

*Tuzenbach*: In years to come, you say, life on earth will be marvellous, beautiful. That's true. But to take part in that now, even from afar, one must prepare, one must work . . .

Yes, one must work. Perhaps you think – this German is getting over-excited. But on my word of honour, I'm Russian. I cannot even speak German. My father is Orthodox . . .

Anton Chekhov, *Three Sisters*

*Politika u nás byla však spíše méně smělejší formou kultury.*  
(Our politics however was a rather less daring form of culture.)

J. Sládeček, *Osmášedesátý* ('68), Index, Köln, 1980,  
(written under this pen name by Petr Pithart, subsequently prime minister of the Czech lands, and previously circulated in samizdat in Prague).

Our nationality is like our relations to women: too implicated in our moral nature to be changed honourably, and too accidental to be worth changing.

George Santayana

## 1

### Definitions

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Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.

Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle. Nationalist *sentiment* is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfilment. A nationalist *movement* is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind.

There is a variety of ways in which the nationalist principle can be violated. The political boundary of a given state can fail to include all the members of the appropriate nation; or it can include them all but also include some foreigners; or it can fail in both these ways at once, not incorporating all the nationals and yet also including some non-nationals. Or again, a nation may live, unmixed with foreigners, in a multiplicity of states, so that no single state can claim to be the national one.

But there is one particular form of the violation of the nationalist principle to which nationalist sentiment is quite particularly sensitive: if the rulers of the political unit belong to a nation other than that of the majority of the ruled, this, for nationalists, constitutes a quite outstandingly intolerable breach of political propriety. This can occur either through the incorporation of the national territory in a larger empire, or by the local domination of an alien group.

In brief, nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and, in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state – a contingency already formally excluded by the principle in its general formulation – should not separate the power-holders from the rest.

The nationalist principle can be asserted in an ethical, 'universalistic' spirit. There could be, and on occasion there have been, nationalists-in-the-abstract, unbiassed in favour of any special nationality of their own, and generously preaching the doctrine for all nations alike: let all nations have their own political roofs, and let all

of them also refrain from including non-nationals under it. There is no formal contradiction in asserting such non-egoistic nationalism. As a **doctrine** it can be supported by some good arguments, such as the desirability of preserving cultural diversity, of a pluralistic international political system, and of the diminution of internal strains within states.

In fact, however, nationalism has often not been so sweetly reasonable, nor so rationally symmetrical. It may be that, as Immanuel Kant believed, partiality, the tendency to make exceptions on one's own behalf or one's own case, is *the* central human weakness from which all others flow; and that it infects national sentiment as it does **all** else, engendering what the Italians under **Mussolini** called the *sacro egoismo* of nationalism. It may also be that the political effectiveness of national sentiment would be much impaired if nationalists had as **fine** a sensibility to the wrongs committed by their nation as they have to those committed against it.

But over and above these considerations there are others, tied to the specific nature of the world we happen to live in, which militate against any impartial, general, sweetly reasonable nationalism. To put it in the simplest possible terms: there is a very large number of potential nations on earth. Our planet also contains room for a certain number of independent or autonomous political units. On any reasonable calculation, the former number (of potential nations) is probably much, **much** larger **than** that of possible viable states. If this argument or calculation is correct, **not all nationalisms can be satisfied, at any rate at the same time. The satisfaction of some spells the frustration of others. This argument is further and immeasurably strengthened by the fact that very many of the potential nations of this world live, or until recently have lived, not in compact territorial units but intermixed with each other in complex patterns. It follows that a territorial political unit can only become ethnically homogeneous, in such cases, if it either kills, or expels, or assimilates all non-nationals. Their unwillingness to suffer such fates may make the peaceful implementation of the nationalist principle difficult.**

These definitions must, of course, like most definitions, be applied with common sense. The nationalist principle, as defined, is not violated by the presence of **small** numbers of resident foreigners, or even by the presence of the occasional foreigner in, say, a national ruling family. Just how many resident foreigners or foreign members of the **ruling** class there must be before the principle is effectively

violated cannot be stated with precision. There is no sacred percentage figure, below which the foreigner can be benignly tolerated, and above which he becomes offensive and his safety and life are at peril. No doubt the figure will vary with circumstances. The impossibility of providing a generally applicable and precise figure, however, does not undermine the usefulness of the **definition**.

