a social theory of the nation state

the political forms of modernity beyond methodological nationalism

Daniel Chernilo

Critical Realism: Interventions

A Social Theory of the Nation-State

A Social Theory of the Nation-State: the political forms of modernity beyond methodological nationalism construes a novel and original social theory of the nation-state. It rejects nationalistic ways of thinking that take the nation-state for granted as much as globalist orthodoxy that speaks of its current and definitive decline.

Its main aim is therefore to provide a renovated account of the nation-state's historical development and recent global challenges via an analysis of the writings of key social theorists. This reconstruction of the history of the nation-state is divided into three periods:

- classical (K. Marx, M. Weber, E. Durkheim)
- modernist (T. Parsons, R. Aron, R. Bendix, B. Moore)
- contemporary (M. Mann, E. Hobsbawm, U. Beck, M. Castells, N. Luhmann, J. Habermas)

For each phase, it introduces social theory's key views about the nation-state, its past, present and future. In so doing this book rejects methodological nationalism, the claim that the nation-state is the necessary representation of the modern society, because it misrepresents the nation-state's own problematic trajectory in modernity. And methodological nationalism is also rejected because it is unable to capture the richness of social theory's intellectual canon. Instead, via a strong conception of society and a subtler notion of the nation-state, *A Social Theory of the Nation-State* tries to account for the 'opacity of the nation-state in modernity'.

Daniel Chernilo is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University Alberto Hurtado in Chile and a Fellow of the Centre for Social Theory at the University of Warwick in England.

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This book is dedicated to Paula

Contents

Acknowledgements

The nation-state has a difficult relationship with time, space and culture, and the trajectory of this book on a social theory of the nation-state has come to resemble these vexed connections. In relation to time, this work has been in the making for more than six years now. It has gone through several stages, taken different formats and served more than one purpose over time. With regard to space, it has been equally written in Chile and in the United Kingdom, as I have inhabited both countries in reality as much as in imagination whilst writing it. Finally, this author's first book was written in a language that is not his mother tongue and I can only wonder how different the process of writing it – and its actual result – might otherwise have been. In a way, all these complications seem to have come together in this book's substantive thesis: there is something deeply wrong and artificial in methodological nationalism – in the idea that the nation-state is the natural or necessary container of modern social life. Rather, I have reached the conclusion that the nation-state can be conceptualised only if we are willing to acknowledge the opacity of its position in modernity.

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Daniel Chernilo (2006) 'Social theory's methodological nationalism: myth and reality', *European Journal of Social Theory* 9(1): 5–22.

Daniel Chernilo (2007) 'A quest for universalism: re-assessing the nature of classical social theory's cosmopolitanism', *European Journal of Social Theory* 10(1): 17–35.

Daniel Chernilo and Robert Fine (2003) 'Classes and nations in recent historical sociology', in Gerard Delanty and Egin Isin (eds) *Handbook of Historical Sociology*, London: Sage, 235–49.

Daniel Chernilo and Robert Fine (2004) 'Between past and future: the equivocations of the new cosmopolitanism', *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society* 31: 25–44.

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Introduction

The opacity of the nation-state's position in modernity

The study of the history, main features and normative legacy of the nation-state has proved complicated for the social sciences at large. During the past two centuries, the nation-state has been deified and demonised in equal measure; been declared born and dead many times; been regarded as a modern as well as primordial form of social and political community; been conceived of as both a rational structure and an imagined/imaginary community; created as much welfare as misery; been equally a source for political democracy, cosmopolitanism and ethnic cleansing; co-existed with empires, colonies, blocs, protectorates, city-states and other forms of socio-political organisation; gone through experiences of unification, totalitarian terror, occupation, division, and then re-unification; and been legitimised around ethnic/racial, republican, monarchic, liberal, democratic, federal and even class principles. Yet, despite – or more possibly owing to – all this variation, the nation-state succeeded, to an important extent at least, in presenting itself as a solid, stable and ultimately the necessary form of social and political organisation in modernity. Again in this case, the sources of its alleged solidity have proved difficult to identify: increase in the state's control over its population through nationalisation policies such as literacy campaigns, schooling, taxation and military recruitment; the use and abuse of sentiments of belonging to emphasise cultural and/or ethnic differences; the rise of a system of nation-states composed of a growing number of at least formally equal sovereign members; the development of a capitalist class structure at the national level and the expansion of capitalism at the global level; the universalistic appeal of popular sovereignty and democracy. In modernity, arguably, only the nation-state has had such troubled history, been conceptually so obscure and left such an ambivalent normative legacy. The nation-state is, arguably, one of modernity's most vexing themes.

On the face of these apparent obscurities, then, it is puzzling how over the last three decades, and increasingly so in recent years, it has been argued that social theory emphasises everything that is opposite to these complications and uncertainties. This argument, which has become known as *methodological nationalism*, can be simply defined as the all-pervasive equation between the idea of society and the formation of the nation-state in modernity. The wide acceptance

of this claim seems to be founded on two grounds. Historically, because the nation-state itself would have become the natural and necessary form of society in modernity and, conceptually, because social theory would have used national categories to shape its most abstract conception of society. The nation-state becomes in this way the key factor in explaining modernity's emergence and key features, the driving force behind the development of social theory and indeed the organising principle around which the whole project of modernity coheres. My starting point in this book is that methodological nationalism must be rejected because *it is unable to grasp the opacity of the nation-state in modernity* and also because it *disregards what the canon of social theory can effectively enlighten about the nation-state*.

In contradistinction to methodological nationalism, then, I suggest that an explanation of social theory's difficulties in understanding the nation-state is to be found within the nation-state's own elusive history, main features and ambiguous normative legacy. Social theory has not portrayed the nation-state as the necessary *locus* of modernity but rather has struggled throughout with trying to grasp its complicated position and legacy. My expectation is that, if we thoroughly revise the thesis of social theory's immanent methodological nationalism, we may be able to renovate our substantive conceptualisation of the nation-state as well. Against the most widely accepted proposition in contemporary debates, namely, that the history of social theory mirrors the history of the nation-state in modernity so that no move beyond methodological nationalism can be attempted from within social theory itself, I shall try to demonstrate that social theory has considered the problems, confronted the uncertainties and battled – with differentiated degrees of success – to solve the ambiguities that were introduced in the opening paragraph. The move beyond methodological nationalism being attempted here tries to use social theory's claim to universalism to unravel the actual opacity of the position of the nation-state in modernity.

Aims and structure of the book

The main aim of this book is then to *construe a social theory of the nation-state that helps us understand the actual opacity of its position in modernity*. Its subsidiary, more critical, aim is to *refute the thesis of social theory's immanent methodological nationalism*.

In terms of structure, Chapter 1 prepares the ground for the fulfilment of the critical aim I just introduced. It defines more precisely what methodological nationalism actually is, distinguishes between different versions of the argument of social theory's methodological nationalism, reviews the two waves around which the debate on methodological nationalism has taken place within social theory – during the 1970s and Ulrich Beck's recent critique – and eventually expands on the reasons why it must be rejected. After this critical review, Chapter 2 introduces the framework for the more positive side of my argument. It advances the thesis that social theory can only escape from methodological nationalism on the basis of its claim to universalism and attempts to do just that

by breaking apart the equation between the nation-state and society from either side in turn. On the one hand, from the historical end of the equation, social theory's claim to universalism points to the thesis that despite historical, cultural and geographical variation the nation-state needs to be understood as one single form of socio-political arrangement. This conceptualisation is what this book refers to as the *historical elusiveness*, *sociological equivocations*, and *normative ambiguity* that constitute the *opacity of the nation-state in modernity*. On the other, from the theoretical end of the equation, social theory's claim to universalism advances the proposition that, rather than the empirical definition of a nation-state, society has fulfilled the role of a regulative ideal. Throughout the history of social theory, society's most systematic role has had less to do with the definition of an empirical reference and more with an abstract conceptualisation of the nature of modern social life. The emphasis on social theory's claim to universalism upon which Chapter 2 is based implies taking seriously the challenge of finding the right balance between being sensitive to empirical differences, historical variations and normative disagreement without pre-deciding against the possibility of making claims with universalistic intent. It is a way of responding to post-modern relativism without having to fall back on any form of fundamentalism or unwarranted metaphysics.

Having clearly defined the object of critique and then set up the framework that may help us overcome methodological nationalism; this book is then divided into three chronological parts to construe a social theory of the nation-state in its *classical*, *modernist* and *contemporary* moments. Each of these three parts shall:

- reconstruct and assess what major social theorists have understood, at different times, as the main characteristics of the nation-state in modernity[1];
- establish the relationship between different conceptualisations of the nation-state and the underlying use of society as a regulative ideal, and
- demonstrate that social theory's claim to universalism can help us reflect upon the actual opacity of the nation-state in modernity.

The part on classical social theory goes back to the period of the formation of social theory, from the second half of the nineteenth century until the end of the First World War, and discusses how Karl Marx (Chapter 3), Max Weber (Chapter 4) and Emile Durkheim (Chapter 5) came to terms, respectively, with the historical elusiveness, sociological equivocations and normative ambiguity of the nation-state. I argue that, with their different approaches to the study of social life, they provide us with useful resources to understanding the formation and main characteristics of the nation-state precisely because, on the world scene, the modern nation-state was still in the making at the time. In their different ways, the three writers found it difficult to produce a clear *concept* of the nation-state and in that sense they anticipate some of the problems social theory has faced ever since. They are unlikely candidates for a methodologically nationalistic social theory, however, because the discipline they were founding was, at the very least, as concerned with the world arena as it was with the national one. Their

understanding of the nation-state needs to be seen in relation to alternative developments which all undermine a methodologically nationalistic conception of the nation-state such as the ideas of world revolution, empires and moral universalism. Despite all their difficulties, therefore, they did not seem to have equated the nation-state with society nor did they make their theories of modernity to rely on national categories. There is, I firmly believe, a strong claim to universalism underlying their social theory and this is the key legacy that makes their contribution to social theory classical in the sense that we can still refer and relate to it in a meaningful way (Chernilo 2007; Turner 2006).

The part on modernist social theory focuses on a body of knowledge that developed roughly during the second post-war period. This modernist social theory is especially relevant here as it coincides with the time in which the faith in the 'nation-state as society' was arguably at its peak. It is precisely during this period when the thesis of methodological nationalism became a standard view to reconstruct the history of social theory. In analysing some of Talcott Parsons' writings, I demonstrate that he did not regard the nation-state as the natural and necessary form of social and political organisation in modernity because the threat of totalitarianism was far too present for him to do so (Chapter 6). Parsons contrasted the 'liberal democratic nation-state' with totalitarian regimes and saw both as possible developments within the Western world. Also within this modernist period, Chapter 7 surveys some of the arguments in the historical sociology of the nation-state as represented in the works of Raymond Aron, Barrington Moore Jr and Reinhard Bendix. Here, the main argument will be the historicity of the nation-state in modernity; the fact that it has always coexisted with other equally modern forms of socio-political organisation. So, whereas for Aron the nation-state plays a crucial yet subordinated role in understanding modernity's current industrialist stage, for Moore modernity's long-term historical conceptualisation requires the wider framework provided by his three democratic, fascist and communist trajectories and for Bendix it relates with the transition from royal to popular forms of political authority. Methodological nationalism fails here because the nation-state just cannot be regarded as the necessary product of modernity.

The final part of this book commences with a recent body of writings which points towards the historical disjuncture between class, nation, state and society. Chapter 8 thus centres on key works by Michael Mann and Eric Hobsbawm to reflect upon the changing conceptions of the nation and the nation-state throughout modernity as well as upon the connection between class and nation in the rise of the modern nation-state. Chapter 9 discusses the rise of a new orthodoxy in the social theory of globalisation and argues that, despite their merits in other regards, Manuel Castells and other contemporary sociologists such as Martin Albrow, John Urry and Anthony Giddens convey a rather one-sided view of the major arguments of both classical and modernist social theory, and this has the consequence of misrepresenting the thesis of the epochal change we allegedly now experience. Finally, in Chapter 10, works by Niklas Luhmann and Jürgen Habermas will be reviewed. In relation to Luhmann I will discuss his abstract idea

of the world society which, rather than referring to the world as a single geographical unit, concentrates on society understood as an emergent horizon of possible communication. Habermas' theory of the nation-state, for its part, is framed in the context of his wider interest in the development of current cosmopolitan legal and political institutions. Towards the end, then, the expectation is that by having reconstructed a 'social theory of the nation-state' we are now able to better understand the actual opacity of the nation-state's position in modernity.

Part I

Understanding the nation-state

1 The critique of methodological nationalism

A debate in two waves

Methodological nationalism can be simply defined as the equation between the nation-state and society in social theory. Before trying to transcend it, however, we must establish the terms of the debate, differentiate some of its key versions and understand its implications as clearly as possibly. These tasks constitute the aim of this first chapter.

The nation-state's position in modernity has proved taxing for the social sciences in general and for social theory in particular. For instance, in his book *Cosmopolis. The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, philosopher and mathematician Stephen Toulmin (1990: 140) captured the opacity with which the nation-state has confounded intellectuals.

> Between 1650 and 1950 few political philosophers challenged this basic assumption, or questioned that 'nationhood' is the natural basis of State formation: their central question was, 'How do nation-states acquire and retain legitimacy, and by what means are they entitled to enforce the political obedience of their subjects?'. The prior question – 'To what extent does the nation-state have only limited value as the focus of political organization or social loyalty?' – remained unaddressed.

Indeed, Toulmin nicely disentangles the question of understanding the specific nature of modernity's novel socio-political arrangements – the issue of the nation-state's acquisition and maintenance of socio-political legitimacy – from the question of how and why the nation-state succeeded in being regarded as the only legitimate form of such modern socio-political arrangements. The merit of Toulmin's formulation, it seems to me, lies in the fact that he posits the question simultaneously at a historical and a logical level. In other words, the invitation is to reconsider the relationship between the set of *institutional practices* that have led to the creation and consolidation of the nation-state in modernity and the *intellectual outlook* with which scholars have tried to make sense of these practices. Furthermore, the time-frame within which Toulmin situates this enquiry is large enough to regard it as one of modernity's key questions: the position of the nation-state in modernity has remained as puzzling as consequential for intellectuals for more than three centuries.

Although the depth of Toulmin's question helps setting an ultimate horizon for this book, to address fully the field opened up by his remark is beyond my abilities and the scope of this project. I shall then narrow down the time-scale and the intellectual traditions to which attention will be devoted. In the first part of this chapter, I provide a clearer understanding of what methodological nationalism is and when the critique of methodological nationalism first emerged. In the second part, I move on and assess the most important version of the current critique of methodological nationalism, that of Ulrich Beck.

The critique of methodological nationalism in the 1970s

The equation between the historical formation of the *nation-state* – as modernity's key socio-political arrangement – and the idea of *society* – as one of social theory's key analytical tools – is a result of the first systematic reflections about the position of the nation-state that started to develop in the early 1970s. A central feature of what has been referred to as the 'second crisis of modernity' was precisely a more reflexive approach towards the relationships between society and the nation-state (Wagner 1994: 30–1). Indeed, a number of commentators started, at that time, to make this equation explicit and began to reflect upon its implications in previous social theory. For instance, in his volume devoted to the class structure of the advanced societies, Anthony Giddens mentioned the theoretical consequences underwriting the understanding of society as 'national societies'. He was not only concerned with the intellectual origins of the equation between the nation-state and society but also with its consequences for how empirical social analyses were being carried out; for instance, in the way in which the distinction between the internal and external field of national societies was being used in development policies. Giddens was mostly interested in comprehending how the question of society's modernisation was closely associated with the idea that national societies were autonomous units being ruled by their own internal dynamics. For our purposes here, the crux of Giddens' argument lies in the fact that he wanted to relate this understanding of national societies to a more sophisticated explanation of modernity's key structural tendencies. In other words, the problem for Giddens was less about what the nation-state actually is and more about how an inadequate definition of the nation-state leads to a deficient comprehension of modernity itself. Thus, towards the end of that book, Giddens (1973: 265) made the following critical claim:

> The primary unit of sociological analysis, the sociologist's 'society' – in relation to the industrialised world at least – has always been, and must continue to be, the administratively bounded nation-state. But 'society' in this sense, has *never* been the isolated, the 'internally developing' system which has normally been implied in social theory. One of the most important weaknesses of sociological conceptions of development, from Marx onwards, has been the persistent tendency to think of development as the 'unfolding' of endogenous influences with a given society (or, more often, a 'type' of society). 'External'

> factors are treated as an 'environment' to which the society has to 'adapt' and therefore merely conditional in the progression of social change [. . .] In fact, any adequate understanding of the development of the advanced societies presupposes the recognition that factors making for 'endogenous' evolution always combine with influences from 'the outside' in determining the transformations to which a society is subject.

An increasingly explicit reflection upon the multiple consequences of the equation between society and the nation-state was then taking place. To the best of my knowledge, the coinage of the term 'methodological nationalism' belongs to Portuguese sociologist Herminio Martins who, towards the end of an interesting piece devoted to reassessing the position of time in contemporary sociological theory, used it to give the equation a succinct name. The actual selection of the concept 'methodological nationalism' seems to have followed the idea of methodological individualism, which was already common currency at the time.[2] If methodological individualism conceived of social facts as the aggregate result of individual actions, methodological nationalism was to conceive of international relations on the basis of individual national societies. In the same way as methodological individualism's explanation of social life regards individuals as monads, methodological nationalism's explanation of modernity's development comes out of the behaviour of national societies: both individuals and societies were autonomous and isolated units which recognised no external constraints to their own interest. Similar to Giddens' understanding of the problem, for Martins (1974: 276) this idea of individual national societies did not leave the questions of development and social change untouched.

> In the last three decades or so the principle of immanent change has largely coincided with a general presumption – supported by a great variety of scholars in the entire spectrum of sociological opinion – that the 'total' or 'inclusive society', in effect the nation-state, be deemed to be the standard, optimal or even maximal 'isolate' for sociological analysis [. . .] In general, macro-sociological work has largely submitted to national pre-definitions of social realities: a kind of *methodological nationalism* – which does not necessarily go together with political nationalism on the part of the researcher – imposes itself in practice with the national community as the terminal unit and boundary condition for the demarcation of problems and phenomena for social science (my emphasis).

In his discussion of Martins' definition of methodological nationalism, British sociologist and historian Anthony D. Smith, who later became a leading scholar in the field of nationalism studies, took Martins' definition of methodological nationalism and gave it a slightly different, more empirical, orientation. In the context of his analysis of state-sponsored nationalism throughout the world in the twentieth century, Smith emphasises the importance of nationalism as both a cognitive and psychological outlook. Nationalism becomes for him the key force

behind social change in modernity. When this nationalistic perspective becomes inseparable from state power and its ability to steer social life, as he claims it is increasingly the case during the second part of the past century, a wholly new political actor is ready to make its presence felt: the nation-state. The unification of nation and state changes not only the face of modernity but also that of the disciplines devoted to the study of modern social life. This 'principle of "methodological nationalism" operates at every level in the sociology, politics, economics and history of mankind in the modern era', hence

> The study of 'society' today is, almost without question, equated with the analysis of nation-states [...] There are very good reasons for proceeding this way, but the theoretical underpinning derives much of its force from acceptance of nationalist conceptions, and goes a long way to reinforce those conceptions. In this way, the world nation-state system has become an enduring and stable component of our whole cognitive outlook, quite apart from the psychological satisfactions it confers.
>
> (Smith 1979: 191)

Let me now try to draw some consequences from these standpoints. All three arguments endorse the view that sociology's central concept, society, has to an important extent been equated with the nation-state in recent social scientific works – and increasingly also in people's heads.[3] They similarly agree on the fact that this equation between society and the nation-state takes an endogenous or internalist explanation of social change for granted and that a thorough revision of this self-contained image of society was urgently needed. Interestingly, they also seem to concur on the idea that, as long as the internalist focus was discarded, there was no intrinsic problem in equating the nation-state with society: the historical record seemed to support the idea that the nation-state could become or was actually becoming the normal representation of society in modernity. Society and the nation-state have tended to fuse in modernity – at least in the developed world. The quarrel was then not so much against the equation itself but much more definitively on its internalist presuppositions and implications.[4] Each of the three authors is, however, concerned with one particular aspect of the discussion that has since proved crucial. Each writer advances a particular aspect of the argument of methodological nationalism and a distinction between its different versions may help us further clarify what methodological nationalism is, to what extent it has effectively permeated into social theory's theoretical frameworks and how can we start overcoming it.

Martins' argument, first, concentrated on the results that methodological nationalism brings for social theory's concepts and theorems. His claim is posed in relation to logical presuppositions and conceptual definitions; the rise of methodological nationalism was for him the result of a thirty-year long process based upon a number of assumptions which cohered around a self-sufficient image of society. As long as social theory presupposed that social change was internally driven it would always conceive of its object of study as self-contained;

the link between society and the nation-state being made on the basis of the national structure of sociological categories. Martins was duly concerned with the negative impact that this wide-ranging but unquestioned equation between the nation-state and society has had in all the social sciences. As the argument works specifically at the level of the *conceptual development* of social theory, I shall call his position the *logical* version of the argument of methodological nationalism. I do not share, however, Martins' assessment that social theory is intrinsically contaminated with methodological nationalism. In fact, I believe that social theory actually provides us with the tools to transcend it. But it is only fair to acknowledge the key contribution he made not only by coining the term methodological nationalism but more substantively by pointing out that the problem was as real as it was urgent. Martins somehow opened up the debate on the broader conceptual implications it bears for social theory.

Smith, for his part, was not primarily concerned with disciplinary traditions or canons. Rather, he concentrated on why the nation-state could reinforce this image of solidity and self-sufficiency and also on how an international system of nation-states strengthened the relevance of the nation-state at all levels: social, intellectual and political. Smith claims that there is a somewhat natural psychological satisfaction of state bureaucrats and state intellectuals from small countries in seeing their flags alongside those of bigger, 'historical', more powerful nation-states. He understands the rise of methodological nationalism as a socio-psychological consequence of the importance of state nationalism during the twentieth century. He tries to understand how a certain number of historical trends have led to the expansion of a nationalistic worldview for politicians, intellectuals and the wider population alike. In his view, then, methodological nationalism results from the evolution of the nation-state over the recent past and, because of that, I would like to call it the *historical* version of the argument of methodological nationalism.[5] Indeed, this epochal diagnostic looks now increasingly obsolete because whilst in the late 1970s it could still have made sense to conceive of a world of nation-states we are no longer in a situation to take such a laidback position (see next section and Chapters 9 and 10).

Finally, Giddens made a somewhat less clear but equally important point. He emphasised that the way in which the nation-state is being defined and conceptualised – namely, as an isolated and internally developing unit – bears substantive consequences on how modernity itself is theorised. He is duly worried that a methodologically nationalistic theorisation of the nation-state may lead or has already led to a methodologically nationalistic definition of modernity. In other words, the way in which a nation-state is theorised crucially determines the way in which modernity itself is conceptualised. In a way, Giddens is making a stronger point as he combines logical and historical arguments.[6] His claim is that if and when a theoretically deficient conceptualisation of society is matched with a historically deficient recognition of the nation-state's key features, we end up with a deeply problematic image of modernity's development and main features. This is therefore the third and *substantive* version of argument of methodological nationalism.

It is worth keeping in mind the fact that this first wave of debates about methodological nationalism conveyed a certain critique of well-established trends and practices in the social theory and social sciences of that time. These writers' problem was with the internalist focus that characterised methodological nationalism because it diminished these disciplines' intellectual possibilities of understanding social change. To have discovered the difficulties underlying methodological nationalism and to have opened a discussion about them were seen as crucial critical insights into the strengthening and further development of the social sciences. These authors addressed methodological nationalism critically so that it could be challenged and did not continue to exercise its unnoticed influence upon social theory. In so doing, moreover, they did not seem to have reified the development of social theory. On the contrary, they understood methodological nationalism as a result of a certain set of intellectual and institutional practices that needed to be criticised and overcome. And of course, when these views on methodological nationalism first arose in the 1970s, the historical argument of the nation-state as a political project seemed much less contentious than the logical argument – the internalist emphasis of the equation between society and the nation-state. For us now, however, it is apparent that the historical argument is at least as problematic and consequential as the logical one.

All three versions of methodological nationalism come in this way together to obstruct our comprehension of the history, main features and legacy of the nation-state in modernity. Martins conveyed his logical case as a factual result of his analysis of the recent trends in sociological theory; Smith's argument was based on his empirical observations of the ways in which social scientists have behaved in their concrete, state-based, practices over most part of the twentieth century and Giddens was concerned with the extent to which the conceptualisation of the nation-state left its mark on the understanding of modernity more broadly. A first corollary of this discussion is then that none of these authors argued that social theory was intrinsically unable to accomplish the task of conceptualising the nation-state. A second one would be that the change in historical circumstances we nowadays face makes the whole argument of methodological nationalism all the more untenable: the nation-state cannot be regarded as though the final representation or most desirable form of modern socio-political life. Let us then review how these challenges have been taken up in the more recent literature on the subject.

The second critique of methodological nationalism at the turn of the century

The reconstruction of the current wave of criticisms of methodological nationalism can concentrate on the work of Ulrich Beck.[7] He has brought methodological nationalism back into current debates and references to the subject are becoming more prominent in his recent publications (Beck 2002b, 2003, 2004). His main argument is that the current change in historical circumstances challenges social theory to its core because it would be precisely the nationally bounded structure

of social theory that allegedly incapacitates it to make sense of a world that is no longer organised around the nation-state. Beck is no doubt right in rejecting methodological nationalism but I would hold that as he fails to differentiate between its different versions his critique of methodological nationalism suffers from a certain lack of precision, an oversimplification of normative concerns and a weakened historical representation of the past *vis-à-vis* a cult of the new for its own sake.

Beck's phenomenological starting point is surely interesting: people begin to experience rapid social transformations at everyday level and it is this perception of an *epochal change* that puts heavy demands on the social sciences. In novel 'world risk society':

> Social science must be re-established as a transnational science of the reality of de-nationalization, transnationalization and 're-ethnification' in a global age – and this on the levels of concepts, theories and methodologies as well as organizationally. This entails that the fundamental concepts of 'modern society' must be re-examined. *Household, family, class, social inequality, democracy, power, state, commerce, public, community, justice, law, history, politics* must be released from the fetters of methodological nationalism and must be reconceptualised and empirically established within the framework of a cosmopolitan social and political science.
>
> (Beck 2002b: 53–4)

The diagnostic is that methodological nationalism is prevalent throughout the social sciences but it is more acute in sociology because ' "modern" sociology is defined in its typical textbooks as the "modern" science of "modern" society. This both conceals and helps to gain acceptance for a classificatory schema that we might call the *container theory of society*' (Beck 2000a: 23). The conclusion is that the concept of society can no longer convey a strong theoretical meaning. He argues that 'society' became indistinguishable from the conditions which allegedly characterised the nation-state throughout modernity so the weaker the nation-state the more unnecessary a concept of society. The thesis is that social theory's research agenda and conceptual tools must change so that they can match the ways in which the social world itself is being transformed. Social theory would be at a definitive crossroad: if it fails to change, change will simply make it redundant.

> *Methodological nationalism* takes the following ideal premises for granted: it equates societies with nation-state societies, and sees states and their governments as the cornerstones of a social sciences analysis. It assumes that humanity is naturally divided into a limited number of nations, which on the inside, organize themselves as nation-states and, on the outside, set boundaries to distinguish themselves from other nation-states. It goes even further: this outer delimitation, as well as the competition between nation-states, represents the most fundamental category of political organization [...] Indeed the

> social science stance is rooted in the concept of nation-state. It is a nation-state outlook on society and politics, law, justice and history, which governs the sociological imagination.
>
> (Beck 2002b: 51–2)

Even if Beck's definition of methodological nationalism to some extent rehearses the arguments deployed in the 1970s, he equally has in one key sense departed from those formulations. He abandons social theory's claim to universalism and, in so doing, naturalises an argument that started with a critical intention. As we just saw, the first wave of debate on methodological nationalism arose as a critical and self-reflective insight into the ways in which the nation-state was seen as though it was an autonomous and self-contained unit. Martins, Smith and Giddens expected to re-orient social theory's study of the nation-state from within the intellectual tradition of social theory – theirs was above all a self-critical effort. Against these first formulations, Beck's current critique of methodological nationalism increasingly refuses to establish its own position within the intellectual tradition of the social sciences. He not only severely curtails the reflexive impetus of the first critique of methodological nationalism but more importantly increasingly hypostatises the theory of reflexive modernisation for social theory as such. Indeed, the original project of a theory of reflexive modernisation was to be developed *within* the tradition of social theory. It included the rather grandiose aim of mapping out the new epoch but it expected to contribute to the remedy of some of the problems in previous research. Via the thesis of social theory's immanent methodological nationalism, however, Beck's argument has now changed. Instead of a research agenda that put itself to work to renovate social theory's claim to universalism, what we now have is an allegedly autonomous research programme that tends to bully previous social sciences and declares them obsolete. He places the question equally at the level of epochal diagnosis – the current radicalisation of the experience of modernity – and of theory building – we must simply abandon social theory because it can no longer help in understanding the present and shape the future. On both grounds social theory would be on the verge of becoming the 'antiquary's shop specializing in industrial society' (Beck 1997: 18) as it now focuses mainly on 'zombie categories' (Beck 2002b: 53). In his own formulation:

> The association between sociology and nation-state was so extensive that the image of 'modern', organized individual societies – which became definitive with the national model of political organization – itself became an absolutely necessary concept in and through the founding work of classical social scientists. Beyond all their differences, such theorists as Émile Durkheim, Max Weber and even Karl Marx shared a territorial definition of modern society, and thus a model of society centred on the national-state, which has today been shaken by globality and globalization.
>
> (Beck 2000a: 24)

Therefore, the replacement of methodological nationalism is to be found in a new 'methodological cosmopolitanism'; that is, a theoretical approach that is able to

tackle 'what had previously been *analytically* excluded as a sort of silent cartel of divided fundamental convictions' (Beck 2002b: 52). In fact, throughout the last decade or so, Beck has proposed a number of conceptual pairs which, although do not exactly fit with one another, all point in the same direction. His theoretical reasoning operates through dichotomies so that he contrasts simple *versus* reflexive modernisation; linear knowledge *versus* side effects (Beck 1997); nation-state society *versus* world risk society (Beck 1998); simple globalisation *versus* reflexive cosmopolitanism (Beck 2000a); work society *versus* political society (Beck 2000b); the first age of modernity *versus* the second age of modernity (Beck 2000c); national state *versus* cosmopolitan state (Beck 2002a). In my view, the key problem this poses is that in all cases, the second term stands in opposition and comes to replace the first analytically as well as historically. The crucial paradigmatic shift from methodological nationalism to methodological cosmopolitanism is not only the latest of these dichotomies but it comes to crown Beck's long-lasting attempt at setting up a new agenda for the social sciences (Beck 2004; Beck and Sznaider 2006).

