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A Critique of Important Authors on Nationalism who became conquered by the Ideology they wrote about

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**A CRITIQUE OF IMPORTANT AUTHORS ON NATIONALISM
WHO BECAME CONQUERED BY THE IDEOLOGY
THEY WROTE ABOUT
(E. GELLNER, A. SMITH, AND PARTICULARLY L. GREENFELD)**

by

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Interculturalism and Transnationality

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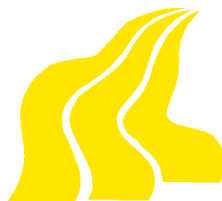
THE POWER OF NATIONALIST MYTHOLOGY
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(E. Gellner, A. Smith, and Particularly L. Greenfeld)

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SPIRIT – School for Postgraduate Interdisciplinary Research
          on Interculturalism and Transnationality

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1. Studies of Identity, Mentality and Culture
2. Global Markets and Organisations: Co-operation and Competition
3. Regions, Cultures and Institutional Change
4. International Politics, Ideas and International Change

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The Power of Nationalist Mythology:

A Critique of Important Authors on Nationalism Who Became Conquered by the Ideology They Wrote About (E. Gellner, A. Smith, and Particularly L. Greenfeld)•.

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Nationalism has been one of the most important forces in history. Therefore it cannot come as a surprise that still today nationalist myths and stereotypes are familiar features of western societies. Given the point that they are at best untenable simplifications, if not completely at variance with reality, one might expect that they are not to be found in academia. But academic life is not isolated from general cultural currents, and there is a permanent risk that prejudices slip through the filters of academic scrutiny.

I contend that this has happened as regards nationalist mythologies. I further contend that in particular the relatively new academic branch of "research on nationalism" has acted as a vehicle for the transport of mythology and stereotypes into academia. Consequently, at a time when nationalist ideology has been slowly but steadily declining in society at large, some sections of academia have practised a kind of nationalist-mythologist revival. It is claimed that substantial elements of nationalist mythology can be traced in *important* academic literature of rather recent date. This applies also to authors who cannot be characterised as political nationalists. Ernest Gellner is perhaps a case in point. However, various other works can be seen as emanations of nationalist ideology proper; wrapped up into fine academic parlance, they aim at transporting crude national stereotypes. This is explained in detail below.

This *problematique* is closely connected to questions of methodology. Academic work is first and foremost a question of methods. And the methods of social sciences are sufficiently developed to filter nationalist mythologies and stereotypes out of academic productions, at least to a high extent. Thus, if they can be found there, then important methodological standards have been set aside.

By analysing some pieces of authoritative literature, I want to give substance to these contentions. However, the purpose of this paper is not only of a critical character. By discussing the above-mentioned problems, I hope also to contribute with some clarifications as to the subject matter, i.e. nationalism and national identity.

The main section of this paper contains a critical review of three books written by Ernest Gellner (Cambridge University), Anthony Smith (London School of Economics), and Liah Greenfeld (when writing the book

reviewed here, Harvard University). However, in the prologue, we will first discuss some basic conceptual and methodological problems.

0. Prologue: Some Concepts and Methodological Problems

a) National Identity and Nationalist Mythology

Members of a nation share a *group feeling* of belonging to this nation. The intensity of this group feeling varies among the citizens, but as to the *existence* of this group feeling we are on safe empirical ground. This group feeling is expressed in various symbols (flags, national football teams, monarchies, etc.), and these symbols are – albeit to a very different degree - of an emotional value to the citizens. Furthermore, national borders are still today substantial barriers to communication. There is usually a much more intensive communication inside national borders than across them. This is, besides language problems, due to the point that political and legal systems are still predominantly national systems. To a high extent this is also the case for economic markets, also in EU countries.[1] This implies that things which happen inside a country matter much more for the individual than events outside the country.

As a first approximation, we might also accept that today most nation states have a common standard language. This aspect should, however, not be driven too far. There are countries such as Switzerland where we find three national languages. And one language, English in particular, can serve as standard language for many countries; the differences between e.g. British and Australian English are hardly a barrier for communication, at least not more than the differences between English sociolects. With these reservations in mind we can say that in most cases the national group feeling is supported and facilitated by a common standard speech. The qualifier "today" is important, because this linguistic unity is of a recent date. Even a small country such as Denmark was by about 1900 divided into numerous idioms (i.e. "dialects"), which were mutually incomprehensible. Standard Danish was restricted to a relatively small layer of well-educated people, thus the majority of the population was not a part of any larger linguistic community. In Italy at the time of unification (1861), only about 2.5 per cent of the population mastered "Italian".[2] It was the progress of school education and later the coming of mass media such as radio and subsequently TV which (rather recently) brought about national linguistic unification.

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[1] Madsen, Poul Thøjs, *Grænser for Det Indre Marked*, Aarhus 2001, esp. p. 49.
[2] Hobsbawm, Eric J., *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge University Press, Canto Edition, 2. edition, 1992, p. 38.

The national group feeling, the symbols which express it, and the pieces of information and images which, due to more internal than external communication, are *relatively* specific to a nation can conveniently be summarised under the term *National Identity.*[3]

Often, however, National Identity is perceived as containing also patterns of behaviour, values, norms or systems of cognitive or moral beliefs, which *allegedly* should be common for a nation. We will see examples below. It is exactly here where nationalist mythology begins.

People can feel like belonging to one nation, and at the same time behave very differently and have different values or systems of cognitive beliefs. The majority of the people in most European countries are Christians, but there are many variations inside this belief. Substantial fractions of those who formally are Christians adhere to systems of causal beliefs, which are incompatible with Christian theology (e.g. astrology). Furthermore, substantial minorities let themselves inspire by Buddhism while others are atheists. Consequently, what Max Weber called the "last realities" are interpreted very differently by different members of national communities. In addition, people can belong to one nation and at the same time have completely different attitudes to foreigners or divergent sexual orientations, to principles of education, or as regards materialist versus post-materialist values. Furthermore, many if not most cultural features in Europe have been cross-national: Christianity, patterns of nationalist mythology, anti-Semitism, post-materialism.

Consequently, *all* European countries have been cultural "cocktails". The nations have been *particular* only in the sense that the exact specification and specific weights of the ingredients have been different from country to country. All countries have been cultural *Melting Pots.*[4]

In all European countries various socio-cultural *milieux* have existed, with strongly divergent cultural values. Many have been rather stable over time, and they have shaped the political landscape for decades. In e.g. Germany after 1871, four major *milieux* with rather stable party affiliations could be discerned:[5]

- a liberal Protestant urban bourgeois milieu,
- a rural Protestant agrarian conservative milieu,
- a Catholic milieu, and
- an urban socialist working-class milieu.

Also France has exhibited a huge amount of divergent and often conflicting cultural patterns which have been remarkably stable over time.

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[3] I agree therefore in principle with the Danish sociologist Peter Gundelach, who, however, defines National Identity only as a group feeling. Our term, including e.g. the symbols, which express the group feeling, is slightly broader. Gundelach, Peter, *Det er dansk*, København 2002, pp. 66 and 69-75.

[4] As to Germany, I have developed this perspective more extensively: Wolfgang Zank, *The German Melting Pot. Multiculturality in Historical Perspective*, Houndmills/Basingstoke and New York, 1998.

[5] Ibid., passim.

Or as Emanuel Todd put it: "We can present France as a heterogeneous and open space …"[6] Hence, my claim that nations have been culturally heterogeneous, is hardly original. In fact, I would rather see this as a banality. But, as we shall see later, sometimes it is necessary to underline banalities.

As opposed to symbols, there have *never* been patterns of behaviour or moral or cognitive beliefs which were *common* for a whole nation. To suppose the existence of *such* a "national identity" is thus the step where national mythology and national stereotyping begins. This supposition is a heritage from nationalist mythology. The mistake is, in a way, an understandable one. As to the *group feeling* and the corresponding symbols, nations have in fact been united. In *this sense* commonness actually has existed. The error has been to extrapolate this common group feeling to an (imaginary) union of values, norms and beliefs.

Historically, nationalist mythologies have exhibited a great variation. But some features have been in common. The first point has exactly been the contention that nations show *cultural homogeneity*. Allegedly, the members of one nation share cultural characteristics such as norms, values, mentalities or patterns of cognitive and moral beliefs; this bundle of characteristics should have constituted a particular "-ness": Danishness, Germanness, Frenchness, or the like.[7]

Often nationalists have conceded that *not all* members of a nation exhibited the proper "-ness". Those were then allegedly a kind of "traitors" who placed themselves outside the national community. These "internal enemies" could actually constitute the majority of the population.[8] Yet, even when nationalists labelled the majority of their countrymen as "bad", they were able to retain the belief in the existence of a good "-ness" which was "typical" for the nation.

In nationalist mythology, the "-ness" of a nation has been something unique, and therefore, all nations have been "very special". The myth of the "-ness" has been used as an auto-stereotype and as a hetero-stereotype. As many scholars (e.g. Max Weber) have pointed out, hetero-stereotypes and auto-stereotypes have been mutually supporting each other: By depicting the "-ness" of others as "different", if not inferior or outright evil, the belief

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[6] "On peut représenter la France comme un espace ouvert et hétérogène …" Todd, Emmanuel, *La Nouvelle France*, Paris, 1988, p. 19. I found this book, which contains an enormous amount of fascinating empirical material, to be extremely stimulating. But when Todd depicts the anthropological *systèmes familiaux* (dissolved for almost two centuries) as being at the basis of the political cleavages and the party system of modern France until quite recently, I cannot follow.

[7] For an example, in casu "Germanness", see the speech in 1915 by law professor Otto v. Gierke where e.g. "faithfulness", "strong sense of duty", "honesty and justice" where presented as typical German values, as quoted in Erwin K. Scheuch, *Wie deutsch sind die Deutschen? Eine Nation wandelt ihr Gesicht,* Bergisch-Gladbach, 1991, p. 89.

[8] In e.g. Germany before 1914 many nationalists regarded Social Democrats, political Catholicism (Zentrum Party), and linguistic minorities such as Poles or Danes as internal enemies. In the Reichstag elections of 1912, these groups gained more than half of the votes. Zank, op. cit., pp. 97-135.

in the particularity of one's own "-ness", and thereby the national group feeling, has become strengthened.