### *State and nation*

Our definition of nationalism was parasitic on two as yet undefined terms: state and nation.

Discussion of the state may begin with Max Weber's celebrated definition of it, as that agency within society which possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence. The idea behind this is simple and seductive: in well-ordered societies, such as most of us live in or aspire to live in, private or sectional violence is illegitimate. Conflict as such is not illegitimate, but it cannot rightfully be resolved by private or sectional violence. Violence may be applied only by the central political authority, and those to whom it delegates this right. Among the various sanctions of the maintenance of order, the ultimate one – force – may be applied only by one special, clearly identified, and well centralized, disciplined agency within society. That agency or group of agencies is the state.

The idea enshrined in this **definition** corresponds fairly well with the moral intuitions of many, probably most, members of **modern** societies. Nevertheless, it is not entirely satisfactory. There are 'states' – or, at any rate, institutions which we would normally be inclined to call by that name – which do not monopolize legitimate violence within the territory which they more or less effectively control. A feudal state does not necessarily object to private wars between its fief-holders, provided they also **fulfil** their obligations to their overlord; or again, a state counting tribal populations among its subjects does not necessarily object to the institution of the feud, as long as those who indulge in it refrain from endangering neutrals on the public highway or in the market. The Iraqi state, under British tutelage after the First World War, tolerated tribal raids, provided the raiders **dutifully** reported at the nearest police station before and after the expedition, leaving an orderly bureaucratic record of slain and booty. In brief, there are states which lack either the **will** or the

means to enforce their monopoly of legitimate violence, and which nonetheless remain, in many respects, recognizable 'states'.

Weber's underlying principle does, however, seem valid *now*, however strangely ethnocentric it may be as a general definition, with its tacit assumption of the well-centralized Western state. The state constitutes one highly distinctive and important elaboration of the social division of labour. Where there is no division of labour, one cannot even begin to speak of the state. But not any or every specialism makes a state: the state is the specialization and concentration of order maintenance. The 'state' is that institution or set of institutions specifically concerned with the enforcement of order (whatever else they may also be concerned with). The state exists where specialized order-enforcing agencies, such as police forces and courts, have separated out from the rest of social life. They are the state.

Not all societies are state-endowed. It immediately follows that the problem of nationalism does not arise for stateless societies. If there is no state, one obviously cannot ask whether or not its boundaries are congruent with the limits of nations. If there are no rulers, there being no state, one cannot ask whether they are of the same nation as the ruled. When neither state nor rulers exist, one cannot resent their failure to conform to the requirements of the principle of nationalism. One may perhaps deplore statelessness, but that is another matter. Nationalists have generally fulminated against the distribution of political power and the nature of political boundaries, but they have seldom if ever had occasion to deplore the absence of power and of boundaries altogether. The circumstances in which nationalism has generally arisen have not normally been those in which the state itself, as such, was lacking, or when its reality was in any serious doubt. The state was only too conspicuously present. It was its boundaries and/or the distribution of power, and possibly of other advantages, within it which were resented.

This in itself is highly significant. Not only is our definition of nationalism parasitic on a prior and assumed definition of the state: it also seems to be the case that nationalism emerges only in *milieux* in which the existence of the state is already very much taken for granted. The existence of politically centralized units, and of a moral-political climate in which such centralized units are taken for granted and are treated as normative, is a necessary though by no means a sufficient condition of nationalism.

By way of anticipation, some general historical observations should be made about the state. Mankind has passed through three fundamental stages in its history: the pre-agrarian, the agrarian, and the industrial. Hunting and gathering bands were and are too small to allow the kind of political division of labour which constitutes the state; and so, for them, the question of the state, of a stable specialized order-enforcing institution, does not really arise. By contrast, most, but by no means **all**, agrarian societies have been state-endowed. Some of these states have been strong and some weak, some have been despotic and others law-abiding. They differ a very great deal in their form. The agrarian phase of human history is the period during which, so to speak, the very existence of the state is an option. Moreover, the form of the state is highly variable. During the hunting-gathering stage, the option was not available.