Yet, we can clearly question the advantages of opposing methodological cosmopolitanism to methodological nationalism. One may ask whether, or at the very least to what extent, a methodologically nationalistic social science was able to provide an accurate account of the nation-state even during the first age of modernity. If we argue, as I do in this book, that this is not the case it is then difficult to accept that a methodologically cosmopolitan social science can now succeed in doing so for the second age of modernity. Instead of trying to gain reflexivity and complexity in the analysis by distinguishing modes or versions of social theory's methodological nationalism – and thus saving what can be saved and disregarding what cannot be – Beck throws everything into an undifferentiated whole: social theory's worthless methodological nationalism versus brand-new-world-risk-society methodological cosmopolitanism.

This line of reasoning underwrites the whole debate on methodological nationalism in Beck's work. Indeed, there have also been instances in which not only the nation-state but *imperialism* – for the period of classical social theory (Connell 1997) – *totalitarianism* – for the period of modernist social theory (Bauman 1991) – and *globalisation* or *cosmopolitanism* – for current social theory (Albrow 1996, and Beck himself) – have all been taken as the representation of modernity's true project. Interestingly, in all these cases the argument is that social theory has immanent and necessary connections with these alternative forms of modern socio-political arrangements. The most striking consequence of this is that instead of social theory's immanent methodological nationalism, we would now equally have *methodological imperialism*, *methodological totalitarianism* and indeed *methodological cosmopolitanism*! The central problem for all those who see things this way is that they are trapped in the type of mythical portrayals that modern forms of social and political organisation constantly create (Cassirer 1955; Chernilo 2006b). A central feature of all these '-isms' is that a one-sided account is taken as the whole – or at least the core – of the story (Fine 2003). In fact, we could even put any of these forms of methodological '-isms' to compete against any of the others so that we may end up with opposite accounts of the

relationship between social theory and modernity in each one of them: 'Modernity is the West's thrust for colonisation', 'modernity is the holocaust', 'modernity is the nation-state', 'modernity is globalisation'. Despite substantive differences, we find in all these positions the thesis that social theory has a built-in tendency towards *conceptual fetishism*.[8] The nation-state is a fetish when its history and main features are made to coincide with the history and main features of modernity itself; when it is reduced to the self-sufficient, solid and well-integrated representation of the modern society – when it is thought of as *the natural and necessary organising principle of modernity*. The question for us is precisely to assess the extent to which the different versions of methodological nationalism require and reinforce one another and whether social theory's claim to universalism may provide us with the tools to effectively disentangle them and avoid any of these kinds of fetishism (see Chapter 2).

At the core of Beck's critique is a rather mythical view of the nation-state as a harmonious socio-political form: 'internal homogeneity is essentially a creation of state control. All kinds of social practices – production, culture, language, labour market, capital, education – are stamped and standardized, defined and rationalized, by the national state, but at least are labelled as national economy, national language, literature public life, history, and so on' (Beck 2000a: 23). On the one hand, the argument is that 'the critique of methodological nationalism should not be mistaken for the thesis of the end of the nation-state.' And yet, on the other, Beck (2002b: 51–2) claims that

> National organization as a structuring principle of societal and political action can no longer serve as a premise for the social science observer perspective. In this sense, social science can only react to the challenge of globalization adequately if it manages to overcome methodological nationalism, and if it manages to raise empirically and theoretically fundamental questions within specialized fields of research and thus elaborate the foundations of a cosmopolitan social and political science.[9]

This image of the nation-state is, at best, only partly true. The nation-state has equally been theorised as a conflictive and unstable form of socio-political organisation and if we can now see it otherwise it is because of *our own* circumstances. The arguments on the current dissolution of the nation-state are backed up by exaggerating the alleged solidity of its recent past so that we end up with the worst of both worlds: the more solid the image of the past of the nation-state the more spectacular its path towards extinction. Beck's critique of methodological nationalism has misrepresented the opacity of the nation-state and cannot grasp, for instance, what Margaret Archer (2005) has nicely captured as the 'hard won' but 'cosy' features of the nation-state's post-war internal settlements. And he equally misses the fact that nations arose, symbolically as well as materially, conjoined with classes (Fine and Chernilo 2003 and Chapter 8). Beck ends up equating all previous social theory with methodological nationalism and thus has no option but to *understand the nation-state itself from a methodologically nationalistic standpoint*.

The importance of Ulrich Beck's work in establishing the key problems methodological nationalism poses to contemporary social theory cannot be undervalued. His work leaves no doubt that we urgently require a decisive move beyond methodological nationalism. Thirty years after the first emergence of the discussion, Beck's critique is crucial in giving due prominence to the debate but rather unsuccessful in its results. The search for a remedy against methodological nationalism is no doubt at the core of Beck's project but question marks have been raised over the extent to which he succeeds in doing so. In spite of Beck's best intentions, his critique of methodological nationalism requires a methodologically nationalistic conceptualisation of the nation-state. The confusion about the historical development and major characteristics of the nation-state is matched, I believe, with a misrepresentation of the canon of social theory. He rejects methodological nationalism because the nation-state is no longer the organising principle of modernity but, in so doing, he does not question the extent to which the nation-state was ever so. In naturalising the idea of methodological nationalism, Beck is missing, but is in need of, a social theory of the nation-state beyond methodological nationalism. Despite all other merits, his contribution to the debate of transcending methodological nationalism in the social sciences has – unintentionally, I believe – weakened our understanding of the position and main features of the nation-state in modernity. In the 1970s, the different critiques of methodological nationalism were conceived of as a reconstruction of social theory from within itself, and certainly they were not an invitation to getting rid of universalistic categories such as society. Beck's solutions to the problems raised by methodological nationalism did not deliver the answers we require. We are in need of a stronger antidote against *any form* of methodological nationalism and this, I believe, can be best provided if we go back and try to recuperate social theory's claim to universalism.

Conclusion

Methodological nationalism needs to be rejected and transcended; such an aim is no doubt the purpose of all of us who contribute to this debate. The equation between the nation-state and society not only distorts social theory's legacy but also prevents us from capturing the opacity of the nation-state in modernity. Methodological nationalism creates a situation in which, rather inadvertently, we end up *obviating* the difficulties of the nation-state's historical record, *reifying* social theory's conceptual tools and *simplifying* all underlying normative concerns so that the nation-state becomes, in turn, historically necessary, sociologically solid and normatively grounded. The nation-state is thus seen as the natural and necessary organising principle of modernity.

Despite their merits, none of the accounts discussed in this chapter has been able to put us in the right direction. Both in the 1970s and at the turn of the century, the attempted moves away from methodological nationalism have failed to lead us beyond it as neither their assessment of the history, main features and normative legacy of the nation-state, nor their understanding of social theory, allows

them to reach the solutions we are looking for. The move beyond methodological nationalism being attempted in this book tries to demonstrate that social theory has not portrayed the nation-state as the necessary final stage of modernity but rather has struggled throughout with trying to grasp its problematic position in modernity. I shall try to show that the analytical problems to be found within social theory's conceptualisation of the nation-state can be used to our advantage so that they help us reflect upon the actual opacity of the nation-state in modernity. The challenge for us is how to theorise the nation-state without permanently falling back into methodological nationalism. With the help of social theory's claim to universalism, I believe, we can start unfolding the *historical elusiveness*, *sociological equivocations* and *normative ambiguity* that constitute the opacity of the nation-state in modernity. And we also need to come to terms with social theory's conceptual tools that have a universalistic thrust such as the idea of society. The next chapter is precisely devoted to the fulfilment of these tasks.

2 A claim to universalism

Breaking the equation between the nation-state and society apart

Before we can start the actual reconstruction of a social theory of the nation-state, we must still bring in the positive arguments upon which this book's approach is built. As Chapter 1 expanded on the problems and shortcomings to be found in previous critiques of methodological nationalism, it is now time to introduce social theory's claim to universalism as the path that I think will lead us to a renovated understanding of the position of the nation-state in modernity – and hopefully as well beyond methodological nationalism. The structure of this chapter follows the simplest definition of methodological nationalism as the equation between the nation-state and society in modernity and here I shall try to break the equation apart by looking at it from each of its ends in turn. The first section of the chapter introduces the key propositions for a novel understanding of the opacity of the nation-state in modernity. If methodological nationalism conceives of the nation-state as natural and necessary I will advance the thesis that a renovated social theory of the nation-state conceptualises it as *historically elusive*, *sociologically equivocal* and *normatively ambiguous*. If this is the case, the equation between the nation-state and society no longer holds from its historical end. The second section deals with the equation between the nation-state and society from its conceptual end. The type of social theory of the nation-state in which this book is interested requires also that we make explicit the role played by the idea of society within social theory's conceptual frameworks. I would thus like to introduce the argument of society's role as a regulative ideal in a systematic fashion. This most theoretically consistent use of society has less to do with the definition of an empirical reference and more with conceptualising the ultimate nature of modern social relations.

Let me clarify a bit further this idea of social theory's claim to universalism. Under current post-metaphysical conditions all reflections about what constitute the essence of humanity's fundamental unity are bound, eventually, to be disappointed and proved wrong. No one can of course expect to hold a Rosetta stone with which to unlock universalism's eternal secrets. And this is precisely why I am referring here to a certain *claim to* universalism. This is an ultimate but unachievable goal, a standard to strive for even though it is known in advance that it cannot really be accomplished. As a claim, it represents the best of social theory as an intellectual tradition because it has consistently pushed it towards refining its concepts, methods and normative standpoints so that to make room for different historical contexts, cultural traditions and moral standpoints. If essentialised and

turned into a dogmatic principle, however, it becomes the perfect fortress for intellectual laziness and normative fundamentalism. So, even if all references to universalism have to face the problem that universalism is a generalisation of someone's particular, because it is here treated as a regulative ideal, this claim to universalism remains willing to be proved wrong and is open to criticisms and revisions.

I hold that social theory's most long-lasting commitment is towards an understanding of modernity from a universalistic point of view. This finds expression, for instance, in the *normative* idea of a single modern society that encompasses the whole of humanity; in the *conceptual* definition of what is the social element in modern social relations and in the *methodological* justification of empirical knowledge that expects to be valid in different cultural contexts and historical epochs. Surely, at times this claim has been betrayed, its application has been rather problematical and indeed it has not always lived up to expectations. The point I am making here, however, is that, as *an intellectual tradition*, the permanent attempt at understanding modernity from a universalistic point of view is what makes social theory worth studying (Chernilo 2007). This book chose the formulation of a social theory of *the* nation-state, in the singular, and attempted a strong defence of society, precisely to locate itself within this intellectual tradition. In the context of a move beyond the nationalist *Weltanschauung* which characterises all critiques of methodological nationalism, the historical argument on the opacity of the nation-state and the theoretical argument on society's regulative role equally belong to the claim to universalism that I believe is at the centre of the best canon of social theory.

Understanding the nation-state beyond methodological nationalism

A social theory of the nation-state beyond methodological nationalism must be able to account for what I would like to call the *opacity* of the nation-state in modernity: its *historical elusiveness*, *sociological equivocations* and *normative ambiguity*.[10] These three themes emerge from the individual chapters' substantive theses and here I would simply like to point them out in broad terms.

Historically, the question of a concise periodisation of the development of the nation-state in modernity has remained troublesome for the social sciences in general and social theory in particular: the 'rise and fall' of the nation-state has thus been declared many times. Indeed, it can be argued that because social theory's concepts are crucially shaped in the thesis of a radical epochal change (Habermas 1969), this has meant a certain 'fallacy of presentism' in which the *current* historical transition becomes, almost automatically, the ultimate standard upon which everything must be reassessed and eventually started anew (Webster 2002). Rather than methodological nationalism, it seems to me that the canon of social theory reveals a certain *elusiveness* of the nation-state in modernity when it comes to breaking its history into neatly divided periods. In this book, this argument on the historicity of the nation-state can be found in Marx's idea that the nation-state is a transitory political form in

capitalism and that, because 'all that is solid melts into air,' nation-states become 'antiquated before they can ossify' (Chapter 3). Similarly, there is the claim that the beginning of the Age of Imperialism may mark equally the beginning of the collapse of the modern nation-state system (Chapter 8). More recently, it has been suggested that the nation-state is collapsing yet again under the weight of multilayered globalisation processes (Chapter 9).

The antidote against methodological nationalism is here to show how social theory makes apparent the different forms the nation-state has adopted in modernity; we must be able to recognise the specificity of each of these forms in the context of the wider development of modernity. The historical record seems to lend support for the thesis that the meaning of what constitutes a nation-state has proved unstable (Cobban 1969). So, instead of discussing the historical formation of the nation-state in terms of beginnings and endings – between the disintegration of old communities and the rise of new societies (Fine and Chernilo 2004 and Chapter 9) – I propose to explore the relationships between the prevailing conceptualisation of the nation-state at particular moments in history so that we trace major shifts in the concept of the nation-state from its early enlightenment formulations, through experiences of imperialism, totalitarianism, welfare state, to its current post-national or cosmopolitan formulations. By acknowledging the existence of different forms of the nation-state that have prevailed at different times, I believe we already start disentangling the equation between the nation-state and society so that the former state stops being the natural and rational form of the latter. From a historical point of view, then, the nation-state has claimed to remain true to itself and yet it has also had to reinvent itself periodically.

Sociologically, there is permanently an important level of *equivocations* with regard to the nation-state's capacity to deal with its continual crises. The question of the nation-state's ability to sort out these crises creates, for those living traumatic events in the present, a level of anxiety that is usually lost when the crises are normalised as just another – more or less important – episode of the national history and the nation-state's solidity and stability becomes self-evident once again. Despite its crises, however, the nation-state has proved particularly successful in presenting its own strength and necessity as something as transparent as it is self-evident (Billig 1995). Social theory may help us transcend methodological nationalism at this sociological plane because it recognises the tension between solidity and instability in the nation-state's self-presentation. On the one hand, a constitutive part of the rhetoric of the nation-state is that of its strength and stability – its capacity to impose order and provide welfare. Yet, on the other hand, there are always doubts on the nation-state's capacity to sort out those current crises that threaten to divide the nation and weaken the state. These arguments about the sociological equivocations of the nation-state find expression in this book, for instance, when Weber argued that nations and states hardly ever coincide in historical reality (Chapter 4). Parsons, for his part, was anxious to find ways to toughen what he regarded as the fragility of nation-state's integrative capacities in the face of the totalitarian threat (Chapter 6). And historical sociologists have been pointing out to us that the nation-state developed as one possible trajectory

to modernity and that it coexists with alternative forms of modern socio-political arrangements (Chapter 7).

As an antidote against methodological nationalism at this sociological plane, social theory's reflections on the nation-state show it as a modern form of socio-political organisation but not as the necessary product of modernity. The nation-state is an unfinished project which paradoxically presents itself as an already established form of socio-political organisation. The question of why and how this strong image has become so prevalent seems to be related to the fact that the nation-state itself was able to find ways of being portrayed in this solid way.[11] The nation-state constantly faces its current crisis as the most urgent threat – almost a death-threat. However, these dramatic challenges are only experienced as such in the present and following generations do not necessarily remember them so dramatically. This is why the question is one of sociological equivocations: we neither surrender to the image of solidity, historical continuity and cultural homogeneity of the nation-state nor underestimate the strength and capacity with which the nation-state actually resolves its crises and re-creates itself.

Finally, from a *normative* point of view, I would hold that the *ambiguous* legacy of the nation-state in modernity results, to a great extent, from the *elusiveness* and *equivocations* I have just introduced: both the internal and external normative basis of the nation-state have proved changeable. Internally, it can be ethnic, political, cultural or religious, which in turn means that it has surely been democratic but it has equally been authoritarian and exclusionist (Wimmer 2002). Externally, also, the understanding of the connections between the nation-state, internationalism and cosmopolitanism remains largely an open question (Anderson 2002; Delanty 2006; Fine 2006a). In its democratic form, the nation-state can find its place in the world equally via asserting its self-determination as a foundational constitutive moment *and* on the basis of its belonging to a peaceful and even democratic community of republics. Interestingly, there seems to be some democratic core within any claim to national autonomy and self-determination whilst the nation-state's position within the wider world needs also to borrow at least some strength from the kind of moral universalism underwriting cosmopolitanism. The illusion of methodological nationalism is here that of a nation-state which successfully manages its own affairs internally whilst, at the same time, it unproblematically finds its place in a neatly-divided world composed only of formally equivalent nation-states. I will expand on these themes at different times in this book. Chapter 5, for instance, concentrates in the way in which Durkheim claimed that the nation-state could only legitimise itself if it was able to secure individual liberties, national welfare and peaceful international relations. The nation-state was, in his view, fully committed to upholding moral universalism within and beyond its frontiers. Similarly, Habermas' recent arguments with regard to the rise of a post-national constellation point in the direction of a further widening of the democratic foundation of national belonging towards a European and, eventually, a cosmopolitan global order (Chapter 10).

The remedy against methodological nationalism requires here of social theory's ability to face the different sources and planes at which the question of normative legitimacy may appear. Indeed, there is no clear-cut solution to the question of the justification of the nation-state's claim to shape and steer social life and at least

some of these normative ambiguities may have to do with the separation between the nation and the state. When the former is being concerned with the normative foundation of its democratic self-determination, the latter may be paying more attention to its right to defend its own borders at all costs. And conversely, whilst the nation may be more interested in pursuing exclusionary cultural policies to strengthen social solidarity, the state may see itself as the increasingly 'neutral' framework within which different ethnic or cultural groupings may be able to coexist peacefully. The opacity of the nation-state is expressed at this plane in the fact that what may be normatively sound for the nation may result rather inconvenient and problematic for the state – and vice versa. Nation and state are both in permanent need of legitimisation but there is neither automatism nor necessity in the way in which they will pursue normative legitimacy at critical crossroads.

These historical, sociological and normative dimensions constitute the substantive conceptualisation of the nation-state beyond methodological nationalism being put forward in this book. Rather than understanding the relationship between social theory and the nation-state as something fixed and ultimately reified, the move beyond methodological nationalism being attempted here centres on the way in which the opacity of the nation-state reflects, and is reflected upon, social theory's own complications when trying to grasp it. For now, these statements are insufficient to prove definitively the plausibility of this approach. But they at least express the general orientation behind this project and may also facilitate the comprehension of some of the arguments in individual chapters: Chapters 3, 8 and 9 speak more directly of the nation-state's historical elusiveness, Chapters 4, 6, 7 of its sociological equivocations and Chapters 5 and 10 of its normative ambiguity. A final assessment of how convincing these arguments are can of course only emerge at the end of this book. Before commencing that reconstruction, however, one final and more theoretical step is still required. We need to introduce social theory's claim to universalism from a strictly theoretical angle.

Society as a regulative ideal

It is now time to attempt the breaking up of the equation between the nation-state and society from its conceptual end and in this section I shall put forward the claim of society's role as a regulative ideal. Rather than the delimitation of whatever kind of geographical reference, social theory's most theoretically sophisticated use of society concentrates on the definition of the nature of modern social relations.

Indeed, the vexatious nature of society is now well established as the notion has proved difficult to grasp when it comes to theorising the nature of its component elements. But society's problematic condition is also apparent in relation to the role it plays within social theory's own conceptual frameworks. In fact, over the years, a number of different arguments have been made as to why social theory's relation with the idea of society is problematic.[12] In that context, at least the following arguments can be identified:

- The idea of society has been amply given a geographical definition so that its only possible meaning is that of the equation with the nation-state in modernity

(Smelser). The passing away of the nation-state thus means the concomitant passing away of any possible substantive knowledge claim attached to society (Albrow, Beck).

- The modern conception of society arose before the rise of social theory and therefore its meaning is attached to questions that are not specifically sociological such as the distinction between state and civil society (Mayhew, Parsons).
- The word society is part and parcel of everyday language and this precludes any attempt to define it more technically (Mann) or to make it social theory's key concept (Nisbet).
- Within the context of an increasingly positivistic self-understanding of the social sciences, all reflections upon the uses and roles of its central categories such as society are discarded as 'philosophical' and therefore 'irrelevant' questions (Adorno, Freitag).
- As an abstract representation of the nature of modern social life, the idea of society has been defeated, for better or worse, by such alternative concepts as 'the social' and only the latter can now claim the position of being social theory's core concept (Wagner).
- The idea of society has been given so many different definitions within twentieth century social theory that it is now a chronically hopeless conceptual tool (Urry).

Good reasons have no doubt been given in support for all these arguments. To ask, once again, the question of the role of society in social theory does not mean that I regard all previous efforts to deal with it necessarily flawed. Also, I do not think we can proceed by purely conveying normative arguments as to why society 'must' be seen as a regulative ideal. My argument, rather, is that from the point of view of its claim to universalism, one has to look at the ways in which social theorists have actually used the idea of society so that its regulative function starts to emerge. The question is then neither whether society is social theory's key concept nor indeed how 'empirical' societies are to be defined and conceptualised. Rather, the issue at stake is the role of society in the theoretical apparatuses with which social theory actually defines modern social relations and how, in so doing, the concept helps us assess and reconstruct social theory's own conceptual operations. Society's position as a regulative ideal becomes in this way not a matter of stubbornly defending a concept for its own sake – or a question of theoretical decisionism. On the contrary, it is central to social theory's claim to universalism as its particular mode of reflecting upon the nature of modern social life of which social theory is itself part. The detachment of society from whatever empirical reference is not an *ad hoc* hypothesis to save social theory's capacity to understand current social changes, but the recognition of the role the notion has effectively played within social theory. Let me now introduce more systematically the philosophical support for the claim of society's role as a regulative ideal.

'Regulative ideals' have a long history in philosophy. Its most methodical formulation is found in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, where he

defined them as the most abstract of the three levels at which the relationship between pure knowledge and empirical objects is expressed. The first plane of that relationship is composed by the 'categories of understanding', which are closest to the empirical representation of objects in the world. These are the categories with which particular sciences pursue their usual description within their respective fields and need not entertain us here. Kant then introduced the 'ideas', which are 'further removed from objective reality than are categories, for no appearance can be found in which they can be represented *in concreto*. They contain a certain completeness to which no possible empirical knowledge ever attains' (Kant 1973: 485). For Kant, then, ideas have the interesting feature of being, simultaneously, ineffective and necessary for the purposes of concrete empirical research. Ideas do 'not show us how an object is constituted, but how, under its guidance, we should *seek* to determine the constitution and connection of the objects of experience' (Kant 1973: 550). The 'regulative employment' of ideas means that they have the ability of 'directing the understanding towards a certain goal upon which the routes marked out by all its rules converge, as upon their point of intersection. This point is indeed a mere idea, a *focus imaginarius*' (Kant 1973: 532–3).

According to Kant, there are three ideas that play the role of orientating empirical enquiries: the *psychological*, *cosmological* and *theological* ideas. They all fulfil the same role of constituting the imaginary locus to which different fields of research aim without they being part of these realms themselves. The psychological principle makes all internal phenomena and experiences possible as if the 'I' were a concrete substance and possessed an immutable personal identity: 'the first object of such an idea is the "I" itself, viewed simply as thinking nature or soul' (Kant 1973: 557). The second, cosmological principle, is the one that organises research into natural phenomena as if that research would have no ultimate end. Kant's point here is that the presupposition of the unity of the world is transcendental: it has to be taken for granted for empirical research to take place and in that sense it does not take part in the actual explanations of natural phenomena (Kant 1973: 558). There is, finally, the theological principle, which treats possible experience as if there was an absolute unity within the sensible world: 'The third idea of pure reason, which contains a merely relative supposition of a being that is the sole and sufficient cause of all cosmological series, is the idea of *God*' (Kant 1973: 559). It is as though the world of empirical facts – as the unity of all phenomena – would have an unknown yet real independent cause.

The ultimate concern of Kant's reflection here is the power and legitimacy of abstractive procedures. His problem is to establish that the role of ideas does not lie in the empirical description of objects in the world but in founding the conditions of possibility of that description. Of course, within the context of Kant's general philosophy, ideas have a transcendental status. But even if we refrain from entering into that terrain just now we can see the strict difference he makes between the conditions of possibility of a particular realm of scientific enquiry and the empirical determination of an object within that realm. Having accomplished this distinction, Kant introduces a third and final level of abstraction. Apart from 'the categories of understanding' and 'the ideas of reason', there are also 'ideals'

which are 'further removed from objective reality even than the idea'. Kant's (1973: 485–6) argument continues as follows:

> Although we cannot concede to these ideals objective reality (existence), they are not therefore to be regarded as figments of the brain; they supply reason with a standard which is indispensable to it, providing it, as they do, with a concept of that which is entirely complete in its kind, and thereby enabling it to estimate and to measure the degree and the defects of the incomplete.

With the introduction of ideals, Kant not only effectively completes his picture of different levels of abstraction but also leads us to a critical argument for the purposes of this book. He points out the difference between presupposing a systematic unity of the world so as to make the attempt at knowing things in the world possible – that is the legitimate regulative use of ideas and ideals – and their completely erroneous ontologisation via the claim that this systematic unity is part of the world itself. In other words, to affirm that a certain ideal exists – he uses the example of humanity – does not mean that we can have a direct access to study it empirically.

I decided to go back to the Kantian way of setting up the problem because the success of the move beyond methodological nationalism being attempted in this book depends, to an important extent, upon how fully we are able to grasp society's regulative role in social theory. Being modelled on Kant, then, my argument is to acknowledge the fact that social theory's understanding of the rise and main features of modernity takes *society* as its own *regulative ideal*. Social theory finds justification for its universalistic knowledge claim because it is inextricably connected with the problem of trying to set a framework to understand modern social life in general. As a regulative ideal, society emerged *vis-à-vis* the rise of modernity.[13] Following this line of reasoning, then, by claiming that society can only be defined with reference to the nation-state, methodological nationalism has fallen into the trap of using the notion of society *constitutively* – to define what society actually is – rather than *regulatively* – the use of society to explicate the conditions of possibility of the knowledge of modern social relations. As soon as this mistake is committed, society is deprived of its universalistic orientation and can be swiftly turned into a description of the nation-state – a national society. Similar to Alfred N. Whitehead's (1953) 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness', the question is that of mistakenly having taken the abstract – society as a regulative ideal – for the concrete – society as the nation-state.

In pursuing the question of society's role as a regulative ideal further, Dorothy Emmet (1994) has made what I think is the most systematic analysis of the role of regulative ideals in contemporary social science. She draws firmly on the first Kantian formulations at the plane of general philosophy and then advances a more comprehensive and indeed up to date account of their position and potential uses. For Emmet, regulative ideals allow us to reflect upon those minimum commitments to be upheld cognitively as well as normatively. They are, as she nicely captures it, our 'philosophical hinterland' – our 'metaphysics of small scale'. Regulative ideals are a privileged strategy to persevere in crossing the

'boundary between what can be said clearly and what cannot be said at all' (Emmet 1994: 1–2). For us here, this means that in using society as a regulative ideal social theory may be actually gaining further insight into the ambivalence and opacity that inheres in modern social life.

She advances a more precise delimitation of the role of regulative ideals in the social sciences by elimination. Emmet claims that they are not to be regarded as instantiations of general principles such as the relationship between the universal and the particular because regulative ideals are intrinsically unrealisable. Due to this same reason, they do not treat 'ideal' conditions as if they were the 'standard' or 'normal' empirical occurrence as it is the case in statistical constructions. Regulative ideals differ also from Weberian ideal-types because they are not the *result* of the generalisation of any particular feature within the context of comparative research but rather they orientate by *anticipation* the direction of actual empirical research. As we shall soon see, regulative ideals *arise* out of concerns that are external to the scientific enquiry itself and yet social theory needs to integrate these into the research in an organised and controlled fashion. Finally, regulative ideals are different from political utopias because they avoid pre-deciding for any conception of a perfect social order so that we know its substantive content in advance. Owing precisely to its *regulative* condition, society cannot be a specified form or type of socio-political arrangement; it cannot be attached to any particular form of community (Emmet 1994: 48). So, even if we do not grant regulative ideals the strictly transcendental status they possessed in Kant's philosophy, they are still relevant for us to be able to control critically the operations and level of abstraction of social theory's key categories such as society. Emmet also uses in this context Kant's reference to their position as a *focus imaginarius*: 'a goal to be approached but which can never be attained' (Emmet 1994: 10).

