

This PDF is auto-generated for reference only. As such, it may contain some conversion errors and/or missing information. For all formal use please refer to the official version on the website, as linked below.

Only Trees have Roots; But Men have Legs: Nationalism's 'Exclusionary' Effects and the Overcoming of Common Misconceptions

<https://www.e-ir.info/2009/10/12/only-trees-have-roots-but-men-have-legs-nationalism%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98exclusionary%E2%80%99-effects-and-the-overcoming-of-common-misconceptions/>

FELIX CHRISTOPH OHNMACHT, OCT 12 2009

The question over *nation* and *nationalism* has provoked one of the most intensely contested literatures in academia and has (arguably) combined several fundamentally diverging strands of thought within one 'ideology'. However, surrounded by great ambiguity, the concepts of nation and nationalism are inherently difficult to define. Different authors employ different typologies, ontologies, and epistemologies in analysing these social phenomena. To further complicate the matter, it is quite clear that nationalism's semantics fundamentally change over time according to the socio-political context. For example, Mattei Dogan asserts that during the French Revolution, nationalism was a leftist value against royal power and aristocracy; today it is (arguably) nourished by rightist.[1] Here, it is significant to note that conceptual distinctions produce dissimilar conclusions, which themselves cannot simply be placed on a dichotomous truth/falsehood spectrum. As Breuilly observes, "nationalism can refer to ideas, to sentiments, and to actions. Each definition will have different implications to the study of nationalism." [2] In light of this, the question arises whether nationalism is always a dangerously exclusionary ideology. This article suggests that rudimentary conceptual distinctions ought to be made and that such a reconceptualisation will lead to an improved and healthier understanding of nationalism. Nationalism *per se* is thus not inveterately incompatible with integration and multi-level governance. Consequently, this author argues that nationalism, in an atypical sense, is by virtue *and* definition an exclusionary 'ideology'; *however*, nationalism can very much act as a genuine catalyst and facilitator for far-reaching integration and social solidarity on *every* level of human interaction. Clearly, identity is not the genesis of the causality of social closure, but must necessarily be seen as multi-layered, as one of countless circles of personal, sentimental human associations. For if nationalism successfully stimulated and engendered social *solidarity* within particular territorial entities and among a great many heterogeneous people exhibiting vast differences, then, indubitably, the arbitrarily demarcated nation-state cannot represent the outer-limits of this 'integrating power'. This essay provides evidence for the aforementioned proposition by demonstrating that; firstly, the *practice* of nationalism is innately exclusionary; secondly, that identity is an integral component as well as part and parcel of human existence; thirdly, that despite its nature, the reality of nationalism can be a helpful integrative tool (even on a supranational and cosmopolitan level); and fourthly, that the anachronistic *perception* of all nationalists as separatists, obsessed with complete state sovereignty and the consequential connotations of autarchy, is perverted and plainly false.

Before any legitimate analysis of nationalism as an ideology can take place, it is sensible to establish whether nationalism is indeed a coherent *ideology* in its own right. It must be noted that 'ideology', as understood by this author, does not entail the fundamentally negative connotations of a 'distorted consciousness', as attached by Marxists. On the contrary, it is seen as "those actual and composite thought-patterns of individuals and groups in a society which relate to the way they comprehend and shape their political worlds, and which supply us with crucial clues for understanding political conduct and practices." [3] According to Michael Freeden then, each internally consistent ideology must have a set of core and a set of peripheral concepts; and the core, in order for it to be a distinct ideology, must be unique to itself alone. [4] The prioritisation of the *nation* as such is undoubtedly at the very centre of nationalism, but, as Freeden asserts, one can then "expect to find its conceptual arrangements as a *component* in another, broader, *ideological family*." [5] This leads Freeden to conclude that nationalism fails to meet

Only Trees have Roots; But Men have Legs: Nationalism's 'Exclusionary' Effects and the Overco

Written by Felix Christoph Ohnmacht

the criteria of a comprehensive ideology. Its conceptual structure simply cannot answer *by itself* the most fundamental questions of morality and/or social justice.[6] However, if one opposes Freedom's approach, nationalism, as Billig argues, becomes a consistent ideology. This ambiguity regarding the ontological position of nationalism within an ideational framework is a matter of great disputation among academics. Many authors have written in great length on this question without uncovering a satisfactory resolution, rendering a fundamental analysis which attempts to determine whether nationalism is indeed an ideology as neither within the scope, aim, and capacity of this article, nor as indeed helpful in assessing its potentially exclusionary effects. The subsequent sections thus examine the issue of nationalism as an arguably dangerously exclusionary *concept*, which produces fundamentally exclusionary practices.

