

# THE IDEA OF NATIONALISM

A STUDY IN ITS ORIGINS AND BACKGROUND

HANS KOHN

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION BY CRAIG CALHOUN



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## INTRODUCTION TO THE TRANSACTION EDITION

The contrast of civic to ethnic nationalism, liberal to organic, Western to Eastern is so habitual today that it is hard to recall that it was invented. Like nationalism itself, it seems almost natural, a reflection of reality rather than a construction of it. But while the distinction does grasp important aspects of modern history and contemporary politics, it does so in a specific way, shaping evaluations and perceptions, reinforcing some political projects and prejudicing thinkers against others. And it was invented. Hans Kohn was the most influential source of both the opposition of civic to ethnic nationalisms and of its association with a parallel opposition between Western and Eastern versions of modernity.<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of Nationalism* is the most important statement of Kohn's view, and it occupies a central place amid his voluminous writings as the main general statement of his mature perspective. It is of interest not only because Kohn was an important scholar and public intellectual, and because his contrast of civic and ethnic nationalisms has been deeply influential, but also because his book is an enlightening window onto the more general relationship between liberalism and nationalism.

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*The Idea of Nationalism* has, in one sense, an odd organization. After a general introduction to the "nature" of nationalism, Kohn traces the development of the idea of nationalism in Western history, from Israel and Hellas through Rome, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Reformation to the late eighteenth-century emergence of fully developed modern nationalism:

The continental Europe of the seventeenth century and of the first half of the eighteenth still lived in the prenatalistic age. But in the growth of centralized states, in the secularization of political life, in the rise of individualism with its faith in liberty and its confidence in man's power, with the acceleration of eco-

conomic life demanding the loosening of the static forms of traditional organization—the foundations were laid for the rise of nationalism. (p. 204)

France took the lead on the European continent, though Kohn acknowledges that England's seventeenth-century revolution was not just a precursor but the first real flowering of modern nationalism. The American and French revolutions were pivotal, crowning the Age of Enlightenment. The story of nationalism is thus embedded in an account of the development of Western civilization. The account culminates with the production of a new kind of liberal universalism and appropriate political structures for this by means of revolution, transformation of absolutist monarchies, and creation of new countries in the "new world." "Modern civilization was molded into its definite form in the eighteenth century" (p. 215). Then there are two chapters on "Stirrings in the Old World" tracing developments in Central and Eastern Europe. These start out promising cultural revitalization but end up anti-modern or at least reactionary.

Kohn initially planned to write a second volume. This would have extended the discussion of Europe further into the nineteenth century and added more on nationalisms which developed elsewhere on into the twentieth century. He never did, though he published numerous studies of later European nationalism and nationalism in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> But in a sense the very omission is telling. His story of nationalism is a story of liberal achievement and an illiberal challenge to it. It is a story in which the West—represented principally by England, France, and the United States—represents the universal and the rest of the world, frequently identified with the East, represents innumerable particularisms. But it is also a story that refuses to cede nationalism to mere backwardness, atavistic loyalties, or traditionalism.

The idea of nationalism, in Kohn's view, developed specifically in the West as part of the pursuit of a social order based on reason and universal justice. It was central to liberalism and liberalism central to it—until it was appropriated and transformed, mainly in the East, by Romantics, traditionalists, mystical irrationalists, and those pursuing a different *raison d'état* governed not by universal ideals but by the desire to claim an equal or even dominant place in the world remade by the West. But the good, liberal version of nationalism was not irrevocably lost, Kohn suggested; it could be recovered, claimed by Western Europe and the US, and even

potentially spread throughout the world as part of the West's gift to humankind. Liberal nationalism could still serve as a valuable step on the path to cosmopolitan global integration. As Kohn ended *The Idea of Nationalism*, summing up its message:

From Hebrew and Greek ideas the age of nationalism drew many of its initial and fundamental inspirations, but from Jerusalem and Athens shine also the eternal guiding stars which lift the age of nationalism above itself, pointing forward on the road to deeper liberty and to higher forms of integration. (p. 576)

Greece and Israel are the crucial sources of the Western inheritance of universalism, humanism, reason, and liberty: "It is significant that in antiquity only the two nationally conscious peoples developed a conscious cosmopolitanism and universalism" (p. 36).

Kohn's story of the idea of nationalism, in other words, is situated in the heroic version of the story of the rise of Western civilization and its gift to the world of Classical, Judeo-Christian, and Enlightenment versions of reasoned universalism. It is as much an account of the flourishing and importance of liberalism as a study of nationalism. But it is not simply triumphal. Though Kohn seems to have been of generally optimistic character, and found reasons for hope not always apparent to his contemporaries, *The Idea of Nationalism* is informed by the rise of Nazism and World War II, and indeed by Kohn's fear for the future of liberalism. Kohn had already been worried by illiberal nationalism, especially in new states such as Turkey, and by Soviet Communism. He was well aware of the potential for dominant groups to harness nationalist ideology to projects that oppressed minority nationalities and indeed freedom more generally.<sup>3</sup> But the rise of the Nazis prompted Kohn not only to turn his attention back to Europe but to try to warn his fellow Americans of the threat National Socialism posed.<sup>4</sup>

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The 1940s must have been an extraordinary time to write about nationalism. They were perhaps a still more extraordinary time to take up the challenge of showing that nationalism and liberal democracy were compatible, and indeed that enlightened nationalism was inseparable from liberalism. The tendency to equate nationalism with its worst excesses was

already widespread (it continues to shape liberal discussions). The other most prominent early twentieth-century analyst of nationalism, Carlton B. Hayes, portrayed it as a kind of religion, emphasizing the irrational rather than the rational.<sup>5</sup> Much more extreme examples of the effort to distinguish essentially bad nationalism from the broader and more benign consciousness of national identity abound. Frederick Hertz, for example, argued that the term nationalism should be reserved "for political movements characterized by a one-sided, intolerant, and often fanatical accentuation of one's own nationality ... the striving for power and domination, and the subordination of all other values to these aims."<sup>6</sup> Kohn by contrast stressed at length how nationalism grew in close relationship to Enlightenment liberalism and cosmopolitanism, and should not be equated with the ethnic variants that grew in nineteenth-century response, inspired in part by Rousseau and Romanticism. Both shared in the common history of nationalism, though they revealed that it was Janus-faced. The latter were not merely late, however, but different in kind, and representative of a branching off of intellectual lineage.

Though Kohn only presented his fully crystallized view in *The Idea of Nationalism*, he had been developing it throughout his life, on the basis of personal experience and public commitment as well scholarship. Kohn was born in Prague on September 15, 1891, near the end of the long nineteenth-century European peace and just before the Continent's convulsive political crises. He grew up in a prosperous and cosmopolitan Bohemia but lived to see the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the struggles of Czechoslovakian Republic and its German invasion, and the reconstruction of Czechoslovakia as a communist state after the ruinous Second World War. He died in 1971 in Philadelphia.

As formative for the young Hans Kohn as this cultural and political context was the project of "cultural" or "ethical" Zionism.<sup>7</sup> He studied at the German University in Prague, eventually receiving a doctorate in law. While there, he became active in Zionist student organizations. For him, as for many others, a visit from Martin Buber was transformative. Indeed, Buber's reception by the Prague students enthusiastic and recruited a number of devoted followers to cultural Zionism. If there was a single fundamental tenet to this alternative to Theodore Herzl's statist version of Jewish nationalism it was the notion that Judaism itself required an internal renewal. It was not enough to change the external conditions faced by

Jews, or even to create a new state to give Jews a secure place to live. If both Jews and Judaism were to flourish there must be a transformation of Jewish culture and indeed a spiritual revitalization. Buber thus brought to Kohn and others his own version of the cultural Zionism associated with Ahad Ha'am, who clashed famously with Herzl over just these issues. Herzl focused on saving Jews, Ha'am and Buber on saving Judaism. Herzl promoted a straightforwardly Western secular modernization program, emphasizing the state as such and not focusing directly on dynamics of identity, social cohesion, or religious values. By comparison, Ha'am and Buber were more interested in what made Jews Jews, and what made Judaism valuable. Interestingly, they were also far more conciliatory towards the Arab population of Palestine.

In fact, Herzl had recruited Buber to edit a Zionist paper in Vienna, but they grew apart over the issue of Jewish identity. The same happened with others, including Israel Zangwill, a British Zionist who by his own account worked slavishly for Herzl before breaking with him on precisely this issue. For Herzl, "Jew" was largely a biological, a racial category, and Jews were people to be protected by seeking the power of a state.<sup>8</sup> But for Buber and Zangwill, Jews were bound spiritually and culturally. Moreover, the cultural Zionists saw in Judaism a moral message which should change the outside world, and faulted Jewish inwardness that blunted this message—which amounted roughly to human brotherhood, or the essential relationality Buber would evoke with the language of "I" and "thou" (anticipating in some ways Levinas's more philosophically sophisticated account of "alterity").<sup>9</sup> As Kohn would do a little later, Zangwill explicitly called for joining the Jewish message of justice and solidarity to Greek universal culture, though Zangwill emphasized Greek aesthetic ideals more than Kohn.<sup>10</sup>

In the early twentieth century, Ha'am's cultural Zionists were often seen as "Jewish particularists" in opposition to Herzl's advocates for a secular, state-centered Jewish realpolitik. As the case of Kohn reveals, though, the "particularist" label can be misleading. The cultural Zionists certainly called for a stronger sense of the special identity of Jews, not merely as a race or descent group, but as bearers of a moral and cultural mission. Kohn would later emphasize Messianism as a distinctive component of Jewish nationalism—but also as a contribution to the broader development of nationalism.<sup>11</sup> And he would interpret this not only in terms of the

belief in the coming of a Redeemer, but as an aspiration to make a better world. He thus linked Messianism to liberal nationalist faith in the possibility of transforming the conditions of social life to achieve universal ends. "The future kingdom never was expected outside this world, in Heaven, but was always regarded as a phase of human history, whose stage was the earth, sometimes a transfigured earth, but still the earth with life purified and clarified but still human. ... It was a stage of national or universal history" (p. 44). For Kohn, Zionism must not stand for backward-looking historical claims, nor only for the inward-looking self-concern of "the chosen people." It must contribute to what he would later analyze as liberal nationalism's advance of global justice and global integration. "Jewish nationalism stood as a moral nationalism—duty and not law; responsibility for humanity."<sup>12</sup> Of course, in the end Jewish particularism came to be associated less with such outward looking reformers and more with the Orthodox and with a range of immigrants to Israel who sought to defend received understandings of Jewish identity, particular interpretations of the law, and even exclusive definitions of who was a real Jew. Not only did Israel become more religious than early secular Zionists imagined, its religion was shaped less by the spiritual renewal Buber, Ha'am, Kohn, and others advocated.