By contrast, in the post-agrarian, industrial age there is, once again, no option; but now the presence, not the absence of the state is inescapable. Paraphrasing Hegel, once none had the state, then some had it, and finally all have it. The form it takes, of course, still remains variable. There are some traditions of social thought – anarchism, Marxism – which hold that even, or especially, in an industrial order the state is dispensable, at least under favourable conditions or under conditions due to be realized in the fullness of time. There are obvious and powerful reasons for doubting this: industrial societies are enormously large, and depend for the standard of living to which they have become accustomed (or to which they ardently wish to become accustomed) on an unbelievably intricate general division of labour and co-operation. Some of this co-operation might under favourable conditions be spontaneous and need no central sanctions. The idea that all of it could perpetually work in this way, that it could exist without any enforcement and control, puts an intolerable strain on one's credulity.

So the problem of nationalism does not arise when there is no state. It does not follow that the problem of nationalism arises for each and every state. On the contrary, it arises only for *some* states. It remains to be seen which ones do face this problem.

### *The nation*

The definition of the nation presents difficulties graver than those attendant on the definition of the state. Although modern man tends

to take the centralized state (and, more specifically, the centralized national state) for granted, nevertheless he is capable, with relatively little effort, of seeing its contingency, and of imagining a social situation in which the state is absent. He is quite adept at visualizing the 'state of nature'. An anthropologist can explain to him that the tribe is not necessarily a state writ small, and that forms of tribal organization exist which can be described as stateless. By contrast, the idea of a man without a nation seems to impose a far greater strain on the modern imagination. Chamisso, an *émigré* Frenchman in Germany during the Napoleonic period, wrote a powerful proto-Kafkaesque novel about a man who lost his shadow: though no doubt part of the effectiveness of this novel hinges on the intended ambiguity of the parable, it is difficult not to suspect that, for the author, the Man without a Shadow was the Man without a Nation. When his followers and acquaintances detect his aberrant shadowlessness they shun the otherwise well-endowed Peter Schlemiehl. A man without a nation defies the recognized categories and provokes revulsion.

Chamisso's perception – if indeed this is what he intended to convey – was valid enough, but valid only for one kind of human condition, and not for the human condition as such anywhere at any time. A man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears; a deficiency in any of these particulars is not inconceivable and does from time to time occur, but only as a result of some disaster, and it is itself a disaster of a kind. All this seems obvious, though, alas, it is not true. But that it should have come to seem so very obviously true is indeed an aspect, or perhaps the very core, of the problem of nationalism. Having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has now come to appear as such.

In fact, nations, like states, are a contingency, and not a universal necessity. Neither nations nor states exist at all times and in all circumstances. Moreover, nations and states are not the *same* contingency. Nationalism holds that they were destined for each other; that either without the other is incomplete, and constitutes a tragedy. But before they could become intended for each other, each of them had to emerge, and their emergence was independent and contingent. The state has certainly emerged without the help of the nation. Some nations have certainly emerged without the blessings of their own state. It is more debatable whether the normative idea of the nation, in its modern sense, did not presuppose the prior existence of the state.

What then is this contingent, but in our age seemingly universal and normative, idea of the nation? Discussion of two very makeshift, temporary definitions will help to pinpoint this elusive concept.

1 Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating.

2 Two men are of the same nation if and only if they *recognize* each other as belonging to the same nation. In other words, *nations maketh man*; nations are the artefacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities. A mere category of persons (say, occupants of a given territory, or speakers of a given language, for example) becomes a nation if and when the members of the category *firmly* recognize certain mutual rights and duties to each other in virtue of their shared membership of it. It is their recognition of each other as fellows of this kind which turns them into a nation, and not the other shared attributes, whatever they might be, which separate that category from non-members.

Each of these provisional definitions, the cultural and the voluntaristic, has some merit. Each of them singles out an element which is of real importance in the understanding of nationalism. But neither is adequate. Definitions of culture, presupposed by the first definition, in the anthropological rather than the normative sense, are notoriously difficult and unsatisfactory. It is probably best to approach this problem by using this term without attempting too much in the way of formal definition, and looking at what culture *does*.

## Culture in Agrarian Society

One development which takes place during the agrarian epoch of human history is comparable in importance with the emergence of the state itself: the emergence of literacy and of a specialized clerical class or estate, a clerisy. Not all agrarian societies attain literacy: paraphrasing Hegel once again, we may say that at first none could read; then some could read; and eventually all can read. That, at any rate, seems to be the way in which literacy fits in with the three great ages of man. In the middle or agrarian age literacy appertains to some only. Some societies have it; and within the societies that do have it, it is always some, and never all, who can actually read.