It is almost axiomatic that nationalism, regardless of structure, form, and shape, is *ipso facto* exclusionary. This truism, as it were, is based upon the notion that the mere ideas of nation and nationalism suffice to construct a dichotomous distinction between insiders and outsiders, between citizens and aliens. In a very fundamental sense, every human being is forced to take on a particular identity as soon as he is born, as reiterated by Thomas Erikson.[7] This phenomenon becomes palpable when the notion of identity is deconstructed to its most elemental condition. First, each human is uniquely defined by his 'self' – everything that is *natural* about him. This is the smallest of countless concentric 'circles of identity', which is naturally fully exclusive (Note[8]). The next larger (and more inclusive) circle comprises the nuclear family; the one after that the extended family; and the one after that friends and/or the local community (and so on and so forth). Accordingly, each circle is inclusive to those who meet the membership criteria and exclusive to those who do not. Any human association is thus inherently based upon some sort of *Gemeinsamkeit* (Note[9]) – a set of specific and defining characteristics or features which excludes anyone not in conformity. At the level of the *nation*, manifestly, collective identity is not a congenital phenomenon, but rather a socially constructed causality. As a result, the nation is not defined by a certain number of all-defining, categorical attributes; *a contrario*, it is inevitably based upon myths of cultural, historical, and/or ethnic homogeneity. John Hutchinson avers, there is "no evidence that the masses before the nineteenth century were aware of a national identity." [10] Emphasising this conception, Ernest Gellner declares, "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist." [11] Clearly then, national identity is dictated by, and structurally conditioned on a historical phase's corresponding *Zeitgeist*, by what the people in communion, the *demos*, ascribe it to be – however arbitrary this may be. Benedict Anderson consequently terms the nation an 'imagined community', consisting of a *united* people, where, even in the smallest nation, the members will never know most of their fellow-nationals. Therefore, the most comprehensive reasoning stipulates *explicitly* that nationalism is in effect exclusionary, just like any other form of human association; yet this internally consistent deduction is unhelpful because it fails to advance any rational for a normative evaluation of nationalism as unavoidably ill-intentioned.

To substantiate that nationalism is not by virtue *dangerously* exclusionary, the ensuing sections explore and assess the concepts of nationalism and identity, as well as the idea of the nation more generally. Immanent to the individual and the group, identity is a peculiar phenomenon. Here, much intellectual debate focuses on the ontological discussion of its genesis as either a static or a fluent phenomenon. Johann Gottfried Herder speaks of *das Gefühl einer Nation* [Translation[12]] and a 'national soul', whose identity is epitomised by language. For Herder, language is all-important because language *per se* makes man human, and, synonymous with thought, it can only be learnt in a community.[13] The implications of these ideas are self-evident: "If language is thought and if it can only be learnt in a community, 'it follows that each community has its own mode of thought'." [14] Thus, according to Herder, national communities are *sui generis* creations whose identities are rooted in a common language and consequently in a common mode of thought. Such a conceptualisation, as argued here, is only partially correct because it fails to see that national identity, while crucially typified by language, goes above and beyond this dimension to include an incalculable diversity of influences. Ernest Renan refers to this multiplicity, writing, "Or l'essence d'une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, *et aussi que tous aient oublié bien de choses.*" [Translation[15]] [16] Therefore, a nation's perceived identity is influenced by *all* rhetoric which shapes the consciousness, which presents problems, platforms for debate, and ways to think about issues and solutions – this is what Foucault called 'discursive formation'. [17] Clearly then, the construction of the nation must attempt to place the source of individual identity within the people, "the central object of loyalty, and the basis of collective solidarity." [18]

Only Trees have Roots; But Men have Legs: Nationalism's 'Exclusionary' Effects and the Overco

Written by Felix Christoph Ohnmacht

If understood in this context of discursive formation, identity ought to be conceived of as a fluent concept, which cannot be legitimately limited to the nation – identity is unmistakably a multi-layered and evolving concept. Notably, the extolled melting-pot analogy is often thought of as a contemporary nobleness in this regard because it creates an environment within which the *demos* appears to be harmonious, homogeneous, and in perfect unison. However, this so-praised 'melting-pot' ethos is fundamentally defect because it entails the assimilation of the 'other' into an ongoing and self-containing national self.[19] Indeed, it is an ideological mechanism which conceals its socio-politically oppressive effects resulting from a fundamentally repressive structure.[20] This is to say that its supposed inclusiveness is inextricably linked to the exclusion of those wanting to preserve parts of their identity which are at odds with the 'national-self' – or, to put it crudely, those displaying differences. This author, on the contrary, argues that it is desirable to foster various identity layers on top of already existing ones, including supranational and cosmopolitan identities. The novelty of doing so becomes clear once nationality is perceived as not inherently limited to 'merely *providing*' identity (as will become evident later); but as multi-functional, aiding in the achievement of liberal and moral postulations. What is more, citizens who lack a sense of shared identity and purpose, as argued by Erica Benner, "are prone to political apathy, social atomisation, and mutual irresponsibility." [21] In political life, then, national identity is an important part, yet it must be seen as but one tiny fraction in a social whole. Thus, at the centre of the current debate stands the "ideological legitimation of multi-level governance with the help of 'the integrative power of national identity'." [22] Stimulating extra identity layers is promising because people are able to assume multiple identities simultaneously, clearly showing that identities are not, in any *meaningful* sense, inherently 'exclusive'. [23] In a further sense, national identities, according to Jürgen Habermas' conception of constitutional patriotism, also serve a functionalist purpose, emphasising the political institutions as objects of collective loyalty. Clearly then, national identities are not a limitation to be transcended as soon as possible, but are part and parcel of social reality and represent a multicultural integration tool.