In this context, it is curious that Zangwill should be remembered for two phrases that seem to embody contradictory messages. It was his play, *The Melting Pot*, that popularized that understanding of America, to Theodore Roosevelt's great pleasure. But it was the same Zangwill who influentially and misleadingly described Palestine as "a land without people for a people without land."<sup>13</sup> It was important to many Zionists to conceive of Palestine as all but empty—as European settlers had earlier thought of North America, Australia, Southern Africa, and other potentially desirable territories. But of course Palestine was already occupied and when he approached it less abstractly, Zangwill recognized it was relatively densely occupied and that this would be a problem for Zionism. Indeed, he broke with the dominant currents of Zionism and became a leader in the pursuit of a non-Zionist approach to a Jewish territory.<sup>14</sup> He was among those tempted by the offer of Uganda—though of course it too was hardly empty. But central to the transformation in his thought and the development of Kohn's was the notion that a territorial solution for Jews need not be a racially or ethnically ordered state, and perhaps must be a multicultural state.

In general, the cultural Zionists from Ha'am on were sympathetic to the Arab population already in Palestine. Their preoccupation with Jewish ethics and the relations of Jews to the larger world was a factor in this. When Buber, for example, wrote that the Arabs are the test God has given Zionism he didn't mean simply that Arabs were trouble for Jews, though he has been quoted as though that were the sense of his remark. He meant that the project of Zionism would have to be judged on how well it accommodated the interests of Arabs as well as Jews, and how well it met the moral standards of Judaism. Such thoughts were widespread in the Brit Shalom (Covenant of Peace) movement. As Kohn's friend Robert Weltsch put it in 1918, "Zionism is not only a political movement; it is above all a spiritual and moral opportunity."<sup>15</sup> Cultural or ethical Zionists felt that all Jewish immigration to and settlement of the land must only be done in brotherly conciliation with the Palestinian people. Anything they would regard as an immoral imposition should not be attempted.

Kohn in particular was deeply troubled by the ways in which Palestinian settlement put Jews in the position of dominating others by power alone, rather than cultural renewal and a dialogical exchange. He was especially unimpressed with arguments based on "historic right" (just as he would be in his writings on nationalism years later). "With the term 'historic right,'" he suggested, "one can rationalize every kind of injustice."<sup>16</sup> As he wrote to Buber in 1929: "We have been in Palestine for 12 years now and have not once seriously tried to secure the acceptance of the people or to negotiate with the people that live in the country. We have relied exclusively on the military power of Great Britain. We have set goals that inevitably and in themselves had to lead to conflicts with the Arabs and about which we should say that they are reason - and justified reason - for a national uprising against us."<sup>17</sup>

Kohn was by this time living in Palestine. During World War I, he had been a prisoner of war and was interned in Soviet prisons in Samarkand and Khabarovsk, Krasnoyarsk and Irkutsk until 1920. He learned Russian and later returned to the Soviet Union as a journalist for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. His writings on Russian nationalism and the USSR are much influenced by personal observation and are not without sympathy. He also spent a great deal of time in Paris and London, working for Zionist organizations and combining an increasing commitment to scholarly writing with both activism and journalism. He had married Jetty Wahl in

1921, and then in 1925 moved to Palestine, where he worked until 1929. Quickly, though, Kohn grew frustrated both with the limited success of cultural Zionism compared to more ethnonationalist variants, and with the growing tensions between Jews and Arabs. The dominant Zionist approach worried him not just because of the conflicts it engendered with Palestinian Arabs but because it at best ignored and at worst was directly contrary to the spiritual and cultural renaissance of Judaism he sought. The Arab riots of 1929 shook him, and helped to precipitate his move to the United States. At the same time, Kohn's growing frustration with the dominant currents in Zionism led him to look further at the nature of nationalism.

Kohn also grew more and more engaged with historical research into European nationalism—not least because European affairs seemed determinant for global affairs. After the riots of 1929 he left Palestine and in 1934 started teaching modern history at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. From 1949 until 1961, he taught at the City College of New York, intermittently at the New School for Social Research, and as a visiting professor at Harvard, Chicago, and other universities. He was also a member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. But Kohn never became simply an academic historian. For all his academic appointments and his prominence among historians, Kohn remained in important ways as devoted to public intellectual life as to scholarship. Or rather, his scholarship was always in the service of a public agenda. And while that agenda had a variety of specific foci from Zionism to alerting the American public to the dangers of Nazism to shaping Western response to the anti-colonial nationalisms of the postwar era, it had an enduring theme. The theme was rational enlightenment liberalism, and more specifically the possibility of a growing unity of humankind in which nationalism was not the enemy of cosmopolitanism but a crucial if temporary mediator between individuals and global citizenship. Until the end of his life, Kohn was engaged both in writing the history of nationalism and in trying to guide it.

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Kohn was steeped in Central European intellectual traditions and exemplified the command of multiple languages and breadth of learning that so astonishes us about many nineteenth- and twentieth-century Ger-

man thinkers.<sup>18</sup> And as was typical of these thinkers, he saw the Greeks as the fundamental source of Western civilization. It was somewhat more distinctive to give equal weight, as he does in *The Idea of History*, to the Jews. Certainly Judea and Hellas were small countries and the ancient world was a broad terrain, but they stand out against the background of all the rest of Antiquity. Indeed, “for the European consciousness, this background was no more than a distinct and obscure setting which by contrast served to illuminate even more brightly the two great protagonists of ancient history, Israel and Hellas” (p. 27). In general, Kohn probably exaggerates the extent to which appreciation and appropriation of the “Old Testament” heritage was basic to early European nationalism. But it was not without importance.

The Greeks and the Jews shared two basic traits that set them apart in the ancient world: individuals mattered, and they achieved national consciousness. The two are commonly opposed—or at least they have been in recent years, especially by liberals but also by more than a few conformity-minded ethnonationalists. But Kohn clearly wants from the outset to make the point that they need not be. Among the Greeks and Jews, the “natural group-sentiment of tribalism” which is common to all ethnic groups was transformed into something more. And the something more of Greek and Judaic nationalism makes no sense without the complement of the more active engagement and dignity of each member of the group. Jews and Greeks developed “a new consciousness which gave every member of the group the knowledge of a special mission entrusted to it and distinguishing it from all other peoples. This consciousness, shared by every individual, raised him to a new personal dignity, and prepared the spiritual foundations of democracy” (p. 27).<sup>19</sup> Or again, “the masses of the other peoples appeared, to Greeks and Hebrews alike, as without individual dignity, subject to the will of their despotic rulers, without participation in a national mission, and without an active share in the cultural life reserved to the priestly class. ... With the other peoples of antiquity, only rulers and empires left their traces on history. With the Greeks and the Jew, it was the national character and the spiritual creative energy of the people which endured” (p. 28).

Kohn's theme flows as directly from his heritage in cultural Zionism as from the crisis of Europe that culminated in World War II. As Wolf remarks, there was something naïve about the cultural Zionist hope for a bi-national state in Palestine, since there was not much support for this

idea among either Jews or Arabs.<sup>20</sup> This is an instance of the idealist's hope for the abstract ought without much regard for the concrete tendencies. And indeed, Kohn appeals to religion for an account of how the Greeks and Jews achieved their distinctive mix of individuality and nationalism in an appeal at once terribly tendentious about the actualities of the two religions and yet not without its insight.

God is the reconciliation of multiplicity to unity. The Greeks arrived at this conciliation by contemplation and a wisdom full of moderation; they never doubted that all men would love virtue if they could but contemplate it. The Jews found conciliation not in the contemplation of knowledge but in the exertion of the will. (p. 34)

Greek philosophy is here elided rather easily into an account of religion, and the specificities of Greek religion seem to matter hardly at all. Whether Kohn refers to the Homeric pantheon or neo-Platonism is never made clear.

Kohn is clear, however, that there are important differences among great Greeks with regard to his key concerns of individual dignity and national identity. He claims the Sophists as incipient humanitarians against the "absolute precedence of the state over the individual" urged by Plato's *Republic*, which he saw as simply a military despotism (pp. 56-7). The Sophist "enlightenment" started an emancipation of the individual from the narrow traditions of family, clan, and city and prepared the way for a broader "community of individuals held together by intellectual instead of tribal or local bonds" (p. 57). This seems to have been most realized in the Hellenism, following the Alexandrine transcendence of the Greek city-state. But while this makes clear Kohn's emphasis on the difference between mere cultural commonality—ethnicity—and mutual intellectual engagement that could be part of a transformative project leading eventually to world community, it raises deep questions. In what sense, for example, was there a Hellenistic "community"? Certainly there were far-flung intellectual connections among those who wrote in Greek. And there were some links by travel and trade. There was arguably a Hellenistic *oikoumene* around the Mediterranean,<sup>21</sup> but this was not in itself the basis for any political community. On the contrary, the Hellenistic intellectuals survived partly by keeping their distance from politics and partly by virtue of the protection of an imperial peace. But they did

not organize or for the most part run the empire. It is certainly true that the Stoics helped to promulgate a vision of world community. Kohn quotes Plutarch's summary of Zeno: "that all the inhabitants of this world of ours should not live differentiated by their respective rules of justice into separate cities and communities but that we should consider all men to be of one community and one order common to all" (p. 59). He reports Alexander's refusal of Aristotle's advice to think of himself as leader of the Greeks—as it were, a nationalist—and he avers that "as a result of Alexander's attitude the universalistic philosophy of the Stoics had a practical example set before it" (p. 60). But it is a little chilling to think that the practical example is one of conquest.

It is easy to fault Kohn for over-reaching as he tries to sustain the pairing of Hellas and the Hebrews. But it would be a mistake to dismiss entirely the importance of the combination of universalism and messianism to some nationalisms: France's *mission civilisatrice* and America's sense of being a "city on a hill" perhaps most notably. And it would be a mistake also to miss the importance of nationalist projects that founded on ideals of transformative self-improvement. Americans my age will always remember the opposed slogans of "America: Love It or Leave It" and "America: Change It or Lose It." Among other things, Kohn is grasping for ways to remind his readers of the potential of the latter approach to nationalism and patriotism.

Over time, Kohn's outlook was shaped more and more by Enlightenment rationalism and the distinctively American version of liberalism. Both get pronounced emphasis in *The Idea of Nationalism*. But among Enlightenment rationalists and American liberals, Kohn is unusual for his sustained and largely positive attention to nationalism. Liberals have more commonly sought to debunk nationalist claims as mere historical errors or inventions of opportunistic politicians.<sup>22</sup> Many have rejected nationalism as a fundamentally illiberal imposition of the collectivity over the individual, of ethnic loyalty over human rights, and of tradition over reason. And even more commonly, liberalism has swept its own tacit reliance on nationalist thinking under the carpet, failing to analyze why the population of any one country belonged there and why the state was entitled to keep others out. Liberalism generally took up questions about how to advance justice and liberty within "societies," didn't much examine what made a society a society, and (except when prodded by war) was

vague on the relationship between a world of such distinct societies and sovereign states and the rights of individuals in the world as a whole. These issues have come to the fore recently in response to globalization, with many liberals struggling with national identities and state boundaries and proclaiming adherence to a more cosmopolitan ideal. The same issues came to the fore after World War II, as liberals sought to organize the United Nations and promote "modernization" in less "developed" countries. Kohn's was an important voice informing the "nation-building" agenda of modernization theory and practice. But he was considerably ahead of the wave of postwar modernization projects, and his synthesis of values from cultural Zionism with Enlightenment liberalism is a key reason. In this regard, Wolf is right that "throughout his life, Kohn remained a prophet of the cultural Zionist ideals: world unity, individual liberty, and a humane ethical nationalism."<sup>23</sup> At the same time, Kohn lived through a fundamental crisis of the traditions that formed him.

