make up for the shortcomings of a strictly chronological account, this chapter will incorporate a thematic methodology. Whereas chronology only relates theories by the sequence in which they were proposed, a thematic approach relates theories by their common themes of analysis. The thematic methodology allows us to group theories according to their common arguments or explanations for the source of nationalism, thereby providing material for a robust comparative analysis between groups of theories.

A 'theme of analysis' refers to the type of subject or ideas, or roughly the empirical or theoretical research material under observation, on which a particular theory is based. It is related, but should not be confused with a 'unit of analysis'. A unit refers to a specific member of a category, whereas the theme is really just the category itself. For example, 'culture' may be used as a theme of analysis, while particular manifestations of culture, say 'art', are subsumed within the theme. In the case of nationalism theory, we could group theories which use culture as their common theme and then compare them with a different theme, say with theories emphasizing an economic-theme basis for nationalism (where the units of analysis might be some measure of wealth).

The thematic strategy is useful, because it will assist in determining which theories (or themes) are more conducive to primordial, modern, perennial, or blended conceptions of nationalism. It will also highlight the general differences between different types of theories and make it easier to determine why issues relating to the origin of nationalism have not yet been resolved. With these benefits in mind, this chapter will be concerned primarily with common themes that can be drawn across differing theories of

nationalism and shall use these common themes as the basis for conducting the comparative analysis between theories of nationalism.

2.3.1 THE THEMES OF INQUIRY

Themes of analysis allow us to place theories of nationalism into a variety of defined categories. For the purpose of this investigation, this chapter shall cover five themed categories: folk culture, historical, material, symbolic and social-psychological. Generally speaking, a given theory of nationalism will tend to ascribe the origin of nationalism to forces or materials which can be placed into one of these categories²⁶.

The validity of potential further categories, and of similarities between the categories as stated, are not excluded from reason. In fact, this is why it is more helpful to think of in terms of themes, which are more general by definition than categories. 'Category', after all, may falsely imply a mutual exclusivity between theories, whereas 'theme' just implies general focus. As the first chapter mentioned, many theorists employ a variety of arguments to uphold their conceptions: linguistic commonality and economic incentive, among others. Themes emerge when we can identify which of these arguments are held up as the dominant causal role, the most essential aspects toward understanding what nationalism 'is' and how or why it came about.

The thematic approach does have some precedents. Degenaar and Hayes broke down nationalism by 'type', suggesting that theories of nationalism are best organized by their distinct manifestations in either history or literature²⁷: i.e. that there are different sorts of theories on nationalism that can be grouped together based on common arguments, ideas, intellectual era or political community. However, Degenaar and Hayes focused primarily on historical occurrences of nationalism that relied on the conscious intentions of

²⁶ The definition of each category will be offered in its respective section of the chapter.

²⁷ See Degenaar's "The Roots of Nationalism" pg. 20 and Hayes' "The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism" pg. 11-12.

various figures in bringing about nationalism, whereas a truly thematic approach focuses on the materials, forces and ideas that underlie such intentions. Boyd Shafer's review of nationalism offers a much closer precedent to the thematic methodology. He divides theories of nationalism into eight categories:

- “1. The supernatural: The nation as creation of God, nature, mystical forces
2. Physical environmental conditions: The nation determined by soil, climate, natural boundaries
3. Physical and spiritual nature of man: The nation rooted in race, tribe, blood, instinct
4. Economic institutions and needs: The nation as the product of the bourgeoisie and their demand for markets and status
5. Political security and prestige: The nation as the result of the struggle for existence and the desire for power
6. Language: The nation unified within and separated from other nations by speech
7. Social need: The nation as an outcome of the human need for social life
8. History: The nation as the products of their respective common pasts”²⁸

Shafer's themes offer a good overview of many ideas found in theories of nationalism, but there is good reason to modify his layout. Since the purpose of this literature review is to analyze the debates over nationalism's origins, the selected themes should offer close applicability to the broad definitions discussed earlier in this chapter: primordialism, perennialism, etc. Although Shafer's descriptions of his themes could readily be ascribed to one of the competing origins, it is not certain if their organization within his themes would lend itself to this chapter's focus on origins.

For example, language can be implemented to support either 'ancient' or 'modern' accounts. Language could be a factor in a primordial account of nationalism (as an inseparable component of German-ness or French-ness). In the modern account, language could be treated simply as a means of transmitting ideas and entail no inherent properties. Shafer points out that “in fact, not fantasy, languages are always changing, growing, dying. They are never stable, never the same as they were or will be”²⁹. In addition, “in no

²⁸ Boyd Shafer, “Nationalism: Myth and Reality” pg. 18

²⁹ Ibid. pg. 48

small measure languages have been imposed upon peoples by conquerors and rulers. French was not naturally spoken by many who were the ancestors of modern Frenchmen nor was English or German by many of the ancestors of modern Englishmen and German"³⁰. These are two distinctly 'modern' criticisms of primordial conceptions of language.

Shafer was not wrong to set out with his stated organization, because his study did not focus explicitly on the dispute over origins (although if one did have to place Shafer's work under one of the definitions, he would have likely favoured modern accounts). Nevertheless, Shafer's study highlights the potential value of themes. Despite the relatively loose nature and definition of themes, they provide a good framework to explain why some theories of nationalism swing toward primordial accounts, while others swing to modern accounts. It is just a matter of separating ambiguous terms such as 'language' into their ancient and modern usages. The separation of theories by theme allows for a clearer investigation into competing arguments for nationalism's origin.

2.3.2 OBJECTIONS TO THE THEMATIC APPROACH

It is important to investigate any possible shortcomings in the thematic methodology before commencing with the comparative analysis, so a few possible objections will be noted. One might argue, for instance, that the only relevant themes in nationalism theory are 'primordial', 'modern', 'primordial' and other previously established camps. In fact, many theories just out-right announce to which group they belong. Why bother with thematic issues such as cultural or historical analysis when most theories can already be generally classified? This is an important argument, because it is true that many contemporary theories of nationalism clearly defend a particular origin, whether primordial, modern or otherwise. Furthermore, as noted in many instances, it is the debate over the origins of nationalism that continues to define theories of nationalism. Maybe these categories, alone, should suffice.

³⁰ Boyd Shafer, "Nationalism: Myth and Reality" pg. 49

However, categorizing by primordial or modern accounts would gloss over significant disagreements between theories within these categories. Not all modern accounts of nationalism agree with one another. As the comparative study will show, theories of nationalism based on historical analysis differ significantly from those based on material analysis. Both, however, may defend the modern origins of nationalism. Historical and material analyses are already broad themes in themselves, but they are capable of emphasizing contrasts that would be missed by primordial and modern categories alone. In addition, grouping theories in regards to their primordial or modern arguments would do little to investigate the factors that determine why they advocate primordial or modern arguments in the first place.

Another problem with the themes-based analysis relates back to its 'fuzziness', i.e. the loose conditions on which we distinguish categories. How does one classify a theory of nationalism which incorporates elements from multiple themes? After all, it is conceivable that a primordial conception of nationalism could be defended with reference to both folk culture and symbology without any inherent contradiction. In response, yes, this is generally true; but despite this fact, it is usually possible to ascribe the theory to a single theme. Some theories attempt to explain the role of various themes in the origin and development of nationalism, but these combinations of are usually explained in terms of a root theme, or in the language of ultimate and proximate causes.

Say, for instance, a theory argues that nationalism is a sentiment of cultural identity which can be traced back to the symbols and traditions of ancient societies, that nationalism is an ancient phenomenon. This theory could go on to say argue that the spread of technology and people during the industrial revolution allowed for the spread of nationalism across the Western world, such that it also has a materialist and modern component. There is no contradiction, because all of the otherwise conflicting themes are explained in terms of an ultimate theme, in this case symbolism. In these cases, the theory is matched with the theme providing the causal explanation.

2.3.3 THEMES AS FACTORS IN THE ARGUMENT OVER ORIGIN

This chapter argues that the central theme of a theory is a contributing factor in determining whether a primordial, modern, perennial or blended theory of nationalism is defended. Again, this is a general conclusion in the same sense that themes are just general categories, but there are connections between themes and theories that are worth defending. Themes of analysis centred on folk culture tend to favour a primordial conception of nationalism. Historical and material analyses tend to favour modern conception, while symbolic and social-psychological analyses are most amenable to a blended perennial conception.

The thematic methodology will satisfy our goals in this chapter: why debates over the study of nationalism are still unsettled (in terms of the theories themselves and not just because of problems of definition) and how these debates can be placed within the context of each theory's intellectual origins.

2.3.4 FOLK-CULTURAL THEORIES OF NATIONALISM

Folk-cultural conceptions of nationalism are best understood as products of two competing schools of European thought: the empirical imperatives of the Enlightenment period, which sought to detach truth and reason from abstract metaphysical entities³¹; and the Romantic literary period, largely a reaction to the cold scientific imperatives of the Enlightenment, which sought to infer humanistic, socially conducive and even emotional elements from the natural world³². Early theories of nationalism were influenced by both intellectual traditions. Following enlightenment principles, the concept of divine rights for monarchs was rejected as a non-empirical abstraction, something which could not be inferred from the natural order and therefore an illegitimate model for

³¹ Boyd Shafer, "Nationalism: Myth and Reality" pg. 22

³² Hans Kohn, "The Idea of Nationalism" pg. 236

governance³³. Following Romantic literary principles, the collapse of divine rights inspired theorists to conceive of social organization as emerging from a humanistic view of the natural world, and at its best when premised on an extension of mankind's natural, unadulterated place in the world³⁴.

Separating the Enlightenment and Romantic literary periods is difficult, because the Enlightened thinkers who dominated prior to the French Revolution would have considered themselves humanitarian, not cold or calculating as the Romantic thinkers would come to interpret of many Enlightenment thinkers. More confusingly, many Enlightenment-era ideas are best thought of as Romantic, despite their appearance before the French Revolution. Isaiah Berlin asks:

“What about Rousseau? Rousseau is of course quite correctly assigned to the Romantic Movement as, in a sense, one of its fathers. But the Rousseau who was responsible for the ideas of Robespierre, the Rousseau who was responsible for the ideas of the Jacobins, is not the Rousseau, it seems to me, who was an obvious connection with Romanticism”³⁵.

The lines between Enlightened and Romantic thought are sometimes blurred. As Hans Kohn points out, the Enlightenment-inspired pietist movement was largely responsible for inspiring Christian churches throughout Europe to “[glorify] good work as a duty of man and [make] industry, thrift, and frugality a religious obligation³⁶: all qualities that are complementary to Romantic ideals of humanity and community. In essence, the Enlightenment and Romantic periods shared the quality of extending reason and social obligation. Whether based purely on reason, or with the added virtue of emotional attachment, both of these intellectual periods were notable for establishing nationalism as an organizing principle of societies.

Viscount Bolingbroke, an English aristocrat, was one of the first Enlightenment thinkers to derive a humanitarian nationalism from otherwise spiritless natural law³⁷. Bolingbroke was sympathetic to the advancement of

³³ Carlton Hayes, “The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism” pg. 18

³⁴ Hans Kohn, “The Idea of Nationalism” . pg. 237.

³⁵ Isaiah Berlin, “The Roots of Romanticism” pg. 7

³⁶ Hans Kohn, “The Idea of Nationalism” pg. 190.

³⁷ Carlton Hayes, “The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism” pg. 17

science and the God of Reason (contrary to the God of religious doctrine), seeing both as desirable alternatives to the misguided concepts of divine rule and mythological deities³⁸. There is often a great deal of confusion regarding Enlightened statements God, because many Enlightenment-era thinkers had what we would call 'religious' beliefs: simply the belief in any god, regardless of how one defines god. How could Enlightenment thinkers shun religion and simultaneously embrace God? There is an important distinction between the conception of 'God=religious doctrine' and the Enlightened sense that 'God=reason'. Whereas the first usage of God is rooted in the teachings of the Church and mythical recollections, the bedrock of the Enlightened God was logical necessity³⁹. God exists insofar as his existence is reasonable, not because religious doctrine compels us to believe. It is not uncommon to find notable Enlightenment thinkers, like Shaftsbury, argue against the prospects of atheism while rejecting the teachings of dogmatic Christianity with the same breath⁴⁰. Many Enlightened thinkers argued for the existence of God, but their statements were just as much a criticism of the Church's concept of a personal God (i.e. the God of scripture).

Unfortunately, despite Bolingbroke's staunch adherence to these progressive 'religious' convictions, historians like Carlton Hayes argue that he and other Enlightenment era thinkers were left spiritually barren by the loss of a personal god. Hayes notes that "Their God of Reason was very remote, very impersonal, very scientific, and veritably enchained by eternal laws of decorum and orderliness. They did not get excited about [God] or feel impelled by [god] to hold revival meetings"⁴¹.

It was this lack of animating spirit and energy that led individuals like Bolingbroke to find a new outlet for self expression, satisfaction and meaning. Hayes argues that these sentiments ultimately led Bolingbroke to the company of community, for in his relationships with other people, Bolingbroke

³⁸ Carlton Hayes, "The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism" pg. 18

³⁹ Basil Willey, "The Eighteenth-Century Background" pg. 14

⁴⁰ Ibid. pg. 64

⁴¹ Carlton Hayes, "The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism" pg. 18

could discern a purpose for life that was otherwise lacking in reason⁴². The strategy of blending the rational and the sentimental is precisely why it is so difficult to separate the Enlightenment and Romantic eras in terms of their respective impacts on nationalism. The enlightened strove to make up for the shortcomings of a dogmatic world view and the romantics strove to make up for the shortcomings of a cold and rational world view. In the case of thinkers on nationalism, you quite often find the same person trying to accomplish both tasks, almost simultaneously.

Bolingbroke's logic dictated that a God of Reason would surely create a world in which mankind's ultimate purpose could be found in nature⁴³. If God is the epitome of good, then all of God's laws and creations must also be good. Assuming this really is the case, one can only do good and live the good life by adhering to what occurs naturally in the world. Looking to the world around him, Bolingbroke was able to discern that mankind was in a naturally divided state: that groups of people are individuated by distances and by peculiarities of custom, speech, government and even climate⁴⁴.

Added together, these factors resulted in a diversity of societies, which to Bolingbroke, constituted nations⁴⁵. Since the existence of these nations could be traced back to nature, and hence directly back to the good and reasonable god, it was imperative in the mindset of people like Bolingbroke to acquire, respect and enforce the distinctive meaning and purpose of one's nation: a realization that led the English Bolingbroke argue for the defense of every institution he felt was quintessentially English, such as the monarchy, the Church of England (in a capacity befitting the deistic, reasonable god of the English, as opposed to the hopelessly tyrannical papal constructions) and landed gentry⁴⁶.

⁴² Ibid. pg. 19

⁴³ Carlton Hayes, "The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism" pg. 19

⁴⁴ Ibid. pg. 19

⁴⁵ Ibid. pg. 19

⁴⁶ Ibid. pg. 20

In defending these institutions, Bolingbroke's sentiments went far beyond symbolism. He did not see the Church or the Crown as being just representative of Englishness or just tokens for respect. He saw them as being the literal embodiments of nature's intention to see Englishness flourish⁴⁷. His arguments on behalf of the natural goodness of England, accordingly, were intended to be of political effect. It was in the national interest, i.e. in the interest of reason and goodness, for the English to maintain a strategic advantage over competing national interest that would seek to diminish its power. To this end Bolingbroke argued that the king "should aid moneyed interests by encouraging trade and commerce, and by maintaining British supremacy on the seas and in the colonies"⁴⁸. More salient to the issue of nationalism, Bolingbroke further argued that patriotism, or love of Englishness, was essential to goodness and reason and should be expressed by all manifestations of Englishness, including the king⁴⁹.

Bolingbroke's treatises on nationalism are important for at least one historical reason: the monarch, formally the embodiment of many things so contrary to the age of Enlightenment (premised on the divine right of kings, ordained by an invisible god and a general hindrance to rational discourse) was transformed, at least conceptually, into a bulwark of Englishness and hence goodness. This case illustrates a distinctive feature of folk nationalism: its ability to reorganize the purpose and character of social institutions by means of a common identity. Dynastic wars are replaced with patriotic interest. This is not to say that Bolingbroke would have justified colonial exploitation in the name of national interest. In fact he and another folk-culturalist, Johann Herder, were adamantly opposed to the notion of mass genocide and imperialism in the name of national honour⁵⁰.

Indeed, Herder argued that the diversity of nations was the natural order of the world and should not be compromised by the artifices of greed and

⁴⁷ Isaac Kramnick, "An Augustan Reply to Locke: Bolingbroke on Natural Law and the Origin of Government" in "Political Science Quarterly" pg. 591-592

⁴⁸ Carlton Hayes, "The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism" pg. 21

⁴⁹ Ibid. pg. 21

⁵⁰ Ibid. pg. 32

empire⁵¹. As with Bolingbroke, Herder's conception of nationalism is also rooted in the notion of an abstraction that created differences amongst peoples of the world, hence a multiplicity of nations⁵². For Bolingbroke it was the God of Reason and for Herder it was the distinctiveness of culture, but they are both primordial⁵³. As an proponent of Germanic nationalism, Herder believed fervently in the preservation of uniquely German texts and the restoration of an official German church (curiously, he favoured an amalgamated faith, combining elements of German paganism and Protestantism)⁵⁴. Herder's folk-culturalist conception of nationalism differs from Bolingbroke's in that the Germanic model sees the nation as intrinsic in culture, whereas Bolingbroke saw it as intrinsic to that culture's visible institutional manifestations (such as the Church or Crown).

Herder's vision of the German people is arguably the finest example of primordial thought: a view often legitimated by the central role of folk culture in his writing. While Bolingbroke's 'God of reason' fits in better with the Enlightenment, Herder's convictions fit in better with the characteristically Romantic belief that "man fulfills himself not in the rational appreciation of the universal, but in his passionate commitment to the specific"⁵⁵. Herder claimed that if a local-traditional art (folk music in particular) is able to speak to you, then it a sign of your connection to a primordial folk community⁵⁶. He would argue, quite simply, there is something it is to be German, such that it is unlike being anyone else in the world. "The Portuguese cannot understand the inwardness of a German as a German can", just as a German would not be

⁵¹ Elie Kedourie, "Nationalism" pg. 59

⁵² Elie Kedourie, "Nationalism" pg. 58

⁵³ Although Herder is very clearly a primordial thinker, some may be inclined to say that Bolingbroke was more of a perennialist (insofar as his argument is based on 'reason' and 'scientific' thought). He clearly places the origins of the English nation prior to modernity, but does not invoke the idea of an inherent Englishness as clearly as Herder does with the German people. The case is made even more difficult by the fact that there was not a clear distinction between 'primordial' and 'perennial' nationalism in Bolingbroke's time. Despite these caveats, it is Bolingbroke's concept of an essential Englishness stemming from the unique political and religious institutions of England that should compel us to group his ideas with more explicitly primordial texts.

⁵⁴ Carlton Hayes, "The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism" pg. 32

⁵⁵ Ernest Gellner, "Language and Solitude" pg. 18

⁵⁶ Isaiah Berlin "The Roots of Romanticism" pg. 59

able to access the folk-cultural significance of a Portuguese folk song⁵⁷. Among other reasons, it was Herder's denial of the compatibility of ideals that marked him as a Romantic and, for our purposes, a clear advocate of primordial nationalism⁵⁸.

Herder's writings are a predominant exposition of primordialism, but the defense of inherent German national distinctiveness is also adopted by Fichte: another proponent of the purity of the Germanic language, who was also inspired by Rousseau's⁵⁹ advice to the people of Poland on the prospect of their concern over Russian, Prussian and Austrian coercion in 1772⁶⁰. Rousseau advised the Polish induce a strong nationalist culture through the institution of national customs, national sports, national awards and national arts⁶¹ as a means to avert any possible cultural encroachments. Kohn argues that the German "romanticists" over-read Rousseau, in that thinkers such as Herder inferred an 'organic' nature to Rousseau's nationalism whereby national sentiment did not have to be created, but merely left free to exercise⁶². One of Fichte's students, F.W. Schelling, even argued that "individuals are only phantoms like the spectrum. They are not modifications of the absolute substance [nationalism], but merely imaginary apparitions"⁶³ Rousseau, Kohn insists, underscored that the unified nationalism had to be willed by free individuals in order to take root⁶⁴.

These conceptions are best described as folk-cultural theories, because each contends that the national character derives from the social and cultural distinctiveness of every distinct society and a will to exercise this distinctiveness. Although relative material strength is necessary to ensure survival in the long run in the case of Bolingbroke, all of these theories

⁵⁷ Ibid. pg. 60

⁵⁸ Ibid. pg. 67

⁵⁹ Anthony D. Smith, "Theories of Nationalism" pg. 17

⁶⁰ Carlton Hayes, "The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism" pg. 25

⁶¹ Carlton Hayes, "The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism" pg. 26

⁶² Hans Kohn, "The Idea of Nationalism" pg. 249

⁶³ Elie Kedourie, "Nationalism" pg. 37

⁶⁴ Hans Kohn, "The Idea of Nationalism" pg. 249

emphasize the value of unique national institutions as both the vestments and the natural bulwarks of nationalism.

It could be argued that these theories should be broken into at least two camps, with Bolingbroke and Rousseau and their political nationalism (invested in the state, whether England or Poland) in one camp and Herder and Fichte with their culturally organic nationalism in the other⁶⁵. Although this grouping is reasonable, the two groups would nevertheless share certain primordial qualities. They both understand nationalism as being inherent as an organizing principle of society, as derived from a timeless reason. Even Rousseau's concept of the 'general will' is premised on the idea that an individual's freedom in the properly actualized nation is analogous to a natural state devoid of oppression⁶⁶. Each particular form of nationalism is rooted in an ancient past, obscured by artificial constructions until the arrival of Enlightenment and Romantic thought allowed for its full realization.

2.3.5 HISTORICAL AND MATERIAL THEORIES OF NATIONALISM

An historical theory seeks to explain nationalism as the result of ideas and events that are unique to periods of time and circumstantial conditions. Perhaps the greatest advantage of the historical analysis of nationalism over folk-culture can be summed up in a simple observation: that the meanings of ideas change over time, such that ideas are occasionally misperceived and improperly applied. If culture is constantly in flux, and if the ideas within one's culture are open for debate, how could it serve as a coherent explanation of social organization?

There are some other differences. The historical approach differs considerably from folk-culture, because prevalence toward nationalism is no longer considered inherent to social organization. This lack of an inherent quality of nationalism also does away with the search to define or defend a particular concept of human nature, especially with reference to a founding

⁶⁵ Louis L. Snyder, "The Meaning of Nationalism" pg. 115

⁶⁶ Carlton Hayes, "The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism" pg. 24

myth or philosophical abstraction. In fact, when the products of folk-cultural literature on nationalism are examined historically, it is possible to see Herder's defense of Germanic religion or Bolingbroke's idea of the patriot king as not being theories of nationalism in themselves, but rather as actual contributing source of nationalism in the modern world. Herder and Fichte were not discovering nationalism; they were creating nationalism⁶⁷.

On an even more critical reading, we could even suggest that Bolingbroke and Herder's works do not constitute real theories. They may offer good expositions of nationalism, but they were more concerned with expounding the virtues of their own cultures than searching for a general understanding of nationalism. To put it another way, they did not study nationalism, they contributed to its actual development in the Enlightenment and Romantic periods. The historical account of nationalism is quick to establish the genealogy of ideas that begin with the Enlightenment authors and ultimately end with political communities based on nationalist principles. The historian or the materialist would show how ideas change over time as they are altered to meet the requirements of leaders, activists and other individuals who have a stake in how nationalism is elucidated. The varied interpretation of Rousseau's work, for instance, clearly had an impact on the form of the French Revolution as carried out by the Jacobins⁶⁸ (even if Rousseau himself would have been horrified by what the Jacobins accomplished, especially during the Reign of Terror). Rousseau did not supply theory. He supplied fodder.

Rousseau's doctrine of the free will, which he saw as the best means of arriving at a social order allowing for 'liberty', 'equality' and 'fraternity' was the nationalist philosophy adopted by the Jacobin Club to restore the French Revolution to its humanitarian objectives. Historical analysis is particularly helpful in this instance, because it highlights the stark differences between Rousseau's original theory and how it was erroneously interpreted and

⁶⁷ Anthony D. Smith, "The Diffusion of Nationalism: Some Historical and Sociological Perspectives" in "The British Journal of Sociology" pg. 237

⁶⁸ Isaiah Berlin, "The Roots of Romanticism" pg. 7

applied as the Jacobins became more militaristic over the course of the Revolution⁶⁹, ultimately succumbing after the execution of Robespierre in 1794⁷⁰.

The Jacobins were comprised of a number of sub groups. The Mountainist Group, were considered radical nationalists more intent on uncovering conspiracies and arresting traitors than on building patriotic consensus⁷¹. The Girondists, by contrast, were seen in the early stages of the Revolution as being impractical idealists, preferring the model of small-scale ancient Greek cities like Sparta as being the ideal standard of sociopolitical organization for the whole of France⁷².

As a whole the Jacobins could claim to take at least initial inspiration from Rousseau, but their internal divisions and circumstances saw Rousseau's intended ideas turned upside down, especially once the Reign of Terror commenced. Hayes notes that "Rousseau had stressed liberty and had invoked patriotism as a servant of liberty. The Jacobins, starting with this ideal, ended by making national patriotism the master of liberty"⁷³. Rousseau's concepts of 'the common people', 'popular sovereignty' and 'natural law' were either discarded or warped beyond meaningful recognition⁷⁴.