The idea of a particular "-ness" of a nation has been a myth, but this does not mean that this idea has been unimportant. On the contrary, liberating the "-ness" from external oppression or defending it against foreign intrusions has constituted powerful motives for human action. And, ironically, the idea of a homogeneous "-ness" actually contributed to bringing about a certain homogeneity. Language has been a case in point: Many countries have experienced waves of linguistic purification where activist groups or even the state bureaucracy have endeavoured to expel "foreign" or "impure" words from the "mother tongue". In addition, the policy of forceful linguistic homogenisation, which several countries practised, particularly during the decades before 1914, was, among many other factors, fuelled by the belief of the existence of the national "-ness". This was, however, a case of an interesting intellectual "drift": The original nationalist claim was that there *existed* a common national "-ness"; when confronted with the fact that this was not the case, nationalists concluded that the "commonness" had to be created actively, if necessary by forceful means.

The second pillar of nationalist mythology has been the contention that the "-ness" has been *constant over time*, "very old", almost eternal, and, by implication, with a long life ahead. "Eternal" characteristics were attributed both to other groups and to one's own. [9] But in fact, one of the most essential features of modern times has been *cultural change*. Examples can be found in secularisation, rationalisation, the rise of literacy and higher education, or more recently, the change from materialist to post-materialist values. Actually, the waxing and waning of nationalism and *the changing character of nationalism itself* [10] (cf. below in section 3 about Greenfeld) has been one of the most important aspects of cultural change. We have to go back to ancient Egypt if we want to look at a society in which culture was *rather* static for centuries.

However, again nationalist mythology has one real point: As to the *group feeling* and as to the *symbols* we can actually observe some constancy. Some national flags (e.g. the Danish *Dannebrog*) are several

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[9] Gierke (see above, note 7) traced the "Germanness" back to "Germanic times". A particularly bizarre example of this way of thinking was perhaps produced by Dietrich Eckart, a close collaborator of the early Hitler. In his view, the Jews have been alike throughout the millennia, and all the time intent on bringing mischief to others by revolution. Moses was the first leader of Bolshevism. According to Eckart's last brochure *Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin. Dialogues between Adolf Hitler and me*, published posthumously 1924, the two discussants held the view that the exodus of the Jews out of Egypt was a consequence of a murderous revolutionary assault by the Jews against Egypt's leading elite. "Just as in our case" (i.e. Germany after the First World War) the Jews had tried to gain the support of the lower strata of society by using humanitarian phrases and paroles such as "Proletarians of all lands, unite!" At the very last moment the "national parts" of Egypt could prevent a bloody revolution and expel Jews and proletarians (*Pöbelvolk*). *Der Bolschewismus von Moses bis Lenin. Zwiegespräche zwischen Adolf Hitler und mir,* as quoted in Ernst Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche. Action Française – Italienischer Faschismus – Nationalsozialismus*, 8th edition, München, 1990, p. 404.

[10] A brilliant overview is to be found e.g. in Hobsbawm, op. cit., passim.

centuries old, and educated Englishmen, Danes or Germans can read texts, which were written in the respective standard idioms some 300 years ago. Again the mistake is one of exaggeration, namely to conclude from the relative constancy of some symbols to the constancy of patterns of cognitive or moral beliefs.

Another pattern which is often found in nationalist mythology is the use of *biological analogies*. Already in the eyes of Johann Gottfried Herder, perhaps the most important of the "founding fathers" of nationalist mythology, nations were like plants or persons, with a soul and a definite life span. And as everything in nature they were God's creation.[11] Plants and persons seem to be something very concrete and tangible. But in many respects, biological analogies have been very misleading. A higher biological organism such as a human being keeps many essential features throughout its lifetime. Of course, a male at the age of ten is different from the same person at the age of seventy. But most physiological processes, or the organs and their function, remain essentially the same. By contrast, the economic processes of a society (the only thing which could be likened to metabolism) are completely different after 150 years, and so is the pattern of institutions. The basic characteristic of modern society is exactly change, whereas a biological organism to a large extent remains the same. The biological analogy thus metaphorically expresses the second main tenet of nationalist mythology, the constancy over time. Furthermore, the organs of a body work together, and most of them are mutually indispensable. By contrast, groups in a society often have different interests. In this sense, a biological analogy gives an over-harmonic picture of a society. It also furthers the ideological implication that every member should see him/herself as part of a whole, and accept her/his place in it. And, finally, nations can be cut over and flourish nevertheless (e.g. West Germany, South Korea), whereas higher organisms such as human beings die immediately, if cut over.

It might, of course, be legitimate for a contemporary scholar to work with the *hypothesis* that a society resembles a biological organism and then test it. But it is a relict of nationalist mythology if the validity of biological analogies, without further argumentation, is *simply claimed.*

We speak of *myths* when central tenets of nationalism such as the homogeneity of the "-ness" or its "eternal character" become *uncritically* reproduced. In this sense, serious academic work and nationalist mythology do not rhyme. To quote Eric J. Hobsbawm: "Finally, I cannot but add that no serious historian of nations and nationalism can be a committed political nationalist … Nationalism requires too much belief in what is patently not so. As Renan said: 'Getting its history wrong is part of being a nation.'"[12]

b) The "methodology" of national stereotyping

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[11] Iggers, Georg, *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft. Eine Kritik der traditionellen Geschichtsauffassung von Herder bis zur Gegenwart, München, 1971, p. 51.*
[12] Hobsbawm, op. cit, p. 12.

I claimed above that nationalist myths and stereotypes are also to be found in newer academic literature. Before we have a look at concrete examples, we will discuss a piece of methodology. Below is given a semi-fictive[13] example, in which the *content* presumably will be viewed as absurd, but the general methods in which are to be found in real academic literature (see below).

The first step is a qualitative observation (which might be perfectly accurate):

> **1st step: Observation: "On March 27 we could observe three Danes at the railway station in Copenhagen who were severely drunk."**

The second step is generalisation. It involves the use of the definite article (e.g. "the" Danes) or of terms such as "national culture" or "national identity".

> **2nd step: Generalisation: "It is part of the Danish national culture to be constantly intoxicated by alcoholic beverages."**

Many people might have doubts about such a generalisation, given the point that there are Danes who are not permanently drunk. So we need a softening clause:

> **3rd step: softening clause: Of course, this is not valid for all Danes, there have always been some exceptions."**

This clause, however, is not allowed to have any influence on the further reasoning. The last step is therefore the unimpressed resumption of the generalisation:

> **4th step: Unimpressed resumption: "But it is nevertheless possible to identify the dominant characteristics of the Danish National Culture, namely …"**

Finally, this position is buttressed by the collection of evidence which fits into the pattern. The essential point is to collect *only qualitative material* which is filtered through a process of *high selectivity*. In the concrete case, articles in the Danish press, which contain stories of alcoholism, or novels such as Tom Kristensen's *Hærværk* (where the main figures actually are under the influence of alcohol most of the time), or reports about alcoholism-related diseases will serve this purpose. It is, however, essential that all contrary empirical evidence becomes discarded or neutralised by step 3 ("Of course, there are some exceptions, but …"). And finally, we have to avoid any *quantitative* reasoning or discuss representativity. We simply implicitly *suppose* that our examples are representative.

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[13] I once had to discuss against such a position.

Before we have a look at concrete examples, it might be helpful shortly to recapitulate the basic characteristics of the methods which can produce representative results.

c) Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

Representative results can be obtained in two ways.[14] One consists of questioning a sample of people who, in regards to certain characteristics such as age, sex or income distribution, reflect the whole population. Another method, more frequently used nowadays, is to construct a sample where each individual of a nation has the same statistical chance to enter this sample. Every sample must consist of a huge number of people. In countries such as Germany, the sample size is often 3000, whereas in Denmark in polls only about 800 people are questioned. The required size of a sample means that it is practically impossible for one person to establish representative results. When working historically, there is the additional problem that successful representative methods were introduced as late as 1936 (by George Gallup). Before this date, we are usually in the mist.

Quantitative methods have several drawbacks. Perhaps most importantly, they cannot reveal anything properly new. Questions and answers have to be standardised, and everything, which does not fit into this straight jacket, will pass unnoticed. Said differently, you can only counts items when you know about these items beforehand.

In this perspective, qualitative methods are superior. By conducting open interviews, reading letters or examining novels, the scholar can learn something really new, about values, outlooks, perspectives and other cultural features which were unknown to him before. But qualitative methods have a drawback too: They cannot be generalised. For instance, reading *Hærværk* tells us something about this novel, and the conjecture that it, at least partially, reflects Tom Kristensen's experiences is plausible. But this tells us *nothing* about the question of how widespread these phenomena were. Qualitative and quantitative methods are simply two different sets of tools, suitable for different types of problems. Or as an author of an introductory text has formulated it so graphically.[15]

> **If we want to find out whether a phenomenon exists, and if it exists, how it looks like, then we choose a qualitative method. However, if we want to know how widespread a phenomenon is … we choose a quantitative method.**

And in case we want to find out both, we have to combine the two methods. We start with qualitative methods, in order to assess the qualitative features of a phenomenon. And thereafter we translate the

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[14] See, for instance, Allerbeck, Klaus, 'Repräsentativität', Endruweit, Günther and Trommsdorff, Gisela (eds.), *Wörterbuch der Soziologie, Band 2*, Stuttgart, 1989, pp. 543-545.

[15] Salomonsen, Per, *Grundlæggende metodebegreber i sociologi*, København, 3rd ed., 1995, p. 19. My translation, W.Z.

observed qualitative features into standardised questions that allow for quantitative research. Very often, however, this second step is omitted. Authors simply assume that qualitative observations are representative. This is a methodological sin which allows national stereotypes to filter into academic productions.

We now turn now to the main section, the review of a number of works on nationalism.

1. Ernest Gellner: Industrial Society and the "Homogeneous" Nation

It might surprise the reader that I claim that Ernest Gellner's famous book *Nations and Nationalism,*[16] printed in many paperback editions, reproduces elements of national mythology. Gellner, a professor of social anthropology at Cambridge, was certainly no political nationalist, and in many respects his book can be read as an *essay* at deconstructing national mythologies.[17] But the de-construction applies mainly to the nationalist myth that nations are age-old. As to the other pillar of nationalist mythology, the supposed homogeneity of the nation, Gellner does not deconstruct.