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Rome and Christianity like the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are for Kohn mostly conduits through which the essential ancient heritage of Greece and Israel is passed on to modernity, when once again intellectual, cultural, and moral creativity begin to nurture improvements in the common inheritance.<sup>24</sup> The conduits nonetheless shape the history of nationalism.

Rome, first of all, provided an organizational context in which the Stoic idea of cosmopolitanism could become a reality. Kohn sees this as an essentially Greek idea taken up by the Romans, and together with the Greek idea of *philanthropeia* or love of mankind, reworked to make the ideal of *humanitas*, "a compound of the qualities of the human and the humane, that quality which makes a man a man. ... This new meaning of *humanitas* found its outward expressing in the Roman Empire which Caesar founded by his revival of the idea of Alexander" (p. 65). Rome bequeathed to the subsequent history of nationalism, thus, mainly the "universalism of the Empire" (p. 70).<sup>25</sup> But Rome was only imperfectly able to realize the ideal it embraced: there were Barbarians without and there was inadequate integration within: "Only many centuries later, in our own days, has the march of technical progress made it objectively

possible to unify mankind without leaving any barbarians at its frontiers or entirely outside its orbit" (p. 69). Nonetheless, Kohn suggests, the memory of the Roman Empire offered hope to sustain Europeans through the ensuing Dark Ages.

Christianity appropriated the hope, but transformed it, partly by also appropriating the Jewish idea of a chosen people. At the same time, Christendom was explicitly conceived as multinational. Kohn notes the difference between Eastern Orthodoxy, with its structure of national churches, and the Western overlay of Catholic universalism and a congeries of more local polities. He identifies Byzantium with a new spirit of authoritarian despotism introduced into the Roman imperial heritage by Constantine, and significantly links this to a transition from a "this-worldly civilization of liberty" which he imagines to have obtained under Augustus to "an otherworldly civilization of authority" (p. 75). Church was subordinated to state in the East.<sup>26</sup> In the West, at this time, "the decentralization and differentiation within those bodies which were later to form the future nations in no way allowed the growth of that political and emotional integration which is the basis of modern nationalism" (p. 78). Moreover, "the political thought of the Middle Ages was characterized by the conviction that mankind was one and had to form one community. ... The main conflict of the Middle Ages was not between universalism and the desire of separation of individual groups, but between two forms of universalism, *Sacerdotium* and *Imperium* (p. 79).<sup>27</sup> Indeed, however much the power of the Holy Roman Empire might fade after Charlemagne, the inherited notion of continuing Roman, Christian universalism remained strong. Even figures like Dante who expressed profound love of country were not nationalists. "What he wished was not the unity of Italy, but the peace of Italy and the peace of humanity in a unified world" (p. 92). There were very local solidarities, rooted not only in territory and polity but in autonomous occupational communities. But these are as different from nationalism as the pan-national Church. It is only from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries that the formation of nations got underway in Europe, and it took form as a struggle against the Church (and indeed, against the autonomy of local groups).

It was the Renaissance and Reformation that brought nationalism back onto the Western European stage. "The rise of nationalism demanded a new attitude of this-worldliness and affirmation of nature, the birth of

individualism, and a new interpretation of history" (p. 104). The Renaissance and Reformation provided these. At the same time, they contributed to a break down of the ostensible universal order that had overlain medieval localism (Kohn's account here centers especially on the Holy Roman Empire). Yet, neither actually was typified by or even directly produced nationalism; they paved the way. During both the Renaissance and Reformation there were appeals to something like nations, not least in literature, but the nascent nations were torn apart from within. Indeed, most of the humanist writers of the Italian Renaissance, however much they might appeal to larger ideals, were employed in the service of local princes or cities. Macchiavelli was the first to transcend this, though even he wrote less as a nationalist *per se* than as an advocate of a secular state. And it was indeed the absolutist states that succeeded in unifying the disparate local powers—except of course in Germany. The modern nationalism of the West, what Kohn would later describe as the good "civic" variant of nationalism, depended crucially on this precedence of the state over ethnocultural appeals to solidarity. And indeed the contribution of absolutist monarchs was not just to dominate feudal lords and other local powers, but to integrate and homogenize affairs throughout their realms.<sup>28</sup>

In England, thus, the rise of the Tudors exhausted the feudal barons and brought an integrated commerce. And then it was in England's seventeenth-century civil war, a rebellion against attempted extension of that very "absolutism" that "the first great surge of nationalism ... embraced a whole people" (p. 125; see also 178). "Here we find the first example of modern nationalism, religious, political, and social at the same time, although it was not yet the secularized nationalism which arose at the end of the eighteenth century" (p. 166).<sup>29</sup> Milton and Cromwell were both deeply religious yet in important ways, Kohn suggests, they emphasized reason as well as faith.<sup>30</sup> It was no accident, moreover, that England gave rise to science in the same era. For science embodied, not least for a utopian like Bacon, the prospect not just of riches but of transformation of the conditions of human life. It marked a new and forward-looking, progressive orientation which Kohn wanted to claim for liberal nationalism—an expectation of society continually improved. This in turn informed a changed orientation to history, in which the history of the nation could appear largely as yet to be made. It was not unrelated to the fact that English nationalism "never made the complete integration of the indi-

vidual into the nation the aim of nationalism; it always put a great emphasis on the individual and upon the human community beyond all national divisions" (p. 178).<sup>31</sup> It was, in other words, just as Kohn wanted nationalism to be.

What Kohn wrote about English nationalism he would have wished for Zionism:

A nation had come into being, directing its own destiny, feeling responsible for it, and a national spirit permeated all institutions. It sprang from a unique consciousness of the identity of divine, natural, and national law, based upon the dignity and liberty of every individual as God's noblest creature, upon his individual conscience inspired by the inner light of God and reason alike. (p. 183)

English nationalism was, however, early on the European scene. On the Continent, the more general trend was for the consolidation and secularization of states to proceed without the level of popular participation seen in seventeenth century England. "Etatism, not nationalism, emerged from the disintegration of medieval universalism." Politics became increasingly rational, but "the masses continued to live in the emotional forms of religion." There were movements to rationalize religion as well as politics, of course, such as pietism. But in general these sought to dissociate religion from politics—and states returned the favor, claiming a *raison d'état* grounded in instrumental rationality not religious values. Only in the late eighteenth century did nationalism begin to rival religion as a source of "emotional warmth." This met a need of the secular states, however, which could no longer rely so readily on religion for their legitimation. "Nationalism made the new State legitimate and implanted it deeply in the hearts and wills of its citizens" (p. 188).

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Kohn is interested in two senses of the "idea" of nationalism. On the one hand his concern is for how "nationalism," as an idea, developed in history. On the other hand, he is concerned for how each nationalism—that is, each cultural movement of nation forming—formulated its distinctive national "idea" and why these diverge.<sup>32</sup>

The former concern is evident when Kohn distinguishes nationalism from nationality. Nationalism is not a natural extension of nationality but

involves its transformation by ideas of sovereignty, popular participation, and ideals. "Nationalism is a state of mind, permeating the large majority of a people and claiming to permeate all its members; it recognizes the nation-state as the ideal form of political organization and the nationality as the source of all creative cultural energy and of economic well-being. The supreme loyalty of man is therefore due to his nationality, as his own life is supposedly rooted in and made possible by its welfare" (p. 16). While this is a plausible account, it is a rather compound definition with shifting parts, not a singular idea. Indeed, part of what Kohn brings out is that there is not a singular idea of nationalism, but rather multiple clashing ideas that share a good deal of vocabulary and reference.<sup>33</sup> This is in fact one reason why he—and after him much of the literature—became increasingly reliant on the value-laden distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism.

The latter concern comes out most clearly in Kohn's discussion of the United States, though it is also basic to the account of the various less liberal nationalisms contrasted to it in the latter part of the book:<sup>34</sup>

Though (or rather, because) the American nation was to be a universal nation—not only in the sense that the ideal which it pursued was universal, valid, and applicable to the whole of mankind, but also in the sense that it was a nation composed of all racial and linguistic strains—it was to be strongly integrated around allegiance to the American idea, an idea to which everyone could be assimilated for the very reason that it was a universal idea. (p. 309)

We see in this important features of liberal nationalism generally which Kohn had initially expressed in his accounts of cultural Zionism. Substitute the word "Jewish" for "American" in the passage just quoted. It then evokes precisely the cultural Zionist claim which the more ethno-racial Zionists rejected.

Liberal nationalisms center on universal ideas, especially freedom and justice. These also provide liberal nations with universal missions: "Thus America became the vanguard of mankind, full of a proud and blissful faith in its mission. This faith of the American people in itself and its mission made it a nation" (p. 308). Clearly the assimilationist, universal dimension of American nationalism was different from what would develop in most of Europe—along with a more forward-looking, less historical orientation and greater individualism that deeply inflected the version of liberty Americans would claim. These were not merely coincidental

differences, however, they were dimensions of self-understanding. The nation's idea of itself could repeatedly be clarified in the contrast. "Each national idea gains its emphasis by contrasting itself with and differentiating itself from another concept; in the case of America, this concept was Europe" (p. 292). American nationalism was a "cultural nationalism" but not in the sense of claiming ethnic culture. Rather, it was cultural in the sense that education and cultural production were to play a "sorely needed" role "in the young nation to cement the loose ties binding the distant communities and colonies with their divergent traditions and backgrounds" into a common whole (p. 301). In addition, of course, freedom demanded knowledge. In Jefferson's words, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be" (quoted on p. 313).

