

THE DAILY CREATION OF THE NATION-SELF
AND THE PROBLEM OF THE BORDER

by

TERRY HUGHSTON

UTZ L. MCKNIGHT, COMMITTEE CHAIR
STEPHEN BORRELLI
STEFANIE FISHEL
DANIEL LEVINE
JOSEPH SMITH

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an attempt to give a more accurate answer to the perennial question of “What is a nation?” by offering a novel theory of the nation-as-self. The theoretical foundation of this theory is largely built upon the works of Ludwig Feuerbach, Carl Schmitt, and Friedrich Nietzsche by arguing that the nation is created through a regular (if not daily) process by which a rational self-reflective agent generates a conception of nation as an alienated version of the politics of that self. Nation essentially possesses the political and personal characteristics of the self yet stands, abstractly, in distinction to the self. The individual then uses the nation-self to examine other claims of nation by other selves as a way of determining whether they are similar enough to the self to warrant a tenuous and temporary designation as a conational or be designated as exception. After establishing this theory of the nation-self, I will examine the potential of civic compassion as a method by which we can relax the view of nations as essentially bordered and imagine a paradigm of boundless political identities without states of exception and exclusion.

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INTRODUCTION

“We are a people of compassion and we are a people of law. But there is nothing compassionate about the failure to enforce immigration laws,” said former Attorney General Jeff Sessions in a statement to assembled press on the ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program (designed to allow certain undocumented persons who had entered the United States as children to apply for work visas) (Sessions, 2017). Many of those same media outlets immediately brought appeals to anything except a loosely and conveniently construed notion of executive overreach into question¹. However, this notion of a compassionate rescinding of a law that allowed many from outside the Trump administration’s recognized sphere of American nationality merely to live and work despite having entered the country at a young age and under no volition of their own as minors speaks to a reading of compassion similar to that expressed in the 1917 eugenics propaganda film, The Black Stork, which asserted that “There are times when saving a life is a greater crime than taking one” (Wharton & Wharton, 1917). Such a view on a notion of compassion to underscore the exclusivity of nation in defense of those not only within the nationality but also outside the nationality relies on a construction of nation that is more narrowly defined than most scholars (or even former Attorney General Sessions himself) would acknowledge.

¹For an exception to this see (Kurtzelben, 2017).

Such a narrow definition presents us with questions of how nation is constructed, how nation works, and how nation is active in the contemporary political landscape of the United States and other nations as well in light of an increased focus on immigration and refugees alongside a resurgence of openly displayed neo-fascism and right-wing racism in those same countries. Nation thus defined betrays an idea that is not entirely dissimilar to the “epistemology of ignorance” that Mills identifies as part of the Racial Contract (Mills, 1997, p. 18). Both operate similarly in their classification of default in-groups and out-groups based on something that is alleged or assumed to be obvious to those being classified (whether those classifications are being chosen, assumed or forced). However, nation as an epistemological phenomenon does not have the willful ignorance that is a feature of the Racial Contract. While nationalists often see their nation and the classification on which it is based as something that is as natural as the Racial Contract seems to be to its signatories and beneficiaries, there is a subtle distinction in the functioning of the epistemology of these two social constructions. While the signatories of the Racial Contract have made another contract with themselves in order to limit the evidentiary possibility of demonstrating a hypocritical contradiction between the hypothetical of the social contract and the reality of the Racial Contract, a nationalist often feels no need to do so.

Even as some nationalist theorists will continue to default to a more “naturalist” explanation for nation (whether it is the ethnic tribalism of Anthony Smith or the logic of mutual ethical obligation of David Miller), nationalists lean on an epistemological understanding that need not worry as much about proving to be hypocritical (as many staunch nationalists would readily admit as theorists from Renan to Miller have) that there is a tension already between a conservative nationalism and a liberal humanistic notion of liberty and consent involved in the

social contract. Rather, nationalists and their theorists rely upon a strict epistemology as a distraction from the shallowness of their ontological assumptions. They do not seek to ignore or explain away the tension through the “epistemology of ignorance” that Mills cites, but rather border on what might be identified as an “epistemology of shamelessness” as the modern nationalist faces very little fear of social pressure or ostracization from either the left or the right as is the case with many contemporary racists (at least as was more the case before the advent of Trumpism and the alt-right made such beliefs work open again in American political rhetoric matching other right-nationalists movements in Europe).

As a result, there is no pressure to form a parallel movement to justify these classifications (as is the case with race-based systems of oppression as Mills, again, notes) either in terms of biology or other scientific methods. Instead, the nationalist merely does not care and finds a very low standard of evidence sufficient to justify the distinction. In doing so, a nationalist thus composed can find themselves very easily in a position where there is a certain form of logic within the limited constraints of their epistemological horizon that allows for an acceptance of denying someone any form of human rights based on the notion that such a denial is to their benefit in the end.

This definition is reminiscent of an idea of nation given voice by Ernest Renan in his speech “What is a Nation?” whereby nation is seen as a “daily plebiscite” in which “A great aggregation of men, in sane mind and warm heart, created a moral conscience that calls itself a nation” (Renan, 1882/1939, p. 205). Again, Renan’s words here beg the question of what kind of moral conscience is required to make such a daily decision on what the boundaries of nation might be in a similar vein to that of Attorney General Sessions requiring the ending of DACA in the name of compassion for those no longer benefitting from the program. Indeed,

what is the value of a moral conscience if such a conscience requires a moral obligation only to those who happen to also be among that “aggregation” just as any compassion is suspect which brings with it the tangible reduction in the quality of life of the beneficiaries of such compassion. Renan goes on to say that, “As long as this moral conscience proofs its strength by sacrifices that require the subordination of the individual to the communal good, it is legitimate and has the right to exist” (Renan, 1882/1939, p. 205). This further instantiates an idea not only of a communal, but not universal good in the name of moral conscience but also asserts that the strength and legitimacy of such a conscience is the degree to which a nation can sacrifice on an altar to itself. This dissertation seeks to examine the daily nature of such a sacrifice with an eye towards protecting those lives that nationals are all-too-willing to sacrifice in the name of compassion to the sacrificial lambs themselves. To that end, I hope to develop a theory of the nation as an extension of the self.

The nation-self is essentially a reflexive identity wherein an individual posits the idea of nation as a separate entity in order to give shape and understanding to an understanding of the self’s own politics. The alienated nation-self exists as the same thing as the individual who has imagined it yet stands apart from it (and even in conflict with it). Once estranged from the original self, the nation-self becomes both a means for and an instance of decision of exception wherein each other agent with which the nation-self comes in contact is judged according to their perceived similarity to the nation as conceived. Any other individual deemed similar enough to pass as another reflection of the nation-self as it has been imagined is temporarily and tenuously granted the status of conational. However, this process must occur regularly, even daily, as I assume that no person with the ability to self-reflect has a fixed and static reflection, particularly as political environments and current events are shaped our concepts of nation and influenced by

those same concepts. As such, the designated exceptional boundaries of the nation adjust as the perception of the self changes or as the political beliefs or actions of the other change, irrespective of whether they have been previously designated as conational.

This primary goal of this dissertation is to provide a new answer to the question: What is nation? Herein, I will assert that the process of daily creating the nation-self provides a novel description of the nation as a psychological phenomenon rather than merely mimicking other theoretical attempts to provide a taxonomy of nations or to provide a historical narrative of the genesis of the same. However, this dissertation will evaluate several such claims as a way of both understanding the more traditional views of nation and casting the theory of the nation-self in distinction to them. Additionally, instead of a historical chronicle of the origins of nations in general or any single nation, I will offer a theoretical explanation for the alienated creation of the nation-self and the definition of both literal and metaphorical borders and boundaries are that self. Finally, I hope to bring into question the problem of the border addressed by many theories of nation and use a conception of compassion as a political emotion as a method by which we can transcend the boundaries of the nation-self into a less exclusive political paradigm. The chapters that follow will take each of these arguments in turn.

Chapter One: The Daily Creation of Nation

The first chapter of this dissertation will scrutinize the traditional way in which nations are theoretically conceived as a way of offering critique of such definitions of nation before asserting a general and broad definition of my own theory of the nation-as-self. The first section will examine the criteria of nation as set out by David Miller as a way of addressing the most common ways in which nation is described. For Miller nations are categorized by mutual

recognition, an active identity, historical continuity, geographical territory claims, and a common public culture. From these criteria combined, he argues that there is sufficient evidence that one's primary moral obligation should be to one's conationals. Both these definitional characteristics of nation as well as the moral obligation that Miller derives from it will be the subject of question across the entire dissertation.

From Miller's categorization we examine arguments about the prepolitical nature of nations and first introduce the problem of the border. The works of Anthony Smith assert that there is a natural ethnic origin of nations that exist prepolitically. For Smith, all definitions of nations are, essentially, references to the ongoing nature of these historical ethnic ties providing, for him, an even stronger claim of moral obligation than that of Miller. Alternatively, Arash Abizadeh will argue that there can be no prepolitical basis for nations and rejects all claims to the contrary while also giving us insight into the potential for the demos to be unbounded in a way that will be further discussed in subsequent chapters.

The second section of this chapter will examine the claims of Ernest Renan. Renan argues that the nation is a daily referendum by its adherents in which the nation is regularly reconstituted as a spiritual connection between conationals. Renan uses this as an attempt to rekindle the revolutionary patriotic spirit that he thinks categorized France in the late 18th century as a way of offering support to the nation contemporaneously to him. While disagreeing with his assertions about the need for a renewed and strengthened sense of nationalism, I will borrow Renan's assertion of the daily realization and spirituality of the concept of nation.

From there, the third section of the chapter will give a rough outline to the concept of the nation-self. I will briefly describe the nation-self as an idea and argue for the process by which I believe it operates. This explanation will largely be a demonstration of the nation-self as a

theoretical model as a thing that requires daily recreation and from which a daily process of othering occurs. The theoretical foundation of the idea of the nation-self will be the subject of the second chapter.

Chapter Two: On Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Schmitt, and Generating the Alienated Nation-Self

The second chapter of this dissertation project will give shape and substance to the theoretical background of the theory of the nation-self. I will begin with the religious writings of Ludwig Feuerbach who argues that the idea of God (termed by Feuerbach often as the Divine Being) is a concept generated by individuals as a way of projecting their own characteristics onto a perfect and unbounded reflection of themselves so as to be able to understand themselves by understanding the alienated fetish-object. Feuerbach details the connection between the self and the Divine Being as a reflection of that self and discusses how such a concept operates within the theological and doctrinal beliefs of Christianity. I will argue that the nation-self is generated in a process that mirrors Feuerbach's creation of God. As individuals self-reflect and generate an idea of nation based on that political self-realization they find themselves alienated from their own created alternate self. The distinction between the two again raise the problem of the border as Feuerbach believes that the Divine Being can only be conceived as unbounded and unlimited and nations appear, at first glance, to be a thing that must be conceived as having strict literal and metaphorical borders. I will also examine a few other parallels between Feuerbach's explanation of Christian theology and aspects of the theory of the nation-self.

The second section of this chapter will further investigate both the decision of exceptionalism that occurs by conceiving of a nation as bordered and legitimizing the use of a religious text for political purposes by using the work of Carl Schmitt. Schmitt's Political

Theology gives us a lens through which to better understand the bounded conception of the nation-self as something that generates both a political norm and establishes the context for and substance of states of emergency that inform the exceptions around that nation-self. This section will further demonstrate the connection between the creation of a Feuerbachian nation-self and Schmitt's conception of sovereignty as the ability to decide the exception of others.

The final section of this chapter will utilize the work of Friedrich Nietzsche and Mark Warren to give initial consideration to the possibility of an unbounded nation-self. Nietzsche's concern is that a sense of bounded horizons is what allows the individual to find meaning in life and avoid the perils of nihilism. The worry is that as liberal democratic institutions take root as secularized versions of older political and theological norms that the shifts in the realities of our existence no longer match up with our assumptions of the metaphorical borders of our conception and worldview. In response, I will doubly argue that the daily generation of the nation-self partially avoids this slip into nihilism and begin here to argue that there is theoretical space for imagining the possibility of a world beyond the boundedness of our nation-selves.

Chapter Three: On Frank and Anderson's Constituent Moments and National Imaginings

The third chapter in this dissertation will examine two alternative ways of viewing the origin of nations. Rather than attempting to create a criterion by which one can assess national claims or argue for a taxonomy of nations, Jason Frank and Benedict Anderson offer unorthodox explanations for how nations came into existence historically. Both theorists offer historical explanations for the rise of nation that will be examined in turn as a way of offering critiques for these theories and finding partial support for the theory of the nation-self.

The first section of this chapter will examine the idea of “constituent moments” as asserted by Frank. Frank sees these moments as instances wherein a group of individuals becomes a political “people” by taking up the latent, willful constituent power that lays dormant just beneath the surface of established political institutions. This constituent power gives a people the ability to establish extralegal institutions for themselves as a way of meeting needs that their established governments either cannot or will not meet. This power allows them both to make a new claim to represent *vox populi* as well as recreate the context and standards by which such claims are legitimized. Frank argues that this power is something that can always be reactivated whenever a people needs to reclaim their revolutionary creative abilities and uses various examples from American political history as evidence that this has been the case from prerevolutionary times until the contemporary United States. While offering a critique of the border problem inherent in Frank’s constituent moments, this section also discusses how the latency of constituent power is similar to the regularity of the process of generating the nation-self.

The second section in this chapter examines the historical narrative that Benedict Anderson argues explains the origin of the nation as a concept. Anderson asserts that nations are “imagined” things and that they are imagined in a such a way that they are bounded, sovereign communities of individuals to whom we can offer love and patriotic devotion despite their artificiality. His points out the seemingly paradoxical nature of nations as something that is objectively modern yet subjectively ancient. The answer to this paradox is found in the generation of nation as a concept as older paradigms of religious communities and monarchical dynasties are fading out of dominance. The invention of new technology and an emphasis on vernacular languages allows for ideas of nation to become fixed and definitional (like those

offered by Miller in a previous chapter) and ported around the world to fit various localized contexts. While critical of much of Anderson's theory, I argue that the theory of the nation-self is also informed by the historical explanation the imagined community can offer. Though the theory of the nation-self need not inherently have a historical explanation, Anderson's modern account of the rise of nation as an artifact of modernity is sufficient as such an explanation.

The final section in this chapter will examine the inherent limitations and boundedness of nations as conceived by both Frank and Anderson. While their novel approaches offer new insight into the nation as a regularly created thing that has psychological elements, both of their conceptions are specifically subject to the same problem of the border as the defenses of nation offered by Renan, Miller, and Smith. This section will critique such a reliance upon bounded thinking and, again, suggest that ideas of nation need not be bounded and that unboundedness outside of the confines of nations can be possible in another shift of political paradigms.

Chapter Four: Borderline Compassion and Compassion at the Borderline

The final chapter of this dissertation will offer a varied look at the problem of the border. I will examine arguments in favor of the necessity of both literal and metaphorical borders and suggest that compassion can be both a tool and a test for a way in which we might transcend the borders of nations, even the reflective nation-self. The first section of this chapter will discuss briefly the novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep and offer a definition of compassion as a political emotion that helps us to relate to the suffering of other in a way that can spur us beyond our own social and political boundaries into something broader and more common.

The second and third sections of this chapter will examine the claims of the cosmopolitans to be a philosophy that pushes the idea of human rights beyond the borders of

nation. However, I will argue that there are inherent flaws in such a philosophy. Firstly, contemporary cosmopolitans assume a connection to the ancient cynics that is not borne out upon closer consideration. Secondly, even on their own terms, contemporary cosmopolitanism does not transgress the borders of nations which they claim are problematic but simply relocate those borders to encompass a larger metaphorical territory without solving the inherent problems of exclusion caused by such borders. As an example of this phenomenon, I look at the philosophical conflict between Du Bois and Diagne over the issue of cosmopolitan ideals and the black diaspora in the early 20th century.

Having dismissed the claims of the cosmopolitans, the subsequent two sections of this chapter examine arguments in defense of borders. David Miller returns in this chapter with an argument in favor of the contemporary liberal nation emphasizing their own national borders and denying access and compassion to those outside them as he frames the issue of immigration and refugees in the context of 2016 under the same type of moral obligations that were problematic in the first chapter. Additionally, I, again, examine Nietzsche's arguments about the metaphorical boundaries of truth claims in the context of nation through the lens of Tracy Strong.

The penultimate section of this chapter will review Wendy Brown's claim that a return to an emphasis on national border walls (and their metaphorical counterparts) are signs of a waning sense of sovereignty rather than giving renewed strength to those contemporary national sovereigns. Following Schmitt, Brown argues that the insistence upon walling represents a continued state of exception that undermines the validity of the claim to sovereignty which can designate such a state of exception.

The final section of this chapter returns to the idea of compassion as what can allow us to transgress national boundaries and solve the problem of the border. This section returns to the

Dick novel from the beginning of the chapter to discuss the possibility that the capacity for compassion should be the defining characteristic of humanity and allows us to move beyond the bounded thinking offered to us by theories of nation into something more transgressive and with more potential.

CHAPTER ONE: THE DAILY CREATION OF NATION

Since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, most have acknowledged the world to be divided into a series of nation-states. These nation-states reflected the political order that resulted from decades of wars, primarily motivated by religion, that cost countless lives across Europe. The Peace was meant to serve as a partial deterrent to future conflicts like those that had plagued the continent by establishing a system of sovereign states who could use their relative balance of power to keep one another in check. In what has since been heralded by some as the beginning of the modern system of international relations, representatives from 16 European States, 66 Imperial States of the Holy Roman Empire, and various other interested parties signed a series of treaties that established borders, adjusted territorial claims, and provided limited religious freedoms to Christians living in areas where their denomination was not the predominant form of worship.

However, though this historical series of events has been widely regarded as having created the political and legal notion of the modern nation-state (or, at the very least the construction of a Westphalian myth that stands in for an assumed historical reality), the idea of “nation” as a political entity existed before and has changed since. Depending on how one defines “nation,” such apparent political communities date back to antiquity (although, as will be addressed in this and the following chapters such claims may be specious modern and contemporary creations to justify claims of national identity by coopting and retroactively changing or reinterpreting various histories). Many characteristics of nations and national

identities are thought to be constant and unchanging, almost by definition while other characteristics have allowed the conception of nation to adapt to fit the current political climate and circumstances of the time. This chapter will evaluate one such contemporary retelling of the nation by David Miller and the ethical obligations which are claimed to stem from such a nationality. After having done so, I will use an 1882 lecture given by French historian Ernest Renan as a way of both demonstrating how such a taxonomy of what counts as a nation has changed over time and develop a novel theory of the nation as a reflective self.

Miller, Abizadeh, Smith, and the Creation of Nation

David Miller's work on distributive social justice has often intersected with his ideas of nations and the moral obligations which they present, beginning with his 1995 work On Nationality. Miller begins here by examining whether the nation is something created and political or a type of "elemental force outside of human control, akin to natural phenomena like tidal waves" (Miller, 1995, pp. 4-5). To the extent that nations often appear to be ancient political bodies, they might often seem as if they are one of the most fundamental ways in which humans order their political lives. Certainly, this seems to be a predominant way of viewing one's national identity and issues of historical continuity of nation must be addressed by anyone examining the subject. We will return to the moment where nations are constituted and imagined in the next chapter for more discussion. However, this "elemental" or "tidal wave" view of nation provides two interesting points of view to consider.

Firstly, one could see an elemental nation as something inevitable, something that is integral to the natural world despite the artificiality of the borders that represent nations both literally and symbolically. The fascist belief in nation as homeland and motherland fits into this

model. Alternatively, one can see an elemental nation as something against which human beings must ultimately struggle. Just as Marx casts history as class struggle, some might promote a narrative wherein humanity must struggle against and overcome our nationalistic impulses (be they modern or ancient). Einstein's assertion that "Nationalism is an infantile disease" and "the measles of humanity" seems to suggest this natural view, both in the sense that diseases are natural, something against which humanity struggles, and, yet, something that can be overcome (Viereck, 1929, p. 117). Einstein's passing metaphor here is instructional in a few senses. Firstly, he sees nationalism as a disease, something natural yet invasive and potentially dangerous. This seems prescient given that the interview in which the quote was given took place in 1929, still before European nationalism and the wars it caused would reach their early 20th century zenith. Even after the ravages of the first World War, the menace that nationalist movements could represent was apparent. Secondly, Einstein saw nationalism is not just a disease but an infantile one, a disease that, though it might be deadly for some, would be an affliction that most would grow out of and grow beyond. Measles, as a disease, is incredibly contagious², so, too, is nationalism. Both exist as things that are easily transmittable (see more discussion of this in the following chapter's discussion of Benedict Anderson) and can have deadly consequences. This dual recognition both of danger and of the passing nature of it speak to where Einstein saw his contemporary world but also where he might have predicted the passage of time would carry humanity. Miller answers Einstein's metaphor by asserting that if nationalism were such an infantile disease that it "is ineradicable, and all we can do is to make the lives of the patients as comfortable as possible" (Miller, 1995, p. 6). Yet, I believe this quote

² The Center for Disease Control states that 90% of the unimmunized people who come into contact with a person with measles will become infected themselves.

mistakes one kind of natural and elemental view of nationalism for the other. Miller here prefers the more “realistic perspective” that tells us that nations are a practical reality from which we cannot possibly escape. I will not attempt to dispute the practical concerns and problems that nations can and do present both to populations within their own citizenry and without, yet it is error to assume that the presence of a state of affairs in which something exists and has implications must mean that such a state of affairs exists “necessarily” or that it exists. To this end, Einstein’s metaphor continues to be useful because (though it was not at the time of the interview and would not be for three and a half decades later) the literal measles of humanity is almost completely preventable. While there may be no easily administered and almost completely effective vaccine for nationalism as with measles, the disease metaphor might still give hope that the existence of such a paradigm may not be as inevitable as some suggest.

However, although Miller finds the argument for the inescapability of nationalism more empirically plausible than the sub-human view suggested by Einstein and others, he ultimately rejects the notion of the “tidal wave” view of nations instead arguing “ideas of nationality are the conscious creations of bodies of people, who have elaborated and revised them in order to make sense of their social and political surroundings” (Miller, 1995, p. 6). Yet, despite the admitted artificiality of nation, he derives three propositions in defense of nations and nationality³. The first proposition argues that nations actually exist in the sense that they are not entirely fictions and that it is not irrational for individuals to identify as members of one. The second contends

³ It might be worth pointing out that Miller routinely tries to avoid the term “nationalism” in an attempt to avoid bringing the negative associations with that term and the history of nationalist movements into his defense of nations. However, very little in his arguments about nations across his body of work on the subject distinctively prevents one from using his same points and justifications of national identity in a sense of which he would approve from one of which he would not. As such, in my discussion of Miller’s arguments, I will continue to use the terms as relatively interchangeable.

that conationals have a greater ethical and moral obligation to one another. Finally, the third asserts that all nations have a right to self-determine. Let us begin by considering the first proposition, that of the rationality and actuality of national existence.

While I will contend in this chapter that nations in a different way and to a different extent than many theorists (including Miller) assume that they do, the idea of nation as an ontological metaphor is not entirely unfounded. This would seem to be especially true given the second part of Miller's proposition, that it is rational for a group of individuals to identify as a part of a nation. But, without precision in what we mean by the existence of nation and the rationality of nationals, this quickly diverges into a type of *argumentum ad populum* circularly arguing that nations exist because they are believed in and that they are believed in because they exist. Certainly, the common belief in fictions can lead to material circumstances with material consequences in a way that seems to mimic the process by which it appears nations might be conjured into existence. Yet, even then, thinking of nations in this way seems to require either a belief the nations are the natural, prepolitical thing that Miller rejects or that they are self-referential. If, as the proposition claims, nations do actually exist and that individuals can rationally identify with them, then there must be some sort of legitimizing factors that underly the nation itself.

Miller answers this question by later providing five such criteria that help to designate and define what counts as a nation: mutual recognition of members, historical continuity, an active identity, a particular geography, and a common public culture (Miller, 1995, pp. 22-25). Considered together, these five aspects become, for Miller, a litmus test to identify what counts as a legitimate nation and what does not. Since Miller denies that any of these things are references to that some extant entity outside of our own collective, political imaginings, each of

them then helps to compose the nation, at least in part. None of these criteria alone are sufficient in order for nationhood to be established yet not all five are completely necessary either. For example, a nation who possesses mutual recognition, a shared history bound to a geographical place and a common culture yet is not one with which anyone actively identifies has, for Miller, ceased to be a nation. Alternatively, a nation might exist without all of five criteria, or else a newly formed political body might have to wait generations before having developed enough of a historical continuity to be classified as legitimate. While these aspects of nations were meant to be broad brushstrokes of what a nation might be, the margin for difference here makes the definition of nation more ethereal and mystical than Miller intends or admits. However, this ethereality may seem unavoidable when trying to quantify the existence of something based on collective belief alone.

Further, each of these aspects is problematized when one realizes that such a constitution of a nation requires us to set aside most questions about whether the perspectives on what counts for each aspect may not be shared with precision. Who can say with certainty that what one national views as the delineations of a shared history or common culture is the same as that of another national? Even the one of these aspects that seems to be the most concrete, that of particular geography, is less straightforward when one considers the regularity of difficulties of neighbors assessing property lines, or, more to the point, when nations make competing claims for the same particular geography. Can a geographical claim, the most substantive of these as it implies a fixedness in space, overlap with another? Are geographical claims merely metaphorical as well in a way that satisfies the criteria? Is the phenomenon of a map or geographical shape serving as a symbol described by Anderson enough?

Even with an aspect like a common public culture, which is important enough to many that immigrants are often forced with policies and programs requiring cultural assimilation, things are less distinctive. As Abizadeh argues, a shared culture is less an objective given and is instead a “*project to be realized*”⁴ via the exercise of political power, and not a prepolitical ground for power” (Abizadeh, 2012, p. 872). Indeed, because even this cultural connection does not rise to the level of “antecedent fact, then the nationalist legitimization of politics and political project it encompasses... demands some new prepolitical ground” (Abizadeh, 2012, p. 872).

Ceremonies and traditions, even and especially ones whose origins have been forgotten, are insufficient to be other than a political exercise. Language fails to become an objective and external marker of this common public culture even as differences between languages can often be blurred and subtle and dialects and distinctions within languages can often be drastic. One might respond that Miller has already admitted that nations need not have prepolitical foundations; yet, even with that admission most of these aspects of nation possess and appeal to something prepolitical nonetheless. In the end one seems to be left with little more than what Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart said of obscenity, “I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description, and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it...” (Jacobellis v. Ohio, 1964).