According to Gellner, modern nations and nationalisms are basically the result of the transition to industrial society. The *preceding agrarian societies* were characterised by "laterally insulated communities of agricultural producers", above which there were various "stratified, horizontally segregated layers of military, administrative, clerical and sometimes commercial ruling classes."[18] Among the ruling strata, there is "great stress on cultural differentiation … The more differentiated in style of all kinds the various strata are, the less friction and ambiguity there will be between them. The whole system favours horizontal lines of cultural cleavages."[19] Below these top strata the majority of the population lives in

> laterally separated petty communities … Here, once again, cultural differentiation is very marked, though the reasons are quite different. Small peasant communities generally live inward-turned lives … a kind of cultural drift soon engenders dialectical and other differences. No-one, or almost no-one, has an interest in promoting cultural homogeneity at this social level.[20]

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[16] Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1993 (first edition 1983).

[17] He writes explicitly: "… nationalist ideology suffers from pervasive false consciousness. Its myths inverts reality: it claims to defend folk culture while in fact it is forging a high culture; it claims to protect an old folk society while in fact helping to build up an anonymous mass society." Ibid., p. 124.

[18] Ibid., p.9, figure 1.

[19] Ibid., p. 10.

[20] Ibid.

The transition to industrial society alters this picture dramatically: It imposes cultural homogeneity. Gellner's argument hinges on the "general and central features of industrial society":

> **Universal literacy and a high level of numerical, technical and general sophistication are among its functional prerequisites. Its members must be mobile, and ready to shift from one activity to another, and must possess that generic training which enables them to follow the manuals and instructions of a new activity or occupation. In the course of their work they must constantly communicate with a large number of men, with whom they frequently have no previous association, and with whom communication must consequently be explicit, rather than relying on context. They must be able to communicate by means of written, impersonal, context-free, to-whom-it may-concern type messages. Hence these communications must be in the same shared and standardized linguistic medium and script. The educational system which guarantees this social achievement becomes large and is indispensable …[21]**

These functional prerequisites have, in Gellner's view, enormous cultural implications:

> **Culture is no longer merely the adornment, confirmation and legitimisation of a social order which was also sustained by harsher and coercive constraints; culture is now the necessary shared medium, the life-blood or perhaps rather the minimal shared atmosphere, within which alone the members of the society can breathe and survive and produce. For a given society, it must be one in which they can *all* breath and speak and produce; so it must be the *same* culture. Moreover, it must now be a great or high (literate, training-sustained) culture … [22]**

This is, according to Gellner, the clue to understand nationalism. It was not so that nationalism imposed homogeneity on society; "it is rather that homogeneity imposed by objective, inescapable imperative eventually appears on the surface in the form of nationalism,"[23] "it is the objective need for homogeneity which is reflected in nationalism"[24]. These constellations created the modern nation states:

> **… when general social conditions make for standardized, homogeneous, centrally-sustained high-cultures, pervading entire populations and not just elite minorities, a situation arises in which well-defined educationally sanctioned and unified cultures constitutes very nearly the only kind of unit with which men willingly and often ardently identify. The cultures now seem to be the natural repositories of political legitimacy. Only then does it come to appear that any defiance of their boundaries by political units constitutes a scandal.**
> **… In these conditions, men will to be politically united with all those, and only those, who share their culture. Polities then will to extend their boundaries to the limits of their cultures, and to protect and impose their culture with [*within?*] their boundaries of their power.[25]**

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[21] Ibid., p. 35.
[22] Ibid., p. 37f.
[23] Ibid., p. 39.
[24] Ibid., p. 46.
[25] Ibid., p. 55

This last passage corresponds with his basic definition of his subject: "Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent."[26]

Gellner's book received much acclaim. "Brilliant, provocative, (…), a great book" (New Statesman), "A better explanation than anyone else has yet offered why nationalism is such a prominent principle of political legitimacy today (…) a terse and forceful work" (Times Literary Supplement).[27]

Gellner's book is indeed stimulating, and it contains a rich variety of valuable insights. But essential building blocks of his argumentation are unfortunately at odds with many facts. To begin with, he explains the rise of nationalism by the functional prerequisites of industrial society. So, it should have been industrialisation which created nationalism. But nationalism is *older* than industrialisation, even in England, the country which pioneered industrialisation. And Herder wrote his works before the first steam engines came to Germany. Also the French revolution, often portrayed as the event which created nationalism as a *mass* phenomenon, took place in a predominantly agrarian country, with some sections of handicraft, artisanship and services, but practically no industry. And when the industrialisation eventually took place, it often did not result in high culture and qualification, but rather in de-qualification: Old and highly sophisticated handicraft traditions and skills became obsolete and were replaced by unskilled women and children who performed often rather monotonous work at attending machines. Industrialisation has been a highly complex process which Gellner's rather crude model only insufficiently reflects.

In our context, however, more important: Gellner's postulate that industry requires *cultural homogeneity*, is strikingly unrealistic. Industrial conglomerations have in numerous cases been characterised by huge cultural diversity. To give one example, in 1976 about 29 percent of the workers at the BMW plant in Munich were foreign immigrants, mainly from Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece, and not the least Turkey.[28] Also the Ruhr district has been a cultural meeting and merging place. Before 1914, there were between 300,000 and 350,000 Poles living in the Ruhr (mainly migrants from Prussia's eastern provinces); if we add the Mazurians (a Protestant population in East Prussia, speaking a Polish idiom), the figure was about half a million.[29] Numerous other workers were foreigners. The German-speaking workers were, of course, also highly divided when it comes to values or systems of beliefs. So in the Ruhr we found Polish associations, German nationalist organisations, Protestant communities, a

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[26] Ibid., p. 1.
[27] As reproduced on the backside of Gellner's book.
[28] Wetzel, Juliane, 'Integration im Grossbetrieb – das Beispiel BMW', Benz, Wolfgang (Hrsg.), *Integration ist machbar: Ausländer in Deutschland*, München, 1993, pp. 93-108, esp. p. 94.
[29] Klessmann, Christoph, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet 1870-1945. Soziale Integration und nationale Subkultur einer Minderheit in der deutschen Industriegesellschaft*, Göttingen, 1978, p. 22.

network of Catholic organisations of various kinds (integrating Germans and Poles), a widely ramified socialist *milieu* of Social Democrat organisations and trade unions (also integrating both Germans and others), and many more. There were many conflicts between these *milieux* and organisations. But nevertheless, the mines and steelworks of the Ruhr belonged to the most productive plants in the world. A similar picture we find at that time e.g. in British factories, with their many Irish or Welsh immigrants, or the industrial centres of Belgium and northern France, not to mention the American industrial centres, with their complex picture of numerous immigrant groups.

Today, the industrial conglomerate Airbus is based on a network of 1500 manufacturers in 30 countries on 4 continents.[30] How can such an industrial organisation, which cuts through an enormous row of national and cultural borders, develop successfully? Because industry is about constantly finding and developing new patterns of human cooperation *across national borders*. Contrary to Gellner's view, the dynamics of industrialism, and more generally, capitalism, have had an in-built cross-national logic. Already before 1914, the industrially developed countries were enmeshed in a dense network of international economic cooperation. This network was destroyed during the First World War, and not rebuilt in the inter-war period. In the 1930s many governments followed a nationalist economic policy and promoted e.g. industrial autarchy, but they did so *against the logic of industrial development*. The last decades, however, saw a renewal of the trend towards an ever-closer economic cooperation *across national boundaries*.

Gellner has, of course, a point when he writes that industrial society depends much more than the previous rural society on explicit, context-free communication in a standard language. But Gellner goes an essential step too far when he writes that the *culture* must be the same. He seems to equate "ability to communicate" with "cultural homogeneity", which is blatantly not the case. In a Ruhr steel plant, German socialist workers had to be able to communicate with deeply religious Catholic Poles, with a liberal engineer or a Protestant nationalist office clerk or director.

Gellner seems to be of the opinion that "same language" means "same culture", and conversely, "different language" equates "different culture". In his view, language (i.e. a system of symbols) seems to be strictly connected with other cultural phenomena, such as systems of cognitive and moral beliefs. Together they seem to form a coherent structure. We call this idea the "structuralist fallacy". It is *evidently* wrong. People can speak a similar language and have e.g. *very* different moral values. And conversely, moral or cognitive beliefs (such as Catholicism) can be shared by people who speak completely different languages.

Gellner used also the alleged homogeneity of the nation state to to define political nationalism, namely as "a principle which holds that the

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[30] Airbus Industry, http://www.airbus.com/about/procurement.asp.

political and the national unit should be congruent." This definition fits well for many nationalist movements, e.g. those in Italy and Germany in the first half of the 19th century. But the definition fails for many others. According to this definition, neither Italian Fascism nor German Nazism could be classified as nationalism. When e.g. the Italian fascist regime conquered Ethiopia in 1935, it "united" areas, which were culturally completely different from the Italian "political unit". And why did Nazi Germany in March 1939 de facto annex the Czech part of Czechoslovakia, Gellner's home country? Or how could the industrialised Japan in 1931 conquer Manchuria, China's most industrialised region? It was Japan's defeat in 1945 that broke this "unity", not the cultural differences between Japan and Manchuria. In none of these cases did the conqueror do much in order to impose cultural homogeneity on the conquered province.

Gellner's definition and theory of nationalism cannot explain *expansionist* nationalism. On the contrary, according to his theory, expansionism would be against the very essence of nationalism. Many nationalists, the Nazis in the 1930s included, have claimed that this has been the case – in stark contrast to their own practice. We conclude that Gellner has accepted the mythology, which nationalist movements have created about themselves, at face value.

The following observation is presumably no coincidence: Through most of his book, Gellner argues calmly and rationally for his case. But exactly when it comes to the alleged necessity of cultural homogeneity in industrial society – the longer quote above is his *only* argument as to this point - his style turns vague: Culture turns into "life-blood", or into the "atmosphere" within which alone the members of the society can "breathe", and for "a given society, it must be one in which they can *all* breathe and speak and produce; so it must be the *same* culture."[31] In short, *instead of arguments* he uses biological analogies – in the "best" tradition of national mythology. Indeed, everyone has to breathe in order to survive. But there is no logical connection between breathing and the alleged homogeneity of culture. Instead of making it a matter of critical research, he placed the myth of national homogeneity uncritically at the very centre of his book. He then tried, by using abstract model reasoning, with hardly any reference to empirical material, to construct a theory on how this fictive national cultural homogeneity could have come about. But it never came about.