America provided an exceptionally promising environment for the realization of the ideals of the French Enlightenment. Indeed, Kohn begins his discussion of the U.S. by emphasizing this connection, not simply the direct lineage of English ideals. He is justified in this both by the admiration many French thinkers showed for English liberties and by the importance of the American example for the French, but he probably does underestimate the influence not only of English thinkers but of the Scottish moralists. In any event, what is important to Kohn is that in the North American colonies, the struggle for civic liberty could lead directly to the foundation of a new nation (p. 271). Here too, the historical role of the middle classes as protagonists of liberal nationalism was renewed (after a slide towards greater aristocratic dominance in Restoration England). American patriotism, on Kohn's reading, was typified by the cosmopolitanism of Thomas Jefferson and Tom Paine. In different ways each emphasized that the freedoms of Americans were not simply English historical liberties but natural rights of all men.<sup>35</sup> "For by the end of the Revolution the American colonies had emancipated themselves from the past so completely that they did not regard common descent or a common root as the foundation of their community" (p. 275). The common foundation was the constitution, a this-worldly human action, based on ideas and ideals and showing their efficacy in the world (as against mere *realpolitik*). "The American constitutional laws of 1789 have lasted because the idea for which they stand was so intimately welded with the existence of the American nation that without the idea there would have been no nation" (p. 289).

The U.S. is the setting for creation of a "new man" as well as a new nation. Kohn's emphasis on the newness of American nationalism leads him to see little common culture, identity, or social integration uniting the thirteen colonies before the Revolution. This underwrites his view of the U.S. as achieving an almost purely civic nationalism. Likewise, he says little about the ethnocultural construction of American identity that would later be termed "WASP."

Kohn emphasizes the melting pot character of the United States in terms comparable to (and including quotes from) Zangwill. Crèvecoeur emphasized "that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country" and along with mixed descent the attitude of "leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices, and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced" (quoted pp. 275-6). Kohn quotes John Adams with approval: "this radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people, was the real American Revolution" (p. 276). Not unlike Hannah Arendt, he finds in the Revolution and the founding of the United States a paradigmatic exemplification of the human capacity to create something new and good in the world, going beyond the exigencies of necessity and narrowly instrumental interest.<sup>36</sup> Unlike Arendt, he would extend much of the same enthusiasm to the French Revolution, dwelling little on the slippery slope towards totalitarianism she thought it revealed.<sup>37</sup>

Kohn's discussion of American national identity and self-understanding also reveals how much his ideas about liberal nationalism depend not only on the themes of universalism, active individual participation, and an ethical orientation but also on a notion of creative self-fashioning. In Christian terms, it is not Christ's suffering body as portrayed in the crucifix, but the redemption—and perhaps the Pentecost—that liberal nationalism claims. This also suggests one of the reasons why Kohn sees an implicit affinity with Protestantism. The transformation from an externally imposed order to a continual sense of the self as a moral project—what so troubled Foucault about modern individualism—is central to Kohn's embrace of liberal nationalism.<sup>38</sup>

While Kohn is adamant that nationalism is a state of mind, he is clear that this state of mind is produced not just by inheritance of an "idea" or the labor of intellectuals (though *The Idea of Nationalism* is mainly an intellectual history). Partly because nationalism is so importantly about

what ordinary people think and feel, Kohn is well aware that it has roots not just in the reading of high theory but in the experience of everyday life and communication. He anticipates the stress placed a generation later by Karl Deutsch on communications media as a basis for nationalism, noting for example that French road building and transportation was very advanced (p. 225) and more generally how important communications and transport technology was not only to nationalism but to cosmopolitanism (p. 201).<sup>39</sup>

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A deep problem for the new socio-political order that arose with nationalism and the centralized, secular state was reconciling "the liberty of the individual with the exigencies of social integration" (p. 226). It is a problem familiar to sociologists in Talcott Parsons' classical evocation of the Hobbesian problem of order at the beginning of a treatise on how voluntary social action could produce social structure.<sup>40</sup> As stated, it is slightly less familiar to political theory, because questions of social integration have not figured prominently in that tradition, though the opposition of the individual to the state has. This is not quite the same thing, because the liberty of the individual is counterposed here not only to state nor collectivity but to social integration. Above all, this is the problem taken up by Rousseau, whose solution is maddening, not least for trying to bring together what political theory general keeps asunder. As Kohn suggests, Rousseau was seeking "amid much confusion and contradiction, a new community starting from, and based upon, the free individual" (p. 226). Kohn too.<sup>41</sup>

Reconciling individual liberty, a sense of felt community, and ethical universalism is for Kohn at the heart of nationalism. And here the problems started, which would lead Kohn eventually to distinguish civic from ethnic nationalism. As a Zionist, Kohn had opposed cultural or ethical nationalism to 'merely' political. Now, influenced both by deeper study of liberalism and by the rise of Nazism, Kohn opposed two kinds of political nationalism. One retained individual liberty and ethical universalism and underwrote the nationalism of the Allies in World War II. The other focused more on culture, but in irrational ways and without the ideal of

self-transcendence Kohn valued. Embodied in fascism it transmuted ethical universalism into mere imperialism.

Rousseau appears as the last great thinker crucial to the development of both civic and ethnic nationalism. Claiming Rousseau, at least in part, for Enlightenment rationalism, and for his version of civic nationalism, Kohn insists that "a nation that expressed itself through the general will, could for Rousseau not be a product of nature" (p. 249). Indeed, Rousseau did suggest in *Of the Social Contract* that "the mere promptings of appetite are slavery, while obedience to a law which we impose upon ourselves is what constitutes liberty" (p. 246). This was in accord with Kohn's opposition (already clear in his writings on Zionism) of mere self-interested power politics to the transformative, ethically higher notion of the nation. But Kohn wants to extend the distinction to dissociate his Rousseau from later Romantic readings:

[The Romantics] established a distinction between state and nation: they regarded the state as a mechanical and juridical construction, the artificial produce of historical accidents, while they believed the nation to be the work of nature, and therefore something sacred, eternal, organic, carrying a deeper justification than works of men. Nothing could be further from Rousseau's thought; for him the nation and the nation-state were nothing "natural" or "organic," but a produce of the will of individuals. (p. 249)

Rousseau was certainly no conservative nostalgic for the feudal order, but Kohn's reading does not confront Rousseau's distinction of the "will of all" from the "general will."

Nor does Kohn deal adequately with Rousseau's worry over what happens when the normative ideals of the small community are transposed to the large-scale society, though he notes the rural and isolationist bias implicit in his proposed constitution for Corsica (pp. 253-4). It is true that "Rousseau envisioned a world federation of small independent and peaceful states and the extension of the rule of law from the national city-state to the city of man" (p. 257). But Kohn without comment treats this as identical to the problem of national states in the modern global order. The problem lies however not simply in the question of whether free peoples will attack one another and thus perpetual peace is possible, but also in the sociological shift from the local, largely face-to-face community to the much larger and more abstract nation. Elsewhere (pp. 8-9), indeed, Kohn

is at pains to make the distinction, precisely because he disagrees with Romantic nationalist assertions that the nation is simply an extension of home and family to a larger scale. He recognizes that nations must be associations among strangers. But scale is an issue not only for ethnic nationalists who claim an illusory identity between kinship and nationality. It is also an issue for civic nationalists who propose that shared political forms should be adequate to support the mutual commitments of citizens to each other—an issue that has famously resurfaced recently with Jürgen Habermas's call for a "constitutional patriotism."<sup>42</sup>

Nonetheless, in Kohn's eyes, "Rousseau provided the modern nation with its emotional and moral foundations" (p. 251). And, "though nationalism with Rousseau was almost religious feeling of an entirely new intensity and of an all-pervading intimate nature, it was fundamentally opposed to any intolerance or hostility to other nations. Its basic aim was to render life more moral, more peaceful and happy for all men, to establish firmly and protect the dignity and liberty of every individual, and ultimately to replace the state of nature, in which men are subject to passions and appetites, by the rational order of law" (p. 259). It was an important catch that the Romantic reading of Rousseau which Kohn disputes was widespread and influential.<sup>43</sup>

The absence of a sustained chapter on the French Revolution and its aftermath is the signal lacuna of *The Idea of Nationalism*. After his approving account of the American founding, Kohn turns to the stirrings of nationalism in the Old World, by which he means mainly Central, Eastern, and Catholic Europe other than France. In the course of this he introduces the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism that will become so influential, though he does so not by taxonomic announcement but by the very organization of the book. As I noted at the outset, the distinction is framed in several more or less homologous oppositions and associated strongly with geography.<sup>44</sup> That it is represented in a whole series of specific histories, rather than announced as an analytic apparatus, makes it appear all the more as simply part of the empirical record. But the missing French revolution is the pivot on which this turns.

Perhaps the more detailed treatment was intended for the second volume, though that seems anachronistic. In any case, it is not that Kohn doesn't think the French Revolution important, for his opening paragraph declares it "the first great manifestation" of nationalism, which in

turn “gave the new movement an increased dynamic force” (p. 3). One might suggest that the reason the French Revolution doesn’t get sustained treatment is that it did not contribute directly to the *idea* of nationalism. This is why Kohn’s Rousseau-centered chapter on the French Enlightenment seems to stand in for it. Such an argument would depend on a sharp separation between philosophical contributions to the idea of nationalism and those from practical politics, public discourse, and everyday life. Indeed, Kohn does not maintain such a sharp distinction elsewhere, though his bias like that of most intellectual historians is towards high culture. But surely the *levée en masse*, the participatory politics of the Paris clubs, factions, committees, and *quartiers*, and the numerous ritualizations of revolutionary citizenship—like the use of *citoyen* and *citoyenne* as terms of address, and even the “family drama” of the treatment of the royal family all contributed to the idea of nationalism.<sup>45</sup> The Revolution itself—as event and as myth—is clearly pivotal to the French national idea, the national self-understanding of French public culture. In fact, of course, this reliance on the traditions and celebrations of the Revolution introduces a significant element of historicism, traditionalism, and cultural nationalism into France’s vaunted civic nationalism. Likewise, the philosophes, whom Kohn rightly seeks to reclaim for the story of nationalism, were not simply rationalist enemies of tradition. Voltaire gave France an important national narrative in the *Henriade*, extolling Henry IV as a man who put national unity ahead of party or religion.<sup>46</sup> To treat France as simply “civic” is to indulge too much its own national self-understanding, reproduced in ritual and a pedagogical narrative that is not quite simple fact, and also in a characteristic opposition to Germany.<sup>47</sup>

Kohn’s thin treatment of France masks trouble at the core of the concept of civic nationalism. The problem is one that runs back into Zionism as well. Indeed, one might think of it as the fundamental paradox of liberal nationalism: the need to account for the particularity of belonging. That is, why should French nationalism apply to the French, or Zionism (cultural or otherwise) to the Jews? Why should Americans be privileged to live in one of the world’s richest and freest countries and others kept out?

The problem with the maximally universal construction, in other words, is that it makes poor sense of particularism—and yet relies on it. One response is simply to abandon particularism and with it any defense of

nationalism. This is the route take by some extreme cosmopolitans.<sup>48</sup> Whatever its other merits, it suggests that any strong feelings of membership in a more particular community are at best temporary expedients, probably suspect, and to be tolerated morally only so long as they do not imply favoritism for fellow members or otherwise get in the way of more universal ethics.<sup>49</sup> When Kohn writes of nationalism as merely a way station on the path to a unified world, he expresses ambivalence towards it. And this ambivalence informs the introduction of the distinction between civic and ethnic nations—effectively good and bad nationalisms.