One of Miller’s aspects of nation demonstrates this ethereality particularly well, that of a shared historical continuity. He argues that it does not matter if such a history truly exists because the narrative of nations often refers backwards far enough in time that any true origin has been lost anyways. Instead, what becomes more important is the quality of the historical

⁴ Emphasis from the source.

narrative itself, the main purpose of which is not merely to give some sort of backstory that helps to explain the present, but, more importantly, to create an account that can and will inspire a sufficient amount of communal obligation to the nation. To this end, historical national tragedies are more efficient at creating obligation than historical triumphs. Individual historical figures who can serve as heroes or icons may be more effective than a reliance on a vague, amorphous historical “people.” Indeed, for Miller, the narrative need not even be true as he anticipates that a nation may be required to conduct a certain amount of “veil-drawing” and national forgetting in order to obscure anything about the national narrative that might get in the way of inspiring the duty and obligation to nation that keep individuals and generations of individuals believing in its existence enough to actualize that existence. Further, Miller claims that there is no necessary correlation between the level of accuracy of the national history to a sense of objective truth of the matter and the strength of the nation. The quality of the national myth is merely measured by allegiance alone.

Such allegiance might, again, be problematic for a young nation without a point of reference distant enough to rouse a sense of duty that is adequately voracious, but it must still, according to Miller, be enough to distinguish the nation from other groups or communities with which one might identify by making the nation “appear more ‘real’ or solid” (Miller, 1995, p. 24). Here, again, we enter the fuzzy lines around the qualifications of nation by falling back on the assertion that nations may not be required to completely satisfy each aspect so long as it does so in a way that is truer and more substantial than other obligations one might feel. Indeed, as Miller concludes:

“[P]eople may be hard pressed to say explicitly what the national character of their people consists in, and yet may have an intuitive sense, when confronted with foreigners, of where the differences lie. National identities can remain unarticulated, and yet still exercise a pervasive influence on people’s behavior.” (Miller, 1995, p. 27)

While the final point about being sufficient enough to provoke a reflexive response is an easy enough hurdle for most communities to clear, the weakness of this standard seems insufficient to build the strong sense of moral obligation that Miller also believes is true of nations in his second proposition. In order for the nation and our conationals to be worthy of being the primary object of our ethical commitment, all Miller requires is a practical calculus that such obligation is more engrained, and a sense of indebtedness is greater than other identities. This argument quickly becomes circular as nations are defined as the things to which we owe our greatest moral obligation, that moral obligation is derived from a sufficiently compelling story of our national history, and what makes that national history sufficiently compelling is that it creates the greatest sense of moral obligation.

This argument becomes further problematized by Miller's assertion that "one [can be] forced to bear a national identity regardless of choice, simply by virtue of participating in this way of life" (Miller, 1995, p. 42). Forced obligation here stems from a slightly weakened sense of implied consent. While one might have the right to emigrate away from one's place of origin⁵, Miller asserts that the supremacy of moral obligation to the nation allows for a certain disapproval of those who might be classified as deserters no matter their reasoning or imperative. In this theory, national identities lose their meaning if they are able to be chosen, carving out this one exception to a conception of freedom and choice in association. So, the claim of the rationality of national identity has been extended and transformed now into the imperative of national identity, precisely for the justification that the moral imperative is what allows for the nation to exist in the first instance. As evidence of this, Miller points to the oath of allegiance

⁵ Although, Miller expects these cases to be necessarily limited in favor of whatever allegiance a nation is owed from the accident of birth.

required of American immigrants, pledging an obligation to their new nation above all other fealties and be willing to sacrifice to the maximum extent possible on behalf of their new homeland⁶. That “natural-born” citizens are not required to pledge similarly speaks to both the superficial and symbolic nature of the oath itself and the duty which is implied merely by one’s birth.

Given the failings of these categories, some with a desire to justify the existence of nation, particularly in light of the type of moral obligation Miller feels is essential, will argue that the collective political will of the people is enough to legitimize the nation as the primary institution with which one should identify. Abizadeh believes that the question of the legitimacy of political power (particularly as exercised by the nation) and the question of the boundaries of the demos are inextricably connected by both contemporary democratic theory⁷ and what he calls the “culture nationalist” position (like that which Miller has expressed via his aspects of nation). Both theories aim at understanding both at what legitimates the political power of the nation as well as the limits of the legitimizing nature of that power. For the cultural nationalist, the assumption of legitimacy (despite the claims of some to be otherwise as we have seen) aims at establishing some external and prepolitical source as being the foundation for the nation. As a

⁶ The oath of allegiance itself reads, “I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.” (US Department of Homeland Security Office of Citizenship and Immigration Services)

⁷ Though democratic theory means many different things to many different theorists, Abizadeh mostly focuses his discussion of democratic theory on the basic ideal of self-rule.

way of getting around the persist problem presented by the necessity of continuing the historical continuity of nation (which seems so necessary from the cultural nationalistic position), they search for something solid on which to build their theory. This solid footing could be an aspect of the culture itself that must be immutable and unquestioned⁸ but Abizadeh rejects this as largely impossible since the culture itself is a “sociopolitical artifact” that changes within and between generations of conationals (Abizadeh, 2012, p. 873). The difficulty and effort required to instill a belief in such a very specific sense of tradition and ceremony (the symbolic meaning of which cannot be allowed to change if culture is to be the prepolitical basis of nation) makes this a daunting task. As a result, many cultural nationalists will default to a notion of ethnic or tribal ties as a type of “extracultural supplement to anchor its boundaries in space and time” (Abizadeh, 2012, p. 873).

For example, Anthony Smith seeks to locate an “ethno-symbolic community” as the source of a primordial addition to the contemporary theories of nation like Millers⁹ that will allow for a cultural reappropriation wherein the nation can reach “back into the ethnic past to obtain the *authentic*¹⁰ materials, and ethos for a distinct modern nation” (Smith, 1999, p. 12). According to the ethno-symbolic approach, all nations, whether they know it yet or not, have some claim to early or ancient ethnic ties, traditions or symbols and should attempt to coopt m for modern purposes if only as part of telling the same type of national myth that Miller found to be so instructional and inspirational. However, where Miller believed those things could be intentionally falsified or misremembered as a way of justifying the nation that

⁸ The idea of the unquestionability of certain parts of the national mythos will be further addressed in Chapter Four.

⁹ Smith shares all five of Miller’s criteria of nation, adding only a measure of practical solidarity among political elites.

¹⁰ Emphasis from the source.

exists contemporaneously, Smith believes those ties to exist in a real and prepolitical fashion. Additionally, even though he admits that sentiments can change and that national identities are never static over generations, the ethnic underpinnings of the nation on which those fluid identities are based do remain fixed in a way that allows the cultural nationalist to continually draw upon them. Indeed, Smith finds that nationalism, on its own and without the underpinnings of the *ethnie*, “influences and shapes and hastens” the creation of nations “but does not produce or construct them” on its own (Smith, 1999, p. 115). In the end, without prepolitical and primordial underpinnings, Smith finds (as I have asserted previously) the logic of the nationalist to be circular and tautological. Nations exist because nationalists have created them using criteria of what counts as a nation that has been generated as a justification of the existence of the already established nations to which nationalists feel allegiance. Yet, pointing out the circularity of this argument does not necessarily lend more credence to the primordial ethnic assertions that Smith wants to make here. Even Miller and Renan reject the notion that such true primordial ethnic histories ever existed and Abizadeh asserts again that to the extent ethnic ties are real, they certainly cannot be determined prepolitically. They are the product of political processes and, as Abizadeh asserts that trying to maintain a sense of political procedure and power based on a myth that is itself created and justified by that same power and those same procedures becomes circular itself.

However even more liberal notions of the demos fall into the same problem of trying to address the boundedness of the demos even with only the most fundamental aspects of democratic theory as their aim. Such theories attempt to justify national political power not in terms of a criteria that defends the existence of the nation or a prepolitical culture that underlies it, but, instead, simply on the democratic will to self-govern. The very basis for the existence of

the national demos is the instinct to express our will through self-determination. Most liberal social contract theory makes this basic assumption implicitly, whether it is motivated by the primal fear of others and the need for personal security, the protection of property and negative liberty, the expression of choice inherent in positive liberty, or a desire for a uniform theory of justice as fairness. Yet, the assumption that legitimacy of nation can be anything but political here falls apart as well, for two reasons. Firstly, democratic theory can still not escape the problems of exclusion and boundedness; and, secondly, the processes by which democratic self-determination happen are themselves exercises of political power. Even the most liberal of democracies intending to grant the most expansive notions of human rights draw boundaries between those within the nation who will be the beneficiaries of such treatment and those without who will not¹¹. Yet, again, just as culture was argued to be the product of sociopolitical determinations, so, too, is the decision of who is part of the democratic demos and that decision has consequences for both those within the demos and those without. By seeking to establish a system of self-determination, the democratic demos has exercised its political will and power to determine who will be part of that self-determination in a fashion that necessitates it having happened before the creation of the demos in the first instance. Again, just as with the defense of nation we have seen before, we are left with something completely self-referential without offering a proper solution to the problem of boundedness. To this end, Abizadeh argues:

¹¹ See (Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, 2000) and (Miller, *Strangers in Our Midst*, 2016) for such a defense from the nationalist perspective of the right of the nation to make such distinctions to give special favor and consideration to its citizens and to deny the extension of anything but the most basic notion of human rights to those outside the nation. I have forgone the issue of citizenship here to avoid necessarily by admitting that nations, as we know them, have practical and legal implications that are related but distinct from the sense of national identity which this dissertation wants to elucidate and examine. For the issue of compassion (or lack thereof) towards the other as exemplified by Miller's thoughts on contemporary immigration policy, see Chapter Four.

“There is no such thing [as the prepolitical collective will]. Any democratic articulation of a collective will presupposes political procedures, processes, and institutions, and these not only causally shape individual wills, but also in part constitutively determine (rather than merely track) the will of the people. There is no democratic subject with corporate agency given prior to politics.” (Abizadeh, 2012, p. 879)

Ultimately, Abizadeh arrives at the conclusion that in order for a demos to exercise a sense of legitimate and legitimizing political power, it must embrace a sense of unboundedness that releases it from the obligation of exclusion¹². Because both national and democratic legitimacy must be inherently self-referential (as has been demonstrated by discussing the seeming circularity of Miller’s arguments about the constitution of nations) there need be no boundedness involved. Here we move to something different from both seeing nation as entirely a created thing¹³ nor can it be objectively natural or prepolitical. Instead, nation must be something that exists in between. Following in the vein of Abizadeh’s assertion that it is the action of exercising political power that creates the demos rather than something prepolitical, in the remainder of this chapter I will assert that the nation exists in a daily act of creation, that mimics some of Miller’s particular aspects of nation without making a claim to be either wholly created or wholly natural.

Renan’s National Spiritual Family

One of the chief sources that Miller cites in support of his theories of nation is the 1882 lecture by French historian Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” Miller sees his defense of nation as being a philosophical heir of the speech, given originally in an attempt to rekindle the symbolic value of nation that had originally resulted from the French Revolution nearly a century

¹² This is in direct contradiction to most theorist of nation and democratic theory who assert that both the nation and democratic power must be essentially exclusive at least in part.

¹³ As Miller says, “Nations are not things that exist in the world independently of the beliefs people have about them” (Miller, 1995, p. 17).

earlier and which Renan found wanting in his contemporary France. Chief among the claims that Miller cites are Renan's statements about the importance of national history as part of the narrative that inspires national pride and a sense of duty to one's homeland. While that has already been discussed at length, Renan further asserts that in telling one's national history that, "to forget and... to get one's history wrong, are essential factors in the making of a nation; and thus the advance of historical studies is often a danger to nationality" (Renan, 1882/1939, p. 190). Where Miller believes that certain types of national narratives are more inspirational, Renan's belief here emanates more from desire to cast "fresh light on upon those deeds of violence which have marked the original of all political formations, even of those which have been followed by the most beneficial results" (Renan, 1882/1939, p. 190).

In a similar way to Abizadeh's assumption that the demos exists as an exercise of political power, Renan believes that no nations exist but for those who have been created through the use of brute force. Though he diverges from contemporary political philosophers of the day in that he did not believe that the story of all nations should be, as much as possible, tied into the storied histories of great kings of Europe, the alliances they forged with one another through marriages, and the battles they fought and won (or lost as it is from Renan that Miller gets his theory that tragedy is a better motivator than glory when it comes to telling a national myth). Instead, Renan thought that all nations, in some way or another, were generated through various forms of conquest. As an example, despite his desire to reawaken the patriotic fervor that he believed was common of the revolutionary French, he shows as much admiration for the tyrannical acts of the French kings prior to the revolution as he does the violence of the revolution itself.

The United States, for example, could be seen as a form of exploratory conquest despite lacking any sort of dynasty that was typical of the national origin of the United Kingdom. From his historian's perspective, Renan saw the modern nation as, "the historic consequence of a series of facts converging towards the same point" (Renan, 1882/1939, p. 191). While still avoiding the more natural understandings of the origin of nation that Miller and Abizadeh rejected as being possible, Renan speaks of nation as almost an intersection of fated timelines that connected for glorious patriotic purpose.

In trying to further isolate the origins of these historically converging facts, Renan dismisses both the use of race and ethnography as potential explanations. The rejection seems surprising given he also believed that racial characteristics were biologically deterministic, leading some groups to be inherently inferior to others¹⁴. Yet, his belief that basic nation on race or ethnicity would be chimerical was more based on his admission that, to his mind, racial purity was already a lost cause and his empirical evidence that a variety of racial groups were already living peaceably together in the extant nations of his day, as well as a belief that associations based on race changed as ethnographic studies of race changed its perception of such a discriminatory taxonomy. Similarly, and in contradistinction to Miller's criteria of nation, Renan dismissed both culture and language as defining features of nation as well. Miller believed in the importance of shared culture to the extent that qualified immigration as being allowable "provided only that the immigrants take on the essential elements of the national character" (Miller, 2000, p. 30). However, Renan rejected the necessity of assimilation policies by arguing

¹⁴ Many of his writings on the history of early Christianity and interpretations of the Bible are decidedly and pointedly anti-Semitic, including his ethnographic attempts castigate the Jews as surely having been deserving of centuries of persecution and making allowances for the Ashkenazi Jews as being something other than a Semitic group.

that too much influence on the importance of a single language or culture as the defining characteristic of nation would leave you, “confined and immured, having left the open air of the great world outside to shut yourself up in a conventicle together with your compatriots” claiming that such isolation was uncharacteristic of humans as “reasonable moral being[s]” (Renan, 1882/1939, pp. 199-200).

As if disagreeing with Miller’s aspects of nation one by one (apart from the importance of a misremembered, forgotten or intentionally false national history), Renan also argues that neither common economic interest nor geography as the basis of nation, going so far as to assert that there is “no doctrine more arbitrary or false” than using geography as a justification for national claims. Instead of all of these arguments that Miller would insist upon a century later despite citing Renan as inspiration for his theory, Renan suggested two defining principles of his own that answer his titular question about the characterization of nations: that of a spiritual family and an act of continuing desire and consent.

Firstly, Renan believed that the “nation is a soul, a spiritual principle” (Renan, 1882/1939, p. 202). This spiritual affinity for nation is what is generated by the tales of national historical glory and sacrifice by one’s ancestors (which Renan called the most justifiable form of worship). This is the patriotic essence that he hoped to identify and inspire with his investigation into the nature of national identity. This spiritual family was beyond what could be produced by any particular religion. Additionally, even though religion had spurred many contemporary and historical examples of violence that were often attributed interchangeably between a religion and a nation (the various religious wars discussed previously as what had contributed to the Peace at Westphalia being examples of the same), these claims were too shallow for Renan to find them sufficient as a basis for nation. Where Miller believed that people who possessed a national

identity would instinctively understand the character of their nation in ways that they could not express but would immediately recognize upon being confronted with something external to that conception, Renan's spirituality was less about instinctive recognition and more about a sense of nearly divine elevation.

The second principle is that of a continued and daily renewed sense of desire and consent to be a part of a nation. Where other theorists would assume, as Miller does, that national identity is mostly static (you are born into a system of nations and, by virtue of having lived and matured as part of that system, are inevitably and virtually inescapably a part of it with few options to immigrate and no ability to theorize a world beyond that of the same system), Renan argued that "the existence of a nation is.. a daily plebiscite, just as that of the individual is a continual affirmation of life" (Renan, 1882/1939, p. 203). The regular renewal, not of a liberal social contract, but of a more fundamental (and spiritual) desire to be a part of a nation was the daily task of the individual and the nation alike. When you stripped away the trappings of other arguments of national origin, Renan remarked that all that was left remaining was "man, with his desires and his needs" (Renan, 1882/1939, p. 204). The daily referendum of which Renan speaks was less of an instance of the positive exercise of a determinative popular or individual will, but rather a more ethereal and spiritual determination of whether the national affiliation one felt in one's heart still made sense in the way that a nation should inspire and elevate an individual.

To this end, Renan finally predicted that eventually, a system of nations constructed as a daily spiritual affirmation would eventually be something that humanity moved beyond. Thought without the negative connotation of Einstein's claim that nationalism was a disease, Renan also believed that human wishes and desires would likely change in a way that would no

longer be sated by the spiritual family provided by the nation. Though he approved of the same realistic practicality of nation that Miller would still cling so tightly to a century later, Renan says that, “Nations are not eternal. They have had beginnings and will have ends; and will probably be replaced by a confederation of Europe.” (Renan, 1882/1939, p. 204). Were it not for the retreat away from broader notions of political community and the moral obligations of those communities in the contemporary world indicated by such things as the renewed rhetorical cries for “America first” or the Brexit movement in Britain, Renan’s prediction of a European confederation would seem more than prescient. A greater explanation of this tendency towards withdrawing within literal and metaphorical national borders as well as an assertion of a scheme by which humanity might begin to image a world beyond such borders will be the subject of Chapter Four. However, for now, I wish to borrow Renan’s characterization of the nation as the result of a daily spiritual activity to argue for a new way of conceptualizing the nation more accurately as a reflective extension of the self rather than a form of communal politics. An explanation of what I mean by this reflective nation-self will fill the rest of this chapter while the following chapter will examine more closely the spiritual process by which such a daily renewal occurs.

The Daily Creation of the Nation-Self

In this final section of the chapter I want to posit a theory that borrows from several of the theorists discussed previously. Miller argues that nations exist as a form of instinctive ability to distinguish the essential character of one’s national identity from something that is other. Abizadeh concludes that the power of the demos is essentially self-referential. Renan argues that the nation requires daily renewal and reconstruction to exist continually as a type of spiritual

activity. Using these as starting points I postulate that the nation is little more than an alienation from and fetishization of the self.

My assertion is that national identities are a form of self-identification. What we see as our nation is an extension of how we see and define ourselves. We project our beliefs about what a nation is and what defines our own externally from ourselves, but such projection does not belie the individualistic nature of the fetish we create. After having gone through even the briefest form of self-examination in this way and projected ourselves onto nation, we evaluate each other individual we perceive in an attempt to identify them as conationals. Should they share enough of our essential nature that we see ourselves in the other, we designate them as part of our national identity and designate them as separate otherwise. Mutual recognition here may be possible but is not necessary or sufficient. One is a member of one's nation because they have determined themselves to be so and not because some other has done such determining for them. This theory may be limited when it comes to the allowances that a grant of citizenship or other national status may provide in terms of practical rights or legal statuses (wherein such statuses are almost entirely things that are granted and not claimed), but we restrict ourselves here mostly to the discussion of national identity.

This type of self-examination approaches something not entirely dissimilar from a Cartesian skepticism applied to the nation-self. Such a skepticism and evaluation give a brief understanding of what the process might look like but also why multiple people who claim the same nation may define it differently. Beginning with the supposition that one is a self that exists, as with Descartes's first principle, one can the extrapolate outwards. If one is a self that has certain types of characteristics, beliefs, values, hold to certain truths, and also the type of person who identifies with a nation, then I can project those characteristics, beliefs, values, and

truth claims onto the nation itself. Any value given to the nation then originates from and is derived by the self that imagines it thusly. Only after having done so can we then compare our conception to nation to others. This comparison becomes largely the same irrespective of the nation claims of other selves as both comparisons stem from judgments made against the standard and definition of one's own nation-self claim. The exact process by which I believe this nation-self is created theoretically will be the extensive subject of Chapter Two. However, for now, let us consider what the characteristics of such a nation-self would be as a way of seeing how the nation thusly construed explains many of the limitations which are common to nations and the politics built around them.

Let us begin with the basic idea of nation as being something that is not only self-referential in terms of referencing itself but in terms of referencing a self. Miller is not entirely wrong when he describes the national as having a preternatural ability to distinguish between self and other. Even outside of the context of nation, many people experience forms of apophenia and pareidolia which cause us to look for intrinsic connections between unrelated things and recognize patterns out of random inputs. Essentially, the phenomena which might cause us to hear our name from random noises or see the face of the Virgin Mary in a piece of toast cause us to see other meaning in other seemingly haphazard or arbitrary organizations. To the extent that I have a self that is knowable, at least in part, to myself, it becomes a pattern that I can look for in an attempt to recognize it in others. The self-reflexive agent itself fundamentally becomes its own conceptual scheme that both organizes one's own experience and develops into the lens through which a person sees and interprets the world. As Davidson says,

“Conceptual schemes, we are told, are ways of organizing experience; they are systems of categories that give form to the data of sensation; they are points of view from which individuals, cultures, or periods survey the passing scene. There may be no translating from one scheme to another, in which case the beliefs, desires, hopes and bits of

knowledge that characterize one person have no true counterparts for the subscriber to another scheme. Reality itself is relative to a scheme: what counts as real in one system may not in another.” (Davidson, 1974, p. 5)

As with other conceptions of the self, the nation-self forms such a conceptual scheme. It is from this point of view that one evaluates firstly whether one has a national identity (as I do not accept this as given in the same with that Miller does) and what is its shape and meaning. Using this as a starting point, what we take as our nation then becomes the type of self-reflective pattern that we may then recognize based on other external inputs we receive. Further, just as we may partially identify a pattern with which we are familiar, so, too, can we partially recognize our nation-self within others. The acknowledgement need not be a simple binary. As with several of the critiques of using culture or language as a basis of a national understanding argued, the lines here blur around the edges so that there may be some spectrum that exists between full recognition and complete unrecognition of anything external to our nation-self.

One might argue that the nation need be so individualized for recognition to work in this way. After all, Miller argues something very similar to this. However, additional concerns exist about the translation of the idea of nation from person to person which must first be addressed. Before concentrating on these concerns specifically, let us first consider the extent to which translation may be necessary at all. If we return to something similar to Miller’s criteria, several of the defining aspects of nation thusly construed depend on a mutual understanding of terms and ideas. Indeed, a sense of mutuality seems to underly each of them in important ways. How can a history thought to be important or continuous if there is no shared element of it? Given that Miller and Renan both believe strongly that the point of historical continuity is to create a sense of duty and obligation to the nation, how can such duty be inspired if one does not believe that the nation in which one lives now is the same nation as that of the sacrificing forebearers to

whom we are supposed to feel obligation? How can a sense of history that motivates sacrificial commitment from current nationals be enough to defend the nation if it is not shared? Similarly, how can territorial claims beyond that of where we live individually matter to us if we do not first understand geography in a similar fashion but also feel the same sense of belonging or manifest destiny tied to a special existence on a map? More specifically, what would a common public culture mean if we had no way of assessing the definition and value of commonality? Mutual recognition as a criterion readily allows for nation to be denied someone who might be deemed unworthy of such recognition, yet how much more quizzical does this criterion become if we do not have a shared conceptual scheme in the first instance? Without common terms and definitions, collective ideas of nations are incomprehensible.

Yet, such collective ideas may be unachievable on an epistemological level. This is not to say that the nation-self is strictly a solipsistic exercise, but if the mutuality of nation is so central to the process of creating, having and identifying with a nation, anything less than a full ability to translate ideas of our national conceptual scheme from person to person may be a problem for the more typical view of national identity. Donaldson provides a workable system to describe how such translation might be possible yet demonstrates the limited nature of sharing concepts at all that would affect the nation-self construed in this manner. The method is a quick progression through a few logical assumptions. If we are to believe that someone might live in/under a different conceptual world than our own,¹⁵ then we assume that they think and speak

¹⁵ This is precisely what I assert with my theory of the nation as the self that would look for recognition individually by examining another's similarity with myself as a metric of whether one should be considered as part of my nation but is also the implication of any theory of nation that puts value on common culture or mutual recognition. In order to have culture in common or the mutually recognize someone, there is an implied state of non-commonality or non-recognition should the other individual or group fail to show a sufficient amount of sameness.

in some fashion. To assume that others are thinking and speaking is both to assume further that we know that what they are saying is more than just guttural noise but is actually language and that we know enough of what they mean in order to begin translation and to ascribe to them various beliefs, desires, attitudes and ways of connecting these mental elements. But to ascribe any such beliefs or desires (whether they are ones which we assume we hold in common or not) is to assume that we live in a shared world with a shared epistemological background, again at least in part (Davidson, 1974).

The argument suggests that some degree of sameness is required in order for there to be noticeable differences between schema. Disagreement can only happen against the backdrop of at least partial agreement. These similarities require you to attribute certain characteristics and make certain assumptions about the other with whom you are trying to communicate or recognize¹⁶. Once you make these assumptions and realize there is some similarity, then you are able to begin a translation between groups. This could be a mere translation of language from one word to its counterpart, but it also allows for the translation of grander ideas and perhaps entire worldviews using language as a vehicle. However, the lingering question that I would like to begin with here is this: How much similarity is sufficient for the translation to begin? Yet, since we still often believe and feel like there are other groups that are so much different from us that communication is impossible (perhaps even different ideological or philosophical groups within our own language), we could also ask the question: How much difference is required for translation to be hopeless?

¹⁶A related argument asserts that one should use intelligibility rather than similarity. This is a looser standard that does not imply that even partial direct translation must be possible in order for mutual understanding to exist. (Grandy, 1973)

Attempting to answer these questions is the daily task of the nation-self that is borrowed here from Renan's "daily plebiscite." Every day, the nation-self goes through the process both of reconstituting itself as well as evaluating all others for enough similarity to be designated as conationals. That this task must be undertaken personally and regularly may seem to overstate the obvious, but most theories of nation assume that the nation is something that is completely identifiable from an objective perspective. Yet, for the theorist or social scientist who would seek to make such a determination, one cannot completely eliminate their own personal conceptual schema of nation as well. One creates an objective theory of nation and designates criteria based on that theory, not from a point of normative intent or even completely scientific disinterest, but by trying to identify as generalities the things which such a person's own nation-self uses their own daily ritual of national identity as an example. This critique may problematize more social and political theory than just that of the nation, but one cannot escape the seeming fact that many who lay out theories, standards, and defenses of nation, do so, at least in part, because they feel strongly about their own or the need for a renewed sense of national identity or the patriotism it engenders. Renan and Rorty both make the truth of this explicit even if Miller and Smith try to obscure the same¹⁷. This is akin to the type of self-reference that Abizadeh discusses as well.