2. Anthony D. Smith: Nations as Ethnic Communities

Anthony D. Smith, whose book *National Identity*[32] has been printed in many editions as a Penguin paperback, has often been seen as a kind of opponent to Gellner. Whereas Gellner has been classified as a "modernist", i.e. someone who sees the nation as an essentially modern construction,

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[31] See above, footnote 22.
[32] Smith, Anthony D., *National Identity*, London and New York, Penguin, 1991.

Smith has been labelled "traditionalist" because of his view that European nations have century-old roots and were formed around "ethnic cores". As we shall see, this difference between them should not be exaggerated. Also Smith's book can, at least partly, be seen as an *essay* at de-constructing nationalist ideology. But in contrast to Gellner, who proceeded mainly by abstract model reasoning, Smith unfolds a rich historical *tableau* of antique ethnical communities and the genesis of modern nations across the globe. His impressing knowledge makes this book interesting reading indeed. But his theoretical reasoning is not seldom self-contradictory or at variance with important facts. And also Smith cultivates the mythology of the homogeneous nation to quite some extent.

According to Smith, the "fundamental features of national identity" can be listed as follows:[33]

1. **an historic territory, or homeland**
2. **common myths and historical memories**
3. **a common, mass public culture**
4. **common legal rights and duties for all members**
5. **a common economy with territorial mobility for members**

A nation can therefore be defined as a *named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.*

This list presumes a high degree of cultural homogeneity. Given the point that it defines the main subject of his book, a reader might expect substantial evidence supporting each point. But instead, Smith refers only to nationalist ideology: "These are assumptions and demands, common to all nationalists, and widely accepted even by their critics …" His argument for the *central* theoretical presumption of his book consists in the point that because *nationalists of all sorts have believed* that nations looked like that, it must be so in reality. In other words, he made nationalist ideology the basis of this theory. And Smith errs if he contends that these assumptions and demands are "widely accepted even by the critics" of nationalism. For instance, I would accept only point 1 (territory), and partly point 4 (common legal rights). This criterion entails, however, that we can speak of nations only at a historically rather late point in time. Equality in front of the law was introduced as a principle roughly at about 1800, and in certain fields (voting rights for women) it had to wait until 1915 (Denmark), 1919 (Germany) or 1946 (Italy).

Smith's second point ("common myths and historical memories") postulates a fond of cultural homogeneity. If these myths and memories were really common, it would be possible to empirically identify a kind of "Britishness", "Frenchnesss", or any other "-ness". But Smith does not forward any empirical material. Instead he refers frequently *to the constructions of nationalists.* Again he seems to infer that nations have common myths and memories because nationalists have thought they did.

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[33] Smith, op. cit., p. 14, emphasis in the original.

What should be the "common myths plus historical memories" of today's Great Britain, Germany or Denmark? Because these countries are culturally heterogeneous, open societies, there exists a *multitude* of historical perspectives. History is a *cultural battlefield* where various actors construct competing views. There are, on the one hand, professional academics who build (or at least ought to build) their versions on scientific procedures. Among them there is consensus on a number of fields, mainly about "what happened", but much disagreement when it comes to the question "why did it happen". Furthermore, there is a huge body of historical literature which is produced by journalists, by amateurs, or by actors of various kinds who e.g. produce memoirs. Political parties and fringe groups (e.g. neo-Nazis) are at times quite productive too. Also the movie industry has become a powerful producer of historical versions, sometimes hopelessly (or deliberately) fictive. And among the population at large, personal memories and the oral tradition are as divergent and contradicting as the personal experiences have been.

There are, of course, some events that have been so momentous that practically every one knows about them. Practically all the British know that their country won the Second World War, and most Danes know that Denmark was occupied between 1940 and 1945. But at this point the "commonness" stops. There are many myths circulating in every country, but the myths are not common.

In Denmark, for instance, the mythology of a strong and efficient resistance movement has been quite widespread. The "classical" myth was perhaps the one about the effectiveness of railroad sabotage against German military transports in 1944.[34] But as the historian Aage Trommer has documented convincingly, the sabotage actions were rather irrelevant from a military point of view.[35] More in general, the political left has since 1945 pointed at the fact that the official Denmark actively cooperated with the occupation power, a view which professional historians share. For instance, in 1941, the Danish police, on request by the Gestapo, arrested Communist activists and delivered more than was requested. In 1942, the Danish Prime Minister Wilhelm Buhl asked the general public to inform the police about saboteurs.

Against this background, it is a small wonder that after 1945, historical debates have regularly led to *highly emotional controversies*. Still

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[34] According to the popular *Politikens Danmarks Historie*, the railway sabotage against the movement of German troops from Norway to the Western front in 1944 was so effective that the German military had to face substantial delays. Guarding the lines bound 50,000-80,000 German troops. In the end, there were practically no transports any more, the German troops had to march on foot all the way down Jutland. Wendt, Franz, *Besættelsen og Atomtid 1939-1965 (Politikens Danmarks Historie, Bind 14),* København, 1966, pp. 297-301.

[35] From the time of the invasion in Normandy to the end of the war, the German army transferred 30 divisions and combat units (brigade, regiment) through Jutland. Five divisions and one regimental combat unit were delayed more than a day (with 64 hours maximum), in the case of the other 25 divisions/units the delay was below one day. None of the delays had any influence on actual combats. Trommer, Aage, *Jernbanesabotagen I Danmark under den anden verdenskrig*, Odense University Press, 1971, esp. p. 172.

today, these subjects are polemically discussed in the Danish press practically every month. So, the myth about the widespread and effective resistance movement, or any other myths, have *not been common* for the Danes.

This is even more the case for Germany. The *Fischer-Kontroverse* in the 1960s and 1970s about Berlin's role at the outbreak of the First World War,[36] the *Historiker-Streit* in the 1980s about Ernst Nolte's interpretation of Nazism as a mirror of and reaction against Bolshevism,[37] the exhibition about war crimes committed by Wehrmacht units, the debate about Daniel J. Goldhagen's book about "ordinary Germans and the Holocaust"[38] – the number of fierce intellectual clashes about German history is almost endless. The GDR produced its own versions, and so have writers on the extreme right (effectively supported e.g. by the English historian David Irving). It is simply untenable to claim that modern nations have "common historical myths" in line with pre-modern ethnies. Smith does not present a single empirical example, and if he had searched he would not have found one.

Smith does, however, rather extensively show that nationalists, particularly in the 19th century, have been very busy in constructing historical myths, endeavouring to show that their respective countries have had a kind of "golden age" and a long majestic history.[39] But Smith seems to jump directly from the nationalist mythology to the assumption that modern nations must have common myths.

He forwards, however, a functional argument: Historical myths give a feeling of "where we are coming from", and hence whom we are. Thus, in this functional view, a myth might contribute to social cohesion. As to pre-modern ethnies, this might have even been necessary. Yet, this has not been the case with modern nations. Modern nations owe their cohesion not to homogeneous beliefs, but to mechanisms such as equal rights, common laws and socialisation through a national educational system. Pre-modern ethnies and modern nations are something different, and by jumping from one to the other, Smith gives a distorted view of modern nations.

The third point on Smith's list of "national identity" is a "common, mass public culture". He does not explain this term. If he means the incorporation of the large majority of the population into a nation-wide education system, the development of nation-wide media and the ability of most persons to communicate by means of a standard speech, this criterion is certainly valid, albeit again only at a rather late date (roughly around 1900 as regards Western, Northern and Central Europe). But he speaks of a

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[36] Fischer, Fritz, *Griff nach der Weltmacht. Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland*, Königsstein, Ts, 1977 (first edition 1961).
[37] Nolte, Ernst, *Der Europäische Bürgerkrieg, 1917-1945, Nationalsozialismus and Bolschewismus,* fourth edition, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1989.
[38] Goldhagen, Daniel J., *Hitlers willige Vollstrecker. Ganz gewöhnliche Deutsche und der Holocaust*, Berlin, 1996.
[39] Smith, op. cit., p. 161.

"common culture". Does he mean common values, norms or cognitive beliefs? If he does so, Smith is again in the realm of nationalist mythology.

His last point refers to a "common economy". Also this point remains practically unexplained. The only keyword he presents is the "territorial mobility of its members". It was indeed part of the nation-building process, mainly in the nineteenth century, that governments abolished internal barriers to mobility. But already before 1914, huge *trans-national* migrations and international trade and cross-border investments had come about. This trend, which was interrupted in 1914 and in the inter-war period, was resumed after the Second World War, with particular intensity within the EU. *All modern economies* are today enmeshed in a dense net of international division of labour. Also as to this point, Smith did not have a look at real economic processes, but at nationalist ideology: "By defining the membership, the boundaries and the resources, national identity provides the rationale for ideals of national autarchy."[40] Great Britain, his own country, abandoned any "ideals of national autarchy" in 1846 (abolishment of the Corn Laws). Did she thereby cease to be a nation? Smith has got a point insofar as protectionists often used nationalist arguments to support their claims for e.g. higher tariffs. But the point that nationalist mythology has been supportive for protectionist policy does not mean that modern nations have a "common national economy".

It is strange to observe that an author, who otherwise presents a long row of concrete and detailed facts, turns imprecise and patently counter-factual, when he defines the *central* features of his main subject, nation and national identity. Necessarily so, because he could not liberate himself from the idea of the homogeneous nation, and this idea can only be "supported" by turning vague.

In Smith's view, there are seemingly no essential differences between modern nations and pre-modern ethnical communities. In fact, Smith's list of "National Identity" overlaps in important points with his attributes of an ethnic community or *ethnie* ("1. a collective proper name 2. a myth of common ancestry 3. shared historical memories 4. one or more differentiating elements of common culture 5. an association with a specific 'homeland' 6. a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population").[41] As a comparison of his definitions show, nations are according to Smith only a particular kind of *ethnie*: Nations fulfil all the criteria of an *ethnie*, although not all *ethnies* seem to qualify for a nation.