Regulative ideals are therefore a particular way of relating abstract thinking with empirical reality. They are fundamentally unrealisable without being pure figments of the imagination and they are also part of social life without being just empirical objects. They have a role to play in our cognitive as well as moral practices: 'living with the unrealisable frees us from self-destructive guilt about what we cannot achieve and from self-satisfied complacency about what we do achieve. Nor will we be tempted to swing from an over-simple absolutism to an over-simple relativism' (Emmet 1994: 122). This, it seems to me, is one of regulative ideals' most important features: they provide with a way of relating legitimate *philosophical* and *normative* concerns with the *descriptive* and *explanatory* requirements of the social sciences. In other words, even if regulative ideals do not allow us to control completely social theory's tension between empirical description and normative assessment, they none the less help us reflect systematically upon the tensions between these planes. The normative dimension all social life possesses gains in this way the possibility of being related back to the empirical description of the world without either losing its specificity. See how Emmet (1994: 94–5) formulates the problem.

> To make a Regulative Ideal a concrete universal as an open set of possible ways of realisation is to lose its *transcendence*, as a standard to be realised nearly but

> *never quite* [...] The transcendence of the Regulative Ideal prevents its identification with anything we can see and do, and prevents us from settling for either of two extremes: one is to be so impressed with the varieties of circumstances and of moral views that we just say 'it is all relative' [...] The other extreme is to think that absolute morality is given in a code of principles to be observed no matter what. On the former extreme, one can ask how we come by our hunches. They may be creative intuitions, or they may express unrecognised prejudices. On the latter extreme, how much misery should be allowed to be suffered as the result of holding rigorously to a principle, and what happens when absolute principles clash? [...] Where a moral decision is made under a Regulative Ideal, an absolute is acknowledged and taken seriously, not merely paid lip-service. Yet the particular complexities of actual situation are also taken seriously [...] The role of the Regulative Ideal can then be to save us from simple moralism on the one hand and from cynicism on the other, and from letting the inadequacy of the former cause us to swing to the latter.

In Kant's terms, if in the theoretical realm of Pure Reason regulative ideals prove to be non-instantiable, in the normative realm of Practical Reason they are unrealisable. Regulative ideals are relevant because they have a role in setting both conceptual and normative standards to orient our social practices. They fulfil the function of allowing us to recognise the limitations of any contemplation of the world by always integrating these normative standpoints back into our empirical descriptions. For this book's purposes of transcending methodological nationalism, this results in the thesis that social theory renounces its claim to universalism when it treats society simply as a conventional device for the description of social phenomena such as the nation-state. The regulative ideal of society constitutes, therefore, part of the quasi-transcendental equipment with which social theory tries to comprehend the ultimate nature of those social forces which shape modernity: society as an impossible but necessary object of study in social theory. It is an impossible object of study because its relevance has little to do with the determination of an empirical or geographical referent to which it can be attached. But society is also a necessary object of study because a reflection upon the nature of social relations *as such* implies some mention to it. It may be clear now that the question is neither whether society is social theory's core object of study nor how 'empirical' societies are to be defined after the decline of the nation-state. Rather, my claim is that society works as a regulative ideal because its universalistic orientation obliges social theory to provide some answer to the *ontological*, *theoretical*, *historical*, *methodological* and *normative* dimensions that are intrinsic to its mode of enquiry.[14] Let me conclude this chapter by briefly commenting on each of these planes.

The idea of society has remained problematic with regard to its substantive status, that is, the question of the *ontological* definition of their ultimate component elements. On the one hand, we find definitions of society attached to specific empirical references like individuals and the aggregate consequences of their actions as in methodological individualism and indeed to geographical or empirical locations as in methodological nationalism. On the other hand, a more consistent and theoretically

sophisticated understanding of society is found in such general conceptions as Simmel's (1949) 'sociation' or 'sociability' or Luhmann's 'communication' (see Chapter 10). These notions create an abstract theoretical framework within which a certain understanding of the ultimate component elements of social life can arise and be applied consistently. Society works as a regulative ideal here because it provides us with an explanation of the key dimensions of modern social life without having to attach that explanation to any particular empirical reference.

As we saw at the beginning of this section, society emerged and has remained an intensely debated concept since its inception. The *theoretical* question of its position within social theory means that its actual location within different conceptual frameworks makes a difference with regard to how social theory's own development is understood. Different conceptions of society make apparent substantive differences within social theory's epistemological foundations. The argument of society as a regulative ideal pushes social theory to remain aware of the different planes at which its concepts and theories operate and in that sense it also prevents it from treating them as purely conventional analytical devices. In terms of the arguments of this book, for the three different periods of classical, modernist and contemporary social theory, the case can be made that, by looking at how the idea of society is defined one can clarify the ways in which social theory's conceptual apparatuses relate to its own epochal diagnoses.[15]

Explicit reflections upon society's ontological status and theoretical position are themselves possible thanks to the rise of modernity. The *historical* dimension of society refers to the emergence of modernity as a whole new set of trends and phenomena that fundamentally reshaped collective life. Modernity created the opportunity for treating the whole of humanity as a single body of human beings living within one frame temporarily and spatially – modernity did indeed begin locally but soon enough started to be experienced globally. Social theory's epochal diagnoses, its comprehensive accounts of those major trends by which the world has so dramatically changed, take always into consideration the particular ways in which individuals experience and react to social change in their everyday life.

The *methodological* plane centres on the determination of the best procedures with which to study social relations. This not only means that society cannot be studied directly but also that methodological decisions will bear ontological, theoretical and normative implications. Indeed, methodological rules are not neutral and their consistent application can never be taken for granted. At this level, society's role as a regulative ideal makes apparent that the selection and deployment of methodological procedures cannot pre-decide in favour of any particular empirical evidence or explanatory standpoint. Social theory's claim to universalism can only fulfil its promise if and when it leaves room for unexpected facts, uncomfortable arguments and conflictive views.

Society has always been an intensely political concept and this leads to the last *normative* question of having some, although elusive, image of a preferred kind of social order. The argument of society's regulative role means here that we face the tensions inscribed in social theory's simultaneous commitment to both facts and norms, empirical description and normative assessment. Normative concerns cannot steer descriptive and explanatory requirements and yet normativity is not simply yet

another aspect of social life – it seems to be at the core of what life in common actually consists of. Social theory cannot give up either dimension without betraying itself: there is a normative aspect of social life that stubbornly refuses to go away.

The universalistic knowledge claim to which social theory is committed – ontologically sound, theoretically informed, historically relevant, methodologically consistent and normatively conscious – benefits from an abstract understanding of society as a regulative ideal. The reconstruction of the canon of social theory in which I am interested here requires a strong conception of society that is able to help us control the definition of our key themes, concepts, procedures and presuppositions. On the one hand, regulative ideals are analytical tools which are both non-empirical and real. On the other hand, they set a framework within which the attempt can be made to link, without de-differentiating them, all five levels. Whether we like it or not, because of the way in which social theory conceives of social life, and because of the way in which its analytical and normative concerns play themselves against one another, we seem to be unable to run away from society as social theory's smallest metaphysical commitment.

Conclusion

The move beyond methodological nationalism that is the purpose of this book requires the disentanglement of the equation between the nation-state and society. From the side of the nation-state, this chapter introduced a renovated understanding of the nation-state based on the idea of its historical elusiveness, sociological equivocation and normative ambiguity in modernity. This led us to think about the nation-state as a modern rather than the modern form of socio-political arrangement *per se* and also about the opacity of its position in modernity. From the point of view of society, the breaking apart of the equation with the help of the argument of its regulative function allows social theory to be aware of the different planes – ontological, theoretical, historical, methodological and normative – at which it simultaneously operates and the mutual implications and differences to be found between these levels. Rather than abandoning the idea of society because of its alleged obsolescence, social theory requires, as part of its quasi-transcendental equipment, a robust yet subtle conception of society.

Even if social scientists do not have an explicit theory of society, in so far as they remain concerned with understanding modern social life they cannot do totally away with it. In breaking the equation between the nation-state and society apart, we are trying to reconstruct and renovate social theory's claim to universalism so that it can orient the direction of current debates on the nation-state and society. The canon of social theory in which this book is interested is inseparable from a permanent engagement with its claim to universalism.

But enough patience has now been demanded from the reader. No more prolegomena, clarifications and theoretical disquisitions: let the reconstruction of a social theory of the nation-state begin.

Part II

Classical social theory

3 Karl Marx (1818–1883)

The rise of capitalism and the historical elusiveness of the nation-state

The work of Karl Marx is a good starting point for a reconstruction of a social theory of the nation-state that, at the same time, is a critique of methodological nationalism. Although even sympathetic commentators have made the argument that Marx's work is not particularly helpful for understanding the nation-state's position in modernity (Giddens 1985: 23–31), the fact that Marx did not address the question of the nation-state directly can be turned here into an advantage. Marx neither conceived of the nation-state as the highest form of socio-political organisation nor did he anticipate a 'universal' process of nation-state formation. In his work we are going to find a clear rebuttal of the thesis that the nation-state is the only, crucial or necessary yardstick to assess the political forms of capitalist development.

Without pursuing the analogy between Marx's time and the present too far, it seems fair to argue that our current epoch mirrors Marx's in that for neither him nor us can the nation-state be taken for granted. Marx's early critique of the nation-state and current post-national theories share, I think, a type of elusiveness that can be used to our advantage. It may be useful to review Marx's account on the formation and expansion of the nation-state, the connection he saw between the local and global aspects of capitalism and also the tensions between different forms of nationalism and internationalism. It seems to me that Marx grasped a particular form of methodological nationalism in previous Political Philosophy and Political Economy; his critique of these traditions is definitively worth revisiting in this context. This does not imply, however, that his understanding of the nation-state was free of problems. It is arguable that, at times, it was imprecise (as in the concept of people without history), Eurocentric (as in many statements on colonialism), and chauvinistic (when he supported German national unification and rejected separatists claims of some minority groups).

The chapter is divided into two sections. First, it discusses some secondary accounts of Marx's understanding of the nation-state and point out some of their problems and limitations. These arguments are seen as problematic mainly because they violate Marx's deeper universalistic understanding of the nature of capitalism and modern social life. The second part of the chapter argues that Marx's view of the nation-state is set up by his idea that, in capitalism, all social relations 'become antiquated before they can ossify'. Marx disintegrates the

nation-state in his analysis of the tensions between Empires and the Commune, between national and world revolutions. Marx's idea of the nation-state resembles a type of social and political organisation that emerges from, but cannot deal with, the contradictory character of capitalism. The nation-state was being constituted and pulled apart, formed and dissolved, as part of the contradictory dynamic of capitalism.

Reconstructing Marx's 'theory' of the nation-state

In an early study on Marx's conception of the nation, Solomon Bloom made the case that, for Marx, such terms as 'nation', 'society', 'national' and 'social' were all virtually interchangeable. For Bloom (1967 [1941]: 17), 'the "nation" of Marx may be described as an individual society which functions with a considerable degree of autonomy, integration and self-consciousness.' The argument is that Marx's emphasis was on such 'objective' conditions of the national society as its class structure and economic system. Marx would have understood nationality as neither an indissoluble and natural bond nor as a subjective preference and nation-building was just one result of the broader set of social changes brought about by capitalism. Equally, he claims that Marx thought that the workers should organise primarily at home as 'the nation was the irreducible unit for the establishment of socialism' (Bloom 1967: 88). Finally, there is the question of Marx's internationalism and Bloom argues that Marx rejected cosmopolitanism because it 'seeks to pass from the individual to mankind without the intermediate stopping place of social units less comprehensive than the whole species' (Bloom 1967: 207). The leitmotif of Bloom's (1967: 206) reconstruction is to present Marx as an 'enlightened patriot'. The argument is that Marx's world is a 'world of nations' because he regarded

> The nation as a substantial historical entity, by an attempted reconciliation of national and class factors in politics, by a revaluation of national welfare and national devotion, and by an internationalist rather than a cosmopolitan view of the organization of the world [. . .] national traditions were quite real, they reflected the economic development of society, the arrangement of classes at different periods, and the special, perhaps unique, features of the course taken by particular countries.
>
> (Bloom 1967: 204)

In systematising Marx's scattered references on the nation, Bloom expected to contribute to place Marx into the great pantheon of nineteenth-century social scientists: he read Marx in a methodologically nationalistic fashion because he saw nothing to oppose in methodological nationalism *per se*. Indeed, a major theme within Marxist scholarship ever since is whether Marx's thoughts on the nation-state can be formalised via some *criteria of viability* through which to decide whether a particular nation can eventually become a fully-fledged nation-state. There are different versions of this theory of criteria and I shall now review some of them.

To Bloom (1967: 85), for instance, nations can be grouped into three categories: advanced countries (Western Europe and the United States); countries which were economically backward but could progress (Russia, Turkey and China) and countries which were not only backward but socially and economically stagnant (the rest of the world). In this argument, only the first two groups of countries are or will eventually become nation-states and they are the ones which deserve international support for their national cause. A more elaborate but equally problematic version of this argument is that of Iain Cummins (1980: 36–9), for whom the criteria are: (1) *territory of an adequate size*, which includes both physical factors (clear geographical boundaries) and social factors (size of the population); (2) *advanced economic system*, the nation-state is to be based on a capitalist class structure; (3) *bourgeois leadership*, only the bourgeoisie can push the nation forward and represent, at least initially, the interests of the nation as a whole; and (4) *centralised state institutions* to give shape and maintain the nation-state together. The claim of Marx having implicitly been operating with these criteria is interesting because it contains the *potential* for a critique of methodological nationalism. It hints at Marx's idea that the nation-state is neither the automatic nor the natural political result of capitalist development. Bloom's and Cummins' versions of the criteria, however, still take the nation-state as the ideal political form of capitalism and therefore reintroduce methodological nationalism from the backdoor, as it were.

According to Erika Benner's (1995: 16–34) more recent work on Marx and Engels' theory of nationalism, in the German-speaking world of the mid-nineteenth century the idea of the nationality (*Nationalität)* could take one of three meanings. There was first an *ethnic* conception which, rooted in the tradition of German Romanticism, exacerbated the distinctiveness of peoples along racial and cultural lines.[16] This was a sense, she argues, in which Marx did not use the term nation. There was also a second *statist* idea of nation that, arising from Hegel, took the nation as the same as a sovereign state; the nation was here identified and made coextensive with the state. The third concept of the nation would be the one closest to Marx's programme: the *democratic* idea of the nation as it was expressed, for instance, in his support for universal suffrage (Avineri 1980: 209–18). The nation here is related to popular sovereignty, personal freedom, individual equality and a sense of community. No one but the people should determine the conditions of association within a state. To Benner, however, there is a tension running through Marx's understanding of the nation between a 'Hegelian' or statist conception and a 'Rousseaunian' or democratic definition: there would be a Marx who supported democratic reform in Germany and also a Marx who felt more strongly about the importance of building strong state institutions.

It is in this context that Benner also put forward the idea of the criteria of viability. Interestingly, she relates this not to the existence of nations as such but to whether national movements deserve international support. The first of her criteria has then to do with the question of *social reform*: Marx and Engels would have favoured only a democratic form of nationalism. As the struggle for the ending of foreign oppression does not automatically lead to more freedom for the people, nationalist movements should also be movements for social reform and it

is precisely this, more than their actual nationalism, which counts. A national movement is eligible for international support only if its national agenda coincided with a democratic one. Benner's second criterion is *international reciprocity*; the support for national movements is also to be decided upon the substantive political agenda of the movement outside the nation's frontier. If national movements are unable to see beyond their own national independence, there is then nothing in them to rally for. To be legitimate, nationalism should strive, internally, for freeing the people from tyranny and class exploitation and, externally, for making itself ready to fight for the global revolution. The question of *national viability* is Benner's third criterion but her notion of viability is based more on the conditions of political struggle than on any given factor: ' "viability" was not simply an attribute of immutable national characteristics. It was, more importantly, a matter of commitment to a countervailing network of international power [...] nations which failed the test of "viability" on a purely geopolitical yardstick need not give up their hopes of self-determination' (Benner 1995: 162). This formulation is interesting because it does not surrender to methodological nationalism. In fact, she argues precisely that Marx 'undercut the very assumption that the authoritative agents of international relations must be states or national "units" ' (Benner 1995: 159).

The problem with Benner's account is that some of her arguments hardly stand the test of some of Marx's views on particular nation and national movements. The most (in)famous example of this is possibly found in Marx and Engels' writings on national issues in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* and the representation of Slavic peoples as 'peoples without history'. During the revolutions of 1848–9, Slavic peoples were thought of in terms of the absence of state institutions, incomplete economic development and weaknesses of their bourgeoisie and all these factors came together in the thesis that any truly national project of these peoples was doomed. Peoples without their own history are defined as 'those peoples who were unable to form a strong state of their own in the past and therefore lacked, in Engels' opinion, the power to achieve national independence in the future' (Rosdolsky 1986–7: 19).[17] Slavic peoples could be seen in this crude way because they had lacked autonomous state institutions and, in that sense, the concept of peoples without history would be politically rather than racially inspired. The notion was related with the conservative position of some Slavic groups during the 1848 revolutions and not with any intrinsic or racial characteristic.[18] Marx favoured processes of bureaucratic centralisation as they reinforced state power but equally realised that centralisation did not necessarily coincide with nationalisation and even less with democratisation. Charles Herod's argument is that Marx emphasised state centralisation rather than nation-building. Marx and Engels, therefore,

> [F]avored large and even multi-national politico-economic units since in their view only such large units could provide an adequate frame for industrial capitalist production and, thereby, could contribute to the growth and further development of a class-conscious proletariat. In their view national groups would be an impediment of this politic-economic development.
>
> (Herod 1976: 37)

The point to be made here is that Marx realised well that centralisation and nationalisation do not necessarily coincide. Rather, such an emphasis seems to speak more of the interests of later readers of Marx and it overstates Marx's views on the nation and the nation-state. As we shall presently see, the global scene was for Marx formed by nation-states, empires, colonies and indeed classes and class alliances that were not attached to national borders.

The search for a list of criteria has proved problematic and inconclusive. Furthermore, these attempts uncritically assume that there are going to be no clashes between criteria. Again, an example of this is found in the concept of peoples without history, whose underlying racism, historical inaccuracies and theoretical gaps show that an agenda for social reform within the nation and an internationalist agenda do not automatically coincide. Also, all these arguments end up battling with the question of how to decide between legitimate and illegitimate, acceptable and unacceptable forms of nationalism. And this battle they just cannot win. In fact, they express the extent to which the opacity of nationalism as a political force has permeated post-war Marxism (Fine 1994: 434–7). The question remains, in any case, whether there is methodological nationalism in Marx's work and how he actually conceptualised the nation-state.

The global expansion of capitalism and the premature dissolution of the nation-state

The fact that Marx struggled to come up with a consistent concept of the nation-state could indeed be due to historical circumstances – the fact that the modern nation-state was still in the making in Marx's time. Yet, a more theoretical argument can also be made. Marx seems to have perceived one of the elements of what I refer to as the opacity of the nation-state's position in modernity: its historical elusiveness. What passed as a nation-state – for intellectuals as well as for political actors themselves – was, more often than not, some other form of socio-political arrangement. In the *Communist Manifesto*, for instance, the argument revolves around the tension between nationalisation and cosmopolitisation that capitalism brings with it.

> All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, *all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify*. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life and his relations with his kind.
>
> (Marx and Engels 1976: 487, my emphasis)

What immediately precedes and follows this paragraph, it must be remembered, is nothing but the description of the rise of a world market, world literature and worldwide means of communication; this is how the famous 'all-that-is-solid-melts-into-air' sentence has usually been interpreted (Berman 1982: 91–105). In relation to the nation-state, however, it seems to me that the crucial sentence is the

previous one – the one highlighted in italics in the extract. Marx points out there how, under capitalism, all new forms of social relations are obsolete before they mature: if capitalism forms the nation-state, it also erodes it before it can fully develop in modernity. Thus, for instance, in *The German Ideology* Marx (1974: 78) had already argued that 'while the bourgeoisie of each nation still retained separate national interests, big industry created a class, which in all nations has the same interest and with which nationality is *already dead*' (my italics). The nation-state is an 'impossible' socio-political arrangement because states cannot be based on nations and indeed nations become antiquated before they can create 'their own' states. The contradiction Marx exposes here is that although the creation of a nation-state may be seen as a forward-looking project it is at the same time outdated even before it can actually establish and settle in the present.

Still in the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels (1976: 495) argued 'though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie'. This distinction between form and substance must not be interpreted as a division between real and illusionary forms of social relations. If social and political struggles appear in a national form, this form must be taken seriously. On the one hand, then, the national form of struggle is an expression of the importance of the nation in the development of capitalism. On the other hand, however, this is also a warning that the nation is never the ultimate cause of the social conflicts in capitalism. For instance, in the *Critique of the Gotha Program* – originally written in 1875 – Marx himself commented on this last quotation from the Communist Manifesto. He argued that, in the project of working class emancipation '*within the framework of the present-day national state*', the national state is nothing but the German Empire and that the Empire itself is 'economically "within the framework" of the world market [and] politically "within the framework" of the system of states' (Marx 1978e: 533). Indeed, Marx is rejecting here methodological nationalism's substantive argument, namely, that the nation-state bears any causal force in explaining the rise and main features of modernity.

In *The Civil War in France* – originally written in 1870–1 – the nation-state also disappears, in this case behind the struggle between the French Empire and the Commune. The claim in this text is that current political struggles were to be fought between the Empire and the Commune; he is again arguing as if the nation-state had already passed away.[19] Marx (1978f: 631) introduces imperialism as 'the most prostitute and the ultimate form of State power which nascent middle-class society had commenced to elaborate as a means of its own emancipation from feudalism'. In the Europe of that time, 'monarchy' was just 'the normal incumbrance and indispensable cloak of class-rule' (Marx 1978f: 634). And yet, Marx actually argued that in opposition to the Empire did not stand any form of nation-state; rather 'the direct antithesis to empire was the Commune.' And in fact, for the middle classes 'there was but one alternative – the Commune, or the Empire – under whatever form it might reappear' (Marx 1978f: 636). Marx argued as though nations do not and cannot constitute states. In other

words, as a form of political organisation in capitalism, the nation-state is being formed and dissolved, constituted and pulled apart, in the same process of capitalist development.

Marx's argument here follows the distinction between state centralisation and nationalisation that was introduced in the previous section. Centralisation relates to the state's power to steer class relations. Capital accumulation requires political power and this is a power that is best delivered by the state. Nationalisation, for its part, has to do with the particular role of the nation in the processes of capital accumulation and class struggle. The nation is, then, neither capitalism's superstructure nor a trap the bourgeoisie set to the proletariat, nor an ethnic form of community, nor even 'the people'. The nation is a form of social relation that is structurally associated with capitalism in so far as capitalism both forms and dissolves the links between classes and states.

> The unity of the nation was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, to be organised by the Communal Constitution and to become a reality by the destruction of the State power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence.
>
> (Marx 1978f: 633)

The distinction between state centralisation and nationalisation may help us understand the core of Marx's critique of the nation-state as the necessary form of socio-political arrangement in capitalism. We can see again how Marx's central insight here is simply but clearly that the nation-state becomes antiquated before it can ossify. Indeed, this obsolescence is something that all modern social structures share so his analysis of the nation-state does not substantively differ from his understanding of other modern social phenomena. Ever since Marx's time, the nation-state has remained elusive with regard to its periodisation; it becomes antiquated even before it can fully unfold. It is not only that the nation-state intrinsically belongs to capitalism but equally that it is pulled and pushed as it deals with capitalism's integrative requirements and disintegrative consequences. The historical elusiveness of the nation-state is the illusion that although it claims to have been out there for ever it is, at the same time, always about to disappear.

It is in the context of this analysis where the image of the nation-state as a *void* appears more clearly: the nation-state arises from the development of capitalism and yet it is this same capitalism that creates the conditions for its dissolution. The nation-state exists in real politics as well as in people's minds and yet it is usually attributed with powers it does not possess. It is an empty social and political framework which evolves towards its own dissolution from either within or the outside; the nation-state can be strong or weak and yet in either case it evolves into something different – Empires or the Commune. This image of the void resembles the eye of the hurricane where things look in calm just at the time when they are about to be blown apart. In its alleged claim of unity between nation and state, in its trans-historical appealing to history, in its artificial appeal to a natural

sense of belonging, in its obliteration of power differences on behalf of formal equality and in its oppressive foundation of freedom, the nation-state's greatest strength is, at the same time, its greatest mythical quality. Marx put forward a critique of methodological nationalism and not of the nation-state; the theses of the historical elusiveness of the nation-state – and to lesser extent also of its sociological equivocations – are central elements in Marx's conceptualisation of its opacity in modernity.

Marx's (1918, 1978b, 1978f, 1984) analyses of particular national cases are always connected with the history and developments of class relations, structures and struggles (Dahrendorf 1976: 7). In his works on France and Germany, for instance, he systematically linked internal politics and the global expansion of capitalism. Marx saw clearly that the nation-state depended on class alliances that were permanently being re-negotiated so that their constitution could never be taken for granted. Furthermore, as we just saw, there was a constant tension, or rather a gap, between the political self-conceptions of nation-state and the empire – between the respectable and the naked form of bourgeois order. Marx's analysis of the realm of national politics during his lifetime included different types of nationalism and internationalism, any of which could be progressive or conservative depending on its class composition. The political forms that internationalism may take change historically and cannot be pre-decided. In his analysis of the defeat of the popular revolts of 1848, for instance, Marx saw that whereas the workers were nationally organised and thus put forward a democratic agenda on the basis of their national organisation, the political strategy of the privileged classes took the form of a conservative class-internationalism that ran much deeper than their national affiliations. Nationalism and internationalism have therefore no invariable or inevitable political colour.

Marx's reflections on the nation-state can now be placed in the context of his more general arguments on the intellectual traditions with which he was coming to terms. At least part of Marx's reconstruction of Political Philosophy and Political Economy can be translated into a critique of methodological nationalism. In a way, Marx can be said to be criticising the early methodological nationalism of these traditions from the point of view of their insufficient claim to universalism. As Marx did not face the question of methodological nationalism directly, however, we must look for clues that allow us to reconstruct his argument.

In the context of his dispute with the young Hegelians, Marx criticised 'the fetishism of the state' which finds in 'Hegel's idealism its ultimate expression' (Fine 2002: 65). In fact, Marx (1974: 40) begins his critique of contemporary German philosophy by demanding that we 'look at the whole spectacle from a standpoint beyond the frontiers of Germany'. Marx argued that Hegel described 'a particular state of affairs (like hereditary monarchy, a reformed bureaucracy, a bicameral parliament, the incorporation of the judiciary within the executive) and assigned to it the logical attributes of universality. Hegel idealized empirical reality, turning the existing state into the embodiment of the universal' (Fine 2002: 68–9).[20] According to Marx, before Hegel German political philosophy remained

focused on religion as the philosophical consciousness which reflected, in an inverted form, the real inversions of the German socio-political situation

> The struggle against religion is, indirectly, a struggle against *that world* whose spiritual *aroma* is religion [. . .] *Religious* suffering is at the same time an *expression* of real suffering and a *protest* against real suffering [. . .] the abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of men, is a demand for their *real* happiness.
>
> (Marx 1978b: 54)

The definitive importance of Hegel is to have realised that 'the criticism of heaven' must be 'transformed into the criticism of earth, the *criticism of religion* into the *criticism of law*, and the *criticism of theology* into the *criticism of politics*' (Marx 1978b: 54). The work of Hegel thus represents the highest and most profound critique of both '*German philosophy of right and of the state*' and of 'the modern state and of the reality connected with it' (Marx 1978b: 59). Marx's critique of the early methodological nationalism of German philosophy centres on Hegel because of his role in the idealisation of the Germans' understanding of their country's situation.

> In politics, the Germans have *thought* what other nations have *done* [. . .] the *status quo* of the *German political system* expresses the *consummation of the ancien régime*, the thorn in the flesh of the modern state, the *status quo* of *German political science* expresses the *imperfection of the modern state* itself, the degeneracy of its flesh.
>
> (Marx 1978b: 59–60)

Against what he saw as the limitations of Hegelian philosophy of right, namely, the missing distinction between philosophical and practical revolutions, Marx criticises this diagnostic of Germany in which the country is taken as self-sufficient and without consideration of broader social processes all over the world. Marx refers to Hegel's view of Germany as '*the deficiency of present-day politics constituted into a system*' [. . .] [i]t is not *radical* revolution, *universal human* emancipation, which is a Utopian dream for Germany, but rather a partial, merely political revolution which leaves the pillars of the building standing' (Marx 1978b: 62). Marx's critique of Hegel is the critique of turning the project of a German nation-state into a form of religion; Marx's argument on Germany, as well as his general critique of Hegel's idea of the state, pointed in the direction of a critique which involved transcending the methodologically nationalistic framework and assumptions with which, in his view, Hegel had endorsed the German state.