The written word seems to enter history with the accountant and the tax collector: the earliest uses of the written sign seem often to be occasioned by the keeping of records. Once developed, however, the written word acquires other uses, legal, contractual, administrative. God himself eventually puts his covenant with humanity and his rules for the comportment of his creation in writing. Theology, legislation, litigation, administration, therapy: all engender a class of literate specialists, in alliance or more often in competition with freelance illiterate thaumaturges. In agrarian societies literacy brings forth a major chasm between the great and the little traditions (or cults). The doctrines and forms of organization of the clerisy of the great and literate cultures are highly variable, and the depth of the chasm between the great and little traditions may vary a great deal. So does the relationship of the clerisy to the state, and its own internal organization: it may be centralized or it may be loose, it may be hereditary or on the contrary constitute an open guild, and so forth.

Literacy, the establishment of a reasonably permanent and standardized script, means in effect the possibility of cultural and cognitive storage and centralization. The cognitive centralization and codification effected by a clerisy, and the political centralization which is the state, need not go hand in hand. Often they are rivals; sometimes one may capture the other; but more often, the Red and

the Black, the specialists of violence and of faith, are indeed independently operating rivals, and their territories are often not co-extensive.

### *Power and culture in the agro-literate polity*

These two crucial and idiosyncratic forms of the division of labour – the centralizations of power and of culture/cognition – have profound and special implications for the typical social structure of the agro-literate polity. Their implications are best considered jointly, and they can be schematized as shown in figure 1.

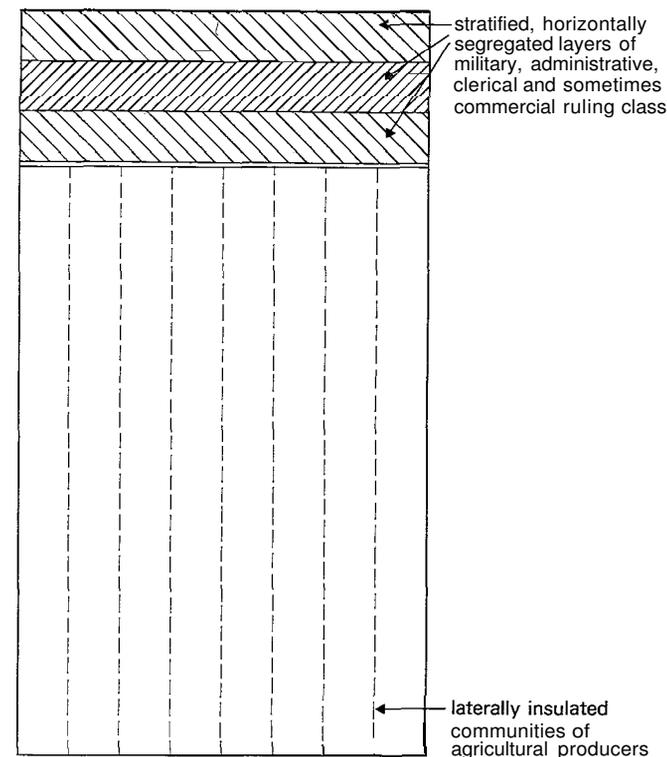


Figure 1 General form of the social structure of agrarian societies.

In the characteristic agro-literate polity, the ruling class forms a **small** minority of the population, rigidly separate from the **great** majority of direct agricultural producers, or peasants. Generally

speaking, its ideology exaggerates rather than underplays the inequality of classes and the degree of separation of the ruling stratum. This can in turn be sub-divided into a number of more specialized layers: warriors, priests, clerics, administrators, burghers. Some of these layers (for example, Christian clergy) may be non-hereditary and be re-selected in each generation, though recruitment may be closely predetermined by the other hereditary strata. The most important point, however, is this: both for the ruling stratum as a whole, and for the various sub-strata within it, there is great stress on cultural differentiation rather **than** on homogeneity. The more differentiated in style of all **kinds** the various strata are, the less friction and ambiguity there will be between them. The whole system favours horizontal lines of cultural cleavage, and it may invent and reinforce them when they are absent. Genetic and cultural differences are attributed to what were in fact merely strata differentiated by function, so as to fortify the differentiation, and endow it **with** authority and permanence. For instance, in early nineteenth-century Tunisia, the ruling stratum considered itself to be Turkish, though quite unable to speak that language, and in fact of very mixed ancestry and reinforced by **recruits** from below.