But this way, essential differences between modern nations and historical or anthropological ethnic communities become obscured. As Smith himself pointed out, the European nations are basically the product of the modern bureaucratic state, which, in the process of nation-making, was assisted by an emerging market economy and the development of secular

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[40] Smith, op. cit., p. 16.
[41] Smith, op. cit., p. 21.

education and culture.[42] In these passages, nations are essentially *modern* constructions:[43]

> " … it is clear that nations are indeed modern phenomena in so far as:
>   1. they require a unified legal code of common rights and duties, with citizenship rights where the nation is independent
>   2. they are based on a unified economy with a single division of labour, and mobility of goods and persons throughout the national territory
>   3. they need a fairly compact territory, preferably with 'natural' defensible frontiers, in a world of similar compact nations
>   4. they require a single 'political culture' and public mass education and media system, to socialise future generations to be 'citizens' of the new nation.
>
> As we saw, it is rare to find most of these elements in any force in pre-modern ethnic states, however powerful they appear.

However, Smith is also of the opinion that there have been dominant "ethnic cores" at the starting point of the nation-building processes in Europe, and other *ethnies* were incorporated into these. Smith sees the ruling Norman feudal aristocracy in England after 1066 as such a dominant "lateral *ethnie*". But he himself points out:[44]

> There was during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries considerable linguistic borrowing, intermarriage and elite mobility between conquering Normans and subordinate upper-stratum Saxons, all within a framework of growing, if interrupted, state centralization and an English Catholic ecclesiastical organization. This meant that the bureaucratic incorporation of subordinate ethnic populations entailed considerable social intercourse and cultural fusion between Anglo-Saxon, Danish and Norman elements.

How much sense does it make to talk of a *dominant* "lateral *ethnie*" if there was considerable linguistic borrowing, intermarriage, elite mobility and *cultural fusion* between the Normans and various other ethnic groups soon after 1066? In the usual sense of the word, all features such as intermarriage happen mainly *inside* an *ethnie* and not across the borders of it.

So already as to Norman England his term of a dominant lateral *ethnie* is highly problematic. It turns even more so when applied to e.g. France. He states that the French monarchy originated from the Isle de France, but he presents no empirical material that the aristocracy of this region was an *ethnie* with e.g. a distinct "myth of common ancestry". Smith's presentation obscures the point that the ruling strata in feudal society were connected by personal bonds of mutual rights and obligations with the king or emperor, and that these bonds could and were installed *irrespective of and across ethnic allegiances*.

But if we leave the scepticism regarding a "dominant lateral *ethnie*" aside, I completely agree with Smith's summary of the process of nation building:

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[42] Ibid., pp. 59-61.
[43] Ibid., p. 69.
[44] Ibid., p. 55f.

> It was through these three revolutions – administrative, economic and cultural – that outlying regions and their *ethnies* and middle and lower classes were incorporated … through the agency of the bureaucratic state. The creation of secular, mass nations was ultimately the outcome of a vigorous programme of political socialization through the public, mass education system.[45]

But exactly because modern nations are the *product* of bureaucratic states, market economy and education systems, they are something completely different than pre-modern *ethnies*. We see the somewhat paradoxical result that Smith himself underlines the importance of the bureaucratic state and other institutions for modern nations, but then he seems to fail to see that exactly these institutions made modern national identity (a group feeling, see Prologue) qualitatively different from ethnic identity. Therefore a few remarks are needed: When it comes to social cohesion, the provision of political legitimacy has always been important. In pre-modern *ethnies*, to use Max Weber's terminology, political leaders derived their legitimacy from traditional religious beliefs or from their charismatic qualities. In modern nations, however, power is legitimate because it *respects explicit legal rules*. One of the essential aspects of modern state-building has been the development of rule by law, a system that binds the subjects *and the rulers*. Power has been accepted as legitimate when it respected these rules. In Weber's words, legitimacy emanated from a "positive statute in whose legality one believes"[46]. Legitimacy became further enhanced when power and lawmaking are built upon democratic procedures. Democracy is basically understood here as a set of rules and principles (freedom of speech and organisation, elections etc.).

Because the modern state does not depend on religious legitimacy any more, it can tolerate divergent religious beliefs. Religious minorities were even protected by the modern state, and this in turn has strongly increased the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of these groups. Of course, religious groups have had to respect the legal system, and they have had to recur to legal mechanisms and rules, if they wanted to alter legislation. Religious fundamentalism, which places the holy scripts higher than the law and the democratic process, has not been compatible with modern democracy. Yet, if it is accepted that religion is basically a private matter and that the law must be respected, religious heterodoxy does not *substantially* endanger the social cohesion of a modern nation.

It has often been overlooked that the modern democratic nation state has been *enormously successful* at accommodating cultural differences. In the 19th century in countries such as France, Italy or Germany, one section of the population was pitted antagonistically against the Catholic church, but that has been history for a long time now. Bitter confrontations on the question of choice of language in, for instance, the Danish-German border

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[45] Ibid., p. 61. "into the dominant lateral ethnic culture" omitted.
[46] " … kraft positiver Satzung, an deren Legalität geglaubt wird." Weber, Max, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Cologne, Berlin, 1964, p. 26.

region have passed into oblivion, and so have movements such as the Sicilian separatism. The strong cultural tensions in the wake of e.g. the Polish immigration to the Ruhr have completely abated, and so have the problems in connection with e.g. Italian immigration to France. Decades ago, most European countries were torn by murderous confrontations between ideologies such as Communism and Fascism, i.e. systematic bodies of thought which claimed priority for certain values and norms. Compared to that time, politics has become rather boring in all Western states. Seen in this light, the current debates on the difficulties of *Multiculturalism* seem to suffer from historical forgetfulness. True, immigration and globalisation have recently created new problems, which have to be addressed. But seen from a historical perspective, these problems are not so new, nor do they seem to be particularly grave.[47]

The capability of the modern democratic state to accommodate cultural differences depended, among other factors, on its ability to protect all citizens. Furthermore, the state had to be able to socialise the citizens in such a manner that they would be able to communicate among themselves, and that they would accept the state as a community. Subsequently, majority decisions became acceptable, *cultural differences not-withstanding*.

Several countries, particularly the African ones, have still a long way to go. Such states are rather unstable as they protect their citizens only insufficiently. In addition, the rules of law and democracy are not properly respected, and the education system is comparatively weak. As a consequence, a *national identity* is yet *underdeveloped*; instead *ethnic identities* often still prevail. Smith, however, having seemingly forgotten what he himself wrote about the importance of the state and other institutions for the creation of modern nations, presents an account of the African problems where again the essential difference between a national identity and an ethnic identity is utterly confused.[48]

This problem is also recognizable in another field. Smith adapted Hans Kohn's[49] distinction between a western civic model of a nation, and a non-western ethnic one. The components of the western model are "historic territory, legal-political community, legal-political equality of its members, and common civic culture and ideology."[50] By contrast, a non-western 'ethnic' conception of the nation places the emphasis on a community of birth and a native culture. In this model, a nation was foremost a

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[47] For a more detailed account as regards the German experiences, the reader might consult Zank, op. cit., passim.

[48] See for instance the following passage: "This lack of congruence between the state and the nation is exemplified in the many 'plural' states today. Indeed, Walker Connor's estimate in the early 1970s showed that only about 10 per cent of states could claim to be true 'nation-states', in the sense that the state's boundaries coincide with the nation's and that the total population of the state share a single ethnic culture." (Smith, op. cit, p. 15). Here the terms nation and ethnic community are completely confused, and the mythology that (some) modern nations have a single homogeneous ethnic culture resurfaces again.

[49] Smith, op. cit., p. 80; Kohn, Hans, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History*, Princeton, 1955.

[50] Smith, op. cit, p. 11.

"community of common descent"[51] or a kind of "super family". Smith adds the important observation that these are ideal types (in the sense of Max Weber), which cannot be found in their pure form in reality, and that in fact "every nationalism contains civic and ethnic elements in varying degrees and different forms."[52] As an example he mentions France where the Jacobin nationalism was essentially civic, whereas during the 19th century in particular the clerical-monarchist Right was wedded to an ethnic 'organic' concept of the French nation. Also Smith's material about the development of an early English/British identity seems to reflect an ethnic model with mythologies of common descent.[53] It is perhaps important to underline that nationalisms have always been *heterogeneous* movements. It is therefore completely erroneous to talk about "the" French nationalism, "the" German nationalism, etc.

We should also add to Smith's presentation that the distinction between a "civic" and an "ethnic" concept of a nation is basically a distinction between a "modern" and an "immature" concept of the nation. At least when it comes to the legal system, today *all* modern western states adhere to the civic model. It is actually the only one which is compatible with the principles of the rule of law, democracy and equality. The civic model was initially developed in Western Europe because Western Europe was modern[54] at an earlier state than Eastern Europe. We leave the question open to which extent ethnic nationalism still shapes the perceptions of the population at large. Parties such as the *Front National* in France might be evoked as examples of ethnic nationalism still having some political clout in Western Europe. However, parties who campaign on nationalist slogans of this kind constitute everywhere a minority.

In regards to the legal system, the EU has made acceptance of the civic model a condition for membership. The Copenhagen Criteria from 1993 stated explicitly that accession countries had to guarantee "democracy, the rule of law, human rights and *respect for and protection of minorities*".[55] In e.g. Estonia and Latvia there have been tendencies to shape legislation along ethnic-nationalist lines, for instance by barring citizenship to Russian-speaking inhabitants. But as the EU made clear, ethnic nationalist policies are incompatible with an EU membership.

As to the future of European integration, it hinges, according to Smith, on the "rise of a sense of specifically 'European' heritage and the

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., p. 13.
[53] Ibid., p. 58.
[54]"Modernity" is here seen as the successful development of the institutions of a secular state, rule by law, democracy, and economic productivity. It is implied that in principle *all* countries will eventually move towards improvements on these fields, although not necessarily with the same success in all fields simultaneously, and with the possibility of temporal setbacks. Some setbacks can last for decades (Russia 1917-1991), others may be shorter, but very destructive (Germany 1933-45), but they are nevertheless all temporal. However, a discussion of "modernity" lies beyond the scope of this paper.
[55] See the website of the EU commission, http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/intro/criteria.htm. Emphasis mine, WZ.

growth of an accepted 'European mythology'".[56] In opposition I contend that if there was one sure way of discrediting the EU, then it would be through the creation of new mythologies. The EU is a set of modern institutions, and their stability will depend on their democratic legitimacy (essentially, see above, a question of rules), their transparency, and their efficiency. Nationalist movements needed mythologies but this is not the case with modern European states and their Union.