In addition to explaining the differences between a theory as it was originally articulated and how it was actually interpreted and applied, historical analysis is also best suited to provide insight on occasions when thinkers or leaders forge compromises or syntheses between competing political philosophies. When Louis XVIII claimed the French throne, his court was torn between lingering Jacobin sentiment for the vestments of popular patriotism and the competing post-Revolutionary of nationalism which sought out security in

⁶⁹ Louis L. Snyder, "The Meaning of Nationalism" pg. 116

⁷⁰ Carlton Hayes, "The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism" pg. 44

⁷¹ Carlton Hayes, "The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism" pg. 47

⁷² Ibid. pg. 46

⁷³ Ibid. pg. 51

⁷⁴ Ibid. pg. 51

strong, non-jingoistic leadership structures⁷⁵. This sort of historical account is necessary to explain why king Louis banned the tricolour and the Marseillaise in favour of traditional Bourbon iconography, but simultaneously affirmed “the public rights of the French” and addressed his subjects as “the French people” (two acts that would never been contemplated by the pre-Revolutionary dynastic kings of France)⁷⁶.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the historical method offers a benefit in ensuring the correct usage of the term ‘nationalism’ is applied to its corresponding historical context. In addition, an historical view is effective in isolating factors that distort our interpretation of various theories. There are some possible drawbacks, to be sure. Anthony Smith is critical of Carlton Hayes for overemphasizing ideological factors as the agents of nationalism⁷⁷. Smith also takes issue with Hayes’ exclusive focus on Anglo-Franco sources of nationalism, that the subjects under investigation are too narrow to provide a general account of nationalism⁷⁸.

While we may have to concede this point to Smith, it should not reflect badly on the category of historical analysis as a whole. Hans Kohn is another theorist who relies heavily on historical factors to explain the origins of nationalism, but his study draws from a comparative analysis of nationalism in the West (England, British Dominions, France, Netherlands and Switzerland) as compared to nationalism in the East (Central and Eastern Europe and Asia)⁷⁹. Smith just offers a similar retort, chiding Kohn’s neglect of African and Latin American societies⁸⁰. Once again, the point is valid, but it is still not a deep criticism of the historical method. Smith’s comments only apply to the scope of particular studies, not to the method employed.

A stronger criticism of the historical analysis should focus on the method’s shortfall when it comes to isolating causal factors for the origins of

⁷⁵ Ibid. pg. 114.

⁷⁶ Carlton Hayes, “The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism” pg. 114

⁷⁷ Anthony D. Smith, “Theories of Nationalism” pg. 196

⁷⁸ Ibid. pg. 196

⁷⁹ Louis L. Snyder, “The Meaning of Nationalism” pg. 118

⁸⁰ Anthony Smith, “Theories of Nationalism” pg. 197

nationalism. None of the historical approaches really succeed in explaining why nationalism took root in some societies and a particular time, and not some other time, apart from the fact that nationalist literature and sentiments can be ascribed to particular historical periods. As stated earlier, historical theories of nationalism tend to place its origins in the modern period, but this is not a hard and fast rule. Louis Snyder maintains that “nationalism in its modern form is by no means a new phenomenon, but rather a revival and fusion of older trends...Each primitive tribe had its distinctive speech, religion, traditions, and social organization⁸¹”. This is not to say that Snyder is fundamentally wrong. Any or all of these factors are arguably necessary for nationalism set foot. Unfortunately, Snyder does not do a good job explaining why these factors have a causal role in the early development of nationalism. Snyder’s theory may not be wrong, but without a stronger defense of his own position, it really comes down to a matter of opinion.

The material theory of nationalism is an improvement over strict historical analysis, because its primary concern is isolating and defending various causal factors that contribute to nationalism. By ‘materialism’ we generally mean a non ideological factor (i.e. anything that exists independent of our concept of nationalism) whose changing characteristics contribute to the emergence of nationalism over time. ‘Culture’ in the primordial sense would not qualify as a material factor, because nationalism in that framework is already an inherent aspect of culture from the outset. As an alternative to the primordial understanding, perhaps ‘culture’ (in a folk-neutral non-ideological) might just refer to the ease and facility by which people are able to communicate with one another. Culture is just a familiarity amongst people, not a determining element of nationalism in itself. The development of nationalism would depend on culturally independent forces, i.e. materialism. A material factor could refer to materials in a strict sense: physical quantities of natural resource wealth, agricultural surplus and industrial capacity. These factors are not synonymous with nationalism (we can distinguish between

⁸¹ Louis L. Snyder, “The Meaning of Nationalism” pg. 112

material wealth and national sentiment), but a materialist would contend that such factors contribute directly to the origins of nationalism.

Ernest Gellner argues that nationalism is a largely predictable outgrowth of societies undergoing significant industrial modernization⁸². Largely non-mechanized agrarian societies are capable of sustaining distinct cultures and languages, as the ability to acquire these characteristics is within the biological capacity of any individual to obtain⁸³. However, in order for a society to surpass its full agricultural potential and achieve a modern, centralized market economy, a number of material changes have to take place⁸⁴. Principal among these material changes is the emergence of an elite 'high culture', effectively the bureaucratic class that works to centralize a particular society around the means of economic production and is sufficiently educated to keep industry productive⁸⁵. This results in a very different social order that the close personal connections between people that can occur in small, gathering societies.

The modern social order is defined by "anonymity, mobility and atomization"⁸⁶. It is need to maintain the coherence and unity of these new social qualities that explains the advent of nationalism⁸⁷. Nationalism is not a perennial or primordial urge to live in common with other people (and whatever natural inclinations people have to live with one another, they can hardly be called nationalistic); rather, it is a means for individuals living in de-localized and impersonal societies to establish a basis for social cohesion amongst themselves⁸⁸.

Is there any role for culture whatsoever? Gellner is not so radical that he would deny peoples' sense of cultural belonging as an aspect of national identity. Gellner was often ridiculed for taking the emotional connection or the

⁸² Ernest Gellner, "Nationalism" pg. 75

⁸³ Ibid. 2

⁸⁴ Ernest Gellner, "Nationalism" pg. 14

⁸⁵ Ibid. 29

⁸⁶ Ibid. 28

⁸⁷ Ibid. 30

⁸⁸ Ibid. 30

'humanity' out of nationalism, but it is clear from his own personal experience that the 'spell' of nationalism engenders very deep and personal sentiments. In the preface to *Nationalism*, Gellner's son gives offers a response that his Gellner once gave to a critic of modern materialism's coldness. Gellner confesses that he is "deeply sensitive to the spell of nationalism. I can play about thirty Bohemian folk songs...I do not think I could have written the book on nationalism which I did write, were I not capable of crying, with the help of a little alcohol, over folk songs, which happen to be my favourite form of music"⁸⁹.

The power of folk music over Ernest Gellner would satisfy pretty much any definition of irony. Despite his rejection of primordialism, it would seem Gellner cannot resist the Romantic appeal of nationalism. Is he being hypocritical? A closer reading of Gellner suggests that this criticism is fairly superficial.

Gellner makes a sharp distinction between the perception and the reality of nationalism. The perception of nationalism (the personal and emotional sense of collective belonging) contributes to a certain mindset: that "if liberalism is the politics of the universal, then nationalism is the politics of the specific. It may be specific culturally or genetically or both. Its object is selected by passion not by reason and just that constitutes its legitimacy"⁹⁰. The reality of nationalism, which forms the basis of Gellner's theory, contributes to another mindset: that "in fact [nations are] neither immemorial nor 'organic': they are based on a rational economy with a mobile, meritocratic labour force, [one] which needed easy impersonal communication, hence a shared high culture, and so [the nation] came to delimit itself culturally"⁹¹. The impetus for this delimited culture was elite and undeniably materialistic: "The [elite] had to tell people that their identity, vitality, and integrity were

⁸⁹ David N. Gellner (preface) in Ernest Gellner, "Nationalism" pg. ix. David Gellner takes this quote from Gellner in J.A. Hall and I. Jarvis (eds.), "The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner" pg. 624-625.

⁹⁰ Ernest Gellner, "Language and Solitude" pg. 18

⁹¹ Ibid. 24

dependent on their (ethnically specific, though not over-specific) roots”⁹². Gellner’s personal experience of nationalism is no different than anyone who has been moved by a folk song or cheered wildly at an international soccer match. The reality of nationalism, however, is something altogether different. The unifying and emotional effects of culture are underwritten by a history of material development based on elite-motivated economic centralization.

Benedict Anderson offers another materialist based-nationalism. Like Gellner, Anderson maintains that individuals have a natural ability to feel a sense of belonging with one another: a sense that would have pervaded in even the smallest villages⁹³. The concept Anderson uses to describe this sense is belonging is ‘imagination’, the ability to think of you and the fellow members of your society as living in a common community⁹⁴. The community is said to be imagined, because it has no basis in physical reality. Rather, it is an idea within the minds of a society’s members⁹⁵. As with Gellner, the human capacity to ‘imagine’ does not constitute nationalism in and of itself. Nationalism originates in the modern era as a consequence of several material changes: colonial expansion pursued on the basis of religious evangelism, which created a bureaucratic high class; the introduction of print capitalism and its affect on the distribution of ideas and sentiments in great quantity; and the decline of official ‘high’ or ‘script’ languages in favour of common dialects such as English and French⁹⁶.

These material factors resulted in the expansion of distances between units or outposts of a common community⁹⁷, which is a similar state of affairs to Gellner’s illustration of the industrial society: which is defined by anonymity, mobility and atomization. Nationalism is, once again, the mode by which individuals identify with a community. It is an exercise in creativity, or ‘imagination’ because the nation itself is nothing more than one’s ability to imagine one’s common identity with individuals he or she may never

⁹² Ibid. 24

⁹³ Benedict Anderson, “Imagined Communities” pg. 6

⁹⁴ Ibid. pg. 6

⁹⁵ Ibid. pg. 7

⁹⁶ Ibid. pg. 38-42

⁹⁷ Ibid. pg. 22-23

encounter in day-to-day life and inherently material, because it is spread by technology and economic growth.

Critics of Gellner's materialism argue that his conception of nationalism is too functionalistic: a means toward the emergence of related social phenomena, but not a discrete phenomenon in itself⁹⁸. Anderson's theory is also critiqued on the basis of its materialism. Anthony Smith, who generally finds fault with the modernist standard adopted by both Gellner and Anderson, contends that communities are never 'invented'; rather, they are always based on some features of common identity⁹⁹. For Smith, this basis is the *ethnie*¹⁰⁰. Another criticism Smith raises is the tendency for 'imagined communities' to rely on the machinations of elite actors and interests to initiate and then sustain a sense of nationalism in a society¹⁰¹. If individuals already have an innate capacity to establish social bonds with other people in small communities, as Gellner argues for in terms of gathering societies and Anderson supports in terms of the mental ability to imagine, then why should the extension of these human capacities be the result of an external (or material) source, such as elitist pressure?

Despite these criticisms, the material argument for nationalism provides a more compelling account for the modern origins of nationalism than does the strictly historical analysis. The limits that Carlton Hayes laid down for his study are a reflection of the limits of historical analysis in general. He opens by stating:

"In discussing the historical evolution of modern nationalism, it is not my purpose to describe the historical development of those social and economic forces which more or less blindly and yet with seeming inevitability have served to transform petty principalities and huge empires into a new political order based on the principle of nationality. Nor is it my purpose to explain, except quite incidentally, the practical operation of those agencies, military, literary, or educational, by means of which the masses of mankind have latterly been inspired with national patriotism. In other words, I do not propose in the following pages to treat of nationalism either as a social process or as a popular movement, though of course such treatments would be entirely legitimate"¹⁰².

⁹⁸ Graham Day and Andrew Thompson, "Theorizing Nationalism" pg. 43

⁹⁹ Anthony D. Smith, "The Nation in History" pg. 61.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. pg. 65

¹⁰¹ Ibid. pg. 61

¹⁰² Carlton Hayes, "The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism" pg. V

We must applaud Hayes for his honesty (and his frankness) for firmly establishing the ground rules for an historical analysis of nationalism. On the other hand, those looking for a causal theory of nationalism (why it occurs, not just an overview of how it has occurred) would be left disappointed¹⁰³. A materialist along the lines of Gellner or Anderson would be apt to say that historical analysis can succeed in placing the origins of nationalism in the modern camp, but remains ultimately theory-barren because it falls short on explaining what unique features of modern history make nationalism a recent phenomenon.

Material accounts have yielded a number of causal explanations for the origins of nationalism. As we have seen, most of these explanations are found in distinctly modern times (roughly after the French Revolution, just as the historians have suggested), so there seems to be a strong connection between the material and the modern. Theories focusing on economic growth, or changes to communication technology and elite pressure that lead to the evolution of linguistic communities, will tend to reject primordial, perennial and other 'old' foundations for nationalism.

2.3.6 SYMBOLIC AND SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF NATIONALISM

Some theorists have become frustrated by the 'ancient' and 'modern' dilemma in nationalism and feel that none of the material or folk-cultural theories and few of the historical accounts offer a robust conception of nationalism. This group of 'alternative' theorists is difficult to name, but it can generally be broken down into two themes: the symbolic, which attempts to find a cultural and causal root for nationalism that does not rely on the shortcomings of primordialism; and the social-psychological, which generally advocates for a synthesis of psycho-anthropological and cultural explanations for social organization. Simply put, both schools of thought would argue that even if the

¹⁰³ Anthony D. Smith, "The Diffusion of Nationalism: Some Historical and Sociological Perspectives" in "The British Journal of Sociology" pg. 235

materialists and historians are right to fix the origins of the modern world of nationalism and nation states in the recent past, the political and economic elites (who had a direct role in originating nationalism, according to Gellner and Anderson) would still have relied on a given structure of social cohesion that pre-dates the Enlightenment and Romantic periods.

Symbolic theories of nationalism are unique in that they often do not fit neatly into one of the broad categories of origin (primordial, perennial or modern). Anthony Smith's theory of ethno-symbolism refers to what are generally referred to the 'exceptions' regarding the origin of nations: societies who arguably constituted unified societies in the past, to which their descendents (now organized into a nation) relate to in terms of a common ethnic origin¹⁰⁴. Israel is often cited as representing a society which bore markers of nationalism in its ancient past: a self-identifying populace, common beliefs in the terms of a religion as well as a common language, only to then lose those markers and territorial control for an extended period of time¹⁰⁵. This case is interesting because modern Israel identifies to and claims lineage from the original Jewish inhabitants, but also identifies with social conventions and ideas that are unique to the present day, such as the right of return and the Zionist movement¹⁰⁶.

Anthony Smith claims that the Jewish example is best described as ethno-symbolic nationalism. This particular form of symbolization occurs when a people living in the modern period are able to collectively identify themselves by reference to common myths, stories and other aspects of cultural heritage that originate in ancient societies¹⁰⁷. Another factor that makes Smith's theory unique is that he understands nationalism as means to satisfy particular desires (as opposed to just living in a nation as a consequence of some other factors, as is largely the case with the materialist approach). Nationalism has an intrinsic purpose to: divide the world into people who can relate in terms of history and character; enshrine a representative authority or political power, to

¹⁰⁴ Anthony D. Smith, "The Nation in History" pg. 45

¹⁰⁵ James G. Kellas, "The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity" pg. 22

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. pg. 22

¹⁰⁷ Anthony D. Smith, "The Nation in History" pg. 71

provide freedom through relationships to common people; and to provide cultural distinctiveness¹⁰⁸.

Smith does not advocate either variation of perennialism very strongly, largely because he perceives errors in conflating ethnic communities and nationalism (you do not have to be a nation to be a unique people), but he does see the merit of recognizing the 'old' ethnic antecedents of modern nationalism¹⁰⁹.

Smith argues against the concept of socially constructed nations, the idea that nations are fabricated outright by the forces of materialism or otherwise just the byproduct of other social interactions¹¹⁰. He does not deny the role that materialism played in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but in a metaphorical sense, the elites and material pressures of that era were really just molding a pre-existing clay. He rejects the perennial, modern and primordial concepts of nationalism in favour of ethnic symbolism.

Ethnicity is rooted in both biological and cultural history, essentially an entity whose origins lay in the past but which is still relevant to members of a society. Distinct cultural groups, as discussed earlier, compose an ethnie. Ethno-symbolism is an activity engaged in by modern societies to relate to their ethnie, an ongoing activity across place and time. By arguing that both ancient and modern elements rely on this causal theory of nationalism, Smith is able to avoid a general label.

Ethno-symbolic nationalism is an appeal or reference to an ethnie. The term refers to the act, not the ethnie itself. In this way, Smith is also able to dodge the perennialist tag¹¹¹. Nationalism is based on reference to ethnie, but the ethnie can persist in a number of different social orders, some of them non-nationalistic. As mentioned earlier, the reality of a Jewish identity (or ethnie) has thrived in multiple socio-political environments. Does this maneuver give Smith's theory credence over clearer cut instances of ancient or modern

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. pg. 72-73

¹⁰⁹ Anthony D. Smith, "The Nation in History" pg. 51-52

¹¹⁰ Ibid. pg. 52

¹¹¹ Ibid. pg. 51

theory? He may have succeeded in dodging most conventional categories of theory, but this is only accomplished through the creation of a new abstraction, the *ethnie*.

The *ethnie* is either 'old' or 'new', depending on the circumstances in which it is used as a referent: 'old' when constituting a pre-national society and 'new' when constituting the basis of a modern nation. In other words, the term *ethnie* evades the ancient-modern distinction because it is always incidental to the context of a particular invocation. This is a case of slight-of-hand. Although *ethnie* is both old new, by definition, Smith should be pressed to admit that the context of its usage does place *ethnie* within one of the broad categories of nationalism. It is simply a question of how you want to use *ethnie* that determines its definition as some variety of 'ancient' or 'modern'.

Ross Poole offers another criticism. Smith argues that *ethnie* is not always determined by physical descent from old to new communities; so long as the later manifestation symbolizes the earlier, there is no need to establish a coherent bloodline to establish an *ethnie* bond¹¹². Poole thinks this is a tricky argument, because it lumps ethnicity with all other forms of collective identity (religious, institutional) and some of the latter have absolutely no sense of nationalism. In attempting to shelter his theory from the problems associated with modernity and perennialism, Smith puts his concept of *ethnie* at risk of over-generalization and non-applicability to nationalism.

Other scholars are less wary than Smith about sticking to definite categories, such as perennialism. John Armstrong does not see the problem of equating ethnic groups with national identity. For Armstrong, nationalism is just a contemporary version of social organization based on ethnic groups¹¹³.

Armstrong's definition of ethnicity largely evades the scientific typology associated with this term, as he generally avoids biological understandings of ethnicity (including race and genetic predisposition to living in groups); and where there is reference to naturally occurring boundaries to ethnic division,

¹¹² Ross Poole, "Nation and Identity" pg. 39

¹¹³ *Ibid.* pg. 50

the source is often geographic in nature, not biological¹¹⁴. By ethnic nationalism, Armstrong is really just talking about the social life of communities which have an extended history of adapting to their environment and which develop often unique customs and identities based on shared intergenerational experiences¹¹⁵.

For the perennialist, ethnic identification is really just an attitude forged by living within the context of a distinguishable group of people. These ethnic attitudes are stronger than material pressures, such that “useful material accomplishments diffuse readily, although slowly, without significantly affecting ethnic identities”¹¹⁶. New technologies and innovations, whether architecture or agriculture, are a given in any organized society that is able to pass down knowledge to future generations, thus allowing for significant progress over time, but these additions and alterations very rarely compromise ethnic identity in Armstrong’s study¹¹⁷.

The origins of ethnic nationalism are found in the organization of everyday life: an observation Armstrong supports with a comparative analysis of urban planning and values between different cultures. “The impact of city life [differs] psychologically in different cultures”¹¹⁸. As late as the fifteenth century, membership of the Moslem ethnicity entailed an attachment to urban life in general: meaning an individual would not typically feel attached to any one city in particular (as a consequence, perhaps, of the well established tradition of inter-city caravan networks and an even earlier precedent for nomadic lifestyles)¹¹⁹.

European ethnicities were generally the reverse, with strong loyalty to individual cities. In medieval Italy, where a person’s legal status was

¹¹⁴ John A. Armstrong, “Nations Before Nationalism” pg. 9

¹¹⁵ Ibid. pg. 14

¹¹⁶ John A. Armstrong, “Nations Before Nationalism” pg. 14

¹¹⁷ Ibid. pg. 14

¹¹⁸ Ibid. pg. 95

¹¹⁹ Ibid. pg. 94

accorded to their official residence, social and class distinctions were made between 'cittadino' (city dwellers) and 'contadino' (countrymen)¹²⁰.

Armstrong's version of ethnic nationalism is in very close agreement with Smith's definition of continuous perennialism. Although an ethnic community may grow and diverge over time, the characteristics and values embodied at any point along the causal chain are generally an outgrowth of an early practice or disposition of that ethnic community. The characteristics of the state are an extension of the city, which is an extension of the household, which is the extension of the family. The sum of collective memory and conduct along this causal chain is the living attitude, or ethnicity, which serves as the basis for nationalism.

Variations on the usage of 'ethnicity' will typically influence which variety of perennialism a theory upholds. Armstrong's theory aligns well with the 'continuous' definition, because of the former's heavy reliance on the concept of distinct ethnic presumptions which bear on the values and even urban composition over an indefinite period of time¹²¹. Theories which refer to ethnicity as a category of human association, on the other hand, place far less emphasis on the notions of collective experience and persistent (or causally related) attitudes across time.

Bozkurt Guvenc sees ethnic identity and belonging as a perennial aspect of human psychology, regardless of the distinctive qualities or values that a particular ethnicity embodies¹²². The creation of ethnicities is a psychological tendency: some internal feature of the mind which, in league with other minds, divides the world into groups to which it belongs (whether immediate family, kinship group or nation) and into groups to which it does not (generally referred to as "others")¹²³. Whereas Armstrong's version of ethnicity is 'external', meaning the characteristics and values of a particular ethnic group basically condition the individual mind, Guvenc's version of ethnicity is

¹²⁰ John A. Armstrong, "Nations Before Nationalism" pg. 94

¹²¹ Ibid. pg. 7

¹²² Bozkurt Guvenc, "Ethnocentrism: Roots and Prospects" in Peter Kruger, "Ethnicity and Nationalism" pg. 21

¹²³ Ibid. pg. 23

‘internal’: meaning the ‘I and thou’ faculties of the human mind are responsible for creating the various ethnicities out-there-in-the-world. Likewise, Armstrong’s theory is continuous perennialist, because it refers to the distinct and pervasive ethnicities over time; and Guvenc’s theory is recurrent perennialist because the actual ethnic groups out there in the world, regardless of their lineages, are secondary to the living minds (meaning present minds, because deceased minds just do not think) and their psychological inclinations.

Day and Thompson are probably correct in claiming that “the modernist understanding of the rise of the nation...constitutes something as an orthodoxy within the study of nationalism”¹²⁴. There is no obvious empirical tool we could use to test Day and Thompson’s impression and it seems fairly clear that they did not intend the statement to offer anything more than an impression. Unfortunately, that forces us to speculate as to the reasons for their impression, but there are a few very possible explanations. For example, historical and material accounts have generally done ‘a better job’ at refuting criticism than ethnic-symbolic accounts (think of the separation between perception and reality found in Gellner). Ancient accounts, conversely, have had more difficulty convincing readers that the forces of modernization are of secondary importance to sometimes vague references to symbols and community values. Nevertheless, the various ethnic and perennial accounts discussed in this section should not be dismissed lightly. Modern accounts may currently dominate the study of nationalism, but they only gone so far to accommodate various ‘ancient’ criticisms, not outright disprove competing non-modern theories.

2.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed a number of sharp divisions, both conceptual and substantial, that have contributed to a multiplicity of theories claiming to best explain the origins of nationalism. How can we decide which theory is the

¹²⁴ Graham Day and Andrew Thompson “Theorizing Nationalism” pg. 63

most accurate, if in fact a choice is even possible at this stage? This is the ultimate question. To answer it, we must refer to the defined goals of this chapter.

Why are debates over the origins and nature of nationalism still unsettled and how they have come to define the study of nationalism?

This chapter suggests a very clear answer to this question. One of the main sticking points between theories of nationalism is the issue of causation. Between the 'ancient' and 'modern' accounts the debate has generally focused on the competing roles of culture and material development. A modern theorist like Anderson would say that economic and technological change accommodates the sorts of changes in culture that have allowed the flourishing of popular nationalism. Smith, on the other hand, argues that modernizing forces occur within the context of distinct ethnic identities, such that symbols and other cultural references continue to define one's sense of national belonging. The competing theories do their best to absorb then explain away one another, but the results so far have not been conclusive. The causation debate is also present even within individual 'camps'. Within perennialism, there is an unresolved debate between 'internal' and 'external' sources. Again, there has been no definitive solution to the problem.

The impact of the causation problem has been significant. Even though Day and Thompson probably did not intend to make an important point by offering their 'impression' that modern theories have come to be the "orthodoxy" of studies on nationalism, their statement is very telling. Despite the vast literature available on the origins of nationalism, there is still no definitive account. We are still not at stage where we can easily separate correct and incorrect theories. There may be several reasons for the field's shortfall, but the debate over causation best illustrates the problem. If there can be no agreement over causation, then there is no real standard with which we can judge rival theories. Carlton Hayes only referred to his own account of nationalism when he suggested that the historical approach could only describe the origins of nationalism, not explain the mechanisms. Ironically,

without a neutral standard to test the causal mechanisms offered by subsequent theories, 'descriptions' will remain the only viable tool to study nationalisms.

Which factors determine whether a theory will ultimately advance a primordial, perennial, modern or some alternative theory of nationalism?