In *On the Jewish Question*, Marx revolves around a similar subject as he discusses the limits of what can be achieved in the transformation of social life when the political form of the modern state is taken as the ultimate framework of social and political relations. This is Marx's critique of political emancipation,

a struggle that misapprehends the *form* of modern political relations for its *substance*. On the one hand, Marx (1978a: 44) writes that political emancipation is the 'dissolution' of the old society, of 'Feudalism'. On the other, the argument is that political emancipation is a necessary stepping stone in the process of modern society reaching its own limits: '*political* emancipation certainly represents a great progress. It is not, indeed, the final form of human emancipation, but it is the final form of human emancipation *within* the framework of the prevailing social order' (Marx's 1978a: 35). This is why he refuses to regard political emancipation as the ultimate battle against the real sources of alienation and inequality. Whilst the *idea* of political emancipation makes possible the rise of the modern form of socio-political relations – represented in the division between the state and civil society – the *critique* of political emancipation exposes the limitations of these social relations and political order. The ultimate problem with the project of political emancipation is not that it fails to *transcend* the actual form of the state but that it actually *reinforces* that same state by consecrating the separation of civil society from the state. In Marx's (1978a: 46) own words:

> *Every* emancipation is a *restoration* of the human world and of human relationship to man *himself*.
>
> Political emancipation is a reduction of man, on the one hand, to a member of civil society, an *independent* and *egoistic* individual, and on the other hand, to a *citizen*, to a moral person.
>
> Human emancipation will only be complete when the real, individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a *species-being*; and when he has recognized and organized his own powers [...] as *social* powers so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as *political* power.

Marx argues that the political programme that aims to the reform of the modern state within the limits of that state fails to grasp not only its historical and contradictory character but also the ultimate source of alienation and inequality of modern social life. The universalistic project of human emancipation is based on the transcendence of the bourgeois state and the contradictory form of reproduction of social life upon which that state is founded: civil society. Furthermore, part of Marx's critique of Bauer in that piece has to do with the latter's thesis that political rights were to be attached to religious, ethnic or indeed national background: 'we do not say to the Jews, therefore, as does Bauer: you cannot be emancipated politically without emancipating yourselves completely from Judaism. We say rather: it is because you can be emancipated politically, without renouncing Judaism completely and absolutely, that *political emancipation* itself is not *human* emancipation' (Marx 1978a: 40). The claim is here in fact twofold. First, Marx argues that even within the framework of the modern (nation) state, political rights should be independent from religious or cultural differences. Marx criticised Bauer on the grounds that he attached the recognition of political rights

within the state to an alleged abolition of these differences. And second, Marx realised that the actual result of that alleged abolition can only be the imposition of one privileged national (German) and/or religious (Christian) form of identity upon other minority groups. Marx's critique of political emancipation is also in this sense a critique of making the nation the basis for the recognition of political and civil rights within the state (Marx 1978a: 29–30). Political emancipation mirrors methodological nationalism because they both take the bourgeois state as something that state is not: the final stage in the historical development of modernity.[21]

A similar mode of reasoning seems to follow Marx's critique of Political Economy. Marx's critique of Hegel can be made compatible with his critique of political economy 'because it is a critique of their common ideological foundations' (Clarke 1991: 58). In Marx's (1973: 108) own words:

> The concept of national wealth creeps into the work of the economists of the seventeenth century – continuing partly with those of the eighteenth – in the form of the notion that wealth is created only to enrich the state [. . .] This was the still unconsciously hypocritical form in which wealth and the production of wealth proclaimed themselves as the purpose of modern states, and regarded these states henceforth only as means for the production of wealth.

Marx criticised the illusionary character of the idea of autonomous individuals with which both political economists and political philosophers operate. In capitalism, says Marx (1973: 163–4),

> The ties of personal dependence, of distinctions of blood, education, etc. are in fact exploded, ripped up [. . .] and individuals *seem* independent (this is an independence which is at bottom merely an illusion, and it is more correctly called indifference), free to collide with one another and to engage in exchange within this freedom; but they appear thus only for someone who abstracts from the *conditions*, the *conditions of existence* within which these individuals enter into contact.

The alienated conception of the individual complements the alienated and self-sufficient conceptions of state and society. Marx described the capitalist economy as a complex web of social and economic relations. In the rise and functioning of market relations, no self-sufficient unit can resist the systemic integration into the multiplicity of layers with which capitalism operates. He argues that for the determination of the actual processes of production and exchange, 'individual', 'local' (communal), 'national' and 'global' aspects are all to be integrated and taken into account (Marx 1973: 172). Programmatically, Marx says that the first section of his proposed study of economic of relations '*as relations of productions*' implies the study of the

> Exchange of the superfluous only [. . .] the internal structure of production therefore forms the second section; the concentration of the whole in the state the third; the international relation the fourth; the world market the conclusion,

> in which production is posited as a totality together with all its moments, but within which, at the time, all contradictions come into play. The world market then, again, forms the presupposition of the whole as well as its substratum. (Marx 1973: 227–8)[22]

In the context of his reflections on money, furthermore, Marx argues that there is an opposition between the idea of money – in general – and the actual deployment of particular coins. Marx describes this opposition as a representation of the relationships between the universal and the particular and between the global and the national. This conception of money is twofold: on the one hand, money is the 'means for expanding the universality of wealth', on the other, money is also required 'for drawing the dimensions of exchange over the whole world' (Marx 1973: 225). Either way, money is necessarily actualised in particular coins, which in capitalism take the form of 'national' coins: 'money *posited* in the form of the medium of circulation is *coin*. As coin, it has lost its use value as such, its use value is identical with its quality as medium of circulation [...] as coin, it also loses its universal character and adopts a national, local one' (Marx 1973: 226). There is a mutual dependence between particular coins and money in general. Marx argues that national coins, to become and remain such, are inextricably related to the generic conception of money in general. National currencies and money in general are – quite literally in this case – two sides of the same *coin*. To the argument that no national coin exists without money in general, Marx adds that, from the point of view of their raw materials – gold and silver – the coin loses its particular national character 'again' as it 'acquires a political title, and talks, as it were, a different language in different countries'. It thus serves as 'medium of exchange between the nations, as universal medium of exchange, no longer as *symbol*, but rather as a definite amount of gold and silver' (Marx 1973: 226). In capitalist society, then, the existence of national boundaries, in this case the boundaries of a national economy, depends on the concurrent expansion of capitalism in a way that simultaneously undermines these same national boundaries.

I would like to close this chapter with a brief reference to Marx's use and understanding of society. Rather than equating it with the nation-state, his use of the term is closer to a generic concept of social relations. Certainly, Marx used the term society in the sense of a 'country' and we saw that Bloom thus interpreted it. Yet, even when society is used in the definition of a geographical referent, no isolated society, no idea of society as self-sufficient unit, is to be found. Marx strongly criticised any treatment of society as an 'an isolated monad, who can be considered independently of historical and social context' (Frisby and Sayer 1986: 91). He argued, as we just saw, as though the nation-state had already been reified and that is the methodological nationalism he inherited and criticised: 'reified conceptions of society [...] reflect the real alienation of social relations from their participants characteristic of bourgeois society' (Frisby and Sayer 1986: 95).

Marx's most systematic understanding of society is closer to its role as a regulative ideal. It points in the direction of his more abstract and universalistic reflections upon the nature of social life in general; society is the representation

of a truly *social* sphere of life and is an ontological reality that is independent of particular individuals. If, in the theses on Feuerbach, the young Marx (1978c: 145) refers to society as 'socialised humanity', in *Grundrisse*, he similarly said that 'society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand' (Marx 1973: 265). Rather than a reified entity or a purely nominal device to describe social relations, society becomes 'the mediating term between the "material" and the "ideal" [. . .] the everyday practical activity of real human beings' (Clarke 1991: 57). In Marx's (1978d: 207) own words

> *The relations of production in their totality constitute what are called the social relations, society, and, specifically, a society at a definitive stage of historical development*, a society with a peculiar, distinctive character. *Ancient* society, *feudal* society, *bourgeois* society are such totalities of production relations, each of which at the same time denotes a social stage of development in the history of mankind.

There is no straightforward conception of the nation-state nor of society in Marx's writings. Yet, it seems highly implausible to argue that he equated the two terms. First, because Marx used them at different levels of abstraction: the nation-state in a rather unsystematic and even chauvinistic fashion and society in the more universalistic sense of social relations in general. Second, because he saw no tendency towards the generalisation of the nation-state as modernity's most acceptable form of socio-political arrangement. Marx hinted towards the premature dissolution of the nation-state and with it to the historical elusiveness of its position in modernity.

Conclusion

The nation-state is a modern form of socio-political arrangement that emerges from, but cannot deal with, the contradictory character of capitalist social relations. Marx seemed to have realised that the nation-state is constantly under immense pressures. The global dynamic of capital accumulation, national and international class struggles, civil and international wars, are all forces at work that create contradictions that not only escape from its control but also battles hard to resist. Yet, this subtle vision of the nation-state's problems in capitalism creates its own difficulties. Marx lacked an idea of what the nation-state can actually achieve in terms of strength and stability and did not pay enough attention to the ways in which the nation-state can learn to resist these pressures. No doubt, Marx clearly understood that the nation-state was not the type of socio-political organisation that methodological nationalism would argue, and yet, in so doing, he overestimated the extent of its possible disintegration in modernity. *Pace* Marx, the nation-state has demonstrated to be quite durable and resilient.

Marx's reconstruction of Political Philosophy and Political Economy is more a critique than an exemplar of methodological nationalism as he seems to have

understood the fact that, even before that the nation-state expanded throughout the world, they had already been seen as the highest form of modernity. He regarded the nation-state as one part of a complex web of social and political relations and his argument is not only that the nation-state is not self-sufficient but also that political relations can take other political forms in capitalism – such as Empires or the Commune. Yet, we must remember that Marx did not argue for a contingent link between capitalism and the nation-state either. Rather, he subjected the nation-state to the dialectics of formation and dissolution of social relations with which capitalism has made itself famous. The nation-state is in this sense no different from all other forms of social relations that under capitalism *become antiquated before they can ossify:* the nation-state is being created and dissolved, established and pulled apart in the same way as everything else is in capitalism.

4 Max Weber (1864–1920)

Politics and the sociological equivocations of the nation-state

There are good reasons to put the relationship between politics and scholarship at the centre of this reconstruction of Max Weber's ideas on the nation-state. Both activities were undoubtedly very dear to him and his statements on both subjects are somewhat contradictory: the claims on the neutrality of science do not necessarily or automatically go down well with those on the worth of the German nation. We are entitled to ask, then, whether Weber's undoubted political nationalism translates into methodological nationalism in his scholarly work. An appropriate answer to this question, it seems to me, requires an understanding of Weber's thesis that there was something particularly obscure in the *claim to unity* between nations and states in modernity alongside their *effective disjuncture*. There is a certain sociological equivocation arising from this seperation that constitutes the core of Weber's assessment of the nation-state's position in modernity.

The chapter first addresses the question of Weber's conceptualisation of the nation in the context of his critique of nationalistic ways of thinking. Similar to Marx's critique of the early methodological nationalism to be found in political philosophy and political economy, Weber criticised the conceptual reification, and the particularistic chauvinism with which important quarters of German academia were already dealing with the nation and the politics of nationalism. The second part of the chapter assesses Weber's conception of politics in the broader context of his thesis of the tragedy of culture in modernity. Weber's understanding of politics has to do with the determination of the specific means of politics, and not with politics' substantive values: violence (as a means) and not the nation (as a value or end) is the core of Weber's doctrine of politics.

Political and methodological nationalism in Weber's work

There is now more than half a century of well-established secondary literature on the nationalism of Weber's politics and there can be no doubts about the fact of how strongly Weber felt for the fate of German nation.[23] Early in his career, Weber tried to come to terms with the most recent social trends in Germany in order to help foster its development as a world power. Towards the end of his life, by the time of the First World War as well as after the German defeat, he was willing – health permitting – to 'serve the nation' in whatever way he could have

been needed. Throughout all his life, then, Weber was concerned with the role and destiny of Germany, with its particular cultural outlook and the material welfare of the German people. When analysing the nature, content and extent of Weber's nationalism, however, the agreement in the literature suddenly ends. On the question of the philosophical roots of Weber's politics, it has been argued that he was a liberal, an elitist, a republican, a nationalist or even a proto-fascist; in terms of the importance of politics in Weber's life, there is the question of whether he saw himself as a man of action or as a scholar; in relation to the influence of this nationalism on his sociological work, people have argued in favour *and* against the views that his science was 'instrumental' to his politics but also that there is a radical break between the two (Stammer 1971).

From those secondary works available in English, there are two which have linked, or in fact conflated, Weber's *political* and *methodological* nationalism. The first is David Beetham's *Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics* in which he tries to produce an account of Weber's conceptualisation of the nation-state as the same of the *modern* form of the state (Beetham 1974: 121). This assessment of Weber's idea of the nation-state includes a rather narrow interpretation of the role of the bureaucracy in Weber's definition of the state which is then complemented with the claim that Weber's concept of *Kultur* only finds its ultimate expression at the national level. A *Kultur*, in this view is composed by: 'those particular values which distinguish a group of society from others – which constitutes individuality ("Eigenart") – and which are given self-conscious formulation, typically in the art or literature of the society [...] all culture is national culture' (Beetham's 1974: 125). The second, more influential, argument that finds an inextricable connection between politics and the nation-state in Weber's works is found in Anthony Giddens' *Politics and sociology in the thought of Max Weber*. The thesis is here that Weber's intellectual interest in the *Protestant Ethic* is in fact instrumental to his political concern with the failures of the German bourgeoisie in carrying on a successful bourgeois revolution.

> It became increasingly apparent to Weber after the turn of the century, that the immediate future of Germany must lie with a sharpening of the political consciousness of the bourgeoisie. An important underlying motif of 'The Protestant Ethic' was certainly that of identifying the historical sources of such a 'bourgeois consciousness'.
>
> (Giddens 1972: 12)[24]

Unsurprisingly, these interpretations are both from the mid-1970s, which we saw was also the time when the arguments on social theory's methodological nationalism first emerged. Thus, whereas Beetham understands that the nation-state is Weber's incarnation of the idea of modern society, Giddens attributes to Weber the thesis that a modern nation-state is a society only if it has experienced a successful bourgeois revolution. Both assessments take Weber's methodological nationalism for granted. A rather different picture emerges, however, if we look at those interpretations that do not concentrate on Weber's politics and nationalism.

Thus, for Karl Jaspers (1989), it is scholarship that truly captures Weber's life-passion; for Hans Gerth and Charles W. Mills (1970: 23, 72) Weber belongs to a 'generation of universal scholars' and conveyed a 'defensive pessimism for the future of freedom'; for Reinhard Bendix (1966: xx) 'Weber's work belongs to the intellectual heritage of European liberalism;' for Wolfgang Schluchter (1981: 6) 'capitalism is Max Weber's first theme,' for Jürgen Habermas (1984: 143) Weber wanted to comprehend 'the process of disenchantment in the history of religion' as well as the processes of 'societal rationalization'; for Talcott Parsons (1965: 172) he was a 'highly cosmopolitan intellectual passionately concerned with [...] understanding the significance of the society of his own time in Europe' and for Sam Whimster (1998: 72) Weber 'was not explicitly a nation-state theorist. What we find instead is a theory of power.'

Let me put some these reflections into the context of Weber's own intellectual scene. We can use for this Weber's comments on the narrowness and reification he found within German academic circles at the turn of the twentieth century. For instance, the core of his long critique of Wilhelm Roscher (1817–1894) and Karl Knies (1821–1898) lies precisely in the fact that he remained suspicious of the ways in which these two writers tried to abolish any universalistic thrust to social scientific explanations and reintroduced all sorts of intuitionism and chauvinism. For instance, Weber (1992b: 27–37) criticises Roscher because he understands peoples as 'closed organisms' and nations as 'individuals' and 'biological entities'. Weber rejected any attempt at conceptualising the nation as a cultural individual which would find expression not only in such spheres as arts, language and politics but also in that each nation would have 'its own wine'. This conception, Weber (1992b: 31) argues, is nothing but the nation being 'hypostatised as a "social-psychological" unity which experiences development in itself'. Weber wrote furiously against this intuitionism that sought to understand socio-historical life via any form of empathy – the worst version of which was that based on 'common blood' or 'shared culture'. He emphatically repudiated the idea that the value spheres which composed his most abstract diagnosis of the development of modern Western culture could be understood, in a methodologically nationalistic fashion, as 'emanations of the *Volksgeist*' (Bendix and Berger 1959: 106–7; Seidman 1983: 233). Rather than methodological nationalism, Weber is closer to a kind of methodological universalism that is centred on his idea of science's value-freedom. Scientific knowledge is no position to grant, justify or indeed establish ultimate values (Weber 1970a). And it is precisely in the context of this argument on scientific neutrality that Weber (1997: 147–8) argued that 'the nation' is a concept which belongs to the realm of values. Science cannot and should not be made instrumental to the nation! (Schluchter 1996: 39–45, 273 and Weber 1949: 28–37).

The question here, then, is to assess the position of the nation within Weber's broader understanding of politics. One can begin with Weber's (1994c: 310–11) well-known concept of the state, which focuses on the question of the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical violence. For Weber, what really characterises a *modern* state is not so much its national component but the fact that state's duties

are fulfilled through particular means. Weber's understanding of the modern state is framed within his broader understanding of the processes of bureaucratisation of social life. This finds expression, above all, in the fact that the state's administrative staff is separated from the means with which they fulfil their roles. Thus Weber (1994c: 314–15):

> All forms of state order can be divided into two main categories based on different principles. In the first, the staff of men [...] *own* the means of administration *in their own right* [...] In the other case the administrative staff is 'separated' from the means of administration, in just the same way as the office-worker or proletarian of today is 'separated' from the material means of production within a capitalist enterprise [...] the development of the modern state is set in motion everywhere by a decision of the prince to dispossess the independent, 'private' bearers of administrative power who exist along him, that is all those in personal possession of the means of administration and the conduct of war, the organisation of finance and politically deployable goods of all kinds [my italics].

It is only in this context that Weber introduces a positive definition of the nation and its relationship with the state. The argument is that only sentiments of prestige can fulfil, although imperfectly, the role of founding a nation. It is through these sentiments of prestige that the nation relates to politics and, eventually, to the formation of an autonomous state: 'a nation is a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own; hence, a nation is a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own' (Weber 1970b: 176). This is a definition of the nation-state that could be charged with methodological nationalism and, as we have said seen, it has thus been read. I will, however, argue that the picture is far more complicated and indeed interesting.

Weber arrives at this definition of the nation only after a laborious exercise of delimitation. His scholarly accounts on the nation are unsystematic and even his most methodical pieces on the subject, although analytical in scope, are far from definitive. Weber begins his reflections on the idea of the nation by stating that it is 'one of the most vexing, since emotionally charged concepts' to be found in the sociological lexicon and he was sceptical as to whether the nation could be truly formalised as a concept (Weber 1978: 395). 'If the concept of "nation" can in any way be defined unambiguously', he says, it can just refer to 'a specific sentiment of solidarity' of a certain group of people 'in the face of other groups' (Weber 1970b: 172). Weber argued that there is no single causal component in the emergence of nations so that no conclusive explanation of their development can be given. Weber faces substantive problems as he expands on the difficulties of grasping what a nation is and laboriously tries to attach the definition of the nation to other aspects of social life: 'the concept of "nationality" shares with that of the "people" (*Volk*) – in the "ethnic" sense – the vague connotation that whatever is felt to be distinctively common must derive from common descent' (Weber 1978: 395). This ambiguity is only the beginning of the problem as

nations do not have 'an economic origin'; they are not 'identical with the "people of a state"' neither are they 'identical with a community speaking the same language' and indeed 'and one must not conceive of the "nation" as a "culture community"'. Furthermore, 'a common anthropological type [...] is neither sufficient nor a prerequisite to found a nation [...] "national" affiliation need not be based upon common blood' so that 'the sentiment of ethnic solidarity does not by itself make a "nation"'. Finally, in relation to classes, the claim is that an 'unbroken scale of quite varied and highly changeable attitudes towards the idea of the "nation" is to be found among social strata' (Weber 1970b: 171–8).[25]

Weber's sociological reflections on the nation give the impression that, overall, he was sceptical on the possibilities of arriving at definitive results. The sentence that precedes the definition of the nation introduced above states that the nation is 'located in the field of politics' only 'in so far as there is at all a common object lying behind the obviously ambiguous term "nation"' (Weber 1970b: 176). And equally, he argues that 'the concept [of the nation] seems to refer – if it refers at all to a uniform phenomenon – to a specific kind of pathos which is linked to the idea of a powerful political community [...] such a state may already exist or it may be desired' (Weber 1978: 398). Also, in the very last paragraph of one of the pieces from which we have quoted extensively, Weber associated nations with states *only* 'if one believes that it is at all possible to distinguish national sentiment as something homogeneous and specifically set apart' and, *even if that were the case* 'one must be clearly aware of the fact that sentiments of solidarity, very heterogeneous in both their nature and their origin, are comprised within national sentiments' (Weber 1970b: 179). This is repeated even in more general terms when Weber (1978: 397) concludes that 'feelings of identity subsumed under the term "national" are not uniform but may derive from diverse sources' and among these sources he mentions all the factors we have already introduced. Class structure, power politics, common memories, religion, language and racial features are all only imperfectly associated with the nation and none of them can really give us the just impression of what a nation is.

If these comments were not enough, there is still another reason as to why Weber's understanding of the nation-state points towards what this books refers to as the sociological equivocations of its position in modernity. We have seen already that his concept of the *modern* state is independent from the nation and even if nations need states, the fact that they do not presuppose one another dissolves any rest of teleology and logical necessity in Weber's conceptualisation of the nation-state. Weber argued that the 'national sentiment is variously related to political associations, and the "idea" of the nation may become antagonistic to the empirical scope of given political associations. This antagonism may lead to quite different results' (Weber 1970b: 175). The political expression of national sentiments produces different political results in different groups: Spaniards, Poles, Croats, Russians and Germans have all had to come to terms with an 'idea of the nation' which is 'entirely ambiguous' for the purposes of sociological generalisation (Weber 1970b: 175).

Complications do not stop there either. We have said that it is via sentiments of prestige that individuals become members of the nation and this means that

nations want to form powerful states and aim to build states that are able to heighten national prestige through power politics. If successful, however, the nation-state becomes a victim of its own success: imperialism is the representation of the disintegration of the nation-state because power politics pushes the state *beyond* the limits of the nation. Interestingly, the opposite case is also possible and these are 'cases for which the term nationality does not seem to be quite fitting' (Weber 1978: 397). He argues, for instance, that the Belgian or Swiss nation would not be conceived of as such because they simply have 'forsaken power' (Weber 1978: 397). If via imperialistic power politics the nation-state explodes and becomes a victim of the triumph of its own policies, in this latter case the nation-state implodes due to the lack of power and prestige politics that can maintain it as a viable socio-political project. The argument is that, in either case, the nation-state is unlikely to survive *qua* nation-state. So, even when Weber (1978: 395) recognises that the ' "nation state" has become conceptually identical with "state" based on common language' he would do so by emphatically stating at the same time that 'in reality, however, such modern nation states exist next to many others that comprise several language groups.'

Indeed, it is important that we never loose sight of Weber's historical context because his reflections on the nation are permanently referred back to the question of the role of the 'German nation' as world-power and its relationship with the German *Reich* – the German Empire (Mommsen 1984: 35–40). In fact, further light can be shed into the more abstract reflections on the nation-state I have just discussed if we pay attention to Weber's understanding of the relationship between the ideas of the *Reich* and the nation-state. Weber was well aware of the ambiguities that underpinned the formation of the *Reich*. It was widely recognised at the time that the *Reich* held an equivocal relationship with the nation-state; one was not the same as, nor completely different from, the other. On the one hand, the *Reich* presented itself as a nation-state; it developed from an idealised image of how a German nation-state ought to be: 'the new *Reich* saw itself as a nation-state' (Langewiesche 2000: 122). On the other, however, there seems to have been an equally clear awareness among the actors involved in the long process of founding the *Reich* that Germany was an 'incomplete' nation-state. The 'German nation-state' was more a project than an accomplished socio-political entity. The 'internal formation of the nation had not yet taken place' because the *Reich* 'did not fully absorb the old imperial nation, and at the same time expanded beyond the ethnic nation' (Langewiesche 2000: 122).

Of course, if the tensions between the ideas of the *Reich* and the nation-state are missed, the foundation of the *Reich* can uncritically be taken to represent the foundation of the German nation-state. Weber's writings on the subject are in this way taken out of context and his political nationalism is thus easily translated into methodological nationalism. Paradoxically, however, the more the connection between political nationalism and imperialism is emphasised – as it was done by the early Weber (1994a [1895]) himself – the more his arguments become a critique of methodological nationalism. The situation of Germany at the turn of the century seemed to have convinced him that a German nation-state was not even desirable at

that particular moment and rather that an Empire was in fact needed. Again, the nation-state was seen as a project rather than as an already made solution. The nation-state was difficult to establish and, more important for my argument here, it was not the only or even the best answer for current political struggles. It is the conflation between imperialism and nationalism in Weber's political writings that creates an illusion of methodological nationalism in his sociological work.[26]

Analytically, Weber's understanding of the relationship between national and imperial politics has been interpreted in the sense that he regarded no fundamental differences between external and internal politics; the argument being that Weber did not consider politics as divided into foreign and home arenas (Arndt 1971). It has also been suggested that Weber's conception of 'politics works from outside in, and that the external, military relations of states are crucial determinants of their internal politics. This is because of the centrality of legitimacy as a resource in the struggle of power' (Collins 1986: 145). And the claim has also been put forward that Weber's emphasis on the primacy of foreign policy (*Primat der Aussenpolitik*) reflects his awareness on the 'military and political vulnerability of Germany' (Bendix 1964: 207). The consequence I would like to draw from these views is that, even if the idea of Empire gave way to an idea of nation-state, this nation-state needed to find a position in world politics and markets. The international system becomes as much the focus of analysis as individual nation-states; foreign and home policies are closely tied together right from the start.

In concluding this section, a word may be said on the relationship between language and the nation. Language is the most important *cultural* component of Weber's (1970b: 177–8) idea of the nation but even if that is the case it is, in itself, neither indispensable nor sufficient. Weber (1970b: 172) argued that the nation is broadly associated with the existence of a common language but at the same time, the possession of a 'national' language does not secure a coherent national solidarity. A nation is not only, or necessarily, a community speaking the same language. Yet, he pointed out that there are economic interests behind the expansion of a single and unified national language. For instance, he found a tendency towards the decline of bi-linguism because of the 'practical problems' created by the 'multi-lingual' character of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Weber 1970b: 179 and 1994b: 273). Weber (1970b: 176–8) also highlights how vernacular languages are important to both the state and the church, especially in the former gaining influence against the latter. Finally, he refers to the crucial role intellectuals have played in these processes and makes the point that 'the importance of language is necessarily increasing along with the democratization of the state, society and culture' (Weber 1970b: 178).

On the basis of a combination of his analysis of Germany and his more general comments on the subject, it should by now be clear that Weber's understanding of the nation-state is not methodologically nationalistic. The general thesis of this section is that of the nation-state's sociological equivocations because even if there is nothing to prevent nations and states to join, there is no guarantee on the success or time-span of their union. Weber thought that Germany was not really a nation-state yet and there was no certainty that it would ever be so either.

Equally, Weber's efforts to define the nation sociologically faced the problem of the nation's incredible empirical variability and we could see how hard he battled to find a centre for his concept of the nation. So, although he eventually defined the nation in relation to the politics of prestige, the concept of the state remained attached to the property of administrative means and remained separated from the nation. The nation and the state could be expected to come closer and closer in modernity but, from historical experience, Weber knew that they might fall victims of their own success – states expanding beyond the nation – or failure – nations failing to form states.

The position of politics in Weber's diagnosis of modernity

It is impossible to review, even sketchily, the many different themes on which Weber attempted to contribute. The comparative question of world-religions and the rationalisation of modern life; the social character of Ancient Civilisations; the question of the 'polytheism of values' and the relation between ideas and interests; epistemological and methodological questions on the objectivity of science; the rise of capitalism and bureaucracy are some of these topics and, taken together, they hardly constitute the scholarly agenda of a champion of the nation-state. A closer look to any of these themes could provide with the argument that Weber was in fact developing a kind of methodological universalism. He was more concerned with nature of modern social life in general than with the nation-state. In what follows, however, I shall concentrate on Weber's understanding of politics in the context of his reflections on the nature of modern social life because, had his sociology been methodologically nationalistic, it is that place where that would have made its appearance.

Weber's understanding of politics has to be made in the broader context of his conceptualisation of the rise of modernity and the transformation of culture in the West. The idea of the secularisation of modern culture centres on Weber's thesis of its fragmentation in different value spheres, each of which would be independent and autonomous from the others. Weber (1970a,c,d) starts from the fact that, in modernity, religion has lost its power as a unifying cultural framework. Religion holds no longer a privileged position for establishing the true and only meaning of life in the modern age. Secularisation brings about the disenchantment of culture and, with it, any attempt to find a unifying centre for modern culture is now doomed. This is what Weber calls (1970a: 147–8) the thesis of the polytheism of ultimate values. His argument, however, was not only that in modernity different value spheres are independent from one another but also that each sphere attempts 'to hold validity for *all* cultural practices' so, instead of partial worldviews, any of these value spheres become ' "sublimated" into total world views' (Charles Turner 1992: 89). All value spheres develop a kind of imperialistic logic as they try to control what happens outside their own particular realm.