As mentioned in the introduction, defining the concept of *nationalism* is a complicated matter. Differences between liberal, leftist, radical, rightist, and other 'prefixes of nationalism' render it virtually impossible to speak of nationalism as one universally understood and coherent notion. Equating nationalism with its extreme manifestations, namely separatism and authoritarianism, is unhelpful and dangerous. [24] Only with such an erroneous conceptualisation can the *étatisation* of the nation be described as an exaggerated idea which fundamentally strives after independence, absolute state sovereignty, and autarky. In the broadest sense however, nationalisms are forms of social solidarity; and the nation, as revealed above, is merely one of countless embodiments of different identity layers. Here it is central to understand that nationalism does not prerequisite (nor necessarily desire) the nation-state – indeed, sovereignty and nationalism are closely intertwined yet entirely *autonomous* notions. Making the issue even more complex, nationalism is almost automatically thought of as 'unreasonable' and/or even perverted. Michael Billig contends, "Our nationalism is not presented as nationalism, which is dangerously irrational, surplus, and alien; it is presented as *patriotism*, which is good and beneficial." [25] Locating nationalism on the periphery in this manner, and thus not within the centre or the 'us', is a common fallacy. To distinguish between good and bad, political and cultural, civic and ethnic, liberal and illiberal nationalisms may be somewhat tempting, yet this dualistic approach is limited. Differences should be understood as differences of degree, rather than principle and/or type, *for* at the heart of nationalism, whatever shape or form it takes, is an essentially exclusionary philosophy. [26] Yet the more revealing question remains to what degree, and whether this exclusion carries any meaningful effects to the 'other'.

The nation, before the eighteenth century, so the argument goes, was subordinate to religious principles and worldviews. The monarch was portrayed as "the representative of God on earth, and the population as his subjects, owing him reverence." [27] Stephen Castles asserts,

"[Pre-modern states] based their authority [on the absolute power of a monarch over a specific territory. Within this area, all people were subjects of the monarch (rather than citizens). There was no concept of a national *culture* which transcended the gulf between aristocratic rulers and peasants. The modern nation-state, by contrast, implies a close link between cultural belonging and political identity]" [28]

This 'modern' nationalism, as it were, celebrated its genesis with the influx of beliefs of human rationality. During the Enlightenment, the perception that the nation can only be understood in relation to its goals, namely the creation (or revival, as some would falsely argue) of a nation-state whose legitimacy resides within the will of the people was

Only Trees have Roots; But Men have Legs: Nationalism's 'Exclusionary' Effects and the Overco

Written by Felix Christoph Ohnmacht

disseminated.[29] Consequently, the legitimacy to determine and shape 'everyday life' shifted from being located with God to the rational people, and hence the individual. This movement, however, cannot accurately be described as the secularisation of society, but rather as the 'sacred-ification' of the so-called 'rational' individual.

Historically, there has been an almost natural tendency to equate nationalism to its extreme occurrences and manifestations, such as Nazism in Germany and ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia (among many examples). Such 'symptoms' rendered popular perceptions of nationalism as instinctively ill-intentioned and dangerous. Nationalism, in this light, is professed irrational, violent, secessionist, and of aggressive nature. These orthodox interpretations focused exclusively on the correlations between nationalism, the nation, and the so-termed nation-state, thereby *presupposing* nationalism's preoccupation with sovereignty and independent statehood. However, by and large, nationalism's brutality and illiberalness is the direct result of its historical context; nationalism as a positive and constructive form of social solidarity has been entirely ignored and/or denounced. Moreover, as Andrew Vincent avows, "the most worrying phenomenon *is* the state which claims exclusively one particular identity. *Multinational states* or political organisations seem to be the only way forward." [30] The fact of the matter remains that the homogeneous nation-state does not exist, and never did exist; it itself is the resurrection of an *ahistorical* social myth. Thus, the idea of multi-layered identities vis-à-vis 'supranationalism' presents a new and useful framework for analysis of the more general concept of nationalism, or, as some would label it, post-nationalism. Here, it is vital to note that post-nationalism can neither simply be defined as 'that which comes after nationalism', nor merely as its absence. As used by this author, it entails an 'identity-building' which moves beyond the limits imposed by traditional identifications with the nation-state to *complement* already existing identities with supranational ones. This 'new' conception, then, shows no logical repugnance between nationalism and such conceptions like liberalism, universalism, or even cosmopolitanism. As Miller remarks, the "strengthening of commitments to a smaller group is likely to increase our commitment to wider constituencies." [31] This is grounded in the logic that if we are already laden with particularist commitments, we may then rationalise those commitments from a universalist perspective. [32] Moreover, the increasing polyethnic character of the (nation-)state, particularly within the European Union (EU [33]), renders problematic the relationship between nationality, democracy, and citizenship. [34] The new nationalism of the twenty-first century recognises this dilemma and presents an overarching and complementary form of solidarity and governance. Thus, while the nature of nationalism remains exclusionary, nationalism as such – perceived as one of multiple layers of identities of equal worth – does indeed advance a common human good.