The theme of analysis plays a decisive role in determining which category of nationalism a theory will support¹²⁵. Folk-cultural themes align closely with primordial theories, historical and material themes go well with modern theories and symbolic or social-psychological themes with perennial themes. There are exceptions, of course, such as Anthony Smith. Although his concept of *ethnie* relates very well to perennialism, he carves out a unique niche by distancing *ethnie* from the more clearly perennial concepts of ethnicity.

We have a description, but not an explanation. Why do the themes and categories break down in this fashion? The answer to this question involves breaking down the themes of analysis into two groups: nationalism as an 'unintended' phenomenon and nationalism as an 'intended' phenomenon.

As an 'unintended' phenomenon, nationalism emerges because it is a quality of: a particular culture, as in the case of folk-culture; or particular social grouping, such as an ethnicity, as in social-psychological or symbolic accounts. Regardless of the theme in question, the main reason why it would favour a primordial or perennial account of nationalism is its standing as an unintended phenomenon. Simply put, 'unintended' means that nationalism has not been devised by an elite group within society, fabricated as means to pursue some other end (such as economic or linguistic centralization).

¹²⁵ To restate, this thematic introduction only offers an overview of nationalism through a number of representative theories. Other theories and, indeed, other themes cannot be denied. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to suggest that theories of nationalism tend to focus on specific factors which can determine their overall category.

As an 'intended' phenomenon, nationalism emerges because it is either a necessary or convenient belief-system to further some underlying conscious human activity (such as consolidating power over a geographical region) or the outgrowth of an influential ideology (as a creation of Enlightenment and Romantic thought).

This is only a rough outline, and there is no doubt reason to question the rationale of abstracting the theories of nationalism into yet another set of headings, but this illustration serves to highlight greatest underlying ambiguities within the literature on nationalism: the extent to which nationalism is an entirely human creation, or whether there is also some unintended or natural antecedent. There is no consensus as to what extent, or in what capacity, humans shape their social environments.

How can we decide which theory is the most accurate, if in fact a choice is even possible at this stage?

The current body of literature on nationalism does not provide us with the necessary means to settle on any one particular theory. The tensions between primordialism, perennialism, modern and other theories of nationalism (and their further abstractions as unintended or intended phenomena) are still packed too densely. This introduction offers a broad overview of the issues that have given rise to these tensions, but a resolution requires further investigation.

3. Philosophical Foundations of Nationalism: Early Theory

Steven Pinker's 'The Blank Slate' exposes a number of misconceptions about human nature that are often found in the social sciences and humanities. He pays special attention to arguments (flawed, in his estimation) suggesting that language and behaviour are entirely social in origin: that is, they are social constructions determined by one's exposure to cultures and customs, with little if any input from individual mind, human evolution or other factors whose understanding relies on the natural sciences¹. According to Pinker, these misconceptions about language, behaviour and evolution have weakened the social sciences' ability to meet several goals: most notably, properly explaining social action².

Although this study is strictly concerned with theories of nationalism, most debates over the role of language, culture, behaviour and ethnicity as factors of nationalism can readily apply to 'The Blank Slate's' critique of the social sciences. Interestingly, Pinker identifies Locke and Rousseau as early forerunners to the social sciences' confusion about human nature³, and as we have seen, these thinkers are also very important to the study of nationalism.

This chapter discusses the philosophical 'roots' of nationalism theory in terms of the following developments: how Locke's ideas influenced Bolingbroke; how Rousseau's ideas influenced Herder and Fichte (the later two who, of course, were studied closely by twentieth century historians of nationalism). This chapter will show that the early theories of nationalism were heavily influenced by philosophical arguments and that any discussion on the validity of these theories must make reference to the philosophy of their time

3.1 NATIONALISM, THE MAGPIE SUBJECT

Nationalism borrows concepts from a number of subjects (such as ethnicity and language), so it seems only fair that theorists from any number of fields should borrow nationalism as a concept for their own studies. Do the treatments of 'nationalism' in diverse subjects such as art history or musicology count as theories of nationalism? The answer is generally 'no'. A theory of nationalism will invariably defend a particular argument on the nature of origin: something that may be of little interest to the musicologist.

¹ Steven Pinker, "The Blank Slate" pg. x

² Ibid. pg.

³ It is important to mention that Locke and Rousseau would probably have disagreed with how their respective theories were adopted by subsequent thinkers who used them as references.

We would expect theories incorporating nationalism to at least acknowledge the existence of ongoing debates, but it is too much to ask every scholar with an interest in nationalism to say something definitive about its origin. The reason is just a simple matter of research focus.

Nationalism is generally studied in the social sciences and its themes are also relevant to the humanities, but many subject areas related to nationalism do not have the scope to make a contribution to the debate on origins. An art historian may be interested in the relationship between the political turmoil of the French Revolution and its representation in the visual arts, but this research focus has virtually no consequence on the arguments between primordial, perennial, modern and symbolic concepts of nationalism. A musicologist might invoke nationalism to frame Wagner's influence on European symphony, but connections between nationalism and German Romanticism may be passed over. Once again, the treatment of nationalism is determined by research goals.

The varying interests of multi-disciplined studies on nationalism do not diminish the central dilemma of nationalism: its unresolved origins.

However, there is no need to disparage art historians and musicologists for neglecting issues like primordialism and perennialism, or to suggest they expand the scope of their field, because their goals are altogether different. Nationalism is an interdisciplinary subject, its importance largely determined by niche interests. Given the role of nationalism in historical conceptions of art and society, we must assume its broad appeal.

The interdisciplinary character of nationalism is both satisfying and frustrating, depending on one's interests. As a social ideology, nationalism has motivated the style of thinkers, artists and revolutionaries who are of interest to cultural and literary theorists, so the idea of 'injecting' theories of art with conception of nationalism is beneficial to certain theorists; but unfortunately, the musicologist or art historian are less likely to study the nature of nationalism's motivation and its place in human history and nature, so we never really get the 'full picture'. In fact, it is probably for the best if they refrain from trying,

because such an investigations require conceptual 'tools' that are lacking in their disciplines: a causal explanation for human social organization, a general basis for group identification and so forth. Even worse (potentially), those theorists who do attempt a study of nationalism's meaning and origin within the confines of their niche interests are sometimes 'coloured' by the perceptions, jargon, theories and even world-views which constitute the idioms of their respective fields. Then again, even if the art historian does not contribute to our understanding of nationalism, we would still expect him or her not to 'offend' the literature on nationalism: for instance, misrepresenting a key concept. The same is true of theorists working on language and nationalism.

Linguists do not expect a new contribution to the study of language, but they would expect the theorist to, at the very least, respect current views about language. The interdisciplinary character of nationalism entails a special imperative. If the concepts incorporated by theories of nationalism are 'borrowed', then any study of these theories must assess whether or not their borrowed concepts have been properly understood and applied.

3.2 SHORTFALLS OF NATIONALISM'S INTERDISCIPLINARY NATURE

Theories of nationalism make occasional contributions to other fields, but they take and borrow much more from the arts and sciences than they return. Theories of nationalism employ no tools of their own. Whether the subject matter is ethnicity, language, or history, among others, the content used by various theories of nationalism is invariably 'native' to other studies. Although theorists working on the origins of nationalism are careful to limit their discussion to issues that have a direct bearing to their argument (perennialists focus on ethnicity, because ethnic ties pre-date the modern account), the issues they raise are almost always derived from a more discrete academic field (generally speaking, concepts of ethnicity are borrowed from anthropology or sociology).

A theorist working on the origins of nationalism is susceptible to the same risks as any other scholar working in a niche field: namely, that his or her argument will be muddled when they misread or over-apply concepts borrowed from other fields. A perennialist, for example, may feel justified to bolster their argument with an appeal to the causal role of ethnicity in identity formation, but their reading and application of 'ethnicity' must be parsimonious with current theories on the nature of 'ethnicity'.

The role of interdisciplinary scholarship is important to the debate on nationalism's origins, because theories of nationalism are largely informed by philosophical terms, assumptions and methodological techniques found in the social sciences. We should not be surprised, because theories of nationalism have never been written in a vacuum. There may be certain issues that are somewhat more relevant to the idea of nationalism than to other forms of social organization studied in the social sciences, such as the role of political elites in the dissemination of official script language, but there are few, if any, debates in academic literature that are truly exclusive to nationalism. This is to be expected, of course, because nationalism does not constitute a discreet subject area within academia. It is an amalgam of sociology, history, philosophy, anthropology and political science amongst other disciplines.

3.3 SUMMARY OF THE ISSUES

The second chapter organized theories of nationalism into groups: first according to the types of nationalism found in the literature (primordial, perennial, modern, and other versions), followed by themes of analysis (folk-cultural, historical, material, ethnic and symbolic). The final grouping, discussed in the conclusion, organized the theories under two broad headings: 'unintended phenomenon' for theories where nationalism is seen as extending from a non-fabricated entity that is generally not subject to time or historical context (such as the idea that an ethnic community persists through time, despite its uniqueness at any one place along the timeline); and 'intended phenomenon' for theories where nationalism is seen as either a contingent or inevitable product human action which is very sensitive to time

and historical context (such as a means to recruitment a large and mobile labour force).

The differences between 'old' and 'new' theories of nationalism are fairly straight forward, but the 'unintended' and 'intended' categories are somewhat blurry. This blurriness is the result of overlapping concepts: elements of human and social nature which share the same name, but are conceived differently. Language is a textbook example. For a perennialist expounding the ethnic basis of nationalism, language is often treated as a component of one's ethnicity⁴. As such, language is 'unintended', because it is an aspect of ethnicity regardless of that ethnicity's place on the timeline and regardless of that ethnicity's status as a nation. For a modern theorist expounding the material base of nationalism, language is simply a means for communication (a vehicle for nationalism to be sure, but not its source, because ethnicity cause of nationalism). Where people share a common language, it is often because external pressures (material, political) have forced them into certain groups. As such, language is an 'intended' phenomenon, because its role in the development of nationalism is dependant on how it is used during a very particular moment in history.

We were able to group theories into successively larger and more general headings, but in the end we were still faced with the unattractive prospect: having to make a nearly arbitrary choice. Mutual exclusivity made it too difficult to choose between theories. How do you compare two theories which make different assumptions about the causal sources of nationalism? The chapter concluded by arguing that disagreement over the origins of nationalism cannot be settled with the current literature.

⁴ Note that this usage of 'language' and 'ethnicity' does not necessarily imply primordialism. Although common language may be treated as a prominent or even inherent component of ethnicity, the perennial accounts are nevertheless differentiated from primordialism. Although language is a component of ethnicity, an ethnicity's status as a nation is not inherent to its social organization. In addition, the characteristics of language in the perennial account do not denote folk characteristics, as is the case with primordial conceptions of language which would, for instance, identify an inherent 'German-ness' in the German language.

Is there another way to approach the debate? Nationalism's interdisciplinary nature, its dependence on borrowed concepts, opens up a new avenue.

It is not enough to study a theory of nationalism 'in-and-of-itself' or even to simply compare one theory of nationalism with another. A thorough investigation must examine the philosophical foundations of the theory. If it is worthwhile to see how scholars working outside the body of literature on nationalism place the concept of 'origin' under the microscope, then it is imperative to see how scholars working on the origins of nationalism work with the conceptual tools and theories that they take from other fields.

Language, for example, is a 'borrowed' concept. Various theorists of nationalism have tried to define it for their own purposes, but the development of dedicated fields such as linguistics and the philosophy of language do a far better job of defining what language is 'in itself', i.e. above and beyond what language is for any one particular instance of its usage (as a component of ethnicity or as a means to a material end). Since the success or failure of any theory of nationalism hinges on its treatment of concepts such as language, the role of borrowed concepts will be discussed throughout this chapter.

Although an examination of the current literature helped identify and explain the tensions between competing theories, this method was unable to provide a 'way out': a methodology for resolving these tensions. This chapter adopts a new tactic to sort things out: by examining the concepts that theories of nationalism have 'borrowed' from other areas of the arts and sciences. We cannot choose between theories themselves, but we can comment on the validity of their 'borrowed' concepts. This chapter will examine some philosophical ideas advanced in the Enlightenment and Romantic periods and shows how they influenced a number of primordial conceptions of nationalism.

3.4 LANGUAGE, SOCIETY, ENLIGHTENMENT AND ROMANTIC REBUTTALS

The first chapter's investigation into the themes of nationalism began with a brief overview of Enlightenment and Romantic era ideas. This chapter will do the same, but not just for stylistic purposes. Late seventeenth to mid-nineteenth century Europe was very important period in the development of nationalism. For the primordialists, it was a period when theories on the inherent qualities of culture and nation emerged. For the modernists, it was a period of great material development and socio-political change. However, this intellectual period was equally important to the study of language, as many influential twentieth century concepts of language and culture (and their erroneous assumptions) can be traced back to the thinkers of this era.

3.5 DISTORTING LOCKE'S 'BLANK SLATE'

John Locke was arguably the most influential liberal political theorist of the late seventeenth century. His association of nature and reason⁵ (that humans have access to reason in the state of nature, as created by God) and doctrine of the 'blank slate' (that mental content derives from experience, not innate knowledge, such that irrational and unnatural beliefs are necessarily learned)⁶, have had lasting impacts on the study of language and culture. In addition, Locke's concepts of nature, reason and the 'black slate' are essential to understanding his philosophy, as they are the foundations of his core political ideas.

Liberal individualism, for example, secures rights of ownership and the enjoyment of private property⁷. How is it justified by nature and reason? The term 'individual' is essential to the argument. The individual exists prior to his or her cultural membership and associated political notions (as prescribed by the blank slate), and is therefore unequipped with the knowledge of social custom that is later gained through experience⁸. In the state of nature, the individual must appeal to reason to ensure his or her survival and flourishing: first by the accumulation of property through labour (to acquire the resources

⁵ Louis L. Snyder, "The Meaning of Nationalism" pg. 23

⁶ Steven Pinker, "The Blank Slate" pg. 5

⁷ Hans Kohn, "The Idea of Nationalism" pg. 182

⁸ Nicholas Jolley, "Locke: His Philosophical Thought" pg. 28

necessary for one's own welfare). The protection of property serves as a rational basis for society, in fact a reason to have any civil society at all, because it derives from the rationally derived interest to hold property. The liberal arguments for private property and protection do not derive from social custom or experience, but from requirement to live off the resources found in nature and the rational interest to secure one's welfare.

Groups may live together in harmony, and accumulation of experience seems to imply that individual groups will go on to develop their own distinctive characteristics (nations, perhaps?). These cultures, however, are secondary to nature. The rational thought needed to acquire property and sustain our wellbeing (or freedom) must derive from nature alone, for at least one reason: the dogmas of culture are the creation of humankind, subsequent to humanity's creation, and the God of reason would not have made an incomplete world. Then again, even if we leave God out of the argument, the completeness of reason in nature would still be fundamental to Locke's theory, because the 'blank slate' has no innate knowledge. The mind is naturally rational, because it cannot appeal to experiences which it has not yet acquired. The argument is entirely optimistic.

The individual born of a 'blank state' lacks dogmatic baggage. This is a liberated state of being, because the person is free to live according to reason alone: the natural order that God has embodied in the world⁹. In this scenario, all of the individual's acts and decisions will derive from reason. If all individuals were given the freedom to live in this perfectly natural and rational manner, and better yet, if individuals were free to form associations and societies derived purely from reason, there would be no inclination to war or man-made irrationalities such as slavery¹⁰.

For Locke, the blank slate is an expression of liberty because it rejects any notion that irrational beliefs justified by power, lineage, prejudice are either

⁹ Louis L. Snyder, "The Meaning of Nationalism" pg. 23

¹⁰ Hans Kohn, "The Idea of Nationalism" pg. 181

necessary or unalterable¹¹. Societies contaminated by such beliefs are in a state of irrationality, because they live by man's law, not God's, but the blank slate holds out the possibility for redemption. Since no ideas are innate, the slate of any corrupted person can be modified should it be badly contaminated with irrational or unnatural attitudes. As Pinker points out, the very ability to re-mold the minds of individuals by "reforming parenting, education, the media and social rewards" establishes a moral imperative to rid society of irrational prejudices, such as "poverty" and "antisocial behaviour"¹². If the theory and the means exist to reform society for the better, then one is obliged to put them to full effect.

In terms of Locke's influences, Hans Kohn suggests that the vision of a peaceable human nature was a direct assault on Thomas Hobbes' state of anarchy¹³: specifically, the argument that humanity's self-interests are so powerful and prone to anarchy by nature that the wellbeing of any population requires the moderation of the state to ensure peaceful co-existence. To Locke's mind, this is an appeal to the unnatural. Why should an institution of humankind, the Leviathan, be necessary in a world that has already been made complete and reasonable by God? Even if the concept of the Leviathan is one of peaceful arbitrator and entirely well-intentioned it is nevertheless an artifice: reasonable in conduct perhaps, but not rooted in the reason. More importantly, anarchy¹⁴ is the rejection of reason, so it cannot be entirely natural¹⁵.¹⁶ If human nature were naturally archaic, then there would be no

¹¹ Steven Pinker, "The Blank Slate" pg. 6

¹² Steven Pinker, "The Blank Slate" pg. 6

¹³ Ibid. pg. 180

¹⁴ 'Anarchy' in this sense does not mean absent-minded action or wanton destruction. It would be a mistake to suggest that Hobbes' theory implies either of these negative concepts. Anarchy is best understood as disorder, a world engulfed by competing interests. It does not suggest that humans are irrational, but they can only flourish once a certain measure of freedom is exchanged for order.

¹⁵ Ibid. pg. 181

¹⁶ This is not to say that Locke saw the state of nature as the be-all and end-all of human social organization. It is true that he saw the fulfillment of rationality as inherent to the state of nature, but this does not imply that humans should not (or will not) move beyond the state of nature. For instance, Locke argues that it is rational that humans should not allow value (meaning anything of value, such as food) to spoil (See Nicholas Jolley, "Locke: His Philosophical Thought" pg. 208). The institution of currency ameliorates the issue of spoilage, because of its 'shelf life'. A stable system of currency, however, requires a level of organization that can only be found in a society above the state of nature. See Kiyoshi Shimokawa "Locke's Concept of Justice" in Peter R. Anstey "The Philosophy of John Locke:

natural foundation for the rational and cooperative society: clearly an unacceptable position for Locke¹⁷.

Locke's argument for individual liberty is representative of the Enlightenment's movement to free humankind from the bondage of irrational dogma and a variety of 'unnatural' living conditions. Although Romantic thinkers were generally critical of the cold rationalism elucidated by their Enlightened intellectual forefathers, the search for a social order premised on the goal of human flourishing as found in Locke and even Hobbes would have been held at least some appeal. If Enlightened and Romantic thinkers have one thing in common, it is their willingness to challenge the necessity of the established political order¹⁸. The proper state of being for mankind is found in some conception of nature or humanity, not in dynastic lineages and other inherited structures. Despite the differences between these intellectual traditions, one cannot appreciate the later Romantic theories without reference to earlier Enlightenment concepts of nature.

As is often the case, however, the conception of humankind's nature and proper state of being tends to alter with each theorist who makes a contribution to the literature. Locke is a good starting point on the topics of culture and language, because he is fairly unambiguous in his separation of nature and reason on one hand and experience and on the other. We are born of a rational mind and receive ideas about society through experience. The extent to which these experiences are well-founded and rational depends on their coherence with natural law. The lines become more blurry in the works of subsequent theorists (some who nevertheless claim to be following in the footsteps of Locke, of course) who attempt to fill in the blank slate, as it were, by arguing that cultural ideas are a part of nature. Bolingbroke was one

New Perspectives" pg. 68. Humans can and should move beyond the state of nature, but the organizing principles of civil society remain bound to natural law.

¹⁷ Again, the Leviathan does not count as natural. It may follow logically as a means to escape the anarchic state of nature, but it is nevertheless dependent on humankind's conceived notions of accord.

¹⁸ The early liberals were certainly critical of government and law, but they were far from being iconoclasts (see Bolingbroke's defense of the Church of England in the previous chapter).

of the first theorists to be simultaneously inspired by Locke, yet driven to revise his ideas in just this fashion.

The philosophical mode of the Enlightenment was empiricism, which entails a deep distrust of metaphysical postulations and non-material idealism as sensible components of reality: an attitude well represented by Locke and Bolingbroke¹⁹. Both theorists were intent on demonstrating the weakness of non-empirical, pre-enlightenment thought, which they variously characterized as “presumptuous”, “arrogant” and “labyrinthine”²⁰. Although both men were active writers during the same period, Bolingbroke was very much the disciple of Locke²¹, calling the latter’s empiricist *Essay on Human Understanding* “the most complete work of its kind that any language can boast”²². Indeed, Bolingbroke finds himself in very close agreement with many Locke’s ideas, including: the importance of consent of the people to governance²³ and the status of government as an artificial creation of mankind²⁴; but Bolingbroke was no clone. His intellectual relationship to Locke is more significant for differences than similarities.

One would expect that a self-professed ‘fan’ of Locke would stand firmly behind the concepts of individual liberty and natural right; so it comes as a shock to discover that Bolingbroke held neither in very high regard. Isaak Kramnick notes that “nowhere in Bolingbroke’s discussion is it suggested that men enter society to protect rights and property. Totally lacking in his analysis is the individualist bias that Locke’s natural rights assumptions give to his more traditional natural law notions”²⁵. These are significant omissions.

As discussed earlier, Locke’s political theory rests on the argument that organized society and government arise from the individual’s need to protect

¹⁹ Isaac Kramnick, “An Augustan Reply to Locke: Bolingbroke on Natural Law and the Origin of Government” in “Political Science Quarterly”, pg. 573

²⁰ Ibid. pg. 573

²¹ Ibid. pg. 581

²² Bolingbroke, quoted by Ibid. pg. 573

²³ Ibid. pg. 581

²⁴ Ibid. pg. 581, 586

²⁵ Isaac Kramnick, “An Augustan Reply to Locke: Bolingbroke on Natural Law and the Origin of Government” in “Political Science Quarterly” pg. 582

the private property which he or she would have acquired in the state of nature. All of Locke's major themes (nature, reason and the blank slate, which gives them primacy over other concepts derived from experience) are bound to the concept of individual liberty. How can there be a naturally derived consent to governance apart from Locke's argument? Better yet, how can one pull off the feat of being a non-liberal Lockean?

Bolingbroke takes serious issue with Locke's state of nature. The emphasis on individuals, he argues, gives the impression that early humans roamed the earth as "solitary vagabonds", or "strolling savages": in other words, beings who were completely independent from one another and with no natural concept of hierarchy or subordination²⁶. The problem, says Bolingbroke, is that individuals in this 'state of nature' could never form a civil society, regardless of the protections it could afford, because the complex organization of leadership and bureaucracy that are inherent to civil society would be completely foreign (read unnatural) concepts to such people²⁷. You cannot have a concept of government without having at least some ideas about subordination and order. As such, the individual (liberal) level of analysis does not yield a realistic consent to govern.

One of the main differences between Locke and Bolingbroke is level of analysis. Whereas Locke sees the individual as the natural and rational source of government, Bolingbroke argues that the concept of organized society can only exist where there is some concept of group structure. Bolingbroke's level of analysis is the family²⁸. For one thing, the family unit would likely exist in the state of nature as an identifiable social grouping, just as it does today. More importantly, the family unit provides the sorts of ideas that necessary for building a successful civil society: "fathers, paternal authority, subordination, rank, cooperation, and public service" found in the family can all accommodate a nascent ordering of society²⁹. Note the

²⁶ Isaac Kramnick, "An Augustan Reply to Locke: Bolingbroke on Natural Law and the Origin of Government" in "Political Science Quarterly" pg. 582

²⁷ Ibid. pg. 582

²⁸ Ibid. pg. 576.

²⁹ Ibid. pg. 585

significance of 'ideas' inherent to family and society. The 'blank slate' has been rejected.

The chasm between Locke and Bolingbroke is already gaping at this point, but their contrasting units of analysis engender even more disagreement. If the ideas found in family structures are considered fundamental to social organization, then it really is not much of a reach to argue that stable societies are hierarchical in nature and generally share the same concerns that are relevant to families: "the maintenance of peace and order, the rendering of justice according to [the natural laws inherent to the stability of the family], and paternal concern for the good of the people"³⁰. This argument is another component of Bolingbroke's theory, and once again, it distains much of Locke.

Whereas the purpose of Locke's civil society is to maximize freedom for individuals, Bolingbroke's seems more concerned with ranking society in a primordial structure. In the absence of this structure, Bolingbroke argues, chaos reigns: "all distinctions would vanish, the social order would be overturned, and havoc would ensue. 'He who sits on a throne would inhabit a cottage, and he who holds a plough would wield a scepter'"³¹. For Bolingbroke, this vision of disorder is the inevitable consequence of founding a society based on equality and individuality rather than ideas such as paternal care and family loyalty. A society without structure is a meaningless and inherently unstable entity.

Locke's state of nature was a reaction to Hobbes' anarchy, just as Bolingbroke's theory of nationalism is largely a reaction to the core elements of Locke's individualist philosophy: nature, reason and the 'blank slate'. Bolingbroke's nationalism is simply an extension of his discussion on family, on the importance of collective ideas over individual freedoms. Paternal command, identity and love of family are transplanted directly into institutions

³⁰ Isaac Kramnick, "An Augustan Reply to Locke: Bolingbroke on Natural Law and the Origin of Government" in "Political Science Quarterly" pg. 582

³¹ Ibid. pg. 583

of the governing (paternal) elite. This strategy results in some share of irony when we consider some of Bolingbroke's other beliefs. For example, he was "a great critic of organized religion from a religious and philosophical point of view, [but] was at the same time, like Machiavelli, convinced of its social and political utility"³².