The *tragedy* of modern culture lies thus in the fact that the differentiation between multiple spheres leads to a permanent battle among them. This is seen as

a real tragedy because each value sphere tries to embrace the others through the imposition of its particular value on the rest. The tragedy of culture is therefore a double tragedy. On the one hand, there is the question of the distance between ultimate values and the world *within* each sphere. There is always a loss in the transition from abstract values to the world so, when values are put into practice, the process is necessarily imperfect. On the other hand, there is the problem of the 'sublimation' of values. This is the second, more important part of the tragedy of culture in which each sphere strives, but fails, to steer or unify the world outside itself. The real struggle of the modern culture is the drama, the inevitability and impossibility, of human beings attempting to produce a unified account of culture with which to answer the question of the ultimate meaning of life.

Weber (1970d) distinguished six value spheres: Religion, economics, politics, aesthetics, the erotic and the intellectual. All of these spheres have the same analytical status but, from the point of view of their substantive content, three of them stand above the rest. Religion, the intellectual (which in turn is divided into science and philosophy) and politics have a different status from the angle of the meaning of their ultimate values. In other words, religion, science and politics have no special position regarding the *causes* of social change and none can at any point become the unifying core of culture. Yet, there is something intrinsic to their worldviews which bears special consequences for the unfolding of the tragedy of modern culture. In discussing Weber's idea of politics within the context of his diagnosis of modernity I think that further light will be shed into the question of Weber's theory of the nation-state.[27]

Religion's special status, first, is based on its 'transcendental' point of view. Weber chose religion as the central value sphere for his analysis of modern culture precisely because, historically, the answers to the question of the meaning of life have been primarily religious. Religion's imperialistic relationship with the other spheres lies in its claim to the ultimate unity of the world under religious guidance. In Weber's (1970c: 271–8) view, religion is primarily concerned with the meaning of the world in the light of good fortune and, especially, of suffering and injustice. The main demand being made upon religion is that 'the world order in its totality is, could, and should somehow be a meaningful "cosmos"' and, in an increasingly rationalised conception of the modern world, religion is moved 'into the realm of the irrational' (Weber 1970c: 281). The original 'unity of the primitive image of the world [. . .] has tended to split into rational cognition and mastery of nature, on the one hand, and into "mystic" experiences, on the other' (Weber 1970c: 282). The tension between religion and other value spheres is based upon religion's rejection of its own position as only one sphere among others. Religion keeps claming universal validity for itself and only for itself because it presupposes that 'a religious ethics is the only perspective from which the world's existence could be justified' (Charles Turner 1992: 88). Weber's theses of the secularisation of culture and of the disenchantment of the world are the result of the transformations within the religious sphere and its relationship with the other cultural ambits.

The intellectual sphere, second, stands on the claim that it is the only able to reflect upon the values of the other spheres. Weber (1970d: 350) recognises the

fact that it is in relation to the intellectual sphere that religion faces its 'greatest and most principled' tension. Indeed, he is aware of the fact that his own thesis of the value spheres emerges from, and is legitimised by, universalistic philosophical theories and scientific methodological procedures. The intellectual sphere's imperialism with regards to the other value spheres corresponds to its self-understanding as the one sphere within which an accurate representation and explanation of the totality of culture can still be drawn. Weber's idea of the 'cultural significance' of science is 'the question of what effects the methodically secured growth of theoretical knowledge has on the development of the human mind and the cultural context of life as a whole' (Habermas 1984: 146). As said, Weber acknowledges the fact that the intellectual sphere was itself internally differentiated. Natural sciences, social sciences and philosophy all play different roles within the intellectual sphere. The natural sciences give 'us an answer to the question of what we must do if we wish to master life technically' (Weber 1970a: 144). They respond, and are culturally justified, to the need of technically controlling of the world. The social scientists, for their part, must state 'the internal structure of cultural values' (Weber 1970a: 146), that is, they must be able to describe the main trends of their own world and time. The philosopher's work, finally, consists in deriving 'the inner consistency, and hence integrity, from this or that ultimate *weltanschauliche* position'. His role is to tell how 'you serve this god and offend the other god' when people decide between different values; he must help the individual give 'himself an *account of the ultimate meaning of his own conduct*' (Weber 1970a: 151–2). For Weber, then, scholars should only claim to possess legitimate knowledge within their field of expertise. Scientists must refrain from answering 'the question of the *value* of culture [. . .] and the question of how one should act in the cultural community and in political associations' (Weber 1970a: 146).

There is, finally, the sphere of politics that also makes its imperialist claims on controlling the other value spheres. The grounds for this are altogether different from those of science and religion because, whilst they base it on transcendental or cognitive claims, politics does it on practical grounds. Weber's (1994c) conception of the nature of political action is that of a struggle for domination within which culture can be mastered and history pushed in a certain direction. Crucially, the thesis that politics is characterised by the use of specific means (i.e. violence) instead of ultimate values implies also that no credo can take the place of politics' ultimate value. It is precisely here, in the idea that 'the political' has to be defined only by its means and never through its purposes or values that the problem of Weber's alleged methodological nationalism becomes apparent again. On the one hand, as we have just seen, politics is not the centre of Weber's conception of modernity and culture. The thesis of the differentiation of value spheres runs explicitly against any such view of the centrality of politics. On the other hand, as long as the idea of the nation belongs to the realm of *ultimate values*, and politics is defined by the use of violence and domination as *means*, the nation is an integral part but not the core of Weber's conception of politics. The emphasis on violence in his idea of politics, plus the position of politics within Weber's broader diagnosis of modernity, should refrain us from understanding

his conceptualisation of nation-states as the natural, necessary and rational organising centre of modernity.

In trying to come to terms with the tension between 'Weber the scholar' and 'Weber the political man', then, there are his own ideas of science and politics which must to be taken into consideration. The crucial elements in Weber's idea of politics would come from his awareness of the fact that 'the ideals of others are as sacred to them as ours are to us' so that modern culture is 'a mosaic of domains of normativity' (Charles Turner 1992: 167). The core of Weber's idea of politics lies precisely in the struggle that comes from the recognition of its inner connection, and practical dealings, with violence. There are powerful strains that a political personality must resist if politics becomes his personal project in life: 'to have a vocation for politics is to commit oneself to an activity defined not in terms of the validity of a value, but in terms of an understanding of the tragic relationship between values and the resistances life offers to their actualisation' (Charles Turner 1992: 169). Had Weber granted a special status to politics in the context of his thesis of the value spheres, it would have to become apparent here, in the specific nature of the relationship between politics and the world.

At the same time, Weber's idea of the scholar is that of the person who is devoted '*solely* to the work at hand'; who really develops 'an inner devotion to the task'. Only such a rare kind of individual deserves the name of scholar (Weber 1970a: 137, Jaspers 1989). Weber's health and political activism seem to have made him aware of the fact that he himself did not deserve such name because he did not devote his life only to science. We have seen that he has a clear idea of the limitations of science's legitimate role in public life. The question is for him that we ask the sciences only that they can really provide: a technical understanding of the best means to achieve an end (in natural sciences) and a scrutiny into the position of values within particular social and cultural contexts (for the social sciences). Conversely, his scholarly passion and lack of will for power prevented him from embracing a fuller political engagement. It is on the idea of *Beruf*, in its double meaning of *calling* and *profession*, where the modern personality should find its position in the world. And it seems that Weber himself was never able to resolve the inner tension of wanting to be a true politician and an exemplary scholar while knowing, tragically, of the impossibility and dangers of trying to serve faithfully both gods at the same time.

Conclusion

Weber seemed to have understood well that several forms of social relations and identity had already been taken as the nation's core. Physical appearance, culture, language, religion and class have all claimed to represent the nation but none of them was adequate for a sociological account of the subject. The nation is for Weber a type of political community that is based on sentiments of prestige and yet, even if nations need to be defined in relation to some form of political communities, the relationship between the two remained full of complications: 'The more power is emphasised, the closer appears to be the link between nation and state. This pathetic pride in the power of one's own community' (Weber 1978: 398).

At the more analytical level, moreover, Weber did not need the nation to conceptualise the modern state. Modern states are characterised by the fact that the staff is separated from the means of administration and also by the specific means states use to fulfil their tasks: violence. Weber also asserted that the nation-state did not work as the natural and unproblematic reference for the dynamics of power politics. When powerful and strong, states expand beyond the nation's limits and they become multi-national *Empires.* When states are weak and forsake power, populations living within these states can hardly be conceived of as nation-states either. Weber seems to have understood one particular aspect of opacity of the nation-state's position in modernity: the *sociological equivocations* which underline the attempts at unifying nation and state into a single socio-political arrangement.

In the second part of the chapter, I argued that the position of politics within Weber's work must be linked with his broader diagnostic of the disenchantment and rationalisation of the world. Again in this case, I do not think that this concept of politics coincides with, or can be reduced to, the nation. Rather, it seems to be based on violence as politics' specific means. In asserting the tension between scholarship and politics in Weber's work, it may have become clear that Weber struggled throughout his life to come to terms with the ultimate values and inner vocation that each of these two activities demanded from individuals. The claim that either politics or science was instrumental to the substantive ends of the other just does not do justice to Weber's overall project and its universalistic orientation. The chapter comes together in having traced some positive contributions of Weber to an understanding of the nation-state that neither presupposes nor requires regarding the nation-state as the final and necessary result of modernity's development. In so doing, there is no need to deny the importance of Weber's political nationalism. Weber the scholar would have been happy with it in so far as this neither undermined nor over-determined his sociological work.

5 Emile Durkheim (1857–1917)

Moral universalism and the normative ambiguity of the nation-state

In the same way as with the previous two chapters of this part on classical social theory, this one is devoted to draw some substantive lessons from Emile Durkheim's work on the opacity of the nation-state in modernity. Durkheim's interest in the life and fate of the French Third Republic was not only academic but also political. His politics remained nationalistic throughout his life and therefore an understanding of the relationship between Durkheim's politics and scholarship must be one of this chapter's aims. A strong normative claim to universalism – at the levels of individual autonomy, national self-determination and cosmopolitanism – was central in Durkheim's approach to politics and it is this moral universalism that constitutes the core of his understanding of the *normative ambiguity* of the nation-state.

The first section of the chapter argues that an idea of crisis, a social and political *malaise*, is the bottom line of Durkheim's epochal diagnostic. His problem, as a sociologist, was to understand the sources of the crisis and we shall review these by analysing Durkheim's engagement with the major political events of his time – the Dreyfus Affair and the First World War. The purpose is not only to expand on the question of the connections between politics and scholarship within his work but also to address more directly one of the crucial aspects of Durkheim's social theory: the attempt to combine descriptive and normative arguments. Despite all the shortcomings of his political nationalism, his anti-German chauvinism, and his idea of humanity, Durkheim never surrendered in his effort to make normative and sociological arguments work together. Politics and scholarship come together in Durkheim's writings through the argument that France's *national* role was that of pursuing a kind *universalistic* morality – an emergent cosmopolitan or global consciousness.

The second part of the chapter comes directly to terms with Durkheim's sociology of the nation-state. The core argument here is Durkheim's distinction between national and world patriotisms and the role of the nation-state in the actualisation of universalistic moral values. A main lesson to be drawn from Durkheim's social theory of the nation-state is how abstract moral ideals such as cosmopolitanism become anchored in smaller forms of socio-political arrangements. The normative ambiguity of the nation-state lies in the fact that the moral universalistic basis for its legitimacy must come, internally, from its internal

democratic organisation and, externally, from its upholding of cosmopolitan principles.

Understanding the sociological and moral nature of the modern *malaise*

Durkheim devoted great efforts to the establishment of academic sociology. He was crucial in the institutionalisation of sociology within the French university system and in the formation of a generation of young scholars who would embrace sociology (Durkheim 1964c: xlii; Burke 1990: 13–19; Thompson 1982: 17–18). And, in so doing, he counted with decided governmental support, his influence being at is peak just before the outbreak of the First World War (Lepenies 1988: 51–3, 64–5; Pickering and Martins 1994: 2). It was from this position of influence that he expected sociology to contribute to the design of the institutional reform of the French state (Durkheim 1964b: 33, 1973a,b).[28] Indeed, the life of the French Third Republic, between 1870 and 1914, was full of problems and contradictions. Its beginning was marked by France's defeat in the war against Prussia and the violence experienced during the uprising of the Paris Commune. Both events led to a sense of decadence that was felt not only economically (as compared to England) but also educationally and militarily (in relation to Germany). The end of the Republic was intimately related to the outbreak of the First World War. There was at the time a generalised sense of social and political malaise in the country (Durkheim 1992: 96; Jones 1999: 32, 43–4; Llobera 1994a: 142–4).

Durkheim (1970: 37) felt strongly about the urgency of these problems. His view of the *malaise* is represented in such 'pathological' social phenomena as an abnormal division of labour, anomie and the misery in the living conditions of the working class. Sociologically, for example, the central thesis of his *The Division of Labour in Society* has to do with understanding the 'moral crisis' being experienced in society because of the transition from one form of social solidarity to another (Durkheim 1964b: 34). Politically, Durkheim (1959: 7) analyses socialism as 'a cry of grief, sometimes of anger, uttered by men who feel most keenly our collective *malaise*'. The truly *moral* character of Durkheim's diagnosis of the malaise, however, helps him transcend pure pessimism. Although it is true that there is an 'ambivalence between optimism and gloom' (Miller 1996: 9) in his judgement, Durkheim's belief in the inner normative condition of social life and the emergence of new forms of social solidarity allow him space for hope as part of the diagnosis of the crisis. Durkheim's view of the solution to the crisis was based on neither some sort of regressive utopia nor a teleological conception of a future social order (Fenton 1984: 8). The Third Republic saw itself as a continuation of the philosophical legacy of 1789, which meant for Durkheim the challenge of coming seriously to terms with the inevitability of social change *vis-à-vis* its positive and negative consequences (Durkheim 1959: 66; 1973c).

Durkheim believed in progress, justice and democracy and this prevents us from placing his work within any conservative framework.[29] The fact that he also

believed in the capitalist division of labour, the authority of the state, the rule of law and the necessity of social and moral integration invalidates any interpretation that makes him a radical intellectual. Some of his students and friends were indeed socialists and he supported social reform but this is still not enough to maintain that he was far on the left (Mauss 1959: 2–3). In fact, I believe that there is a problem in the very argument of the centrality of politics for understanding Durkheim's social theory. Any such claim is bound to fall permanently back to the problem of radicalism versus conservatism.[30] In contradistinction to that, my position is that Durkheim's idea of the malaise does not fit into this division precisely because it imposes a methodologically nationalistic framework upon Durkheim's thought. Durkheim's central aim was to connect moral universalism – which included the principles of individual freedom, national self-determination and cosmopolitanism – with workable legal frameworks and viable socio-political arrangements. Durkheim's epochal diagnosis makes apparent that the specificity of his social theory lies in the ways in which he tries to combine *sociological* and *normative* arguments and this is my argument about his conceptualisation of the normative ambiguity of the nation-state's position in modernity. How and why this is the case shall become clearer as we look at some of Durkheim's more direct engagements in politics.

Durkheim only rarely took part in everyday politics. His concerns, rather, were with the major political issues of his time, mostly the Dreyfus Affair and the First World War (Bellah 1973: liii). The Dreyfus Affair, first, has been seen as a crucial moment in the history of the Third Republic (Cobban 1965: 48–58; Jones 1993: 154–8). At the time of the case, in the 1890s, there was an important right-wing nationalist movement in France. For this group, Germany was France's main external foe, socialists and masons were internal enemies and the Jews were in their usually awkward position of being 'truly' neither French nor foreigners. In terms of its social composition, these French nationalism were mostly Roman Catholic, middle class, urban and comprised a big portion of the officialdom in the Army. Intellectuals, on the other hand, were at that time mainly supporting the Republic and stood against the nationalists (Bryan Turner 1992: xv). Yet, the opposition to right-wing nationalism did not restrain intellectuals from linking their republicanism with strictly *patriotic* sentiments and it has been documented that this was Durkheim's position (Fenton 1984: 12; Jones 2001: 111).

Durkheim's ([1898] 1973d) paper *Individualism and the Intellectuals* was published during the Dreyfus Affair and on occasion of the case. It was conceived of as a response to a previous article by a right wing and anti-Dreyfusiard scholar, Ferdinand Brunetière (1849–1906). Durkheim's article begins with a passionate defence for the rights of all individuals to decide political and moral issues for themselves. Against Brunetière's claim that individualism was the source of France's moral crisis, Durkheim (1973d: 43) supported the argument that intellectuals trying to defend Dreyfus must place 'their reason above authority'. Durkheim's view was that Brunetière's critique of individualism was flawed because it did not differentiate between individualism and utilitarianism, the latter being the reduction of moral individualism into egoistic economism and therefore

a position to be forcefully rejected. True individualism, conversely, was the tradition rooted in the philosophies of Kant and Rousseau. It was the framework that provided inspiration to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the form of individualism that 'has become the basis of our moral catechism' (Durkheim 1973d: 45). The argument is that it is mistaken to conflate the two doctrines into one and, in attacking individualism without distinguishing it from utilitarianism, the conservatives perpetrate both a mistake and a fallacy. They make the mistake of being unable to separate two very different political doctrines and the fallacy of trying to undermine the *philosophical* version of individualism by criticising only the *economic* utilitarian position. Durkheim's (1973d: 48–9) argument goes even further as he claims that moral individualism and utilitarianism are indeed opposite doctrines. *Duty* rather than *desire* prevails in true individualism and the foundations of moral individualism can only be anchored in such feelings as sympathy, pity and thirst for justice. Moreover, Durkheim believed that the affirmation of the autonomy of reason is not only compatible with, but also a precondition of, the respect of authority because authority itself must be rationally constituted. Moral individualism forms the rational grounds on which authority can be established and only morally autonomous individuals can form a healthy society based on a virtuous relationship between individual freedom and authority.

We come closer to understanding the relationship of this discussion with Durkheim's conceptualisation of the nation-state as we see that he stated that, for the foundation of a legitimate authority, a moral common ground was needed. As traditional religions such as Catholicism could no longer provide the minimum of moral consensus that was now required, this common ground was to be established upon the idea of a 'religion of humanity' that was based on the universalistic principles of moral individualism. The argument is that the authority of this new secular religion must be attached to, and supported by, the *moral* authority of state (Durkheim 1973d: 51). The feelings of transgression of these sentiments would undermine social cohesion, which in turn would erode the authority of the state. The article ends with Durkheim arguing for the relationship between moral individualism and the national project he believed France represented. As the country of the Revolution and the Rights of Man, the risk of opposing this individualism was to threaten France's own national existence (Durkheim 1973c). France is the country where the cause of the individual coincides with the national one: 'if there is a country among all others where the cause of individualism is truly national, it is our own; for there is no other which has created such rigorous solidarity between its fate and the fate of these ideas' (Durkheim 1973d: 54).

The analytical question with regard to this last quotation is where the explanatory emphasis must be placed. It is my view that Durkheim values highly, and thus intends to preserve, the substantive conception of individual moral autonomy and freedom that is at the root of the versions of individualism, republicanism and humanism for which he advocated. In other words, Durkheim's moral individualism applies to humankind in general and not to the citizens of any specific nation. Even recognising the problems his formulation contains with regard to political nationalism, the argument is that the worth of these values is based on their claim

to universality and not on the fact that they are particularly French. What makes the French national project viable in world historical terms is that the state had effectively embraced these values as its own – but it does not follow from Durkheim's argument that France is the only nation-state that can represent these values. The state has to respect both the internal morality of the civil society and the external mores of foreign peoples (Giddens 1986: 21–3). The substantive lesson to be taken from this is that the normative legitimacy of the nation-state is based on the universalistic core behind such ideas as *individual freedom*, *national self-determination* and – as we shall see in the next section of this chapter – *cosmopolitanism*. There are however difficulties when these three, equally important, principles are simultaneously actualised and then enter into competition. It is indeed the purpose of the state to make these three principles as compatible as possible and yet, as soon as they clash, as they are bound to, the normative ambiguity of the nation-state becomes apparent. Durkheim's argument is that there is no clear-cut solution for the conflicts between these principles as they all are equally based on moral universalism. In a rather paradoxical way, then, the more *politically* nationalistic Durkheim's arguments became – that is, the more he defended the project of a strong French nation-state based on this threefold argument of moral universalism – the less he could conceive of the nation-state as such in any methodologically nationalistic way.

These issues are given further expression in Durkheim's (1915) *Germany above all*, a little pamphlet written to explicate the causes of the First World War to the French public. As with the case of the article on the Dreyfus Affair, that book can be read not only as a political treatise – now in support of France's war effort – but also as a sociological essay against methodological nationalism. Politically, Durkheim (1915: 44–5) takes the work of Heinrich Treitschke (1834–1896) as the ultimate representation of the development of a German mentality by which 'a morbid hypertrophy of the will' expresses itself as an 'attempt to rise "above all human forces" to master them and exercise full and absolute sovereignty over them'. With this, Durkheim (1915: 4) says, Germany has departed from 'the great family of civilized peoples' and therefore it is not only in France's interest, but in the interest of humanity itself, to oppose the expansion of Germany. As a social theory of the nation-state, however, Durkheim's book is an explicit rejection of the idea of the nation-state as a self-contained unit and as *the* major organising centre of modern social life. Indeed, Durkheim (1915: 7–8) regards as one of Treitschke's gravest mistakes the fact that in his 'way of conceiving of the State [. . .] it must be completely self-sufficient'. Durkheim expands on the question of the centrality Treitschke's attributes to the idea of self-sufficiency because his argument was as pragmatic – the 'State is power' (Durkheim 1915: 19) – as it was normative: 'the State is not under the jurisdiction of the moral conscience, and should recognise no law but its own interest' (Durkheim 1915: 18).

Durkheim thoroughly opposed Treitschke's conception of a self-sufficient state on the basis that no genuinely universalist conception of morality can be grounded only on statist or nationalistic premises. Morality, Durkheim (1915: 23) argues, is based on 'the realisation of humanity, its liberation from the servitudes that belittle it'. Durkheim (1915: 24) understands that core to the Christian

tradition is the fact that 'there are hardly any great divinities who are not to some extent international.' The religion of humanity in which Durkheim is interested fuses with neither the state nor the nation. Rather, all efforts must be made to transcend the highly possible but by no means inevitable paradox between a commitment towards human values and patriotism towards one's own nation (see next section).

Durkheim's position with regard to international politics, then, is based equally on descriptive and normative arguments. For the former, the industrial revolution played a major role; pacifism has to be pursued in order to avoid the ' "wasteful" expenditure of war' (Layne 1973: 99). Durkheim follows Kant closely here as he argues that industrial development, technological improvements and prosperity have arisen together and require the pacific reorganisation of Europe (Durkheim 1959: 130–1). On the normative side, and also following Kant, there is a 'perpetual-peace' type of pacifism: 'the evolution of modern society has produced a wider horizon for human consciousness as human beings become conscious of their involvement in "humanity" on a global scale [...] Durkheim anticipated the idea of political globalization on the basis of a universalistic notion of humanity' (Bryan Turner 1992: xxxv). The nation-state should turn away from old tendencies to imperialist expansion and focus on social justice and the full development of their citizenry (Jones 2001: 60, 181; Thompson 1982: 153–4). Durkheim believed in the compatibility between a republican organisation of the state and international harmony. And yet, as we have seen, he thoroughly supported France's war effort on the ground of defending these same historical developments and moral principles.

Indeed, Durkheim's formulations contain their own problems, some of which he could have seen at his time and did not solve satisfactorily (for instance, his naivety in dealing with the relationships between 'altruist' patriotism and 'fanatic' nationalism) and certainly others which were just beyond his historical time (such as the limitations of his rather metaphysic use of universalistic concepts). Moreover, Durkheim seems to have become more nationalistic as he grew older; the destiny of France and its Republic came increasingly to be seen as the destiny of civilisation – and thus the chauvinism of this formulation has duly been criticised (Joas 2003: 69–71). The most important argument for this section is that in spite of all these problems, no conflation was made between political and methodological nationalism. Even in his writings on the causes of the war Durkheim did not use the nation-state as the natural or necessary representation of society in modernity. The crucial thesis is that the nation-state takes its normative value in relation and only in relation to universalistic principles and ideals: individual freedom, collective (national) self-determination and a cosmopolitan conception of humanity. A major feature of Durkheim's social theory of the nation-state is that he emphasised the fact that these universalistic values could only be effective if actualised through particular forms of modern socio-political arrangements.

National patriotism and cosmopolitanism

The set of lectures edited in English as *Professional Ethics and Civil Morals* can be read as Durkheim's (1992) sociological account of political life and the

modern state. Although these notes were not thought of as a book – they were published posthumously in French (but in Turkey) just in 1950 – the fact that they were given at different moments during Durkheim's career can be taken as a sign of his satisfaction with the main theses being exposed there (Llobera 1994a: 136). The book has two aims. First, it provides a definition of several of the main concepts of political theory such as the state, the nation, political society and democracy. Second, the text sets what we can refer to as Durkheim's social theory of modern political life as it deals, descriptively *and* normatively, with the question of the political organisation of complex societies.

Durkheim's (1992: 2) starting point is his query into how sanctions are created and why they are important for social life. Sanctions, he says, place abstract moral ideals into particular social contexts. They express the inner normative condition of social life because sanctions let us understand the way in which society organises the treatment of those who transgress valid norms. The core distinction of that book, that between professional ethics and civil morals, draws precisely upon this understanding of sanctions as both normative oriented and practically organised. All individuals, as fellow citizens in a political society governed by a state, are attached to two sets of rules. One is abstract and defined by their general and equal condition as citizens – the civic morals – whereas the other is more particular and related to the different economic function they fulfil – the professional ethics. Let me first deal with the latter.

In relation to professional ethics, Durkheim (1992: 9–10) holds that not every secondary group can produce the regulations it requires. While the professions closely linked to the administration of the state can usually succeed in doing so (the legal trade, the army and civil servants in general), those professional associations closer to the economy, namely industry and trade, are hardly able to define norms in the level and form that is required. Professional ethics do not arise naturally in these fields because competition rather than cooperation is the natural form of interaction in the economy. Individuals and groups devoted to productive activities, however, still have the need for 'a moral power capable of containing individual egos, of maintaining a spirited sentiment of common solidarity in the consciousness of all the workers, of preventing the law of the strongest from being brutally applied to industrial and commercial relations' (Durkheim 1964a: 10). The argument is that, at earlier times in history, economic functions had been subordinated to political power, military might or religious control and could therefore be regulated, more or less successfully, from these other fields. The economy lacked autonomy and thus economic groupings had no need to create their own norms and codes of conduct.

In modernity, however, due to the increasing primacy of the division of labour, no externally imposed regulation on the economy can insufflate it with a moral sense to curb effectively potential anomic behaviour (Durkheim 1959: 109–10). No system of norms that remains functional to the requirements of complex economic relations can be imposed from above by the state or another agency. Rather, such a system has to be created by the very organisations that participate in everyday economic activities. Professional associations are the only groups

that can do so because, as they are part of economic life, they have both the practical knowledge to make the rules efficient and understand that competition ought to be fair. But professional associations will only be able to deal with this task if they are re-created. They cannot be organised along the old medieval guilds because the universalistic moral drive that is now needed was not found in these previous forms of organisation. Rather, the kind of organic solidarity upon which these associations must now be based can only arise from the fact that people start performing similar economic functions (Durkheim 1959: 67; 1992: 14–20). Surely, this is consistent with the better-known sociological version of the same argument: organic solidarity is the specific form of moral regulation arising from people performing similar economic tasks. These institutions, moreover, are no longer seen as private but now become public; their primary function is moral instead of economic. The state is the agency that must set a framework for the correct functioning of all professional groups and the expectation was that these secondary groups would close the gap between the actions of state and those of the individual. In terms of their administrative organisation, professional associations are located beyond local or municipal districts. They must link the country together and thus Durkheim (1964a: 27–8) refers to them as 'national corporate bodies'.

> Society, instead of remaining what it is today, an aggregate of juxtaposed territorial districts, would become a vast system of national corporations [. . .] it will be seen, indeed, how, as advances are made in history, the organization which has territorial groups as its base (village or city, district, province, etc.) steadily becomes effaced [. . .] These geographical divisions are, for the most part, artificial and no longer awaken in us profound sentiments, the provincial spirit has disappeared never to return; the patriotism of the parish has become an archaism that cannot be restored at will.

The second part of the book, centred on the civic morals, begins with the distinction between the state and political society. That is, the differentiation between the governing body and the governed: 'we should then define the political society as one formed by the coming together of a rather large number of secondary social groups, subject to the same one authority which is not in itself subject to any other superior authority duly constituted' (Durkheim 1992: 44–5). This definition reinforces the role of secondary associations in the organisation of the state, which is in turn defined as 'the organising centre of the secondary groups themselves' (Durkheim 1992: 49). He stresses that, although decisions taken by the state involve the political society, the specificity of the state lies in its capacity of volition and deliberation. Executive tasks are the responsibility of the different officials within the state.[31]

The question of the balance between state control and individual freedom reappears here as one of the crucial normative tensions in Durkheim's political sociology. On the one hand, the development of differentiated professional ethics makes clear that, with the division of labour, the gap between the individual and

the state increases. On the other hand, the granting of individual rights can only be secured by the state: 'the stronger the State, the more the individual is respected' (Durkheim 1992: 57). The thesis is that there are no natural rights of the individual at the moment of birth; these rights arise and are held secure only by the state. In Durkheim's (1992: 68–9) own words:

> There was no exaggeration in saying that our moral individuality, far from being antagonistic to the State, has on the contrary been a product of it [...] the fundamental duty of the State is laid down in this very fact: it is to persevere in calling the individual to a moral way of life.