The answers to the question of sufficiency, as with the concept of the nation itself, is both particular and individual. The intensity of the scrutiny which one nation-self submits another's nation claim (or, to be more precise, any other regardless of whether make any nation claim at all) is likely commensurate to the strength of one's own feelings about the nation with which

¹⁷ For more on Rorty's attempt to rekindle a strong sense of American patriotism that could be used progressively by the political left and for a refutation of the same see (Rorty, 1998) and (Johnston, 2007).

oneself identifies, but the scrutiny itself is not significantly different in either case. Once another's nation-self claim is found to be adequately similar enough to one's own nation-self, the individuality and idiosyncratic nature of the nation-self informs what, exactly, that resemblance implies about the other. Though the language expressed at this point in the process may be that of mutual recognition that Miller uses as a criterion of nation, the mutuality of this recognition is irrelevant to the nation-self. As the nation with which identify is merely an extension and fetishization of one's idea of oneself, having another claim to verify that identification is simply gratuitous. Similarly, if another seeks to deny my nation-self claim, the refusal of mutual recognition does little to alter the egoism of my claim. That neither agreement or disagreement of another with one's own claim matters in terms of one's ability to instinctively feel a national identity is support of the claim that such a national identity can be reduced to an extension of the self. This also speaks to the fragility of how we perceive the national claims of others. The nation-self instinctively sees the claims of another as tenuous even when the rhetoric of recognition seems strong.

This happens for two reasons. Firstly, we are protective of our own definition of nation because it is inextricably connected with our conception of ourselves. Our claim is precious to us, and we are careful where we cast our metaphorical pearls. Second, and perhaps more importantly, our recognition is not given into perpetuity. As a result of this determination being a daily one, it is possible for someone that we have identified as a conational to do, believe, or express something that one feels goes beyond the limits of the nation-self which one has generated, and to which one has given temporary and tenuous recognition. Acceptance based on our understanding is always weak and fragile if this is the case, and any number of examples

from contemporary political rhetoric seem to suggest that many believe it to be the case¹⁸.

Recognition that is given can be easily taken away because what is at state is similarity with the perception of the self. Anything that deviates from our definition makes the revocation of that which might have already been given. Just as Renan says asserts that nations are born and that nations die, so, too do acknowledgements of this sort.

Understanding nation this way corresponds with Johnston's assertion that patriotic love is always narcissistic (Johnston, 2007). For Johnston, patriotism is narcissistic because it is performative and demands the attention of others. We are patriotic, in no small part, so that we can be noticed being patriotic and awarded social capital because of our actions. However, in his criticism of Rorty's appeal for a new patriotism in the American Left, he discusses he says of patriots under Rorty's model, "We are gods adoring our selves in the reflection of what we make. At long last, we are in love with ourselves, our achieving country" (Johnston, 2007, p. 35). Seeing nation as part of a secular civic religion along the lines of what theorists like Rorty and Rousseau desire will be discussed more in Chapter Two, but for now the point about adoring and loving our own national reflections speaks to the theory of the nation-self as presented here, even if Johnston did not intend it to be taken quite so literally.

Having given a sense of what is meant by the daily creation of the nation-self, one objection remains before moving on to the further discussion of the theoretical process that explains and justifies this conception of nation. A critic might ask the question of why other personal identifications and associations should be seen as different than how I have described nation. What makes the nation different or distinct as the thing that is an extension of the self

¹⁸ One such example would be President Trump's assertion in his 2019 State of the Union address that, "Tonight, we renew our resolve that America will never be a socialist country" (The White House, 2019).

such that I do not argue that all groups function in a similar way? My response would be twofold. Firstly, I make no claims that nation is the only association that operates in this fashion. Upon closer examination, it may become apparent that national identity is not the only identity that fits this particular metaphorical and theoretical model. Secondly, I assert that nation is different because Miller and others (even the cosmopolitans in a way) want us to use nation as a primary source of moral obligation. This theory, while offering a functional new way to describe what nation is and (in the next chapter) how it is formed in this way also shows why using such a fragile and arbitrary structure as nation for such a strong sense of obligation is problematic and dangerous. If we are to believe that nations are, as Miller argues strongly, that nations are real things that exist and are essential parts of most human beings and that we should give moral preference to them over other communities and associations, then the more it can be shown that such declarations are acts of self-reference and ego, the more tenuous such moral claims become. The theory of the nation-self both refutes Miller's claim to definitely establish criteria of nation and the robust ethical assertions he derives from them.

Yet, the theory of the nation-self does not merely exist as a refutation of exclusionary nationalism and limited moral claims that are often used to justify the less than human treatment of those beyond our literal and metaphorical national borders, but also because we can see in nation a process of alienation that explains why the nation is inseparable from the self. This process will be the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: ON FEURBACH, NIETZSCHE, SCHMITT, AND GENERATING THE ALIENATED NATION-SELF

Having given a rough definition of the nation-self in the previous chapter, I turn now to a theoretical explanation for how the nation-self is generated as part of the daily process of assessment of self and other. While the nation-self has been presented thus far as a thing akin to Cartesian skepticism for the way that such a metaphor allowed us to examine how the world of assumed national identities of others can be derived from and built around the one's own nation-self, the more exacting description herein will offer an account of the nation-self as a product of alienation and fetishization. The writings on the human creation of the concept of God by Feuerbach will be largely instrumental here by giving us a model by which to explicate the nation-self. The theory of the nation-self posited here is not an attempt at suggesting a normative view of nation but rather an attempt to offer a novel and more accurate description of how national identities are formed. This chapter will also track the nation-self as a secular identity with religious traits and connotations through the work of Nietzsche and Schmitt as a way of further elucidating the connection to Feuerbach.

Feuerbach's Alienation of God and Self

Ludwig Feuerbach is a philosopher often overlooked by political theorists as a footnote on the journey from Kant to Hegel to Marx, since most of his well-known work centers exclusively around religion in general and Christianity particularly rather than offering a larger theory of politics, justice, the state, etc. The passing attention given to Marx's theses on

Feuerbach and a brief discussion of how Feuerbach's theory of alienation and fetishization inform Marx's own models of estranged labor are frequently the extent to which Feuerbach is studied. However, his explicit claims about the process by which humanity creates an idea of God as something that is wholly a product of the self yet also something that seemingly stands apart from that same self, can be instructional for the theory of the nation as a similar extension of an individual self. While the metaphor does not track to the extent that one could merely read The Essence of Christianity and merely supplant the word "nation" for "God," there are many similarities that help explain how the nation-self is created by examining how Feuerbach's "Divine Spirit" (not meant to be a literal reference to Jesus of Nazareth despite the direct focus on Christianity and Christian doctrine across Feuerbach's writing, but rather something that applies both generally to the idea of spirituality that could be interpreted as an amalgamation of all the divine spirits across cultures but also specifically to the Christian paradigm to which he is writing) is generated from within the person. Feuerbach beings The Essence of Christianity with a succinct statement of the philosophy which is useful here:

"RELIGION is the disuniting of man from himself; he sets God before him as the antithesis of himself God is not what man is – man is not what God is. God is the infinite, man the finite being; God is perfect, man imperfect; God eternal, man temporal; God almighty, man weak; God holy, man sinful. God and man are extremes: God is the absolutely positive, the sum of all realities; man the absolutely negative, comprehending all negations. But in religion man contemplates his own latent nature. Hence it must be shown that this antithesis, this differencing of God and man, with which religion begins, is a differencing of man with his own nature." (Feuerbach, 1841/2008, p. 1)

In a manner not entirely unlike how Kantorowicz uses medieval law to speculate about the two bodies of the king¹⁹ (the temporal human body coalescing with the immortal divine body), Feuerbach asserts that God is created by humankind to stand in distinction to humankind as a way of investing the idea with the best parts of humankind in an attempt to better understand the

¹⁹ For more on this, see (Kantorowicz, 2016).

nature of humankind. Eventually, the newly created notion of God becomes something that will return to torment humanity through the same instances of guilty and suffering that Nietzsche finds problematic of Christian asceticism, but in the first instance, God is created so that humanity can better understand itself. In the same extent to which humanity (or an individual human for our purposes) possesses intelligence, rationality, justice, or other characteristics to which we assign moral or ethical value, we invest our idea of God with those same attributes almost as if undertaking a process of extrapolating a Platonic ideal from human imperfection. However, for Feuerbach, the God that is invested with these traits is no different from the person who has generated such an idea and only appears to be different to the extent that one is able to suspend a certain type of disbelief and accept that this God exists wholly separately from oneself. The main distinguishing feature of the human self and the fetishized version of those human qualities that has been created and named “God” is that the Divine Spirit is unlimited in its expression of the characteristics given to it. As Feuerbach says:

“God is thy highest idea, the supreme effort of thy understanding thy highest power of thought. God is the sum of all realities, ie., the sum of all affirmations of the understanding. That which I recognise in the understanding as essential I place in God as existent: God is what the understanding thinks as the highest. But in what I perceive to be essential is revealed the nature of my understanding is shown the power of my thinking faculty. Thus the understanding is the *ens realissimum*, the most real being of the old onto-theology. —Fundamentally, ‘says onto-theology we cannot conceive God otherwise than by attributing to him without limit all the real qualities which we find in ourselves.’ Our positive, essential qualities, our realities, are therefore the realities of God, but in us they exist with, in God without, limits.” (Feuerbach, 1841/2008, p. 5)

God, in this instance, must exist as unlimited and unbounded, even if we believe our own selves to be limited or else our examination of ourselves through the vehicle of the idea of God becomes limited as well. If we imagine God as a physical being than our understanding of ourselves through the lens of the Divine Spirit is bounded by the physical world as well. As

such, we create God as not merely just but limitlessly just so that we may understand the meaning of justice. We create God as more than just merciful but a being of ultimate mercy as a means of understanding the nature of mercy among ourselves. For Feuerbach, the thought experiment cannot work with a limited conception of God because such limitations would undermine the intention of the creation in the first instance. Since God is a philosophical substitute for human understanding, by limiting God, we limit our capacity to understand.

In this view, nothing created by one's own understanding can, in reality, be wholly separate from one's understanding. Every thought, every perception, every action, every behavioral trait can be connected back to the way one thinks about oneself and the world in which one lives. We cannot stand entirely outside the paradigm of our own understanding even in our imagining of alternative possibilities of reality or humanity. This is especially true when we create a fetish to examine some particular aspect of ourselves. This type of fetishism (not unique to Feuerbach in its generality) is an attempt to "identify a misunderstanding of the world in which properties are attributed to objects that can only correctly be attributed to human beings" (Dant, 1996, p. 496). Fetishization, as an anthropological phenomenon, is essentially a form of alienation, by setting something made by the self or of the self apart from the self, sometimes leading to some conflict or hostility between the self and what has become alienated from it²⁰. For Feuerbach, this fetish is the Divine Spirit made from the characteristics of the human self (Marx, Theses on Feuerbach, 1978). For Marx, what is alienated are the products of the labor of the worker. Freud uses this same scheme to describe projections of sexual desire.

²⁰ This is specifically the case with Marx's theory of estranged labor wherein the worker, as a result of not owning the product of their labor, is alienated from and stands in conflict with the product of their labor, the labor itself, themselves as a worker, from Marx's "species-being," and from other workers (Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, 1978).

For our purposes here, the alienated fetish-object is the nation in distinction to the individual self from which it is generated. Often these fetish-objects are venerated or otherwise become the object of desire and can even partially determine the behavior of the same individuals who have given it shape, meaning, and value. Feuerbach states:

“What I think, that I myself do, of course only in purely intellectual matters; what I think of as united, I unite; what I think of as distinct, I distinguish; what I think of as abolished, as negated, that I myself abolish and negative.” (Feuerbach, 1841/2008, p. 8)

Whatever material form the fetish might take it has a symbolic meaning metaphorically larger than the literal space it might occupy.

The assumption here made by Dant in his definitional look at the idea of fetishism (primarily looking at Marx and Freud, as many do) is that there is some material component to a fetish. A fetish might take the form of an idol, some assumedly charmed object, a flag, or even things like the material processes of religious practices. Feuerbach seems to mostly deny either that there is or that there needs to be a materiality to the fetish-object as he sees a requirement of materiality to be a limitation of the Divine Being that undermines having imagined God in the first place as discussed before. This rejection of materiality is one of the critiques of Feuerbach offered by Marx who noted that “as far as Feuerbach is a materialist he does not deal with history, and as far as he considers history he is not a materialist” (Marx, *The German Ideology*, 1978, p. 171). Our nation-self as a fetish object might seem to be without material form as with Feuerbach’s notion of God; however, the materiality may exist again in some physical symbol of nation or even consequences of the political actions based on a nation construed in this way²¹.

²¹ Certainly, the denial of common identity of another in our own nation-self can have material consequence if that denial entails, for instance, the placing of children of refugees into internment camps at the national border.

The key emphasis for Feuerbach, however, is the self's simple distinction from and connection to the alienated creation. Humanity's need to examine its own flaws by considering their characteristics made perfect and unlimited in God creates a need for that fetishized God to offer them salvation by whatever means a specific religion might offer. For Christianity, this is made most apparent because where God is created of humanity, the God that offers salvation does so by setting aside the divine to become a human as a self-sacrifice on behalf of humanity. The God-human becomes a human-God to demonstrate God's affection and mercy for the same humanity which created the God to examine itself. The process here is similar no matter if the particular goal of the exercise is to examine and understand salvation, justice, mercy, or any other characteristic humanity invests in the God it worships. The stress is not on the goal or the particulars of how religion describes each concept but that one evaluates it in God because one *is* God. Of peace as one such goal Feuerbach writes:

“How can I share the peace of a being if I am not of the same nature with him? If his nature is different from mine, his peace is essentially different, – it is no peace for me. How then can I become a partaker of his peace if I am not a partaker of his nature? but how can I be a partaker of his nature if I am really of a different nature? Every being experiences peace only in its own element, only in the conditions of its own nature. Thus, if man feels peace in God, he feels it only because in God he first attains his true nature...” (Feuerbach, 1841/2008, p. 12)

Here, we can see the easy substitution of nation in the place of God. For whatever purpose we assume the creation of the nation-self (the social contract theorists, as an example, provide us with a variety of options including but not limited to personal security, protection of property, exercise of positive liberty, etc.), we can examine the meaning of those concepts and try to realize them for ourselves, because the nation onto which we project and from which we expect them is, essentially, still a projection of our self. Unfortunately, however, just as we can project the perfect need for security or justice onto the nation-self, in denying that someone else

is similar enough to our own self-reflective conceptual scheme to count as being a conational, we can also project onto that other the opposite of the characteristics we have invested in our nation. For example, in endowing our nation with a sense of moral righteousness, we essentially endow a lack of the same onto the “foreign” other. In giving our nation-self a sense of strength so that we might have security, we become suspicious of the outsider as a threat to that strength and security. Many religions function in this type of Manichean fashion; forming for themselves both Feuerbach’s perfect Divine Being while also creating some devil-figure to stand in opposition to the God-self. While the creation of this contradictory fetish-object may not be necessary, it certainly is not prohibited.

This possibility may be one reason why Feuerbach also emphasizes the importance (at least in Christianity) of the love that the alienated God shows for the subjects who have given it form. For Feuerbach, love is the essential connection between God and humanity as it reconciles the perfect with the imperfect. This metaphor follows easily in Christianity where God is said to be the manifestation of love.²² Feuerbach says of love, “Love is God himself, and apart from it there is no God. Love makes man God and God man. Love strengthens the weak and weakens the strong, abases the high and raises the lowly, idealises matter and materialises spirit” (Feuerbach, 1841/2008, p. 14). Here we see the extent to which Feuerbach believes that immaterial and infinite Divine Spirit can be partially materialized because love provides a unity of self and God. For our nation-self, this love could be manifested in the limited and bordered way we often imagine nation to be patriotic love for the nation-itself (either the motivating and productive love that Rorty desired or the narcissistic love that Johnston found to be

²² “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4: 7-8, English Standard Version)

antidemocratic will suffice in this instance. Love in this sense could also be love for one's conationals expressed by Miller's sense of moral obligation to the members of one's nation. In Chapter Four, we will examine whether such love can also be expressed as a *borderless* compassion expressed by embracing the idea of transcending both literal and metaphorical borders (as Abizadeh and cosmopolitans like Nussbaum and Held believe we should).

Feuerbach goes on to describe the creation of the God-self as a cosmogonical process not altogether unlike Smith and Renan's development of a national myth that can serve as a unifying and obligating force for those with a national identity. However, for Feuerbach's God and our nation-self, this cosmogonical process becomes a creation myth for the alienated fetish-object that underscores a different type of unity – the unity of self that creates with the realized version of the self that has been created.

“This cosmogonical process is nothing else than the mystic paraphrase of a psychological process, nothing else than the unity of consciousness and self-consciousness made objective. God thinks himself: – thus he is self-conscious. God is self-consciousness posited as an object, as a being; but inasmuch as he knows himself, thinks himself, he also thinks another than himself; for to know oneself is to distinguish oneself from another, whether this be a possible, merely conceptional, or a real being.” (Feuerbach, 1841/2008, p. 46)

As with for Descartes, consciousness and self-awareness become a foundational element of both the creation and the sustenance of both God-self and nation-self with everything not part of the God-self or nation-self dual existence being categorized as “the world.” The world may present limitations but the desire of the human ego to be limitless can, again, be realized and understood only through the boundless and unconstrained nature of God. The distinction here between the unbounded God and the specifically bounded nation becomes paramount, not just in the extent to which one will use the concept as the basis for various claims of moral imperatives, but on the benefit to consciousness that Feuerbach believes can only be achieved in this way.

Because we posit God as a realization of our perfect consciousness and posit God in such a way to be the creator of the natural world and of the other people within that natural world, a limited instance of God would limit our ability to accurately and affectively recognize and understand that same world and those same people. This is why the pantheism of Spinoza and others falls short for Feuerbach's God-self. Pantheism of the most fundamental sort identifies a unity of both God and the natural world. God, for the pantheist, exists in everything and everything in God. This metaphor would seem, at first glance, to be somewhat like Feuerbach's but the distinction exists in the pantheist asserting that this is the natural state of the divine where Feuerbach believes in an intentionality of the creation of God as we have seen. The God-self we imagine must be for Feuerbach unlimited in its potential to express the perfected form of humanity for self-examination, but the usefulness of the metaphor can be limited even when God is not. Pantheism, then, loses the point of the argument, according to Feuerbach when it attempts to translate God into something larger than or other than humanity. Indeed, any theism commits a similar error when it attempts to posit God prior to or wholly separate than humanity. On this point, Feuerbach writes:

“It is true that the divine personality is distinguished in every possible way from the human in order to veil their identity; but these distinctions are either purely fantastic, or they are mere assertions, devices which exhibit the invalidity of the attempted deduction.” (Feuerbach, 1841/2008, p. 72)

Similarly, where the nation appears (often necessarily for the self-reflective nature of the daily nation-self thought experiment to work) to be separate or derived from the self, they are more than just simply in error. The subjectivity of both the God-self and the nation-self cannot be escaped while yet still clinging to the idea of either God or the nation and would defeat the purpose of their creation if they could. For this reason, I do not wholly deny the utility of the nation in the nation-self. Value exists for the self that daily imagines nation or else the rational

consciousness of the individual would not have imagined nation in the first instance. However, this same argument from Feuerbach shows the danger in the loss of realization that the self is what generates nation, what gives it form and meaning, and not the nation which does so for the self. Nations do not and cannot, in this theory, exist prior to or separate from the daily process of their imagining. To take nation or God as a given thing that exists objectively discretely from the self is to risk the aspect of self-understanding and self-growth that those ideals provide (akin to that which Rousseau would claim is facilitated by nation already) and can risk the same type of violence between humans (particularly when God or nation has been imagined differently between individuals) which Miller hopes his exploration of nationalism can avoid by referring simply to “national identity” instead. Conceiving the nation as unbounded and unlimited in the same way that Feuerbach imagines god as limitless and infinite helps to avoid this possibility more than simply changing the language with which one speaks about nation.

Before examining the further implications of the nation-self’s similarity to the Divine Being as self, I want to make a few additional references to Renan’s assertion that nation is reconstituted daily and that doing so is a spiritual process. The spirituality of the nation-self when using the metaphor of Feuerbach’s God seems obvious but should be interpreted as something larger than merely adopting a religious metaphor for a secular purpose. Certainly, Renan believed that patriotic love for nation should form a type of civic religion that he is not alone among political theorists in desiring. This is largely what he is referencing by positing nation as a spiritual family. For Renan a patriot feels a surge of pride and affection for nation that could only be a metaphor for spiritual fervor in a religious context. Yet, more than that, the process by which he thinks that nations are instituted and by which they impact our lives is an a mystical one even as it is a mythical one. This ethereality is not lost in the process of generating

nation-self as defined and described herein. The mysticality of the process is described by Feuerbach as one that tracks with the distinction of waking live and dreaming:

“It is the same ego, the same being in dreaming as in waking; the only distinction is, that in waking the ego acts on itself; whereas in dreaming it is acted on by itself as by another being I think myself – is a passionless, rationalistic position; I am thought by God, and think myself only as thought by God – is a position pregnant with feeling religious. Feeling is a dream with the eyes open; religion the dream of waking consciousness: dreaming is the key to the mysteries of religion.” (Feuerbach, 1841/2008, p. 103)

The dreamlike nature of projecting the self onto God and using God to examine the self becomes, here, a vaguely spiritual and otherworldly notion. Such creation feels like an act of a sort of magic that allows us to transcend the bounds of our own limitations, which is, of course the entire goal according to Feuerbach.

Yet, with the spirituality of the creation of the alienated fetish-object in this instance, what of the daily process of creation? Surely, by defining it as a “daily process” we could refer to the everyday and mundane manner in which the trappings of nationalism effect the lives of those deemed to be both within and without of the nation, but such would be a different project than this one. The theory of the nation-self presented here borrows the idea of a daily activity from Renan but merely signifies something that happens with regularity. The benefit of such a recurrent act of creation is twofold. Firstly, as a regular or daily activity, the generation of the nation-self allows for giving a type of religious ceremonial nature to the act itself, even if (and maybe especially so) it happens subconsciously. Mill’s liberty of thought depends on a rejection of dogma as a danger wherein a person even with true beliefs about the world can forget the origin and justification for those beliefs. However, for one that holds there is intrinsic benefit to either religious or national identification (not the community that such associations claim to provide but the identification itself), there may also be value in having part of that process become rote and automatic, especially if (as for some theists apart from Feuerbach and most

nationalists) one wants to obscure that the nation or the Divine Being is created of human action and thought.

The second reason that the theory of the nation-self benefits from the process of imagining occurring with some regularity is that the self which does the reflecting via the examination of nation is not static or fixed. Feuerbach gives no evidence of necessarily thinking or caring about the question of whether the human person who projects perfect and unlimited human characteristics onto God changes, as what is more important is the realization of those ideal characteristics anyway. However, with the nation-self, there must be an additional level of precision added here at least given contemporary political rhetoric of nation and other. If our conception of nation is based on our view of our self and serves as a mirror in which may reflect on such, we have already argued that this self then becomes a metric by which we examine other people for evidence of enough similarity to count as conational and that such recognition is temporary should someone do or espouse something that we find antithetical to our view of nation. However, though we may claim that the definition of nation is be a static one²³, we must often contend with the factual reality that national ideals change and adapt over time to suit current circumstances and to allow for progression over time. More than that, personal ideals and politics change over time as well, resulting in a change in how we conceive of our nation-self and to whom we extend membership in the same.

Renan used his “daily plebiscite” as a way of spurring the body politic into a continual process of patriotic unity, but here the process is less about jingoistic fervor and more about having to regularly assess who one is to build an identity around the self. Often this happens

²³ The reference, in the previous chapter, to President Trump’s declaration that America stands (and always has stood) in opposition to socialism is again an example.

unwittingly and subconsciously, in part because most change in political belief happens incrementally such that it might not be noticed day by day even as such change might be occurring. Alternatively, there may also be political or personal events that can induce sudden and potentially drastic change in the way one views the world. Thirdly, the possibility of change exists even for those whose personal identity and politics might be truly unwavering as the world around us which informs our politics might change. Either way, the process of the nation-self cannot be static, as either scenario of change will leave one feeling as if the nation one once claimed is no longer one's own and a new nation-self identity must form around the newly contrived self. So, the process of creating this nation-self must be regular if not continual, claims to ground these national identities in something we tell ourselves is ancient become *purely fantastic*.

Finally, before giving thought to the parallels between the theory of the nation-self and the idea of political theology and secularization of political religions, I want to examine a few more seeming equivalents in Feuerbach's theory of the Divine Being. One of the more interesting connections is that of a belief in the immortality of the fetish-object and of the self in its relationship to the alienated creation. Feuerbach writes of the Christian ideal of heaven:

“[T]he belief in personal immortality is perfectly identical with the belief in a personal God that which expresses the belief in the heavenly, immortal life of the person, expresses God also, as he is an object to Christians, namely, as absolute, unlimited personality. Unlimited personality is God; but heavenly personality, or the perpetuation of human personality in heaven, is nothing else than personality released from all earthly encumbrances and limitations...” (Feuerbach, 1841/2008, p. 133)

The afterlife, then, is the ultimate realization of the imaging of the God-self. As God is humanity and humanity is God, the perfect union of that is the unbounding of the original self such that it might gain the perfection offered by the already unlimited Divine Being. For the Christian believer, this is often a belief in a literal place where one may hope to dwell after death. But,

Feuerbach avoids specific references to streets of gold in favor of an image wherein God is “the as yet abstract presence and existence” of this state of perfection. The ultimate end-point of imbuing the unlimited realization and fulfillment of human characteristics in the God-self is to reach the point where a sense of unity with that realization is possible. God is heaven and heaven is God with humanity becoming both by the transitive property. As is true of more conventional Christian doctrines, the disciple is encouraged to live with the next life as the ultimate goal and aim that could be realized on Earth as it is in Heaven were it not, in Feuerbach’s instance, limited by our own assumptions of humanity, which is the life humanity was intended to live all along. Feuerbach writes,

“The religious man renounces the joys of this world, but only that he may win in return the joys of heaven; or rather he renounces them because he is already in the ideal possession of heavenly joys; and the joys of heaven are the same as those of earth, only that they are freed from the limits and contrarities of this life.” (Feuerbach, 1841/2008, p. 141)

The promise of immortality of the nation as typically construed and the possibility of immortality in service to it is not entirely dissimilar to how Feuerbach describes heaven.

Although Renan specifically admits that the paradigm of nations will one day come to an end, most theories about and defenses of nation seem to imply the alternative. This is particularly true of definitions of nation that involve an emphasis on national historical narratives. Under these models, the patriotic nationalist is to give of themselves out of a sense of moral obligation based on the sacrifices of their forebearers and national heroes. This sacrifice, in turn, is meant to inspire the same among those who will follow in future generations. Nations, according to Renan, are essentially built on conquest, that the conquest here is over the hearts, minds and lives of those who identify with that nation as opposed to the conquest of another may be irrelevant. Patriotic death is a point of focus for Steven Johnston who writes, “Death provides

the links that hold together the great chain of patriotic being” (Johnston, 2007, p. 195) describing this exact chain of never-ending obligation to the nation (the origin of which, again, may be entirely fictional according to Miller, Renan, Smith and others). Death is what makes the belief in nation authentic and must be done cheerfully and with deliberation. This is what provides the nation with the immortality that Feuerbach’s Divine Being possesses by its nature. Where the human in Feuerbach’s analogy gains immortality in a full realization of the God-self that was already conceived as immortal, Johnston argues that the nation offers the illusion of symbolic of immortality in return for giving a sacrifice that gives the nation something like immortality that it did not possess already. Yet, the daily creation of the nation-self seems, again, to use the promise of nation as a façade to hide the truth of the situation²⁴. Heaven for the nationalist patriot is to have one’s name engraved upon a monument to the fallen, romanticizing the nature of war and death into something live-giving rather than destructive²⁵.