This notion of nationalism/post-nationalism celebrates the particularity of culture together with the universality of multiculturalism. It also recognises that national identity can improve notions of social justice. For example, redistributive policies often presuppose the willingness to sacrifice for anonymous 'Others'; here, the principle of nationality constructs a common bond between people that increases social solidarity and, as a result, the willingness to sacrifice for others. [35] Thus, if supranational organisations like the EU are able to create a complementary 'supranational' identity, the direct result, in due time, is a confederation or zone of states with increased social inclusion and social justice. The point of thinking about nationalism as inclusive is, it must be noted, not a new idea. As Anthony Smith proclaims,

"At the outset, nationalism was an inclusive and liberating force. It broke down the various localisms of region, dialect, custom, and clan, and helped to create large and powerful nation-states, with centralised markets and systems of administration, taxation, and education. Its appeal was popular and democratic." [36]

It is in this sense that the 'inclusionary nationalism' attempts to now overcome the constraints imposed by the nation-state; it is an evolutionary process whose ultimate goal resides within universalism and cosmopolitanism. These new nationalisms of the twenty-first century, including supranationalism and post-nationalism, as it were, are still in their infancy and represent very delicate and fragile conceptions. Nevertheless, they do exist, whether within the literature or within the minds of the people. In this regard, Gellner accentuates the importance of mass public education. He maintains that education is given the fundamental task of "instilling ardent loyalty to the nation in its citizens...." [37] In the French Third Republic, the republican leaders "devised a universal system of mass public education based on a standardised curriculum, especially in 'national' subjects like literature, geography, [and] history." [38] Not surprisingly, this 'national curriculum' was overfilled with messages of French *grandeur* and national unity; a subliminal message which embedded within the French citizen a sense of social belonging, a common history, and a

Only Trees have Roots; But Men have Legs: Nationalism's 'Exclusionary' Effects and the Overcome

Written by Felix Christoph Ohnmacht

shared identity. It is in the same way that ideas of the new nationalisms not 'only' appear in academic articles, but also represent an essential part of university textbooks and other educational resources. Much like during the French Third Republic, current academic debates, as well as popular folk discourses within the EU, discuss and/or examine the issue of supranationalism and European integration, thereby actively contributing to its social diffusion. Following Smith's argument introduced above, nationalism, which already successfully overcame what was at the time seen as the natural boundaries of loyalties and solidarity, and which has united a diverse people in the name of *la nation*, now takes the next logical step in actively advancing supranationalism and ideas of multi-layered identities that are inclusive on an ever growing scale. It is in this way that post-nationalism, not only as a concept, but also as a practice and/or popular worldview, becomes ideologically legitimate. Nationalism thus evolves and repeats its integration process in accordance with the contemporary social *Zeitgeist*, for, as Stuart Hall has written, "the hope of every ideology is to naturalise itself out of History and into Nature and thus to become invisible, to operate unconsciously." [39]

Here, the European Union and its socio-political aims serve as an example *par excellence*. European identity and integration, as concluded at a workshop organised by Oxford University and the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Strasbourg, "introduces a competition between diverse sources of identification, which are not necessarily incompatible." [40] Contemporary European nationalisms thus tend to combine the quest for autonomy within the philosophy of European integration. For instance, in prioritising the *nation*, the Scottish National Party promotes "Scottish autonomy within a larger European framework." [41] Similar 'post-nationalist' rhetoric resurfaces within the manifestos of the *Christlich-Soziale Union* (CSU) and the *Catalan Convergencia i Unio* (CiU). Smith remarks, "several nationalisms have eschewed the road to outright independence, preferring to attain maximum cultural, social, and economic autonomy for their homelands and people within a wider, federal sovereign state." [42] Smith also notes the Scots and Catalans as having gained considerable autonomy, including their own legal, educational, and cultural institutions, while both have opted to remain part of the United Kingdom and Spain respectively. To deny these 'post-nationalist' parties the label of 'nationalism', simply because they are not preoccupied with absolute state sovereignty, is to "overlook the centrality of national culture and social regeneration in their movements, an ideal that is common to so many other 'nationalisms'." [43] Thus, nationalism's popular understanding and connotative baggage exhibits a fundamental ideational and ontological shift. This shift entails the (much-needed) conceptual changing of nationalism's semantics as well as the social integration of previously disconnected and dispersed individuals and peoples. As Claire Sutherland avows, the "*Independence in Europe*' slogan illustrates that nationalist party rhetoric can be adapted to contemporary multi-level governance without losing its nationalist character for all that." [44] This redefinition and reconceptualisation manifestly reveals that the idea of nationalism is not inherently contradictory with regionalism and supranationalism, and that indeed the socio-political context is the seminal cause in effect.