Durkheim emphasises the moral character of the state. The constitution of the *modern* state produces a specific kind of ethical life that takes individual moral freedom as its highest value. In fact, the centrality of the question of the relationship between the collective and the individual is permanent in Durkheim's work as it is explicitly stated in the introductions of both *The Division of Labour in Society* – 'this work has its origins in the question of the relations of the individual to social solidarity' (Durkheim 1964b: 37) – and *Suicide* 'there can be no sociology unless societies exist, and that societies cannot exist if there are only individuals' (Durkheim 1970: 38). He recognised a tension between individualism and collectivism at the core of the constitution of modernity because the 'two fundamental principles' of the French Revolution are those of 'individualism' and 'statism' (Durkheim 1959: 66). Yet, his particular form of collectivism is represented in his positive assessment of the relationship between individuals and the state. Durkheim's republicanism led him to see no evil in the 'normal' development of the state and he was permanently looking for 'healthy' ways of mediating between individual freedom and state control. Durkheim seems to have in mind a model in which state officials mediate in the relationship between individuals and the state from the point of view of the state, whereas secondary groups also mediate in that relationship but now from the individuals' side.

The question of the social foundation of individualism has been marked as one of the crucial tensions in Durkheim's understanding of modern social life and the problem of his potential methodological nationalism crucially arises here. Robert Bellah (1965: 174), for instance, has made the argument that in Durkheim 'society equals God' and that to the question of 'what would be the referent to which sacred symbols refer? Durkheim replied "society", and as the most comprehensive functioning society "the nation" '. Despite this strong association between nation and state, even Bellah recognises here that this equation between the 'society-god' and the' nation' is really only half of the story: 'Durkheim was keenly aware of the danger of demonic nationalism. And his "social" includes [...] more than the concrete existing society: it included ideals. Thus Durkheim held that which is sacred for us is the nation *insofar as* it embodies the ideal of humanity' (Bellah 1965: 174). The nature of the problem is well expressed, for instance, in the claim that Durkheim would rather have been looking for 'a religion without God [...] it is society which, for him, incarnates the highest

good, the principle of individualism' (Richter 1964: 203). In this argument, society is god because it gives birth to individual rights; the emphasis is quite directly on individualism (Bach 1990: 191–4; Wallace 1990). Moral individualism would be at the roots of the legitimisation of the state, which in turn has to guarantee individual rights and freedom. Individual rights play a key role in social integration and the type of legitimisation that is needed in modern societies is to be achieved through a 'quasi-religious' institutionalisation of moral individualism, the roots of which would be in the revolution of 1789 (Tiryakian 1979: 190–1). The real duty of a democratic state would be to promote the 'individuals' self-realization' (Giddens 1986: 9) and Durkheim's view would have been that state intervention in social life should focus primarily on increasing individual freedom (Thompson 1982: 153). According to Gianfranco Poggi (2000: 86), finally, 'Durkheim conceptualizes society as the set of *minded* patterns affecting the interactions of human individuals.' The core of Durkheim's conception of society is that

> Society is the sum total of norms; it exists in so far as individuals' compliance with those norms is chiefly motivated by their sense that they ought to comply with them [...] people can develop and sustain a capacity for self-transcendence. That capacity is not innate to them: it must be *socialized* into them by educational institutions.
>
> (Poggi 2000: 91)

It can therefore come as no surprise that in some recent literature this tension between collectivism and individualism has been expressed as the thesis of Durkheim's communitarian defence of 'liberalism' (Cladis 1992) or 'individualism' (Miller 1996). It is as though Durkheim came up with a thesis on the *co-originality* between modern states and modern individuals. A modern state is one which is able to enhance individual life and protect it from despotic or tyrannical developments and a modern individual finds ethical fulfilment in collective life organised around the state. This thesis of the co-originality can be based on two alternative interpretations of Durkheim's understanding of the nation-state's position in modernity. The first would argue that the nation-state is the ultimate locus and necessary organising centre of modern social life because it is the only agency that is able to give adequate shape to the relationships between collective and individual life. The claim here is that this co-originality is a product of the rise of the nation-state, which must thus become the necessary representation of society in modernity. A different interpretation, to oppose rather than endorse methodological nationalism, would be that his conception of the nation-state is not that of a framework or container of modern social life but that of a mediating agency that tries to handle social relations. In my view, no understanding of the opacity of the nation-state is possible without paying the required attention to the *normative ambiguity* that is expressed in the struggle to make compatible the organisational and normative dimensions of modern social life. I would now like to substantiate my support for the latter interpretation by looking directly at Durkheim's conceptualisation of the nation-state.

To begin with, it must be acknowledged that Durkheim's (1959: 43) conception of the nation-state is forcefully modernist: 'it is only when the great European peoples were formed and centralized that one saw the state simultaneously administer multitudes of peoples and diverse services.' Peoples do not precede their states; they are themselves formed along with the process of state centralisation. A nationality is thus defined as a group sharing a certain worldview but without a political bond and it is only when the nationality overlaps with the state that a nation is actually born. A *patrie* emerges out of the integration of *moral sentiments* into the newly formed nation. The *patrie* is therefore not a community of culture but rather a collective actor based on the combination between a moral sentiment and a political bond. The constitution of *patries* is the process of constant enlargement of political units since the medieval times. *Patries* are not fixed to territories and actually existing socio-political arrangements but rather are constituted, and evolve, in relation to changes in moral sentiments. Although common culture is a factor that might help in their constitution, Durkheim saw it only as an auxiliary condition in the formation of a *patrie*. He rejected the notion of a community of culture or an ethnic principle in the constitution of the nation as the question was to avoid chauvinism and to stay away from the doctrine of aggressiveness among states: 'national exclusivism has to be excised from patriotism' (Llobera 1994a: 152; Peyre 1964: 29).

In fact, to Durkheim, sentiments towards one's own nation and towards humanity in general are 'equally high-minded kind of sentiments' and he refers positively to both of them as 'patriotism' and 'world patriotism' or 'cosmopolitanism' (Durkheim 1992: 72; 1964b: 33). Surely, competition among states created in the past, and still creates, rivalries and wars. The feelings towards one's own nationality and state can easily enter into conflict with the sentiments towards other groups and also towards the human species as such. But equally, he argued that there was no automatic opposition between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. He claimed that our current cosmopolitanism lies precisely in the fact of having understood that there is no necessary opposition between the nation and humanity: 'neither anti-patriotism nor nationalism are defendable positions' (Durkheim quoted in Layne 1973: 101).

There can be no universalistic moral sentiments without an appreciation of humanity and its privileged position within any ethical hierarchy. Cosmopolitan values are the most general, unchangeable and even sublime (Durkheim 1992: 72–3). Yet, as a sociologist, Durkheim's arguments could not and were not exclusively normative. He faced equally the problem of grounding these abstract moral values in really existing socio-political arrangements. The reproduction of social life is based on the fact that individuals have to live together under some kind of socio-political arrangement and no abstract notion of humanity is strong enough to create the social sources of moral sentiments. Durkheim's argument is that modern social life requires the creation of bonds around the idea of the *patrie*. That is, there is the need for a type of sentiment which is both morally justifiable and socio-politically viable. If the idea of humanity is missing, the result will be chauvinistic nationalism instead of morally sound *patriotism*. Universal values must be anchored in really existing communities, and Durkheim thought that the

nation-state was indeed one very important form of modern socio-political community. To be practical and useful, the regulation of social life has to be carried out within a certain scale and range, and, so far, that scale has been provided by the nation-state. Yet again, the identity of the state – national patriotism – must be centred on emphasising the worth of cosmopolitan human values. In Durkheim's (1992: 74–5) own words:

> If each State had as it chief aim, not to expand, or to lengthen its borders, but to set its own house in order and to make the widest appeal to its members for a moral life on a ever higher level, then all discrepancy between national and human morals would be excluded. If the State had no other purpose than making men of its citizens, in the widest sense of the term, the civic duties would be only a particular form of the general obligations of humanity. It is this course that evolution takes, as we have already seen. The more societies concentrate their energies inwards, on the interior life, the more they will be diverted from the disputes that bring a clash between cosmopolitanism – or world patriotism, and patriotism; as they grow in size and get greater complexity, so will they concentrate more and more on themselves [...] societies can have their pride, not in being the greatest or the wealthiest, but in being the most just, the best organized and in possessing the best moral constitution.

Even if Durkheim was against any kind of philosophy of history (Davy 1992: lxi), this last quotation can be read as carrying on a sense of soft teleology in the confluence between national patriotism and world patriotism and again on this theme his views are not too far apart from Kant's views on cosmopolitanism. Yet, it is not altogether clear what Durkheim thought about the future of the nation-state. It has been argued, for instance, that the bonds between the individual and the nation are becoming increasingly weaker. In this view, the nation-state loses ground along with the evolution of modernity and the growing importance of supranational spheres of action (Bach 1990: 190–1). It was therefore possible to foresee an evolution towards the decline of national differences say, as the expansion of the division of labour at a global scale will lead eventually to the formation of some form of supranational community (Fenton 1984: 41). Others hold that Durkheim anticipated a 'European or even the human *patrie*', even though he would have not resolved the tension of whether 'we should strive to achieve these *patries* in formation, or rather, try to preserve jealously the independence of the *patrie* to which we belong' (Llobera 1994a: 150). For the purposes of this chapter, however, the point remains that Durkheim's social theory emphasises the normative ambiguity of the nation-state as a modern form of socio-political arrangement.

Conclusion

In his reconstruction of the epistemological foundations of Durkheim's social theory, Robert A. Jones (1999: 93) refers to 'Durkheim's constant preoccupation with the idea of society [...as] the most concrete, well-defined group of which

we are members – i.e., the modern nation-state' (Jones 1999: 94). At the normative level, Jones also attributes to Durkheim the thesis that society, that is, the nation-state, is 'both a necessary and a sufficient moral entity' (Jones 1999: 93). This is indeed a rather crude version of methodological nationalism. Throughout this chapter, however, I have maintained the opposite argument; namely, that Durkheim's moral universalism is an attempt to transcend the thesis of society as this necessary and sufficient moral entity and to move beyond the idea of the nation-state as the ultimate representation of society in modernity. Durkheim recognises the tension between the national and the international and his idea of a secular substitute for traditional religions was not uncritically attached to the nation-state but to moral universalism at the individual, national and cosmopolitan levels. Normatively as well as descriptively, his social theory tries to understand how moral universalism can be expressed *through* national particularisms. On the one hand, Durkheim stresses that any project for eliciting social solidarity is doomed if it is decoupled from really existing socio-political communities. On the other, he feels at ease with a rather thick conception of national identity only in so far as it is committed to respect the individual and takes humanity as its final aim. Durkheim remains aware of the elusiveness and equivocations surrounding the nation-state; he just does not know, for instance, 'when this kind of [world] patriotism could prevail without dissent, if indeed a time could ever come' (Durkheim 1992: 75). This is of course another expression of the complicated ways in which the mediations between political and methodological nationalism have appeared in these three chapters on classical social theory.

One of Durkheim's crucial problems seems to have been the emergence of a new social order in which neither the past (religion, tradition) nor the future (socialism, a single world society) was able to take the role of orientating politics. There is no doubt that Durkheim was truly concerned with the social and political crisis of the French nation-state, but he was also well aware of the fact that both the diagnostic and possible remedies to that crisis were to be found in questions such as industrialism and moral individualism, none of which took the nation-state as its core. Regardless of how concerned he was for the fate of France, the intellectual core of Durkheim's social theory has proved independent from any methodologically nationalistic framework. Durkheim's argument of France being the representation of humanity – the more so in the context of his idea of Germany's departure from the family of 'civilised nations' – is problematic in its own right. Yet, this did not lead him into a position where the nation-state was taken as the final and necessary representation of modern socio-political arrangements. Durkheim's insight into the ways in which universalistic values have to be anchored in real socio-political arrangements cannot be undervalued. To him, it seems to have mattered less whether people were living in nation-states or not and more whether and how universalistic moral values could orientate socio-political arrangements so that to promote individual freedoms, democratic self-determination and peaceful international relations. The comprehension of the normative ambiguity that underlines the foundation of the nation-state is Durkheim's key contribution to understanding the opacity of the nation-state in modernity.

Part III

Modernist social theory

6 Talcott Parsons (1902–1979)

The totalitarian threat to the nation-state

The importance of Talcott Parsons in the course of contemporary social theory can hardly be exaggerated. Regardless of whether we see more recent developments in the field as a continuation or as a reaction against Parsonianism, the fact remains that he is arguably the key figure in the transition from classical to contemporary social theory. This same centrality makes particularly relevant to understand the extent to which Parsons' conceptualisation of the nation-state's position in modernity can be charged with methodological nationalism. To reach such an assessment is precisely the aim of this chapter.

In the first section, it is argued that Parsons' understanding of the nation-state is that of a specifically modern yet unstable form of socio-political arrangement. He conceived of the nation-state as one key institutional development of the Western world; as a form of social order whose existence could not be taken for granted. Nor did he think that its permanence was teleologically secured. I shall discuss some claims in recent secondary literature that show the reasons why Parsons' reflections on the main characteristics of the nation-state have to be placed in the context of his understanding of the rise of totalitarianism before and after the Second World War. Parsons' early awareness of the threat fascism posed to modernity had a long-lasting effect on his sociology. The common criticism to his work, that he overstated the level of social and normative integration within the nation-state, and that in so doing he underestimated the actuality of its conflicts, may thus be seen in a different way. Although Parson's idealisation of the nation-state is surely problematic, these difficulties seem also to be an expression of his awareness about how potentially unstable the nation-state can be.

The second section of the chapter is less historical and more analytical in scope. It deals with Parsons' conceptualisation of society and its main claim is that he hinted towards a use of society as a regulative ideal. Although he did not formulate this explicitly, Parsons seems to have realised that social theory required a strong conception of society that went beyond the *empirical* role of framing a geographical reference for historical analysis. Society played the *theoretically* more important role of conceptualising the nature of modern social relations. Parsons explicitly tried to translate the abstract idea of society into three more clearly defined concepts: social system, modern society and, indeed, the nation-state. In the overall interpretation advanced in this chapter, then, even

though the origins of methodological nationalism have been attributed to Parsonian sociology, Parsons' work is rather understood here as a critique of methodological nationalism.

A dual world order: totalitarian regimes and the democratic nation-state

Talcott Parsons' understanding of the nation-state is especially relevant for this reconstruction of social theory's methodological nationalism. As argued in Chapter 1, the first arguments on methodological nationalism arose in the context of the decline of Parsonian sociology in the early 1970s and the critique of methodological nationalism was developed, to an important extent, also as a critique of Parsonianism. We must review, then, whether this view of Parsonian social theory is tenable. Moreover, this modernist period is usually taken to represent a golden age for the discipline of sociology and, allegedly at least, for the nation-state as well. This is the time when sociology grew institutionally and produced the first explicit versions of its own canon along with systematic evaluations of the epochal diagnoses made by the previous generation.[32] Parsons' epochal diagnosis, however, is different from those of Marx, Weber and Durkheim. More than the explanation of the local and global rise of modernity from the breakdown of traditional forms of social life, which were the subjects that had captured the imagination of the previous generation of sociologists (Turner 1990), Parsons sought to understand and intervene in the functioning of the fully-fledged capitalist modernity. To Parsons, the American New Deal – in the form of a liberal and democratic nation-state – would be taken as a desirable form of *existing* social order, whereas fascism, and totalitarianism in general, were the major threats posed to the social and political form of the modern nation-state.

In fact, over the last two decades or so there have been two interpretations of Parsons' work that have made an important contribution to the understanding of Parsons' political concerns *vis-à-vis* the nation-state: those of Canadian political economist William Buxton (1985) and German sociologist Uta Gerhardt (1993, 1999, 2001, 2002; Gerhardt and Barber 1999). Despite differences, both writers have suggested that Parsons' sociology has to be understood within the framework of the clash between the capitalistic–democratic nation-state and authoritarian/totalitarian regimes. And they also equally claim that it makes little sense to try to grasp Parsons' deepest intellectual concerns without proper consideration of the world-politics within which his thinking developed. Similarly, both Buxton and Gerhardt have argued that secondary sources on Parsons' work have mostly ignored the connection between his political interests and his most theoretical work. According to Gerhardt (1999: 95–104), for instance, even sympathetic commentators have assumed that the evolution of Parsons' thought relates only to scholarly decisions and therefore has little to do with the politics of his time. Or, more critically, they have also argued that the changes in Parsons' intellectual concerns were the result of conscious decisions to forge an academic reputation for sociology – and thus for himself – at Harvard University

in the 1930s.[33] For Gerhardt (1999: 109), rather, from the mid-1930s on, Parsons sought to produce a

> Sociological analysis of Nazi society in terms of breakdown of institutional integration, authoritarianism, force as well as regression from universalism to particularism and specificity to diffuseness. Such policies, elucidating what Parsons himself endorsed when he supported New Deal liberalism in the 1930s, expressed [...] that social change through democratic modernization was the road forward in advanced industrial society.

Gerhardt's argument is that this awareness of the threat posed by Nazism to the democratic nation-state proved to be long-lasting for Parsons. He would have remained concerned throughout his career with the potential instability of democratic forms of social order and the ethical duty of social scientists to participate actively in strengthening democracy.[34] Nazism was a radical threat to modernity; the more radical as it arose from within modernity itself. This challenge imposed duties upon the citizenry in general and indeed a specific ethical demand upon social scientists. The role of the latter was to contribute to the strengthening of those institutions that are central for democracy and can prevent the rise of totalitarianism (Parsons 1993: 106, 124). The analysis of fascism in general, and Nazi Germany in particular, moreover, not only posed a major challenge to Parsons' abstract comprehension of modernity but also left an indelible trace in his social theory.

Buxton (1985: 4), for his part, explains the neglect of the relationships between Parsons' politics and scholarship in the secondary literature on the basis of the mistaken view of Parsons as a 'descriptive theorist who sought nothing more than to portray reality on social-scientific canvas'. This idea of Parsons as a pure theorist would have been maintained by those critical commentators that have argued for the conservative political bias of his sociology. In labelling Parsons a conservative, however, they would have failed to comprehend the complex nature of the relationship between scholarship and politics in his work. According to Buxton, they fell short of grasping the 'political activism' that is found beneath Parsons' obscure language. Far from being a thinker unconcerned with the events outside the ivory tower, Parsons would have been 'aware of the inherent limitations of capitalism's ability to create the conditions necessary for social stability, his efforts were directed towards elaborating how a more integrated social order – one preserving capitalist social relations, yet providing them with stability – could be constituted' (Buxton 1985: 4). The social sciences were seen in this context as crucially important for the formation of such social order. In analysing Parsons' writings and practical involvement in the Second World War and the politics of the Cold War, Buxton substantiates the thesis that the consolidation of the social sciences co-evolved with that of the democratic nation-state, so that in the second half of the twentieth century they would have reinforced each other. The nation-state was always seen as in opposition to alternative yet equally modern forms of social order and Buxton (1985: 112) maintains that Parsons' goal was to propose

an alternative to socialism by 'overcoming the anomie and atomism of the market economy, while still preserving capitalist social relations'. The dangers of Soviet totalitarianism would represent the background of Parsons' political interests from the 1950s onwards and this would be just the continuation of Parsons' earlier concern with the threats of fascism.[35]

For my purposes here, Gerhardt's and Buxton's arguments are interesting because they show that Parsons' understanding of the nation-state is that of a modern social order but not the automatic and necessary result of modernity. The key claim is that when Parsons refers to the moral and social integration of a democratic nation-state, this has to be seen in the context of the instability – the historical elusiveness and sociological equivocations – of the nation-state's position in modernity. Both interpretations underscore how Parsons' reflections on the main characteristics of the nation-state have the problem of understanding, and fighting against, totalitarianism. Based on a number of papers of the late 1930s and 1940s – that were put together by Gerhardt herself (Parsons 1993) – I would like now to explicate the key themes that I think constitute the core of Parsons' social theory of the nation-state.

Following Parsons' first and unpublished version of the preface to *The Structure of Social Action*, in September 1937, Gerhardt (1999: 139) argues that Parsons' 'original interest was in understanding the empirical society of his time, which, in the 1930s, comprised a dual reality between the totalitarian *Führerstaat* in Nazi Germany and the democratic welfare state of the New Deal in the United States.'[36] The claim is that this double socio-political context expresses Parsons' idea about the radical differences between a totalitarian regime and a liberal-democratic nation-state. The passage also introduces this as a contrast between different but equally modern forms of social order and argues that Parsons did not take for granted the prevalence or success of one above the other. He had a clear sense, during the 1930s and 1940s, of the threat that Nazi Germany in particular, and fascism and totalitarianism more broadly, posed to liberal democracy. The fact that he took this as a serious question is clear enough as he defined it as one about the survival of Western values and civilisation (Parsons 1993: 309). This understanding of the nature of the threat posed by totalitarianism would have had an important effect on him and the argument can be made that he never fully overcame the idea that these threats to democracy could always arise yet again. In that sense, Parsons' understanding of the nation-state is permanently besieged by his concerns about the possibility of developments that can prevent the consolidation of a liberal and democratic nation-state. If things are seen in this way, the nation-state is thus characterised less by its absence of conflict, extended moral consensus and harmonious social integration and more by its commitment towards the institutionalisation of democracy and the rule of law. The question is less about how far was conflict was extended within the nation-state and more about whether the nation-state was able to put in place and maintain the appropriate rules and procedures to prevent potentially totalitarian developments.

Parsons' conceptualisation of fascism and Nazi Germany is that of a radically different socio-political arrangement from that of the liberal and democratic

nation-state and for him the two forms of social order are better studied in contrast to one another (Gerhardt 1999: 108–9, 136). In Parsons' (1993: 174) own words: 'in certain essential respects the still rather vague and imperfectly crystallized system of ideas of the National Socialist movement, stands in drastic conflict with those which have held the dominant position in the Western world and become institutionalized as part of its social structure.' The challenge posed by fascism is not only against democracy, at least democracy understood as a specific political regime, but to 'the broader type of rational-legal authority' that is at the centre of the idea of a modern nation-state (Parsons 1993: 201). Both types of social order were equally necessary to describe empirically the actual historical crossroads of the world at the time. Modern societies, then, could at least in principle be conceived of either as liberal–democratic or authoritarian. In this rather crude descriptive sense, then, the nation-state and society did not perform the same role within Parsons' social theory.

In fact, Nazi Germany could only be adequately understood as 'a radically new type of society which, if not interfered with, promises to depart progressively more radically from the main line of Western social development since the Renaissance' (Parsons 1993: 235). The Nazis were 'the most formidable threat to many of the institutional fundamentals of western civilization as a whole which has been seen for many centuries' (Parsons 1993: 81). Furthermore, a correct understanding of fascism needed to consider it as an *internal* development of Western civilisation itself. This is the reason why Nazism was so seriously threatening the core values and institutions of the West: fascism 'is deeply rooted in the structure of Western society as a whole' (Parsons 1993: 203). That this was a time with dramatic epochal tones was due, for Parsons, to the fact that the Nazis were the most radical movement since the Middle Ages (Parsons 1993: 153). It is a radicalism of the right, but still a form of radicalism, because of 'the existence of a popular mass movement in which large masses of the "common people" have become imbued with highly emotional, indeed often fanatical, zeal for a cause' (Parsons 1993: 204). The empirical representation of modernity was that of a differentiated structural development – either the nation-state or a fascist/authoritarian regime. Indeed, this was felt as all the more dramatic because this development had occurred *inside* the boundaries of the Western world: fascism could produce the internal implosion of Western society. Fascism arose from the interaction between 'institutional structures', 'ideological definitions' and 'psychological reaction patterns' that have been occurring everywhere in the West over the last century or so before Hitler came to power (Parsons 1993: 215). His anxiety in trying to understand fascism is expressed in the fact that Parsons was just unable to produce a coherent argument as to why fascism had arisen in the way, place and time it did. For instance, in a piece from 1942, that is, right in the middle of the Second World War, Parsons was only able to come up with a rather unarticulated list of different aspects that contributed to the rise of fascism. Yet, all the features he mentions there are also part of the most conventional sociological understanding of modernity: industrialisation based on technology and science, rapid economic change, elite groups with vested interests, mass education,

mass political movements, debunking of traditional values, changes in consumer patterns, growing individualism, nationalism and so on. Although at the end no real explanation of the rise of fascism is given, the analysis does reach an astonishing finale. From a comparative and conceptual point of view, he says, there is no clear ground on which to distinguish between healthy and self-destructive developments in modernity. Parsons' (1993: 207) dispirited and painful conclusion is simply that

> The state of anomie in Western society is not primarily a consequence of the impingement on it of structurally fortuitous disorganizing forces [. . .] it has, rather, involved a very central dynamic process of its own about which a crucially important complex of factors of change may be grouped, what, following Max Weber, may be called the 'process of rationalisation'.

Parsons' understanding of the process of rationalisation implies no teleology with regard to the nation-state. In turn, this raises the question of the types of societies that were possible to distinguish at that moment in history and Parsons compared and differentiated totalitarianism (Nazi Germany) from the nation-state (such as the United States and the United Kingdom). They were two alternative forms of social order, none of which could be ruled out. In Parsons' (1993: 110–14) view, most of the elements that were at the base of Nazism as a political movement and of totalitarianism as a political regime were also present, in one way or another, in the United States. In fact, his diagnosis of the situation in the United States in the late 1930s and early 1940s was rather grim. More than a qualitative difference between the United States and Germany, wrote Parsons (1993: 117) in 1940, 'we may say that the United States is perhaps half-way to the instability of the German situation before 1933.' Some of the elements that the two countries shared were rapid social change (industrialisation), a sense of economic malaise, migration, the increasing pace in the change of cultural orientations, a specific form of socialist appeal to the masses and an anti-intellectualism, that is, a 'negative orientation' to the 'maturing modern social order', in the form of a critique of 'bourgeois values' (Parsons 1993: 206–12).

Most worryingly, not only the similarities but also the differences between Germany and the United States could be accounted for as a threat to the stability of the democratic order in America. Germany seemed to be a culturally homogeneous country; its weak and belated unification as a nation-state proved to be a fertile soil for non-democratic developments. The idea of the *Volksgeist* was being used idealistically and some cultural images were being exaggerated because of the absence of a political organisation to which Germans could make collective reference (Parsons 1993: 222). He explicitly combined aspects of the internal situation and the international context to explicate the collapse of Weimar Germany and the rise of Nazism (Parsons 1993: 240–1). The United States, for its part, was described as a culturally heterogeneous country that had not yet achieved a stable and consensual level of normative and cultural integration. The liberal values that constitute a core part of the normative outlook of the

United States were, for Parsons, only very imperfectly integrated: 'the American nation constitutes, as a result of various strains and circumstances of its past, a relatively badly integrated social system with an unstable orientation on the part of large numbers of individuals, and many internal differences and conflicts' (Parsons 1993: 120).

The more analytical conclusion to be drawn from this comparison between Germany and the United States is that, in Parsons' opinion, there were little structural grounds on which to differentiate the rise of a liberal and democratic nation-state from that of an authoritarian and potentially totalitarian regime. Parsons' epochal diagnosis included these two types of modern socio-political arrangements and although he clearly was in favour of the nation-state he remained cautious about which option would eventually prevail. Even at this descriptive level Parsons' idea of society cannot be equated with the nation-state: Parsons saw Nazi Germany also as a type of society, one that is radically different from the nation-state. Interestingly, even when he used the term society for the definition of a geographical unit, the question of the empirical definition of society was not answered in a single and necessary form. In fact, after the Allies had succeeded in defeating the Nazis, Parsons still considered the danger of its re-emergence a possibility. The question was that not only Germany but also other parts of the world could follow the totalitarian route (Parsons 1993: 309–14). The types of threats that fascism posed to the world went beyond the particular question of the defeat of Nazism.

Parsons' view about the coexistence of the nation-state with other forms of social and political organisation did not fade away in his more mature theoretical framework. By the time his AGIL paradigm of the four functions was already in place, Parsons devoted a paper to the development and main characteristics of the 'international social system'. The article revolves around the thesis that the nation-state is just one, albeit a very important one, form of organisation of social relations on territorial basis. In that article, Parsons (1969b: 296) argued that the

> Organization of order with regard to territorial jurisdiction is a common element of all societal organization. But the nation-state (or something like it), as seen in comparative perspective, is not an isolated and unique phenomenon. Organization of order on a territorial basis clearly continues to be important for many subunits of a politically organized society, including, of course, many units not ordinarily thought of as political.

The territorialisation of social relations is a process reinforced by the development of nation-state institutions, but at the same time this territorialisation is far from absolute or definitive, both practically – the nation-state's actual capacity to control its territory – and normatively – the values and principles underlying such claims as democratic self-determination and the rule of law. This territorial organisation of social relations is a general problem that has to be solved simultaneously at different levels and not only at the national one. In fact, almost in direct opposition to the first wave of critiques of methodological nationalism

in the 1970s, Parsons (1969b: 300) maintained that the nation-state 'is by no means such a monolithic either-or unit as it has often been held to be. Just as there are many internal private groups with interests which cut across national lines, so the idea of the absolute sovereignty of governments is at best only an approximation of the truth.' The higher degree of territorialisation achieved by the nation-state has not in any fundamental way changed the nature of modern social relations. Thus, at the analytical level, Parsons (1969b: 297) argued that

> The national state represents a social system characterized by a relatively high level of integration in one respect, namely, the capacity to control activity within a territorial area and to react concertedly as an 'interest group' *vis-à-vis* other territorial units. But there is no implication either that its existence is incompatible with other elements of normative control over territorial areas, transcending those of its 'sovereignty' (though the nature of such controls is, of course problematic), or that elements of order that have other than primarily territorial-political references are negligible.