Below the horizontally stratified minority at the top, there is another world, that of the laterally separated petty communities of the lay members of the society. Here, once again, cultural differentiation is very marked, though the reasons are quite different. Small peasant communities generally live inward-turned lives, tied to the locality by economic need if not by political prescription. Even if the population of a given area starts from the same linguistic base-line – which very often is not the case – a **kind** of culture drift soon engenders dialectal and other differences. No-one, or almost no-one, has an interest in promoting cultural homogeneity at this social level. The state is interested in extracting taxes, maintaining the peace, and not much else, and has no interest in promoting lateral communication between its subject communities.

The clerisy *may*, it is true, have a measure of interest in imposing certain shared cultural norms. Some clerisies are contemptuous of and indifferent towards folk practices, while others, in the interest of monopolizing access to the sacred, to salvation, therapy and so forth, combat and actively denigrate folk culture and the freelance folk shamans who proliferate within it. But, within the general conditions prevailing in agro-literate polities, they *can* never really be

successful. Such societies simply do not possess the means for making literacy near-universal and incorporating the broad masses of the population in a high culture, thus implementing the ideals of the clerisy. The most the clerisy can achieve is to ensure that its ideal is internalized as a valid but impracticable norm, to be respected or even revered, perhaps even aspired to in periodic outbursts of enthusiasm, but to be honoured more in the breach than in the observance in normal times.

But perhaps the central, most important fact about agro-literate society is this: almost everything in it militates against the definition of political units in terms of cultural boundaries.

In other words! had nationalism been invented in such a period its prospects of general acceptance would have been slender indeed. One might put it this way: of the two potential partners, culture and power, destined for each other according to nationalist theory, *neither* has much inclination for the other in the conditions prevailing in the agrarian age. Let us take each of them in turn.

### *Culture*

Among the higher strata of **agro-literate** society it is clearly advantageous to stress, sharpen and accentuate the diacritical, differential, and **monopolizable** traits of the privileged groups. The tendency of liturgical languages to become distinct from the vernacular is very strong: it is as if literacy alone did not create enough of a barrier between cleric and layman, as if the chasm between them had to be deepened, by making the language not merely recorded in an inaccessible script, but also incomprehensible when articulated.

The establishment of horizontal cultural cleavages is not only attractive, in that it furthers the interests of the privileged and the power-holders; it is also feasible, and indeed easy. Thanks to the relative stability of agro-literate societies, sharp separations of the population into estates or castes or millets can be established and maintained without creating intolerable frictions. On the contrary, by externalizing, making absolute and underwriting inequalities, it fortifies them and makes them palatable, by endowing them with the aura of inevitability, permanence and naturalness. That which is inscribed into the nature of things and is perennial, is consequently not personally, individually offensive, nor psychically intolerable.

By contrast, in an inherently mobile and unstable society the maintenance of these social dams, separating unequal levels, is intolerably **difficult**. The powerful currents of mobility are ever undermining them. Contrary to what Marxism has led people to expect, it is pre-industrial society which is addicted to horizontal differentiation within societies, whereas industrial society strengthens the boundaries between nations rather than those between classes.

The same tends to be true, in a different form, lower down on the social scale. Even there, preoccupation with horizontal, often subtle but locally important differentiations can be intense. But even if the local group is internally more or less homogeneous, it is most unlikely to **link** its own idiosyncratic culture to any kind of political principle, to **think** in terms of a political legitimacy defined in a way which refers to the local culture. For a variety of obvious reasons, such a style of thinking is, in these conditions, most unnatural, and would indeed seem absurd to those concerned, were it explained to them. Local culture is almost invisible. The self-enclosed community tends to communicate in terms whose meaning can only be identified *in context*, in contrast to the relatively context-free scholasticism of the scribes. But the village patois (or shorthand or 'restricted code') has no normative or political pretensions; quite the reverse. The most it can do is identify the village of origin or anyone who opens his mouth at the local market.