Jean Monnet, even before the 1950s, argued in favour of an inclusive European identity. At present, such voices have increased considerably, even postulating that European integration and solidarity are the *conditio sine qua non* for the success of the European Union. This new nationalism emerges as the ideal vehicle to bestow sentiments of supranational identity onto the European '*demos*' and also embodies the very groundwork for social justice and a community based upon equally weighed, multi-layered identities. Thus, from the European Union's outset, it was clear that something more exciting than 'Coal and Steel' had happened, something which would redefine conventional understandings of Europe, of stateism, nationality, and sovereignty, and, of course, of nationalism. This 'something' led Hobsbawm to conclude, "Nation-states and nations will be seen as retreating before, resisting, adapting to, being absorbed or dislocated by, the new supranational restructuring of the globe." [45] Thus, in order to fulfil its regional socio-political goals, in 1984, the EU set up a committee "charged with suggesting ways to strengthen the identity...of the *community*." [46] This strategy is a good indicator of the EU's integrative endeavours and manifestly signifies the importance given to the creation of a common and inclusive 'Europeanness'. Here, the aim of cognitive regionalism, as declared by Sutherland, "is to replicate a quasi-national construct at the regional level." [47] The creation of an elevated and embracing EU identity, which rejoices within its overarching essence the uniqueness and particularity of national identities and cultural particularism, is in perfect unison with the above-advocated notion of multi-layered, fluent identities, which take as their ontological starting point the inestimable worth of multiculturalism and diversity. At the genesis of this process is the recognition that the nation-state in its current 'hyper-nationalised' form of identification is anachronistic and unsuitable.

Only Trees have Roots; But Men have Legs: Nationalism's 'Exclusionary' Effects and the Overco

Written by Felix Christoph Ohnmacht

For that reason, the European Union endeavours to erect and form new identity layers. Initial 'Euro-awareness' projects focused primarily on establishing concrete 'embodiments' of Europe – a policy which has proven not too fruitful. Recent approaches however, have started to scratch at the surface of ideology. They have produced signs of a common identity and supranational governance, and, to modify Billig's notion of banal nationalism, they engage in the continual flagging of 'supranationality' (for a detailed description of an EU identity, see Note[48]). Peter van Ham contends, "Europe's founding fathers' long-term goal was to unite the *peoples of Europe*, not only – or even primarily – uniting Europe's states." [49] It is essential to realise that any genuine identity – and above all on a supranational level – must inevitably be based on multiculturalism, thus "acknowledging that cultural diversity is a permanent and valuable part of democratic political society." [50] This moral postulate, as it were, must necessarily be the foremost important goal of supranational and post-national integration. Ferdinand Tönnies' two ultimate types of social organisation represent a useful analytical tool in this regard. Tönnies differentiated between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, where *Gemeinschaft* relates to,

"a certain sense of belonging based on shared loyalties, norms and values, kinship *or* ethnic ties ("community"); it is conditioned by the feeling that this is a "natural" and organic association based on an *a priori* social unity, on the idea of "one people," and hence a clearly cognisable *demos*. *Gesellschaft*, on the other hand, relates to the idea that people remain independent from each other as individuals, but may decide in a "social contract," or a "convention," to group together for the conduct of profit-making transactions ("society"); it remains an artificial construct which will only continue as long as its citizens find the contractual arrangements of common value." [51]

Clearly then, *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* represent diametrically opposed ends on a spectrum which depicts the degree of social integration and inclusion, with *Gemeinschaft* being the ultimate ambition for any form of social organisation. This must also be the aim of the new nationalisms; to naturalise the community's sentience of *Gemeinschaft* out of 'History' and into 'Nature' (Stuart Hall). Thus, nationalism's decisive challenge is to move from one side of the social spectrum to the other, to move from a society organised by the principle of *Gesellschaft* to one characterised by a common sense of solidarity and *Gemeinschaft*. The principle of *Gemeinschaft*, then, quite clearly, comprises such internally consistent moral postulates as ethnic tolerance towards the 'other', multiculturalism, and the recognition of a shared common good – indeed, it is only through a community guided by the principle of *Gemeinschaft* that nationalism can compensate for its fundamentally exclusionary effects (Note[52]). It is in this sense that this author argues that the new nationalisms transcend these limitations imposed by the nation-state ethos and advance a *complementary* layer of identity that is in concert with universalism and cosmopolitanism. As Claire Sutherland points out, "One of the novelties of contemporary nationalism is its attempt to question the national/regional dichotomy and unite two apparently divergent strands of thought." [53]