Another aspect of the relationship between God and human described by Feuerbach and our nation-self is the importance of sacraments. Every religion has accompanying ceremonies and sacraments. That such sacraments inspire both a sense of the mystical connection with the Divine Being and a sense of familiarity and rote-ness, creates a tension between the two main side effects of these ceremonies. The two main sacraments upon which most Christian sects agree are that of baptism and communion. Baptism is meant to be the action (either undertaken once or multiple times depending on the denomination to which one adheres) that imbues the

²⁴ The “guilty secret” of patriotism is that it has an insatiable need for death (Johnston, 2007, p. 195).

²⁵ As President George W. Bush said in an address to the Georgia World Congress Center in the aftermath of September 11th, “Our great national opportunity is to preserve forever the good that has resulted. Through this tragedy, we are renewing and reclaiming our strong American values.” (Bush, 2001) According to this view, the nation grew one step closer to immortality through the tragic loss of thousands.

individual with the divine. Just as a washing in water can cleanse the body of literal impurities, the baptismal pool becomes a cleansing of the soul or, at least, a metaphorical representation of the same. By freeing oneself through this ceremonial act of purity, one can approach the limitless perfection of the God-self, even if only temporarily. The water of baptism, then, connects both the human with the divine and the divine with the natural.

Communion, as a sacrament, offers another such mingling of the mortal with the immortal. In its most basic sense, communion presents the fulfilling of a need. The taking of bread and wine sates the literal hunger and thirst of the physical human body. However, the needs of the body are more than just these corporeal desires for sustenance²⁶. The act of communion for the believer is another joining of the divine with the human that is meant to sate the spiritual needs of the individual, as well, by offering either a literal or representational (again, depending on one's sect) consumption of the God-self that allows one to experience the unity of God and human which was the original intent of creating the Divine Being as an idea. By fulfilling both our physical and spiritual needs, communion, like baptism, allows us to free ourselves of our limitations and constraints and approach the Divine on sanctified and limitless terms.

While there may be no obvious direct link between the sacraments of baptism and communion for the nation-self, nations are not without their own symbolic, ceremonial sacraments that allow for the mingling of the larger ideal with the human believer. Much is made of the relationship between the ability of music to inspire patriotic fervor or other self-righteousness by theorists like both Nietzsche and Johnston. Even in contemporary American

²⁶ “But he answered, “It is written, ““Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”” (Matthew 4:4, English Standard Version)

rhetoric, the tensions over protesting during the national anthem stem from the belief of many that such a protest interrupts or desecrates something intended to be sacred and spiritual no matter the validity or virtue of the cause for which one might protest. The symbolic actions of pledging to a flag compared to the burning of the same offers a similar tension. No matter the intent of the person immolating a piece of symbolic cloth, others will argue that such an act, even done out of a sense of patriotism, defames the divine spirituality of the idea of nation²⁷. So, we can see pledges, anthems, parades, fireworks displays, etc., all as instances of national sacraments, common among many conceptions of nation even as the particulars change from culture to culture. All of these ceremonial activities allow the nationalist (even unaware of the relationship they might have with the nation-self) to feel something elevating and transcendental in their belief in and obedience to the sacredness of nation.

From Agamben's perspective, the liturgical element of the sacraments plays multiple roles that can inform both Feuerbach's theory and that of the nation-self. From ancient times, the liturgy is a reference both to an office and an action that both carry the weight of service either to the state or the divine (in the ancient world, there was often little distinction as well). However, both played an important role in creating a sense of duty, regularity, and sacrifice. For some, "the fulfillment of the liturgies was seen as a way of obtaining honor and reputation" not entirely dissimilar to the way that contemporary nationalists see sacrifice and service to one's country²⁸ (Agamben, 2013, pp. 1-2). The daily rituals of the liturgy, even in the ancient context, provide us some parallel to the daily actions of conceiving the nation-self. However, the Christian

²⁷ Chief Justice Rehnquist's dissent in *Texas v. Johnston* (the most recent Supreme Court case on the issue of flag burning) offers exactly this type of argument. The flag, for Rehnquist, has symbolic meaning that approaches holiness.

²⁸ In the contemporary American context, this largely refers to military service rather than other types of public service.

context is even more informative as the theory of the nation-self borrows from Feuerbach's view of Christianity. From the view of the priesthood, the acts of daily liturgical ceremony (which can change depending on the time of year and special celebrations, but is largely the same, at least in structure if not in rhetoric on a daily basis) serves a dual function, both as a public act that serves the institution of the church and allows parishioners and devotees the opportunity to participate but also as a private act of the continual communion and sacrifice that, depending on one's sect, either celebrates or continues the forgiveness of one's sins.

The liturgical sacrifice, even as a symbol, both acknowledges the promise of the messianic sacrifice as having occurred once and for the benefit of all believers but also celebrates that sufficient sacrifice of Christ through daily ritual (Agamben, 2013, p. 8). As with sacraments for both Feuerbach and in our discussion of the nation-self, liturgy for Agamben allows the celebrant to both acknowledge the sacrifice done on their behalf but also find ethical value in the adherence to the duty that has become the daily participation in that sacrifice. Again, the regular act of the sacraments allows for the individual to approach and intermingle with the divine in ways that are both extremely specified but also intentionally mystical. The trappings of sacrament, sacrifice, and liturgy here form the basis for what could appear to be another instance of civic religion wherein one shows religious devotion to the secularized nation. Such a religion, as is it typically understood, exist to further a sense of duty and obligation to the nation and, potentially, creates familiar reward and punishment structures as mechanisms of enforcement. However, for the purposes of the nation-self, this ritualistic approach to religion forms a layer of performative action on top of the psychological creation of the reflective fetish object that not only speaks to the similarities in the ways that the nation-self is generated with Feuerbach's God but also creates a metaphorical distance between the nation-self and the self it exists to reflect

that, seemingly paradoxically, shores up the religious admiration of the nation while also obscuring the more accurate depiction of the creation of the same. As such, these rituals and sacraments exist both as something that we do to ourselves and our nation-selves that results in the separation and alienation between the two while also allowing for the appearance of cultural similarities between nation-selves. This ritualistic approach to the nation-self allows for the semblance of co-nationhood without interrogating the selves upon which different national claims are made. If two people feel the same affection for each of their nation-selves while singing an anthem devoted to their understanding of a shared political body, the ritual allows for a shared affective moment that can obscure the tenuousness of each person acknowledging the other as conational.

One last aspect of Feuerbach's Divine Being that runs parallel to the conception of the nation-self is the importance of Faith. For Feuerbach, faith is the conscious form of the love between the God-self and the human creator of the fetish-object. However, where the love between human and God is what unites them, faith is the impulse that seems to make them distinct. Faith in God is what estranges humanity from God supplanting an inner sense of the unity of the two with something external and disparate, a disunity of ideas that undermines the imagining of God in the first place. Faith creates a problem by taking the infinite unlimited God-self and recasting it as something particular. This is the distinguishing factor between a faith in God as revealed and explained by a specific religion and a more generalized belief in God. To this end, Feuerbach does not believe that Christianity is more "correct" in the particulars it invests in the person of Christ, the characteristics of the Trinity, etc.

Instead, Feuerbach shows a preference for Christianity as it more closely matches the metaphor of the Divine Being rather than the other way around. Faith makes the fetish too

objective and too material for Feuerbach, essentially presenting God with bounds that were not of God's character previously. As a result, the characteristics and nature of faith may be the same (or at least similar) in various religions, the assertion is that faith introduces partisanship into the idea of God where none existed before and did not need to exist. The love that is expressed between God and human because of their sameness is expressed between humans, according to Feuerbach in the idealized version of this process, because each other person is equally God. However, casting God into the confines of specific religions changes not only the relationship between God and human but between human and human. Just as Marx argues that an estrangement of labor eventually leads to an estrangement between humans, Feuerbach offers us a model which hopes to explain the nature of conflict between people on religious grounds. "Faith is the opposite of Love" for Feuerbach and faith is the culprit for every historical atrocity done in the name of Christianity (or any other religion for that matter) (Feuerbach, 1841/2008, p. 211). As Feuerbach explains:

"Faith necessarily passes into hatred, hatred into persecution, where the power of faith meets with no contradiction, where it does not find itself in collision with a power foreign to faith, the power of love, of humanity, of the sense of justice. Faith left to itself necessarily exalts itself above the laws of natural morality." (Feuerbach, 1841/2008, p. 214)

In essence, faith supplants God itself and asserts itself over any moral virtue that might have otherwise been explored in the perfection of God by the imperfect human. Faith is something that, eventually, gets expressed for its own benefit and for its own purposes separate from the God who is supposedly the object of the faith. The value of faith is not in relation to God at all, for Feuerbach, as faith demands adherence for its own sake. The most fundamental tenant of Christianity is that "God is love," and for Feuerbach this is meant as a universal statement about love for humanity as expressed through God. But, faith undermines this by its nature.

For the nation-self, faith operates in a similar fashion, again preventing us from expressing a larger sense of love and compassion where we otherwise might by positing faith and belief in nation in something particular and specific. The sense of duty and moral obligation that nation asks of the nationalist requires a certain faith that such an obligation is given justly and righteously. This may not be the case if nations were not the type of thing to make such a demand, but most theories of nation offer such theories of obligation to the point of death which has already been examined²⁹. Love, for Feuerbach, gives without question, but faith demands obedience without question. The same distinction follows for a nation generated through similar means as well. Without faith, the secret demands of patriotism for the nation become made plain and inspiring national histories are insufficient to maintain the need for a circle of continual sacrifice on behalf of nation.

As a result, just as faith lends itself to hatred where religion is concerned, faith in nation has a similar relationship to the hatred of the other. For most theories of nation, it is not simply enough to acknowledge that another possesses a nation other than one's own. This would fall short of the fundamental nature of the nation that Smith argues for and the moral obligation that both Renan and Miller hope to instill. Instead, nations must utilize faith as a further way to mask the selfhood of itself and to justify itself as the subject of our primary obligation. Faith creates the same separation between self and nation-self that undermined the relationship between human and Divine Being. This is why the theory of the nation-self presented here largely avoids discussions of the legal nature of nation-states as we understand them, as legalism is rarely

²⁹ Or, rather, most theories of nation are created to justify whatever specific moral obligations that their authors believe should be instilled in their readers and adherents.

sufficient to create the type of allegiance the theorist of nation finds essential to creating and sustaining the idea of nations themselves, and specific nations in particular.

The tension between love and compassion for other and faith in the boundedness of the nation-self will be the subject of Chapter Four. But, for now, I continue the examination of the religious nature of the nation-self created in a mold similar to that of Feuerbach's Divine Being by comparing the theory of the nation-self with the political theology of Schmitt and an argument about the secularization of the divine offered by Warren as a comment on Nietzsche.

The Nation-Self in Schmitt's Political Theology

In chapter three of Political Theology, Schmitt begins by saying "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts" in part because of the development of the state over the course of human history that begins with a theological notion of divine right and later transfers that theology to the state for political reasons but also because, "because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts" (Schmitt, 1922/2005, p. 36). The type of sociological consideration of which Schmitt speaks is not dissimilar from our discussion of the nation-self derived from Feuerbach's work on the generation of the Divine Spirit. Though using Feuerbach in this manner seems to be novel, describing the nation-self in theological terms is not. Schmitt's arguments about the nature of sovereignty and the exception add to our discussion here by both giving us context for the borrowing of Feuerbach's model for new purpose, but also as he regards sovereignty itself as a theological concept made secular.

As a result, though the few political theorists who examine Feuerbach often find him to be "basically apolitical" and as "little interested in practical issues and 'even less political ones,'"

Schmitt gives us both license and justification to examine such a theological argument in the light of our theory of nation and self (Leopold, 2007, p. 203). Indeed, with the framework of Feuerbach in the background, Schmitt's remark that "Protestant theology presents a different, supposedly unpolitical doctrine, conceiving of God as the 'wholly other' just as in political liberalism the state and politics are conceived of as the 'wholly other'" seems to lend some credence to our idea that the nation-self can be a mostly-liberal, secularized version of Feuerbach's theology that wherein both the alienated concepts, for our purposes, are considered as 'wholly same' (Schmitt, 1922/2005, p. 2).

Schmitt's understanding of sovereignty in this concept tracks with the nation-self from the very beginning. Schmitt tells us that "sovereign is he who decides the exception" (Schmitt, 1922/2005, p. 5). This is the most fundamental expression of his understanding of sovereignty and the power it wields in the context of the state. The sovereign exists to the extent which it can establish what counts as a difference between the juristic self and that other than that same self. This exception is usually thought to be exemplified in the creation or designation of a "state of exception" or "state of emergency" (depending on the translation from the German) and the process of designation is wholly political itself. Just as Abizadeh could not conceive of a prepolitical basis for the bounded liberal demos apart from the exercise of political power to determine, fundamentally, who counted and who did not, Schmitt emphasizes that the decision over who counts as well as the decision about deciding are both political actions of a sovereign who wields the power to make such a determination. This exception is not codified in the legal order of the state because it is the state of exception which gives the state its form by designating boundaries of sovereignty. Not only is it the case that the exception proves the rule (as the adage says) but rather that "the exception is more interesting than the rule" (Schmitt, 1922/2005, p. 15).

This emphasis shows us that Schmitt believes that the political is not synonymous with the state. The body politic defines itself based on the state of exception as designated by sovereignty and the state rests upon the foundation of that designation.

So, too, is the nation-self essentially a designation of exception, not just because nations often define themselves as “exceptional” but primarily because the daily formation of the nation-self requires both a renewed understanding of one’s political identity and then a continued reexamination of what other persons in one’s political sphere count as similar enough to count as a part of that individualized nation-self. Schmitt posits sovereignty as a thing that knows itself already, where the theory of the nation-self adds a preceding determination of self-reflection prior to the determination of exceptionality. From that point until a new self-examination is undertaken, the difference between nation-self and foreign other is nothing more than a continued state of exception albeit in something less than the legal terms that Schmitt uses to describe the state of public law and bureaucracy layered on top of the foundation of sovereignty. For Schmitt a process such as ours wherein one attempts “to trace a conceptual result back to a sociological carrier is psychology; it involves the determination of a certain kind of motivation of human action” (Schmitt, 1922/2005, p. 44). Nevertheless, though Schmitt finds more interest in the legality and practicality, the theory presented here is not completely unlike the juristic principles which Schmitt hopes to elucidate even as the theory of the nation-self focuses more on the realization of an identity rather than the instance of sovereign power in the state.

Schmitt writes that “every general norm demands a normal, everyday frame of life to which it can be factually applied” (Schmitt, 1922/2005, p. 13) and the theory of the nation-self is an attempt at both providing such a daily frame of reference but also leaving room for changes in the state of exception based on changes not merely in the political will or rational considerations

of the sovereign but in the way that the nation-self sees its reflection. For Schmitt the concept of a legal order contains both an element of norm and decision. The nation-self posits both of these elements in a two-step process. Rather than taking the norm as something self-evident (which Schmitt argues most do), the theory of the nation self first determines the norm and then the exception. As such, the nation-self becomes, in a fashion, more than sovereign because it possesses within itself the distinction of norm and the distinction of exception. Where Schmitt argues that the state exists separately from this instance of sovereign exceptionalism (for example, not all German states, according to Schmitt, possessed the ability to establish a state of emergency and suspend the norm, essentially maintaining their statehood without sovereign power), our nation-self possesses the psychological identification equivalent of both norm and exception. Where Schmitt says that “the exception reveals most clearly the essence of the state’s authority,” the theory of the nation-self suggests that the exception reveals the less than clear boundaries of the self as norm. In distinction to Schmitt’s sovereign, the nation-self possesses the capacity for both elements of the legal order, the precision in which it can define them seems somewhat more ambiguous because of its conception as something other than a legal designation. As a result, the nation-self may be less willing to suspend itself than Schmitt’s legal order. Where the legal order may anticipate the need for and specifics of an exception, knowing that it has the underlying norm as a point of reference that can be, arguably, established externally and used as a fallback. The nation-self, as something that possesses the possibility of both norm and decision of exception, finds it difficult to conceive of anything completely external to the system that it understands. So, even as Renan believes that one day the need for a system of nations may be superseded by a new paradigm, he cannot perceive or glimpse that new paradigm. As a result, Johnston’s secret needs of patriotism to demand a cycle of death becomes

even more pernicious. While the nation could argue for both historical and contemporary states of exception, because the nation-self has difficulty perceiving anything beyond itself, the nationalist more readily capitulates to the demands of patriotism even if there is a sense that the national narrative on which such obligations are built are false. The terms of the creation of the nation-self essentially make an exception of imagining a world other than the one in which it is created through our daily process.

Further equivalence between Schmitt and the nation-self exist in Schmitt's comments on Weber's idea of sociological forms. Schmitt distill three basic forms as they apply to sovereignty, the transcendental form, the regular form, and the technical form. The transcendental form is a reference to the "'condition' of juristic cognition" (Schmitt, 1922/2005, p. 28). The transcendental can become a type of reference to the same type of ascendancy that one can feel in the unity between God and human as Feuerbach describes as the explanation of sovereignty for Schmitt and mirrors Weber again as Schmitt seems to "accept the idea of the "demagification" or "disenchantment" of the world" (Strong T. , 2005, p. xxiv). Indeed, the project here that Schmitt undertakes is, in part, an attempt to restore some of the lost qualities of theological sovereignty to the secularized sovereign. The transcendental form speaks to this restoration as an initial restatement of the condition by which the juristic can be understood. The second form identified is the regular form, that Schmitt designates as being "derived from repeated practice and professional reasoning" (Schmitt, 1922/2005, p. 28). The practiced rote-ness of juristic consideration here closely mimics the daily process of realizing the nation-self as both an action that gives form to the idea of nation, but which can also be *formalized* in its regularity. The last form that Schmitt identifies in Weber is the one to which we give less attention in the model of the nation-self, the form of technological refinement. One of Schmitt's

primary interests is to discuss the role that sovereignty plays within the bureaucratic system of public law, and how such bureaucracy and technocracy has become a poor substitute for the grandeur afforded sovereignty by the traditional theological forms of the concept. Again, our attention is largely turned towards the more psychological aspects of the formation of national identity, but the utility that such specialized knowledge and bureaucratic expertise provides in the functional state cannot be denied.

A more accurate representation of the nation-self than that of the bureaucratic state comes, again, in Schmitt's discussion of the sociological and psychological aspects of the theology of sovereignty. In discussing the politicization of theological concepts, Schmitt uses as an example the relevance of the Cartesian argument for the existence of God as a metaphor for the medieval prince. Just as Descartes denies that the thought of God could be derived from the thoughts of the human skeptic³⁰ and argues for the ontological existence of God in part based on this; so, too, does the medieval prince develop "all the characteristics of the state by a sort of continual creation" (Schmitt, 1922/2005, p. 47). Essentially, "the prince is the Cartesian god transposed to the political world" (Schmitt, 1922/2005, p. 47). Even though, as Schmitt argues, "the machine now runs by itself" as secular society has removed any notion of the theological from the conception of sovereignty, the trappings of the condition in which and the means by

³⁰ Descartes obviously reaches a different conclusion here to that of Feuerbach. Descartes denies the possibility that the idea of an infinite divine being could come from a flawed human mind and uses it as evidence for the ontological existence of God (Descartes, 2006). Feuerbach believes that the Divine Being can only be posited by an imperfect and limited human wanting to understand themselves by contemplating the unlimited. In borrowing from Feuerbach, the theory of the nation-self seems to take a middle course that begins with a Cartesian-lite supposition of the self and then turns into a Feuerbachian process of imagining the state as an alienated version of that self.

which it was originally created remain. So, too, does the theory of the nation-self maintain the partial image of the God-self it borrows from Feuerbach.

One last comment remains to be made here about Schmitt's political theology as it is compared to the theory of the nation-self for the sake of the work of a later chapter. Schmitt says that "sovereignty must therefore be associated with a borderline case" placing the sovereign state at odds with liberal philosophy that becomes the basis for the debate of the relative value of liberty and democratic equality upon which other theorists have made careers. We have seen a discussion of this boundedness with Abizadeh in the previous chapter but will return to the topic of literal and metaphorical borders more in Chapter Four. For now, I will stipulate that the theory of the nation-self presents the creation of the alienated fetish as something that is limited and possesses borders that create the exceptionalism which we have argued runs parallel to Schmitt's sovereign. However, Schmitt asserts that because sovereignty exists not just in the ability to decide the exception but also in the power to create the state of emergency that codifies and actualizes it. Again, this seems to mirror the nation-self's two-step creation by determining the boundaries of the self and then creating the exception around them. Yet, the theory of the nation-self presented here also embraces the possibility of an evolution that brings us beyond those boundaries and borders where Schmitt's work presupposes that either there is nothing beyond sovereignty as conceptualized in his theory or that another radical change must happen to lead to a resulting difference. The final section of this chapter will examine the potential for disaster of looking beyond the boundaries of the sovereign and the self through the lens of Nietzsche and Warren.

Nietzsche, Warren, and Liberal Secularization

In his book *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, Mark Warren attempts to resurrect the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and give it new postmodern meaning while also attempting to parse out the potentially different (and maybe even contradictory) implications of Nietzsche's philosophy and his politics. In doing so, I assert that Warren's Nietzsche can give us new insight on American political culture and maybe give us a vision of Nietzsche as a critic of that culture even as he was writing during the formative years of the same. Drawing primarily from Warren's work while also using various supporting materials as a buttress, this section seeks to examine what Warren's Nietzsche might have to say about American liberalism as the ideal secularization of the Christian-moral culture and potentially the tipping point for a looming nihilistic crisis in the absence of traditional notions of nation, self, and the meaning given to us by these concepts.

This examination must begin, essentially, with Warren's interpretations of Nietzsche's views on culture and agency. By doing so, not only will we be able to retrace Nietzsche's steps through cultural criticism in outlining the path towards nihilism, but we will also be able to see how these things might be applicable in a new era as well. According to Warren, "politics presupposes that individuals have the capacities of agents: the ability to choose and evaluate goals, to take responsibility for actions, to enter into agreements and obligations, and to determine the future" (Warren, 1988, p. 46). However, Nietzsche (and, perhaps, Warren by extension) often seems to refute any construal of this agency as allowing for atomistic individualism. This is at least somewhat true if we can infer that Nietzsche would have refuted atomism in this sense in the same way that he refuted what he called Kantian "soul-atomism" in *Beyond Good and Evil* as a rejection of the belief in the existence Kant's thing-in-itself. Instead, culture becomes the medium through which our own agency is filtered. Indeed, Warren tells us

that “cultures mold political agents by filtering and assigning meaning to experiences, by identifying reasons for action one way rather than another” and that “culture is. . . the intrinsically human way of transforming the phenomenal realm of experience into a universe within which agency is possible” (Warren, 1988, pp. 46-48).

However, culture often has a dual nature that Nietzsche argues can eventually betray the agent and result into a lapse into nihilism. The problem arises in the fact that cultures are not only a way for us to relate to the experiential world but that they also are the foundation for and security of our own subjective identities. Nietzsche himself shows us how this dual nature of culture can often serve more self-reflective goals while sacrificing more “reasonable” alternative actions:

“What is the cause of our keen resoluteness in action? . . . The oldest and still most common answer is: God is the cause. In this way he gives us to understand that he approves of our actions. When in former ages people consulted oracles, they did so that they might return home with such a keen resoluteness. . . [T]hey did not decide, in other words, on the basis of what is a reasonable course of action, but on the basis of that image that could fill the soul with hope and courage. A cheerful state of mind was placed on the scales as an argument, and proved to be heavier than reasonableness.” (Warren, 1988, p. 49)

This kind of effect of culture, according to Warren “carve[s] out a horizon, making possible a mode of acting and providing an interpretative space for a feeling of power” (Warren, 1988, p. 49). However, the false sensibility supplants the reason of agency in favor of creating a fictive world with its own new horizons and boundaries, and in doing so causes entire cultures of agents to lose their grounding in the world of experience and puts them in danger of slipping towards nihilism.

One must pause for a moment here to examine how Nietzsche view nihilism so that the connection between this loss of subjective agency and the worldview of will to nothingness. According to Warren, “rather than understanding the root of nihilism to be the loss of a

metaphysically grounded realm of truth, Nietzsche saw it as a symptom of dissolving subjectivity, of disintegrating power, and of a failing mode of living” (Warren, 1988, pp. 13-14). As such, should the culture through which we mediate our views of the world begin to collapse, the individual agent can no longer connect their own understanding of the world (which are filtered through that culture and perhaps given a priori to the individual by their culture) to their experiences in the “real” world. As much as Nietzsche sees nihilism as “a failure of the human powers of agency,” our culture might destine the agent down that road without even giving evidence to that fact (Warren, 1988, p. 17).

This potential of culture to betray us to nihilism cannot be divorced from what Warren refers to as “original nihilism” and its roots in human suffering. Initially nihilism was rooted in a sense of powerlessness that slave classes felt concerning their oppressors. As such, original nihilism was purely a political experience of subjection. The lack of autonomy led to a distinct lack of meaning for these slaves resulting in the first instances of a world without the boundaries and horizons of experiential meaning in which one can exercise one’s own agency. It would be the advent of the Christian-moral worldview that would create a new cultural explanation of the world that created new horizons for agency. This happened seemingly naturally and without any particularly malicious intent. Indeed, Warren writes that “experience acts as a constraint on possible interpretations and violent experience so constrains the possibilities of meaningful interpretation that the oppressed are driven to find meaning outside of experience altogether; they take flight from experiential reality into an imaginary world” (Warren, 1988, pp. 20-21).

The very ideas of Christian-moral culture call for a lauding of selflessness and self-sacrifice such that “the will of the oppressed must become a ‘will to self-denial’ and a ‘will to nothingness’ simple because the worldly avenues for experiencing oneself as an agent are

blocked” (Warren, 1988, p. 23). However, this new cultural lens and these new moral boundaries were created “at the price of recasting the identities of subjects ‘beyond’ the realm of suffering in what Nietzsche thought of as the purely imaginary ‘backward’ of Christian ideals” (Warren, 1988, p. 19). In creating this world separate (even if initially only in part) from the world of physical and political experience, the Christian-moral worldview set its devotees on the eventual course towards nihilism that has been described here previously.