The French case is central in a variety of ways. On the one hand, France figures (alongside the U.S., but in the literature on nationalism even outweighing the U.S.) as demonstrating the paradigmatic civic nationalism. On the other hand, the main cases of “ethnic” nationalism developed partly in response to French invasions and imperial projects, especially in the Napoleonic Wars. And the French Revolution itself is a dramatic but troubling exemplification of extreme civic nationalism in action. It does not appear unequivocally as “liberal.”<sup>50</sup>

Part of the issue is that civic France was so imperial. It became explicitly imperial with the rise of Napoleon, of course, but it also retained old colonies and conquered new dominions while it retained Republican form. Certainly Republican France proved unable to accept a Republican Haiti. It was the Directory that sent General Napoleon to Egypt, thus, and it presumably agreed with his liberal universalist speech to his troops on 9 May 1798, just as they prepared to attack. “The genius of liberty, which has since its birth rendered the Republic the arbiter of Europe, is now headed toward the most distant lands.”<sup>51</sup> The troops responded “The Immortal Republic forever!” and planted a Tree of Liberty. The French Republic of Egypt was governed by its own Directory (the *Diwan*) on the model of that in Paris. Popular sovereignty was announced, but it manifestly did not include national self-determination. If “the growth of nationalism is the process of integration of the masses of the people into a common political form” (Kohn, p. 4) this would seem to count as a variant. But it might also simply be called imperialism, though an imperialism at least somewhat different from those that put only an umbrella of common form over the retention of local structures of authority.<sup>52</sup>

Arguably this imperialism was rooted in messianism.<sup>53</sup> Kohn is right not to shrink from the direct connections between nationalism and impe-

rialism; too often the two are simply opposed, as though France were only imperialist when formally an Empire rather than a Republic. But, in common with nearly all analysts of nationalism, Kohn does not think through what imperialism means for understanding Republican France and its vaunted civic nationalism. "French nationalism was born," he writes, "(as English and American had [been] before it) in a wave of generous enthusiasm for the cause of mankind; the opposing nationalisms lacked this initial inspiration of a disinterested humanitarianism—from the beginning they were directed to laudable but narrower goals, self-centered and antagonistic" (p. 572-3). Yet the distinction between France—the Hexagon—and its dominions was real, if masked by Republican ideology, as were the racial distinctions that informed colonial policy and helped to give rise to modern anthropology in concern over métissage. And surely the export of universalistic ideas by force carries problematic implications.

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That Imperial France was still France and not simply the flowering of universal reason was also felt by many in the European countries invaded by Napoleon's armies. Of course, this didn't bother everyone equally. Hegel and a host of other intellectuals welcomed the French Revolution, and some even the Napoleonic invasion which they hoped would usher an era of progress and liberty into German history. Goethe remained unimpressed by German nationalist appeals even after France was defeated. But at least from 1813, German nationalism was ascendant among intellectuals (though it is unclear how much this mattered to the rest of the population).<sup>54</sup> The story belongs perhaps to "the age of nationalism"—the concern of Kohn's projected second volume—but the way it played out was shaped by a distinctive version of the idea of nationalism. This is the subject of the last two chapters of the present book.

Germany is the overwhelming model for ethnic, Eastern nationalism—for Kohn as for most others—though it is a merit of Kohn's account that he pays significant attention to other European traditions. It is common to stress four factors which encouraged an "ethnic" nationalism in Germany. Because it was politically disunited, cultural and linguistic commonalities mattered more. Because it developed late, compared to France or England, it had less chance to develop rational political institutions

and relied more on traditional loyalties. Because the power of rural elites was entrenched and the peasantry less free participatory politics was impeded and top-down nationalism encouraged (an argument applied even more in regard to Russia). And because the Napoleonic invasion in particular and the threat of domination by France and Britain more generally stimulated German nationalism it was essentially reactive.

Kohn accepts each of these arguments, but doesn't think them fully adequate. Part of what he wants to show is how a different national idea took shape, sharing some philosophical roots but taking a different intellectual course. The *idea* giving form to nationalism matters, Kohn suggests, not just the circumstances in which politicians develop nationalist strategies. If the Western nationalist idea—at least in its idealized form—stressed universalism, rationality, and self-transcendence, the Eastern stressed particular national identities, an emotional connection to history, and development rather than transcendence. Central and Eastern European nationalists drew on myths of the past, dreams of the future, and distinctive intellectual traditions to imagine "an ideal fatherland, closely linked with the past, devoid of any immediate connection with the present, and expected to become sometime a political reality" (p. 330). It is important that in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries this nationalism was not informed by close relationships to actually existing states or social institutions. Where English or French nationalism was about transforming an existing state, nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe focused on developing culture and thus was initially more remote from projects of practical reform. The development of centralized state institutions preceded and informed English and French nationalism—not least with concerns for individual liberty in relation to those states. Though he is not explicit about it, I suspect Kohn would argue the same was true for the United States, albeit in more complicated form because the existing centralized state was British and a new one had to be created in America. But neither the old Hapsburg Empire nor the scattered German dominions offered the same capacity to put the project of rationalizing the relationship between people and government in the forefront. As Kohn writes:

Nationalism in the West was based upon a nationality which was the product of social and political factors; nationalism in German did not find its justification in a rational societal conception, it found it in the "natural" fact of a community, held together, not by the will of its members nor by any obligations of contract,

but by traditional ties of kinship and status. German nationalism substituted for the legal and rational concept of "citizenship" the infinitely vaguer concept of "folk" ... (p. 331)

The issue remains current, as this quotation from Jürgen Habermas, informed by German history though formulated in general terms, makes clear:

The nation-state owes its historical success to the fact that it substituted relations of solidarity between the citizens for the disintegrating corporative ties of early modern society. But this republican achievement is endangered when, conversely, the integrative force of the nation of citizens is traced back to the prepolitical fact of a quasi-natural people, that is, to something independent of and prior to the political opinion and will-formation of the citizens themselves.<sup>55</sup>

Habermas writes in exactly the terms of Kohn's argument, and is concerned to achieve—throughout Europe but not least in Germany and the East—a "constitutional patriotism" in which the loyalty of citizens is based on the reason, justice, and universality of the constitution they have chosen for themselves and agreed to in democratic fashion. In other words, Habermas's project is the realization of the civic ideals Kohn describes. But Habermas is also aware—more than Kohn though it remains an unsolved problem for his theory—that "the question arises of whether there exists a functional equivalent for the fusion of the nation of citizens with the ethnic nation."<sup>56</sup>

The "nation of citizens" is a product of politics and collective will, it is a creature of choice and contract. The "ethnic nation" is prepolitical, the product of history (and perhaps nature), found in already-existing community, though not necessarily static and possibly amenable to nurture and development. The contrast of the two ideas is clear enough, with Habermas raising to theory the historical typology presented by Kohn. But rather than opposing the two types of nation, it might be better to ask how the two dimensions of solidarity and identity, and the two sorts of claims to membership and rights figure and relate to each other in specific national histories. There certainly are differences of emphasis. Some nationalisms—the Japanese and Chinese—rely on ethnic ideas fused with racial typologies.<sup>57</sup> Some may be more matters of rhetoric than actual behavior or policy. Rogers Brubaker, for example, shows how despite France's long-standing rhetoric of assimilationist civic inclusion and Germany's famous ethnic nationalism, the two countries receive immigrants at about the same

rate and grant them comparable benefits (though Germany does make it harder for them to become citizens).<sup>58</sup> But even the most "civic" of nationalisms demand an account of the particularity of their relationship to the larger world.

For Herder, "the national community was the necessary medium between mankind and the individual" (p. 428). Kohn seems to have thought much the same thing as a cultural Zionist, but to have become unsure as he contemplated fascism. Or perhaps the necessity of the mediation was temporary—only until the world as a whole could be ordered on the liberal, Enlightenment principles he advocated. But in any case, what he described as the ethnic nationalism of the East was different because of a deep investment in the idea of an essential diversity of nations. And although Herder was no nationalist in the modern sense—and "his love for nationality embraced all nationalities and their national life" (p. 433)—he was central to the development of this line of thought. "Herder was the first to insist that human civilization lives not in its general and universal, but in its national and peculiar manifestations" (p. 429). Language was paradigmatic.

Kohn shows a considerable sympathy for Herder (despite his general remarks on German and more generally ethnic nationalism). Indeed, much of Kohn's discussion of Old World nationalism is focused on what at least its eighteenth-century forebears shared with Western Enlightenment, revealing the resources for a civic, cosmopolitan nationalism even in Germany.<sup>59</sup> Of course this makes one wonder just when and how Germany became "Eastern."

For most German intellectuals, at least, certainly not in the eighteenth century. Speaking of Schläzer, Kohn suggests that "like all representative German thinkers of the age, he never thought of himself as a German; and he never envisaged a common nationhood for Germany" (p. 380). Schiller declared it "a poor and trifling ideal to write for one nation; such a limitation is totally unbearable for a philosophical mind. It cannot find satisfaction in such a changing, accidental, and arbitrary form of mankind, a mere fragment...It can have no warm feelings for it except in so far as a nation or a national event appears important for the progress of mankind" (quoted p. 409). Kant concurred, visualizing a universal society of free individuals. Writing of the French Revolution, he suggested that "such a revolution ... arouses in the minds of all spectators ... a desire

to participate, one which almost verges on enthusiasm, and which as its expression was dangerous, could therefore have no other cause than a moral faculty in mankind" (quoted pp. 398-9).

While some made reference to national cultural traditions, no eighteenth-century thinker regarded the *volk* as natural and unchangeable (p. 354). Appeals to the fatherland were apt to be more or less "utilitarian" as they sought to mobilize the loyalty of subjects to their rulers (p. 362). But if there was one crucial theme that foreshadowed the later divergent construction, it was the proto-Romantic reception of Rousseau's emphasis on the indigenous originality of each nation. Even this, however, was part of a broader European current—Rousseau was, after all a Genevois writing in Paris, and as Kohn notes the vogue for national legends was also exemplified by the Ossian scam in Scotland and a variety of more honest Celtic discoveries (p. 352). But the notion of the distinctiveness of national cultures was taken up with particular enthusiasm and intellectual depth in Germany, and linked eventually to ideas of national 'genius' and to the distinction of 'historical' nations from those lacking the capacity to survive.

Early versions of this thinking focused on the issue of a national spirit that should connect contemporaries with each other as well as with the past. In Moser's phrasing, "we do not know ourselves any longer, we are estranged from one another, our spirit has departed from us..." (quoted p. 374). Indeed, the Rousseauian theme of 'estrangement' was taken up in a variety of projects for achieving new kinds of community as inherited ones grew weaker; Marx was a crucial inheritor of this tradition but it equally informed nationalism. Kohn notes in passing but doesn't develop the point that concern for "new ties for the integration of society" (p. 455) went well beyond political unification into more sociological concerns.