In conclusion, 1789 did not represent the birth of nationalism just as 1992 did not represent its death. Nationalism is not a "passing phase" in human history – it is a form of social solidarity which evolves over time. To distinguish between different *manifestations* and *forms* of nationalism may simplify popular and academic discourses because it clearly demarcates one form of nationalism from another, thus rendering its scrutiny as an 'ideology' more lucid; however, as is persistently the case with simplifications, they do have detrimental weaknesses and faults; an Achilles' heel, as it were. To differentiate between different types of nationalism is to ignore the fundamental truism that nationalism always harbours within its crux the ominous potential to transcend its positive integrative mechanisms and to deteriorate into authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, racism, and/or chauvinism. As Tom Nairn declared, "All nationalism is both healthy and morbid. Both progress and regress are inscribed in its genetic code from the start." [54] Consequently, differences in nationalism must be understood as differences of degree, rather than principle and/or type. Nationalism, regardless of its current characteristics, always carries within itself the causes for comprehensive exclusion and ethnocentrism. Eriksen emphasises this 'continuum' along which nationalism moves;

"Depending on the social context, then, nationalism may have socio-culturally integrating as well as disintegrating effects; it sometimes serves to identify a large number of people as *outsiders*, but it may also define an *ever* increasing number of people as *insiders* and thereby encourage social integration on a higher level than that which is current." [55]

Only Trees have Roots; But Men have Legs: Nationalism's 'Exclusionary' Effects and the Overco

Written by Felix Christoph Ohnmacht

Thus, the question of what nationalism is, is as essential as what it is *not*. This essay has provided ample evidence to conclude that it is not an ideology which is always *dangerously* exclusionary. Nationalism must necessarily be seen as a multisided phenomenon. At its very core is its *ipso facto* exclusionary philosophy; this is its only true and *constant* characteristic. This exclusionary principle is fundamentally rooted in the idea that identities resemble concentric circles of human association, where the most inner circle – the self – is the most exclusionary one. The larger these circles become, the more inclusive the identity *per se* becomes. Thus, the 'exclusion maxim' is a self-evident truth which is manifest in any form of social identification. However, if nationalism successfully stimulated solidarity among a great many heterogeneous people with vast differences within a particular territory, then, indubitably, the arbitrarily demarcated nation-state cannot represent its outer-limits.

Therefore, the *nation* attempts to locate the source of individual identity within the people, and if the *demos* goes *beyond* the state, *then, naturally, so does its nationalism*. This follows the logic that the people are the central object of loyalty and the basis of collective solidarity. Gellner's argument that, 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist', is central in this regard.[56] The new nationalisms consequently attempt to construct new '*Gemeinschaft*-nations' on an overarching and complementary supranational level. Quite clearly then, there is no innate repugnance between nationalism and universalism. What is more, if a *demos* is already laden with particularist commitments, then these commitments may be rationalised from a universalist perspective. The essentially logical consequence is a confederation or zone of nation-states with improved social solidarity and a common conception of social justice. However, to deny the so-called 'supranationalists' the label of 'nationalists', because they are not preoccupied with absolute state sovereignty, is to miss the genuine aim of nationalism, viz. the socio-political advancement of its *people*. This socio-political advancement is also the fundamental aim behind the creation of an elevated and embracing EU identity. This identity rejoices in all its essence the uniqueness and particularity of national identities and cultural particularism, yet it recognises that 'cultural diversity is a permanent and valuable part of democratic political society'. This is the only true conception of nationalism that is also in perfect unison with the here-advocated notion of multi-layered, fluent identities. Quite clearly, national identities cannot be exaggerated to the point where they represent anachronistic and 'hyper-nationalised' notions of distinctiveness. Most importantly, national identities ought to be based on the principle of *Gemeinschaft*. Here, Johann Gottfried von Herder's positive image of nationalism as essentially inclusive, democratic, and anti-imperialistic is an archetype that ought not to be viewed as some unachievable ideal, but as an aspiration within reach. As Sir Isaiah Berlin remarked, "Herder optimistically believed that *all flowers in the human garden could grow harmoniously, the cultures could stimulate one another and contribute to a creative harmony*." [57] Only a nationalism which is based upon Herder's sympathetic philosophy can surmount identity's inherently exclusionary effects and achieve the 'harmonious growing of all flowers'.

Endnotes:

* The title "Only Trees have Roots; But Men have Legs" refers to the fact that the history of humanity is epitomised by geographical movement. Humans have always migrated and have thus had fluent and evolving identities which are/were not 'rooted' in any genuine and static form of ethnicity or race. Man is in no way naturally *tied* to a particular nation or nation-state; these notions are arbitrary concepts which prove to have no real foundation, as this essay will prove. So Man has legs; he himself is a fluent concept which is influenced greatly by his environment, whether organic or inorganic.

[1] Mattei Dogan, "The Decline of Nationalisms within Western Europe," *Comparative Politics* 26.3 (1994): 281.

[2] Umut Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000), 58.

[3] Michael Freedon, "Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?," *Political Studies* XLVI (1998): 749.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid, 751.