All in all, Anthony D. Smith has written an interesting book with many insights. But by insufficiently distinguishing between pre-modern *ethnies* and modern nations, and by crucially overestimating the cultural homogeneity and mythological necessities of modern nations, he has become a reproducer of nationalist mythologies.

3. Liah Greenfeld: Nationalist mythology in our time

Liah Greenfeld's book *Nationalism - Five Roads to Modernity*[57], published in 1992, has won much acclaim. *The Economist* wrote: "This book is a great contribution to understanding nationalism's place in the world". According to John Gray in *The New York Times Book Review*, it is "a comprehensive, erudite and highly illuminating book". The eminent scholar Walter Laqueur wrote in the *Washington Post Book World*: "For having tackled an enterprise of such magnitude and complexity, the author deserves our admiration."[58]

Greenfeld's aim was to trace the emergence of national identity, or nationalism (she uses the term interchangeably) in five cases (England, France, Russia, Germany, and the US). She starts by giving examples of semantic changes of the word "nation". In her view, a crucial step was reached in sixteenth-century England when "nation" was not applied only to the elite any more, but to the whole population of the country. As a consequence, "people" became a positive entity. On this basis she seeks to give a definition of national identity: "National identity in its distinctive modern sense is, therefore, an identity which derives from membership in a 'people', the fundamental characteristic is that it is defined as a 'nation'."[59] Thus, "identity" is closely linked to "nation", but this is not yet a definition of "identity". In fact, she never properly *defines* her key concept. She writes, however, that identity is the "view the concerned actor has of himself or herself (…) Identity is perception".[60] Afterwards, however, "identity" is implicitly used to have a wider interpretation, covering also the norms and values of human behaviour. In fact, in her treatment, "identity"

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[56] Smith, op. cit, p. 153.
[57] Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism. Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge/Mass. and London, 1992.
[58] http://www.hup.Harvard.edu/reviews/GRENAO_R.html. On this site there are further review quotes, equally enthusiastic.
[59] Ibid., p. 7.
[60] Ibid., p. 13.

is equivalent to "culture" in a very broad sense, covering group feeling, perceptions, and norms and values. And this culture is national.

"Nation" is a general category, but she insists on the specific character of each nation. She seems to imply that every nation has shared very particular cultural characteristics which are specific to it. In her own words:[61]

> **Social integration and cooperation are necessary for the preservation of the human species (as well as of its individual members), but there is no innate knowledge of how this should be accomplished. The lack of innate knowledge results in the need for models and blueprints, for an image of order, or *created symbolic order*, among human beings. Such symbolic order – culture – is the human equivalent of animal instincts, and is an indispensable condition for the survival of the human species as well as of individuals. The particular image of a social order provided by a culture forms the constitutive element of any given society. Within the limits set by the physical and psychological parameters of human nature, symbolic orders are widely variable, which explains the variability of human societies.**

In this passage she does not use the word "nation" but "social order". But from the context we have to infer that "nations" are particular types of "social orders". So, every nation has its particular culture, and this culture is homogeneous – the old myth in new words.

Concerning nationalism/national identity, she turns specific:[62]

> **Nationalism, among other things, connotes a species of identity, in the psychological sense of the term, denoting self-definition. In this sense, any identity is a sense of ideas, a symbolic construct. It is a particularly powerful construct, for it defines a person's position in his or her social world. It carries within itself expectations from the person and from different classes of others in the person's surroundings, and thus orients his or her actions.**

This states explicitly that nationalism implies a particular culture, which steers ("orients") the activities of the individuals. Thus, "nation" and (one homogeneous) national culture are closely connected. This is again the old and simple nationalist mythology.

Greenfeld uses "national identity" (i.e. "national culture") and nationalism interchangeably. Usually the term "nationalism" denotes a political movement. As such, it only comprises *a part* of the population. Other parts of society have adhered to different ideologies settings, e.g. Catholicism or Socialist Internationalism. Greenfeld, however, without any discussion, equates political nationalism with "national identities" and makes deductions from ideological figures of political nationalism to the ideological matrix of the whole nation.

At the end of the introduction, however, she revokes her position:[63]

> **Do the origins of nationalism which define its nature … also *completely* shape its social and political expressions? Is the conduct of a nation – its historical record – *determined* by its dominant traditions? The answer to these questions is *no*. The dominant traditions**

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[61] Greenfeld, p. 18.
[62] Ibid., p. 20.
[63] Greenfeld, p. 25.

create a predisposition for a certain type of action, and a probability that, in certain conditions, such action will take place.

Thus, national identity does not steer action, as it did in the quote before, it only creates dispositions. It should also be noted that in the above quote whole nations are collective actors, as if they were one person ("the conduct of a nation").

After having stated the uniqueness and "necessary" homogeneity of a national identity, Liah Greenfeld makes a surprising admission: "I was bewildered by the complexity of the historical evidence"[64]. She is also "aware" of "'multiple continuities' in every one of the nationalisms" she studied.[65] She mentions e.g. "science", which was first institutionalised in England but developed elsewhere too. Romanticism has its origins in Germany but was also to be found in other countries, along with liberalism and anti-Semitism. In other words, she is aware of the existence of *various* and *conflicting* cultural trends which where transgressing national borders, and which were found *inside* many national settings where they created a cultural *heterogeneity*. Nevertheless, she insists on a clear distinction between national identities. The operation is simple: "I treated such 'international' traditions as singular features of particular nationalisms …" In other words, she attributes *international* trends to *one particular* nation. England receives credit for science and liberalism, and Germany romanticism and anti-Semitism. She justifies this procedure as follows:

> The same tradition, metaphorically, might be a dominant gene in one case, and a recessive one in another. I am aware of 'multiple continuities' in every one of the nationalisms I studied. In each there were defeated traditions and roads not taken. I did not focus on them *because* they were not taken.[66]

We will return to this last point soon, we just note here that she introduces a political criterion ("defeated traditions") when it comes to the selection and assigning of cultural currents to a nation. This way, she feels legitimated in not trying to find out how *widespread* cultural currents actually were. In this connection, we may also note that a biological analogy ("dominant gene") is used as a substitute for an academic argument.

She assigns widespread transnational currents to one nation only and thereby *evicts them* out of the national settings of all the others. A similar methodology of discarding is applied to regional cultural settings: "I have focused on those regions or sections within each population whose traditions have left a particularly deep imprint on that population's national identity. This is the reason for the emphasis on the development in Protestant as against Catholic Germany (and specifically on Prussia as against Austria) …"[67] But in Germany after 1871, the Catholic parts of the

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[64] Greenfeld, p. 26.
[65] Ibid., p. 25.
[66] Ibid., p. 25.
[67] Ibid., p. 24.

population numbered about 35 percent of the population. Furthermore, she locates the emergence of German "national identity" to the first half of the 19th century. At that time the Austrians and the Catholic German-speaking population in northern Bohemia considered themselves as Germans too. If both groups are included, the number of Catholic Germans rises to above 50 per cent. Thus, in the case of Germany, Greenfeld *expels more than half* of the population from her "analysis" before she even starts it. As we shall see, by evicting science and liberalism too, there is not much left. Greenfeld concentrates "upon the formation of national identity, not its promulgation", and: "The character of every national identity was defined during the early phase, which is here discussed in detail."[68] In other words, she introduces the idea that a national identity was created at a certain point in time – *and thereafter remained constant*. Thus, the familiar nationalist myth of the cultural constancy of national culture became a steering axiom of her book.

In her view, intellectuals played a key role in the formation of national identities, and it was their work she wanted to reconstruct. "I based my interpretation on the testimonies of the participants, left by them in laws and official proclamations, as well as in the works of literature or scholarship which they produced, their diaries and private correspondence. I tried to rely chiefly on primary sources, using secondary historical analysis for orientation when my own knowledge of them was insufficient."[69] In other words, only casually did she study the academic research, which existed on the field she wrote about.

Furthermore, in Germany alone, between 1801 and 1830 about 122,000 books were published.[70] Thus, for an author who claims to base her construction "chiefly on primary sources", there are plenty of possibilities to choose (and to discard) among.

The following will provide a closer look at her empirical findings. Focus is set on Germany. In Greenfeld's view, German "national identity" was formed between 1806 and 1815, and its two building blocks were "*ressentiment* against the West" and racism, in particular racial anti-Semitism. [71] "… German national consciousness was unmistakably and distinctly racist from the moment it existed, and the national identity of the Germans was essentially an identity of race, and only superficially that of language or anything else. The language, deeply revered as it was, was but an epiphenomenon, a reflection of race, 'the indisputable testimony of common descent'. (…) In the minds of the architects of the German national consciousness, one could not exist without the other, and both represented the fundamental bonds of German nationality."[72]

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[68] Ibid., p. 22.

[69] Ibid., p. 26.

[70] Wehler, Hans-Ulrich, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgesichte. Zweiter Band. Von der Reformära bis zur industriellen und politischen "Deutschen Doppelrevolution" 1815-1848/49*, München, 2. Auflage, 1989, p. 524.

[71] Ibid., pp. 360-386.

[72] Ibid., p. 369. The passage in inverted commas is a quotation of Kohn.

She quotes in this context Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, Theodor Körner and other exponents of militant nationalism in the time of the anti-Napoleonic wars, who indeed expressed a very aggressive form of nationalism. But why were these men representatives or even "architects" of "German national consciousness", and not e.g. Johann Wolfgang v. Goethe or Friedrich Schiller, who thought in completely different terms? Why not e.g. Immanuel Kant, a philosopher who has had a profound impact on German (and European) intellectual life, and has worked e.g. on the problem of how to achieve lasting peace? Or why not Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, the most important author of the second half of the 18th century and influential spokesman for the emancipation of the Jews, often read and played from his days until today? In her view, Kant and Lessing do not count because, allegedly, German "national consciousness" was formed in the beginning of the 19th century. Thus, all the "enlightenment authors", Kant and Lessing among them, can be discarded. But why, then, are Goethe and Schiller not in her sample, given the point that they were highly productive exactly in the years, which Greenfeld labelled "formative"? We presume: Because they do not fit into the pattern. At any rate, Greenfeld did certainly not choose the authors who had the widest circulation or the greatest impact on later generations. The problem of *representativity* does not enter her considerations.