Metaphysical rituals and beliefs such as original sin, the sacraments and "eternal punishment in another life" offended Bolingbroke's sensibilities as a man of the Enlightenment, but the ability of the state Church to "encourage obedience and public spirit" [was] too tempting to ignore³³. The irony stems from Bolingbroke's desire to 'have his cake and eat it too': a rejection of religious doctrine that allows us to keep the Church as a propagator of culture, subordination and paternalism. The other irony, of course, is Bolingbroke's unique status as a non-liberal Lockean. He is a fan of natural order, the artifice of government and the rejection of metaphysics; but his denial of the 'blank slate' leads him to deny liberal individualism. More importantly, the filling of the 'blank slate' with inherent socializing concepts like subordination and collective survival provide the basis for primordial nationalism: the argument that nationalism is inherent to a population because it derives from the characteristics of cultural belonging (not through non-inherent secondary experiences as gathered by the 'blank slate').

Bolingbroke bases much of his theory of nationalism on Lockean philosophy, but denies or distorts many of Locke's terms, such that we have an almost-blank slate. These alterations are significant, because they suggest that nationalism is somehow inconsistent with liberal individualism. This potential caveat in Bolingbroke's theory is not especially clear without closer examination of his underlying philosophical commitments.

3.6 NATURE, SOCIETY AND REFORMING REASON

³² Isaac Kramnick, "An Augustan Reply to Locke: Bolingbroke on Natural Law and the Origin of Government" in "Political Science Quarterly" pg. 592

³³ Ibid. pg. 592

Bolingbroke's theory of nationalism emerged from a calculated 'chipping away' of the 'blank slate'. He may have stopped short of introducing a slew of culture-specific notions into the concept of mind, but the introduction of inherent ideas broke the wall Locke had built between natural reason and experience. Nevertheless, we must keep the context of Bolingbroke's argument in mind. As discussed earlier, he was a fervent defender of Enlightenment reason: that empirical investigation is at the heart of knowledge. Certain ideas like subordination and hierarchy predate our experience, but the proof behind this argument is found in the world itself: in the sorts of human relationships that exist prior to civil society. You cannot 'see' the ideas themselves, but you certainly derive them with reference to the behaviour of humans.

To dismiss the observable characteristics of social relationships in favour of an imagined state of nature, where mankind exhibits only the qualities the theorist wishes to highlight, is to venture into metaphysical speculation³⁴. These philosophical concerns betray Bolingbroke's writing as of a direct criticism to Locke; but while Bolingbroke may have departed from Locke's methodology, it is reasonable to suppose that he intended write what, at least to his mind, Locke *should* have written. Locke errs on several points, but overall he is still right to champion the 'God of reason' as the ultimate creator of the rational world. Subsequent philosophers, on the other hand, proposed far greater departures.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau tried to bridge the individual liberty introduced by theorists like Locke with a Romantic philosophy that would not be so negligent about the welfare of social groups: "the new society of free and equal individuals could exist, as Rousseau knew, only when the disintegrating forces of personal voluptuousness and inertia were overcome by a new sense of community-mindedness, by the identification of the person with the commonwealth"³⁵. Bolingbroke offered the first justification for an examination

³⁴ Isaac Kramnick, "An Augustan Reply to Locke: Bolingbroke on Natural Law and the Origin of Government" in "Political Science Quarterly" pg. 583

³⁵ Hans Kohn, "The Idea of Nationalism" pg. 248.

of culture's role in the formation of society, suggesting that the concepts of government derive from concepts of family. The mind cannot be entirely blank, because certain pre-societal ideas such as subordination are simply a part of what makes us socially-minded people. These innate ideas are necessary for the establishment of civil society. Rousseau goes a step further. We may not have concepts such as society in the state of nature, but the mind is not entirely blank. It is comprised of the ideas that are reflective of humankind's level of advancement, growing along with the development of the human species; but more importantly, it is a creation of our own making³⁶, not the 'God of reason'³⁷.

To appreciate the extent of Rousseau's departure from Locke, it is important to clear away some potential ambiguities. Locke's 'blank slate' is often misinterpreted to suggest that the mind is a passive receptacle, totally impressionable and un-programmed³⁸. These labels could never be right, of course, because each implies a sort of ambivalence or indifference towards the kinds of ideas that the mind receives and that the mind itself plays no role in the interpretation of ideas. How can a passive and ambivalent mind be considered a reasoning mind? 'Reason'³⁹ is the antithesis of ambivalence. A mind of reason must have the capacity to observe objects and develop them into concepts⁴⁰. If the 'God of reason' is bound by logic⁴¹, then our knowledge of and access to his/its creations must rely on some thought faculty that is capable of accessing them in nature. If reason is a necessity, and faculty

³⁶ As Pinker points out, the term 'culture' (meaning "the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought" (Pinker quoting Franz Boas) is approximately one hundred years in age. Accordingly, Rousseau would not have used the term 'culture' in the same fashion that we would today. Nevertheless, the definition of culture offered in Pinker is a fairly accurate portrayal of the ideas presented in Rousseau's theories: that there are socially derived beliefs and institutions that are transmitted by unique populations and that these transmissions constitute the minds of individuals. See Steven Pinker, "The Blank Slate" pg. 22

³⁷ Anne M. Cohler, "Rousseau and Nationalism" pg. 108

³⁸ Nicholas Jolley, "Locke: His Philosophical Thought" pg. 28

³⁹ This is not meant to imply that every choice an individual makes is necessarily a rational choice, or that every thought will be logical. However, the statement does suggest that the concept of reason, whether invoked or not, is not indifferent to good and bad arguments.

⁴⁰ John Colman, "Locke's Empiricist Theory of the Law of Nature" in Peter R. Anstey (ed.) "The Philosophy of John Locke" pg. 121

⁴¹ Nicholas Jolley, "Locke: His Philosophical Thought" pg. 22

endowed by the 'God of reason', then it is not much of a stretch to speak of reason as quality of the mind.

Reason as a quality of the mind: is this not a stunning contradiction to the 'blank slate' argument? The answer is 'no', but the explanation requires a careful distinction between the mind (simply the organ of thought) and ideas (which are introduced into the mind). The mind takes ideas from the world and then utilizes them to construct a wide array of concepts. So long as these concepts are an accurate reflection of the ideas originally taken from nature, their reason will be as robust as the reason of the world that the 'God of reason' created:

"The mind, being originally *tabula rasa*, derives all its ideas or materials of thinking ultimately from experience. Most, however, are not originally given in experience. All concepts – Locke's general, abstract ideas – are the workmanship of the mind. The difference between ectypal and archetypal ideas or concepts is that in creating the first it endeavours to copy patterns given in nature and in the second it combines its ideas into a complex without the intention of representing anything given in observation"⁴².

Colman's observation helps us distinguish between 'minds' and 'ideas'. The 'materials' are ideas utilized by the mind and taken from experience, whereas the mind 'endeavours' to combine these raw ideas into concepts. This ability to combine, to take from experience and add to knowledge, is the faculty of reason employed by the mind⁴³. It is a necessary quality and inherently contradictory to notions such as passivity and ambivalence. This theory illustrates an important principle underlying Locke's theory: that the mind plays an active role in manufacturing the products of experience.

The 'blank slate' remains empty of content, but it does not want for a faculty of thought: the mind "imposes the unity on elements which are given in experience; it is the mind, so to speak, which ties them together in a bundle"⁴⁴. Bolingbroke differs in that he holds that some ideas must be innate in order for humans to form civil societies, but Rousseau diverges from Locke

⁴² John Colman, "Locke's Empiricist Theory of the Law of Nature" in Peter R. Anstey (ed.) "The Philosophy of John Locke" pg. 121

⁴³ Ibid. pg. 109

⁴⁴ Nicholas Jolley, "Locke: His Philosophical Thought" pg. 47

even further. The differences are immediately apparent in regards to the state of nature. Whereas Locke and Bolingbroke see humans and human reason as more or less complete in this state⁴⁵, lacking the institutions of civil society needed to fulfill happiness but certainly none of the elements needed to derive a rational government⁴⁶, Rousseau sees humans as fundamentally incomplete in nature⁴⁷.

In the state of nature, Rousseau argues that man “is an animal among animals”, such that early humans were principally concerned with fulfilling basic physical needs⁴⁸. No appeal to godly reason is necessary, because humankind at this stage needed nothing more than to live off the land. Issues like ‘spoilage’ and ‘property’ found in Locke (and ultimately derived from the so-called reason of God’s nature) are entirely superfluous notions in the state of nature. One does not require a concept of ‘property’ or a ‘right’ to hold it⁴⁹. One simply takes objects for consumption. Humans manage to survive and prosper, albeit far removed from the concepts needed to form a civil society.

The idea of man living alongside animals in the state of nature would have been abhorrent to Locke and Bolingbroke. While Rousseau readily agrees that the pure state of nature does not represent the best way to live⁵⁰ (thus his state of nature is also something to be surpassed, just as in Locke’s theory) it

⁴⁵ Humans were not complete in terms of experience, of course, but the ‘machinery’ of the rational mind and the world according to God’s reason would have been present

⁴⁶ Although, as discussed, Locke and Bolingbroke differ in their arguments for which elements are necessary to arrive at government: for Locke it is the protection of private property as justified by liberal individualism and for Bolingbroke it is a matter of pre-societal ideas of hierarchy and social organization.

⁴⁷ Incompleteness does not carry a negative connotation in this sense. Rousseau does not imply that humans are ‘lesser’ people in the state of nature, but neither are their thoughts and behaviours fully realized.

⁴⁸ Anne M. Cohler, “Rousseau and Nationalism” pg. 101

⁴⁹ Roger D. Masters, “The Political Philosophy of Rousseau” pg. 161

⁵⁰ Rousseau is sometimes misread in regards to his sentiments toward the state of nature. On some erroneous interpretations of his theory, Rousseau is thought to have argued for a return to the state of nature as a rebellion of sorts against the corruption of society. However, while Rousseau does write somewhat favourably of early humans, he explicitly rules out the necessity of returning to the state of nature: “What! Must we destroy societies, annihilate thine and mine, and go back to live in forests with bears?...As for men like me, whose passions have forever destroyed their original simplicity...they will respect the sacred bonds of the societies of which they are members” Rousseau quoted in Roger D. Masters, “The Political Philosophy of Rousseau” pg. 110

is crucial toward understanding the role that society plays in making the modern human mind. “If one does not consider men as animals, one cannot consider men to be naturally outside of society. Only in this way can we truly understand what the development of society did to men’s souls”⁵¹.

Rousseau’s concept of the culturally produced mind does grant humankind at least one distinctive marker over animals. Whereas animals are limited in their behaviour out of basic instinct (i.e. an ape, by its instinct, will not seek to improve upon its abilities), human behaviour is constantly modified because of our ability to imitate others⁵². In the state of nature, human are capable of reaching at least ape-like intelligence because our minds are shaped by the culture in which we are submerged: the culture represented by animal behaviour in this case. It is the capacity to be shaped by culture that best explains the growth and diversity of the human species.

Human may have got their start by borrowing from the ‘cultures’ of other animals (imitating their behaviour), but it was not long before humans started to develop a culture all their own. Rousseau argues that the imitation and appropriation of basic animal cultures is driven by an inherently human desire for ‘perfection’⁵³. Early humans would have adopted the characteristics of other animals, apes for instance, because people would have been able to identify certain aspects of ape culture that could improve the human situation. In the search for perfection we also begin to appreciate the concept of standards⁵⁴. When human life is improved in some fashion (towards perfection), there is a tendency to avoid regress (standards).

With the concepts of ‘perfection’ and ‘standards’, humans had established the first necessary means to acquire their own culture. Concepts were derived from animal behaviour, adopted by early humans, and then set as human standards. All that was needed to initiate the distinctly human culture (a state

⁵¹ Anne M. Cohler, “Rousseau and Nationalism” pg. 108

⁵² Ibid. pg. 101

⁵³ Ibid. pg. 103

⁵⁴ Ibid. pg. 107

of affairs whereby humans learn all they need to know from other humans, not animals) was an impetus to perfect, standardize and preserve.

Rousseau suggests that humanity's impetus to go beyond animal-level culture (essentially bringing humans to value preservation, standardization and preservation) was a combination of population and resource pressure⁵⁵. Growing demands on standards of living (the need to sustain a growing population and decreasing ability to achieve this goal through resources available in animal nature) required humans to become more industrious: to develop methods to maximize the value of labour and develop efficient means of production⁵⁶.

The success of these efforts was two-fold. First, human developed new methods for securing their survival. More importantly, these uniquely human solutions to population and resource pressure effectively separated human culture from the animals found in the state of nature. The development of this culture had a lasting effect on how humans would come to perceive themselves in particular and the world in general. Rousseau argues that humankind's realization that it had risen above the habits of mere creatures offered a great sense of "pride", a belief that humans were unique and even special⁵⁷.

'Pride' is an idea gained through culture, but its impact is controversial. The idea that culture informs human behaviour is important, it leads to the development of society, but Rousseau argues that the products of society like pride are not always beneficial. As human culture increases in influence and scope, it becomes detached from nature and leads to the development of 'unnatural' social concepts: 'inequality' is the most notable⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ Anne M. Cohler, "Rousseau and Nationalism" pg. 116

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* pg. 116

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* pg. 116

⁵⁸ Roger D. Masters "The Political Philosophy of Rousseau" pg. 182

There are hardships in the state of nature, but they are strictly limited to issues of survival: keeping up one's strength for self-preservation⁵⁹. The energy needed to collect food, protect oneself and live to reproduce were all 'natural' hardships: all of them potentially dangerous when mismanaged, but inevitable aspects of being human⁶⁰. The hardships suffered by humans in society are altogether different. Culture and society pull humans away from 'natural' hardships, but introduce new problems which have no basis in humankind's original constitution. For Rousseau, the most important unnatural hardship is the material inequality caused by the ownership of property⁶¹. Owning property created an imbalance between people, allowing a very small elite to assume disproportionate legal powers over the majority⁶²: "The corruption of government...has its origins in the vices introduced together with property, and can be traced to private morals as well as political right"⁶³.

Rousseau's theory illustrates how cultural developments, ideas that originate outside of individual reason or even God's reason, have shaped human minds and behaviour. His formula may seem rather bleak on an initial reading, because it would seem as though humans are almost pre-destined to invent the means to their misery; but there is an equal share of optimism. Culturally derived ideas such as property and inequality are fundamentally unnatural, suggesting their negative aspects can be whittled away through successive reform. The solution is not to disband society or reject culture altogether, but to rediscover and implement the values that humans enjoy in nature (and before human reason, perhaps a veiled criticism of Locke and the 'blank slate')⁶⁴. 'Pity' is an important human quality that is either lost or neglected in unequal societies, but its prominence of the state of nature demonstrates its importance to the welfare of humanity: "It is very certain, therefore, that pity is a natural sentiment which, moderating in each individual the activity of love of oneself, contributes to the mutual preservation of the species...the human

⁵⁹ Ibid. Pg. 163

⁶⁰ Roger D. Masters "The Political Philosophy of Rousseau" pg. 158-159

⁶¹ Ibid. pg. 180

⁶² Ibid. pg. 196

⁶³ Ibid. pg. 196

⁶⁴ Ibid. pg. 143

race would have perished long ago if its preservation had depended only on the reasoning of its members”⁶⁵.

Humankind becomes complete when it acquires a society all its own, but is only fulfilled when the culture rediscovers natural values. Civil Society may derive from experience, so Rousseau’s theory has at least that much in common with Locke, and, granted, there more similarities. The ‘blank slate’ does not feature in Rousseau’s state of nature, but his theory is still very much in the spirit of Locke in rejecting Hobbes’ pessimism⁶⁶. This criticism is especially true in regards to the state of nature. For one thing, the idea of a leviathan is just as superfluous as the rights and contracts it is meant to enforce⁶⁷. Early humans would have been concerned with self-preservation, but it is a stretch to suggest that the meager desires for food and shelter would have necessitated a “war of all against all” described by Hobbes⁶⁸.

Locke and Rousseau were generally optimistic about the state of nature and both saw its fundamentals as key to undoing a variety of irrational (Locke’s term) and unnatural (Rousseau’s term) social conventions. However, just as Bolingbroke and Locke, certain philosophical positions are difficult to reconcile. Locke invoked the blank slate to argue that the reason of the state of nature preceded civil society (and certainly culture). His intentions were entirely optimistic. The best way to discredit harmful social dogmas such as slavery is to demonstrate that they are mere products of experience and therefore secondary to the demands of liberal individualism; bring ‘culture’ into the mix and the efficacy of the argument is lost. Rousseau’s argument does just that, by claiming human populations grew into civilizations based entirely on cultural lineages. This should not imply that Rousseau set out to trample the rights of individuals, as a fervent supporter of Locke would be prone to charge. There is no indication that Rousseau would sanction the mistreatment of the individual for the sake of the group.

⁶⁵ Ibid. pg. 143

⁶⁶ Steven Pinker, “The Blank Slate” pg. 7

⁶⁷ Roger D. Masters, “The Political Philosophy of Rousseau” pg. 136

⁶⁸ Ibid. pg. 137

The difference between Locke and Rousseau is not about levels of analysis; rather, it is a question of human nature. Locke's philosophy is founded on the argument that the institutions of social organization (government with a view to protecting property) are justified by reason. Rousseau, conversely, argues that "neither Hobbes nor Locke 'arrived at' the state of nature because they did not see the natural man is an animal incapable of reason and language"⁶⁹. For Rousseau, the successful society needs to embody a culture of natural sentiments like 'pity', not abstract ideas of reason⁷⁰.

3.7 THE PATH TO DETERMINISM

Rousseau's discourses on the state of nature and inequality are generally considered his most important contributions to theories of social behaviour, but his thoughts on language are just as important. In fact, given the importance that language plays in many subsequent theories of nationalism, these statements are arguably more important.

Rousseau's theory of 'natural' versus 'unnatural' sentiments hints at his intellectual contribution to the French Revolution (as discussed in the first chapter). Human behaviour is shaped, or warped, by the values (generally 'unnatural') of a society: certainly a revolutionary concept, because it implies that the institutions of inequality and nobility are not only invalid, but harmful and ultimately replaceable. In regards to nationalism, Rousseau's work has twin importance. First, it demonstrated that theories of social behaviour have distinct philosophical roots concerning human nature (competing roots, when compared to Locke and the Enlightenment thinkers). Second, it compelled many subsequent theories of nationalism to adopt a 'cultural' explanation for the features of distinct populations: common language being the most important. The previous section, which traced Rousseau's ideas as a reaction to Locke, covered the first category. This section will consider will consider the latter: how culture has come to dominate concepts of language in the

⁶⁹ Roger D. Masters, "The Political Philosophy of Rousseau" pg. 200

⁷⁰ Ibid. pg. 200

literature on nationalism. To answer the question, we have to consider some competing ideas on how scholars have interpreted Rousseau.

It is generally thought that Rousseau never planned or even desired to see the entirety of his theories incorporated, verbatim, into society. Many critics and historians have concluded that Rousseau never intended a practical application of his ideas, and that his ideas were written in a style of ‘armchair philosophy’⁷¹. These observations could actually apply to a number of social-contract theories and it seems somewhat fair to brush Rousseau with the same stroke, but we should not be hasty.

He was very careful to point out the differences between “principles of political right” (ideas which underpin the ruling ideology of any well-functioning society) and “maxims of politics” (the practical application of ideas to the operation of government)⁷². Arguments regarding the ‘nature of law’ in *Social Contract*, for instance, are more concerned with expounding the ‘political right’ and are therefore more akin to an ‘armchair’ perspective of Rousseau⁷³. On the other hand, books III and IV of *Social Contract* are primarily about “the considerations necessary for maintaining a stable order” and “means to strengthen the Constitution of the State”: two decidedly ‘practical’ topics of discussion⁷⁴. Adding strength to the ‘particular nature’ reading is Rousseau’s work on specific societies (not political communities in general). He authored an extensive investigation on Poland, mixing ‘principles’ such as the “authentic acts of the general will” with more practical ‘maxims’, including the impracticalities of attaining universal suffrage⁷⁵.

Roger Masters claims the sub-text of Rousseau’s writings indicate an embedded pragmatism: specifically, that he wrote with ambitious politicians and would-be kings in mind⁷⁶. This particular reading is somewhat ironic, because it puts Rousseau in close company with Machiavelli: very strange

⁷¹ Roger D. Masters “The Political Philosophy of Rousseau” pg. 306

⁷² *Ibid.* pg. 305

⁷³ *Ibid.* pg. 305

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* pg. 305

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* pg. 334

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* pg. 306

bedfellows indeed⁷⁷. Taking his cue from Machiavelli, Rousseau hopes to 'sell' his ideas by appealing to the selfish interests of would be rulers:

"If the prince fully understands Rousseau's work, he will be able to exercise the greatest power possible under the circumstances within which he rules...Rousseau merely tries to show that it is in the enlightened self-interest of the politician to know and practice the principles of political right; kings would be more powerful if they took a long-range view and subordinated their personal interest to the 'public felicity'⁷⁸.

We can identify at least three ways of reading Rousseau: the theorist who writes on generalizations, the theorist who writes on practical contexts, and the theorist who fancies himself a Machiavellian political architect. Which version of Rousseau had the most significant impact on theories of language and nationalism? The answer is tricky. There is reason to believe that he intended to speak about languages 'in general': meaning he had no particular interest in dividing his concept of language to explain any one vernacular (English, French, German, etc.).

This general approach is largely due to his 'general' idea that language is an "invention" of man: not a quality which human beings possess in the state of nature, but a subsequent creation of culture⁷⁹: However, this non-inherent concept of language effectively 'opens the door' to the notion that particular languages, which derive from particular cultures or populations, are unique from one another. If the general argument is that there is no inherent basis for language in human beings, then each language must be inherent to its individual manifestation. To put it another way, the 'general' reading of Rousseau invites speculation as to what determines a 'particular' language.

Humans did possess the capability of uttering animal-like sounds to communicate basic expressions in the state of nature (such as pain or alarm)

⁷⁷ Ibid. pg. 310

⁷⁸ Roger D. Masters "The Political Philosophy of Rousseau" pg. 311

⁷⁹ Ibid. pg. 139

but since humans were not born with any particular concepts⁸⁰ (such as 'property') language would have served no purpose; there would be nothing for language to express⁸¹. When complex languages do emerge (i.e. the sorts of languages held by modern humans, which expresses ideas and thoughts) it is due to the same circumstances that bring humans out of the state of nature: population and resource pressure⁸². Humans develop language as a means to facilitate industry and live in organized settlements which, consequently, distinguishes people from animals and fosters ideas such as 'pride'⁸³.

Rousseau's concept of language and resource/population pressure is not entirely his own. He was immensely influenced by the work of a fellow French philosopher, Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, who theorized on the relationship between climate and language. In the *Spirit of Laws* Montesquieu argues that the character of languages (which is also reflective of the character of the language user) is determined by the physical climate of that language's locality⁸⁴. People who live in cold climates are vigorous, bold, phlegmatic and frank (all of which is reflected in their cold, logical languages)⁸⁵. People living in warm climates are more passionate and amorous, and their language is more musical in tone and pitch⁸⁶. Rousseau's argument is much the same: "Southern languages are lively, accented, sonorous, and adapted to making love rather than to logical exposition"⁸⁷.

Montesquieu carries over his climatic theory of language to explain the cultural and social composition of society: "warm countries have less need of inhabitants than cold countries, and could nourish more of them; which

⁸⁰ Note that 'pity', which was a crucial aspect of human sentiment in the state of nature, is not something that must be thought or expressed in terms of words and definitions. It is an instinct, not an idea in the sense of a linguistic expression or complex thought.

⁸¹ Roger D. Masters "The Political Philosophy of Rousseau" pg. 134

⁸² Ibid. pg. 374

⁸³ Anne M. Cohler, "Rousseau and Nationalism" pg. 119

⁸⁴ Hilary Bok, "Montesquieu" in "Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy"

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Hilary Bok, "Montesquieu" in "Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy"

⁸⁷ Anne M. Cohler, "Rousseau and Nationalism" pg. 122

produces a double surplus always to the advantage of despotism”⁸⁸. Rousseau agrees with Montesquieu to such an extent that he is even willing to accept the climatic theory of culture/language when the evidence is entirely contradictory: “Even if all the south should be covered with republics and all the north with despotic states, it would not be less true that by the effect of climate, despotism is suited to warm countries, barbarism to cold countries, and the good polity to the intermediate regions”⁸⁹.

Rousseau’s theory is a textbook example of linguistic determinism: the idea that our thoughts, dispositions (and forms of government in Rousseau’s case) are determined by characteristics of language⁹⁰. The added deterministic bonus offered by Rousseau and Montesquieu is their argument that these restrictive languages (and cultures, by extension) are imposed by an external, arbitrary force: climate.

The climatic theory of language is faulty and the reason is fairly obvious. It is an argument by analogy, a rather simple fallacy that occurs when the solution to one problem is used to solve problems with a similar logical structure⁹¹. Reasoning that societies speaking the southern languages (Italian, Spanish, etc.) are more prone to tyranny because hot ‘climate’ is analogous to passionate ‘temperament’ is not far removed from saying that the enemy army moves “in the jungle as fish in the water”⁹². If you can find characteristics about a language like match your impressions of a climate, then you can explain political language and ideas in terms of geographic variation. On the same line of argument, you should try to expose the enemy in the same way that you would drain a pond to expose the fish⁹³. None of these arguments are particularly strong. The logical structure of the first relationship (hot, climate) is mirrored onto the second problem (passionate, temperament), so the argument that hot climates yield hot temperaments has the appearance of

⁸⁸ Roger D. Masters quoting Montesquieu in “The Political Philosophy of Rousseau” pg. 378

⁸⁹ Roger D. Masters “The Political Philosophy of Rousseau” pg. 378-379

⁹⁰ Steven Pinker, “The Blank Slate” pg. 207

⁹¹ Ibid. pg. 105

⁹² Ibid. pg. 105

⁹³ Ibid. pg. 105

validity, but a closer reading shows that the connection is merely an analogy and not a statement of fact.