Only Trees have Roots; But Men have Legs: Nationalism's 'Exclusionary' Effects and the Overco

Written by Felix Christoph Ohnmacht

[6] Ibid.

[7] Thomas Eriksen, "Ethnicity versus Nationalism," *Journal of Peace Research* 28.3 (1991): 275.

[8] This circle is fully exclusive because the human 'self' is unique; no one can be like someone else and thus membership to one's self is inherently restricted (to "one's self").

[9] I.e. commonality. The German word *Gemeinsamkeit*, however, is more fitting in this context as it connotes, in some sense, a combination of commonness, community, and commonality – a defining set of characteristics that all members share. In another sense, it brings to the notion of commonality and commonness what Tönnies' concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* bring to the idea of social groupings and classifications.

[10] John Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism* (London: Fontana Press, 1994): 11.

[11] Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964): 164, quoted in John Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism* (London: Fontana Press, 1994): 28.

[12] Translated: 'the feeling of a nation'.

[13] Özkirimli, 18-19.

[14] John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993): 57, quoted in Umut Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000), 38-47.

[15] "Or l'essence d'une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié bien de choses" can be roughly translated into: 'Now the essence of a nation is such that all the individuals have a great many things in common, and also that all [of them] have forgotten many things.'

[16] Ernest Renan, "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?," *Oeuvres Complètes* 1.0 (1961): 892, quoted in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983): 6.

[17] Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (UK: Open University Press, 1997), 3.

[18] Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (USA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 160, quoted in Claire Sutherland, "Another nation-building bloc? Integrating nationalist ideology into the EU and ASEAN," *Asia Europe Journal* 3.2 (2005): 143.

[19] Wilson Neate, "Unwelcome Reminders, Welcome Reminders," *Theory, Culture and Criticism* 19.2 (1994): 18.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Erica Brenner, "Nationality without Nationalism," *Journal of political Ideologies* 2.2 (1997): 192.

[22] William Wallace, "Rescue or Retreat? The Nation State in Western Europe, 1945-1993," *Political Studies* 42.1, 52-76, quoted in Claire Sutherland, "Another nation-building bloc? Integrating nationalist ideology into the EU and ASEAN," *Asia Europe Journal* 3.2 (2005): 142.

[23] Helder De Schutter, "Nations Beyond Nationalism," *Inquiry* 50.4 (2007): 391.

[24] Özkirimli, 3.

[25] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995), quoted in Umut Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000), 3.

Only Trees have Roots; But Men have Legs: Nationalism's 'Exclusionary' Effects and the Overco

Written by Felix Christoph Ohnmacht

[26] Phillip Spencer *et al*, "Good and bad nationalisms: A critique of dualism," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 3.3 (1998): 256.

[27] Hutchinson, 4.

[28] Stephen Castles *et al*, *The Age of Immigration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 40-41.

[29] Hutchinson, 4.

[30] Andrew Vincent, "Liberal Nationalism: An Irresponsible Compound?," *Political Studies* XLV (1997): 287.

[31] David Miller, "The Ethical Significance of Nationalism," *Ethics* 98 (1988): 661-662, quoted in Andrew Vincent, "Liberal Nationalism: An Irresponsible Compound?," *Political Studies* XLV (1997): 291.

[32] *Ibid*, 281.

[33] Note: Although the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Community, and the European Union (EU) do not represent the same political concepts and institutions, this author will use the term EU interchangeably. For example, this essay may refer to the beginning of an EU identity in a context during which only the European Coal and Steel Community existed. This is mainly to prevent confusion between 'different' identities as relating to a certain time period.

[34] Hutchinson, 136.

[35] Schutter, 382.

[36] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 1.

[37] *Ibid*, 39.

[38] *Ibid*.

[39] Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Hard Left* (London: Verso, 1988), 8, quoted in Alan Finlayson, "Ideology, discourse and nationalism," *Journal of Political Ideology* 3.1 (1998): 102.

[40] Muriel Rambour, "References and Uses of Postnationalism in French and British Debates on Europe," Workshop held as part of the National Identity and Euroscepticism symposium, 13 May 2005, Strasbourg, page 1.

[41] Claire Sutherland, "Another nation-building bloc? Integrating nationalist ideology into the EU and ASEAN," *Asia Europe Journal* 3.2 (2005): 145.

[42] Smith, 90.

[43] *Ibid*.

[44] Sutherland, 145.

[45] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalisms since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 182, quoted in Smith, 124.

[46] Karl-Dieter Opp, "Decline of the Nation State? How the European Union Creates National and Sub-National Identifications," *Social Forces* 84.2 (2005): 654.

Only Trees have Roots; But Men have Legs: Nationalism's 'Exclusionary' Effects and the Overco

Written by Felix Christoph Ohnmacht

[47] Sutherland, 142.