In her introduction Greenfeld writes that she has based her interpretation, among other things, on the "testimonies of the participants, left by them in laws and official proclamations"[73]. But she does not quote any law or official proclamation from that time period at all. A good starting point could have been the *Hambacher Fest* of 27 May 1832 with about 20-30.000 participants, the first manifestation of German nationalism as a *mass* movement.[74] The slogans of the meeting were a united and free Germany, the abolishment of the privileges of the nobility, and Republic and Democracy. It should perhaps be underlined: German nationalism in the first half of the 19th century was a *democratic* movement.

If "laws and proclamations" are relevant, then perhaps the National Assembly of 1848 is worth studying. This was the first freely-elected body in German history. After the fierce barricade fights of spring 1848 in practically every major German city, the traditional authorities accepted the election of a national representation, which should draft a constitution. The franchise varied slightly in the states of the German League; on average between 80 and 90 percent of the male population above the age of 25 years could vote.[75] The constitution which the National Assembly finally endorsed in 1849, combined democratic, monarchic, federal and unitarian principles:[76] A *Kaiser* should be head of state, but all legislation was to be elaborated by a two-chamber parliament which consisted of a *Volkshaus*, to

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[73] See note 69.
[74] Wehler, op.cit., p. 365.
[75] Wehler, op. cit., p. 738.
[76] Ibid., p. 750.

be elected by the universal franchise of all male citizens, and a *Staatenhaus*, which represented parliaments and governments of the member states. The monarch had a veto right, but this veto could only delay and not block legislation. In our context perhaps particularly important: Equality in front of the law, Jews included, belonged to the basic principles of the constitution (§ 137: "… The Germans are equal in front of the law …")[77]. In fact, in 1849 most of the discriminations against Jews *were* already abolished (in e.g. Prussia in 1812), but the constitution made it an compulsory principle also for the most back warded parts of Germany. This constitution reflected German nationalism at this time.

Greenfeld might feel justified to discard the National Assembly 1848/49 because its project of German unification failed. In 1849 the traditional monarchic authorities remained victorious, and Bismarck's united Germany of 1867/1871 was much less democratic. But such reasoning raises the question regarding what is more relevant for the study of "national cultures": The result of elections and the expressions of the political will of the vast majority of the population, or the question of who controls the bigger guns? In 1849 the traditional powers, which were in control of the bigger guns, won the civil war. But wasn't Greenfeld's book about culture?

Furthermore, the construction of the German Reich of 1867/1871[78] shows that it would be erroneous to regard the movement of 1848/49 as a plain failure. Bismarck was no democrat, but he had to make compromises with the most influential currents in the German population. Therefore, also the constitution of 1867/71 contained a two-chamber parliament, where the Reichstag was elected on the basis of a *universal and equal* franchise (something England did not have at this time). The constitution of 1867/71 was not democratic in the sense that the government was not dependent on parliament; the chancellor was appointed by the monarch, and executive institutions (most crucially: the armed forces) were not subject to parliamentary control. But the Reichstag had to endorse all legislation and the federal budget. As was the case with the constitution of 1849, freedom of speech, of press, and of organisation were basic constitutional principles, and so was equality in front of the laws. The Jews were, of course, judicially completely emancipated. And throughout the 19th century they experienced a steady social advance.

The National Liberals, political heirs of the 1848/49 movement, were the strongest political party after 1867, and Bismarck's main political ally in Reichstag in the 1870s. Eduard Lasker was chairman, and Ludwig Bamberger, the "father of the Reichsmark", was particularly influential within economic policy making. Both were Jews. And at the elections to the

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[77] Jessen, Hans, *Die Deutsche Revolution 1848/49 in Augenzeugenberichten*, München, 2. edition, 1976, p. 307.

[78] In 1867, after the victorious war with Austria, the *Norddeutscher Bund* under Prussian leadership was formed. It united the states north of the river Main. In 1870/71 it was enlarged by the southern German states and formed thereafter the German Reich. The constitutional essentials were those of the Norddeutscher Bund.

first Reichstag in 1871, National Liberals, left-wing liberals, and the Catholic *Zentrum* party gained in total 63 per cent of the votes.[79] This means that political forces, which, according to Greenfeld, did not represent German "national identity", received two thirds of the votes.

"Resentment to the West", we remember, was another building block of Greenfeld's "German identity". She quotes several authors who indeed had negative attitudes as regards France or England. But she seems to regard France and England as interchangeable nations in this context, and thus she perceives the hatred against the Napoleonic occupation 1806-13 as an expression of resentment to the "West". Yet, at that time many leading politicians were positively impressed by English institutions. As Greenfeld states: "Both Stein and Arndt, for example, admired England."[80] Stein was Prussian prime minister and one of the main initiators of the liberal reform wave after 1807. But again, neither the politician Stein nor the intellectual Arndt are valid exponents of the "German national identity". By contrast, the anglophobe Heinrich v. Treitschke could represent "the" "German opinion of the English nation".

In Greenfeld's account, Adam Smith is a negative figure to "the" German mind. But Christian Kraus, Kant's successor at the philosophy chair in Königsberg, claimed that Smith's *Wealth of Nations* was the book that "produced the most benevolent results since the New Testament."[81] Furthermore, Adam Smith (and other liberal economists) had a tremendous influence in Germany, not the least within the Prussian bureaucracy. The economic policy of Prussia, and of the *Zollverein*, the customs union after 1834, was one of systematic liberalism. In many cases, Prussia practised liberal principles more consistently than Great Britain, a fact that did not pass unnoticed by contemporary British liberals. John Stuart Mill, for instance, when arguing for a land reform in Ireland, evoked the Prussian agrarian reforms as an example and wrote that the "ministers Stein and Hardenberg (…) revolutionised the state of landed property in the Prussian monarchy, and left their names to posterity as the greatest benefactors of their country."[82]

The economic historian William Oscar Henderson, when placing the Prussian policy in the decades after the Napoleonic Wars in a comparative perspective, wrote: "Prussia's moderate duties stood in sharp contrast to the high tariffs and prohibitions of her neighbours [Footnote: Professor J.H. Clapham considered that Prussia had 'immeasurably the wisest and most scientific tariff then existing among the great powers', The Economic

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[79] Boldt, Hans, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte, Band 2. Von 1806 bis zur Gegenwart*. 2. Auflage, München, 1993, p. 375.
[80] Greenfeld, op. cit., p. 377.
[81] "Seit der Zeit des Neuen Testamentes hat kein Buch segensreichere Wirkungen gehabt", Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgesichte. Erster Band. Vom Feudalismes des Alten Reiches bis zur Defensiven Modernisierung der Reformära 1700-1815*, München, 2. Auflage, 1989, p. 405.
[82] Mill, John Stuart, *Principles of Political Economy, with some of the Applications to Social Philosophy (1848)*, New edition 1909, with an introduction by Sir William Ashley, reprint 1987, Fairfield, New York, p. 334.

Development of France and Germany 1815-1914 (1936), p. 97] Huskisson praised the Prussian tariff in a speech in the House of Commons in 1827 and commented: 'I trust that the time will come when we can say as much for the tariff of this country.'"[83] Thus, once again we have to note that Greenfeld's account is utterly at odds with Germany's *most influential* intellectual currents and political practices.

We can, of course, agree with her that anti-Semitism existed (as an inferior current which had no influence on constitutions or legislation). But it did not exist in the manner depicted by Greenfeld. According to her, "German national consciousness was unmistakably and distinctly racist from the moment it existed, and the national identity of the Germans was essentially an identity of race, and only superficially that of language or anything else."[84] We notice again that "the" Germans have just one "national identity" or "national consciousness". As empirical evidence, she quotes Arndt, Körner, Jahn and Schlegel, i.e. four quotes all in all, who depicted the Germans as being united by a "bond of blood", being "pure blood", and the like. However, in a footnote she writes that in Fichte's view the Germans, i.e. the German-speaking people, were a "mixture".[85] She does not inform us why Fichte in this case did not represent "the" German national consciousness. Yet interestingly, in this context she accepts Arndt, i.e. the same Arndt whose Anglophilia she otherwise dismissed as irrelevant for "the" German identity. Thus, Greenfeld does not merely select *among* authors, according to whether they fit into her pattern or not. Also *the same author* becomes switched on or off, according to the pattern.

There were, as a matter of fact, dozens and hundreds of authors who saw *language,* without any reference to or even in clear opposition to "blood", as the constituent of German identity. It may suffice to point at the statistician Richard Böckh, who in his influential publications in the 1860s argued that language was the only adequate indicator of nationality and therefore concluded that the Ashkenazi Jews had to be classified as Germans, given the point that Yiddish was unquestionably a German dialect, derived from medieval German.[86]

We can agree with Greenfeld that for authors such as Jahn, language and "blood" goes hand in hand. However, postulating a "bond of blood" is not the same as racism. The bond of blood is a metaphor which was used everywhere by ethnic nationalists; for them a nation was a *community of descent*, comparable to a big family. Ethnic nationalism is also to be found in England or France, and Spanish nationalists have explicitly referred to the purity of blood as a Spanish characteristic ("liempieza de sangre").[87] It is relevant in this context to revert to Anthony Smith and Hans Kohn, who juxtaposed this "ethnic" nationalism to "civic" nationalism". Greenfeld

[83] Henderson, William Oscar, The Zollverein, 3. edition, London 1984, p. 42f.
[84] Greenfeld, op. cit., p. 369.
[85] Ibid., p. 549n181.
[86] Hobsbawm, op. cit., p. 21f.
[87] Smith, op. cit., p. 58.

herself presents this distinction in her introduction, declaring it to be a "useful analytical tool".[88] But then she abandons it and declares ethnic nationalism to be identical with biological racism. But entertaining a myth that your own nation is a kind of big family and a community of descent does not imply that you watch your neighbouring nation as a different *race*. It can be just another "family". Certainly, the idea of "bondage of the blood" is not properly compatible to the idea of the emancipation of the Jews. But it is not the same as biological racism. Besides, as it has been noted earlier, German constitutions and legislation were not exclusive in this sense, the Jews (as well as the Poles, the Danes, the Mazurians, the Sorbians, the Kashubians, etc.) received exactly the same legal status as the Westphalians or the Bavarians.