In brief, cultures proliferate in this world, but its conditions do not *generally* encourage what **might** be called cultural imperialisms, the **efforts** of one **culture** or another to dominate and expand to **fill** out a political unit. Culture tends to be branded either horizontally (by social caste), or vertically, to define very small local **com-**unities. The factors determining political boundaries are totally distinct from those **determining** cultural limits. Clerics sometimes endeavour to extend the zone of a culture, or rather, of the faith they codified for it; and states sometimes indulge in crusades, **faith-**endorsed aggression. But these are not the normal, pervasive conditions of agrarian society.

It is important to add that cultures in such a world proliferate in a very complex way: in many cases, it is far from clear how a given individual is to be assigned to his 'cultural background'. A **Hima-**layan peasant, for instance, may be involved with priests and monks and shamans of several religions in different contexts at different

times of the year; his caste, clan and language may link him to diverse units. The speakers of a given tribal language may, for instance, not be treated as members of it, if they happen to be of the wrong occupational caste. Life-style, occupation, language, ritual practice, may fail to be congruent. A family's economic and political survival may hinge, precisely, on the adroit manipulation and maintenance of these ambiguities, on keeping options and connections open. Its members may not have the slightest interest in, or taste for, an unambiguous, categorical self-characterization such as is nowadays associated with a putative nation, aspiring to internal homogeneity and external autonomy. In a traditional milieu an ideal of a single overriding and cultural identity makes little sense. Nepalese hill peasants often have links with a variety of religious rituals, and **think in** terms of caste, clan, or village (but not of nation) according to circumstance. It hardly matters whether homogeneity is preached or not. It **can find** little resonance.

#### *The state in agrarian society*

In these circumstances there is little incentive or opportunity for cultures to aspire to the kind of monochrome homogeneity and political pervasiveness and domination for which later, with the coming of the age of nationalism, they eventually strive. But how does the matter look from the viewpoint of the state, or, more generally, of the political unit?

Political units of the agrarian age vary enormously in size and kind. Roughly speaking, however, one can divide them into two species, or perhaps poles: local self-governing communities, and large empires. On the one hand, there are the city states, **mbal** segments, peasant communes and so forth, **running** their own affairs, with a fairly high political participation ratio (to adapt S. Andreski's useful phrase), and with only moderate inequality; and on the other, large territories controlled by a concentration of force at one point. A very characteristic political form is, of course, one which fuses these two principles: a central dominant authority co-exists with **semi-**autonomous local units.

The question which concerns us is whether, in our world, **con-**taining these types of unit, there are forces making for that fusion of culture and polity which is the essence of nationalism. The answer

must be No. The local communities depend for their functioning on a good measure of face-to-face contact, and they cannot expand in size radically without transforming themselves out of all recognition. Hence these participatory communities seldom exhaust the culture of which they are part; they may have their local accent and customs, but these tend to be but variants of a wider inter-communicating culture containing many other **similar** communities. City states, for instance, seldom have a language of their own. No doubt the ancient Greeks were reasonably typical in this respect. While they possessed a vigorous awareness of their own shared culture and the contrast between it and that of all barbarians (with, incidentally, a rather low degree of horizontal cultural differentiation **between** Hellenes), this sense of unity had little *political* expression, even in aspiration, let alone in achievement. But when a pan-Hellenic polity was established under **Macedonian** leadership, it very rapidly grew into an empire transcending by far the bounds of Hellenism. In ancient Greece, chauvinistic though the Greeks were in their own way, there appears to have been no slogan equivalent to *Ein Reich, Ein Volk, Ein Fuehrer*.

#### *The varieties of agrarian rulers*

The **agro-literate polity** is a **kind** of society which has been in existence some five **millennia** or so and which, despite the variety of its **forms**, shares certain basic features. The great majority of its citizens are agricultural producers, living in inward-turned communities, and they are dominated by a minority whose chief distinguishing attributes are the management of violence, the maintenance of order, and the control of the official wisdom of the society, which is eventually enshrined in **script**. This warrior-and-scribe ruling class can be fitted into a rough typology, in terms of the following set of **oppositions**:

- |   |             |               |
|---|-------------|---------------|
| 1 | Centralized | Uncentralized |
| 2 | Gelded      | Stallions     |
| 3 | Closed      | Open          |
| 4 | Fused       | Specialized   |

1 Both a clerisy and a **military** class can be either **centralized** or **decentralized**. The medieval Catholic Church is a splendid example of an effectively centralized clerisy which can dominate the moral

climate of a civilization. The *ulama* of Islam achieved as much, but with an almost total absence of any centralized organization or internal hierarchy, and they were theoretically an open class. The Brahmins were both a clerisy and a closed kin group; the Chinese bureaucracy doubled up as scribes and administrators.