[48] Note: For a detailed description of an EU identity, please see: 1. Peter van Ham *et al*, "Affluence and Influence: The Conceptual Basis of Europe's New Politics," *The National Interest* 58.1 (1999/2000), and Peter van Ham, "Europe's Postmodern Identity: A Critical Appraisal," *International Politics* 38.1 (2001).

[49] Peter van Ham, "Europe's Postmodern Identity: A Critical Appraisal," *International Politics* 38.1 (2001): 241.

[50] Van Ham, II.

[51] Van Ham, 229-230.

[52] Only in this sense is exclusion ethically justifiable because the exclusion *per se* does not include any meaningful effects because the society itself is based on the acceptance of multi-layered identities which are innately exclusionary. Yet this exclusion is defensible because there is an overarching identity to which all members belong.

[53] Sutherland, 146.

[54] Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain* (London: New Left Books, 1977), 347-8, quoted in Spencer, 255.

[55] Eriksen, 265.

[56] Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964): 164, quoted in John Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism* (London: Fontana Press, 1994): 28.

[57] Van Ham, 231.

Selected Bibliography:

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1983.

Billig, Michael. *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage, 1995.

Brenner, Erica. "Nationality without Nationalism." *Journal of political Ideologies* 2.2 (1997): 189-206.

Brubaker, Rogers. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Calhoun, Craig. *Nationalism*. UK: Open University Press, 1997.

Carens, Joseph. "Who Should Get in? The Ethics of Immigration Admissions." *Ethics & International Affairs* 17.1 (2003): 95-110.

Castles, Stephen, *et al*. *The Age of Immigration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003.

Cole, Phillip. *Philosophies of Exclusion: Liberal Political Theory and Immigration*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000.

De Schutter, Helder. "Nations Beyond Nationalism." *Inquiry* 50.4 (2007): 378-394.

Dogan, Mattei. "The Decline of Nationalisms within Western Europe." *Comparative Politics* 26.3 (1994): 281-305.

Only Trees have Roots; But Men have Legs: Nationalism's 'Exclusionary' Effects and the Overco

Written by Felix Christoph Ohnmacht

- Eriksen, Thomas. "Ethnicity versus Nationalism." *Journal of Peace Research* 28.3 (1991): 263-278.
- Finlayson, Alan. "Ideology, discourse and nationalism." *Journal of Political Ideology* 3.1 (1998): 99-118.
- Freedon, Michael. "Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?." *Political Studies* XLVI (1998): 748-765.
- Hosie, Bernard. "The Morality of a Restricted Immigration Policy." *Social Compass* 5.1 (1957): 9-52.
- Hutchinson, John. *Modern Nationalism*. London: Fontana Press, 1994.
- Neate, Wilson. "Unwelcome Reminders, Welcome Reminders." *Theory, Culture and Criticism* 19.2 (1994): 17-34.
- Özkirimli, Umut. *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. UK: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000.
- Opp, Karl-Dieter. "Decline of the Nation State? How the European Union Creates National and Sub-National Identifications." *Social Forces* 84.2 (2005): 653-680.
- Parker, Owen, and James Brassett. "Contingent Borders, Ambiguous Ethics: Migrants in (International) Political Theory." *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (2005): 233-253.
- Rambour, Muriel. "References and Uses of Postnationalism in French and British Debates on Europe." Workshop held as part of the National Identity and Euroscepticism symposium, 13 May 2005, Strasbourg.
- Risse, Mathias. "On the Morality of Immigration." *Ethics & International Affairs* 22.1 (2008): 25-33.
- Smith, Anthony D. *Nationalism and Modernism*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Spencer, Phillip, *et al.* "Good and bad nationalisms: A critique of dualism." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 3.3 (1998): 255-274.
- Sutherland, Claire. "Another nation-building bloc? Integrating nationalist ideology into the EU and ASEAN." *Asia Europe Journal* 3.2 (2005): 141-157.
- Trondal, Jarle. "Beyond the EU membership – non-membership dichotomy? Supranational identities among national EU decision-makers." *Journal of European Public Policy* 9.3 (2002): 468-487.
- van Gorp, Bouke, *et al.* "A European Cultural Identity? Heritage and Shared Histories in the European Union." *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 98.3 (2007): 407-415.
- van Ham, Peter. "Europe's Postmodern Identity: A Critical Appraisal." *International Politics* 38.1 (2001): 229-252.
- van Ham, Peter, *et al.* "Affluence and Influence: The Conceptual Basis of Europe's New Politics," *The National Interest* 58.1 (1999/2000): 81-87.
- Vincent, Andrew. "Liberal Nationalism: An Irresponsible Compound?," *Political Studies* XLV (1997): 275-295.
- William, R. "Rights of passage: the ethics of immigration and refugee policy." *Theological Studies* 59.1 (1998): n/a.

—

Written By: Felix C. Ohnmacht
Written at: Swansea University
Written For: Dr Mark Evans

Only Trees have Roots; But Men have Legs: Nationalism's 'Exclusionary' Effects and the Overco

Written by Felix Christoph Ohnmacht

Date Written: January 2009