Despite its weaknesses, the climatic theory of language and culture extends from Rousseau's earlier argument that resource and population pressure are ultimately responsible for humankind's cultural genesis, so the two are mutually complementary as 'general' theories of society. However, as discussed earlier, his 'general' theory raises the possibility of mutually exclusive manifestations of culture and language, but does not denote any societies in 'particular'. However, Rousseau's argument that language is the main property that distinguishes one nation from another⁹⁴, confirms the possibility that individual cultures and languages are naturally distinct from one another in the same way that geographies are separated by space and terrain. In other words, the 'general' theory accommodates the possibility of 'particular' societal characteristics.

Several important theorists of nationalism were influenced by the prospect of entirely unique languages and argued that the prospect of mutually exclusive cultures and languages actually forms the basis of nationalism. Rousseau's theory of the culturally created mind (although culture as shaped by climate in Rousseau's case, of course) was readily adopted by, Fichte and Herder: two German thinkers who strongly advocated a primordial conception of nationalism. Their collective ideas read like an *extreme* version of Rousseau's hypothesis that nations are distinct associations.

Fichte's theory of nationalism is founded squarely on the inherent distinctiveness of the German language: "national languages [are] the essence of human identity and [individuals can] best assert their will through the life of the nation"⁹⁵. Fichte imparts primacy to the nationalism, arguing that "[it is] incumbent on a nation[ality] worthy of the name to revive, develop and extend what is taken to be its original speech, even though it might be

⁹⁴ Anne M. Cohler, "Rousseau and Nationalism" pg. 119

⁹⁵ Lloyd Kramer, "Historical Narratives and the Meaning of Nationalism" in "Journal of the History of Ideas" pg. 536

found only in remote villages...for only such an original language will allow a nation to realize itself and attain freedom"⁹⁶. There is a real quality about language, which imposes itself on the individual such that he or she can never shed the primordial attachment that one acquires early in life⁹⁷. Once again, we should notice the connection to Montesquieu and Rousseau. The two French philosophers elucidated a doctrine of linguistic determinism, and Fichte developed a parallel linguistic-nationalist determinism.

Fichte's work is difficult to summarize without qualification. His theories were 'works in progress', meaning the convictions he held at one stage in his thinking were ultimately subsumed by more expansive convictions held at later stages. His early work can be described as individualistic, because of his emphasis on the isolated 'ego': the "anarchistic" self that creates the world by virtue of its own will and by differentiating itself from non-ego⁹⁸. This is a poorly conceived argument, of course, because it relies on an unfounded claim that the existence of any one thing necessarily proves the existence of its opposite (I exist because of my ego, therefore the world exists because it has non-ego)⁹⁹. Perhaps this error escapes Fichte's attention, or at least his concern, because his attention quickly shifts from the individual to the group. The ultimate expression of ego is not the individual alone by itself in the world, but a group of egos which, which together, creates a sort of super-identity (volk) that encompasses every meaningful aspect of human life: i.e. German-ness in Fichte's case¹⁰⁰.

It is somewhat unproductive to talk about Fichte's 'individualist' philosophy, because it is inevitably subsumed into the primordial/collective German identity. The reasons for his change in direction are debatable: was it philosophical necessity, meaning his earlier work on individual ego logically entailed a further and more expansive philosophy of the group; or was the motivation something external to his original argument? Roger Hausheer

⁹⁶ Joshua A. Fishman quoting Fichte in "Language and Nationalism" pg. 69

⁹⁷ Ibid. pg. 105

⁹⁸ Roger Hausheer, "Fichte and Schelling" in Anthony O'Hear (ed.) "German Philosophy since Kant) pg. 9

⁹⁹ Ibid. pg.9

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. pg. 10

argues that Fichte's theories were largely informed by political events in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries¹⁰¹. His individualist writings were in close alignment to the idealisms of the early French Revolution (early 1790s), when it was still fashionable (read acceptable) to "rail against oppression and paternalism, and preach an extreme, almost anarchist individualism in the framework of a minimal contractual state"¹⁰². By the late 1790s, Fichte's pronouncements took a radical turn. Fichte began to argue that the state must become "the vehicle for the transcendental self"; and several years later, after the German loss to Napoleon in 1806, he developed his German-language centered theory of nationalism¹⁰³.

Herder and Fichte shared a number of ideas, both making a number of statements about deriving primordialism from linguistic determinism. "Language is the external and visible badge of those differences which distinguish one nation from another"¹⁰⁴, which means that the primordial German-ness of Herder's nationalism is inseparable from the native tongue: culture makes the nation and language. The 'volk', or common culture, is synonymous with the 'nation'¹⁰⁵ and "the principal source of [the volk's] emergence and perpetuation is language. It is through language that the individual becomes at once aware of his selfhood and of his nationhood. In this sense individual identity and collective identity become one"¹⁰⁶. To live in a community is to share a language and to have a language is to separate oneself both culturally and mentally from all other communities¹⁰⁷.

The issue of climatic language/culture and other non-human precursors to language do not feature as prominently in either Fichte or Herder, (although Herder did agree with Rousseau that climate and ecology have an impact on

¹⁰¹ Ibid. pg. 11

¹⁰² Roger Hausheer, "Fichte and Schelling" in Anthony O'Hear (ed.) "German Philosophy since Kant" pg. 10

¹⁰³ Ibid. pg. 10

¹⁰⁴ Elie Kedourie, "Nationalism" pg. 64

¹⁰⁵ F.M. Barnard (ed.), "Editor's Introduction" in J.G. Herder, "Herder on Social and Political Culture" pg. 7

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. pg. 7

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. pg. 18

national culture and character¹⁰⁸) but their standing as linguistic determinists is impossible to deny. Nationalism is inescapable, an inherent quality of personal identity and social belonging, because it goes part-and-parcel with language (which itself is an inherent aspect of culture). If the argument seems somewhat circular (Nationalism is a part of language/culture and language/culture is embodied in nationalism) then it is likely do to both Herder's and Fichte's heavy reliance on primordial/inherent/organic concepts of identity. Incidentally, the same criticism of circularity has been leveled against Fichte's concept of 'ego' ("the ego cannot be posited by anything other than itself"¹⁰⁹). If 'German-ness' is inherent to all things German, then it is difficult to understand how German nationalism emerged in the first place (apparently it was there all along). Whatever the possible difficulties with their arguments, Fichte and Herder exemplify the idea that nationalism (or German-ness, specifically) creates the individual, not the other way around.

Although there are distinct differences between Rousseau, Fichte and Herder, a common tendency to attribute human nature (language, behaviour, etc.) to abstract concepts of culture is clear. Who we are and what we can do as humans is a question of social development. Everything that we are as social beings derives from what we learn from others and what we have created with others (either in the creation of societies with Rousseau, or in the expression of collective belonging with the German idealists). On a similar note, there are many sharp disagreements between Rousseau, Bolingbroke and Locke, but we can see common recurring tensions between mind, mental content, language and culture. How do we discover the knowledge required to form successful societies?

For Locke, that 'required knowledge' is not innate and its truth or falsehood depends on our ability to mirror the reason of nature. For Bolingbroke, there are notions of civil order prior to experience, but they still depend on the experience of family. One could argue that Locke and Bolingbroke just 'defer'

¹⁰⁸ Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities" pg. 60

¹⁰⁹ Roger Hausheer, "Fichte and Schelling" in Anthony O'Hear (ed.) "German Philosophy Since Kant" pg. 8

the problem of pre-experiential knowledge to another level of abstraction (the God of reason), although it is certain they would never admit to this charge. Rousseau is perhaps the most adamant that society is somehow super-human, arguing that the thoughts and behaviour of individuals in modern societies (pride, inequality, etc.) are completely fabricated by culture and experience. Take away culture and we are not much different from animals.

Fichte is more difficult to place. The nature of 'ego' is individualistic, but it raises more problems than it solves. First of all, Fichte's 'ego' is a potentially circular argument. Second of all, Fichte's later writings suggest that 'ego' is entirely subsumed by collective identity/ego/German-ness: so we have a 'chicken and egg' problem on the one hand and a case of partisan motivation on the other. There is nothing to suggest that the ambiguities in Fichte's work cannot be resolved, but at this stage it is safe to say that he would be more comfortable with a group or cultural account of mind.

The theories discussed directly above do contain some ideas that are fairly uncontroversial on a cursory reading. Society would seem to imply an organization of multiple individuals and language would be superfluous in a world where humans would gain no benefit from sharing ideas. Concepts like ownership and property as presented by Locke, or pride and inequality as presented by Rousseau, only make sense if we assume that human are capable of mutual understanding (enter culture). The difficulty does not become clear until these theorists speculate on human nature prior to the culturally derived mind: Locke and Bolingbroke appeal to their enlightenment-conception of God as the ultimate creator of nature; Rousseau (and Montesquieu) argue that the only determinant of language prior to culture is climate and geography; and Fichte's concept of the ego, in the act of positing itself, ultimately finds itself positing a collective ego.

3.8 REMARKS ON THE EARLY THINKERS

The problems raised in the above sections go much deeper than the issues that typically define theories of nationalism (primordialism, perennialism,

modernism, etc.). The philosophical foundations of nationalism indicate that early theories on origin are closely related to longstanding issues of human nature faced by the social sciences (linguistic determinism, socially produced knowledge and human behaviour), as indicated by Pinker. Furthermore, although there is a clear succession of ideas (from Locke to Bolingbroke and Rousseau to Fichte and Herder), each theorist has carved out their own niche interpretation of human nature, making for an inauspicious start to fashioning a coherent theory of nationalism: the mutual exclusivity of theories discussed earlier. Why is there such variation?

The best answer is an overuse of 'poorly borrowed' concepts: i.e. the treatments on language, culture and behaviour to support various theories are generally 'twisted' to suit the parameters of given arguments. The best example of this 'twisting' is seen in the contrast between Locke's 'rights-based' state of nature and Rousseau's 'sentiments-based' state of nature. Which theory is better? It is a tough choice made worse by the fact that Locke and Rousseau had very different assumptions about human nature. For Locke, the establishment of property rights takes no more than an appeal to natural reason. For Rousseau, the very concept of property is inaccessible to early humans (who are not even equipped with language). These niche interpretations inevitably 'twist' certain concepts: human capacity for language is not explained independently from views on the state of nature.

Then again, we should avoid too much harsh criticism. Some deficiencies are obvious in the early theories of nationalism and in some of their related philosophies (Fichte's 'ego', for instance). We would be hasty to suggest that the actual theories of Locke, Rousseau and other early writers are still underpinning current efforts to understand nationalism. Errors in the early thinkers' work provide the first indications of problems in the study of human nature (and perhaps in the social sciences themselves).

Pinker is not explicit on the matter, he probably does not think 'less' of Locke or Rousseau for their now-dated thinking: such as Locke's frequent references to the nature of God's reason and Rousseau's climatic theory of

language. If anything, Pinker invokes their ideas metaphorically ('the blank slate' from Locke and 'the noble savage' from an interpretation of Rousseau's man in the state of nature) to criticize more contemporary social scientists, not Locke or Rousseau themselves. It is important to remember the era in which these early philosophers worked. Both provided compelling arguments against dogma, political oppression and other significantly more flawed conceptions of society¹¹⁰.

In addition, neither had access to modern theories of mind or even the concept of evolutionary behaviour. There is only so much that the early thinkers could have known about human nature. Criticizing the early thinkers on the one hand, or taking inspiration from them on the other, can only get us so far. The goal is to make use of knowledge about human nature available in the present.

Pinker's main concern is with contemporary social scientists who have refused to improve on Locke and Rousseau's concept of culturally created minds. The omissions of philosophers over two hundred years ago are still made by social scientists and other academics to this day, despite modern research on language, biology and evolutionary psychology. Contemporary social scientists have generally resisted the theories advanced by these studies. Modern theories of nationalism have also tended to neglect research in these fields, essentially 'losing out' on a number of opportunities to advance the debate on origin.

3.9 LEGACY OF THE EARLY THINKERS

Determinism is the idea that most categories of human potential (to think, to know, to identify, to create, all relevant to theories of nationalism) are premised on the scope of certain underlying principles¹¹¹. Some discussions about determinism are of little importance to the social sciences: that our potential is limited by gravity, need for food and oxygen, etc. The more

¹¹⁰ Steven Pinker, "The Blank Slate" pg. 6

¹¹¹ Ibid. pg. 174-175

relevant discussions about determinism tend to fall on a particular topic: the extent to which the limit of our potential is a prison of our own making. Locke and Rousseau handled issues of determinism in humankind's state of nature. For Locke, there are no innate ideas, so our potential to realize God's reason is determined by our ability to live according to the rationality of natural law. For Rousseau, even language is not innate, but something that emerges as a combination of human design (arising to facilitate living in communities, out of resource pressure) and climate (even character traits such as 'passion' are not human in nature, but imprinted by one's exposure to particular terrains). In both early theories, the limits of human potential are incidental, because human nature extends from the worlds we carve out. Our abilities matter less than the consequences of our actions. In fact, some of our abilities (such as the ability to speak, in Rousseau's theory) are the result of some previous human action. At first glance, these early ideas would seem to imply a very strict determinism: we are inevitably our own prison masters.

Indeed, there is a great deal of 'apparent' determinism in Locke and Rousseau. How else could one describe the argument that our languages and political inclinations are set by climate? However, there is an important caveat. The prisons are real, but they are nothing more than inventions¹¹². As masters of our own prisons, we determine the limits of our freedom¹¹³. In Locke's scenario, the products of human experience have forced some people to suffer the 'prison' of slavery; but since these ideas are premised on a malleable 'blank slate', they do not be taken as necessary truths. The slate is cleanable. The case is quite similar in Rousseau's theory. Social and material inequalities are not 'determined' by anything other than the abuses of freedom; they extend from constructed values that defy humankind's original

¹¹² The term 'construction' is employed to emphasize the non-inherent, human-made knowledge that only arrives subsequent to the state of nature. The usage of 'constructed' is much like the modern understanding of 'social construction', but this term is avoided because none of the early thinkers would use it in their work.

¹¹³ Remember Rousseau's qualification: climate influences language and political systems, but these latter human qualities do not exist in the state of nature, so they are not beyond revision. We can reform our climate-influenced languages and ideas by appealing to pre-linguistic values such as 'pity'. Although climate plays a part in the development of language, we are ultimately capable of altering any aspect of ourselves that is not inherent to the state of nature.

state of nature. Suffering (as a consequence of inequality) is a constructed idea. Determinism, ultimately, is also constructed.

'State of nature' arguments have vanished from modern philosophy, as have 'Gods of reason' and other dated concepts, but the core idea remains: that human nature is inseparable from culturally transmitted knowledge and invention. The modern name for this theory varies in different accounts, but it can be referred to generally as 'social constructivism'. The following will focus on the role of social constructivism in debates in the social sciences and theories of nationalism.

4. Philosophical Foundations of Nationalism: Modern Theory Toward a Consilient Account

The previous chapter examined how primordial theories of nationalism were influenced by philosophers such as Locke and Rousseau. Two important problems were noted. Several theories of nationalism took significant departures from their underlying philosophical ideas (such as Bolingbroke's re-working of the 'blank slate'): illustrating the point that debates surrounding theories of nationalism are not just between competing theories, but also between theory and philosophy. A further problem involves theories of nationalism which are based on rather 'shaky' philosophical ground: specifically, those relying on Rousseau's linguistic determinism and Fichte's concept of 'ego'. The quality of a theory is invariably determined by the quality of its underlying philosophical claims.

This chapter will continue on the theme of relating theories of nationalism to certain ideas in philosophy and the social sciences. The focus will be on more contemporary theories (perennialism¹, modernism) and their relation to the development of twentieth-century anthropology and philosophy. Once again, it will be argued that most problems with these theories can be traced to debates and errors in their underlying intellectual commitments.

The remaining sections of this chapter offer a methodology that will assist future theories of nationalism in dealing with the debate on origins. A consilient methodology, which unites the social and natural sciences on questions of human behaviour and social organization, will prevent future theories from 'falling victim' to discussed errors in the humanities and social sciences (linguistic determinism, ethnic determinism and radical constructivism).

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Nationalism is a social phenomenon, meaning it can be understood only as a product of human creation. There are two good reasons for this definition. First, there are no nationalisms or nations in the natural world; there is only physical geography and natural features such as bodies of waters. Second, nationalisms and nations only 'exist' because we essentially agree that they exist. For both of these reasons, it is fair to say that nationalism is socially

¹ The ethno-symbolic category of nationalism will be covered under perennialism in this chapter, since both rely heavily on the concept of 'ethnicity'.

constructed². Nationalism is social because it exists only in the non-physical world, and constructed because it strictly a product of the human mind (or perhaps human imagination in particular, in Aderson's usage).

Problems with social constructivism only emerge when individuals argue that all components contributing to the making of social constructions are themselves socially constructed. For example, there really is no problem in saying that nationalism is a social construct and it is also fair to say that nationalism generally arises within groups that speak a common language. However, it is going a step too far to argue that language is also, therefore, a social construct (an argument that would bring us in close alignment with linguistic determinism). While it is true that language is used to communicate ideas (and social constructions) it is nevertheless premised on a faculty whose nature owes to human evolution and cognitive development^{3,4}. Evolution and biological development occur without our 'thinking about them'; they are independent of our design, and therefore cannot be products of social construction.

The nature of social construction is important, because many theories of nationalism falter when it comes to explaining social realities (or constructions); oftentimes, they revert to explaining social phenomena such as nationalism in exclusively constructivist terms, only rarely allowing for non-constructed perspectives. This seems to be especially true in the field of modern anthropology.

There is a problem with over-reading social construction to the total neglect of ideas whose truth conditions are in the natural sciences. As discussed above, social constructions rely on our 'agreeing to them' in order for them to exist:

² Steven Pinker, "The Blank Slate" pg. 327

³ Noam Chomsky, "On Nature and Language" pg. 62-63

⁴ To keep Chomsky in context, he does not see the language/brain issue as solved. In fact, he argues that there are still significant gaps in our understanding between the connection of human biology and language acquisition. However, he is fairly comfortable in conceding that language is a component of biology 'in principle'. Also see Steven Pinker, "The Blank Slate" pg. 35 on issues relating to language and mind. He stresses despite gaps in the current literature, there is general consensus that language entails an innate faculty in the brain.

it is pretty much their only truth condition. In terms of nationalism, this strategy suffices for us to conclude that nationalism is a social reality (it exists because we all believe it exists) but it does little to advance our theories on when and why nationalism emerged. A theory that limits itself exclusively to socially constructed arguments will only be true if we generally agree that it is true. In other words, the best theory will be the one that builds the greatest consensus: the correct theory is the one we think is correct. There would be no impartial measures for determining the veracity of the theory; we would only have our sensibilities to guide us.

The last chapter ended with a brief introduction to the idea of socially/culturally created minds: a concept introduced via the 'blank slate' and Rousseau's theory of social evolution. Neither of these philosophers would have used the term 'socially constructed', but we can see how their work introduced ideas that are now somewhat common to social construction: there may be a material basis for the machinery of thought (even Locke maintained that a rational mind was first necessary in order to discern reason in the world), but all of our thoughts and even our emotions are determined by experience and (in the case of Rousseau) social contexts⁵.

The concept of the socially/culturally produced mind carried over from the early thinkers to the modern field of anthropology via a group of influential German philosophers (to be discussed below). Once again, the philosophical foundations stressing culturally produced minds informed many theories of nationalism, particularly those emphasizing ethnicity. This chapter will discuss this history, how the legacy of these ideas continues to affect our conceptions of nationalism, and finally, how the problem of social construction can be resolved to the benefit of the debate on nationalism's origins.

4.2 ANTHROPOLOGY: THE PATH TO MODERN SOCIAL SCIENCE

⁵ Sergio Sismondo, "Some Social Constructions" in *Social Studies of Science* pg. 521

The early philosophical roots of nationalism culminated in the arguments of Fichte and Herder, so it is fair to say that the theories of nationalism can trace their ancestry to primordialism. However, it is also fair to say that very few contemporary theorists would write in a primordialist vein. Present-day arguments extolling the sacredness and organic nature of national identity are far more likely to be classified as politically motivated, jingoistic and even fascist; they would be considered part of a 'movement', not an impartial theory of human social organization⁶. As discussed in the previous chapter, most modern theorists working in the historical analysis theme (Kedourie in particular) described the early primordial theories as expressions of nationalism, more of a call to arms than an objective study.

Objectivity aside, it is difficult to see how nationalism could exist if certain concepts did not exist (such as collective identity and common culture); and discussions of these concepts can be found as far back as Bolingbroke, Rousseau and certainly reach a boiling point in the German Romantic ideas of Herder and Fichte. Indeed, the primordial concepts of *volk*, German-ness, or Bolingbroke's idea of God-given English institutions are all manifestations of collective identity and common culture. Replace 'volk' with collective identity and 'German-ness' with common culture and the old primordial theories seem quite plausible, even for present-day usage.

The transformation from primordialism to perennialism grew out of anthropology's aspiration to become a social science, meaning it wanted to build up a set of concepts, or 'tools', that could be used to understand the social organizations of multiple and disparate societies⁷. Primordial concepts like 'German-ness' fell out of fashion, because anthropologists did not see national allegiances as being free-standing ideas; rather, they saw them as manifestations of a more generalized social structure⁸. The particular concept of 'German volk' could be explained in terms of 'culture'; the particular concept of 'German-ness' could be explained in terms of 'tribalism' and later,

⁶ Anthony D. Smith, "The Diffusion of Nationalism" in "The British Journal of Sociology" pg. 245

⁷ Fred Inglis, "Clifford Geertz: Culture, Custom and Ethics" pg. 11

⁸ Craig Calhoun, "Nationalism and Ethnicity" in "Annual Review of Sociology" pg. 215, 218

'ethnicity'. Instead of talking about German-ness being inherent to the German people, theorists now talk about ethnicity being a component of German identity. The transformation, however, was not immediate. Early anthropology shared many ideas with the German Romantics and, in the case of Central European anthropology, took its motivation from German philosophies inspired by Fichte and Herder⁹.

Many twentieth-century theories of nationalism borrow concepts and ideas from the modern social sciences, sociology and anthropology in particular: an arrangement that closely mirrors the relationship between nationalism and philosophy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Locke was not ostensibly a theorist on nationalism, but he and the other social contract theorists (Hobbes, Rousseau) had a significant impact on early primordial theories. Closer to our own time, anthropology is concerned with far more than debates on nationalism, but most twentieth-century theories of nationalism would not exist in their present form if it were not for anthropological work on ethnicity and language. Theories of nationalism have always depended on the intellectual output of sometimes non-nationalist thinkers.

4.3 THE BEGINNING

Ernest Gellner was perhaps the leading theorist working on nationalism in the second half of the Twentieth century and argued consistently for its origins in modernity. However, he was also a noted philosopher, sociologist and anthropologist, so his ideas draw from a number of intellectual traditions. His last major work, *Language and Solitude* (published posthumously in 1998) offers his final word on all of these fields. His observations are important for this study, not just because of his take on the origin debate, but for his skill at connecting the study of nationalism to a number of philosophical and methodological debates that have been waged since the early twentieth century. He does make an explicit call for the social sciences to embrace the

⁹ Ernest Gellner, "Language and Solitude" pf. 125

natural sciences in the same vein as Steven Pinker (who appeals to evolutionary biology and the modern study of language), but he picks up on a tension in modern scholarship that relates closely to Pinker: what parts of our knowledge have a natural explanation (scientific basis) and which parts have a social explanation (learned culturally).

According to Gellner, the modern field of anthropology (beginning in the mid to late nineteenth century) was influenced by historical and scientific variations across Europe, but the ultimate reasons were political¹⁰. Early British anthropologists were heavily influenced by Charles Darwin and were eager to seek out 'primitive' societies in order to establish the pattern of human evolution from 'savage' to modern man¹¹. Naturalism was the scientific aspect. The political aspect, which rationalized scientific study, was a hope that discovering the nature of human evolution would "provide a charter for power ranking in a world pervaded by a new type of empire, territorially discontinuous, where the power-holders seemed to be at a different 'stage' of social development from those they ruled"¹². Central European anthropologists, on the other hand, were engaged in preserving, protecting and codifying peasant cultures in order to solidify coherent nationalisms (and to protect their respective nations from the encroachment of competing nations)¹³. Despite their differences (identifying versus protecting) British and Central European philosophers were motivated by assumed political necessities.

James George Frazer was a preeminent British anthropologist of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and he epitomized early anthropology's Darwinian attempt to isolate humankind's evolutionary path¹⁴. Unfortunately for Frazer, this conception of anthropology fell out of favour by the end of the nineteenth century. The Central European method would become the standard, and subsequently, the core of anthropological thought.

¹⁰ Ernest Gellner, "Language and Solitude" pg. 114-115

¹¹ Ibid. pg. 114

¹² Ibid. pg. 114

¹³ Ibid. pg. 115

¹⁴ Ernest Gellner, "Language and Solitude" pg. 113

The explanation for this sea change in Britain is a matter of historical debate, but Gellner thinks it was largely because of a 'rising star': Bronislaw Malinkowski, a Polish anthropologist who took a particular in the unique characteristics of each society that was 'under the microscope'¹⁵.