Though it seemed to be offering a solution to the problem of original nihilism, the Christian-moral worldview simply masked the problem of suffering and powerlessness without addressing the root causes of original nihilism. As Warren says, “Any interpretive resolution to suffering without a practical resolution retains the mark of suffering in its movement away from the world” (Warren, 1988, p. 28). No matter how effective the mask, no attempt to ignore the problems of political suffering and existential powerlessness will be successful indefinitely. Even after the eventual collapse of the Christian-moral worldview leads to a second uprising of nihilism in the world (as will be discussed in the subsequently), the whole history of the prosperity of Christendom did not eliminate the possibility of a slip back into original nihilism. Unfortunately, Nietzsche still seems to believe that a replication of the conditions of original nihilism will still result in a replication of the results. To this end, Warren writes that, “one can conclude the original nihilism will manifest itself wherever political oppression is coupled with cultural exclusion” (Warren, 1988, p. 25). Like an individual or community suffering bouts of a reoccurring plague, humanity may not yet be free from potential outbreaks of the sickness of nihilism.

The first real crisis of nihilism owing to the failure of the Christian-moral worldview as described previously occurred during a period of what Warren refers to as European Nihilism.

While the results were somewhat common to that of the original crisis of nihilism, the event was not itself caused by political suffering but by a crisis of identity as a result of the acknowledgement of the failure of the Christian-moral worldview not because of its own internal inconsistencies but rather by the fact that the experiential world from which this worldview attempted to distract Western society changed such that it was no longer needed and was ultimately discarded. However, unfortunately, to the extent that Warren and Nietzsche think that society might have simply supplanted the Christian-moral worldview with notions of democratic liberalism, we may simply be deluding ourselves into another separation from the world of experience lending ourselves to a contemporary crisis of nihilism.

According to Warren, Nietzsche's main criticism of the Christian-moral worldview was not just that it was potentially internally inconsistent, but that it was no longer necessary given the changes in the world brought on by modernity. "[Nietzsche's] claim is simply that violence in the modern era is something less than that of the early Christian era. Since violence is decreasing, Nietzsche reasons that it could not be an *increase* in violence that has produced European nihilism, as it was in the case of original nihilism" (Warren, 1988, p. 36). Essentially, Nietzsche asserts that whatever connection the Christian-moral worldview had to the experiential world in relating its philosophy of self-denial to a world of political violence and oppression dissipates as that violence and oppression declines. As such, we begin to see that the Christian-moral worldview no longer represents "a complete and coherent conceptual universe" (Warren, 1988, p. 39).

As the situation and the state of human affairs in the world of experience begin to change, "the 'truths' of such a worldview are no longer insulated from comparison with experience. Hence "God" becomes "far too extreme a hypothesis" for the relatively pacified life of the

nineteenth century” (Warren, 1988, p. 41). Confronted with a new era of advancements in technology and philosophy, the Christian-moral worldview reaches a point where it is no longer relevant to the lives of individuals or society. As such, Nietzsche concludes that only the Madman still seeks out God while rationality suggests, “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him” (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 167). The crisis of identity faced by those still clinging to the notions of the Christian-moral worldview in a world where God is dead is this second historical crisis of nihilism.

However, as our society and culture evolved and adapted to create a solution (feeble and unsatisfactory though it may have been) to the onset of original nihilism, so too might we have created another delusion for ourselves as a way of abstractly escaping from the experiential world. While this second crisis is different from the first in that we are not confronted with a “will to nothingness” because of our own political powerlessness has caused us to give up on a meaningful life, instead we are driven to that same end by a crisis in which our assumptions about the world around us are not corresponding to our own experiences. However, in another attempt to escape from the crisis of nihilism we may have created a new “god” that is just as much a social construct as the first and placed our faith in it. By examining the philosophy rising out of the period of Enlightenment that contributed to the death of our old god, perhaps the identity of our new god becomes clearer.

Warren says that “Nietzsche views liberal democratic political culture as little more than a secularized development of Christian culture” (Warren, 1988, p. 213). He continues to say, “Nietzsche seems to relate its liberal aspect to Christianity’s conception of the individual and its democratic aspect to Christianity’s conceptions of community and social justice. The important difference between Christian and liberal democratic culture, Nietzsche seems to think, is only

that the latter is an attempt to politicize the ideals of the former” (Warren, 1988, p. 214).

Furthermore, “because liberal democracy relies on ideals that are part of a collapsing culture it too is implicated in the crisis of nihilism” (Warren, 1988, p. 214).

Although we often think of democratic liberalism as being grounded in its own rationality based on real political and historical experience Nietzsche seems to assert that:

“[L]iberalism inherits the contradictions of Christian ideology that stem from its metaphysics of the subject. Christianity posited the existence of individual souls as unconditional, nonempirical, and irreducible beings. For this reason, the Christian individual remains nonactive and nonworldly; the self is displaced into a set of metaphysical identities that are divorced from practices. Liberalism inherited this metaphysical conception of the subject while giving it a different content and putting it to different uses.” (Warren, 1988, pp. 214-215)

In imagining society as “the result of individuals agreeing to enforce rules in terms of which they can maximize their desires and preferences”, liberals create a metaphysical stand-in for the individual agent (Warren, 1988, p. 215). By arguing for a notion of an individual that exists before the society in a metaphysical sense that allows them to form a social contract with other individuals, they create a space for the individual to exist but ultimately fail to theorize this space. In doing so liberalism simply uses the private space it has created for the individual to take over the metaphysical space that the Christian-moral worldview allowed for a soul separate from social and political reality and uses it as a ground on which to build a political foundation. Yet by basing liberal political institutions on abstractions analogous (and potentially directly drawing from previously failed abstractions, liberalism inherits all the flaws and failings of the Christian-moral worldview that led to a crisis of nihilism.

Though Western society tried to create a new cultural worldview based on rationality, it seems that this creation may simply be another abstract set of boundaries and horizons that may separate us from the world of experience. Moreover, just as Nietzsche’s argument that “while

some aspects of a society will be questionable in terms of its culture, others will be unquestionable because the interpretive hegemony of the culture will make questions about them quite literally inconceivable” applied to a questioning of the existence and purpose of God, so too does that argument apply to liberalism. If the experiential world suggests that liberal notions of equality and liberty are fundamentally correct but do not allow for questioning of whether they exist in reality rather than just as ideological abstracts, then liberalism follows the path of the Christian-moral worldview step-for-step.

Here reenters the theory of the alienated nation-self as we have conceived it. The distinction added by the examination of Nietzsche is that we can further see the assumed importance of the boundedness of the nation-self as a political ideal. The self sees its reflection as physically limited and understands the world in which one lives through that lens, creating a limited idea of a nation-self as well. However, the transcendental nature of Feuerbach’s alienation cannot be ignored here despite Schmitt’s protestations that such case of exception at the border are essential to defining his juristic conceptions. While Warren and Nietzsche suggest that nihilism and meaninglessness result from having a system of truth and belief that no longer mimics or matches the experiential world in which one lives, the theory of the nation-self argues for that same regular process of reimagining that borrowed from Renan’s daily plebiscite. The nation-self created in this way feels the lurking danger of nihilism should its promises and demands for sacrifice and moral obligation be shown for what they really are.

The nation-self subconsciously worries of the lack of justification for the exceptions which establish its borders and boundaries. Yet it supplants these senses of danger and worry with a regular reshaping of the way we see ourselves and the nation we build around that conception in a way that is meant to prevent the nation-self from ever straying too far away from

one's experiential perception of the world. This shallow epistemology of nation may often sacrifice a notion of genuine national history (complete with historical terrors and atrocities that such an epistemology would deny or ignore) to maintain the constant vigilance against the nihilistic future that Nietzsche seems to predict given the historical developments he cites (although, as we have seen most arguments justifying nation assume that these histories need not be real to inspire exactly this type of bounded belief). Though the god who imbued Schmitt's sovereign with power that must be reclaimed in a secular world, here we have substituted nation-self for Feuerbach's God-self in a way that maintains much of the spiritual mysticism of the theological while allowing for a mostly secular existence and avoiding the problems of the threat of nihilism one day at a time. Whether this vigilance is necessary and whether there is real potential for a concerned passion of other that would force the nation-self beyond its boundedness and exceptionality will be the extensive subject of Chapter Four. However, first I turn in Chapter Three to an examination of two other theories of the genesis of nations as popular contemporary alternatives to the stringency of nationalist theories of Renan, Miller, and Smith but end with many of the same eventual conclusions about moral obligation that underly the theory of the nation-self as presented thus far.

CHAPTER THREE: ON FRANK AND ANDERSON'S CONSTITUENT MOMENTS AND NATIONAL IMAGININGS

After having given form to the theory of the nation-self and shown the theoretical foundation upon which the concept was built, I turn now to an examination of two models of the origin of nations that differ from the theorists like Miller and Smith who hope to boil the definition of nation down to easily recognizable categories. This chapter will examine the idea of “constituent moments” as asserted by Jason Frank and the process of “imagined communities” of Benedict Anderson. These two models offer fewer direct parallels to the theory of the nation-self than we found in Feuerbach and Schmitt but give us a conceptual lens with which to examine the nation-self not historically speaking (though both works focus heavily on tracing their theories of nations and peoples through historical events) but rather conceptually as two theories which are radically different both from the typical theories of nation and from one another.

Just as the theory of the nation-self asserts a certain type of individualized psychological moment in which the person posits the nation, giving it the form of their own characteristics and then creates the boundaries of exception around the same, both of these theories seek to describe national origins in terms of moments of collective creation, based on adaptations to new political realities and practical circumstances. Whether a moment in which a people constitutes itself as separate from a political process or imagine themselves as sovereign political communities, both involve a certain psychology wherein the nation is formed separately from the established and formalized political processes (and perhaps intentionally in spite of it). Additionally, both

theories reflect changing attitudes over time and the relative recency of the conception of nation or popular communities as we think of them in contemporary politics and theory. This chapter will seek to examine each theory in its own right respectively while offering some critique before comparing each to the theory of the nation-self which we argue more accurately represents the psychology behind the formation of national identity.

Frank's Constituent Moments

Jason Frank's recent work Constituent Moments seeks to offer a theoretical critique of contemporary democratic theory and its focus on the "border problem" or the "dilemma of constituency." Rather than focusing on a Schmittian-esque theory of determining an answer to the question of who constitutes the *vox populi* in a nation, Frank focuses instead on what the moments where a "people" coalesces. His main claim is that these moments of constituency posit that "the potency of the *vox populi* in American history derives in part from its persistent latency or virtuality, from the paradoxical political reality that the people are forever a people that is not... yet" (Frank, 2010, p. 5). These are moments in which a revolutionary group and the self-created institutions that they often create outside of the norms of politics and laws take control of the process by which a "people" gain authorization as an attempt to constitute themselves as the same "people" in whose name their governments claim to operate as a source of legitimacy. The question here becomes "What is sufficient to constitute the 'people?'" Frank finds something felicitous in the "performative utterance" giving, as an example, the difference between a marriage license as a document that legally creates a marriage verses the symboling meaning imbued on a relationship by marriage vows (Frank, 2010, p. 8). The legalistic explanation is obviously that the marriage, as a contract, becomes an entity that exists as soon as

signatures are put to a piece of paper, but, for those who opt to supplement their legal marriage with a ceremony, the actions of the ceremony become more important despite what the license to wed represents³¹. What is important here is that these moments of creation for these abstract concepts now realized and made material is that such “constituent claims effectively change the conditions and contexts through which they are heard and recognized as claims” (Frank, 2010, p. 8). These moments allow us to create a new space for a new politics by demonstrating both legitimacy of a new people to be a people and the inability of the old regime to deny such a constitutive possibility. In something more akin to Schmitt’s exceptional decision than Frank seems to admit, a group of individuals becomes “a people” when they have the will and wherewithal to declare themselves as such and the political power to do so irrespective of the norms of political activity and institutions of power.

In these moments, narrative histories about the origins of a nation (or the heroic figures to whom other theorists argue that fealty and sacrifice are owed) fade into a less important background as something new is being created that finds the definition of its existence as something largely separate from such histories. This must almost necessarily be so as the institutions that already exist have already laid claim to these histories and a revolution against such institutions must either deemphasize such narratives or enter into a face-off over who has the more legitimate claim to histories and heroes. But further than that, Frank argues that investigation into a

“people’s revolutionary origin undoes the purity of this origin, revealing how the revolutionary enactment of the people does not ground an perpetuate a political identity

³¹ Frank does not acknowledge here that the use of a signature or a document also carries a substantial amount of symbolic weight to the extent that we see a legal document as something that has import or can determine the lives of individuals, but I take his point about the distinction between the legality of a thing and the moment in which the thing is constituted in the eyes of those involved.

so much as it spurs its continual revision and transformation over a history of democratic claims making.” (Frank, 2010, p. 9)

Essentially, national histories become less important in the face of revolutionary fervor which is demanding the creation of some new way of perceiving itself as being generated from the people and questions the usual ways of legitimizing such a people.

This revolutionary spirit is what is more worth of theoretical attention, according to Frank, though he argues that most political theorists find it a less appealing topic than that of democratic institutions, the problem of borders, or instances of public law. His work is essentially an attempt at tracing this exact revolutionary spirit from before the Revolutionary War through American history as a counter-narrative to that normally taught. He sees the American revolutionary public as something less principled and more practical. The distinction between the two is something Frank finds with Wolin who designates the “two bodies” of a democratic people (Frank, 2010, p. 30). The first of these two bodies is the active, revolutionary body which possesses both the power and the will to destroy and create, tearing down old politics and institutions and forging new ones. The Latin adage *vox populi, vox Dei* exemplifies this spirit as the metaphorical voice of the people here is related to the voice of God, who possesses as right of divine nature the ability to both create and destroy. This first body of the people is one that does more than merely participate in the political processes it is given as norm but seeks to alter or abolish those processes to suit its own needs. This body is the revolutionary force which Frank argues has the ability to create constituent moments, taking away any public claims of political institutions and changing the context in which those claims can be made in order to make a new one. This process is dynamic both during and after a period of revolution, as long as it remains an active identity, and, as we will see, Frank gives examples of the

continued activity of this first body long after the Revolutionary War ends and even after the writing of the Constitution.

The second body that Wolin gives us is that of the people as an “essentially passive, depoliticized entity invoked only to authorize the state’s expanding power” (Frank, 2010, p. 30). This is the form of the political body to which the revolutionary objects, particularly when the institutions of government claim to operate in the name of the people without considering the will or needs of the people. This body is also the risk that a revolutionarily constituted people face should the destructive and creative spirit of the first body return to its former dormancy. Frank creates theoretical tension here between the constitutional and the constitutive, a distinction that, according to Frank, often goes unnoticed or is purposefully ignored as a way of preferring the stability of a constitutional state and a return to the usual norm of democratic theory and historical narratives.

In American history, Frank points to the pre-revolutionary existence of political institutions that existed “out of doors,” meaning something wholly separate from the colonial governments of the time (Frank, 2010, p. 17). As the usual governmental and judicial bodies were seen as illegitimate or insufficient, the citizens of the colonies would forge new bodies to meet their unaddressed needs and viewed these “out of doors” institutions as having more legitimacy than those established by monarchical charter or even popular constitutionalism. This sense of dissatisfaction is what spurred on the resort to violence in the lead-up to and beginnings of the American Revolution³². Even when they were expressly illegal according to either the crown or the democratic colonial authorities, these institutions were viewed as possessing true

³² One could read the discussion of Nietzsche from the previous chapter into this moment to give further context. The people, according to that view, would be facing a sense of nihilism as a result of the world that was asserted to them not matching that of their experience.

legitimacy to represent the people, giving us an example of a constituent moment wherein the people chose some extra-procedural process as a means of representing and legitimizing themselves.

According to Frank, this is not, as many who study American political thought and history would argue, a movement that was predicated primarily (or perhaps even at all) on Lockean or Jeffersonian ideals about natural rights, legitimacy in government, or the right to rebel. Though such theories might make for an interesting overlay, the revolutionary nature of the revolution was often supplanted, even contemporaneously, with an argument that what was occurring was more civilized than such a braze revolutionary force. Such “constitutional histories” had a tendency to “place the Revolutionary War within a sequence of events culminating in the Constitutional convention, effectively picturing a violent revolt as a deliberate reform” (Frank, 2010, p. 244). The revolutionary group the Sons of Liberty give us a demonstration of this exact point. The claim of the Sons to represent the people was something that existed separately from both the rule of law of the monarchy and the rule of law of commonwealth government in an attempt to realize some truer version of popular representation even when it meant that the group had to operate through quasi-judicial means. From Frank’s view, the American Revolution was less a principled and philosophical revolution of ideas stemming from a view of the people generate almost exclusively from liberal social contract theory, but more the violence revolutionary spirit of a disenfranchised people who felt twice failed by their various government whether it be Parliament ruling from afar or more local governments who lacked the legitimacy to effect change. The people had embraced a continuing process of a constitutive power that could both exist in the extraordinary current events of the day and the mundanity of everyday democratic life.

The latency of constitutive power is something that, for Frank, is difficult to quell once it has been aroused and was so for the new American republic. That both the war and American independence was formalized by the Continental Congress seems almost incidental from this point of view. Such legal acts were a response to what had already begun under the auspices of constitutive power rather than an attempt to use principles of government and philosophies of natural rights in order to generate such a revolutionary spirit. Additionally, this revolutionary spirit did not go quietly into the night as soon as the war ended or even when the Constitution was proposed and later ratified. According to Frank, the American people, once accustomed to exercising their own political authority to make constitutional decisions for themselves were reticent to abdicate that authority into the hands of a new constitutional government. Though today American history may often frame the war for independence as seeking the justice and domestic tranquility offered by the new Constitution, this claim was made problematic by the fact that a claim to represent “we the people” was a tenuous one in light of the continued resort to constitutive power³³. The revolutionary spirit would continue beyond the end of the war through instances like Shay’s rebellion and beyond the Constitution into the 19th Century where American politics representing a variety of points of view all claimed to continue the “unfinished work” of the revolution from abolitionists, suffrage movements, labor movements, etc. Frank argues that this was more than just a mere political trope but was the continuation of Wolin’s first body of the people in spite of a Constitutional urging toward the inertness of the second. Long before we accepted that American greatness was something static to which we must return in the fictitious narrative history of our nation, American politics for close to a century was based

³³All of this is also separate from the historical reality that the authors of the Constitution were not interested in either full democracy or full equality as shown by their fears of mob rule and their reticence to address the issue of slavery in a serious way.

on a rhetorical return to the revolution. But wherever they occur either across history or in contemporary politics, “constituent moments similarly return to these ‘revolutionary roots’ though without the focus on constitutional law and formal political constitutions” (Frank, 2010, p. 32) This constitutive power, for Frank is exemplified not just in the important constitutional crises of the day, but in the everyday politics of American life for each new appeal to represent “the people.” Contemporary American populisms like those of Donald Trump or Bernie Sanders would seem to be potential examples of this same appeal in a more recent context. These constitutive moments and their claims to express the “voice of the people” wherein the people to which such claims refer are always becoming, always adapting, always (as Frank says) “not yet.”

Though Frank obviously believes that this “voice of the people” must, in fact, represent some extant group in the world rather the individualized nature of the nation-self there are some important similarities and some important points of distinction to be drawn between the two theories. The most striking similarity is that of the continual process. For Frank, the constituent power of the people rests latently just beneath the surface of political awareness any time that it appears dormant and can be reactivated as the people need to wield such power. These moments can exist in the small and ordinary parts of the national life and need not rest merely in moments of revolution or constitutional crisis. Frank argues that a “focus on constituent moments may at once deflate the dramatically exceptional significance of the founding moment while simultaneously infusing the democratic everyday with the possibility of the extraordinary” (Frank, 2010, p. 253). Though Frank sees these moments as returns to the revolutionary spirit and creative possibility, a literal return to a past sense of people and nation may not be necessary and may even be counterproductive and counterintuitive given whatever the current needs and desires of the people might be.

Similarly, the theory of the nation-self posits a continual process that focuses on the daily exercise of the individual will to create an idea of nation around the self's own political conceptions and desires. Where Frank argues that the "people" is often an ambiguous, faceless crowd that can go unrepresented if we try to focus our sense of "people" on a constitutionally or legally instituted group, the theory of the nation-self just removes that process one step further by asserting that the process is essentially individual in the first place. Any sense of a "people" according to the theory of the nation-self, is either a weaker one formed by the tenuous agreements of the nation-self to acknowledge the commonality between individuals or is a complete rhetorical fiction. As with the distinction between the nation-self and Schmitt, Frank focuses less specifically on the psychology of the person or the group in the constituent moment and more on the exercise of power, but the will to create a nation based on one's own self-identity is still an exercise of power and one that can have implications for the institutions of government as well. The metaphor of the marriage vows being a constituent moment compared to the legal marriage document is an apt one but forgets that even the ceremonial and symbolic meaning of a marriage can vary from person to person (even with the confines of the marriage relationship itself). The issue of translation of ideas reinserts itself here if the constituent moment must needs be something more than individualized but something less than a force of nature that just sweeps individuals and groups along in its wake.

Where Frank borrows the phrase "out of doors" as a reference to the pre-revolutionary American tendency to set up ad hoc institutions of power and governance in the streets to meet the needs that colonial governments were not, we simply elevate the "out of doors" metaphor to something even more secluded and individualized. Though still avoiding the slip towards solipsism (of which Feuerbach was often accused) and an assertion that the self is the only thing

that is knowable or can be a self, the theory of the nation-self speculates that the constituent power is wielded more strongly (particularly in the American context in which Frank writes) by the individual and only weakly in agreements of nation between individuals. Additionally, just as Frank worries that constituent power may often be used as the power to oppress and enslave as much as it is the power to create and to imagine, the theory of the nation-self is chiefly concerned that such an individualized version of nation inherently makes exceptional decisions more extreme. Moreover, as with many theories and novel historical explanations about the root of political power in the nation, the focus on constituent moments fails to allow for imagining anything beyond the confines of the more localized group.

Frank conceives of his constituent people as being Janus-faced with an eye towards both the past and the future. However, the more accurate metaphor would be a figure with an eye towards the historical narrative of nation and one eye on the present for his constituent moments focus primarily on the will to power of the people as exercised to meet their present political needs with little sense of forethought or future. The violently creative revolutionary power of which Frank's theory conceives seems ill-suited to make long-term plans, especially as he sees it as a power that can be constantly reformed and reasserted. As such, an idea of something beyond the possibility of the nationally or locally focused "people" does not seem to be an aspect of the constituent moment. The "constituent moment" seems to be completely unconcerned with more than a passing glance at the "constituent past" with even less consideration for a "constituent future" and ends up accepting the limited, bounded nature of the nation as a given. Though Frank wants to avoid a connection to Schmittian exceptionalism for fear of being associated with more oppressive political schema, the constituent moment cannot be construed in a way that makes it wholly other from the state of exception. In fact, to the extent which Frank

believes that the constituent moment is a return to the revolutionary roots of a people wherein they reengage with their own political necessities in that “out of doors” context, the state of exception cannot be ignored. Agamben writes that a popular view of the state of exception stems from necessity itself, the underlying principle of the constituent moment. He writes that a possible translation of the Latin adage “*necessitas legem non habet*” is “necessity creates its own law” in a way that reduces the theory of the state of exception wherein a determination of necessity (often extralegally or quasi-legally) is enough to justify and legitimize the creation or delineation of a state of emergency (Agamben, *State of Exception*, 2005, p. 24). As such, Frank’s ignoring the inherent border problem in the theory of constituent moments does not solve it or account for it, and, instead may merely be reducible to another instance of it. A possible answer to the problem of a focus on boundaries will be the extended subject of Chapter Four.

Anderson’s Imagined Communities

Benedict Anderson’s model of nation also diverges from the typical taxonomy of national characteristics that are offered by most theorists of nation. Like Frank, Anderson hopes to offer a type of historical account for the rise of nations as the primary (and for Anderson universal) source of political power. This section will examine the theory of “imagined communities” and, again, offer a critique of why the same is an insufficient explanation for national identity. Succinctly, Anderson defines nation as “an imagined political community” that is specifically imagined as “inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 2006, p. 6). It is imagined not merely in the sense that Anderson sees nations as inherently created things (certainly not with prepolitical roots as Smith sees them), but mostly because “the members of the smallest nation

will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 2006, p. 6). Implied here is an understanding that other people exist and a willingness to imagine those others as part of the same community with which one identifies. The limitedness of the nation, for Anderson comes from the fact that no nation sees itself as encompassing all of humanity, the reintroduction of the border problem is an intended feature for the imagined community. The nation is also imagined as sovereign, which, for Anderson is mostly a reference to the liberal idea of self-determination given the medieval concept applied to the divine right of the monarch. Lastly, Anderson argues that each nation is imagined as a community as it “is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson, 2006, p. 7). This definition is different than the categories of Miller by making its main claim something like a psychological process writ large rather than merely trying to categorize nation from the supposed position of something completely objective and external. Rather than giving us some sort of epistemological standard by which we can judge whether something sufficiently counts as a nation, Anderson offers this definition as the pinnacle of a historical process which views the national paradigm as something that grew almost dialectically from the paradigms of religious communities and monarchical dynasties.

In this way, Anderson frames nations as essentially novel, modern concepts that present a person who either claims to be part of such an imagined community or who studies them with three paradoxes that arise from the formation of nation. Firstly, the nation appears to originate in antiquity despite being a demonstrably modern innovation. From an objective viewpoint, the idea of nations is something that, for Anderson, even postdates the Peace of Westphalia referenced in the chapter previous. Instead, the nation is something that does not reach full realization until around a century later in the midst of political and philosophical change in the

18th century. That nations come into existence in the waning days of the more traditional paradigm of monarchy here is no accident. As feudalism makes less sense in an increasingly industrialized and globalized world, the monarchy shifts into something more imperial in nature, drawing more on the beginnings of the rhetoric of nation for their sustenance rather than notions of fealty as their primary source of popular loyalty. This intermediate step here is essential as this is what allows for the nation to possess a certain sense of subjective antiquity inherited both from the move from monarchical dynasty to imperialist nation, but also by the use of these new imperial proto-nations subsuming ancient histories into the retroactive historical continuity of their national narrative (in no small part due to similarities in the genealogy of languages passed down from the ancient world through modernity).

At the same time, nations benefit from the decline of religious communities that spanned vast territory largely due to the secular emphasis of the Enlightenment. As religious modes of thinking fall out of fashion, they are replaced with liberal notions of natural rights and negative liberties in a process already described by Nietzsche and Warren in the previous chapter. Where nations imagine themselves as strictly limited and bordered, these religious communities (especially messianic ones) saw themselves as aiming at universality either by conversion or force. The aspiration here is either to bring the entire world into the faith or eliminate any outside the religious community through subjection or extermination. That religious wars dominated the medieval era is no surprise here, especially when considering that the Peace of Westphalia was designed specifically to end such religious wars and preempt the creation of new ones. Yet, the religious community did not fade away merely out of the practicality of ending religious wars but was also facilitated by periods of exploration which revealed the existence of other large-scale religious communities and through the increasing use of sacred texts in

vernacular language that allowed regional particularities to take more of a hold among the religious communities of Europe. This emphasis on vernacular language, in particular, robbed the religious institutions of some of their mystical grandeur and replaced it with the personal (or at least more localized) ability to approach the divine on terms that were not necessarily dictated by the institution itself. This has the effect of also undermining, in part, the theological assumptions that medieval law made about the nature and dual-personhood of the sovereign most aptly described by Kantorowicz.