Where patriotism, cosmopolitanism, and liberalism had been inseparable, as the century progressed the first element became dominant. While the Risorgimento revealed its roots in Western thought by moving from rational cosmopolitanism to liberal nationalism (p. 509), in Russia as in Germany, there was a turn from liberal cosmopolitanism to narrow nationalism (p. 569). But it was not just the narrowness of nineteenth-century nationalisms that would distinguish these for Kohn. It was the widespread embrace of irrationalism. "The reasonableness of the eighteenth

century gave way to a fanatic enthusiasm from the depth" (p. 474). Kohn may be looking forward to Wagner and others beyond the precise timeframe of this book. In any case, his formulation enables him to see ethnic nationalism as an Eastern revolt against the West—and specifically against Enlightenment—rather than as a dimension of all nationalisms and indeed a reflection of a crisis within Western thought and politics.<sup>60</sup>

Herder employed all the traditional claims that became typical of German nationalism in the nineteenth century. Yet, he remained insistently liberal and cosmopolitan, a humanitarian and a democrat. A protean thinker (like Rousseau), he could be claimed by opposing intellectual and political traditions. Kohn is left ambivalent, I think, partly because Herder suggests three ingredients crucial to Kohn's vision of progress and missing from much Enlightenment rationalist philosophy. The first is the relationship of being to time implicit in his notion of becoming. "Humanity is the character of our race," Herder wrote, "we receive it only as a potentiality, and we must develop it" (quoted p. 435).<sup>61</sup> Herder's ideas of potentiality and becoming resonate with Kohn's notions of self-transcendence. Likewise, Herder's emphasis on language connects him to Ha'am and an important thread in cultural Zionism. Finally, Herder is insistent on an active participation in national self-development: "the happiness of one people cannot be forced upon any other. The roses for the wreath of each nation's liberty must be picked with its own hands, and must grow happily out of its own wants, joys, and love" (quoted p. 431).

But Herder's strong sense of the uniqueness of nations is troubling. He articulates a constitutive role for language and culture that Kohn can only see as worryingly relativist, anticipating what in the twentieth century would be called "incommensurability."<sup>62</sup> "No individual, no country, no people, no history of a people, no state is like any other. Therefore, the true, the beautiful, and the good are not the same for them" (quoted p. 433). As Kohn recognizes, Herder sees each nationality as embodying an original version of a common humanity, a humanity which because of cultural and creativity has a tremendous potential for variation. To eliminate this variety—even in the name of rational order or equality—would be to lose much of what is distinctively human. The problem is that eighteenth-century rationalism and later liberalism rely heavily on notions of the human individual that do not acknowledge this constitutive role for culture, that are often atomistic, and that match with universalism be

presuming equivalence. So there is a real difference, already in play with Herder, even though he doesn't draw the illiberal conclusions from it that some later nationalists will.

A key question—unresolved to this day—is whether granting culture this constitutive role can be reconciled with either individualism or universalism. Habermas, for example, reacted vehemently to Charles Taylor's advocacy of multiculturalism precisely because it seemed to him to challenge universalism and thus a necessary foundation for liberalism—and to echo this troubling German tradition for doing so. The constitutional state can and should tolerate cultural differences, Habermas suggests, but these should not be introduced into either the intellectual or the legal basis for such a state.<sup>63</sup>

Kohn recognizes both the innovative character of Herder's thought and the extent to which it offers an answer to the question of "why a nation?" that other versions of liberal thought find more difficult. He sees in Herder, moreover, a strong echo of Moses and much that he had praised in his earlier discussion of ancient Hebrew nationalism. "Herder's nationalism, an ethico-cultural nationalism, showed deep traces of affinity with the national idea of the Hebrew prophets and psalmists" (p. 441). Yet Kohn is ambivalent because Herder's culturalism (if I may use that word) seems to lead in what history proved were dangerous directions, and because he cannot reconcile it with Enlightenment rationalism and universalism.

A cosmopolitan global order must be built, Herder suggests, in a way that provides for the flourishing of numerous nationalities, each mediating the relationship of its members to humanity at large, each contributing to the fulfillment of human potential in diverse ways.

Has the world not enough space for all of us? Do not the countries exist peacefully beside one another? Cabinets swindle one another, political machines maneuver until they destroy one another. But fatherlands do not maneuver in such a way, they exist peacefully beside one another, and like families, help one another. (quoted p. 441)

Kohn and others chastened by the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries commonly suggest the world has not space enough for all of us. Think back to the cultural Zionists' recognition, perhaps surprisingly belated in some cases, that Palestine was not "a land without people for a people without land." Think too of the two World Wars. Is this not support for a

different version of cosmopolitanism, one in which nationality would not mediate but be subordinated, valued only in so far and in so long as it promoted individual rights in a single, rational, universal order?

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Kohn envisions a progressive extension simultaneously of the scale of political integration and of the use of reason and justice to order world affairs. Nationalism transcends localism and kinship; cosmopolitanism transcends nationalism. His concern is to vindicate liberal nationalism as part of this general progress, and to keep it from being identified completely with the fascist and other aggressive ethnonationalisms. But he doesn't focus clearly on why or when the claims of country or community rather than only humanity as a whole should carry weight. As a result, when he begins to examine the claims for more particularistic national identities in the second part of *The Idea of Nationalism* he sometimes seems to unravel the case he made in the first part for the positive potential of a civic nationalism joining citizens in common commitment to an ethical project.

Implicitly, of course, Kohn suggests that good nationalism deserves loyalty more than bad, and good nationalism inheres in commitments to reason, justice, individualism, and universality. It therefore is self-transcending. A central problem with organic, historical, or ethnic nationalism thus is that it is not self-transcending. At best it is benign—when it is not coupled to projects of exploiting minorities or conquering neighbors. At worst it lacks the moral orientation required (a) to consider the interests of other nations as carrying comparable moral weight to those of one's own, or (b) to ask that one's nation become better than it is, not merely be preserved.

The key is a conception of politics as rational, self-conscious creation, the making of social order by means of mutual agreements and coordinated actions.<sup>64</sup>

In the West nations grew up as unions of citizens, by the will of individuals who expressed it in contracts, covenants, or plebiscites. Thus they integrated around a political idea, looking towards the common future which would spring from their common efforts. A nascent German nationalism, unable to find the rallying point in society or in a free and rational order, found it in nature or in the past, not in

a political act but in a given natural fact, the folk community, formed by the ties of a hoary past, and later of prehistoric biological factors. This natural foundation was not simply accepted as a fact, but raised to the dignity of an ideal or of a mystery. The political integration around a rational goal was replaced by a mystical integration around the irrational, precivilized folk concept. (p. 351)

In this respect, Kant is a decisive improvement on Rousseau. "Both shared the fundamental respect for the dignity of the human individual, but Kant's ethics never knew any other horizon than the universal one of mankind" (p. 396). And on this even the more romantic Goethe would agree: "the fatherland of the man who thinks without prejudice, who can rise above his time, is nowhere and everywhere" (p. 414).

But then, just where is the man who thinks without prejudice? Just how far can anyone rise above his time (and still matter in it)? At its most extreme, the civic/ethnic opposition implies the possibility of a purely political, purely rational order, escaping from any constitution by culture or pre-existing social relations. Even in more moderate versions, though, it suggests the radical prioritization of political community over all other senses of community or social solidarity. It suggests that 'belonging' can plausibly be based entirely on adherence to an "idea" expressed in more or less abstract forms. And in doing so it begs the question of whether such civic belonging based on adherence to liberal universalist ideals could underwrite the specific loyalty of specific citizens to specific states, or the exclusion of others from those states.

It is not that the distinction of civic from ethnic makes no sense. The problem lies, rather, in using it to construct opposed types of nationalism. This obscures the extent to which 'civic' and 'ethnic' dimensions are intertwined in all cases, albeit in varying proportions. It also collapses into 'ethnic' a variety of notions about why some people belong together, from language and shared culture to attachments to place and participation in a social structure. And it suggests more homology with the series of other oppositions—West/East, peaceful/aggressive, liberal/illiberal, forward-looking/backward-looking—than is warranted. It is worth noting that though Carleton Hayes' idea of "integral nationalism" shares something with Kohn's "ethnic nationalism" it is by no means identical and it is not proposed as distinctively Eastern. Hayes presents it as typified by Barrès and Maurras as much as Mussolini and Hitler—and indeed his label is drawn from their "integriste" movement.<sup>65</sup> And it was a Frenchman who

wrote famously that "historical enquiry brings to light deeds of violence which took place at the origin of all political formations, even those whose consequences have been altogether beneficial. Unity is always effected by means of brutality."<sup>66</sup> Of course, Renan imagined nationalism a "daily plebiscite" not a binding inheritance. But he recognized the impossibility of a pure polity, free from the original sin of being particular and probably the product of power.

Where does this leave the Jews? As a Zionist, Kohn sought a cultural transformation that would realize Jewish ethical ideals and a nation that would save Judaism not only Jews. Both frustrated with the actual developments of Zionism, and horrified by what nationalism became in fascism, Kohn turned to recovery of a liberal nationalism from a secularized Christian tradition, the Enlightenment, and its appropriation of the Sophists, Stoics, and other Greeks. This centered on individualism, the rights of man, a rational and universal concept of political liberty, and a progressive orientation to the future. He contrasted this to a nationalism founded on particular histories, on "monuments and graveyards, even harking back to the mysteries of ancient times and of tribal solidarity" (p. 574). This stressed the past, the diversity, and the self-sufficiency of nations. The former, he thought, was grounded in the rising middle classes. The latter appealed to the aristocracy and the masses. Each of these was available by the beginning of the nineteenth century, and together they became the poles around which the age of nationalism revolved. Nationalism was to be feared unless it could be Western.

In this conclusion, we see Kohn falling back on the opposition of two types of nationalism. He associates them with different national ideas and understands these to organize the thoughts and feelings of different nations, West and East. The later-developing Eastern nationalisms he will see as derivative, at best participating in the spread of an originally European Enlightenment, but too commonly deviating from it in the direction of claims rooted in ancient and overly fixed ethnicities.<sup>67</sup> The opposition of civic and ethnic nationalisms exerts a powerful influence over the study of nationalism, but like many typologies it obscures as much as it reveals. It not only crowds out a variety of other variables, and leads too many to locate national traditions as wholes on one side or the other of the divide rather than studying their internal tensions. It also encourages misrecognition of the cultural constructions on which ostensibly wholly

civic nationalisms rest. It encourages self-declared civic nationalists, liberals, and cosmopolitans to be too complacent, seeing central evils of the modern world produced at a safe distance by ethnic nationalists from whom they are surely deeply different.