Whereas Frazer examined the generalities of humankind (true to a more Darwinian model to study with a species-mind frame) Malinowski looked at the particularities of individual groups: unique languages, values, customs and beliefs¹⁶. Gellner is fairly vague on the specifics of how and why Malinowski 'stole the show', but it is possible that the politics of the British Empire intervened yet again. Britain's overseas possessions were administered by a central Colonial Office, which was responsible for recruiting new civil servants to administer government offices around the world. Understandably, it was argued that a civil servant would be more likely to succeed in his new post if he were versed in the particular customs and habits native to his jurisdiction¹⁷. Malinowski's method was a boon, because its emphasis on examining individual societies sat nicely with the government's desired curriculum. Frazer's method, conversely, was more disposed to training aspiring naturalists than footmen of the Empire.

Malinowski's rise to prominence had a lasting impact on social sciences throughout the Western world largely because of his founding role in modern anthropology. He developed many original ideas, but nevertheless, his philosophical sensibilities derive from German Romanticism: think of Herder and Fichte's impassioned defense of unique languages and peoples amalgamated into mutually exclusive cultures. Malinowski, along with other Central European anthropologists, inferred a moral imperative: if groups depend on their distinctive features to exist, then such features should be preserved. "[Their] aim was to record, codify, and protect the national culture, or its peasant variant, either because the peasant version was held to be the

¹⁵ Ernest Gellner, "Language and Solitude" pg. 121

¹⁶ Ibid pg. 121

¹⁷ Ibid. pg. 121

purest and most valuable form.”¹⁸ Compare the statement about Malinowski with an earlier one about Fichte: “[it is] incumbent on a nation[ality] worthy of the name to revive, develop and extend what is taken to be its original speech, even though it might be found only in remote villages...for only such an original language will allow a nation to realize itself and attain freedom”¹⁹. Compare those two statements with one describing Herder’s views on language and culture: “Socio-cultural entities only [survive] as communities *sui generis* as long as they succeed in preserving their language as a collective inheritance”²⁰. The succession of ideas from the early thinkers is clearly visible.

Pinker and Gellner seem to agree that the new study of anthropology was the source of many twentieth-century theories on social organization and behaviour, but they differ in their choice of ‘founding fathers’. Pinker identifies Franz Boas as the fountainhead of twentieth-century arguments for constructivism.²¹ Working from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, Boas (a Central European, like Malinowski) was influenced by a tradition of German philosophy (again, influenced by Fichte and Herder) which argued that ‘ideas’ are the “ultimate constituents of reality”, as opposed to ‘bodies’ and ‘matter’²². Boas extended the concept of reality-ideas to a concept of society, arguing that variations in socially determined activities across populations denote unique ‘cultures’²³.

In a style reminiscent of Rousseau’s argument that nations are divisible by language and custom²⁴, Boas argued that “peoples differ because their cultures differ”²⁵. There is no mass population of humans, but societies which are individuated by their own subjective experiences. His views are also quite similar to Montesquieu (although not in regards to the climatic argument).

¹⁸ Ibid. pg. 130-131

¹⁹ Joshua A. Fishman quoting Fichte in “Language and Nationalism” pg. 69

²⁰ F.M. Barnard (ed.), “Herder on Social and Political Culture” pg. 18

²¹ Steven Pinker, “The Blank Slate” pg. 22

²² Ibid. pg. 22

²³ Ibid. pg. 22

²⁴ Anne M. Cohler, “Rousseau and Nationalism” pg. 121

²⁵ Steven Pinker, “The Blank Slate” pg. 22

Montesquieu was unique for an Enlightenment-era thinker because of his interest in studying 'cultures' from a relativistic perspective²⁶. He noted that the unique thinking of humans in disparate parts of the world make it impossible to believe that people are somehow meant to live according to a universal custom: what makes a person happy in China may be absent or loathed in Paris, and vice versa²⁷. More importantly, he saw no reason to believe we should think one way of life, or 'culture', to be superior to any other²⁸. He positively shocked the readers of his day by suggesting that belief in Montezuma was a reasonable and adequate deity for worship, because he fulfilled the Aztec's need for a satisfying religion in the same way that the Christian god satisfied the people of Spain²⁹. Boas (along with Malinowski) may have made an original contribution in emphasizing the value of studying individual cultures directly, but his search for cultural understanding has a clear historical precedent.

It is curious to read Gellner and Pinker together, because they tend to cite the same anthropological ideas underpinning the modern social sciences; yet shockingly, Gellner does not mention Boas and Pinker does not mention Malinowski. The omissions are surprising in both accounts. There is also an important consequence: Pinker and Gellner focus on different 'heirs' to the early anthropologists (i.e. the thinkers influenced by Malinowski versus the thinkers influenced by Boas). Despite their differing paths, however, common problems with the socially determined worldview unfold in tandem.

As is sometimes the case with important theorists, an individual's impact on academic study is established by the prominence of their students. The quality of an idea is not necessarily judged by its longevity, but the transformation of individual theories into robust doctrines depends on successive generations of thinkers who appeal to common beliefs of how a subject ought to be studied. Pinker argues that Boas is a noteworthy social scientist in his own right, having made an individual contribution to social

²⁶ Isaiah Berlin, "The Roots of Romanticism" pg. 30-31

²⁷ Isaiah Berlin, "The Roots of Romanticism" pg. 30-31

²⁸ Ibid. pg. 30-31

²⁹ Ibid. pg. 31

science, but he is arguably more important for inspiring a generation of 'cultural' theorists who treat the importance of cultural understanding with doctrinal respect³⁰. The same is true of Gellner's view on Malinowski. Although Frazer was technically 'first' in terms of modern theorizing on anthropology, it was Malinowski's work that would become the doctrine for future social scientists³¹. In terms of actual successors, Pinker lists several students of Boas who qualify as viable successors, but seems to prefer Albert Kroeber. Meanwhile, Gellner follows the influence of Malinowski on the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein.

4.4 LINGUISTIC DETERMINISM: THE MODERN INCARNATION

Rousseau and Montesquieu's climatic theory of language was unconvincing because it relied on an improper use of analogy: taking knowledge about one thing (the connection between southern terrains and warm weather, versus northern terrains and cold weather) and taking it to solve for a completely different problem (the diversity of political systems and languages in the world). Part of the problem could be explained by reference to Rousseau's time. As discussed earlier, the Enlightenment compelled new thinkers to find natural explanations for most subjects under study. Rousseau was more of a Romantic-Enlightenment thinker, but we can see the bias for the natural in the climatic theory. On the one hand, the theory is hopelessly flawed because it does not go so far to explain how or why weather makes language, just that there is a connection. On the other hand, the idea is somewhat of a step forward in holding out the possibility that humans can be studied scientifically (meaning in terms of nature, without recourse to spiritualism).

Unfortunately, several thinkers at the beginning of the twentieth century had not improved our understanding of language significantly beyond Rousseau. These are two passages from Otto Jespersen's *Growth and Structure of the English Language*, published in 1905:

³⁰ Steven Pinker, "The Blank Slate" pg. 23

³¹ Ernest Gellner, "Language and Solitude" pg. 136-137

(On the English language)

“There is one expression that continually comes to my mind whenever I think of the English language and compare it with others: it seems to be positively and expressly *masculine*, it is the language of a grown-up man and has very little childish or feminine about it.³²”

(On language from Hawaii)

“Can any one be in doubt that even if such a language sounds pleasantly and be full of music and harmony the total impression is childlike and effeminate? You do not expect much vigor or energy in a people speaking such a language; it seems adapted only to inhabitants of sunny regions where the soil requires scarcely any labor on the part of man to yield him everything he wants, and where life therefore does not bear the stamp of a hard struggle against nature and fellow-creatures. In a lesser degree we find the same phonetic structure in such languages as Italian and Spanish; but how different are our Northern tongues.³³”

Steven Pinker explains these statements in terms of institutionalized racism and stereotypes that were common in the early twentieth century. Jespersen’s ‘observations’ were simply uninformed opinions about non-Europeans which were prevalent at the time³⁴. There is good reason to dismiss any theory if it is based on opinion, bias or other sentiments, because such views are rarely scrutinized or held to account by the theory itself. The actual views (what European intellectuals thought about non-Europeans) are important in a historical sense, their role in elite political decision making should be evaluated closely; but we must reinforce an important point on argumentation. It does not matter whether a non-scrutinized ideas are negative (thinking of non-Europeans as less culturally developed) or positive (thinking European languages are especially sophisticated). Neither sort of idea makes for good argument, because neither is based on established fact.

Ernest Gellner provides a good summary of Central European anthropological projects in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This school was interested in preserving linguistic communities and unique peasant cultures (the connection to Fichte is fairly transparent). As discussed, it became the dominant model for anthropology, and took root in Britain under Malinowski

³² Otto Jespersen quoted in Steven Pinker, “The Blank Slate” pg. 14

³³ Otto Jespersen quoted in Ibid. pg. 14

³⁴ Steven Pinker, “The Blank Slate” pg. 16

(Gellner's attribution) and Boas (Pinker's attribution). Alfred Kroeber was a student of Boas, taking the German-inspired overseas to the United States.

Kroeber's work can be viewed as a radical interpretation of Boasian theory. Boas examined the importance of culture in the transmission of ideas and values, but did not exclude the likelihood that individual minds possessed enough ability to generate complex thought. In addition, he was also a firm believer in the inherent equality of languages, and argued passionately against the idea of separating people with appeals to their languages and linguistic characteristics³⁵ (a direct challenge to theorists like Jespersen³⁶). Kroeber, on the other hand, argued that there really is no individual, that the faculties of no individual person could generate social behaviours or ideas found in any society: "Mentality relates to the individual. The social or cultural, on the other hand, is in its essence non-individual. Civilization as such begins only where the individual ends"³⁷. The individual has a brain, but culture constructs the mind.

Working in the United States, Kroeber based his anthropological studies of Native Americans on a combination of the Central European model (preserving the distinctiveness of language) and his personal reading of Boas. Kroeber's work on Native American Culture was supplemented by an associate, Edward Sapir (who was also a student of Boas³⁸), and the two thinkers inspired a generation of anthropologists that would remain active well into the 1970s³⁹. Benjamin Lee-Whorf was perhaps their most notable student⁴⁰. Working closely with Sapir, Whorf's theories on language (derived

³⁵ Jane H. Hill, "Language, Race, and White Public Space" in Alessandro Duranti (ed.) "Linguistic Anthropology: a Reader" pg. 451

³⁶ There is a caveat. Boas argues that there are no naturally binding inequalities between people, but Pinker does suggest that Boas considered European civilization superior. Although Boas' views would no longer be considered good statements of equality, he nevertheless felt that all people were capable of achieving the 'superior' standards of civilizations established by Europeans. Steven Pinker, "The Blank Slate" pg. 23

³⁷ Ibid. pg. 23

³⁸ Steven Pinker, "The Language Instinct" pg. 59

³⁹ Alessandro Duranti, "Linguistic Anthropology" in Alessandro Duranti (ed.) "Linguistic Anthropology: a Reader" pg. 3

⁴⁰ Ibid. pg. 3

from anthropological analysis of the Hopi) was the culmination of Kroeber's cultural theory of mind.

Whorf's linguistic study of the Hopi language (published, 1950) was part of a larger anthropological survey of Native American societies. Laura Thompson summarizes the goal of this survey (which was sponsored by the US Department of Indian Affairs) as socio-political⁴¹. The American government funded a number of studies to establish a social and economic blueprint for native tribes that would maximize local autonomy and welfare⁴². It is interesting to see that, once again, the spread of anthropological theories owes to government influence (compare with the British governments adoption of Central European models), but the influence of now established cultural construction is even greater.

Whorf argues that "the premises implicit in traditional Hopi ideology and the extent to which they differ from those implicit in traditional Euro-American ideologies are further revealed by a comparative analysis of relevant grammatical forms in the Hopi language and in English"⁴³. It is fairly uncontroversial to state that people living in a self-defined culture will generally possess a common language and that this language may even be unique to that particular culture, but Whorf argues for an even stronger form of construction in suggesting that language determines belief: "The grammar of our mother tongue determines not only the way we build sentences but also the way we view nature and break up the kaleidoscope of experience into objects and entities about which to make sentences"⁴⁴. The individual, it appears, is entirely a construction of culture. To possess language is to possess a particular language and each particular language consists of specific values, beliefs, customs and behaviours. How we see the world is based on how we think of it in terms of a culturally constructed language.

⁴¹ Laura Thompson, "Preface" in Laura Thompson (ed.) "Culture on Crisis: a Study of the Hopi Indians" pg. xvi

⁴² Ibid. pg. xvi

⁴³ Benjamin Lee-Whorf "Time, Space, and Language" in Laura Thompson (ed.) "Culture on Crisis: a Study of the Hopi Indians" pg. 152

⁴⁴ Ibid. pg. 153

Whorf's linguistic determinism owes a great deal to the anthropological tradition that was established by his teachers and anthropology itself owes a great deal to early theorists of nationalism. Fichte and Herder's conceptions of German-ness may have fallen by the wayside, but social sciences up through the mid-twentieth century (at this stage of the argument) remained loyal to the idea of unique culture, unique languages and the moral imperative to protect the coherence and independence of these unique populations. Modern anthropology and the role of constructionist theory in the social sciences are inseparable from early conceptions of nationalism. Whorf's hypotheses are no longer accepted by most mainstream linguists, psychologists⁴⁵ and biologists, but this only goes to show part of the reason why many linguists, psychologists and biologists find themselves at odds with anthropology in general.

Linguistic determinism has featured in twentieth century theories of nationalism. Louis Snyder's statement is the most exquisite example: "National vocabulary, syntax, word formations, and word rhythms accurately reflect the intellectual and emotional qualities of a people"⁴⁶. More recently, James Kellas claims that "some neurophysiologists have related particular languages to particular types of brain (eg. Japanese brains cope best with the Japanese language, etc.) The implication is that language and biology are linked, and that 'mother tongues' are the most 'natural'...These languages have a peculiar potency, which subsequent language shifts cannot totally eras"⁴⁷.

On the one hand, the natural sciences will have to decide on the neurological structure of the brain for themselves; on the other, there is nothing in this statement that should imply a bio-linguistic basis for nationalism: that Japanese are confined to a national identity because of the facility with which they adopt a first language. The notion of 'Japanese brains' is also highly suspicious (note Pinker's criticism of Jespersen: that there is no implicit

⁴⁵ Steven Pinker, "The Language Instinct" pg. 63

⁴⁶ Louis L. Snyder, "The Meaning of Nationalism" pg. 21

⁴⁷ James G. Kellas, "The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity"

psychological hierarchy in the variations of world languages). In regards to other nationalism theorists, Joshua Fishman is highly suspicious of Whorf's theory of linguistic determinism; however, he notes the sway that it holds over anthropologists and theorists of nationalism, in spite all of its problems:

"The continued emotional hold of [Whorf's views], in the absence of confirmatory evidence, notwithstanding repeated efforts to provide such via controlled experiments, is evident from the fact that most cultural anthropologists today would doubtlessly agree with Vossler's intuitive claim that 'there rests in the lap of each language a kind of predestination, a gentle urge to this or that way of thinking'"⁴⁸.

Whorf's hypothesis was readily adopted by many twentieth-century theorists of nationalism, because it provided a justification for what anthropological arguments for nationalism had been saying for over fifty years (and even further back if we trace the original ideas to Fichte and Herder): that nationalism is the expression of distinct cultures, each with their own constructed visions of the world. Fishman notes that "[Whorf's] original presentations [were] indicative of the nationalist contexts in which the conviction arose that language must be taken 'not merely as a set of words and rules of syntax, not merely as a kind of emotional reciprocity, but also as a certain conceptualization of the world'"⁴⁹. Linguistic determinism has been a component of the literature on nationalism in each of the former's manifestations since the Romantic era. In each instance, linguistic determinism makes the same mistake: conflating the diversity of common languages with the capacity of every language community to develop expressions for describing the world. Theories of nationalism have suffered as a result of linguistic determinism, because their arguments are simply based on poor philosophical foundations.

4.5 ORDINARY LANGUAGE AND ETHNICITY

Ethnicity is perhaps the central concept of perennial theories. As discussed in the second chapter, theories of nationalism making reference to nationalism will usually choose between two conceptions: ethnicity as common descent,

⁴⁸ Joshua Fishman, "Language and Nationalism" pg. 127

⁴⁹ Ibid. pg. 127

meaning the passing down of an identity from one generation of people to their direct successors; or ethnicity as a symbolic act, where common descent is not necessarily given, but a people nevertheless defines themselves in terms of their symbolic relationship to an historic identity⁵⁰. Despite the different versions of ethnicity, they both play a common role in terms of nationalism. For the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, that role is to provide “a template or blueprint for the organization of social and psychological processes”⁵¹. For Geertz, culture is the main organizing principle for all societies, and ethnicity is simply the mode. Briefly stated, symbolic ethnicity embodies the values and ideas of communities, effectively framing the group’s perception of the world⁵². Ethnicity, the argument follows, is the basis for nationalism:

“The development of highly generalized ideologies as the basis of social and political organization is of course the essence of nationalism...[nationalism may play a role] by freeing cultural patterns from overly concrete narrowly specified social contexts [and] it may universalize them to the point where they are better able to meet the demands of a less stable, less predictable, more rapidly changing social situation”⁵³.

Geertz theory is optimistic, because it sees ethnicity and nationalism work as coping strategies: assisting groups achieve the social knowledge needed to live in unpredictable environments. Despite this positive outlook, however, is the similarity between Geertz’s theory and linguistic determinism. Geertz’s theory of ethnicity and nationalism as the ‘glue’ of society is essentially an adaptation of the poorly conceived deterministic theory offered by Whorf. How did Geertz’s anthropological treatment of symbolic ethnicity become just as deterministic as Whorf’s language? The answer is in Geertz’s intellectual genealogy: beginning with Malinowski, then to Wittgenstein and finally to Ryle.

Bronislaw Malinowski’s Central-European inspired anthropology borrowed a great deal from Fichte and Herder’s ‘collective society of the individual’: i.e. that the individual’s world begins and ends in the pool of collective egos that

⁵⁰ James G. Kellas, “The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity” pg. 51-52

⁵¹ Clifford Geertz quoted in Stephen Hlophe, “The Significance of Barth and Geertz’ Model of Ethnicity in the Analysis of Nationalism in Liberia” in “The Canadian Journal of African Studies” pg. 241

⁵² Ibid. pg. 241

⁵³ Clifford Geertz quoted in Fred Inglis, “Clifford Geertz: Culture, Custom and Ethics” pg. 65

form his or her national identity⁵⁴. Gellner emphasizes the difficulty of underestimating the role of early German thought, because it had a significant impact on two important twentieth-century fields: Malinowski's (and Boas') model for culture-centered anthropology, which has been discussed, and the philosophy of language as influenced by Ludwig Wittgenstein⁵⁵.

Wittgenstein's philosophy cannot be discussed in much detail, partly because it departs significantly from issues of culture that relate to nationalism, and partly because his philosophical positions are too varied for general description. Indeed, the deep contrasts between Wittgenstein's early and later philosophies make it difficult to declare any one of his propositions truly 'Wittgensteinian': a difficulty leading some thinkers to casually refer to Wittgenstein as two different people⁵⁶. The early *Tractatus* (1922) offers a sharp logical account of truth, knowledge and language where "complex propositions...depend for their truth and meaning on nothing other than the truth and meaning of their constituent part-propositions, and the manner in which they have been combined"⁵⁷. The Wittgenstein of *Tractatus* had an intellectual friend in Bertrand Russell, both arguing that ordinary languages must be translated into a formal, logical structure (and ideal language) in order to make meaningful philosophical statements; the alternative being a descent into wordiness, full of argument but loose on factual references⁵⁸. The 'truths' offered by everyday language are prone to pseudo-beliefs and metaphysical speculation. This is just a summary of the mood in *Tractatus*, not a complete description of its argument, but it is helpful for establishing Wittgenstein's early style, which emphasized a strictly non-cultural view of mind, world and language⁵⁹.

The later Wittgenstein (or the second Wittgenstein) is found in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). In this new guise, he is in much closer agreement with

⁵⁴ Ernest Gellner, "Language and Solitude" pg. 125

⁵⁵ Ernest Gellner, "Language and Solitude" pg. 125

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* pg. 71

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* pg. 46

⁵⁸ Dudley Shapere "Philosophy and the Analysis of Language" in Richard Rorty (ed.) "The Linguistic Turn" pg. 271

⁵⁹ Ernest Gellner, "Language and Solitude" pg. 68

his fellow Central European colleagues: making such bold pronouncements as “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world”⁶⁰, “the subject does not belong to the world but rather, it is a limit of the world”⁶¹ and most starkly of all, “There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas”⁶². This is the Wittgenstein who is most often cited in defense of social construction and cultural theories of mind. His philosophy was not quite as radical as Benjamin Whorf’s, although some readings confer some similarities. Gellner observes: “Wittgenstein’s later views on language and society are intimately blended and virtually identical. In fact Wittgenstein’s theory of language, central to his philosophy, is but a coded theory of society: mankind lives in cultural communities or, in his words, ‘forms of life’, which are self-sustaining, self-legitimizing, logically and normatively final”⁶³.

The transformation from the early to the late philosophy, why Wittgenstein abandoned his earlier thoughts on the solitude of language to an almost Romantic worldview, is a hotly debated topic. Ernest Gellner is not so confident on the matter to suggest that his opinion should be taken as fact, but he argues that Wittgenstein was very much inspired by Malinowski. He does not make the accusation, but he implies that he could very well have used Malinowski’s anthropological theories for his own philosophy of language (a scandalous claim, since Wittgenstein does not acknowledge Malinowski)⁶⁴. Ultimately, Gellner finds Wittgenstein’s alleged disingenuousness rather moot, because Malinowski took many of his own ideas from German romanticism (a school of thought partly established by Fichte and Herder) without entirely sincere acknowledgement⁶⁵. It may turn out that for all of their fame, there was nothing especially original about either Malinowski or Wittgenstein (and perhaps Boas, too). Then again, this chapter has shown that the roots to cultural theories of mind stretch back much farther German romanticism: to Rousseau more directly and even back to the empirical traditions established by Enlightenment thinkers such as Locke.

⁶⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein quoted in Steven Pinker, “The Blank Slate” pg. 207

⁶¹ Ernest Gellner, “Language and Solitude” pg. 97

⁶² Ibid. pg. 97

⁶³ Ibid. pg. 145

⁶⁴ Ernest Gellner, “Language and Solitude” pg. 155

⁶⁵ Ibid. pg. 156

The early Wittgenstein continues to have an influence on philosophy, but it is the later Wittgenstein's influence that has been important to anthropology. It is difficult to define any philosopher according to a specific school of thought, because each member of any school inevitably has his or her own ideas, but the later Wittgenstein is often associated with a group called the 'ordinary language philosophers' (the very name should mark a contrast with *Tractatus*); 'Cambridge school philosophers' and 'linguistic philosophers' (the latter is Gellner's term) are other labels⁶⁶. A brief side-note: Ernest Gellner made his first big philosophical debut (supported by Russell) with the publication of *Words and Things*, which was a direct attack on ordinary language philosophy in general and the later Wittgenstein in particular⁶⁷.

In terms of its influence, the ordinary language school's output from the late 1950s' to the mid 1970s' had a profound impact on social and linguistic anthropology, providing a basis for research in these fields to the present day⁶⁸. Its popularity in the social sciences owed simply to its intent: to find answers for philosophical problems using ordinary languages (like French or English) rather than abstract systems of logic. It is a very far reach to say that ordinary language philosophers would have approved of radical linguistic theories such as Whorf's; in fact there is no meaningful connection. Gilbert Ryle, one of the central figures in ordinary language philosophy, made a brief statement that should dash any quick attempt to link this philosophy with strict linguistic determinism: "You do not have to write in Celtic to understand what a Celtic expression means, anymore than a psychologist studying witticisms must write wittily"⁶⁹.

Ryle's point is that individuals can perceive language for themselves, making a distinction between humour and humorous statements. Nevertheless, the notion of ordinary languages having a say on the truth of the world was very

⁶⁶ Ernest Gellner, "Language and Solitude" pg. 72

⁶⁷ Siobhan Chapman, "Paul Grice: Philosopher and Linguist" pg. 44

⁶⁸ Alessandro Duranti, "Introduction: The Performance of Language: Acts, Events and Activities" in Alessandro Duranti (ed.) "Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader" pg. 147

⁶⁹ Gilbert Ryle, "Collected Essays: vol. II" pg. 313

appealing to cultural and constructionists. The fact that this school was so readily adopted by cultural anthropologists may give credence to Gellner's criticisms about the sub-field (and Wittgenstein's) lack of philosophical rigor. If the school can have such appeal to a discipline that has only an incidental interest in philosophy to suit its own needs, then perhaps ordinary language does lack a robust 'doctrine'

In terms of 'doctrine', the ordinary language school was founded on a somewhat confusing irony. As discussed above, early Wittgenstein and Russell insisted that ideal language philosophy is necessary to rid the mind and the field of useless metaphysical ideas that were based on ordinary language's lack of rigor: "Logical empiricism [driver of formal language] prided itself on its exclusive concern with artificial languages, claiming that natural languages are too irregular, amorphous, and vague to provide a basis for the solution to philosophical problems"⁷⁰. Ordinary language philosophy, on the other hand, took a few pages from the later Wittgenstein and "prided itself on its avoidance of theory construction, claiming that theories cause the very philosophical perplexities that philosophy seeks to resolve"⁷¹. The irony comes with the realization that both sides accuse one another of doing exactly the same thing: stuffing philosophical study with more baggage than necessary (and also, that Wittgenstein was a key figure on both sides).