2 From the viewpoint of the central state, the major danger, as Plato recognized so long ago, is the acquisition, or retention, by its military or clerical office-holders of links with particular **kin** groups, whose interests are then liable to sway the officers from the stern path of **duty**, and whose support is, at the same time, liable to endow them on occasion with too much power.

The strategies adopted for countering this pervasive danger vary in detail, but can be generically characterized as *gelding*. The idea is to break the **kin** link by depriving the budding **warrior/bureaucrat/cleric** either of ancestry, or of posterity, or of both. The techniques used included the use of eunuchs, physically incapable of possessing posterity; of priests whose privileged position was conditional on celibacy, thereby preventing them from avowing posterity; of foreigners, whose **kin** links could be assumed to be safely distant; or of members of otherwise disfranchised or excluded groups, who would be helpless if separated from the employing state. Another technique was the employment of 'slaves', men who, though in fact privileged and powerful, nevertheless, being 'owned' by the state, technically had no other legitimate links, and whose **property** and position could revert to the state at any time, without even the fiction of a right to due process, and thus without creating any rights on the parts of some local or **kin** group of the destituted official.

'Literal eunuchs were frequently employed.' Celibate priests were, of course, prominent in Christendom. Slave military bureaucracies were conspicuous in Islamic polities after the decline of the **Kaliphate**. Foreigners were often prominent in palace elite guards and in the **financial** secretariats of the empires.

However, gelding was not universal. The Chinese bureaucracy was recruited from the 'gentry'; and the European feudal class rapidly succeeded in superimposing the principle of heredity on to that of the allocation of land for service. In contrast with gelding, elites whose members are formally allowed to reproduce themselves

socially, and retain their positions for their offspring, may be called stallions.

3 There are advantages in clerisies, bureaucracies and military classes being open, and in their being closed. European clergy and Chinese bureaucrats were technically open (as were Muslim ulama), though they were recruited predominantly from a restricted stratum. In Hinduism, priests and warrior-rulers are both closed and distinct, and their mutual (theoretical) impenetrability may be essential to the working of the system. They are both closed and non-fused, distinct. In Islam (excluding Mamluk and Janissary periods) neither clerisy nor the military are gelled.

4 Finally, the ruling class may either fuse the military and clerical (and possibly other) functions, or carefully segregate them into specialized groups. Hinduism formally separated them. European feudalism fused them on occasion, in the military orders.

It would be intriguing to follow in concrete historical detail the various possible combinations resulting from choosing from among these alternatives. For our present purpose, however, what matters is something that all the variants tend to have in common. The power-holders are caught in a kind of field of tension between local communities which are sub-national in scale, and a horizontal estate or caste which is more than national. They are loyal to a stratum which is much more interested in differentiating itself from those below than in diffusing its own culture to them, and which quite often extends its own limits beyond the bounds of the local polity, and is trans-political and in competition with the state. Only seldom (as in the case of the Chinese bureaucracy) is it co-extensive with a state (and in that case, it did display a certain kind of nationalism).

The only stratum which can in any sense be said to have a cultural policy is the clerisy. Sometimes, as in the case of the Brahmins, its policy is in effect to create a complementarity and mutual interdependence between itself and the other orders. It seeks to strengthen its own position by making itself indispensable, and the complementary roles it ascribes to itself and to the laity, far from requiring its own universalization, formally preclude it. Notwithstanding the fact that it claims monopolistic authority over ritual propriety, it does not wish to see itself emulated. It has little wish for the sincerest form of flattery, imitation, though it does provoke it.