Yet in *The Idea of Nationalism* Kohn also performs an important service. He integrates nationalism into the story of Western liberalism (even if he distinguishes ethnic nationalism too sharply from it). He rightly shows nationalism at work in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century foundations of Western modernity and indeed democracy. He calls our attention to the appropriation of ideas from Classical Antiquity that informed this. And he shows how nationalism could be, at least sometimes, internationalist and even universalist. Kohn's book had its greatest influence through the opposition of civic and ethnic nationalisms. But reading it again can also be an occasion for thinking anew about the relationship of nationalism to liberalism, skeptical about Kohn's problematic dichotomy and perhaps about the overconfidence of mid-twentieth-century liberalism, but attentive to his indications of the pervasive influence of nationalism and the importance and even progressive potential of some forms of solidarity between families and other face-to-face groups and the world as a whole.

Craig Calhoun

### Notes

1. Kohn had used versions of this distinction earlier; it did not appear *ex nihilo* in 1944. And of course the general ideas that made it possible were older. But the specific contrast, implicitly evaluative and linked to geographical East and West and ideas of late historical development was put in play largely by Kohn. It is instructive, for example, that Louis Wirth's article on "Types of Nationalism," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 41, no. 6 (1936): 723-37 makes no mention of this contrast. His types are hegemony nationalism, particularistic nationalism, marginal nationalism, and the nationalism of minorities. Or again, in perhaps the single most influential American study before Kohn's, Carleton J. H. Hayes employed the typology: humanitarian nationalism, Jacobin nationalism, traditional nationalism, liberal nationalism, and integral nationalism. See *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1931). See Louis L. Snyder, *The Meaning of Nationalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1954), p. 121 on the "Kohn Dichotomy."

2. Kohn covered the time period projected for the second volume in *The Age of Nationalism: The First Era of Global History* (New York: Harper 1962), but in a more "popular" mode and not with the attention to intellectual history of the idea of nationalism.
3. See his discussion in *A History of Nationalism in the East* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1929).
4. Kohn wrote several semi-popular works for that purpose, like *Force or Reason* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1937), *Revolutions and Dictatorships* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939) and *Not By Arms Alone: Essays on Our Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940) and *World Order in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942). The first traced the "cult of force" and "dethronement of reason" to the bewilderment of the masses after the World War. The second compared instances of revolution and dictatorship culminating in an account of why fascism was especially dangerous, why appeasement wouldn't work, and why inspirational renewal of democracy was crucial to fight it. In the third, he focused on the fascist exaltation of war, tracing a lineage from Sparta to the Third Reich, argued that a democratic revolution would be needed to overcome fascism, and held that Austria has created a "better German civilization" which should have evolved into a federal union. And in the last he addressed the ways in which struggle against fascism could be a step towards world unification, supporting the United Nations as part of a general progress towards world order. It was crucial, he argued, that fascism had managed to range against itself every force in the world that affirmed the universality of values including liberalism, communism, the papacy and the British Empire, Protestants, and Jews. As one reviewer remarked, the book was an excellent statement of the liberal progressive view, but its weaknesses were those of all who based their arguments on the philosophical ideals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Such authors "adore Jefferson and Condorcet but do not appear to know Burke or Montesquieu. They overestimate the importance of abstract ideals in history and minimize the tenacious strength of the concrete." Ross Hoffman, "Review of *World Order in Historical Perspective*" in *Journal of Modern History*, 15, 2 (1943): 155-6.
5. See Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1931). Eric Hobsbawm quotes A. Kemiläinen describing Kohn and Hayes as "the twin founding fathers" of the academic study of nationalism, praises Kemiläinen, but indicates that he would not put either Kohn or Hayes on his reading list. See *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 3. Kohn was not opposed to Hayes' account of nationalism as a replacement for religion, though he had other emphases and intellectual agendas. He had a very inclusive style as an historian, which meant among other things that he was loath to make a single variable determinative.
6. Hertz, "The Nature of Nationalism," *Social Forces*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1941): 409-15.

7. There is no consistent label for the Zionism of Ahad Ha'am (the pen name of Asher Ginsberg, which translates as "one of the people" and a near contemporary as well as an opponent of Herzl). It combined a strong emphasis on ethics, spiritual strivings, and cultural renewal—themes some later distinguished. Ha'am was also an important advocate for Hebrew and considered a master of Hebrew style—part of his program of cultural identity and, it is worth noting, at once an innovation and an advocacy for distinctive tradition. For a brief account of Ha'am, see Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York: Basic Books, 1981). Martin Buber was among the most important intellectuals joining Ha'am in this movement.
8. Herzl somewhat vacillated among civic, ethnic, and racial definitions of Jews, though his nationalism was always political rather than cultural or spiritual. When he met Israel Zangwill for the first time, he described him as a Jew "of the long-nosed negroid type." See Desmond Stewart, *Theodore Herzl* (New York: Doubleday, 1974). Zionism was of course in large part a product of nineteenth-century European thought—racial theories as well as socialism, Romanticism, and nationalism. Part of Kohn's project is to emphasize that it was also a product of eighteenth-century Enlightenment rationalism and universalism—and that they in turn drew on Jewish sources for inspiration.
9. Each offers, in part, philosophical reworkings and developments of themes from Hassidic thought.
10. On Zangwill, and his eventual break with Zionism, see Hani A. Faris, "Israel Zangwill's Challenge to Zionism," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3. (Spring, 1975), pp. 74-90.
11. See chapter II below. "Side by side with this nationalistic Messianism," Kohn writes, "there developed from the very beginning the tradition of universalistic Messianism" (p. 45).
12. Cited in Ken Wolf, "Hans Kohn's Liberal Nationalism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 37, no. 4 (1976), pp. 651-72; p. 654.
13. Zangwill's play, *The Melting Pot*, appeared in 1908. But of course the phrase had much older roots. Emerson, for example, referred in 1845 to racial and cultural mixture through the metaphor of "the smelting pot"; there were still earlier anticipations in Crèvecoeur and other colonial commentators. And Zangwill was not only a playwright, but the author of books like *The Principle of Nationalities* (1917). The "melting" metaphor was also used to discuss the question of how autonomous and distinct the separate states should be, as in Winterbotham's (1795) observation that: "some from jealousy of liberty were afraid of giving too much power to their rulers; others, from an honest ambition to aggrandize their country, were for paving the way to national greatness by melting down the separate states into a national mass." The passage (quoted by Kohn on p. 288 below) reminds us helpfully of the parallel between debates over the integration of immigrants and those over the incorporation of disparate regions, provinces, and states into a larger

- common nation-state. And it is worth noting that the hero of Zangwill's play is a Jewish immigrant who falls in love with and wins the heart of a Christian—Jewish particularism was not ethnic insularity for Zangwill. Interestingly, the hero and his love interest are both Russian, she a noblewoman, he the child of parents slaughtered in a pogrom. Old World antipathies are overcome in the New World, but Old World cultural commonalities apparently still count.
14. See Faris, *op cit.*
  15. Cited in Wolf, *op cit.*, p. 653.
  16. Cited in Wolf, *op cit.*, p. 653.
  17. Online at [http://www.passia.org/publications/research\\_studies/peace/chapter2.html](http://www.passia.org/publications/research_studies/peace/chapter2.html)
  18. Let the present generation feel uniquely deficient in this regard, note the words of a reviewer in 1944: "Even an adept linguist may sometimes feel staggered by all the quotations offered without translation in Latin and Greek, French and German, Italian and Spanish, Dutch and Polish. But we must assume the blame ourselves, not put it on the learned author." Halvdan Koht, "Review of *The Idea of Nationalism*," *American Historical Review*, vol. 50, no. 1 (1944): 93-96.
  19. Kohn does not consider how much or how little this extended to women.
  20. Wolf, *op cit.*, 654.
  21. See F.E. Peters, *The Harvest of Hellenism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970).
  22. See for example Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), though both editors might bridle at being called liberals.
  23. Wolf, *op cit.*, 655-6.
  24. There are many who would emphasize these phases more. See, e.g., Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002) and for a more general claim to long-term ethnic continuity with less break between medieval and modern, see Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).
  25. It is interesting that Kohn claims mainly the Roman Empire for the story of nationalism when so many of the eighteenth-century thinkers he admires saw in it the corruption of the purer ideals of the Republic. In his cultural Zionism as well, Kohn retained a liberal imperialist attitude. In the same essay in which he spoke of the moral responsibility Jewish nationalism must take on itself he wrote: "let us not be fooled by national chauvinism, or we will be slaves of yesterday, not the imperialists of tomorrow" (cited in Wolf, *op cit.*, 654).
  26. Here it is worth noting that the East clearly means the world of Orthodox Christianity. Indeed, as Kohn notes, in medieval Islam "universalism remained a reality much longer than in Western Christianity" (p. 79).
  27. Only later will Kohn note that there were significant challenges to what he here describes as simply the political thought of the age—challenges that become important to some later thinkers like Gierke.

28. Here Kohn takes up a theme central to later "state-centered" theories of nationalism. See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), Michael Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, esp. vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), and specifically on absolutism, exploring Europe's East-West and other contrasts, Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: New Left Books, 1974).
29. "This religious nationalism," Kohn argued, "was experienced by the English people as a revival of Old Testament nationalism" (p. 168). "English nationalism was born in the great decisive hour of its history by repeating the experience of the chosen people and of the Covenant" (p. 176). Certainly Old Testament themes were important, as in the birth of American nationalism a little later, but perhaps not quite so unambiguously dominant as Kohn suggests.
30. Kohn quotes Milton: "If men within themselves would be governed by reason, and not generally give up their understanding to a double tyranny, of Custom from without, and blind affection within, they would discern better, what it is to favor and uphold the Tyrant of a Nation" (p. 170.1).
31. Not unrelatedly, the birth of English nationalism coincided with the rise of the middle classes (p. 179) and Locke's two principles are basic: that individuals are primary and government a moral trust (p. 182).
32. Kohn quotes with approval the German nationalist Karl von Moser, the first to speak of a *Nationalgeist* (translating Montesquieu's *esprit du nation*): "In every political constitution there must be one great, one general idea, the punctum saliens, which represents the vitalizing power of the national mind" (p. 375). The approval is for the fact that "Moser made it clear that his national spirit was a political idea, much more akin to the concepts of the West...than to the later German *Volksgeist*."
33. I would prefer to speak of the "discourse" of nationalism, since as Kohn acknowledges rather than a single idea of nationalism developing, a range of ideas interrelate in shifting patterns. See Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). Benedict Anderson has influentially argued this point, portraying nationalism as one way of imagining large-scale community among strangers, facilitated by various communicative, administrative, and other innovations, and with a variety of more specific contents that vary among cases; see *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991). To define nations, nationalities, of nationalism by their contents has proved all but impossible. As Kohn himself writes, "Nationalities come into existence only when certain objective bonds delimit a social group. A nationality generally has several of these attributes; very few have all of them. The most usual of them are common descent, language, territory, political entity, customs and traditions, and religion. A short discussion will suffice to show that none of them is essential to the existence or definition of nationality" (pp. 13-14).
34. Kohn developed his treatment of U.S. nationalism at greater length but with mostly similar argument in *American Nationalism: An Interpretative Essay*