These abstract arguments can also be rehearsed here at the more empirical and historical levels. Parsons' understanding on the functioning of world-politics during the Cold War can now be introduced and, consistently with the argument I have made so far, he sees the international arena as a field of complex and multilayered relationships.

> Whether by formal contractual agreement or in various other ways, the international system is clearly not simply an aggregate of atomistic sovereign units; rather, these units are organized in complex ways into various kinds of 'communities of interests' and the like. The British Commonwealth, the West European combinations [. . .] NATO, SEATO, and – by no means least – the Communist bloc, are familiar examples.
>
> (Parsons 1969b: 301)

The argument is that, at the practical level, the blocs in which the world was divided during the Cold War were, at the very least, as important sovereign units as individual nation-states were. The question that comes to mind in this context is how the idea of the nation-state as a solid and necessary unit emerged. And interestingly, Parsons' answer to this question has to do with the nation-state having created a mythical image of its own. This, I think, is Parsons' particular explanation of the rise, and also a *critique*, of social theory's methodological nationalism: 'since nationalism has been so prominent in the immediate historical background, there has been a strong ideological, and perhaps somewhat less a practical, sensitivity to any suggestion of surrendering elements of sovereignty' (Parsons 1969b: 300–1). This claim, it may be worth pointing out, is not too far apart from A. D. Smith's historical version of the critique of methodological nationalism that was introduced in Chapter 1.

The major elements in Parsons' picture of the world situation have now been formally introduced. His image of the modern world is composed by different

possible forms of social order; he was aware of the complex, unstable and up to a certain point unpredictable development of modern socio-political arrangements. For him, then, it would have been historically inaccurate, analytically untenable and politically erroneous and dangerous to consider the liberal–democratic nation-state as the necessary result in the development of modernity. As the specific form of social order that Parsons regarded as desirable, the nation-state had to be purposefully formed, cared for, defended and indeed permanently reinvented. Parsons held a modernist view on the historical development of the nation-state because it co-evolved with other equally modern institutions and values. Yet, this is also a qualified form of modernism because Parsons did not reify the nation-state's position in modernity. The nation-state does not become the final representation of modern institutions nor is it the driving force behind modernity's structural development. Parsons' modernist view of the nation-state is that of a potentially unstable, *sociologically equivocal*, form of social and political organisation. The nation-state coexists with different forms of modern socio-political organisation and represents only one possible trajectory of modern social development. Yet, to a certain extent at least, this does not prevent him from idealising the stabilising effect that a liberally and democratically organised nation-state may have on its population. Even without teleology in his argument, Parsons' politics did lead him to regard the nation-state in a somewhat unrealistic and idyllic fashion.

Parsons' threefold definition of society: social system, modern society and the nation-state

This second part of the chapter argues that Parsons can be held responsible for the rise of more technical conceptions of society in social theory. It is Parsons who seems to have produced the transition from a loosely defined notion to more clearly defined concepts of society that operate at different levels of abstraction within his theoretical frame of reference – and beyond. In scrutinising how a more formal definition of society took shape within his work, it is necessary to look at this theorising of the nation-state *vis-à-vis* the more abstract concepts with which he tried to refer to society. My argument is then that 'social system', 'modern society' and the 'nation-state' are the three concepts with which Parsonian social theory made its more formal representation of society since the 1950s. Each of these terms developed a life of its own and proved its adequacy for different empirical and theoretical purposes within social theory.

I would like to begin this section with a reflection on Parsons' use of the term society in his early political writings during the war. See, for instance, Parsons' (1993: 309) explanation of the crossroad the modern world faced then: 'if Western civilization is to survive at all, it must be as a relatively mobile, "individualistic," industrial society where such universalistic values as those of science, modern technology, and the rights of the individual citizen play a prominent part.' There can be no exceptions to this development, he continues, as 'no major unit like Germany in this "Great Society" can be successfully insulated

from these patterns' (Parsons 1993: 309). This reference to the 'Great Society' is of interest here. In a sense, Parsons seems to have been quite consistent in his double use of the idea of society in the plural and the singular. For the former, the idea of society seems to point to individual nation-states or to such regimes as Nazi Germany, and in that sense they are referred to as a plurality of units within 'the international social system'. When the idea of society is used in this form, Parsons can make comparisons among nation-states, for instance, when he takes the allegedly high cultural homogeneity of Britain as a positive asset to resist the fascist threat as compared with the cultural heterogeneity of the United States (Parsons 1993: 108); and also as he tries to compare the structural conditions of Nazi Germany and the United States, as we already saw. Here, the 'societies' are to be defined geographically in what can be called a referential use of the term.

When Parsons talks about society in the singular, however, the reference point is not the nation-state or any other socio-political unit. Parsons uses, widely and loosely in these early writings, concepts such as 'Western civilisation' (1993: 81), 'Western world' (1993: 174), 'Western culture' (1993: 215–16), 'Western society' (1993: 329, 335), 'modern Western society' (1993: 138, 259), 'modern Western social world' (1993: 194); 'Western society as a whole' (1993: 203); 'modern Western world as a whole' (1993: 225), and, as just seen, also 'Great Society'. What we seem to witness in these expressions is the embryo of the thesis of the regulative role of society. This is a society that is not dependent upon the definition of a politically organised geographical reference; it is rather a society to which one can only refer in the singular. My argument here is that the more accurate concept of modern society, as developed by Parsons in the late 1950s and 1960s, is a result of this, admittedly rather vague, reference to the Western world during his early period. It seems to be the case that Parsons' general framework is set up as a twofold analysis: *between* nation-states and *within* the confines of the Western world as one single civilisational development. Parsons' (1993: 329) thesis that: ' "Western society" is a very complex entity with many different variations on national, regional, cultural, class and other bases' is a long-lasting one in his thought, and a crucial one for a critique of methodological nationalism.

In fact, we can pursue this reconstruction of Parsons' definition of society further by giving a closer examination of the more technical definition he makes of the term. The idea of society, in his view,

> [H]as tended to refer to the highest-order social system, one which fulfills the prerequisites of a level of order that permits a relatively complete and stable development, within its boundaries, of *all* the important types of structure and process with which the analyst of social systems is concerned. Perhaps the Aristotelian concept of self-sufficiency has served as the fundamental model.
>
> (Parsons 1969b: 295)

Later in the same page, Parsons argues that in this understanding of the idea of society what is especially relevant is the question of

> [T]he relation between a pattern of normative order and the effective control of action within a territorial area. In terms of the structure of complex societies, this refers to the relation between political organization, on the one hand, and a legal system, on the other [...] there can be no certainty of implementation of a normative order, unless the employment of physical force can be controlled – and controlled within a territorial area – because force must be applied to the object in the *place* where it is located.

These definitions being relatively similar to some others, have a number of points that deserve comment.[37] First, they begin by relating the term society to the concept of social system, and more specifically to the highest-order type of social system. This means that the idea of society is to be reserved for those special forms of social relations that possess the quality of being stable and are more or less clearly bounded. Second, it is made clear that for the purposes of sociology as a scientific discipline the idea of society has to be related to other less abstract and more manageable concepts: society is now being operationalised into more scientific concepts. Third, it is argued that a territory is an important dimension to consider for any idea of society, although it is by no means the most important one. In fact, that reference to the territory is specific to the capacity of exercising power upon it (the political dimension) and the legitimacy through which that capacity is actually implemented (the legal dimension). Fourth, the quotation refers to the process of functional differentiation that is at the base of this relationship between the political and the legal systems, so in this sense society is also connected with the concept of modern society more broadly understood. The consequence to be drawn from this is that Parsons was consistent in using the idea of society through more clearly defined and empirically more profitable concepts.

My, possibly unconventional, reading of Parsons here is that he did not mean only the nation-state when he utilised the idea of society. He could not do so because the level of abstraction at which society operates made that connection too narrow for his purposes – it made impossible to include some of the dimensions I just introduced in the last two quotations. An exact equation between society and the nation-state was also inadequate in what refers to the actual conditions of social integration of the nation-state – as we saw in the previous section of the chapter. A key feature of his epistemological 'analytical realism', however, is that any one category must be in relation to others in order to create a close theoretical system (Alexander 1978; Parsons 1962: 320–3). And in this context this means that Parsons used the notion of society as a regulative ideal in the sense I introduced it in Chapter 2, which was then put to work more empirically *via* the concepts of social system, nation-state and modern society. Even if a comprehensive reconstruction of these three concepts is beyond the scope of this book, I would none the less try to explore briefly Parsons' use of society through each of these three concepts.

The concept of social system is surely the key concept in Parsons' AGIL model. This mature conceptualisation of the social system is based on his theory of generalised symbolic media and the core of Parsons' theory of the functional differentiation via generalised media is fully autonomous from the nation-state (Chernilo 2002). Furthermore, the idea of 'evolutionary universals' represents the most abstract formulation of Parsons' theory of evolution and at this highest level of generality his theory of modernity is also independent from the nation-state. It requires the nation-state neither as the starting point nor as the final stage of modernity.[38]

In more conceptual terms, social systems are for Parsons (1977a, 1961: 43) systems of interaction. However, they cannot be conceptualised as the addition of individual perspectives but rather have to be understood as an emergent field of enquiry (Parsons 1977b: 196). Systems were thought of as the most abstract analytical tool with which to define not only a scientific object of enquiry but also the dimensions to be studied within that object. Through the concept of the social system, a unit for sociological analysis becomes clearly defined so that it allows the sociologist to compare different but analogous units. In fact, as just said, Parsons argues explicitly that for sociology the concepts of society and social system have to be defined in relation to one another. Society is a very special case of social system because it comprises the highest complexity in its internal and external relations, historical specificity with regard to its emergence in modernity and self-sufficiency.

The issue of self-sufficiency deserves some further comments because it surely pushes the argument towards methodological nationalism. By self-sufficiency, Parsons (1977b: 182) understands 'the capacity of the system, gained through both its internal organization and resources and its access to inputs from its environments, to function autonomously in implementing its normative culture, particularly its values, but also its norms and collective goals'. More concretely, Parsons' (1971: 8–10) conceptualisation of self-sufficiency comprises the institutionalisation of: (1) a level of solidarity upon which membership can be founded; (2) an adequate control over the economic–technological relations; (3) 'roles' as standardised forms of collective organisation; (4) a generalised cultural system that can legitimate a normative order and satisfy all different functional requirements; and (5) an adequate control over the motivational forces of the members of society. It seems to me that this list reflects that Parsons' idea of self-sufficiency takes the nation-state as its reference point only to a certain extent, particularly in dimensions 1, 2 and possibly 3: solidarity within membership, control over economic life and collectively distributed roles. At the same time, however, dimensions 4 and 5 correspond to more symbolic and cultural dimensions that can only be related to a broader framework. The symbols, normative orientations and motivational forces that Parsons has in mind here – for instance, individual moral autonomy and the rule of law – go beyond any individual nation-state and seem to relate to a wider idea of the West or even humanity as such.

Furthermore, we can place these reflections into their historical context. In relation to the economy, the question of trying to achieve some form of 'economic

autarchy' was already a key preoccupation during the interwar period and later in the Cold War (Hall 2003: 13; Hobsbawm 1995: 94–102). At the ideological level, the opposition between liberalism and fascism, or between capitalism and socialism, regarded the values of these different 'cultural systems' as though they were fully self-contained. We may need again to remember that Parsons' geopolitical understanding of the Cold War was one in which blocs, as well as individual states, were major actors. If this self-sufficiency argument were to find empirical application either economically or normatively, then, it could perfectly do so in relation to such bigger units as the Cold War military blocs.

The nation-state is a second, more 'concrete', representation of the idea of society and is here that Parsons' arguments give space to a methodologically nationalistic interpretation of his sociology. Indeed, Parsons (1961: 46; Parsons and Smelser 1956: 8–9) was explicit in that the nation-state has become the most important historical representation of modern societies. Parsons (1969a: 254–8) regarded the rise of the nation as evolutionary achievement because it provided the basis for constructing a modern idea of community. Also, from the 1950s onwards, the analogy between society and nation-state started to coincide with a number of important historical processes by which the idea of a national society was being reinforced: the expansion of the nation-state form throughout the world (for instance in Africa); the implementation of the Marshall plan and strong welfare-state programmes in Western Europe; a major expansion of the internal market in the United States; the rise of new developmental states in the Asian Tigers (see Chapter 9), and the implementation of mildly successful modernisation programmes in Latin America. Moreover, the national organisation of the social sciences also strengthened during this time: the number of social scientists grew massively alongside the increment in the state's demands for their skills (Buxton 1985: 97–164). Yet, we need to keep in mind the arguments that were introduced in the previous section of this chapter. Parsons saw the nation-state as a modern yet equivocal form of socio-political arrangement and theorised its position in modernity always against the possibility of authoritarian and even totalitarian developments. This substantive conceptualisation of the nation-state seems, therefore, to have taken the form of a critique of methodological nationalism.

Modern society is the third form with which Parsons (1966, 1971) refers to the idea of society. As argued in the previous section, Parsons' original concept of modern society corresponds broadly – with its strengths and weaknesses – to the idea of the West. The question is complicated further, however, by the use of the term in the singular and the plural. This is clearly presented in the very first page of his work devoted to comparative historical sociology:

> The thesis underlying this volume [...] is that the modern type of *society* has emerged in a single evolutionary arena, the West, which is essentially the area of Europe that fell heir to the western half of the Roman Empire north of the Mediterranean. The *society* of Western Christendom, then provided the base from which what we shall call the 'system' of modern *societies* 'took off'. Whether or not there is justification for treating medieval Western

> Christendom as a single *society*, the succeeding territorial states – and the cultural heritages that we call national – developed to such an extent that, for the modern period, the whole complex can be viewed only as a *system of societies.*
>
> (Parsons 1971: 1, my italics)

As we have said already, there is one sense in which Parsons preferred the use of the term in the singular and with the definitive article – *the* modern society. In so doing, he is able to stress the meaning of the concept as the most abstract cultural and social framework that encompasses the development of the West – and increasingly beyond. But there is also the use of term in the plural, which is in fact not far from the nation-state. In this second employment, I think, the aim was to highlight the differences that can be found *within* the area of Western Christendom. Modern societies would then be those that have followed the route of the Western development, societies whose differences represent only historical variations within a single civilisational trajectory and it is in this sense that Parsons talks about 'the system of modern societies'. If one takes Parsons' connection between the idea of Western civilisation and modern society seriously, and therefore society is used in this sense to describe the long-term development of the West, modern societies and the system of modern societies would certainly include nation-states but it would also have to incorporate other forms of socio-political organisation like, empires, colonies, city-states and indeed authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.

There is still another sense in which Parsons defines the concept of modern society, now in relation to the developmental trajectory of functional differentiation. In Parsons' *theoretical* description of the *historical* development of the modern society, there are three successive revolutions through which the societal community, which is responsible for the processes of integration in the system (Parsons 1977b: 201), becomes differentiated from the other societal subsystems. The Greek concept of *polis*, and more recently the nation, are historical representations of this idea of a societal community. As it is concerned with the problem of integration, the question of 'solidarity' turns to be crucial because it holds the societal community together, the modern form of this solidarity being attached to T. H. Marshall's (1991 [1950]) concept of citizenship.[39] The emergence of the societal community took off via the 'economic revolution' that occurred in Britain in the late eighteenth century and created a capitalist economy. There was also a second 'political revolution', which took place in the United States and France roughly the same time and meant the transition from absolutist states to some form of democratic regime. This political revolution differentiated the political system from the societal community. Finally, there was a third 'educational revolution', which consisted in successive waves of alphabetisation, expansion of general education and above all the growth of tertiary education. This last revolution was first completed in the United States by about the mid-twentieth century (Parsons and Platt 1973: 1–29).

To Parsons, these three revolutions are the major evolutionary achievement of modern society. Here, again, the tension between the use of the term in the

singular and in the plural comes to the fore. The idea of modern *societies* can only make sense within the framework of *the* modern society as one single civilisational development. *Theoretically*, modern societies are an abstract representation of what core Western European societies tend to highlight of themselves and also of what novel or peripheral societies were expected to achieve. *Historically*, the modern society is a long-term developmental process that began with the cultural changes brought about by the Renaissance and continues until the present. *Normatively*, the concept of modern society emphasises the desirability of a universalistic type of social integration, and implies a relatively high degree of moral consensus with regard to the importance of these universalistic values. Indeed, the modern society became a core concept for theoretically oriented social theory and many of the subsequent sociological formulations about the defining characteristics of social life have had to relate, positively or critically, to the idea of modern society.[40]

In terms of the connections between the three definitions of society, it seems to me that, analytically, the concept of social system prevails over the other two, as in understanding the formation of the modern society and the nation-state Parsons had to make reference to the functional differentiation of social systems. Modern society, on the contrary, is more open a category for historical analysis as it focuses on general criteria to understand the most abstract features of the development of the West and its expansion since the end of the fifteenth century (Larraín 2000; Therborn 1995). The nation-state, finally, had little theoretical value in Parsons' sociology. His understanding of the nation-state requires the other two definitions of society because this was the only way in which the nation-state's history and main features could be related to the rise and main features of modernity itself.

Rather than concentrating on whether Parsons equated society with the nation-state in particular occasions, it seems more important to realise that this connection was always subordinated to the other, more abstract, roles he gave to the idea of society. It is this threefold definition of society that substantiates best the thesis of society's role as a regulative ideal. Moreover, it is also this relation between an abstract notion of society and these other more empirically applicable concepts that allows us to understand how Parsons' social theory of the nation-state remained connected with, and controlled by, his more general theoretical concerns.

Conclusion

Institutionally as well as theoretically, Parsons is the central figure of this modernist period, so a detailed analysis of his work was important to understand some of the broader tendencies in the social theory at that time. The thesis that the nation-state is equated to society in his work has proved to be, at best, only partly true. Such an argument overstates its case by neglecting alternative uses of society that neither coincide with the nation-state nor are geographically based. Equally, Parsons' understanding of the historical juncture of the nation-state at the time led him to conceive it as a main but certainly not the only form of modern

socio-political arrangement. Surely, Parsons himself is responsible for a methodologically nationalistic reading of his work as he held high hopes on nationally organised democracies and also because his political agenda was strongly in favour of the liberal–democratic nation-state. But, similar to what happened to classical social theorists, it is difficult to prove that Parsons' political preference for a particular form of nation-state translates into methodological nationalism. The mediations between his political views, his abstract theoretical framework and his more historically oriented work are more complex and subtler than any suggestion of methodological nationalism. The seriousness of Parsons' political preference for the nation-state led him to take the nation-state very seriously indeed. Parsons needed to produce a complex understanding of the position of the nation-state in modernity but methodological nationalism, on the contrary, simplifies and distorts the historical development, main features and normative legacy of the nation-state in modernity.

Let me then conclude this chapter by spelling out the major arguments of Parsons' social theory of the nation-state. First, there is a *co-existence* argument as Parsons compared and contrasted the nation-state with totalitarian regimes and saw these two as different, but equally real and modern, types of social order. Second, there is the argument of the *opposition* between the nation-state and totalitarianism. There was no peaceful coexistence between these two types of regimes but rather they were in a fierce fight which in the case of Nazi Germany amounted to total war. Third, I have tried to convey the argument of the *sociological equivocations* of the nation-state's position in modernity. The nation-state was not teleologically secured and Parsons' view was that the nation-state could be dissolved from within (the Weimar Republic being turned into Nazism), or indeed by external defeat (the Nazis taking over Europe). In his view, there was no guarantee that the nation-state would prevail; the victory of the 'liberal-democratic' nation-state was a political project to fight for. Fourth, there is the *territorialisation* argument. Parsons' more direct critique of methodological nationalism was that territorialisation of social relations does not necessarily coincide with nationalisation. The nation-state is not unique in its quest for territorial jurisdiction; rather the opposite, he saw that as something immanent to all forms of societal organisations. The novelty that the nation-state brings about is not territorialisation but the specific project that all social relations have to be organised nationally and that only national claims can prove legitimate and effective. Yet, there is no evidence to support the idea that Parsons was confounded by the nation-state's equivocations and conceived of national unity and self-determination as an adequate empirical description of modernity's recent developments. Rather the opposite, his reflections on America's social strains – right wing McCarthyism and racial problems – showed that he was clearly aware of the fact that integrative problems in the United States were still unresolved. Internally, the nation-state shares power with what he calls the many subunits of society. Externally, Parsons thought that the *Realpolitik* of the Cold War period has taught us that the Western and Communist blocs were as sovereign units as any individual nation-state.

For the second part of the chapter, I have used Parsons' mature work to convey the thesis that he worked with a threefold definition of society. Parsons translated a vague notion into technically defined concepts that could fulfil different roles within his sociology depending on the level of abstraction at which he was operating. Although he did not provide a consistent reflection upon the different roles of society within his own theoretical framework, and his use of society is not free of problems, I have argued that the threefold use of society is a major achievement of Parsons' social theory – not least because it allows us to substantiate the claim of society's role as a regulative ideal. Indeed, it may be argued that, in contrasting the liberal–democratic nation-state to totalitarian regimes, Parsons downplayed some internal problems of the nation-state. He may well have idealised those states that organise themselves in national terms and hoped that they will peacefully evolve towards liberal and democratic institutional arrangements. But despite how widely accepted the methodologically nationalistic reading of Parsons has been, and all the instances when support can be found within his own work for this interpretation, this chapter depicts a far more sophisticated image of the opacity of the nation-state's position in modernity.

7 Raymond Aron (1905–1983), Barrington Moore (1913–2005) and Reinhard Bendix (1916–1991)

Industrialism and the historicity of the nation-state

This chapter is the first one in this book not devoted solely to an individual writer. From now on, in fact, all chapters will focus on a group of writers who roughly belong to the same generation and are concerned with some common themes in relation to understanding the nation-state. Raymond Aron, Barrington Moore and Reinhard Bendix represent part of the 'sociological establishment' between the 1950s and the 1970s and as they all devoted some explicit attention to the question of the nation-state's position in modernity there is enough ground to focus on their works here.

Let me briefly contextualise the aim of this chapter with some comments on the position of historical sociology within the broader intellectual tradition of social theory. For instance, in the introduction to his book on historical sociology, American scholar Harry Barnes (1984 [1948]: 3) expected not only to explain what he regarded as the 'relative decline of historical sociology' since the turn of the twentieth century but also to 'indicate reasons for expecting its revival', which he associated with the rise of a 'promising method and a more reliable body of fact and doctrine'. It seems fair to say that historical sociology did experience a revival, although it was not due to convergence in theoretical or methodological terms. Over the last twenty years, there have been a number of surveys, critical introductions and assessments of these advances in historical sociology so that some broad remarks can now be made.

First, and despite Barnes' prediction, the picture of twentieth-century historical sociology is one of plurality at every level. Indeed, commentators have praised the heterogeneity of themes, theories, methods and sources being used in historical sociology as a major strength of this tradition (Calhoun 1998; Crow 1997; Delanty and Isin 2003; Mann 1994; Mouzelis 1994; Smith 1991). Even if some authors persist in claiming that *only* some theories (such as rational choice, Kiser and Hechter 1991, 1998) and methodological principles (such as the use of primary sources, Goldthorpe 1991, 1994; Skocpol 1984a,b) must be adopted across the board this is an ongoing debate that is unlikely to be settled once and for all.[41] Second, it has been noted that this is a tradition that has transcended disciplinary limits. In some accounts, in fact, the *raison d'être* of historical sociology is the unity of history and sociology (Abrams 1982; Braudel 1980; Tilly 1981; Wallerstein 2000). Works in this field are not the monopoly of any single

discipline as they have permeated into such different subject areas as International Relations (Hobden 1998), Latin American Studies (Centeno and López-Alves 2001), and Political Science (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003). Third, and closely related to my focus in this book, the question of 'nation-states as societies' has already been the subject of scrutiny in historical sociology (Calhoun 1999: 218–21; Crow 1997: 9–19; Giddens 1985: 1–17, 52–3; Hall 1986: 147; Mann 1986: 1–32; Tilly 1984: 20–6).

Chapter 7 concentrates on each of the three writers in turn. Raymond Aron, first, pays attention to the nation-state mainly in relation to the development of industrialism, which in his view was then the key structural feature of modernity. Aron's challenge is to give an account of the emergence and current conditions of industrialism and, in so doing, he requires a type of conceptualisation of the nation-state that at times comes close to, but equally departs in crucial respects from, methodological nationalism. Barrington Moore's work on the transition to modernity not only advances the idea of different routes to modernity that has since become one important way of theorising modernity without an Eurocentric bias, but situates the study of particular countries within the wider context of the three trajectories he distinguishes. His distinction of the democratic, fascist and communist routes to modernity may now seem out of date but points clearly beyond the limitations of any explanatory strategy of modernity centred on the nation-state. Reinhard Bendix, finally, is the writer of this group who devoted most explicit attention to the nation-state as such, both theoretically and historically. His exhaustive account of the rise and development of the nation-state in terms of the changes in political structures point towards conceptualising the nation-state as a modern sociopolitical arrangement but not as the necessary result of modernity.

Raymond Aron: industrialism as a diagnostic of the present

Raymond Aron was a leading figure in French academic sociology during the 1950s and 1960s and was also a key player in the rising of its public profile and further institutionalisation (Davis 2003; Gowan 2003; Jennings 2003). More conceptually, his key contribution to modernist social theory lies in the wide use he gave to the notion of industrial society as modernity's current epochal diagnosis. The concept of industrial society expresses to an important extent what contemporaries felt as the most challenging features and urgent issues at the time (Dahrendorf 1976 [1958] and the section on Barrington Moore later in this chapter). Aron's understanding of the modern industrial world is nuanced: he tries to produce an account as empirically informed as theoretically sophisticated. Yet, in terms of an assessment of Aron's methodological nationalism, the meaning he gave to the concept is far from unproblematic. There is always a tension between a more theoretical conception of industrial society as a regulative ideal – when the reflections focus on the main features of industrialism and the nature of modern social life – and the more empirical use of the term in relation to the geographical and administrative scale of the nation-state. As in previous chapters, I shall use

this ambiguity to assess not only the extent to which methodological nationalism permeates into Aron's work but also to unfold his more positive arguments on the opacity of the nation-state.

According to Aron (1972: 103), modernity's central tension is the 'dialectic' between its technological drive and its egalitarian ideal. Industrial civilisation – in his view, modernity's highest stage of development – constitutes itself in the tension of trying to reconcile these two poles. Industrialism becomes for Aron a key analytical term with which to avoid such ideologically charged and theoretically imprecise terms as capitalism and socialism. Being originally given its modern meaning in the nineteenth century by Saint-Simon, Tocqueville and Marx, the idea of industrialism fell later in disgrace only to regain ascendance after the Second World War (Aron 1967: 31). Rather than seeing capitalism and socialism as two radically different forms of modern social organisation, Aron (1967: 42) considers them as 'two species of the same genus: industrial society'. Industrialism is thus a way into comprehensively depicting the rise and main features of modernity in the present – both in its socialist and capitalist variations. Industrialism gears social life towards a certain conception of progress that can be measured by economic productivity, growth and the creation of wealth; its key feature being the 'scientific organisation of scientific progress' (Aron 1972: 165). Despite its centrality, however, the analytical status of the concept remains problematic: 'no one national society is *the* industrial society as such, and all the industrial societies together do not compose *one* industrial society' (Aron 1967: 3). We can see here that it is plausible to understand the concept of industrial society as closely attached to the idea of the nation-state: France and Britain were of course types of industrial society. But there is equal ground to argue that the crucial question posed by the concept was, rather, how to define in an abstract way the core elements of modernity in general and of specific industrial regimes, in particular.

Aron (1967: 5) broadly refers to the Soviet and Western types of society as different types of *modern* social organisation and political arrangement. Either type of modern social order represented an ideal type to which sociology must devote equal attention (Aron 1965: 13). Modernity was not in his view necessarily oriented towards only one direction and he only uneasily subscribed to the thesis of the convergence between the two. He rejected the idea that one type of society will move closer or become a reflex of the other (Aron 1967: 7). With the concept of industrialism he is precisely able to understand that Western and Soviet regimes were similar – as they are equally the result of modernity's development – as well as different – in the way in which they resolved modernity's key problems of progress and egalitarianism. In Aron's (1968: 248) own words:

> The political systems of industrial societies have features in common, the extension of the administrative sphere, the growth of the bureaucracy, but why should all industrial societies have to choose between the extreme centralism of the Soviet type and the extreme pluralism of autonomous forces of the western type?

Aron (1968: 253) follows here the footsteps of Alexander de Tocqueville: modern societies may equally develop liberal or tyrannical forms political regimes. Aron's thesis is that whilst industrialism draws different forms of modern social life closer together, no similar convergence will necessarily occur at the level of political or legal systems. Both types of industrial regime share some claim to popular sovereignty, the necessity of fostering economic development and scientific rationalisation and the pressure for engrossing their second – industrial – sector. Yet, whilst in its Western version these concerns are dealt with via market forces, liberal–democratic political procedures and welfare state institutions, in the Soviet orbit these same problems were faced with a combination of central economic planning, one-party system and state-guaranteed universal access to social services.