The liberal secularism of the Enlightenment, then helps explain the decline of both of the more traditional paradigms and modes around which people had structured their lives until the advent of modernity. In the wake of these losses, the nation, philosophically based in the liberal assertions of the social contract theorists begin to take form in a way that will become the antithesis of these medieval models for social and political living. As such, the paradox of antiquity finds its explanation. According to Anderson, nations are objectively modern because the conditions for their creation did not exist until the Enlightenment undermined both of the previous conceptual schemes simultaneously. However, nations still appear to be subjectively ancient because the transition between paradigms allowed the nation to inherit some of the characteristics and much of the rhetoric of the earlier models. As such, a contemporary British primary student might learn how William the Norman and the theological aspects of the medieval sovereign are both part of their understanding of their contemporary national identity even though neither of those things may be necessary for Anderson's description of nation or, indeed, factually true.

The theory of the nation-self is easily transferrable to Anderson's historical account of the origin of nation in this instance. Through Feuerbach, we have already argued how the

nation-self is formed in a fashion similar to that of the Divine Being. In Anderson's narrative, this process of psychological alienation for the 18th century early nationalist may have simply involved a subconscious move from conceiving of God in a Feuerbachian fashion into conceiving the nation in a similar manner as paradigms shifted over time. Indeed, the secularization of such religious concepts of sovereignty and underly the entire theory of the nation-self and Anderson offers an acceptable historical account of what I have argued for in theory.

Additionally, we can track the theory of the nation-self with the paradigm shift that Anderson describes by raising the problem of borders again. Anderson argues that:

“In the modern conception, state sovereignty is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimeter of a legally demarcated territory. But in the older imagining, where states were defined by centres, borders were porous and indistinct, and sovereignties faded imperceptibly into one another.” (Anderson, 2006, p. 19)

Essentially, Anderson gives us a point of origin for the border problem as it applies to the nation. Where the feudal, monarchical systems focused on the monarch and the capitol as a locus of political power that flowed outwards leaving plenty of space for overlapping claims and places where no such political claims existed at all, the nation assumes that such a power is exercised evenly over all territory and all people. Weber's definition of nation as a monopoly on violence over a specific territory seems to be derived from a similar idea of the application of political power evenly. Even Schmitt's state of exception operates on something akin to this assumption as it does not leave much theoretical room for a conception of the norm that is not defined by an exception that appears both ambiguous in one glance but fixed in another. In the creation of the nation-self, perhaps it is sufficient for the individual subconsciously to locate a center of political power within themselves and then construct a bordered state of exception around such in a way that overlaps Anderson's two forms of imagining.

Another of the paradoxes of Anderson's imagined communities is that the socio-cultural concept of nation appears to be universal even though particular instances of nation always seem grounded in the specifics of each nation being imagined. Even in the Peace of Westphalia, the assumption of the creation of a system of sovereign nations able to hold each other in check via a careful balance of power assumes a certain continental universality. Again, the problem of translation of ideas asserts itself again as the assumption of universality rests on further assumptions that there is a universality in the meaning of the concept of nation and not just universality in the sense that every person and every geographical place can be categorized as part of one nation or another. Yet, Anderson's explanation of the historical origin of nations offers an answer to this problem as well, although this time the solution is largely technological rather than theoretical.

Thought the printing press had been invented in three hundred years prior to the advent of nationalism as Anderson places it, its use in vernacular printing becomes foundational for the creation and spread of nationalist ideas. According to Anderson, by the time of the Enlightenment, the potential market for books printed in Latin was largely saturated and people were looking for works printed in regional vernaculars. So, while the use of vernacular works was eliminating part of the importance of sacred religious languages that were still seen as largely belonging to the religious and political elites, the vernacular made information accessible to a wider commercial audience at the same time that liberal theorists were looking to publish for that same audience. This allows for the writings that were foundational for the early nationalists to be literally translated from one vernacular to another in ways that Anderson argues were sufficient for these ideas to spread. The publication of these ideals on a large scale also created a

sense of fixity for what it meant to be a nation and think of oneself as a national³⁴. After assuming this type of static authority, the philosophy of nation is one that is easily pirate-able from place to place in a process that continues into the late 20th and early 21st centuries according to Anderson. This is what allows for both the geographical and philosophical universality of the idea of nation.

The theory of the nation-self can learn from this point of Anderson's history too. My assertions so far have made the nation-self largely agnostic as to how the individual acquires the original idea of nation from which the nation-as-self is generated as an alienated other. However, Anderson's argument about the propagation of the idea of nation around the world via the transportation and transmutation afforded to the modern and post-modern individual by technology can serve the purpose of offering an explanation for the genesis of the idea in the self. Certainly, the issue of translation would still leave us with a largely individualized idea of the meaning of nation that may not allow for a perfect transfer of ideas from person to person (or, as Anderson's theory suggests is also likely, text to person), but that is the primary assumption of the theory of the nation-self. This theory does not assume that the individual must be a *tabula rasa* on which each individual must construct a theory of what a nation is from nothing before conceiving of themselves as such. Neither does Feuerbach's theory assume that the individual must invent an idea of the divine themselves. Instead, what I assume is that each person in possession of a national identity takes the social, cultural, and political information they have obtained through either formal or informal education and interprets it through the lens of the self in order to form their personal conception of nation and draw distinctions of exception and other from that point. An individual need not have a complete philosophy of nation to identify with

³⁴ Miller's criteria of nation are a contemporary example of this attempt at fixity.

one, nor, to the extent to which they have such a philosophy, must they construct it themselves. Anderson's historical account of the spread of national ideas is sufficient in this instance to explain how each person with a national identity might have originally come to the idea that they might want or need such an identity.

Once created, Anderson's nation moves beyond its beginnings as a paradigm shift away from outdated modes of imagining into something that can now institute and carry symbolic weight of its own. The three institutions of the census, museum, and the map all serve as symbolic artifices that both help to establish the imagined community and sustain it once it has been imagined. The census is a legal attempt at capturing the extra-legal instance of exceptional decision-making by forcing every person within a nation (or rather every person that is deemed worthy of personhood) into a very often bigoted taxonomy as a way of determining the limits of the imagined community. The museum is the physical manifestation of the historical narrative that the nation uses to explain its origin, again often as something as other than the relatively recent invention that Anderson believes it to be³⁵. The map becomes central in two ways. First, a map exists to express a territorial claim of a nation, irrespective of whether that territorial claim matches up with the geopolitical reality of control over territory. The second function of the map, however, may be even more important for Anderson's imagined communities and that is the map-as-symbol. Anderson argues that the geographical shape of the nation itself can take on symbolic meaning as a representation of a nation not unlike a flag or insignia.

³⁵ Anderson speaks of the concept of "awakening" national identities as an implication that such identities have been latent just beneath the surface of history in a similar fashion to the latent constitutive power Frank describes. Such nations, per their own understanding, are not created but rather just rekindle a real identity that has existed since antiquity.

All three of these things have import to the nation-self as objects that the self can use both to help determine the identity of the self as a nation but also to justify and legitimize the nation which the self imagines. Additionally, as Miller and Renan argue about national history, it may not be important that any of these things exist objectively but are symbolic and important even as models. As Clark and Primo write, “Models are seen as objects, thus neither true nor false, and are judged by their usefulness for a particular purpose” (Clarke & Primo, 2012, p. 1). As with anything that the self might use as ways of delineating and understanding the fetishized object of nation, all three of these things serve a purely instrumental purpose in helping the process of imagining.

Another of Anderson’s thoughts deserving of comment by the theory of the nation-self is his chapter on “Patriotism and Racism.” Even though Anderson’s historical narrative accounts for the origin and spread of the nation, he still finds it unsatisfactory to explain the attachment that a person might feel towards their imagined community. Instead, patriotism fills this void by imbuing the nation with a form of love. Johnston defines patriotic love a thing of narcissistic performativity that demands acknowledgment of its existence as legitimization of its existence (Johnston, 2007, p. 66). This type of love is self-sacrificial but is also Manichean in its assertion that you are either willing to reciprocate the same performative patriotism or you have become part of the exception. Anderson sees patriotic love something much more romanticized. The sacrifice of the patriot in the name of their imagined nation becomes an attempt to relive the assumed grandeur of the past. The martyred soldier becomes cast as medieval knight slain for king and country. However, both see patriotism as being mostly expressive through the cultural artifacts of patriotism – poetry, prose, music, or other media of art. The distinction is that Johnston sees tragedy where Anderson sees beauty.

Johnston argues that nationalist must wrestle in a serious fashion with the atrocities of their nation's past in order to give any kind of honest appreciation³⁶. Anderson believes that the elevating love of patriotism should be enough to give us reason to overlook any past terror or oppression. While Anderson does admit that racism and xenophobia are regular side-effects of patriotic fervor, he believes that the love expressed for nation culturally is sufficient reason to look away from bigotry to the idealized version that may yet be realized. Rorty uses a crude metaphor to describe this act of ignoring atrocity as a way of anticipating a hopeful future by saying, "You have to be loyal to a dream country rather than the one to which you wake up every morning" (Rorty, 1998, p. 101). This work on the theory of the nation-self hopes to explain the tendency to imagine the nation in the best possible terms while arguing that doing so may not be required or necessary in order for a person to have a national identity.

Yet, as Miller and Renan seem to believe, Anderson assumes that imagined nations are essentially worthy of the allegiance that they ask of the patriot. When a theorist like Smith argues that the loyalty stems from the natural existence of nations as prepolitical ethnic artifacts, Anderson agrees that such love is only understandable because the nation has a semblance of unchosen-ness like other more "natural" personal characteristics. Sacrificial love, for Anderson is only justifiable under such circumstances. He differentiates here from the nation (which he believes is imagined yet operates as if it is not to the extent that someone could feel such affection as naturally as any familial tie) and other associations which might be chosen. The individual intrinsically understands that nation falls into the former category as dying for one's

³⁶ In his discussion of monuments, Johnston differentiates between monuments that are offered as a tragic mourning of loss and monuments that aggrandize the glorious nation as a way of overlooking loss. He offers the American Vietnam War Memorial and World War II Memorials in Washington, DC as evidence of each category, respectively.

country carries with it a certain logic that dying for one's professional association or political party might not. He argues that national identities come with a certain "halo of disinterestedness" that allow them to operate as if they have always existed even when he has shown objectively that they have not (Anderson, 2006, p. 143). Anderson assumes that this disinterestedness stems from the assumption that nations seem natural rather than chosen. This "disinterest" exists seemingly irrespective of whether its subject is a person or group within the nation or not. Nations, for Anderson then, assume that some individuals exist as worthy of interest and some do not with the existence of the nation as a thing worthy of moral obligation resulting from some decision of exception. As a result, though he offers a novel theory of the shallowness of the belief in nation, Anderson ends up with another defense of nation as a thing that is worthy the love and devotion to which it is shown. The work done to demonstrate the relative novelty and theoretical poverty of nations is undermined by a return to the assumption that because nations do exist (however they were brought into existence), they must exist and are owed whatever allegiance romanticized patriotic love demands. As Schmitt argues, "The existence of the state is undoubted proof of its superiority" (Schmitt, 1922/2005, p. 12).

Beyond Constituent Moments and Imaginings

However, nothing about the nation-state (or the nation-self) necessarily suggests that it must be the end of history. Of all the theorists consulted herein thus far, only Renan acknowledged the possibility of anything existing beyond the system of nations. Though Anderson offers a historical account of how the national paradigm arose from the failings of the its predecessors and Frank suggests that constitutive power is latent and merely waiting to be actualized at any moment, both theories fail to conceive of a world beyond nation or wherein

nation might exist as something other than completely bounded. Anderson gives no suggestion that the paradigm of nations might, through the use of technology even, lend itself to something else, no matter what that subsequent something might be. Frank asserts the continued availability of constituent power but always couches his people in national terms. Theories like that of Rorty dream of achieving an America that can be the perfect idealization of the promise of liberal freedom and equality on progressive terms, but never ponders the viability or necessity of using any political means or theoretical conceptions beyond that of the nation to which he already feels loyalty. The next chapter will give consideration to these ideas in more explicit ways, by examining the cosmopolitan assertions that the problem of borders in nations can be solved by relocating those borders to the edges of humanity. Additionally, I will examine Brown's claim that a contemporary emphasis on borders as a solution rather than a problem in need of a solution are evidence that national sovereignty is waning, that the continual turn to a renewed and never-ending state of exception may be viewed as a sign that Schmittian sovereignty may be giving way beneath the national artifice in a way that may suggest the type of paradigm shifts that Anderson discussed. Finally, we will consider the use of compassion as a standard and a tool that will allow us to view the nation-self as something more akin to its Feuerbachian divine counterpart by unbounding the nation out of a sense of love and care for other made perfect by the unboundedness itself.

CHAPTER FOUR: BORDERLINE COMPASSION AND COMPASSION AT THE BORDERLINE

In the science-fiction novel, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep, author Philip K. Dick imagines a futuristic world wherein humanity through the shortsightedness of their stewardship of the planet have rendered Earth functionally uninhabitable but for the remnants of a group of intricately designed androids made as laborers to be nearly identical to humans, the remaining humans who could not afford the evacuation of the planet (or were otherwise left behind due to radioactive damage or mental disability), and those humans who have stayed behind to hunt the fugitive androids. The theme of the novel centers around what makes someone human and the ability to distinguish between genuine humanity and the simulacrum represented by the androids. This seems straightforward for the protagonist, Rick Deckard, a bounty hunter tasked with finding and “retiring” the counterfeit humans.

Throughout the novel, Deckard tests various people (including himself) using an easily-administered Voigt-Kampff test wherein one is presented with selections from a list of questions and the monitored and measured by a series of polygraph-like devices meant to gauge the subject’s emotional response to situations that are meant to provoke shame or moral shock to what has been described. Essentially, the test is meant to measure the subject’s capacity for compassion and empathy, both for other humans as well the few remaining animal species that have survived the radioactive apocalypse only alluded to in the novel. As Deckard relates in the novel, such a response cannot be programmed and only happens through the basic instincts of the subject. The Voigt-Kampff is presented to the audience as a fool-proof way of identifying what

counts as authentic humanity. Human beings possess an automatic and instinctual compassion towards the plight of others and non-humans do not.

In our contemporary nationalistic world, this focus on compassion and empathy rather than isolation and security seems an all-too-foreign concept. Even the neoliberal dalliance with the fantasy of cosmopolitanism seems ill-placed as form of compassion compared to something as instinctual as the test that is described in the novel. This final chapter will examine the claims of cosmopolitanism as a theory insufficient to overcome the problems presented by both literal and metaphorical borderlines demonstrated by a misunderstanding of the cosmopolitanism of the Cynics, the inadequacy of cosmopolitanism for thinkers and political figures like Du Bois, Diagne, arguments about borderlessness from Miller (addressing literal borders) and Strong (addressing Nietzsche's concerns about the metaphorical borderlessness of nihilism), and finally return to this idea of compassion being the hallmark of humanity in the face of a natural neurosis. After having established the theory of the nation-self as inherently bounded as a psychological example of something akin to Schmitt's exceptional decision and in distinction to the unboundedness of Feuerbach's Divine Being, I want to offer compassion as a potential way of transgressing the borders of the nation-self as a way of beginning to move beyond it.

Compassion, Empathy, Fear, and Love

This examination must begin with a clarification of terms. This chapter partially borrows its definition of "compassion" from Nussbaum as, "a painful emotion directed at the serious suffering of another creature or creatures" that stems from three different considerations of "judgements" of the other experiencing pain (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 142). These three judgements argue that to feel compassion, one must judge the experience of the other to be serious (as in

nontrivial), one must be mostly blameless for the suffering, and the person feeling compassion must be able to conceive of the possibility of similar suffering. As first glance, this seems a broad definition, but as I will argue below, the philosophy of the cosmopolitans (like Nussbaum) limits itself unnecessarily in a way that often undermines the assertions that such theorists wish to make. Of Nussbaum's judgements, I primarily retain only the third. In order to feel a sense of compassion towards another, there must be some sense that the suffering another experience is possible for the witness to as well. This need not require a complete understanding of another's pain nor does it require a taxonomy of suffering. Every human from childhood understands the idea of pain even as they are beginning to understand both themselves and those around them as agents able to make choices and feel consequences.

To suggest, as Nussbaum does, that a judgement of nontriviality must occur before one can feel compassion is to suggest that, firstly, not all pain is worthy of compassion; and, secondly, each person has the ability and the right to make a determination about triviality on behalf of every other person. Such a requirement gives each actor the choice of who and what is worthy as the object of their compassion in a way that undermines both the intent and form of compassion. The same is true of Nussbaum's second judgement of blamelessness. A decision that one deserves the pain one gets assumes that an objective view from which to make such a determination is possible and that a person has a moral ability to judge a person as having merited the suffering to which they are subjected. Both judgements appear less like compassion and more closely like Nietzsche's idea of mercy as an assertion of power that one has the right to absolve another of the punishment which they are due as an act of will and strength (Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 1989). However, further than that, Nussbaum has framed compassion as an inherent contradiction by arguing that it is both an emotion and a decision.

The beauty of the Voigt-Kampff test to which we alluded before and will return below is that emotional responses are not choices, they are instinctual. One can make a choice to deny the expression of an emotion that one feels, but one cannot choose to either have or not have an emotional response.

Consider Nussbaum's distinction between "compassion" and "empathy." She defines empathy as "the ability to imagine the situation of the other, taking the other's perspective" (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 145). Here there is a requirement that a person be able to enter into the circumstances of the sufferer and make a hard distinction between self and other before concern is given. Where compassion might require the acknowledgment of pain as a possible similar experience as a way of relating to that pain (and presumably a desire to alleviate that in the sufferer)³⁷, empathy is an acknowledgment that another person is in pain without necessarily feeling any relation to that pain. As Nussbaum puts it, "Empathy is not sufficient for compassion, for a sadist may have considerably empathy with the situation of another person, and use it to harm that person" (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 146). Compassion can grow from empathy but the distinction between the terms here is important, especially as they are often used interchangeably. Essentially, empathy is a lower standard than compassion, and, as a result, I give preference, as Nussbaum claims to do, to compassion.

Nussbaum also argues that there is a history of tragic compassion being used as a public rite for the public good. The ancient world is replete with the belief in the ability of a tragic spectacle to encourage the expression of compassion and instill a notion that compassion for the

³⁷ Even this feeling of similarity may not be, strictly speaking necessary, as we can experience compassion for other creatures (both human animals and non-human animals) whose experiences are dissimilar to our own). Nussbaum uses this judgement more as a rhetorical buffer against an argument that one sees any "other" as too distant to be the object of one's compassion.

other was a public good. Nussbaum quotes a list from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* that delineates exactly which type of pageantry is sufficient to inspire the desired results:

“[D]eaths, bodily damages, bodily afflictions, old age, illnesses, and lack of food... friendlessness; having few friends; being separated from one's friends and relations; ugliness; weakness; deformity; getting something bad from a source from which you were expecting something good; having that happen many times; the coming of good after the worst has happened; and that no good should befall someone at all, or that one should not be able to enjoy it when it does.” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 263)

All these things, when shown largely through drama, was meant to give the citizen of the demos an opportunity to feel compassion for another in a fictional sense as a way of encouraging the same in real contexts. The list here is long enough and broad enough to make the particulars unimportant. Instead, the emphasis was on common vulnerability to the tragic, and not for its own sake or for pure entertainment or catharsis. The value is that such tragic spectatorship allowed for a sense of commonality that breached the sociopolitical barriers between individuals and groups and could help to avoid a narrowing of the focus of compassion. My emphasis here is that compassion can be something that helps us move beyond the boundaries of ourselves and our imagined communities in a way that is not only efficacious but should be seen as a public good, especially when freed from Nussbaum's unnecessary conceptual limitations.

A few more comments on the importance of compassion as a political emotion are warranted before an examination of the intersection of these emotions and the problem of borders. For Nussbaum, compassion has three emotional enemies that might attempt to narrow the focus of one's compassion or make one see compassionate projects as less of a public good. These three emotions are fear, envy and shame. Each of these emotions become threats for the nation-self as they are ways in which it can be emotionally manipulated into a narrower and more exceptional view of itself and others. Where the public good in compassion comes from its ability to transcend distinctions among people, fear tells us that the difference of others poses a

threat. Though fear is also a natural emotional instinct, it can easily be construed and exaggerated for the purpose of creating division where compassion would seek to remove them. Further, though fear may be a primal instinct and often used to reasonably protect one from danger, it is often mistaken. The cause of one's fear can be mistaken or exaggerated as can the need to fear itself. Fear, by its nature, narrows our focus of concern so as to point out threats but if these threats are false or imagined, the narrowing as a result of fear, can lead to unwarranted hate and suffering that can detrimentally eclipse the transgressive power of compassion.

Similarly, envy motivates an unnecessary system of competition between individuals who might otherwise have familiar feelings for one another. Envy creates hostility at a perception of misfortune or comparative advantage that again impairs one's ability to feel compassion. For Nussbaum, envy is distinct from resentment which carries a weight of moral injustice that can be righted through social or political means. Instead, envy lacks the ability to be a productive force and merely undermines the efforts of civic compassion.

Lastly, shame is an effort to hide one's own flaws. In our context, rather than using alienated nation as a way examining the best elements of our political selves, shame either makes us feel in conflict with that imagined better version of our potential selves or makes us offer defenses for things with which we should wrestle honestly and theoretically in order to move beyond. The idea that nations are perfect is not derived here from the type of limitless perfection of Feuerbach's Divine Being but instead, uses that rhetoric as a way of obscuring the often tragic and atrocious histories and present of our national claims. Where an honest appreciation for the tragic circumstance of others allows us to feel a productive compassion that Aristotle and Nussbaum both found to be of public value, shame prevents a comprehension of suffering in a

way that can both obscure and justify the suffering of another rather than motivating one to assist in finding redress for it.

Instead of giving into the potential manipulation of fear, envy, and shame, Nussbaum believes that it is the duty of the public (however it is conceived) to emphasize a need for compassion. She quotes Whitman as having a desire to “plant companionship thick as trees” particularly in the public space of the United States (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 375). Via a sense of civic compassion, such companionship can rise above the level of a mere sense of sympathy or empathy and have the transgressive power to unite people who are otherwise divided (potentially even those dividing lines that are derived from the reflective nation-self). Such a conception of civic compassion is not unlike Feuerbach’s emphasis on the love that can stem from humanity’s understanding of God. In positing God as an unbounded fetishization of human characteristics, Feuerbach creates a scenario (at least in his use of the Christian context) wherein God, who is love, loves humanity. Further, humanity, who is God, loves God in return and must love each other as being individual instances of the same Divine Being (Leopold, 2007). According to Feuerbach, love that accepts limitations cannot be love in this divine sense (Feuerbach, 1841/2008, p. 218). As such, a civic sense of compassion that accepts limitations cannot be compassion at all. The following section of this chapter will examine arguments both in favor and against national borders as a limitation of our capacity for compassion. We will begin with the cosmopolitan claim (forwarded especially by Nussbaum herself) as a type of political theory that would satisfy this need for compassion.

Cosmopolitan Border Relocation

Though Nussbaum and other cosmopolitans might assert that “emphasis on human rights is certainly necessary for a world in which nations interact all the time on terms... of mutual hope and respect,” the problem such a philosophy points out is not solved by merely changing the terms of the status quo to something broader. A cosmopolitan would have one expand their perception of the border of one’s compassion to something larger than just the national border to which one was born, but without seeing either the inherent colonialism in most attempts at sermonizing such attempts at border expansion or the contradiction presented by the continuing presence of the border even though enlarged to encompass more individuals and peoples than before. The *kosmou politês* imagined by Nussbaum (with some important distinctions from that of Cynics like Diogenes from whom she borrows both the theory and the term) alike are no different in this regard for their reliance on the presence of a border (both physical and metaphysical) around the body politic that delineates – spatially, rhetorically, legally, and mentally – the line between who counts as worthy of compassion and who simply does not. Though expanded, the border represents an often literally concrete barrier that conditionalizes the compassion given to compatriots and co-nationals in a way that undermines the intent of the human rights and compassion they claim to offer.

Notable dissimilarities exist between the cosmopolitanism imagined (in the sense of Anderson) by contemporary theorists and that of the ancient cynics. For some to be a “citizen of the cosmos” was meant to be a literal reference not merely to some political construct larger than and separate from the *polis* but rather to the larger order of the universe that existed beyond human creation or machinations, essentially the cosmological universe. As such, cosmopolitanism in its simplest and most literal meaning becomes more of an ascetic

homelessness that led them both to sleep under the stars as well as moving from place to place rather than having a permanent citizenship. The implication is not simply that of person who has chosen statelessness in favor of some larger sense of community, but literally one of a wanderer being able to identify anywhere as home.

Dio Chrysostom's account of Diogenes recounts that he "had no house or hearth of his own as the well-to-do have, but he made the cities his house and used to live there in the public buildings and in the shrines, which are dedicated to the gods, and took for his hearth-stone the wide world, which after all is man's common hearth and nourisher" (Desmond, 2008, p. 200) Similarly, Epictetus's detailing of the ideal cynic lives "without a city, without a house, without possessions" (Desmond, 2008, p. 200) This view of cosmopolitanism strays far away from a notion of nationlessness when taken literally. However, this view cannot be overlooked as many stories of the same Diogenes cited by Nussbaum give us images of the Cynic carrying with him on his journeys a large earthen pot in which he would rest and eschewing possessions to the extent of throwing away his own cup upon seeing a child drinking with their hands.

Yet problems arise even if we take the more metaphorical view of ancient cosmopolitanism and believe it to be a view of a type of Stoic doctrine of the kinship of all peoples that becomes a moral community transcending national and cultural loyalties. Another ancient expression often cited as a cosmopolitan mantra is found in Terence's play *Heauton Timorumenos* (The Self-Tormentor); although, this quote too is often taken out of context by those who cite it. In Act One, Chremes responds to his neighbor Menedemus's accusation that he is being overly curious and meddlesome in the affairs of others by claiming, "I am human and consider nothing human to be alien to me" (Desmond, 2008, p. 201). This argument in defense of gossip, even if understood to be a claim of the common concern of all humanity is often used

by contemporary cosmopolitan theorists as an altruistic refrain. Yet, the historical way of both claiming type of philosophical magnanimity while still being practically oppressive is to give consideration to humanity while denying humanity to anyone you have predetermined to be unworthy, undeserving, or otherwise separate from your consideration and obligation.

Understood this way, the metaphorical border wall of cosmopolitanism, even though seemingly expanded, still fundamentally and essentially exists and operates in a way that is no different from the metaphorical and literal border walls to which a cosmopolitan would seemingly object³⁸.

History is replete with examples of this denial of humanity existing as cognitive dissonance among those who would ostensibly claim otherwise, again, even beginning with Diogenes. As Desmond notes about the ancient Cynic, “he scorned this [cultural] variety as mere deviations from the one true, natural way of life” and states that “it would have been inconceivable for a Greek of the fourth-century to ‘love mankind’ generally and not to follow the Greek custom of looking down on foreign peoples as so many “barbarians” (Desmond, 2008, p. 202). However, even if one was to argue that such a negative and limited view of the initial understanding of cosmopolitanism need not preclude a more positive, contemporary theorist from coopting the terminology and quotes for more egalitarian purposes today, the cognitive dissonance presented by the presence of the cosmopolitan border still exists.