- (New York: Macmillan, 1957). His enthusiasm for the idea of nationalism as a step on the road to human self-perfection is revealed in an error of the sort that non-specialists dread making when working with historical sources. He quotes John Adams' famous letter to Thomas Jefferson affirming that "our pure, virtuous, public-spirited, federative republic will last forever, govern the globe and introduce the perfection of man" (p. 13). Unfortunately, Kohn doesn't notice that Adams was being satirical (at least one reviewer did; see Marvin Meyers, "Review of Hans Kohn, *American Nationalism: An Interpretative Essay*," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 72, no. 4 [1957]: 628-30).
35. More than a few recent historians have placed greater emphasis on the specifically English, or at least British, claims of the colonists. See Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1991). Wood does not dispute the pivotal significance of the revolution for making Americans—an important theme for Kohn (see below). But he would insist that until the break with Britain came, most colonial leaders insisted on their Englishness and saw their rights mainly in terms of English historical liberties (and the claims to historical liberties are in fact more English than British). Kohn acknowledges this up to a point, but associates worries over English liberties more with Loyalists who saw the Revolution as illiberal (pp. 281-4).
36. See Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 1963).
37. One has to wonder at the assurance with which Kohn writes of France in the second half of the eighteenth century that "This new intimate connection between national welfare and the life of the individual became a great and beneficial force of intellectual awakening and moral fervor in a spiritual climate in which its possible excesses were strictly controlled by a rational conception of men's freedom and a universal conception of their equality" (p. 263).
38. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon, 1977). Compare also Charles Taylor's account of the religious roots of the rise of this sort of self-fashioning moral individualism, largely but not only within Protestantism. Of course, as Taylor suggests, much of the orientation becomes pervasive in modernity and loses any link to its specifically religious origins. See *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).
39. See Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966; orig. 1953).
40. Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1936).
41. The difficulty of achieving this integration became the occasion for an ever more individualistic liberalism and then a "communitarian" reaction stressing the impossibility of life outside cultural and social relations. This was central to debate in political theory (and *Political Theory*) from the 1980s through the 1990s.

42. See Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), also my discussion in "Constitutional Patriotism and the Public Sphere: Interests, Identity, and Solidarity in the Integration of Europe," pp. 275-312 in Pablo De Greiff and Ciaran Cronin, eds., *Global Ethics and Transnational Politics*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002.
43. Kohn's reading is at least as tendentious and glosses over themes like Rousseau's recurrent if not consistent antic cosmopolitanism. In his advice to Poland, for example, he makes the sort of connection to the ancient world that Kohn also emphasizes, but to an un-Kohnian, anti-assimilationist end. Rousseau praises Moses as a great nation-builder, but points out that "all the fraternal bonds with which he drew together the members of his republic were as many barriers keeping them separate from their neighbors and preventing them from mingling with them," "Considerations on the Government of Poland," in *Rousseau: Political Writings* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986).
44. For many others, it will appear largely as a matter of historical "lateness," as late-developing nations cohere around more ethnic, traditionalist nationalisms and are either more aggressive or more defensive or both. See, e.g., Peter Alter's appropriation of the civic/ethnic contrast; *Nationalism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1989). Kohn certainly sees something of this, but he is at pains to emphasize that ethnic nationalism diverges also on more intellectual grounds, not least in the pursuit of indigenous originality. It is a different branch in an initially shared intellectual and political lineage, not simply more intense or the product of different circumstances.
45. See (among many and in addition to all the general histories) Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) and William Sewell, "Le Citoyen, La Citoyenne: Activity, Passivity and the French Revolutionary Concept of Citizenship," pp. 105-25 in vol. 2 of Colin Lucas, ed., *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988); other essays in the Lucas collection are also relevant as are several essays by Sewell hopefully forthcoming in book form. See also his *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyès and What Is the Third Estate?* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994), though in it Sewell focuses on economic and class distinctions and makes little of Sieyès' nationalism, though in *What Is the Third Estate?* he wrote "the nation exists before all, it is the origin of all."
46. See discussion in R.R. Palmer, "The National Idea in France before the Revolution," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1940): 95-111. Palmer notes that those who took the lead in the Revolution "spoke of the 'nation' even more often than of 'nature,' and with at least equal fervor (p. 96). They and their late eighteenth-century forebears also brought back the word "patrie" from obscurity. The philosophes embraced patriotism and the Revolutionaries identified it with citizenship. This informed a later usage that treats patriotism as a sort of benign and appropriate love of country by contrast to more aggressive nationalism. But patriotism was for the philosophes

- if anything a more militant term than nationalism. And for the most part the patriotism/nationalism distinction turns out to be little more than an alternative phrasing for civic vs. ethnic nationalism.
47. As Gellner remarks, "Nationalism ... above all is not what it seems to itself," *Nations and Nationalism*, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
48. Martha Nussbaum is notable, not least because she draws significantly on the Stoics, whom Kohn also likes. See especially *For Love of Country* (Boston: Beacon, 1996).
49. I have discussed the implications of such accounts in "Belonging in the Cosmopolitan Imaginary," *Ethnicities*, vol. 3, no. 4 (2003), pp. 531-553.
50. And indeed, the egalitarianism of Revolution can easily be overstated. This is a key theme of Sewell, *The Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution*, *op. cit.*
51. Quoted from Juan Cole, "Three episodes in the Rhetoric of Liberal Imperialism: French Egypt, British Egypt, American Iraq," in C. Calhoun, F. Cooper, and K. Moore, eds.: *Lessons of Empire?* (New York: New Press, forthcoming).
52. To what extent this vaunted contrast of French imperialism to British "indirect rule" and indeed to many other models of empire was mere ideology and form and to what extent it deeply shaped the practice of government is debated. See Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). This collection is useful more generally as an introduction to a new generation of research that tries to address metropolises and colonies as part of the same analytic field.
53. Kohn was ambivalent about imperialism, thinking it both an understandable project of newly united European nations and an oppression that "inflamed" the nationalism of conquered peoples (see *Nationalism and Imperialism in the Hither East*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1932, p. 49). He also thought that imperialism performed "a service of historic importance" by spreading Western values and Enlightenment, but that where it succeeded it "destroyed its own basis" (see *Force or Reason*, *op. cit.*, p. 94).
54. Kohn offers his version of at least part of this story in several articles presumably intended as sketches for the unwritten second volume: "The Paradox of Fichte's Nationalism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 10, no. 3 (1949), pp. 319-43; "Napoleon and the Age of Nationalism," *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1950), 21-37; "The Eye of German Nationalism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1951), pp. 56-84; and a book of lectures, *Prelude to Nation-States: The French and German Experience, 1789-1815* (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1967).
55. *The Inclusion of the Other*, p. 115.
56. *The Inclusion of the Other*, p. 117.
57. Though most Chinese find it as hard as Japanese to imagine an openly assimilative nation, thinking about civic dimensions of nationalism is pressed on them by the distribution of Chinese people across multiple states—in some cases developing distinct national traditions and legal orders. The

Chinese case in the era of Sun Yatsen also reveals the extent to which a racial nationalism could be advanced in tandem with Republican political ideology and forward-looking projects of cultural reform. See Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992). Sun's vision of saving Chineseness by transforming it was not in every respect different from some of the versions of the Zionist project with which it was contemporaneous.

58. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).
59. See Friedrich Meinecke's classic treatment in *Cosmopolitanism and the National State* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970).
60. The intense engagement of early German nationalists with Greek thought—certainly carried through to Nietzsche and beyond—is an embeddedness in Western civilization, not in the East to which Greek was largely consigned by Constantine's split in Christendom. Elsewhere, to his credit, Kohn is much more attentive to the idea that ethnic and civic ideas are in struggle within German nationalism—and indeed Russian and other “Eastern” nationalisms. See *The Mind of Germany: The Education of a Nation* (New York: Scribner's, 1960) and also the discussion in Wolf, *op. cit.*, p. 668). He is more attentive to the struggle within “derivative” nationalisms—as he saw all outside the Western core—than to that same struggle within English, French, or American nationalism.
61. This is of course a theme Humboldt would later take up, emphasizing both national and individual *bildung*.
62. Herder, along with Humboldt and Hegel, is a key source for Charles Taylor's more recent philosophical challenge to atomistic, acultural individualism; see among many of his writings “The Importance of Herder,” pp. 79-99 in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995) and “Language and Human Nature,” pp. 21-47 in *Human Agency and Language*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
63. Habermas, “Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State,” pp. 107-48 in Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, Rev. ed., edited by Amy Gutman, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1994). Habermas is reacting to Taylor's “The Politics of Recognition,” pp. 25-74 in the same volume.
64. Indeed, Kohn's vision of civic nationalism owes much to both social contract theory and the more general use of contractarian language which is one of the links between later liberalism, the seventeenth-century English Civil War, and the ancient Hebrew Bible. See David Zaret's discussion of the latter two elements in *The Heavenly Contract: Ideology and Organization in Pre-Revolutionary Puritanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).
65. Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism*, *op. cit.*; and see fn. 1 above for Hayes' typology.
66. Ernst Renan, “What Is a Nation?” Pp. 8-22 in Homi Bhabha, ed.: *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 11.
67. See Partha Chatterjee's complaint in the opening chapter of *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (London: Zed Books, 1986)

## PREFACE

The age of nationalism represents the first period of universal history. What preceded it, was the long era of separate civilizations and continents among which little, if any, intercourse or contact existed. Only in the eighteenth century, through the simultaneous emergence of nationalism, democracy, and industrialism, all three closely linked in origin and continuous interaction, an ever-quickening and ever-widening process of acculturation, economic exchange, and intensification of communication started, so that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries every important movement gained world-wide character. Nationalism, arising in the eighteenth century in western Europe, has spread into the farthest corners of the earth; wherever it has gone, it has shaped human thought and society according to its image. The age of nationalism is worldwide in its manifestations; though nationalism is only one of the determining forces of the age, it is important and inclusive enough to warrant calling the era starting with Rousseau and Herder, with the American and French revolutions, the age of nationalism. The world history of these one hundred fifty years will be considered here from the point of view of the development and implications of nationalism.

Nationalism, industrialism, and democracy, though emerging as determining factors in the eighteenth century, have their roots in the past. This book deals with the roots of modern nationalism, with the long period of incubation from Ancient Times to the outbreak of the French Revolution. Another book—*The Age of Nationalism: A Study in the Growth and Fulfillment of an Idea* will deal with the rise of nationalism from 1789 to 1832, with its growth and spread, simultaneously with democracy and industrialism, in the fast expanding world from 1832 to 1919, and its in-