According to Greenfeld, *racial* anti-Semitism is "from the outset" a part of the German racial national identity.[89] The empirical basis for this claim is constituted by two quotes, Herder and "a patriotic lawyer, Grattenauer". Herder wrote that the Jews were "in Europe an Asiatic folk foreign to our continent", and, according to Grattenauer, they were an "Asiatic, alien folk."[90] Both quotes can be regarded as being judaeophobic. But an alien *folk* is not another *race*. Thus, when it comes to *racial* anti-Semitism, Greenfeld has *not one single contemporary source* from the time which, according to her, was formative to "national identity". This may not be surprising given the point that biological racism is a phenomenon of the *second half* of the 19th century, in the wake of Darwinism. It originated in England and France (Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Arthur de Gobineau) and came to Germany as a foreign import. Racism, in this respect considerably deviating from ethnic nationalism, depicted the Jews (and e.g. the yellow race) not only as different people, but also as different biological creatures, endowed by nature with different genes and therefore immutable. By 1900 this way of thinking was rather widespread, not the least in the US or in Great Britain. For instance, the future president Theodore Roosevelt, when being agitated by Chinese immigration to California, talked of the Chinese as the "immoral, degraded, and worthless race". And in a similar context Rudyard Kipling remarked: "There are three races who can work but there is only one that can swarm."[91]

Greenfeld further writes that "the" Germans saw the Jews as an "Asiatic" folk. But on the same page[92] she also constructs a "German identity" according to which the Jews were identified with the West. Should it thus be concluded that the "West" was located in Asia?

It is rare to find a presentation as Greenfeld's, composed to such an extent of self-contradictions, mangled evidence and one-eyed selectivity.

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[88] Greenfeld,op. cit. p. 12.
[89] Greenfeld, op. cit., p. 382f.
[90] Greenfeld, op. cit., p. 383.
[91] As quoted in Schimmelpenninck von der Oye, David, *Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan,* Northern Illinois University Press, 2001, p. 95.
[92] Greenfeld, op. cit., p. 383.

What is actually her "methodology"? Greenfeld's axiomatic starting point is the idea that the Holocaust is the authentic expression of German identity. This becomes apparent already in the heading of the chapter ("The Final Solution of Infinite Longing"). The second axiom is the postulate that German "identity" was formed around 1815 (allowing her to dismiss Kant, Lessing, and many others). According to axiom number three, "national identity" remains unchanged once it was established. As a "result" she states: "Germany was ready for the Holocaust from the moment German national identity existed. It is imperative to realize this."[93] Consequently, her treatment of the empirical material follows a simple pattern: Only pieces which fit into the pattern are accepted, all the rest becomes discarded. And when no proper evidence can be produced (as is the case with e.g. racism), it becomes mangled in order to make it fit.

By a similar procedure, she constructs an English, French, Russian and American "national identity". The "results" were, of course, very different. Russia, was painted rather darkly in a similar manner as Germany, but England and in particular the US appeared shining brightly. Her summary of the "identity" of her own country is quoted below:

> **The uniqueness of the American nation consists in that in the course of its long existence (...) it has remained faithful to the original idea of the nation, and come closest to the realization of the principles of individualistic, civic nationalism. It stands as an example of its original promise – democracy – a proof of its resilience and viability despite the contradictions inherent in it. It is because of this, not because of its newness or heterogeneity, that America is not a nation like all the others.[94]**

I see this as a naive exercise in national self-glorification. Was this the reason for the enthusiastic reception, which Greenfeld's book received among American reviewers?[95] At least Michael Ignatieff, in the *New Republic*, seems to be fascinated by the book exactly because of its ideological implications: "An exhilarating, ambitious, and thoughtful study (…) Greenfeld's analysis allows one to see just what is wrong with that strain of liberal thinking that views nationalism as a form of atavism."[96]

But Ignatieff does not seem to be aware of the point that, by applying Greenfeld's methods, one could easily construct an "American Identity" along the following lines, perhaps under the heading: *Wounded Knee, Hiroshima, My Lai – The American Nightmare Comes True*. As a motto one could choose General Phillip Sheridan's remark that only a dead Indian was a good Indian. We proceed by juxtaposing solemn texts such as the Declaration of Independence, according to which all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain undeniable rights, with other

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[93] Ibid., p. 384.

[94] Ibid., p. 484.

[95] To be true, not all reviewers were equally enthusiastic. Fritz Stern wrote: "The exposition is clear, even when the sociology is a bit abstract and the history erroneous. The German section is particularly weak. The author's reach is far greater than her grasp." *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, p. 203.

[96] http://www.hup.harvard.edu/reviews/GRENAO_R.html.

American texts, which justify slavery and the invasion of Indian territory. In this context, it is also possible to include some racist remarks by Theodore Roosevelt.[97] We collect evidence about the treatment of black slaves and Indians, and about the relentless and merciless expansion westwards. We conclude that hypocrisy and an uncontrollable urge to suppress or to exterminate non-White people have been the building blocks of American Identity. The atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the widespread use of Napalm in Vietnam and, more recently, the torture of Iraqi prisoners are but emanations of this spirit.

4. Conclusion

We have studied three important books, which in many respects are very different. But they have in common that substantial elements of national mythology, in an uncontrolled way, have entered the very foundations of their argumentations. At least partially, all three books have thus become carriers of a nationalist mythology themselves, whether this was the intention of the authors or not.

The gateways for the inflow of nationalist myths have been different in character. Gellner, who has criticised some nationalist myths himself, postulates that an industrial society requires a uniform national culture. If this were true, it would actually be a vindication of the old nationalist myth of the homogeneous nation. But Gellner uses a very blunt concept of culture and falls into a "structuralist fallacy", namely by implicitly postulating that all aspects of culture are part of one strictly interconnected set. But this has, at least in regards to modern nations, *blatantly* not been the case. People may speak the same language and nevertheless adhere to completely different sets of beliefs or values, whereas people speaking the same language might have very similar outlooks or creeds.

In a way, Gellner's "sin" is one of exaggeration: We agree that the transition to industrial society has been accompanied by *some* important cultural changes, among them new requirements for communication. But by jumping from this observation to the idea that an industrial society requires a uniform culture, he ends up formulating a position which is at odds with the empirical reality of an industrial society. Furthermore, in contrast to Gellner's model, industry and capitalism in general have constantly developed dynamic cooperation and interaction *across* cultural and national borders. This is one of the reasons why "globalisation" is currently perceived by many as being highly confusing, not to say menacing. Finally, Gellner's model fails to explain aggressive and imperialist nationalism. Actually, according to Gellner's logic, nationalism is about making culture and state congruent. Imperialism would be against its very nature – this

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[97] See, for instance, Finkelstein, Norman G., 'Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's "Crazy" Thesis: A Critique of *Hitler's Willing Executioners'*, *new left review*, 224, july/august 1997, pp. 39-87, esp. p. 81.

being another standard myth which nationalists have cultivated time and again, in striking contrast to the historical evidence in many, many cases.

In contrast to Gellner's mainly abstract model reasoning, Anthony D. Smith unfolded a rich historical panorama. It suffers, however, from a substantial internal contradiction. On the one hand, he underlines that nations, in all their major aspects, are modern creations. In this context, he points at the bureaucratic state as the major agent of nation building, and the importance of the interconnected administrative, economic and cultural "revolutions". Yet, on the other hand, he operates with a concept of "national identity" which is closely linked to his "ethnic identity". This way, he blurs the border between pre-modern ethnies and modern nations, thus making the nation appear as an "old" phenomenon. The components of his "national identity" (for instance "common historical mythology") presuppose a high level of cultural homogeneity which again is at odds with the reality of modern nations. It is striking that an author who otherwise informs the reader about numerous empirical details, completely refrains from empirical testing when it comes to his definition of "national identity", which, after all, constitutes the very core of his book. Instead he concludes from the *myths* of nationalists about nations to the reality of nations. And he invokes functionalist arguments about the necessity of myths for social cohesion – functionalist arguments which might be useful for studying pre-modern ethnies, but which are beside the point when dealing with modern nations. As a result, also Smith cultivates the nationalist myth of the cultural homogeneity of modern nation to quite some extent.

Neither Gellner nor Smith seem to have been nationalists in a political sense; up to a certain point they even both underline the mythological character of nationalism. Nevertheless, nationalist myths have crept into the foundations of their argumentation.

The case is different with Liah Greenfeld. Her book rests firmly on all the tenets of nationalist mythology (homogeneity, constancy over time, biological analogies), which become translated in a high-style Sociologuese (full of internal contradictions). The five main parts of the book contain five crude national stereotypes, whose empirical "substance" consists of a compilation of qualitative material which has been rigorously selected according to whether it fitted into the pattern or not. Questions of the quantitative distribution of cultural currents remain outside her interest – necessarily so, otherwise her idea of a "national identity" would crumble immediately. Her treatment of historical sources exhibits substantial mangling of her evidence – necessarily so, otherwise her axiom of the constancy over time of the "national identity" would crumble too. The flaws of her "methodology" are, in fact, inseparable from the content of her position. As explained in more detail in the Prologue, only by rigorously selecting *qualitative* evidence and disregarding *quantitative* problems can national stereotypes be dressed up to look "plausible". Finally, in a time of cultural change, a constancy over time of a "national identity" can only be postulated by mishandling historical sources.

According to Greenfeld's "conclusions", the "national identity" of her own nation, the United States, is very nice and compatible with universalism and the progress of humankind in general. By contrast, the Russian and particularly the German "identity" has been an ugly one, full of resentment and racial hatred. We see this as naive constructions by a nationalist author, who presents her own nation as shining brightly (auto-stereotype), while particularly Russia and Germany serve as a dark background (hetero-stereotype). Therefore the heading for the section dealing with Greenfeld was chosen to be: "Nationalist mythology in our time."

In spite of their differences, the works of Gellner, Smith and Greenfeld show that nationalist myths are still quite widespread in academia and they are still able to confuse authors. And perhaps somewhat ironically, particularly the comparatively new branch of "nationalism studies" seems to have been a channel for recycling nationalist myths.

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