³⁸ Nussbaum makes such an objection when she asks, “What is it about the national boundary that magically converts people toward whom we are both incurious and indifferent into people to whom we have duties of mutual respect” (Nussbaum, *Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism*, 2005, pp. 165-166)

Du Bois, Diagne, and the Limits of Cosmopolitan Imagining

W. E. B. Du Bois's writings on the tensions between French cosmopolitanism and anticolonialism are an example of the limitations of this more egalitarian understanding of being a citizen of the global metropole. These tensions were realized at the 1st and 2nd Pan-African Congresses in 1919 and 1921, respectively. Initially organized by Du Bois, these meetings showed how different understandings of cosmopolitan goals (especially between Du Bois and Blaise Diagne, the Senegalese-French political leader, led to dissention (across the various meetings of the 2nd Congress especially) and eventually to some abandoning the cause of Pan-Africanism in favor of continued emphasis in equality as citizens under the existent French Colonial model. This practical and rhetorical breakdown between men of seemingly similar political goals, philosophies, and familiar admiration is detailed Babacar M'Baye's 2017 work Black Cosmopolitanism and Anti-Colonialism: Pivotal Moments.

In their shared nominal belief in Pan-Africanism, the men shared a common desire to see a world wherein members of the African diaspora could find themselves equal no matter where they resided. This aim became for both men and their fellow members of the Congress a cosmopolitanism that, even though seeking to establish Africa as a haven for the diaspora, would also provide equal protection and the benefits of human rights around the globe by pursuing and encouraging those cynical and stoic goals of common moral obligation to humanity. In travelling beyond the borders of the United States (in no small part due to harassment by the CIA), Du Bois found that the situation of racial equality was similar in Europe, but with noticeable differences. This is despite the fact that Du Bois (as quoted by M'Baye) also described England, France, and much of the Western European world experienced through his travels as "white, kindly on the whole—intensely interesting, but painfully white" (M'Baye,

2017, p. 62). This notion of being “kindly” and neighborly speaks to my emphasis on the inadequacy of expanding literal and metaphorical borders between nations in favor of something with more emphasis on compassion rather than moral co-obligation. Consider how Du Bois described one interaction with a Parisian during his travels:

“My neighbor explained matters in polite French. He accepted a cigarette and commended its flavor. At the end he raised his hat and bowed and bade me a very good night. Imagine him in the Hippodrome, New York! He would have shouldered me warily and explained on the other side of the ubiquity of ‘damn n-----s’! (M’Baye, 2017, p. 62)

The distinction between the two is one that is not solved merely by relocating the national border (even the individualized sense of the national self). However, the encounter does emphasize the difference in the way that Du Bois felt that one man offered a sense of shared humanity that the other did not. Demonstrating a sense of humanity seemed to be sufficiently compassionate in one instance despite the lack of a border that made the men co-national; where, in the other instance, being co-nationals sharing a national border did not necessarily create a sense of compassion because of a denial of essential humanity. Relocating the border and expanding a sense of community is entirely insufficient, even if that community be all of humanity, if it is simple enough to deny humanity to someone who has been predetermined as undeserving of one’s consideration and compassion. The exceptionality (as it were) proves the rule.

To project a further notion of cosmopolitan obligation to a global citizenship either legal or metaphorical, both Du Bois and Diagne shared an admiration for Black troops who had served in the European trenches in World War I. As M’Baye puts it,

“Black Francophone and African soldiers represented a cosmopolitanism that African Americans had sought by fighting for humanity in World War I. Like their African cousins, African Americans did not go to the trenches to oppress the weak or colonize people. They went there to liberate France from Germany and wish that such genuine love and respect for human lives would be reciprocated to them in

America.” (M'Baye, 2017, p. 67)

Yet, this was not the world the world to which they returned after the war was not one of acceptance and mutual recognition of humanity, but one of Jim Crow and legalized apartheid. However, this did not deter Du Bois from having still seen that service and sacrifice and something that was a patriotic act on behalf of the United States but something larger that was meant for the cause of global racial equality and justice. As a result, M'Baye documents numerous letters and correspondences that Du Bois kept up with African American soldiers even after the war.

However, as M'Baye asserts, “Du Bois’s cosmopolitanism was more radical than Diagne’s since it always ended with a disparagement of a French colonialism that the Senegalese leader was reluctant to denounce” (M'Baye, 2017, p. 59). Diagne was comfortable (in fact more comfortable) pursuing the ideal of racial justice within the paradigm of French Colonialism rather than taking up what he perceived to be the more extremist positions of Du Bois which wanted more localized autonomy for African populations and more of a global voice in politics and governance whether at the Pan-African Congresses or the League of Nations. A report from the first 1921 Congress read:

“Diagne made it clear that blacks who live under the French flag have nothing to complain about their situation and that, if they come to the aid of their kinsmen, it will be from kindness and brotherly affection and not selfishness.” (M'Baye, 2017, p. 79)

This quote shows the limitations of the cosmopolitan dream to be twofold. Diagne’s cosmopolitanism fell short by retreating within familiar national borders wherein the kinship he desired was granted, at least in part, to the exclusion of others on the more unfortunate side of those colonial designations. Du Bois’s cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, was the victim, not of a similar retreat, but by the unwillingness both at home and abroad to be shown the

recognition and compassion that he had earlier believed was a feature of the more enlightened European nations and which was to be denied at home in the United States as well despite the lives lost by African Americans in patriotic defense of the freedom of others. Whether either of these men would have imagined the contemporary world of 2019, demonstrates that progress towards equality has happened despite a lack of anything but nominal mutual recognition and certainly not because of an embracing of a cosmopolitan ideal whose flaws denied one of them their goal within their own life as well.

Yet even Diagne's belief in the benefits of searching for equality in the mode of French colonial attempts at cosmopolitanism and Du Bois's sometimes admiration for the increased equality found in Europe as compared to his contemporary America, both proved to be less fruitful in reality and the struggle for such continues into contemporary politics today, especially when examined in the expanded sense of global moral obligations which the cosmopolitans would have use consider. A story that highlights this notion as well as the limitations of using any national model (including the Nussbaum-style cosmopolitan one of merely expanding the border of nations) is that of Mamoudou Gassama. Gassama was an immigrant to France from Mali in 2014 amidst a surge of immigration into Europe wherein he "he tried to cross the Mediterranean in March 2014 to reach Italy after a long, arduous spell in Libya, but was caught by police and beaten" (Samuel, 2018). In May 2018, Gassama became infamous for scaling the side of a Parisian building to rescue a four-year old who was dangling from a ledge after being left unattended by his father. Dubbed by the media the "Spider-man" of Paris, Gassama's actions were rewarded by President Emanuel Macron with French citizenship and a job as a firefighter. Such heroism is similar to that of a less-widely reported instance wherein another Malian immigrant, Lassana Bathily saved the lives of several patrons at the

Jewish supermarket where he worked by hiding them inside the business's freezer during the shootings that occurred across several locations in 2014, including the offices of satirical publication Charlie Hebdo (BBC, 2015). Bathily also received citizenship from the French government for his intrepidity.

Both of these actions and the resulting rewards given seemingly magnanimously by the French government both shows importance of compassion given as a sign of true humanity and the limitations of nationalism as an instance of the same. Both men had, coincidentally, immigrated to Paris from the same place of origin. Yet, despite trying to navigate the process of immigration and naturalization, both only received expedited citizenship after showing uncommon and uncharacteristic care for others while risking their own safety. Even as France in 2018 was in the process of enacting harsher immigration and asylum laws and evicting refugees from neighborhoods in Paris, President Macron saw “no contradiction” between the two (Samuel, 2018). However, this exemplifies the issues with a cosmopolitanism based on a platitude like that of Terrence's characters. In only giving consideration to people we count as humans, we can see the border of national and cosmopolitan compassion and moral obligation, essentially undermining the very idea of such a broad-based sense of cosmopolitan ethics. To fundamentally and practically deny the personhood of immigrants, refugees, or others due to the same arbitrariness of borders that Nussbaum finds problematic is the cruelest of contradictions. A nation or metropole loses any right to claim to care about human rights or inclusiveness or compassion when men like Gassama and Bathily are only shown such care after the fact.

President Trump's 2019 proposal to remake the US immigration system into something primarily merit-based is a clear analog to these same inadequacies and imperfections. In a speech on the subject, Trump lauded that, “Our nation has a proud history of affording protection

to those fleeing government persecutions” while also announcing a new plan to give preference in immigration requests to those possessing “valuable skill, an offer of employment, an advanced education or a plan to create jobs” (Hermani, 2019). Again, a lack of compassion is shown couched in the language of practicality and national interests. As Nussbaum and others point out, this shows the limitations of a philosophy like that espoused by Rorty’s desire for the American left to reclaim the jingoistic rhetoric of patriotism for progressive purposes, eschewing a “politics of difference” within our nation while creating a new one that begins at the national border. However, what cosmopolitan theorists fail to see is that merely moving that border from one place to another in an attempt at creating a more egalitarian world with expanded moral obligations, still leaves out the Gassama and Bathilys of the world on the other side of this relocated border along with Trump’s meritless immigrants and asylum seekers as long as politicians, rhetoricians, media personalities, and citizens can deny the personhood or humanity of such individuals by whatever means necessary to meet their already predetermined notions of obligation to those who meet that standard of national similarity. In this manner, a border wall whether literal or metaphorical precludes the possibility for compassion.

The Contemporary Retreat Within the Borders

Although written before the recently renewed emphasis on such by contemporary political leaders, Wendy Brown’s Walled States, Waning Sovereignty examines the increase in instances of nations building walls, border fences, or other physical barriers to protect themselves from perceived threats in an attempt to underscore their own national sovereignty. Weber’s definition of sovereignty seems relevant here although Brown relies on Schmitt for her own examinations of the nature of sovereignty as an idea. The book presents a detailed look at

some walls, focusing on the US-Mexico Border Barrier and the Israel Security Fence while alluding to any number of similar attempts at protective fortification around the world as well as such walls as are prevalent in the gated communities of suburban America.

The central thesis of this work is that rather than strengthening national sovereignty, such attempts at walling highlight the failures of such sovereignty. These walls exist as products of a continual declaration of Schmitt's state of emergency but only serve to acknowledge that we no longer live in a world where walling makes sense, just as "compassionate" acts of granting citizenship for heroism undermines the very compassion which claims to be expressed. The growth of the system of global capitalism has changed how such walls function in a way that is markedly distinct from ways that might have worked when Machiavelli (who many acknowledge as one of the first theorists of the modern nation-state) urged a prudent prince to consider fortresses as a means of protection for the state. Instead, these contemporary walls both try to keep out a certain population seen as a threat (often a terrorist one in the last few decades) or group while still allowing many of those same individuals to pass through the very same wall to facilitate the passage of goods or labor required for commerce and trade (or merit-based immigrations which treat immigrants as trade goods and commodities as well). In addition to such allowances (or perhaps because of them), the function of these walls, for Brown, is mostly theatrical despite the physicality of the walls themselves. Rather than physically emphasizing borders and national sovereignty, they signal that we are moving into a new paradigm where nation-state sovereignty begins to take a backseat to something else.

Brown describes this as a move toward something that is post-Westphalian. She writes, "The new walls iterate... a vanishing political imaginary in a global political interregnum, a time after the era of state sovereignty, but before the articulation or instantiation of an alternate global

order” (Brown, 2010, p. 225). In order to examine how these walls contribute to what she asserts is “waning sovereignty” and the rise of this post-Westphalian interregnum, Brown uses Schmitt as a lens to describe sovereignty so that she can show that she can then deconstruct such notions of sovereignty and Freud as a way of discovering the psychological needs we have for walls even though they may be artifices that function only as “modern-day temples housing the ghost of political sovereignty” (Brown, 2010, p. 113).

My assertion is that the individualized nation-self is analogous to these walls as an attempt to accentuate the distinction between “me” and “other” in the same way that the cohesion of a national identity is analogous to the sovereignty of the nation to which one identifies. Contemporary calls for patriotism and border security (particularly in America) exist seemingly out of perceived states of emergency (or in newly created ones) that many feel necessitates a restatement and reaffirmation of one’s loyalty to the group and by doing so emphasizes the exclusionary nature of such a group identity. Yet, just as national border walls may do less to strengthen sovereignty and highlights the waning of sovereignty instead, so to do such calls for patriotism in a post-Westphalian world highlight the imaginariness and arbitrariness of the national identities they seek to celebrate. It only serves to demonstrate just how frail these individualized and alienated national identities can often be especially given that the same globalized world that contributes to the failure of border walls places many individuals not safely within already existing national identities but in multiple groups at once or in intersections between groups. As pernicious as exclusionary patriotism can be by lending itself to racism, xenophobia, and the victimization of ideological groups seen as contrary to the group identity, such patriotic calls serve more and more to merely emphasize the absurdity of the very distinctions upon which they rely.

Historically speaking, the Schmittian understanding of sovereignty is a history of aspiring sovereigns seeking to cast themselves as mediators for God. As such, political sovereignty is not completely undone by the Nietzschean death of God. Rather, Nietzsche's argument about conception of God no longer being relevant or necessary speaks to the changing nature of sovereignty. As argued in a previous chapter, since political sovereignty can become a substitute for the sovereignty of God, we can create a space between political sovereigns. So, as Brown asserts the rise of the Post-Westphalian "in-between", we can potentially observe the transferal of sovereignty from one regime to another. Brown also asserts that Post-Westphalian sovereignty will be more aggressively and openly theological in its form and less passively so. This could be important for the analysis of my assertion that patriotism is a form of worship that we offer (if not owe according to some advocates of patriotism) our theological political sovereign. Brown also has a specific belief that global capital will become the new sovereign. This is in keeping with her arguments in other works about how neoliberalism has lent itself to a kind of economic philosophy that connects market freedom with state governmentality. As new political sovereign the nature of such global capital speaks to the internationality and transnationality of religion. Of this she writes, "Capital appears to be ascending to a form of sovereignty (in the post-Westphalian world) without a sovereign, that is, without an anthropomorphized God at its heart" (Brown, 2010, p. 65) This speaks to the changing nature of the possibilities for sovereignty in the new "in-between". However, rather than merely accepting her argument about global capital as the new sovereign, I assert that we have seen a retreat way from such an end into something more exclusionary rather than less.

To the extent that neoliberalism is a politics which asserts the coexistence of the sovereignty of the individual as a rational actor, the sovereignty of the free market as an

economic tool, and the sovereignty of the nation-state as international unit and arbiter of the contractual rule of law, it becomes a picture not only of the disjointed explanation of sovereignty which I feel comes from the alienated process outlined previously but of the constraints placed upon society and individuals within society who are called to answer to all of these sovereigns simultaneously. Whether Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, or Recep Erdogan, we can see both that Brown's assumptions about a renewed emphasis on walling (both literal and metaphorical) demonstrate a failing in the very things which they are meant to protect, but also that her prediction that it would be the dangers of globalized neoliberalism that would dominate a new paradigm rather than a reignited paleo-conservatism (even if under the guise of Brexiteers and the alt-right) who would appeal to something less inclusive in terms of global capitalism seeing all people as equally commoditized but more intentionally exclusionary along all-too familiar lines of racism and xenophobia³⁹. Just as Brown argues that to claim that your sovereign is resilient while undermining that belief by believing in the necessity of stronger border walls to protect that sovereignty (whether or not one also believes in the intentional creation of new and potentially false states of emergency as ways of justifying such), one need not make any paradigm shifting assumptions or have any new revelatory epiphany to see how the revived rhetoric of "America first" claims to be reliant on a strong, solidified and exclusionary sense of national identity while revealing the cracks in the façade of such an imagined community. While

³⁹ Were my supposition here wrong and Brown's prediction of a move away from the system of nation states into a world more inundated by the problems of neoliberal global capitalism, the immigration debate in the United States would easily be framed as one of an increasing number of migrants being necessary for the economic growth of the nation and its GDP per capita. Most rhetorical evidence from both ends of the American political spectrum seem to point to the contrary. For instance, many economists argue that increased immigration rather than more scrutiny and fewer migrants, "may be the only budgetarily achievable way to reach [the Trump administration's own predictions of] 4 percent growth" (Groeger, 2017).

Brown may not have foreseen in this work an even more entrenched retreat within our national borderlines, her argument about walled states being a sign of waning sovereignty stands nonetheless. Just as Diagne's withdrawal into the sanctuary of French colonialism seemingly betrayed his cosmopolitan ideals, Brown's argument demonstrates the failings of more contemporary cosmopolitan arguments if those arguments merely seek to expand borders and relocate walls rather than pursuing a politics that questions the needs for such and imagines not merely a larger community but also a new paradigm (whether it be Brown's post-Westphalian one or not) wherein such distinctions fade away. The following sections of this chapter will examine arguments in defense of literal and metaphorical borders as a way of looking to that new paradigm beyond them.

Miller's Open Borders

David Miller presents a critique of cosmopolitanism as part of a defense of what he calls compatriot partiality in his work Strangers in Our Midst (2016). In this work, Miller is concerned with contemporary calls for immigration across open borders and retreats within his long-held beliefs in national particularism and a greater moral and ethical obligation to co-nationals as was detailed in an earlier chapter. While this retreat is further theoretical support of my response to Brown's Walled States, Miller's arguments against cosmopolitanism both go to further demonstrate the failings of the theory to provide the normative world which it desires, but also gives us evidence of the limited and failing nature of compassion and obligation that claims to value human rights and equality while maintaining a sense of national particularity, in this case dealing with immigration across literal borderlines.

As many of cosmopolitanism's own proponents do, Miller divides the philosophy into two categories: weak cosmopolitanism and strong cosmopolitanism (Miller, 2016, pp. 22-23). The stronger claims of cosmopolitanism become for Miller, as with many the theory's nationalist detractors, are problematic as they see cosmopolitanism as advocating for a strict, universal sense of moral obligation with no sense of partiality among individuals whatsoever. Surely, one such opponent might argue, more "natural" connections between human beings such as the romantic ties between partners or the familial ties of parents and children or siblings cannot be extended to the stranger (with the implication being that the further another person is from meeting those more "natural" criteria that one becomes even less deserving of such consideration). However, in making a claim that goes beyond the request of cosmopolitanism and arguing against a false projection of the closest imaginable human ties among all people, Miller and his fellows arrive at the unnecessary claim that such a strong moral obligation can only be achieved by the "creation of a world government, and this could only be an imperialist project in which existing cultural differences were either nullified or privatized" (Miller, 2002, p. 80)⁴⁰. For instance, consider the actual claim that "one should always behave so as to treat with equal respect the dignity of reason and moral choice in every human being" (Nussbaum, *Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism*, 2005, pp. 161-162). While certainly a stronger claim that what Miller will designate as weak cosmopolitanism, Nussbaum here requests simply an equal acknowledgment of the dignity of other persons. As Scheffler puts it, "special attention to

⁴⁰ Although, such formulations may be unnecessary to further either the claims of cosmopolitanism or my theory of compassion as a metric for humanity, there are theorists who offer thoughts on what cosmopolitan global governance might look like as a counterpoint to the totalitarian assumptions made by Miller. See David Held's 2010 work, *Cosmopolitanism: Ideals and Realities* for one such example.

particular people is legitimate only if it can be justified by reference to the interests of all human beings considered as equals” (Scheffler, 1999, p. 259).

Thus, some extended consideration for particular individuals, like family members, may make sense if such familial ties are beneficial when considering the interests of humanity. Although, my argument still maintains that Nussbaum and others create a possibility of easily denying personhood to circumvent such even such basic acknowledgements, Miller goes a step further to assume a demand that is harsher than that asked by most cosmopolitan theorists. As such, the easy dismissal of strong cosmopolitanism as untenable and impractical attacks a claim that has not been made. This may seem to be merely a rhetorical rebuff of Miller’s argument here, but such close evaluation is important as the logical leaps made as justification of stricter immigration policies and skepticism of migrants based on this argument begin with these “natural” familial associations and then become extended to all co-national compatriots, ignoring that, again, one thing exists simply to predetermine the result of the other.

However, we need not focus simply on Miller’s response to the common misrepresentation of “strong” cosmopolitanism as untenable; because, Miller makes a defense of stricter border and immigration policies based on his concerns about “weak” cosmopolitanism as well. Describing this weaker cosmopolitanism Miller says, “[W]e may owe certain kinds of treatment to all other human beings regardless of any relationship in which we stand to them, while there are other kinds of treatment that we owe only to those to whom we are related in certain ways, with neither sort of obligation being derivative of the other” (Miller, 1998, pp. 166-67). Nevertheless, while Miller is more sympathetic to this weaker posting of cosmopolitanism, he again inserts national identity as the more deserving obligation. In arguing for considering national identity as part of this moral and ethical calculus, Miller says: ‘

“With national identity comes a kind of solidarity that is lacking if one looks just at economic and political relationships. People feel emotionally attached to one another because they share this identity. They feel that they belong together and have responsibilities to each other that are not simply the result of existing institutions and practices.” (Miller, 2016, p. 27)

Though, as an earlier chapter demonstrated, Miller acknowledges the arbitrariness (and even intentional incorrectness and falsehood of claims of common national identity), as a practical matter he clings to them, as many do, without acknowledging that his theory of distributive justice assumes this affiliation as given and necessary while dismissing broader the broader associations of humanity which cosmopolitanism suggests as a first allegiance as “unnatural.”

Additionally, while his philosophy is magnanimous enough to admit that “[r]especting their human rights appears to be a straightforward way of acknowledging the equal moral worth of all human beings” he equivocates again by saying, “We cannot assume that there is some definitive list of human rights waiting to be consulted” (Miller, 2016, p. 31). The choice of determining which rights get elevated to the level of protect human rights as well as what obligations are derived from those rights and the methods by which to fulfill those obligations, are left completely to the nation-state, allowing for the same problem to arrive with his philosophy as with the cosmopolitans he critiques; the determination of who counts in terms of ethical obligation is a political one that is made first and a definition of humanity is generated as justification for the predetermined group of compatriots.

As such, all further claims of the practical insufficiency of resources or concerns about the security threat posed by the specter of the unknown and unfamiliar immigrant that are made by contemporary politicians and affirmed by Miller as legitimate, are less veracious as they, too, become nothing more than a ex post facto rationalization meant to excuse the exclusionary policies and rhetoric whether they be based on xenophobia and racism or not. As a result,

though, in the end, Miller claims that a weak cosmopolitan sense of human rights must be one of the guiding values of the immigration policy of a contemporary liberal democracy, he reemphasizes the importance of self-determination of traditional nation-states in determining what the limits of such rights might be in a way, that ultimately, fails to protect them at all. Such a weak commitment to even a weak acknowledgement of humanity on utilitarian grounds of shared ethical obligation leaves us with one of Brown's increasingly walled states and an attenuated sense of compassion.

Truth and the Boundaries of Metaphorical Borderlines

In this discussion of borderlines, I have made reference to both literal and metaphorical borderlines. The ideas of cosmopolitanism informed what those meant in both senses by criticizing the physical borderlines between nations and were compared to Brown's theory of how walling along those borders is a sign of the weakening nature of the sovereignty they aim to project as well as Miller's defense of restrictive border policies in the name of securing the particular moral obligations of compatriots for which he argues. I turn now to the more metaphorical borderlines of national identity for which my theory of individualized imagining has been presented in a previous chapter. However, in this section I want to turn now to thinking of these metaphorical borders as a type of truth statement, the likes of which authors like Miller, as we have seen, often take as *a priori* to any assumptions or theories about nations or national identities. To better examine such a truth claim, and theorize about going beyond these metaphorical borders, I consider Tracy Strong's work on the necessity and possibility of truth for Friedrich Nietzsche.

In examining the works of Nietzsche (predominantly On the Genealogy of Morals in the portion of Strong's book to which I refer), Strong contemplates nihilism as part of Nietzsche's explanation for the revaluation of morals across history and what constitutes a truth claim both within and without of the despair of the nihilist. Strong defines nihilism as a type of change in which there is a "move from a state of belief that the world might be understood in terms of some potentially universal categories to a position that sees no sense or meaning anywhere" (Strong T. B., 1975, p. 22). Contentions, like mine, that humanity is best served by moving away from the individualized understanding of national identity and the politics of borders we seek to build around such creations would certainly count as the "something" that Strong says one would presuppose would happen to lead to such a change.

Though this does not and need not rise to the level of a continuous cycle of Cartesian skepticism, nihilism does, undoubtedly, both describe the questioning of traditionally held truths and values to the extent that someone undergoing such a change as Strong describes might find themselves on the verge of a consciousness in which there is seemingly no meaning at all. Many of the theoretical and philosophical critiques of cosmopolitanism seem to have this worry lurking in their backgrounds as does contemporary political rhetoric espousing the dangers of immigration and open borders. Given, as Miller and Anderson argue, the longstanding (even to antiquity) nature of national identities and imagined communities, how could one within such a paradigm possibly imagine a position outside of the same? Would a move beyond these literal and metaphorical borderlines not lead into the mass chaos and confusion of a sort of nationless nihilism?

Nietzsche famously says "man would rather will nothingness than not will" (Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, p. 97). Even science, which might seem antithetical to the

Christian ascetic, only ends up as another reaffirmation of the ascetic ideal. Nietzsche writes that “science today has absolutely no belief in itself, let alone an ideal above it – and where it still inspires passion, love, ardor and suffering at all, it is not the opposite of the ascetic ideal but rather the latest and most nobles form of it” (Nietzsche, p. 147). Even our most fundamental quest for truth has seemingly brought us to the same end.

Nietzsche himself writes that, “strictly speaking, there is no such thing as science ‘without and presuppositions’” and that even science is built upon an underlying faith (Nietzsche, p. 151-152). Strong speaks to this point when he writes that “truth is to some degree always an attempt at self-justification and is therefore always to some degree moral” (Strong T. B., 1975, p. 50). He goes on to say that “truth... is the phenomenon of drawing or accepting the horizon within which one lives” (Strong T. B., 1975, p. 50). While there may be some distinction between moral truth and scientific truth here, one can easily see how they might be analogous. Both quests for truth (scientific and moral) presuppose that there is some “truth” in the universe that can be discovered. One such horizon is the bounded nature of the individualized national identity. As we construct the national self through our process of daily imagining and alienation, we create metaphorical borderlines around that conceptualization to give meaning and form. Every decision of whether some “other” is similar enough to the national self to count as compatriot, uses this horizon but does so without questioning the characteristics of it (which are assumed) or the necessity of it.