Elsewhere, as in Islam, the clerisy from time to time takes its own missionary duties, to be practised among the habitually relapsing

weaker brethren within the faith, with becoming seriousness. There is here no rule enjoining that some must pray, some fight, and some work, and that these estates should not presume to meddle with each other's realm. As far as the actual prescriptions of the faith go, everyone is allowed to do all three of these things, if his aptitudes and energy allow. (This latent egalitarianism is very important for the successful adaptation of Islam to the modern world.) Thus there is no formal or theological obstacle to a clerical missionary cultural policy a *outrance*. In practice there is still a problem: if everyone really systematically indulged in legal-theological studies, who would look after the sheep, goats and camels? In certain parts of the Sahara there are entire tribes designated, by inter-tribal compact, as People of the Book. In practice, however, this only means that religious personnel are habitually drawn from among their number. It does not mean that all of them actually become religious specialists. Most of them continue to work and fight. The only communities in which a really very significant proportion of adult males indulged in the study of the Law were some Jewish ones in Eastern Europe. But that was a special and extreme case, and in any case these communities were themselves sub-communities in a wider and more complex society.

So for very deep, powerful and insuperable reasons, clerisies in agro-literate societies cannot properly dominate and absorb the entire society. Sometimes their own rules prohibit it, and sometimes external obstacles make it impossible; but the latter would in any case constitute a sufficient and effective impediment, even if the rules were always favourable to this aspiration.

In the agrarian order, to try to impose on all levels of society a universalized clerisy and a homogenized culture with centrally imposed norms, forced by writing, would be an idle dream. Even if such a programme is contained in some theological doctrines, it cannot be, and is not, implemented. It simply cannot be done. The resources are lacking.

But what happens if the clerisy one day is universalized, becomes co-extensive with the entire society, not by its own efforts, not by some heroic or miraculous internal Jihad, but by a much more effective, deeply-rooted social force, by a total transformation of the whole nature of the division of labour and of productive and cognitive processes? The answer to this question, and the specification of the nature of that transformation, will turn out to be crucial for the understanding of nationalism.

Note also that in the agrarian order only some elite strata in some societies were systematically gelded, by one or another of the specific techniques described above. Even when it is done, it is difficult, as Plato foresaw, to enforce the gelding indefinitely. The guardians, be they Mamluks or Janissaries, bureaucrats or prebend-holders, become corrupted, acquire interests and links and continuity, or are seduced by the pursuit of honour and wealth and the lure of self-perpetuation. Agrarian man seems to be made of a corruptible metal.

His successor, industrial man, seems to be made of purer, though not totally pure, metal. What happens when a social order is accidentally brought about in which the clerisy does become, at long last, universal, when literacy is not a specialism but a pre-condition of all other specialisms, and when virtually all occupations cease to be hereditary? What happens when gelding at the same time also becomes near-universal and very effective, when every man Jack amongst us is a Mamluk *de Robe*, putting the obligations to his calling above the claims of kinship? In an age of universalized clerisy and Mamluk-dom, the relationship of culture and polity changes radically. A high culture pervades the whole of society, defines it, and needs to be sustained by the polity. That is the secret of nationalism.

## 3

## Industrial Society

The origins of industrial society continue to be an object of scholarly dispute. It seems to me very probable that this will continue to be so for ever. An enormously complex transformation occurred in a very large, diversified and intricate society, and the event was unique: no imitative industrialization can be treated as an event of the same kind as the original industrialization, simply in virtue of the fact that all the others were indeed imitative, were performed in the light of the now established knowledge that the thing could be done, and had certain blatant and conspicuous advantages (though the emulated ideal was, of course, interpreted in all kinds of quite diverse ways). So we can never repeat the original event, which was perpetrated by men who knew not what they did, an unawareness which was of the very essence of the event. We cannot do it, for quite a number of cogent reasons: the sheer fact of repetition makes it different from the original occasion; we cannot in any case reproduce all the circumstances of early modern Western Europe; and experiments on such a scale, for the sake of establishing a theoretical point, are morally hardly conceivable. In any case, to sort out the causal threads of so complex a process, we should need not one, but very many re-runs, and these will never be available to us.

But while we cannot really establish the aetiology of industrialism, we can hope to make some progress in putting forward models of the generic working of industrial society. In fact, the real merit and importance of Max Weber's celebrated essay (The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism) seems to me to lie far less in his fascinating but speculative and inconclusive hypothesis about the genesis of the capitalist spirit, than in his reflections about what constitute the general distinguishing features of the new social order. In fact, although the (entirely salutary) shift of concern from the origins of capitalism to that of the origins of industrialism only occurred after Weber, and as a consequence of the emergence of non-capitalist industrial societies, nevertheless this reformulation of the crucial