It is not the purpose of this study to sort out who 'got it right' (despite the reference to Gellner's opinion), because doing so would depart too sharply from issues facing the social sciences. However, it is important to establish, in reference to its thought, what ordinary language philosophy is supposed 'to do'. Specifically, most ordinary language philosophy was intended to solve for problems of truth and knowledge, not social behavior and organization. Ryle's greatest contribution, arguably, was an argument against Cartesian dualism. To summarize briefly, he maintains that the mind-body problem made famous by Descartes is just a confusion of words, that concept of

⁷⁰ Jerold Katz, "The Philosophical Relevance of Linguistic Theory" in Richard Rorty (ed.) "The Linguistic Turn" pg. 341

⁷¹ Ibid. pg. 341

'thinking internally' is falsely inferred to be an actual category in the mind's 'cognitive repertoire'⁷².

Ryle did not necessarily write, think and argue with the social sciences and anthropology in mind, but his importance to the field was established by Clifford Geertz: one of the latter twentieth century's most influential anthropologists. Geertz is staunchly in favour of the cultural theory of mind, claiming that "man is the animal most desperately dependent upon such extragenetic, outside-the-skin control mechanisms, such as cultural programs, for ordering his behaviour...Our ideas, our values, our acts, even our emotions, are, like our nervous system itself, cultural products – products manufactured, indeed, out of tendencies, capabilities, and dispositions with which we were born, but manufactured nonetheless"⁷³.

Culture is the determining factor of one's behaviour because "human thinking is primarily an overt act conducted in terms of the objective materials of the common culture and only secondarily a private matter"⁷⁴. Leaving no doubt that the individual really knows nothing outside of his cultural context, Geertz concludes that "cultural resources are ingredient, not accessory, to human thought"⁷⁵. Without culture, there is nothing to think about and nothing in the world has any meaning whatsoever. Geertz's defends his argument for the culturally produced mind with continuous referenced to ordinary language philosophers such as Wittgenstein⁷⁶, but bases most of his theoretical work on an idea first proposed by Ryle, called 'thick description'⁷⁷.

'Thick description' effectively divides human behaviour into two parts: an observable and context-less physical act, and a meaning inferred from that act which can only be known in a certain assumed context⁷⁸. The famous example by Ryle, and used often by Geertz, is the blink/wink distinction. A

⁷² William Lyons, "Gilbert Ryle: an Introduction to His Philosophy" pg. 57-58

⁷³ Clifford Geertz quoted in Steven Pinker, "The Blank Slate" pg. 25

⁷⁴ Clifford Geertz, "The Interpretation of Culture" pg. 83

⁷⁵ Ibid. pg. 83

⁷⁶ Fred Inglis "Clifford Geertz: Culture, Custom and Ethics" pg. 113

⁷⁷ Ibid. pg. 109

⁷⁸ Clifford Geertz, "The Interpretation of Culture" pg. 7

thin description of an individual's eye movement in this situation would be 'blink': the movement of muscle that covers the eye with a fold of skin. A thick description of that person's eye movement would be 'wink': not just the movement of muscle and skin, but an intended act that communicates a certain message (and determining what that message is depends entirely on what kind of 'wink' it was)⁷⁹. Ryle argues that anyone can describe what a blink is, or at least be capable of observing the physical act, but it takes certain knowledge (culturally derived in Geertz's sense) to know that a specific message has just been communicated. The blink is the act, and the wink is the signification (the intention to get across meaning)⁸⁰. The key to defining such acts of signification, for Geertz, is the base justification for cultural anthropology⁸¹.

Geertz's reading of Ryle is another example of how modern anthropology (and nationalism) depends on deeper philosophical foundations. His work underlines the importance of examining the underlying philosophical assumptions of a theory, that it would be unwise to take anthropological claims at face value. In terms of Geertz's argument that 'thick description' proves that culture is the source of all social behaviour (and idea whose genealogy has been discussed throughout this chapter), we can see the importance of verifying the relationship between social theory and philosophy. His argument is only as strong as his interpretation of the 'evidence'. With this in mind, there is good reason to challenge Geertz's broader claims about culture and mind based on his reading of Ryle

As mentioned above, detecting and eliminating superfluous metaphysical baggage is a main goal of ordinary language philosophy: meaning that anyone who appeals to this school of thought must really resist the creation of new abstractions, especially if these distinctions are only based on questions of definition (as opposed to questions of actual properties and entities). Ironically, it is possible that Geertz makes just that mistake. His interpretation

⁷⁹ Clifford Geertz, "The Interpretation of Culture" pg. 7

⁸⁰ Ibid. pg. 9

⁸¹ Ibid. pg. 9

of Ryle's argument leads him to conclude that speaking and meaning are two distinct events, that speaking and meaning are connected by the fact that they occur simultaneously but are in fact two separate things altogether. If meaning can only be inferred by reference to social ideas and norms, then the individual and his or her physical movements could not be the genuine sources of their own intended meaning. Would Ryle have argued the same? After examining his most famous philosophical argument, that the mind-body problem is a confusion of language, the possibility does not seem likely.

Ryle tackled the mind-body problem by demonstrating that Descartes mistakenly conflated 'thinking with 'knowing' and mistakenly ended up with two distinct entities, brain and mind⁸². It would be very unlikely that Ryle would make the very same mistake by implying that the brain (where language is processed) is an altogether different entity from the person who speaks and conveys meaning. Ryle's own version of 'thick description' avoids the error because his argument (that a physical act conveys meaning whose correct interpretation depends on the viewers assumptions) does not necessarily entail a distinction between the physical body and the knowing mind that expresses an intention. All he suggests is that successful communication depends on understanding; therefore one's focus should be on understanding how people attempt to convey meaning, rather than search for it with the aid of some ideal logical model. He says nothing to the tune that there is some metaphysical super-entity called culture that implants itself on the physical body in the fashion suggested by Geertz.

Perhaps we can understand Geertz's error in the same light as Descartes'. Why did Descartes make the false separation of mind and body in the first place? Ryle has an interesting answer: "Descartes found himself in two conflicting motives. As a man of scientific genius he could not but endorse the claims of mechanics, yet as a religious and moral man he could not accept, as Hobbes accepted, the discouraging rider to those close claims, namely that human nature differs only in degree of complexity from

⁸² William Lyons, "Gilbert Ryle: an Introduction to His Philosophy" pg. 57-58

clockwork”⁸³. Descartes theory of dualism suffered from a need to satisfy two conflicting intellectual commitments.

Geertz is also stuck between two competing interests. As a general social scientist, Geertz is compelled to elucidate general categories of human behavior and social organization. ‘Culture’ is his particular category of interest. However, as an anthropologist he is committed to the idea that no two cultures are alike: that for all of ‘culture’s’ generality as a category of investigation, it is never quite the same between societies. It is possible that Geertz’s radical reading of Ryle is the consequence of these twin beliefs. He accepts Ryle’s general argument that there is a distinction between physical acts and interpretation, but goes further to insist that the distinction implies the non-reducibility of culture to the individual.

This critique of Geertz’s borrowed ‘thick description’ should not imply that Geertz’s work can be summarily dismissed, because it only goes so far to indicate a potential error or over-application on his behalf. A more complete analysis of Geertz’s work would be needed before any broad conclusions can be reached. Whatever the case, Geertz’s ‘thick description’ remains an important anthropological topic. The purposes for raising it in this study are three-fold: first, it demonstrates the continued importance of philosophy on the development of the social sciences; second, it builds on the argument, made by previous thinkers, that culture determines social behaviour and organization (an idea that can be traced back to Kroeber, whose ideas can be traced back to Boas, Malinowski and further); third, it best represents anthropology’s movement to a general methodology (i.e. a movement to perennial conceptions of society, where the categories of investigation are left blank and therefore applicable to any society under investigation). The last point, in particular, had a significant impact on contemporary theories of nationalism.

⁸³ Gilbert Ryle quoted in Steven Pinker “The Blank Slate” pg. 10

4.6 ETHNICITY AND NATIONALISM

Geertz serves as a good case study as to how and why anthropology developed a version of ethnicity on par with linguistic determinism. Studies of language and group identity share a common intellectual lineage. What is more, language, ethnicity and determinism are the essential ingredients to anthropological thought. Each concept played an important role in the founding of anthropology and can ultimately explain how theories of nationalism shifted from nineteenth century primordialism to twentieth century perennialism.

The twin role of linguistic and ethnic determinism can be found in recent studies of nationalism. Guvenc concludes his treatment on ethnic nationalism with a few casual but very telling remarks on ego and nationalism: “Professor Imanashi of Japan came up with the phrase ‘survival of coexistence’ [in opposition to] the classical, warlike ‘survival of the fittest’. We and others; hereby proposed is simply a reformation of the same idea. How it can be tested as a hypothesis is open to your consideration. But it is likely to take root and grow in this (Eastern) hemisphere, where the ‘we-ness’ of human existence is regarded as above and before the ‘I—ness’ of individual endeavour”⁸⁴.

This remark is an excellent example of the deterministic thought so typical of perennial theory. It suggests the following: first, culture is the source of all knowledge, such that that we can simply ‘think away’ scientific truths such as natural selection in favour of ideas about the world that are more to our liking; second, it fixes these cultural ideas to distinct ethnic groups (Asian people think in such a way that certain ideas are unique to their ethnicities); third, that social behaviour is constructed, such that we only have to change our focus from ‘I’ to ‘we’ to create new societies. All of Guvenc’s remarks are surely meant to be complimentary and hopeful, but they betray the sort of thinking that determinism engenders: the idea that human social behaviour is

⁸⁴ Bozkurt Guvenc, “Ethnocentrism: Roots and Prospects” in “Ethnicity and Nationalism” pg. 26

dependent on how we use language and to which ethnic/linguistic groups we are born.

The movement from primordial ideas such as German-ness to their perennial successors, ethnicity in this case, reflects the growth of anthropology's scope (i.e. expanding the study of social research beyond Europe) and body of literature (which took many generalized ideas from new developments in philosophy). Although the ideas of present-day anthropology have clear antecedents in the work conducted at the beginning of the twentieth-century, the field has changed rapidly to accommodate its growth as a social science and the increasing social complexity of most societies under observation. Thomas Hylland Eriksen notes that "whereas classical anthropology, as exemplified in the works of Malinowski,...Boas,...and others, would characteristically focus on single 'tribal' societies, changes in the world after the Second World War have brought many of these societies into increased contact with each other, with the state and with global society"⁸⁵.

Boas' understanding of culture was more amenable with the primordial notion of free-standing and unique cultures, because the social and economic conditions of early twentieth-century Europe meant that cultures were more sharply divided by region and culture. These circumstances changed rapidly in a matter of decades, and so did anthropology. "Instead of viewing 'societies' or even 'cultures' as more or less isolated, static and homogeneous units as the...Boasians would have tended to do, anthropologists now typically try to depict flux and process, ambiguity and complexity in their analyses of social worlds. In this context, ethnicity has proven a highly useful concept, since it suggests a dynamic situation of variable contact and mutual accommodation between groups"⁸⁶. In terms of their place in anthropological literature, studies of ethnicity first came to prominence in the 1960s through the 1980s and remain important to this day. Incidentally, this is also the timeframe when Geertz's methodology became influential; and also when

⁸⁵ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Ethnicity and Nationalism" pg. 8-9

⁸⁶ Ibid. pg. 10

many contemporary theories of nationalism were published (Ernest Gellner, Anthony D. Smith, etc.)

The study of ethnicity is a product of increasing social mixing in the world and of anthropology's refreshing older collective identities (such as culture) with new, generalized categories. However, beyond modern changes in social movement and mixing, the substantive differences between the earlier 'culture' and the new 'ethnicity' remain somewhat unclear. It is apparent that ethnicity allows for greater flexibility in terms of geographical and even day to day social relations (for instance, an individual could identify as an ethnic Scotsman, while spending the majority of his or her life living in Holland, speaking Dutch), but the differences do not seem to be much more than a matter of definition.

Eriksen defines ethnicity as "an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction. It can thus also be defined as a social identity (based on a contrast vis-à-vis others) characterized by metaphoric or fictive kinship"⁸⁷. There is a two-part response to this definition. First of all, it is difficult to maintain that ethnicity differs substantively from culture when 'ethnicity' is defined as cultural distinctiveness. Secondly, if there is any difference between ethnicity and culture whatsoever, it seems to be a matter of defining the relationship between the individual and the (cultural or ethnic) group. A person is a member of a culture by virtue of being a member of that culture, but a person is a member of an ethnicity by virtue of that person's belief that they share an identity with one group but not with others.

The first observation suggests that the difference between ethnicity and culture is fairly trivial, because ethnicity is not much more than common culture. The second observation is more interesting, because it suggests that a person's ethnic identity (or even the whole ethnic group's identity for that

⁸⁷ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Ethnicity and Nationalism" pg. 12-13

matter) is defined by their relationship to people who do not identify with that ethnicity. In other words, 'I am who I am because of who I am not'. Indeed, Eriksen argues that "the first fact of ethnicity is the application of systematic distinctions between insiders and outsiders; between Us and Them. If no such principle exists there can be no ethnicity, since ethnicity presupposes an institutionalized relationship between delineated categories whose members consider each other to be culturally distinctive"⁸⁸. Again, we have the problematic use of 'culture', but more importantly, we should notice a striking commonality between ethnicity and the German Romantic's concept of ego: namely, that the individual exists in the first place because of the world's anti-ego and that the individual is who he or she is because this ego is willed either with or against other egos. Along with this similarity, of course, come all of the problems found in Fichte and Herder's philosophies: i.e. individuals become a group and the group defines individuals.

Modern theories of ethnicity are far more than a re-hash of German Romantic philosophy. Perennialism may descend from primordialism, but this does not mean that perennialists are at all interested in searching for the purest form of German-ness. Nevertheless, anthropological theories build on a long established tendency for social scientists and theorists to explain human behaviour in terms of social relationships. Eriksen's definition of ethnicity relies on social construction (in the sense that it only exists because of cultural norms and beliefs) in the same way that Geertz's 'thick description' requires a social or cultural manifold in order for the individual to have any place in the world. The two theorists are distinct in a strictly academic sense: Eriksen does not cite Geertz, or incorporate any of Geertz's anthropological theories in any significant fashion. Geertz, to his credit, did not rely on Whorf to develop his own version of linguistic determinism. However, the strategy adopted by each of these theorists is broadly in line with the early founders of anthropology (Malinowski and Boas): to favour cultural explanations for human behavior over natural explanations. The intellectual history of anthropology can be discerned in most of its contemporary literature.

⁸⁸ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Ethnicity and Nationalism" pg. 19

4.7 CONSEQUENCES OF DETERMINISM

What is the outcome? What are the consequences of anthropology's continued reliance on constructivism? Coincidentally, the problems raised by constructivism are much the same as those found in the study of nationalism: unresolved debates over constituent aspects of humanity, such as ethnicity. If ethnicity is socially constructed (which seems to be the implication of 'Us vs. Other' identity creation) then it is nothing more than a place-holder concept, whose meaning cannot be known until a given society transmits a distinguishing 'ethnic' quality. Is common language a component of ethnicity? The answer cannot be known, because language itself could be socially constructed. In the end, the only way to know whether a particular culture or people represent an ethnicity is to ascertain whether or not that group has a conscious identity. Eriksen discusses Michael Moerman's argument that there are no inherent characteristics about ethnicity other than identification:

"After listing a number of criteria commonly used by anthropologists to demarcate cultural groups, such as language, political organization and territorial contiguity, [Moerman] states: 'Since language, culture, political organization, etc., do not correlate completely, the units delimited by one criterion do not coincide with the units delimited by another...'[s]omeone is Lue by virtue of believing and calling himself Lue and of acting in ways that validate his Lueness...Being unable to argue that this 'Lueness' can be defined with reference to objective cultural features or clear-cut boundaries, Moerman defines it as an *emic category of ascription*'⁸⁹.

The social construction of ethnicity entails that there really is no definition of ethnicity beyond a group's willingness to collectively identify as an ethnicity, such that there is nothing to be said about the characteristics of ethnicity. If we were to transfer over this thinking to nationalism, we would have to conclude that nationalism is nothing more than an agreement that a group of people defines themselves as a nation; or that nationalism is a relationship that grows out of different people who see themselves as different from one another. In any event, it would have no definable characteristics.

It is not inevitable that we must accept such a relativistic formula. In fact, more is gained from understanding how anthropological scholarship arrived at

⁸⁹ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Ethnicity and Nationalism" pg. 12

this particular indeterminist juncture. The constructivist methodology, which ultimately culminates in the relativity in such concepts as ethnicity, can be traced to anthropology's tendency to favour cultural explanations for human behaviour over all others. The relativistic flair owes to the gradual replacement of primordialism (which denoted inherent qualities to particular social groups) to perennialism (whose generalized nature demands that categories of human social organization should be left empty).

4.8 CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF NATIONALISM

What are the implications of ethnicity for perennial and symbolic theories of nationalism? Given the fluidity of 'ethnicity', it is very unlikely that it could solve for the causal problem discussed in the previous chapter. If the characteristics of ethnicity are indeterminate, and the constitution of cultural groups as ethnic groups is debatable, then it does not appear that ethnic groups will comprise national identities with any certainty. The concept of 'ethnie' (symbolic nationalism) could perhaps be explained in terms of the relational aspect of individuals to groups (i.e. that ethnic identity is based on one's belief about common descent and shared culture, rather than actual descent and the relationship of old cultures to new cultures across time); however, we would not be any closer to explaining what aspect of 'ethnie' necessitates the emergence of nationalism.

The concept of 'ethnie' is actually quite similar to Eriksen's account of the 'Lueness' scenario, whereby the 'concrete' properties of ethnicity yield to a very relativistic appeal to contingent belief. It was a problematic argument, of course, because it effectively left the definition of ethnicity unknowable. Ethnicity, like language, is a 'borrowed' term from anthropology, so perennial theories of nationalism, and all others relying on the concept of ethnic attachment, are subject to the same problems brought on by the constructivism of anthropology.

So far we have discussed the philosophical problems underlying primordial, perennial and symbolic (which relies heavily on perennial concepts of identity

formation) theories of nationalism. Which philosophies apply to modernist accounts? The modernist historians have already been somewhat excluded, because their work is intended to describe the emergence of nationalism, more so than explain its emergence. Other modernist theories are more difficult to place. Ernest Gellner played a pivotal role in the development of contemporary nationalism theory. As one would expect, his contributions were crucial to ensuring that the study of nationalism would not become hopelessly submerged in the misunderstandings of human nature introduced by anthropology, ordinary language philosophy and studies of ethnicity. Indeed, his theories do the best job at avoiding most of the problems discussed in this chapter.

However, there is still a sense that Gellner is still somewhat on the hook. He is clearly a modernist, arguing that nationalism can only emerge given specific circumstances: specifically, a decline in local agrarian low society and the emergence of anonymous, industrialized high societies which depend on common identity as a means of engaging in a mobilized economy⁹⁰. In other words, the causal forces of nationalism are modern and material. Nevertheless, even Gellner concedes that human capacity for culture pre-dates nationalism⁹¹. Our ability to relate to one another, share a common language and even form ethnic ties are not necessarily contingent on modernizing factors.

So, Gellner is in a bit of a bind. He is careful not to fall into the pitfalls of explaining culture in anthropological terms, but unfortunately, he does not adjust for the weaknesses of other theories by presenting a comprehensive account of culture. He is sure about what it is not, and the role it does not play in the emergence of nationalism, but he is fairly ambivalent on the actual nature of culture. He confesses that “cultures are both tenacious and volatile. It is neither true that they are virtually immutable, like some slow-moving glacier which only shifts a few meters every year, preserving continuity while changing, nor is it the case that they are ever re-invented, ever spurious in

⁹⁰ Ernest Gellner, “Nationalism” pg. 28-29

⁹¹ Ibid. pg. 93

their pretence of continuity. *Both* things happen, and if there are any laws concerning which predominates, we do not know them”⁹². Gellner’s strength is also a weakness. He refuses to indulge in the grand theories of anthropology and social construction, but he is hesitant to offer a clear alternative take on culture and ethnicity.

Other modernist philosophies have some difficulty accounting for culture and nationalism. Marxist theory would likely consider nationalism a modern phenomenon, because its place in history generally coincides with capitalist society⁹³. Marxist revolution is based on the theory that early proletariat uprisings will initially benefit from national sentiments⁹⁴. The *Manifesto* discloses that “though not in substance, but in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie”⁹⁵. To put it another way, nationalism is just a means to an end: a temporary phenomenon that can be used to facilitate revolution in individual states. Once the working classes have succeeded in their task, nationalism, having played its role, must then be discarded in favour of a proletariat universalism: “the divisions we are accustomed to seeing in the human species along the lines of nation, race, religion, geographical section (town dwellers and country dwellers), occupation and class will have all ceased to exist”⁹⁶.

Things did not work out as Marxist theory predicted, especially in terms of nationalism’s longevity. Even in states that converted to communist rule, international disputes (even amongst communist states) were still largely framed in terms of nationalism. Benedict Anderson opens *Imagined Communities* by putting the matter bluntly:

⁹² Ernest Gellner, “Nationalism” pg. 94

⁹³ Ronaldo Munck, “The Difficult Dialogue: Marxism and Nationalism” pg. 11

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* pg. 24

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* pg 24

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* pg. 25

“Perhaps without being much noticed yet a fundamental transformation in the history of Marxism and Marxist movements is upon us. Its most visible signs are the recent wars between Vietnam, Cambodia and China. These wars are of world-historical importance because they are the first to occur between regimes whose independence and revolutionary credentials are undeniable, and because none of the belligerents has made more than the most perfunctory attempts to justify the bloodshed in terms of a recognizable *Marxist* theoretical perspective”⁹⁷.

Despite his defense of modern nationalism, Anderson demonstrates how collective national identity can challenge the idea that nationalism conveys no cultural or symbolic meaning. Modern economies and material innovations may lay the foundation for national entities (indeed, nationalism would not be possible without print capitalism)⁹⁸, but the phenomenon of nationalism is still heavily reliant on the individual’s ability to imagine himself or herself as part of a non-visible yet entirely real community⁹⁹.

Anderson’s material arguments are well defined, like Gellner’s, but he remains somewhat vague about the definition and formation of cultural identity. Gellner stumbles over the forces determining the relative stability and fluctuation of cultural identity and Anderson is stuck thinking about culture in the same way as Eriksen conceives ethnicity. Anderson argues that “Identity is logically a function of duality: it exists at the moment when ‘b’ encounters ‘=b’...the Tiger has no Tigritude. In other words, Tigritude appears necessary only at the point where two uncertain beasts mirror themselves in each other’s exiled eyes”¹⁰⁰. On the one hand, the argument against ‘tigritude’ is an appropriate rejection of primordialism (the idea of inherent identities), but on the other, it arguably forces Anderson to concede that identity is nothing more than an ‘us, them’ distinction. He says little about the causal mechanism: how and why ‘us and them’ distinctions necessitate the development of oppositional identities. It is clear that the impetus is modern and material, but the actual phenomenon of imagination is taken for granted.

⁹⁷ Benedict Anderson, “Imagined Communities” pg. 1

⁹⁸ Ibid. pg. 37

⁹⁹ Ibid. pg. 7

¹⁰⁰ Benedict Anderson, “The Spectre of Comparisons” pg. 44

4.9 SUMMARY: NATIONALISM AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

This chapter illustrates the importance of philosophy and the social sciences to the development of nationalism theory. It illustrates that one cannot discuss the emergence of nationalism, or settle the debate on origins, without invoking a series of series of underlying concepts and arguments. A proper account of nationalism requires a discussion that extends as far back as Locke, and ends with modern fields such as anthropology.

The outcome of this historical analysis yields an important conclusion: that methodological problems found in philosophy and the social sciences have crept into theories of nationalism; the profound influence of constructivism is most notable. The argument that human minds contain no innate ideas can be traced back to Locke. Although he would not have used the term 'constructivism', his theory of the 'blank slate' illustrates an early denial of human nature. Unfortunately, the continued application of 'experience' and 'culture' as makers of the human mind has precluded the social sciences from adopting contemporary theories of human knowledge informed by psychology and other sciences, and ultimately, this has led the study of nationalism to rely on poorly borrowed concepts. The result is a number of poorly conceived ideas: Linguistic, ethnic and cultural determinism, which severely distort theories of nationalism.

4.10 BEFORE CONSILIENCE: THE PROBLEM WITH SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

What is social constructivism? Is it an inherently faulty strategy, or can it be amended to allow for more robust theories of nationalism?

Nationalism is a social construction insofar as it implies a number of constitutive social ideas: collective identity, social organization, and a sense of 'belonging' to one society, but not others¹⁰¹. If such things are absent, then

¹⁰¹ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Ethnicity and Nationalism" pg. 19

there really is no point of talking about nationalism as a really existing phenomenon. These constituent ideas are 'social' because they can only be found in environments where individuals are able to exchange ideas, knowledge and relationships (sometimes in inequitable proportions, i.e. imbalanced relationships); and 'constructed', because their existence (again, in any meaningful sense) depends on the agency of the thinker. In other words, social ideas can only be realized by individuals who create or impose their own particular concepts of what social ideas 'ought to be'.

The agency of construction explains why there are no 'universal' ideas about the 'best' social organization possible or the extent to which an individual 'must belong' to a particular group identity: because construction is a matter of consensus, not fact. In terms of nationalism, social constructivists would likely argue that its definition is subjective and entirely dependent on how it has manifested in particular instances (or particular groups).