For Nietzsche, these “horizons” seem to be necessary for human life. Strong quotes Nietzsche as saying:

“This is a universal law: a living thing can be health and strong and productive only inside a horizon. If it is unable to draw a horizon around itself, and too selfish to loose its view in another’s, it will come to an untimely end.” (Strong T. B., 1975, p. 26)

A variety of these possible horizons seem to exist. They can be moral horizons in which we acknowledge that certain things or tenets of our religion or morality must be “unquestionable.” They might be scientific horizons where our methodology determines our focus. They can be historical horizons in which our forgetfulness allows some events to slip into the realm of the “unhistorical.” Strong even writes that “if one cannot forget, such that all is eternally present, then action and life itself become impossible, for all choices appear equally invalid” (Strong T. B., 1975, p. 27). This mimics Miller’s earlier claim of the necessity of misremembering national history as a means of justifying the borders of our own national identity.

Yet again, these boundaries and horizons, this need for a sense of truth seem to come with some preconditions that must be met for these horizons to be stable. However, some further examinations show that these presuppositions and preconditions for truth claims of a certain sort might hold within themselves their own downfall (again perhaps in the same manner as the Hegelian dialectic which Nietzsche rejects). For these horizons to be stable there must always be some intrinsic aspect of them that seems fixed or unquestionable. The unquestionability of certain things seems to be fundamental to all claims of moral truth. According to Strong “a considerable part of moral education has been devoted to elevating barriers against such questions” (Strong T. B., 1975, p. 25). Strong goes further to say that questioning such things necessarily assumes that there is some possible way to get an objective viewpoint from some point outside the system to examine that which is being questioned. However, this is antithetical to the very notion of something being unquestionable. Indeed, Strong categorizes nihilism according to Nietzsche as “the historical sickness with which men are incapable of forgetting enough so that a life-giving horizon may be draw about them” (Strong T. B., 1975, p. 27).

Examples about of the process of barriers against asking fundamental questions of our national identity. Anderson's imagining and Miller's forgetting both speak to this phenomenon. Misremembered or intentionally constructed national histories both designate what these truth horizons are and obscure parts of them as being beyond question. In the American example, deference to the infallibility of the Founders or the self-justifying righteousness of the constitution, or the constant calls for civility as a way of dampening legitimate protest or questioning, especially of the executive of the imperial presidency all offer us instances of this. Even criticism leveled at President Obama of an "apology tour for America" in the 2012 election cycle gives us an example, as the critique was not that whatever the supposed apology was for was incorrect, but instead the objection was that America would ever have anything for which to apologize. Reporting on similar reluctance of the American public to believe that the Founders could have been slave owners or that history of the American South will disappear immediately upon the removal of statues glorifying Confederate insurrectionists are even further examples. Strong's insistence that borders of our perception does not specify what those unquestionable aspects must be, merely that they exist.

In line with this, Nietzsche writes that "a certain false psychology... the necessary presupposition for becoming a Christian and for feeling the need of redemption. With the insight into this aberration of reason and imagination, one ceases to be a Christian" (Owen, 2007, p. 46). Similarly, even science, whose primary goal is to ask questions to discover truth only realizes through its own methods the limits of its ability to know. Strong quotes Kant as saying that this is endemic to humanity as "human reason has this peculiar fate, that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is unable to answer" (Strong T.

B., 1975, p. 16). Perhaps the same is true of questions that we are not only unable to answer but unwilling to answer. We hesitate to ask the unquestionable questions because we know in the back of our collective minds that all our truth claims (be they moral or otherwise) are based upon our having presupposed that they have unquestionable aspects. Yet, we are compelled by our own curiosity to do so despite our hesitation.

This tendency towards asking the very same questions that we have predetermined (either intentionally or not) explains the extent to which jingoism has become part and parcel of the national patriotic experience in the contemporary political world. The tensions are as readily apparent as examples of unquestionable aspects of nation. Arguments and disagreements over the Occupy movements of the early 2010s, protests of policing and other institutions of local government as part of the Black Lives Matter movement, sitting protests during the playing of the American national anthem at sporting events, all show us the imperative we face to question the unquestionable (especially when the unquestionable exists as a form of bigoted oppression) and the pushback against such protests demonstrates the extent to which some will go to protect the borders and horizons of our national imagining for fear both of loss of privilege as well as fear of a nihilistic world where national identities represent nothingness.

However, our potentially innate drive towards skepticism does not necessarily lead to nihilism. Strong argues that nihilism goes beyond a simply critical questioning of old truths and values but is “rather a consciousness that there is no meaning or truth to be found at all” (Strong T. B., 1975, p. 22). Yet Nietzsche’s whole endeavor to reevaluate morality seems to suggest that there is nothing that exists beyond questioning. Indeed, Strong points out that “once the questions exist, they will be asked” and that Nietzsche sees himself and those like him as active agents that will always “strive for the forbidden” (Strong T. B., 1975, p. 28). Yet, even then,

there is little argument to suggest that such questioning is unnatural even if it may be difficult to pursue. A fear of a state of nothingness and meaninglessness does not create a state of nothingness and meaninglessness in the same way that a fabricated state of emergency can engender that same fear. Just as there may be no need beyond our own comfortable practicality to justify the continuing retreat within literal walls and borders beyond our own fear of the other, there is no need to avoid questioning and testing the edges of the truth horizons of our national identities until we find those edges just as false, just as predetermined, just as uncompassionate, and just as inhumane.

Human Empathy and the Borderline Nationality Neuroses

It is here we return to the fictional Voigt-Kampff test, administered to ascertain the difference in compassionate emotional responses in true humans and androids in the universe of Dick's novel. That the autonomic and instinctual compassionate response to the suffering of others is the defining feature of humanity is important in our discussion of compassion at the literal and metaphorical borderlines of our national existence. Unlike the failings of cosmopolitanism and its critique by Miller, the Voigt-Kampff eliminates any ability to predetermine the outcome of the exam. In the fiction of the novel, either you have the reflexive responses indicative of compassion or you do not. Even repeated administrations of the exam to the same person cannot condition a subject to show the correct response or desensitize them in a way that would prevent them from doing so.

However, there is one thing important to note here about the exam as it is administered in the novel as well as the implication of the tests results: the test is only partially infallible. Given that the central theme of the book is being able to correctly identify what counts as human (the

inherent problem with cosmopolitan claims based on mutually recognized humanity), one might find it unsurprising from a narrative standpoint that a test that claims to be foolproof is not. However, the directionality of the imperfections inherent in the Voigt-Kampff test are important to note as well. While the test fails at always identifying androids (there is at least one character in the novel who passes the exam but who is later shown to be one of the fabrications), it never falsely identifies human beings. As a result, with compassion for others being the defining characteristic of what counts as humanity, the definition of humanity (even if not precise) is more generous rather than less. In the characters' attempts at identifying humans, that definition of humanity is expanded instead of being emblematic of a retreat within their own definition despite their intentions.

Additionally, even despite the imperfections in the test, the reader is given enough to suppose that this expanded definition is insufficient. Throughout the novel, Deckard, one of the very same people tasked with the arrest and murder of synthetic humans becomes more compassionate to them rather than less. We see the androids in relationships. We see the androids have jobs. We see the androids show genuine compassion towards humans. As such, the reader can easily conclude that all our communities of compassion should be expanded as far as possible if the showing of compassion be the metric of humanity rather than being determined to be human the governing factor over whether one is to be shown compassion. All life is valued by the characters in the novel. Because of the catastrophe that causes the dystopia in which the narrative is set, animal life has been reduced to the point where all living creatures are valued, and the care of an animal is seen as one of the utmost acts of personal morality that a person can demonstrate. This is true even to the extent that moral weight is given to the care of artificial animals even as the central story of the novel deals with the denial of care to artificial humans.

Moral obligation here is to be given as freely as possible despite the malaise (at best) and terror (at worst) of the population that remains on the irradiated planet Earth and honoring that obligation once it has been given is what has become unquestionable, rather than the secretive fictions we might tell ourselves to justify a more restrictive sense of compassion. To care is to be human. Only then does Terence's fictional maxim about humanity become the moral claim that it hopes to be.

In their own way, even the American Psychiatric Association gives us a look at humanity that is partially based on a capacity for empathy towards others⁴¹. As we consider the borderlines of nations, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5 (DSM 5) gives us a definition of a "borderline" personality disorder that is also characterized in part by an impairment in the ability to empathize with others that they describe as "Compromised ability to recognize the feelings and needs of others associated with interpersonal hypersensitivity" with "perceptions of others selectively biased toward negative attributes or vulnerabilities" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)⁴². While no assertion is made here that people living with such personality disorders are, somehow, less than human; it is important that even such a diagnostic manual would emphasize the importance of being able to empathize with other people. In light of this, one could cast our obsession with our nation-selves to the point of finding unquestionable areas to justify our predetermined in and out-groups and denying compassion out of practical expediency of those same in groups as a form of neuroses from which the world has been suffering for centuries. If, as I argued above in distinction to Nussbaum, that compassion cannot

⁴¹ Though we have used Nussbaum's preference for compassion over empathy, the DSM references empathy, so the term is used in this context despite the preference.

⁴² Similar impairments in the ability to feel empathy are diagnostic indicators of a variety of personality disorders.

be a decision but is instinctually felt as all emotions are, then such a neurosis prevents us from having such a capacity or, at the very least, suggest that we not act upon such an emotion when it is felt.

Rather than some sort of dialectic progression of human history leading us to something more fundamentally compassionate, contemporary politics, as we have described, has us retreating within our own borderlines and returning to the unfortunately familiar embrace of xenophobia, racism, and other exclusionary politics in the name of nation and patriotism. This historical regression would seem to suggest that a politics based on the nation thusly formulated (and despite all of the important, practical legal trappings of international law and systems of citizenship) precludes any possibility of moving beyond these borderlines into something truly progressive and beneficial to humanity. The nation-states assumption of a Smithian expectation that what benefits one nation might, in turn, somehow benefit other nations cannot work as a result of this. Nussbaum's assertion that cosmopolitanism would lead us to set aside our national particulars to approach global problems with global solutions⁴³ fails if we limit our understanding of the globe either with imperialistic dictates of completely Western neoliberal definitions of humanity and human rights. The assertion also fails if we, as Nussbaum does, limit our conception of compassion itself. We will remain in situations where hurricanes damage goes unrepaired, where poisonous pipes go unaddressed, and where nations turn away from international cooperation despite recognitions that doing so might harm themselves. To broach the unquestionable nature of the individually created and maintained nation-self may be a violation of the unspoken covenants we have made with ourselves and the predetermined and

⁴³ The example she gives is of the environment. As environmental issue like pollution do not respect national boundaries, solutions to them that are based on national boundaries cannot work.

self-justifying othering that we have based upon them. Yet, doing so is also what might yet allow us to enter not only an existence where fewer horizons exist but also one that need not leave us without answers or compassion.

CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this dissertation was to offer a novel answer to the question “What is nation?” The theory of the nation-self hopes to do just that by casting nation as a psychological phenomenon that exists as a political reflection of the self and against which judgments of exception are made to give tenuous acceptance or potentially hostile denial to any others that one either deems to be similar or foreign to that self. I have demonstrated the theoretical process by which I believe the nation-self is generated as a daily exercise of political self-realization and alienated projection similar to that of Feuerbach. Though unorthodox, this theory of the nation-as-self could likely sit idly and innocently by itself in comparison to more established theories of nation and national origins were it not for the issues presented previously with the way that other theories of nation address the problem of the border. Most such philosophies either defend the literal and metaphorical boundaries of nation, or, functionally tolerate them as insignificant or unnecessary but harmless. This dissertation has hoped to reject this idea.

Chapter One, “The Daily Creation of Nation,” sought both to give an example of a typical and traditional description of nation often used as a defense of nation and the moral obligation it often demands. The primacy of the moral claim that defenders of nation assert warrants special scrutiny of such a definition of nation, particularly whether such a conception exists prepolitically or is translatable between individuals with similar national claims. David Miller’s criterion of nation were used as such an example and were found wanting as were that of Anthony Smith largely due to their essential self-contradictions. The work of Aresh Abizadeh

was instrumental in demonstrating the flaws in arguments for the boundedness of the demos and appeals to a cultural-nationalist belief in a prepolitical basis for nations. Borrowing partly from the definition of Ernest Renan, Chapter One also gave an initial rough definition of the theory of the nation-self. The nation herein was conceived as an extension of the self by which an individual creates an idea of nation by projecting their own political identities and beliefs onto the nation. After creating the nation as an essential reflection of the self, I argued that the nation-self evaluates every other person it encounters with a test of similarity. Those similar enough to be identified as conational are given, by the nation-self, a tenuous and temporary recognition as an extension of that self.

Chapter Two, “On Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Schmitt and the Generation of the Alienated Nation-Self,” outlined the theoretical underpinnings for the theory of the nation-self. I argued that the nation-self is, essentially, a secularized version of the process by which Ludwig Feuerbach believes humanity conceives of God. This alienated Divine Being is an object upon which humanity projects their own characteristics in a perfect and limitless form so that in considering God, they might better understand themselves and work towards their own improvement. After having posited the nation-self in this manner, we examined how the writing of Carl Schmitt and his ideas of secularized sovereignty and political theology might inform our theory. From Schmitt, we primarily compared the idea of sovereignty existing in the declaration of the exception to the nation-self designating itself as norm and any perceived foreign other as exception. Lastly, we also considered how using a secularized version of an inherently theological philosophy might lead to a state of nihilistic despair using the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and Mark Warren and offered some considerations on why that might not be inevitable.

Chapter Three, “On Frank and Anderson's Constituent Moments and National Imaginings,” interrogated to alternative conceptions of the nation in the works of Jason Frank and Benedict Anderson. Frank described the creation of a democratic “people” in the use of a constituent power that both allowed a group of individuals disenfranchised or disenchanting with their established political and legal institutions to wield revolutionary power to seek alternative means of satisfying their need and legitimizing themselves as such a “people.” We found similarity in the “people” and the Schmittian decision of exception and argued that there was a parallel between the eternal latency of Frank’s constituent power and the need for the nation-self to be regenerated regularly. Chapter Three also explained and questioned Anderson’s definition of the nation as an “imagined community” that is specifically imagined as limited and sovereign. In comparing this theory with that of the nation-self we gave specific scrutiny to the limitations that Anderson argued were inherent in nation and what was meant by sovereignty compared to Schmitt’s definition from the previous chapter. Additionally, Chapter Three gave initial consideration to the possibility of imagining a paradigm beyond that of the nation.

The fourth and final chapter of this dissertation, “Borderline Compassion and Compassion at the Borderline,” returned specifically to the problem of the border as presented in most theories of nation, including the theory of the nation-self. We borrowed from Martha Nussbaum and asserted that a sense of civic compassion as a political emotion might be sufficient as a method by which we might begin to imagine a world of nations with fewer borders. After having defined compassion, I offered critique of cosmopolitan claims of transcending nation and found them wanting as a method of moving beyond the border problem. Essentially, the cosmopolitans desire to relocate the national border rather than transcend it into something boundless and not based on exception. Chapter Four then critically examined

arguments in favor of both literal and metaphorical walls for nations in David Miller's book on immigration and Tracy Strong's read of Nietzsche and found some support for my assertions about the problem of the border in Wendy Brown's work on border walls. Lastly, Chapter Four used the Philip K. Dick novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep as a way of returning to the belief that compassion can be used as a definition of humanity that might help us finally being to imagine our nation-self as unbounded. Finally, here I want to offer some concluding thoughts on the usefulness of the nation-self as a theoretical model and return briefly to the problem of the border.

Feuerbach's idea of the Divine Being could not work were the projection of God by the self inherently limited or bounded. Abizadeh has argued that requiring nations to be bounded is overly reductive. Brown has argued that arguments in favor of stronger borders and the walling that demarcates them are signs of the frailty of the sovereignty those walls claim to represent. Yet, we live in a contemporary world where the politics of the day seem to reject this idea completely. Even resistance to walling comes in the form of the necessity of border security. The problem of the border is underscored either way. As Agamben argues, sovereignty (especially as conceived by Schmitt) operates a paradox. The sovereign in making a determination of exception must, by definition exist and operate simultaneously inside and outside of the law (Agamben, 1998). Additionally, the sovereign operates on both the protected object and the castigated subject of the state of exception. As sovereign, the nation (even the nation-as-self) seems to be unable to escape the problem that the border represents. Miller and Rorty both hope to present arguments that come from the left as defenses of those same borders. Rorty wanted the American political left to merely adopt the language and rhetoric of the

conservative, nationalistic right for progressive purposes without acknowledging the inherent flaws that a reliance on that rhetoric would proliferate.

For Miller, those borders are an instance of our moral obligation to the nation, in a way that allowed former Attorney General Sessions, quoted in the introduction to this dissertation to argue was a benefit to individuals on both sides of the border. The moral value here is in the boundedness of the law. Yet, as Agamben demonstrates, the decision of exception cannot be of purely legal value for it is not a purely legal phenomenon. The state of exception, even as declared by the law, exists as a suspension of the law at its core in the name of reifying the boundaries which Nietzsche argued were necessary. Smith believed that nations had the same inherent boundaries as the ethnic communities from which they were generated. Anderson argued that nations had to be imagined as specifically limited in order to make sense to the individual nationalist. Frank's revolutionary constituent power exists within a national context and uses the same exceptional notion of sovereignty at the core of its definition. Even the cosmopolitans who want us to broaden our moral horizons, substitute one exceptional border with another.

The distinction between these theories and that of the nation-self which I have forwarded here is the assumption that those borders are necessary. From the perspective of the nation-self, such borders exist merely because they have been imagined as such. The rules of nation seem to suggest that borders are required, and so the nation-self assumes that they are. We end up with borders existing as objections of exceptional decision-making and moral value simply because we have determined them as such. No theory of nation assumes that borders exist where they do for objectively true reasons. The distinctions made are made merely to justify the fact that the nation believed itself to need such distinction. Cultural and metaphorical boundaries of nation

are essentially no different, as Abizadeh has argued. Nations exist as bordered things because of an underlying assumption that they must be so and for no other reason. As with Mill's *Racial Contract*, an underlying political decision attests that nations can only exist as a thing of limitations and distinctions as a way of justifying the distinctions which the privileged have predetermined ahead of time. That contemporary nations rely on borders being porous and open even in light of the staunchest rhetoric of xenophobic walling attests to this fact. Such rhetoric is merely an instance of the same tendencies to fear, envy, and shame that Nussbaum argued were the enemies of compassion.

We fear that the other presents a threat to our nation either through the threat of violence or a latent racist worry of impurity of a people. We envy other nations against whom we feel a comparative disadvantage, the substance of which need not matter. We feel shame over atrocities done in the name of nation that we dare not speak aloud for fear of asking Nietzsche's unquestionable questions. Yet, all of these negative political emotions exist because we have determined that they ought to exist. Though I believe the theory of the nation-self to be a more accurate description of how an individual comes to possess a national identity, if the individual conceives of their nation-self as necessarily bounded, it is not immune from these same tendencies. In fact, because, as I assert, we take such an individualized approach to the conception of nation that depends almost on a literal reflection of ourselves in another, the nation-as-self is constructed as *more* bounded than other, broader theories. Anderson argues that nations exist as we shifted from a paradigm where we were focused on centers (religious centers and political centers) to one of strict and universal borders. However, the theory of the nation-self asserts that we merely overlaid a border on top of an even more restrictive center.

By centering an idea of nation on the individual who believes it to exist, we have unnecessarily required nation almost back out into a conservative state of nature. In such a state of nature, each individual existed as sovereign but in a constant state of exception and war with every other individual. The theory of the nation-self asserts that the fear produced by nations in the name of nations exists almost as a lens to obscure the fact that nations cause us to operate with the same amount of distrust while doing so using the rhetoric of collectivity as a justification. We instinctively know that the nation does not objectively exist in the world, but we suspend our disbelief just enough to arrive at a point of cognitive dissonance that allows us to use liberal notions of nation, justice, sovereignty, and democracy in ways that are overly exclusive and without compassion. Just as with Miller's defense of nation, the nation-self ends up as a little more than a rationalization for predetermined bigotry by arguing for a false sense of moral obligation to a group that is essentially just the individual. Nation becomes a justification for complete selfishness. As such, any attempt at a collective politics based on nation conceived in such a way will, ultimately, be self-defeating. The nation-self sees primary moral obligation only to the self and limits any other obligation to only that which benefits the self as well, assuming that the need for borders does not motivate the nation-self to do things that go against even its own best interest.

The assertion of this dissertation is that nation is conceived in a manner different than what is usually assumed. However, I do not go so far as to contest Miller's proposition that nations are things with which a person can reasonably identify. What I reject is that the nation-self generated in accordance with this theory need not be bounded to the extent which its defenders believe, nor should it carry the weight of moral obligation to which its defenders ascribe. Yet, the two seem to go together. When one combines a seemingly unlimited sense of

the ability of the nation to set and enforce its own borders (either literally or metaphorically) and a strong form of moral obligation, the extent to which the nation feels it can act with impunity to decide its own exception amplifies. Agamben offers a few examples of such.

The most easily identifiable is that of the post-9/11 United States. In the wake of such a tragedy, fear, overshadowing any sense of civic compassion prompted the Congress to pass the USA Patriot Act which empowered the US Attorney General to take into custody any alien suspected of any activities that might endanger the nation and hold them for up to a week without charges (Agamben, 2005). These detainees (as classification as enemy soldiers would make them subject to international law) existed completely outside of the bounds of the law in this instance of a state of emergency; the legal use of a decision of exceptionalism essentially suspending the law to create and justify itself. Even Lincoln, hero of the American Republic, said to Congress of his decisions to censor the mail and suspend the writ of habeas corpus for anyone suspected of treason that such actions were necessary “whether strictly legal or not” (Agamben, 2005, p. 20). Additionally, several national constitutions have specific provisions whereby the constitution itself can be suspended. Affectively, in this extreme mix of a bordered nation with a sense of moral imperative, the nation has the ability to declare a state of emergency over any situation and on any grounds either legally or extralegally. As Agamben puts it:

“The question of borders becomes all the more urgent: if exceptional measures are the result of periods of political crisis and, as such, must be understood on political and not juridico-constitutional grounds, then they find themselves in the paradoxical position of being juridical measures that cannot be understood in legal terms, and the state of exception appears as the legal form of what cannot have legal form.” (Agamben, 2005, p. 1)

An instance of sovereignty such as this has no basis for a claim to be grounded in the law. Agamben argues that it becomes the case that the sovereign via this state of exception exists in the “no man’s land between public law and political fact” (Agamben, 2005, p. 1). In establishing

boundaries for the people of a nation, the nation seemingly unbounds itself from any sense of legality or morality. For the defenders of the nation, the border is sufficient to warrant moral obligation. The moral obligation to the nation is sufficient to warrant an extreme state of exception. And the state of exception is sufficient to warrant the creation of the border. The circular logic is groundless for there is no objective prepolitical grounds for the bordering of nations, yet nations have a less legitimate claim (if any) to the power they desire to wield. Weber's monopoly on violence becomes self-justifying in no small part because the nation, as I describe it is self-referential. Even Frank's description of a legitimate "people" gaining their legitimacy via a use of constituent power assumes a self-referential nature that inherently excludes some others along the assumed lines of preexisting national borders. Otherwise, why would a caravan of people approaching a national border not have as legitimate a claim to be wielding constituent power? As Abizadeh argues, every demos that insists upon boundaries will default to cultural-nationalist claims in the end despite a desire to adhere to the open equality of democracy because they are essentially self-referential. In a later work discussing the parallels between church and nation, Agamben argues:

"The crises - the states of permanent exception and emergency - that the governments of the world continually proclaim are in reality a secularized parody of the Church's incessant deferral of the Last Judgement. With the eclipse of the messianic experience of the culmination of the law and of time comes an unprecedented hypertrophy of law-one that, under the guise of legislating everything, betrays its legitimacy through legalistic excess. I say the following with words carefully weighed: nowhere on earth today is a legitimate power to be found; even the powerful are convinced of their own illegitimacy." (Agamben, 2012, p. 40)

For Agamben, both the Church and the kingdom have lost sight of their intent and have undermined their own legitimacy likely beyond all repair. Similarly, I assert that as the nation-self rests more and more on its own reflection and creates more extreme states of exception to legitimize its existence as a strictly bounded political fetish-object, it cannot be the grounds for a

genuine collective politics. It may appear as such when such a façade meets the needs of the self-justifying state of exception, but as with Nietzsche's God, the nation as conceived for the last two centuries has lived beyond its usefulness. To the extent that a model finds value in usefulness and not accuracy, the nation-self is depreciating over time. However, the idea of nation need not be immediately abandoned over time.

Consider again Feuerbach's alienated Divine Being. God, for Feuerbach, must exist as unbounded. Perfection cannot be conceived as limited in a way that can further human understanding of their own better selves. This is the essential aim of religion for Feuerbach, even if it happens unconsciously. I argue that this is the essential aim of the nation-self as well. The distinction between the unbounded God and the bordered nation-self is one that, like the nation itself, is artificial. Even Anderson admits that nations imagine themselves as limited. For Anderson the limitation stems from the fact that no one person can meet every other person within their sphere of commonality, a point I do not dispute. However, the same theory assumes that people can feel affection and affiliation with historical figures in a narrative that has been specifically constructed to create such affection. How can one imagine the nation as including historical figures one can never meet yet claim to necessarily exclude groups of other individuals for this same reason?

Further Anderson, as we have seen argues that previous paradigms existed without a strict emphasis on borders, asserts that nations have typically been different and assumes that nations should be different because they are different (another instance of the pure self-reduction that Abizadeh worries about). Again, that nations are conceived in a way is used as justification that nations *should* be conceived in way. Such theorists claim to avoid normative judgements yet infer them in their definitions of nation. The theory of the nation-self put forth in this

dissertation has tried to more accurately describe the way that nations operate as a way of understanding their creation and purpose so that it may either be better achieved or transcended. The method for either option is the same: accept that nations (irrespective of how they are conceived) need not be conceived as bounded or bordered, at least not in the psychological sense of the acknowledgment of the nation-self of others. Additionally, inasmuch as I cast the nation as a psychological phenomenon and creation, I return to the idea that compassion may be the method by which such a transcendence is achieved.

If we can learn anything from the fictional Voigt-Kamff test, I assert that compassion should be the defining characteristic of the self. However, if we are to attempt to move beyond the failure of cosmopolitanism to offer a solution to the border problem, we cannot use compassion as a metric by which we decide who is worthy of compassion. This was the inherent flaw of Nussbaum's conception of compassion as limited with no attempt at pushing for something further. To use a decision about who is worthy of compassion in a definition of compassion as an obligation is to restate the border problem in different words. Yet, despite the defects in Nussbaum's compassion, I still assert that the nation-self can retain its identity while relaxing a need for borders in favor of an intentional development of personal and civic compassion. If, as Anderson argues, the monarchical dynasty focused on political centers and possessed porous borders, the nation-self can exist, even with itself in the center by allowing the prescriptions of compassion to reveal how weak the nation's claim to legitimate political bordering is already. As such, this dissertation ends not only hoping to have played a role in a larger conversation about the definition of nation by presenting a novel theory of the nation-self, but asserts a normative conclusion that rather than a renewed emphasis on the border or on the patriotic self-sacrifice often demanded by the nation, the real possibility of a future collective

politics cannot rest in the nation, but might rest in an emphasis on civic compassion as a way to begin to look to something beyond.

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