The social constructivist is correct to some degree. No theory of nationalism could hope to account for the unique expressions of nationalisms across all human societies, or even account for the particular ideas of nationalism put forward by advocates of nationalism, but this would 'miss the point' about the aspirations of theory. Regardless of the infinite possibilities for what counts as 'collective identity' or 'belonging', our understanding of nationalism must cohere with the realities of human nature.

Social constructivism falls short when it comes to explaining the production of ideas like 'collective identity' and 'nationalism', because the conceptual 'tools' it employs also turn out to be socially constructed. Language, for instance, is presumably a requirement for communicating social ideas and developing group identities¹⁰², which is fair enough, but from where does language come? Many social constructivists argue that language is, itself, socially constructed: something that we acquire through culture¹⁰³. Social

¹⁰² John Searle, "The Construction of Social Reality" pg. 59

¹⁰³ Dell Hymes, "The Scope of Sociolinguistics" in Nikolas Coupland and Adam Jaworski (eds.) "Sociolinguistics: a Reader and Course book" pg. 16-19

constructions require social ideas, and both constructions and ideas are discovered with socially derived language: culture begets culture begets culture. It is a closed causal loop, very reminiscent of Jacques Derrida's statements: "no escape from language is possible", "text is self-referential", "there is nothing outside the text"¹⁰⁴. Regardless of the thinker or topic, the potential for regress always makes for shaky arguments. We encounter real problems if it turns out that social constructivism is socially constructed.

The 'closed loop' is a major fault in the application of social constructivism. How did it get there in the first place? Pinker traces the problem to a particular stance on the meaning of words: since all words can be defined based on their relationship to other words ("*big* makes sense only as the opposite of *little*"¹⁰⁵), then language is a self-contained system¹⁰⁶. If the meaning of words are self-referential or co-referential and our ability to understand those words depends on our ability to interpret how words relate to one another, then the human capacity for language is nothing more than understanding the relationship between words. This is a very risky argument, because it implies that language can only refer to itself and never to anything in world¹⁰⁷: a problematic state of affairs when we consider that our capacity to understand words is supposedly limited to the relationship between words. It implies that we cannot refer to anything in the world either!

Fortunately, there is good reason to believe that the 'closed loop' argument is mistaken. In addition to potential for regress, the 'closed loop' methodology is erroneous because it conflates *our experience* of language with the mental *faculty* of language. 'Our experience' refers to our understanding of language as we actually use it: expressing ideas, identities and performing other social tasks. 'Faculty' refers to the mental qualities of 'mind' which are necessary to acquire language and interpret the meaning and intent of words. 'Our experience' language and 'our mental faculty to acquire and use language'

¹⁰⁴ Jacques Derrida quoted in Steven Pinker, "The Blank Slate" pg. 208

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. pg. 208

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. pg. 208

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. pg. 209

are both real aspects of language, but they are not the same things. The 'closed loop' misreads these aspects.

Social constructivists would argue that language is a 'closed loop', because our usage of language is synonymous with the things language describes¹⁰⁸ (use of words to talk about the world determine the extent to which the world exists, the two are identical and both are constructed discursively¹⁰⁹). Objects in the world cannot have any truth value without language, because truth is a linguistic expression. However, this is similar to arguing that pain is also somehow constructed because an explanation of how the nervous system works would not give you the actual feeling of pain¹¹⁰. Both of these issues are simple matter of conflating proximate knowledge of pain (the sensation) with the ultimate knowledge of pain (how the nervous system works). Proximate and ultimate explanations both yield knowledge about pain¹¹¹, but the ultimate explanation (the nervous system) does not need the proximate explanation (sensation of pain) to be true. Likewise, objects in the world do not need a constructed text in order to hold a truth value (even if truth is something that can be expressed by language)

We know that our nervous systems give us the capacity for pain, and that this capacity exist prior to and independent of whatever external objects make us feel pain. Pain cannot be socially constructed because our ability to feel pain is premised on the organization of our nervous systems. At the same time, knowledge of our nervous systems does not yield the feeling of pain itself, because this knowledge only refers to the 'faculty' for feeling pain. We do not feel pain, because there is no experience, but we can hope to understand how our nervous systems receive external stimuli. 'Experience' and 'faculty' are both related to pain, but they are not the same concept.

¹⁰⁸ William Labov, "Linguistics and Sociolinguistics" in Nikolas Coupland and Adam Jaworski (ed.) "Sociolinguistics: a Reader and Course book" pg. 23

¹⁰⁹ Sergio Sismondo, "Some Social Constructions" in "Social Studies of Science" pg. 524

¹¹⁰ The example of pain and nervous systems should not be confused with a related problem known as the 'explanatory gap'. This thesis is only concerned with the conflation of 'words with worlds', whereas the explanatory gap is closely related to issues of consciousness. For information of the explanatory gap, see Noam Chomsky, "New Horizons in the Study of Language and Mind" pg. 19.

¹¹¹ John Alcock, "The Triumph of Sociobiology" pg. 13

4.11 MOVING FORWARD

The methodology of social construction has had a significant impact on the study of nationalism. The origins of social construction can be found in the early development of the social sciences, especially anthropology and sociology (and the roots of these disciplines can be traced further back to Enlightenment and Romantic thinkers). As such, many issues related to the study of anthropology, such as ethnicity and language, have been explained largely in terms of social construction.

Chapters three and four of this thesis have drawn a number of connections between the study of nationalism and the development of the social sciences and concluded that the intellectual legacies of early anthropology and philosophy played a significant role in determining the direction of nationalism theory. For instance, the debate on nationalism's origins was largely an outgrowth of various intellectual developments. Primordial conceptions of nationalism were largely informed by reactions to political debate: for instance, Bolingbroke's disagreement with Locke over individual rights, and Fichte's reaction to the French Revolution. The Perennial conception was essentially the brainchild of early anthropology, which sought out general categories of human association: such as 'culture' as opposed to 'German-ness'. Modern material accounts are somewhat more detached from issues in anthropology, but we cannot downplay the role of Ernest Gellner in steering the study of nationalism away from the legacy of the ordinary language philosophers (as interpreted by Clifford Geertz).

This thesis does not argue that nationalism should be studied apart from the social sciences, but it is clear that any theory of nationalism that hopes to contribute to the debate on origin will first have to reconcile conceptions of nationalism with their various intellectual forbearers. Given the tremendous impact of

constructivist methodologies on the social sciences (and their relation to pertinent issues in nationalism, such as language and ethnicity), the first step must be an investigation into how arguments can be strengthened with the use of parsimonious (or consilient) conceptions of human nature. The following section describes some of the issues at stake.

4.12.1 CONSILIENCE

Edward O. Wilson defines consilience as the unification of knowledge by “linking of facts and fact-based theory across disciplines to create a common groundwork of explanation”¹¹². Generally speaking, it is a methodology that can be applied to subjects that transcend clearly defined academic disciplines: such as the natural and social sciences. Consilient phenomena include any social behaviours that rely on social construction (customs, beliefs, values) that bear relation to natural facts (in this case, evolved human behaviour).

Nationalism is a consilient phenomenon, meaning it is a social construction whose existence and meaning are best explained with reference to scientific conceptions of human nature. Nationalism is unique subject, although not exclusive, in that it is a product of historical development and sociopolitical variation over time, but also dependent on human behaviours and ability which are made intelligible by evolutionary biology and related natural philosophy. Put simply, nationalism has its feet planted in two very distinct camps: the social and the natural sciences.

The consilient method is useful, because it will help us sort out the ambiguities that arise in strictly constructivist analysis. We can avoid problems such as ‘regress into abstraction’ and ‘self referential text’, by examining how human social behavior must acknowledge studies of the human mind and social behaviour (which do not have a basis in socially-constructed theory). Evolutionary psychology and biology can provide such insights, because both are interested in examining the relationship between

¹¹² Edward O. Wilson, “Consilience” pg. 8

ultimate and proximate features of human nature: how people interact with the environment within the confines of their evolved characteristics and aptitudes¹¹³. The key to ‘fixing’ social constructivism is to open the loop in social construction: a goal that requires social theory to seek essentially non-social, non-constructed relationships with the natural sciences to explain human behaviour.

4.12.2 EXAMPLE ONE: LINGUISTIC DETERMINISM

Let us look at the problem of linguistic determinism. Whorf’s theory assumes that behaviour is derived from the distinctive characteristics of one’s language. The theory is deterministic, because it maintains that one can never escape a learned language, or access the world apart from that learned language. It is a non-consilient argument, because its method is based entirely on construction: i.e. on the idea that our minds are the product of human creation. A consilient analysis, which incorporates both social ideas and natural facts, proves that Whorf’s theory is incorrect.

Steven Pinker frames the logic of Whorf’s argument: according to linguistic determinism, the way we use words determines how we see colour¹¹⁴. Simply put, one’s colour vocabulary is shaped by the number of linguistic manipulations your language is capable of conducting. However, current sociobiological research shows that this determinism is mistaken. The constraints to our colour vocabularies are not socially determined; it is an evolved trait and common in all societies¹¹⁵.

A constructivist might be misled to thinking that colour vocabularies are socially determined for two reasons: first, because some colour descriptions are unique to particular cultures (royal blue, communist red); second, because of the propensity for some tribal communities to speak in terms of ‘dark’ and ‘light’ instead of distinct colours (the Dani people of New Guinea were reputed

¹¹³ John Alcock, “Evolutionary Psychology” pg. 16

¹¹⁴ Steven Pinker, “The Language Instinct” pg. 63

¹¹⁵ Edward O. Wilson, “Consilience” pg. 175

to use such a system as late as the 1960s)¹¹⁶. Studies by have proven these constructivist views incorrect. After numerous investigations, researchers were able to establish hierarchical system of colour classification and language use: languages with only two basic colour terms will distinguish between black and white; languages with only three colour terms will distinguish black, white and red; languages with only four basic colour terms will distinguish black, white, red and either green or yellow; etc¹¹⁷. Researchers were able to establish that the hierarchy is not random, such that a language's reference to primary colours follows this established hierarchy. Random constructions of culture could not have produced the same consistency as those with a basis in human genetics¹¹⁸. In regards to the 'royal blue' question, the actual meaning assigned to some colours is fairly relative. The fact that individuals from disparate communities will nevertheless ascribe certain qualities to colour is a more important observation, because it directs us to a common human propensity¹¹⁹. The way we see colours is what determines are colour vocabulary, not the other way around, so linguistic determinism is defeated¹²⁰.

Some might argue that the 'colour question' is fairly trivial, because it does not have a significant impact on social behaviour. The issues discussed in this chapter suggest the very opposite: proof that linguistic determinism is false has a significant impact on how much credence we should lend to theories culturally determined ethnicity and behaviour. As Wilson points out, the propensity for individuals to assign ideas to colour indicates that "the brain constantly searches for meaning, for connections between objects and qualities that cross-cut the senses and provide information about external existence"¹²¹. The idea that the mind is capable of creating its own meaning shows that our minds cannot be the creation of culture.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. pg. 175

¹¹⁷ Edward O. Wilson, "Consilience" pg. 176

¹¹⁸ Ibid. pg. 177

¹¹⁹ Ibid. pg. 177

¹²⁰ Steven Pinker, "The Language Instinct" pg. 63

¹²¹ Edward O. Wilson, "Consilience" pg. 175

4.12.3 EXAMPLE TWO: IDEAS UNBOUND

Is it possible to establish a true synthesis between theories of nationalism and the natural sciences? It is impossible to know for sure at this stage, because the unresolved debate on origins prevents us from arriving at a truly general definition of nationalism. Nevertheless, there are some theories that offer genuine prospects for a consilient theory of nationalism. As mentioned in various places in this essay, Benedict Anderson's modern/material theory of nationalism argues that the development of print capitalism was a significant factor towards the development of large, anonymous and geographically expansive nations. Pre-national communities did have a sense of collective belonging, but predominance of non-vernacular 'bureaucratic' languages and script ensured that the transmission of ideas and identities (so necessary for individuals to feel connected in an anonymous nation) prevented the development of true nationalism¹²². The emergence of print capitalism, which had the effect of standardizing vernaculars and giving "fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation"¹²³. The development of print-languages and the rapid transmission of ideas through the technology of the printing press were two of the most significant material contributions to the development of nationalism^{124, 125}.

The content of ideas is crucial to identity formation, but Anderson's theory stands out for his equal emphasis on the means of idea transmission: explaining how communication technology in some part determines one's ability to imagine the community. In his book *The Selfish Gene*, Richard Dawkins develops a theory of idea transmission, based on biological principles, which could partner with Anderson's theory of print capitalism.

¹²² Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities" pg. 42

¹²³ Ibid. pg. 44

¹²⁴ Ibid. pg. 45

¹²⁵ It should be noted that these certainly were not the only causes of nationalism. The role of Creole identities and politics, for instance, were also significant. See Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities" pg. 47

Dawkins argues that “cultural transmission is analogous to genetic transmission in that, although basically conservative, it can give rise to a form of evolution. Geoffrey Chaucer could not hold a conversation with a modern Englishman, even though they are linked to each other by an unbroken chain of some twenty generations of Englishmen...Language seems to ‘evolve’ by non-genetic means, and at a rate which is orders of magnitude faster than genetic evolution”¹²⁶. Anderson’s theory of vernacular print language could do very well explaining this language gap. Similarly, Dawkins’ biological-theory based approach to idea transmission could place Anderson’s theory within the context of human nature.

Dawkins coined the term ‘meme’: which is basically any sort of cultural idea (“tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes, fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches”), which replicates itself through transmission from mind-to-mind¹²⁷. Memes propagate themselves in the same way as genes: ultimately, they either succeed in transmitting themselves and spread throughout the meme-pool, often through adaptation and the meme-equivalent of natural selection, or fail and get drown out by stronger and more pervasive memes¹²⁸. Could nationalism be related to memes? The competition of vernacular languages to become print languages is almost wholly dependent on which of the former is most successful in transmitting itself to the widest number of people (and here is where the printing press is an advantage)¹²⁹.

Other consilient points include Dawkins’ concept of the ‘survival machine’: bodies whose physical construction are premised on the pressure for replicators such as genes to spread themselves in an environment with finite resources¹³⁰. The survival machine is Anderson’s theory is likely the printing press. It is a device whose main ‘purpose’ is to transmit ideas, just as the body transmits genes. Then there is Dawkins’ ‘extended phenotype’: the argument that we should see evolutionarily advantageous objects and

¹²⁶ Richard Dawkins, “The Selfish Gene” pg. 189

¹²⁷ Ibid. pg. 192

¹²⁸ Ibid. pg. 192-193

¹²⁹ Benedict Anderson, “Imagines Communities” pg. 45

¹³⁰ Richard Dawkins, “The Selfish Gene” pg. 19

structures in the world as extensions of the ‘survival machines’ (ultimately genes) that benefit from having constructed them¹³¹. In this light, perhaps we should see the nation itself as an extended-memotype. It is, after all, the extended creation of our imagination.

The consilience of Anderson’s and Dawkins’ arguments illustrates the potential for building bridges between nationalism and the social sciences. The earlier sections of this chapter expressed doubt about the possibility of explaining nationalism in terms of human nature (especially with deterministic theories of language and culture) but that is because those conceptions lacked a consilient methodology. Nationalism is a social construction, but there is no reason why it cannot be consilient with our understandings of human nature and evolutionary theory.

4.12.4 AGAINST CONSILIENCE

There are many social scientists who vehemently oppose a partnering of the social and natural sciences¹³². The reasons vary, but fears of biological determinism and ‘rabid’ reductionism are two common worries. As the above section attempts to illustrate, these worries are not especially justified. For one thing, consilience proposes the ‘unity’ of knowledge, not the forced ‘surrender’ of one discipline to another. Dawkins’ theory of memes is no more deterministic than Anderson’s theory of nationalism. This is ironic, because many social scientists propose determinisms that are far stronger than consilience, such as linguistic determinism and cultural determinism.

It may come as somewhat of a surprise to learn that many highly regarded scientists have also laboured against consilient methodologies and, more generally, sociobiology: a body of scientific theories which comment on human behaviour from an evolutionary perspective. Rose, Lewontin and

¹³¹ Richard Dawkins, “The Selfish Gene” pg. 239

¹³² For a good discussion on the social science’s reaction to Edward O. Wilson’s publication of *Sociobiology*, see Steven Pinker, “The Blank Slate” pg. 105

Kamin presented what is considered a classic attack against Sociobiology (and Wilson, in particular)¹³³.

This thesis does not have the scope to analyze these authors' scientific claims, because the issues depart too steeply from the social sciences, but there is one critic-scientist whose views serve a direct challenge to the consilient methodology. Stephen Jay Gould presents a research methodology based on a concept called 'non-overlapping magisteria': an argument that there are distinct categories of human knowledge which, do to their mutual exclusivity, cannot and should not comment on one another¹³⁴. He defines a concrete breakdown of research aims: "Magisterium of science covers the empirical realm: what the universe is made of (fact) and why does it work this way (theory). The magisterium of religion extends over questions of ultimate meaning and moral value. These two magisteria do not overlap" Although Gould's discussion is focused on debates between science and religion, his general challenge to consilience should be considered.

The consilient method is not intent on obscuring the social reality or 'magisterium' of the social sciences over nationalism, or clouding the magisterium of empirical science. The central aim is to ensure that theories of nationalism do not suffer the consequences radical social constructivism: where all statements on social phenomena are self-referring and argument is strictly by consensus. The alternative, to stay within a single magisterial, is to deny that the truth conditions of one's argument have any basis in other disciplines. In regards to theories of nationalism in particular, this sort of denial is precisely the root of so many difficulties: using a conception of language that has no basis in modern psychology, or using a theory of ego that is philosophically contentious. Adopting Gould's methodology would not preserve theories of nationalism. It would just contribute to self-contamination.

¹³³ John Alcock, "The Triumph of Sociobiology" pg. 20-21

¹³⁴ Stephen Jay Gould, "Rocks of Ages" pg. 6

4.12.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has addressed multiple ideas, but the issues are fairly simple. Theories of nationalism have been articulated within a framework established by early anthropology and philosophy. Although this arrangement provides for a rich and varied body of literature, it also raises a problem: is it possible to have a theory of nationalism that 'holds up' against the scrutiny of non-anthropological thought, or non-deterministic philosophies? A lasting resolution to the debate on origin requires a theory that is true of the actual phenomenon of nationalism. Truth by agreement or consensus, generally the products of radical social constructivism, does not yield robust answers. A lasting theory of nationalism will extend its claims to cohere with all truths.

5. Conclusion

Theories of nationalism are still largely defined by their respective stances on the classical problem: the origins of nationalism as a social phenomenon. A resolution to this debate is still a common goal of nationalism theory. This investigation has contributed to the literature by offering a few important insights: that topics discussed by most theories of nationalism (language, culture, ethnicity, etc.) closely relate to longstanding arguments in philosophy and the social sciences (anthropology in particular); and that theories can avoid the ‘pitfalls’ of these arguments by adopting a consilient research methodology, uniting social theory with natural facts. With these contributions in mind, future theories of nationalism will be better equipped to resolve the debate on origin.

This concluding chapter will deal with two issues. It will provide additional justification for the relevance to the debate on nationalism’s origins and it will discuss one final hurdle to defining nationalism: specifically, the argument that nationalism is an essentially contested concept.

5.1 NATIONALISM’S CONTRIBUTION TO OTHER FIELDS: WHY THE DEBATE ON ORIGIN MATTERS

Nationalism can be examined within a number of fields and conceived quite differently, depending on the academic background of the individual who is putting it ‘under the microscope’. Margaret Canovan is interested in theories of nationalism because they relate to her interests as a political philosopher: social justice, utopianism, collective vs. individual rights, constitutional patriotism and liberal democracy¹. She argues that the continuing influence of nationalism in communities worldwide makes it relevant to topics in political theory².

Although Canovan’s study of nationalism is tailored to solve for more philosophical problems, she is inevitably faced with (or at least acknowledge the importance of) the debate on origins. She finds the task rather difficult, which should come as no surprise: “[The] bulk of the literature on nationalism breaths an air of frustration that seems to have two sources, a sense that

¹ Margaret Canovan, “Nationhood and Political Theory” pg. 1, 27, 87, 101, 136

² Ibid. pg. 13

there is something peculiarly elusive about nations, reinforced by the feeling that they are in any case such ramshackle constructions of myth and illusion that they scarcely deserve serious analysis...the power of nationhood is indeed linked with its elusiveness...nations are exceedingly complex phenomena"³.

The whole of Canovan's exegesis is not so gloomy. She demonstrates how conceptions of nationalism are implicit in theories that rely on social organization, such as liberal democracy⁴. She does not get 'hung up' on the problem of origins, no doubt because her sights are set on different targets, but her reference to the unresolved debate is sobering. Even when the focus is not on origins, most treatments of nationalism remain fundamentally incomplete because of the lingering animosities between 'ancient' and 'modern' theories. The ongoing debate does not stop individuals from theorizing about nationalism, of course, but it contributes to a sore spot in the field: the awareness that most usages of nationalism entail ambiguity. This state of affairs is especially problematic for scholars, like Canovan, who argue that a conception of nationalism is implicit to a wide variety of political ideas.

How can nationalism prove useful to political theory when its meaning is so hopelessly vague? The significance of this problem is fairly apparent for those who employ 'nationalism' in their studies. It is common to find scholars like Canovan making reference to the debate and its importance to their work, even when the main objective of their study is not ultimately concerned with nationalism's origin (better to raise the issue yourself than to leave it in the hands of your critics, perhaps). The air of frustration in Canovan's account is probably intentional.

We can bring up nationalism in discussions on politics and utilize it in a variety research purposes, but nationalism as a free-standing concept is still very murky. While scholars like Canovan may find the necessary themes, definitions and arguments about nationalism which they need to satisfy their

³ Ibid. pg. 50

⁴ Margaret Canovan, "Nationhood and Political Theory" pg. 68

own interests (thus contributing to the study of nationalism as well as their own respective fields), the ongoing conflict within the literature on nationalism is generally unaffected. The 'classical problem' on origin, arguably the heart of nationalism's meaning, is addressed in a number of theories which rely on a concept of nationalism, but there is no resolution.

Scholars from any number of fields make appeals to nationalism as a means to further their own studies, in spite of the unresolved tensions that we discussed throughout this investigation. It is worth taking note how nationalism is interpreted and implemented by scholars working in these related fields, because their work only reinforces the need for a constructive exposition on the nature and meaning of nationalism. While a resolution to the debate would be useful in its own right, it would also go a long way toward clarifying the ambiguity of nationalism found in related theories.

5.2 NATIONALISM AS AN 'ESSENTIALLY CONTESTED CONCEPT'

Chapter One discussed problems finding a general definition of 'nationalism'. It was suggested that theory-neutral definitions of nationalism are hard to come by, because it is difficult to define the term apart from one's stance on the debate over origin. Some definitions make an explicit reference, such as 'nationalism is a sentiment between people sharing common history and descent' (this tends to favour ethnic theories and perennialism). Others are more implicit: stopping short of naming definite categories such as 'common descent', but still manage to 'stack the cards'. For example, the claim that 'nationalism is a movement for self-determination' implies that nationalism is situated in a specific context. If nationalism were perennial, it would not be defined as a 'movement' but as a rather fixed state of affairs. 'Movement' implies a temporal dynamic that fits best with modern theories of nationalism. It also begs the question: 'what makes people form a desire for self-determination?'

This thesis has argued that working toward a resolution to the debate on nationalism's origin is the best prospect for solving the problem of general and

neutral definitions. However, could there be an alternative possibility? Craig Calhoun identifies nationalism as an ‘essentially contested concept’: meaning that a fixed definition of the term is unlikely amongst any group of people, because “any definition will legitimate some claims and delegitimize others...all of the available essentialist definitions are unstable and inherently contestable”⁵. In other words, it may never be the case that we can arrive at a clear, general definition of nationalism. Nationalism is akin to ‘art’: conveying meaning, but impossible to define.

Calhoun is right to be critical of ‘essentialist’ ideas (which generally try to explain phenomena in such a way that the given phenomena could not have occurred otherwise), but it has never been the intention of this thesis to suggest that nationalism has a universal or essentialist quality. It has only argued that certain ideas underpinning theories of nationalism are based on shaky philosophy or social science. Nevertheless, Calhoun’s statement offers a good opportunity to discuss the purpose of theorizing about nationalism.

The notion of ‘essentially contested concept’ was introduced by W.B. Gallie, who listed seven qualifications that a term would have to satisfy to be considered an ECC (although we will only discuss one)⁶. The very first qualification reads that the concept “must be appraisive – signifies an achievement”⁷. Quite simply, concepts are contestable if they convey a sense of accomplishment or value.

Even our everyday knowledge of nationalism should tell us that nationalism represents the aspirations of self-identifying groups: that a people is legitimated by being referred to as a nation and shamed when denied this designation. There is a very strong sense that Calhoun is right on this aspect: the identity conferred on an individual by virtue of their participation in nationalism satisfies the invocation of ECC.

⁵ Craig Calhoun, “Nationalism and Ethnicity” in “Annual Review of Sociology” pg. 215

⁶ W.B. Gallie, “Philosophy and the Historical Understanding” pg. 161

⁷ Ibid. pg. 161

Then again, perspective is important. We must remember the work of the early modern nationalism theorists, such as Kohn and Kedourie, who chided early scholars for participating in the creation of nationalism, not objective study. Whether or not nationalism qualifies as an ECC depends entirely on the intention of the researcher. Is it possible to settle important debates, such as the classical debate on nationalism, while remaining detached from the spectre of one's personal experience of nationalism? There is no categorical answer to the question, but this thesis has maintained throughout that nationalism is comprised of ideas and social realities that can be known. Nationalism's awkward position between social and natural facts makes it difficult to explain, but its existence is based on far more than conjecture.

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