Conversely, the difference between the industrial and non-industrial world lies in the difficulties with which the latter manages to resolve, at least partly, the tensions between a rational organisation of scientific progress and modernity's egalitarian ideal. The non-industrial world's battle to find a compromise between these tendencies has nothing to do with internal defects and weaknesses of individual countries but with the fact that this structural tension could only be resolved at the world scale. The solution to this apparent antinomy seems to come from Aron's own recognition that we are in the verge of witnessing the rise of a truly modern *world* society (Aron 1972: 199–200). The attempt is then to explore industrialism's key features by paying attention to the role of national societies but without subordinating the development of either modernity or industrialism to any methodologically nationalistic frame of reference.

As already noted, however, Aron's work is not free from ambivalence when using the concept of industrial society. There is no difficulty in finding methodologically nationalistic statements in his work: 'as society and the state draw closer, national claims or claims to statehood inevitably become social, and social claims become national' (Aron 1972: 82). We can even find instances in which Aron seems tempted to *explain* the rise of modernity, and its increasingly industrial condition, from a methodologically nationalistic viewpoint.

> Each nation has a different history of economic growth, which has in each country characteristics not found in others. Of course there are some common features in the growth patterns of the different economies, but at the beginning each pattern is unique, taking place at a particular time, with a given stock of scientific knowledge and technology [. . .] National characteristics and the particular feature of each economic phase account for the limitations of any universal theory of growth.
>
> (Aron 1967: 138, 144)

This understanding of the nation-state surely resembles methodological nationalism. It can be shown, however, that this use of the concept of industrial society is controlled by the most abstract way in which Aron deals with industrialism's key features. At this more theoretical plane, the references to the importance of

the nation-state in modernity are still relevant but become subordinated to industrialism's universalistic dialectic between hierarchy and egalitarianism. In other words, no appropriate frame of reference for the study of industrial modernity's main features can work with a self-contained conception of the nation-state or via an appeal to different national traditions. Analytically as well as historically, any national frame of reference becomes meaningful only if and when it is complemented with the ideas of the world society, on the one hand, and the local aspects of social life, on the other. For instance, as he reflects on how modern warfare requires the deployment of different kinds of weapons, Aron mentions three levels within which modern social life takes place. There is, first, the submachine gun that is appropriate for guerrilla warfare at the local arena. Then, there is the tank that is the most suitable weapon in territorial (i.e. national) wars, and we find finally the atomic bomb, the representation of global warfare *par excellance* (Aron 1972: 212). More interestingly, Aron does not succumb to the myth of the formal equality between those sovereign units that compose the system of international relations.

> When we come to modern societies, sovereignty is only a legal fiction. Is the people sovereign? This formula can be accepted equally by western regimes, by fascists regimes or by communist regimes. In fact, there is not a single contemporary regime which would not claim one way or another that it is based on popular sovereignty. The difference lies in the political or juridical procedures by which this legitimate authority is transmitted from the abstract people to real men.
>
> (Aron 1968: 28)

On the one hand, Aron rightly asserts that no modern conception of political life can do without an idea of popular sovereignty – and, as we shall see, this is a claim that all writers included in this chapter equally share. On the other hand, however, the role of the analyst is not to confound *the claim* to certain values with their *effective* historical realisation. There is no automatic complementarity between the claim to popular sovereignty and the appeal to democratic national self-determination. In themselves, they tell us little of the way in which sovereignty is actually exercised: the principles upon which it is based, the procedures put in place to make it work, what groups are excluded from it and so on. In fact, following de Tocqueville again, Aron (1967: 66) makes the point that

> All democratic societies are bound to be hypocritical. In our own times authoritarian régimes can only be established in the name of democracy, because all modern régimes are based on the egalitarian principle. Absolute power can only be established by claiming to make men free. Tocqueville remarked on this in the clearest possible way a century ago, and explained that if authoritarian régimes emerged in our democratic era they would do so by invoking the people and equality.

Although it does not play such a central role as it does in the writings of other scholars of his generation, the question of totalitarianism is still important to

Aron's depiction of modernity in the twentieth century. Indeed, at least to an extent, his analysis of the situation in the Soviet bloc is an attempt at answering the question of whether these regimes were totalitarian. Aron's epochal diagnosis does include democratic and totalitarian regimes and they both are equally the result of the rise of modernity and its industrialist development in the last century. Even if there is an important difference between authoritarianism and totalitarianism, and Aron would have not wanted to blur that distinction, the point remains that the tendency towards authoritarianism is as modern as the tendency towards democracy. They are equally inscribed in one of modernity's most important and dangerous promises: 'The dream of absolute freedom quickens totalitarian revolutions' (Aron 1972: 193).

Aron advances his analysis of modernity's political forms not via the comparison between different nation-states but between different kinds of *industrial regimes*. And this consideration leads him to understand the field of international relations as a power-struggle between the world superpowers. His comparative analysis of the industrial world gives full weight to Western and Soviet blocs and at times this pushed him close to a rather crude version of realism (Aron 1972: 71–2). As states can refuse to recognise any superior authority beyond themselves, this realism contains traces of methodological nationalism.

> All international systems have been anarchical, in the strict sense of the term: they have not been subjected to an *arché*. Once an *arché* is recognized, the political units are deprived of their constructive principle – auto-nomy, in-dependence, the ability of making their own decisions involving their destiny [...] Peoples or states act on the stage of history like individuals who *refuse* to submit to a master and *do not know how* to submit to a common law.
>
> (Aron 1972: 209, 211)

Yet, realism's ability to grasp the myth of absolute sovereignty reaches its limits when it is confronted with the consequences of its own premises. Unrestricted state sovereignty can hardly be made compatible with the role and relevance of superpowers and their ability to disregard state sovereignty as they see fit. In this way, Aron's analysis may not be the most sophisticated of those reviewed in this book but it none the less points in a direction different from methodological nationalism. Superpowers are unlike states precisely because they and only they are in a position to assert effectively their sovereignty: the world of international relations is not an 'international system of nation-states'. Even if not totally unproblematic, the core of Aron's assessment of international relations is still able to grasp certain equivocations and ambiguities in the nation-state's position in modernity.

> The likening of 'political units' to 'collective persons' is suggested by the language we use, by the reigning ideology, by our anti-colonialist passion [...] The liquidation in two decades of almost all colonial administrations consecrated the triumph of the egalitarian idea on the world level, but at the same time it increased the real inequalities between states that were judicially equal, at least in their sovereignty, and it enlarged the divergence between the

> theory espoused by the United Nations and the realities of international politics [. . .] this double equalization – in refusing a hierarchy between ethnic groups or states and in the dialectic of the submachine gun and advanced weapons – is likewise a function of the heterogeneity of the international system, whose members are held to be equal, while from all points of view (extent of territory, volume of population, per capita income, degree of development) they have never been so unequal in any of the systems of the past.
>
> (Aron 1972: 228–9)

An important consequence of this assessment of international relations has to do with the meaning of such terms as world economy, world state and indeed world society. Aron views the world economy as an open market economy that is more naturally geared towards the formation of a truly world system because its mode of functioning is based on incessant economic exchanges. A planned economy, conversely, is more likely to work in individual countries because there the state can at least attempt to control and coordinate the different branches of the economy. Theoretically, the case can be made that a 'total planning of the economy in one country alone is only possible if that country is practically self-sufficient [. . .] by definition, the power of the planners ends at the frontiers of a country' (Aron 1967: 102). Similarly to what we have encountered before, there are clear elements of methodological nationalism present in this argument. Yet, Aron immediately makes the point that the underlying issue is how the relationship between planning and self-sufficiency may be achieved – if at all – and not whether the nation-state is or must be the unit within which self-sufficiency can effectively be accomplished. In other words, the point is that the resolution of the tension between planning and self-sufficiency may have to be pursued outside the national borders. For a long time, the Soviet orbit operated 'in isolation from the world market' but now, in places under Soviet rule this isolation is slowly fading away so that it was no longer 'impossible to conceive a planned economy on a world scale' (Aron 1967: 104–5). National units will surely remain key players in the actual managing of planning and control of national borders, but

> If various national economies are planned, a Eurasian plan, extending say from Weimar to Hanoi, becomes possible, and to some extent it is in the process of being achieved [. . .] since 1945 a second world market (a rival of the capitalist world market) has developed, in which international exchanges are to a large extent planned.
>
> (Aron 1967: 105, 110)

If for Aron the idea of a world market – or may be two, one for each bloc – is no fantastic dream, he does not however give similar credit to the possibility of a world state.

> The transition from *many* sovereignties to *one* sovereignty is neither logically nor materially impossible, but it would be *essentially* different from the

> transition from city-state to empire. Empires eliminated or integrated sovereign states; they did not eliminate all external sovereignty. United under one sovereignty, mankind would no longer have any enemy – unless it be on another planet [. . . however . . .] a world state is not in contradiction with the biological or social nature of man [. . .] to establish a universal state, in the absence of consent, it would be necessary to break the resistance of states.
>
> (Aron 1972: 210–11)

With this reference to the world we come back to one of this book's central themes. Aron is interested in social theory because of its claim to understanding cultural differences, historical discrepancy and empirical variations within a universalistic framework. Meaningful concepts are only those which can, in principle at least, be applied to 'social man as such' and therefore, 'even though sociology has become analytical, empirical and quantitative, it has not lost the sense of the *social*, nor, by the same token, of the whole or the totality' (Aron 1972: 12). The goal remains that of constituting a form of *world* sociology that is increasingly able to address the key issues that take place within the *world* society. If with the concept of industrial society Aron highlighted the tendency towards technological unification that is more and more turning in practice the world into a single place, he is equally aware of the fact the this claim to universalism runs deeper than the pure description of technological applications and innovations (Aron 1972: 305–6).

Thus, at the beginning of his most explicit reconstruction of the history of sociology, Aron explicitly advances his views on the origins, main features and current challenges of sociology. With regard to the origins, Aron (1965: 15) shortly but sharply highlights the fact that the discipline emerges in opposition to a state-centred conception of modernity: 'sociology marks a moment in man's reflection on historical reality, the moment when the concept of the social, of society, becomes the centre of interest, replacing the concept of politics or of the régime of the state.' Similarly, he introduces as one of sociology's main characteristics the way in which it perseveres in its 'attempt to comprehend units larger than the nation itself' (Aron 1965: 13). And of course, he is aware of the problems derived from the 'vaguely defined thing we call society, societies or social phenomena. For the time being, I shall use these expressions as if they were synonymous' (Aron 1965: 14). The point I am trying to make here is simply that Aron tried to maintain and renovate the universalistic framework that underlines the rise of social theory and, in so doing, he of course battled to find the appropriate tools and resources to grasp the opacity of the nation-state.

As a scholar working at a time when methodological nationalism was allegedly at its peak, it is worth noticing that Aron is interested in a move beyond any purely nationalistic frame of reference. To Aron, all national frameworks only become meaningful if located within the broader context provided by modernity's industrialist nature. The universalistic impact of the world's technological unification under the auspices of industrialism becomes the infrastructure upon which a deeper recognition of humanity's unity can be achieved. No historical, cultural or ethnic difference in the way in which technology is adapted to local settings is

able to deny the fact that the whole of humanity belongs to the same species. If nothing else, this is modernity's main evolutionary achievement – it made humanity itself aware of the social character of its unity for the first time: 'The dialectic of universality is the mainspring of the march of history' (Aron 1972: 306). The question is that of finding the right kind of analytical framework so that our conceptual tools can at last face the challenge to which they are called.

> The true universality of technology is linked to that ideal of modern society which [. . .] can be summed up by the twin terms: *scientific truth* and *individual equality*. But the internal contradictions of our study take on a different focus when we move from a national to a human frame of reference.
>
> (Aron 1972: 200)

In so far as Aron conceives, at least partly, the nation-state as a frame or container of modern social relations, his work is not altogether devoid or free of methodological nationalism. As the nation-state remains somewhat undertheorised, there is always the danger of reintroducing some form of methodological nationalism from the backdoor. Yet, it must equally be acknowledged that Aron's assessment of the mid-twentieth century departs form methodological nationalism because, in crucial parts of his work, the nation-state does not becomes the natural and/or necessary form of social arrangement in modernity. Neither the explanation of the rise of modernity nor the depiction of modernity's current condition, therefore, can duly be assessed as methodologically nationalistic.

Barrington Moore: the nation-state as a trajectory to modernity

From very early on in his career, Barrington Moore set up his historical research agenda in wide and ambitious terms. The most important themes deserving investigation were, in his view, 'the retreat and transformation of the capitalist order, the rise of totalitarianism, or the colonial revolution' (Moore 1955: 107). These are not issues or questions that easily lend themselves to conventional scientific enquiry. Their nature and scope, rather, obliges the researcher to make conscious options conceptually as well as normatively. In relation to the former, Moore equally rejects *empty generalisations* which, framed in abstract language, are unable to grasp the peculiarities and details of what has actually been the case and *dogmatic historicism* for which every relevant historical event needs to be decomposed into its smallest details and thus cannot be compared, contrasted and located within alternative developments or broader tendencies. He develops a viewpoint that 'is neither determinist nor anti-determinist, a distinction that is too gross to be helpful if it is valid at all' (Moore 1972: 13). His interest in particular historical instances is substantive and yet he is equally committed to seeing these instances as modernity's world historical developments (Denis Smith 1983: 39).

Normatively, Moore (1955: 115) argues that the social scientist cannot be content in becoming some kind of 'moral eunuch in the service of any bureaucracy that

hires him'. As the issues to which the researcher must devote attention are inextricably filled with competing values and imply some kind of moral reasoning, the researcher needs not to be 'neutral' with regard to the values involved in his work. In fact, he assesses positively the idea that 'the scientist can have something to say about values and moral preferences that goes beyond a naturalistic explanation of their origin and relationship to other aspects of social behavior' (Moore 1965: 96). The scholar must retain an objective attitude for handling conflicting evidence and its disturbing consequences: 'the refusal to pass judgement when knowledge is available, the failure to try to find out when judgement is difficult, and to make an effort to correct the situation, constitutes intellectual and moral sloth' (Moore 1972: 59). He therefore sees no incompatibility between the search for human welfare as a legitimate normative goal and the neutrality and objectivity that is imposed upon the researcher of human affairs. The question for Moore is how to handle the tension between empirical description and normative assessment as for him moral preferences are not

> [P]urely arbitrary. The evidence is reasonably clear that human beings do not want a life of suffering, at least not for its own sake. Such evidence has led me to adopt as a working premise the moral position that human society ought to be organised in such a way as to eliminate useless suffering.
>
> (Moore 1972: 5)

Moore is fully aware of the difficulties involved in trying to make compatible, if not to reconcile, the tensions between explanatory and evaluative statements in the social sciences: 'what the position I have argued amounts to is a stress on the familiar point that causal analysis and evaluation are distinct if related activities. Both seem to me unavoidable, and some main difficulties arise from the fact that it is often necessary to carry on both simultaneously' (Moore 1972: 7). He is self-consciously rehearsing here the claim to universalism that is at the centre of the canon of social theory.

Indeed, both in terms of the substantive issues in which he was interested and the approach with which he tried to study these, Barrington Moore's (1967) now classic *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* follows the agenda I have just briefly sketched. One of the book's central claims has to do with the revolutionary and violent quality of the processes leading to the transition to the modern world. He shows that nowhere was this transition achieved peacefully. Rather the contrary, violence and uprisings have been one of its major characteristics. Interestingly, and this shall be a key theme in the next chapter, Moore conceptualises this transition in class terms and he focuses particularly in the way in which class struggles and alliances gave rise to different forms of modern socio-political arrangements. His argument starts from the assumption that whilst in absolutist states the landed classes played the key political role and the peasantry was the class from which the economic surplus was largely taken; in modernity there is an increment in the importance of the relative positions of the bourgeoisie and the working class. The three routes to modernity he distinguishes in this work

(the democratic, communist and fascist) are expressions of particular trajectories of class struggles, of how the traditional class structure and alliances evolved into their modern form. So, while democracy and fascism may both be forms of bourgeois rule, the relation of the ruling class to the other classes are quite distinct. Underlying Moore's concerns is the way in which national bourgeoisies were able to build class alliances upwards as well as downwards. Upwardly, they faced the problem of how to limit the power of the landed classes and place themselves as the decisive actors in the introduction of *new* political arrangements. Downwardly, the core issue they had to address was how to limit the demands from below and integrate both the peasantry and the emergent working classes into capitalist social relations.

The core of the argument lies in understanding that when bourgeois revolutions were successful a democratic form of socio-political arrangement tended to be built. Unsurprisingly, Moore argues that this is broadly the case with England/Britain in 1688, France in 1789 and the United States after its 1861–1865 civil war. In all these cases, Moore's thesis is that a modern nation-state, in the full sense of the term, is the result of bourgeois revolutions achieving their aims. Conversely, when bourgeois revolutions were unsuccessful, a more authoritarian form of socio-political arrangement was established. If bourgeois revolutions were defeated by strong landed classes, as was the case in Japan and Germany, fascism was the most likely outcome. If the defeat was provoked by a strong peasantry, as in Russia and China, communist regimes became the most likely outcome. Indeed, later research has shown that there are problems with the empirical adequacy of Moore's model in the sense that the class alliances and struggles he described have not necessarily resulted in the political regimes one might expect from the model (Mahoney 2003; Skocpol 1994; Valenzuela 2001). More analytically, the case has also been raised that Moore's comparative analysis tends to operate through a method of agreement: the occurrence of one factor seems enough to explain the development of a general pattern regardless of previous differences (Skocpol 1984b: 379). In other words, the charge is that, for Moore, it would be simply enough to assess the destiny of bourgeois revolutions to be able to account for the form in which the transition to modernity has taken place. This understanding of Moore's work, however, misses the point that his 'generalisations through comparative analysis' are in fact subordinated to 'his vision of the tidal flow of history' (Smith 1984: 333). Moore intertwines narrative history and comparative analysis and although he uses his 'comparative analysis as a means of [...] testing (as opposed to illustrating) his own or others' arguments' this does not automatically mean that Moore's comparative work deploys general laws because he is not searching for cases that can then be described as instantiations of a general pattern (Smith 1984: 350). Thus, for instance, Moore talks of 'origins' and not of 'causes' of democracy and dictatorship.

Moore lacks a clear concept of the nation-state and in his work there is always the possibility of methodological nationalism in the conceptualisation of its position in modernity. One possible reading of Moore's book, then, would be that despite the differences in class history and political regimes between, say, the

United States, Germany and China, they are in fact only different forms of nation-state. As bourgeois, fascist and communist regimes are all *modern* forms of society, the question remains as to whether their 'nation-statehood' is precisely that common element. In this forcefully methodologically nationalistic reading of Moore's work, the nation-state becomes the final and necessary moment of modernity precisely because it is the underlying logic behind all of modernity's historical routes. All differences apart, the nation-state becomes here the embodiment of everything that is modern in modern forms of socio-political arrangements. The major problem with this possible reading, as I have just claimed, is that it violates Moore's historical concerns. On the one hand, he argued that the three routes to modernity only 'to a very limited extent [. . .] may constitute alternatives routes and choices. They are much more clearly successive historical stages' (Moore 1967: 413–14). On the other, however, this is an evolutionary tale without a necessary final stage, as the case of India at that time exemplified. In Moore's (1967: 413) own words:

> By the middle of the 1960s, India had no more than haltingly entered upon this process of becoming a modern industrial society. That country had experienced neither a bourgeois revolution, nor a conservative revolution from above, not so far a communist one. Whether India will be able to avoid the appalling costs of these three forms to discover some new variant, as it was trying to do under Nehru, or succumb in some way to the equally appalling costs of stagnation, remains the ghastly problem faced by Nehru's successors.

The ambivalent picture of modernity's different routes being depicted by Moore should not be emptied of its historical elusiveness, sociological equivocation and normative ambiguity. One may of course want to normalise his understanding of modernity as if it were only a world of nation-states but this would make us miss the opacity that emerges out of his interpretation of the rise and development of modernity. Moore's thesis, which on this count at least is not far from Parsons' and Aron's, is that authoritarian regimes – both fascists and communists – are a modern regime of a different nature from the 'democratic' nation-state. Actors at that time had of course no certainty on whether modern forms of authoritarianism would remain what they were or, on the contrary, would eventually evolve into a different kind of socio-political arrangement. If nothing else, the rationale behind Moore's idea of modernity prevents him from conceiving the development of modernity as if it were necessarily leading to the formation of one and the same form of regime everywhere in the world. It neither requires nor presupposes the nation-state at the centre of all his three different routes to modernity. Rather, Moore's concern was with the rise of industrialism and the different forms it can adopt as a specifically modern form of organisation of social life.

Even if there can be no doubt that the democratic nation-state was his preferred form of modern socio-political order, he always retains a rather sceptical eye on it.

This is precisely what we read in the Preface to his *Reflections on the Causes of Human Misery and upon Certain Proposals to Eliminate Them*: 'there is an undercurrent of similarity between the stance that this book takes towards liberal institutions and that of at least some disaffected socialist towards the working of Soviet society' (Moore 1972: xvi). It is as though his commitment towards democracy has not so much to do with this regime's intrinsic value and more with the fact that no better form of socio-political order was still available. But Moore is not content with the requirement of making moral options explicit and posits the problem in stronger and indeed more challenging terms. On the one hand, we have already said that the justification of moral decisions must be simultaneously established at normative and descriptive levels. On the other, the question is for him that of finding support for normative statements with universalistic intent. He is after standpoints that can hold validity in different historical contexts and cultural settings. This claim to universalism is the only legitimate position from which normative assessments can have a place and role in the social sciences.

> [A] general opposition to human suffering constitutes a standpoint that both transcends and unites different cultures and historical epochs. By asking what causes this suffering and is it necessary it becomes possible to escape from the trap of accepting each culture's self-justification at its face value while retaining a capacity for sympathetic insight into its torments and perplexities.
>
> (Moore 1972: 11)

We can now see that the author himself has brought this claim to universalism into a terrain that is linked to the challenges methodological nationalism pose to our understanding of the nation-state's position in modernity. Moore (1972: 32) comes very close to providing his own answer to the problems of methodological nationalism when he further reflects upon the nature of human misery.

> [W]hy are human conflicts and cruelty so very widespread in time and space [? . . .] The essence of the answer that makes sense to me is that the mere existence of independent or 'sovereign' political units is by itself sufficient to set in motion rivalries and insecurities that will before long have these units at each other's throats.

A final reason to read Moore's work as a critique of methodological nationalism relates to the way in which *Social Origins* can be said to belong to the wider intellectual tradition in which *he* dwells and *we* are interested in reconstructing. Moore locates himself within the universalistic orientation of the Enlightenment and classical social theory (Denis Smith 1983: 99).[42] He considers classical social theorists as a generation of thinkers that participated

> [I]n a single debate about the possibility of putting into practice the principles proclaimed earlier by the French Revolution [. . .] All of them saw in their

> own way that mankind had destructive capacities as well as creative ones [. . .] all of them saw as their scientific problems those which the course of human history had put on the agenda as the significant ones of their epoch.
>
> (Moore 1965: 113)

Moore's key questions and themes all embrace the problem of understanding the nation-state and conceptualising its problematic position in modernity. It is because of this same reason that his work is best depicted as a permanent struggle for finding the adequate position of the nation-state within modernity. Moore inhabits in the tradition of the Enlightenment and stays within its commitment towards construing theoretically sophisticated and normatively sound knowledge about the social world. He summarises as follows the dangers we face in abandoning the substantive orientation of this scholarly tradition:

> [I]f social science drops the task of rational criticism from its program altogether, leaving it entirely to theology, journalism, and the Bohemian fringe of intellectual life, it can some day drown in a sea of verbiage, strewn with floating bits of meaningless data.
>
> (Moore 1965: 110)

Similar to Aron's argument in the previous section, Moore's analyses of individual countries are crucially related to the path towards modern industrialism as three differentiated trajectories to modernity. Similar to Bendix's argument in the following section, Moore's interest in the nation-state needs to be considered within the wider change in modernity's political relations.

Reinhard Bendix: the nation-state as a form of political transition

From all the writers discussed so far in this book, Reinhard Bendix seems to be one who has devoted the most explicit and extensive attention to understanding the development and main features of the nation-state. The underlying theme of both his *Citizenship and Nation-Building* (Bendix 1964) and *Kings or People* (Bendix 1978) is that of explaining the transition from traditional to modern forms of political authority and the position of the nation-state within that transition. In other words, Bendix's view of the role of the nation-state is framed by those broader processes of reconfiguration of social life in relation to popular sovereignty and the exercise of political power. In his early work, for instance, this is the way in which he posits the aim of the book.

> The common referent of the following studies is the formation and transformation of political communities which today we call nation-states. The central fact of nation-building is the orderly exercise of a nationwide, public authority. The following discussion expands on the abstract distinction between authority and association by analyzing certain recurrent problems in

> the relations between formally instated officials and the public which is to abide by the rules that are promulgated authoritatively. The purpose is to characterize the *balancing of contingencies upon which the legitimacy of a political order rests.*
>
> (Bendix 1964: 18–19)

This novel form of centralised public authority takes a communitarian flavour through specifically national terms, and Bendix sees an intrinsic connection with class relations in the increasingly national organisation of the state. Classes and nations were directly intertwined and Bendix held that there could not be social classes in the modern sense of the term without the political changes that made a new legal framework possible (see Chapter 8). The emergence of modern classes cannot be separated from the extension of national citizenship to all classes, which in turn was as much a response to protests from below as a result of the bureaucratisation of state structures from above (Bendix 1964: 3). He searches for an explanation of the emergence of new forms of political authority (the state), new forms of production (capitalism) and new forms of social relations (civil society). And in all three cases, the nation claims to provide an adequate framework within which the required reconstitution of social relations could take place: as national state, national economy and national public sphere.

> A nation-wide market economy emerged, based on the capacity of individuals to enter into legally binding agreements. This legal and economic development occurred at a time when public affairs were in the hands of a privileged few – a restriction which was reduced and eventually eliminated through the extension of the franchise. Both the growth of a market economy and the gradual extension of the franchise gave rise to interest groups and political parties which mobilized people for collective action in the economic and political spheres, thus transforming the social structure of modern society.
>
> (Bendix 1964: 23)

Bendix argues that a striking characteristic of these novel structures of public authority is that, despite the proliferation of conflicting class interests, they obtained a relatively high degree of consensus. This is expressed, for instance, in the fact that certain functions of the nation-state such as taxation, law enforcement, public works and the direction of foreign affairs were rarely contested (Bendix 1964: 137). Historically, then, industrialisation and democratisation belong together. The rise of the nation-state challenges religious and patrimonial sources of social solidarity and both class and national identities were there to try to fill that gap (Bendix 1964: 61–2, 106–17). In this view, then, the nation-state and modern forms of citizenship become 'end products of a century-long development' in the West (Bendix 1964: 300). Indeed, the claim of the nation-state being an 'end product' of Western development does not look, at first sight at least, too distant from methodological nationalism. In order to assess how far this is the case, however, a fuller scrutiny of Bendix's theses is still necessary.

The type of comparative analysis in which Bendix is interested focuses on how universally applicable concepts can be put to work in historically circumscribed analysis. His historical sociology is also operating within, and trying to renovate, the claim to universalism that is at the centre of this book. In relation to the abstract use of the idea of society, and its empirical utilisation in studying the development of particular nation-states, Bendix (1963: 532) argues that: 'comparative sociological studies represent an attempt to develop concepts and generalisations at a level between what is true of all societies and what is true of one society at one point in time and space.' From a methodological point of view, according to Bendix, this challenge implies the description of 'dual tendencies' within which the actors' motives and interests keep playing a central role *vis-à-vis* structural constraints. That is, a 'simultaneous attention to the social and the individual aspects of behaviour in society' must be given and this in turn leads to the conclusion that 'the empirical foundation of this perspective lies in the fact that concrete human relationships are ambiguous, and that this ambiguity is manifest in social action and its consequences' (Bendix and Berger 1959: 95, 99).

The argument I am exploring so far is that Bendix tries to find a third way between *contingency* and *necessity* in the explanation of actual nation-state formation processes. Bendix rejects the former because it would mean that an answer to the question of whether a particular nation-state was formed or not could only be achieved by considering all the details and specificity involved in that particular instance. The consequence of this option would be to negate the very possibility of any such thing as a social theory of the nation-state: every nation-state would be different from any other and no meaningful generalisation would be possible. He equally rejects necessary or teleological explanations in so far as they would make his commitment to detailed historical reconstructions pointless. No serious social scientific research can be pursued without a place for novel facts, or novel interpretations of old facts. Ahistorical laws of evolution must therefore be rejected and Bendix's thesis seems to be that even if the nation-state is regarded as an end product of modernity it is not the necessary product of modernity. He is interested in the claim to universalism that is at the core of social theory's project precisely because it is committed to avoid teleological explanations as well as purely empirical descriptions of historical events.[43]

The substantiation of this third way between contingency and necessity in social scientific explanations is found in Bendix's vast comparative work on the transition from traditional to modern forms of political authority. In *Kings or People*, the argument follows a similar reasoning as the one being deployed so far, although the reference to historical materials is greatly expanded and the theoretical frame of reference becomes more abstract and sophisticated. Rather than the question of the constitution of class alliances within countries and the complicated relations between classes and increasingly national forms of public authority, Bendix poses the question now as the problem of the transition from traditional *royal authority* to modern *popular mandate*. It is this transformation that becomes the core of his understanding of modernity and the universalistic thrust behind its worldwide impact. He is now explicit on the implications

associated with the equation between the abstract category of society and the historical development of nation-state as a modern form of socio-political arrangement. Without using the actual term methodological nationalism, Bendix tackles this problem directly. Unsurprisingly, he is also writing in the 1970s and the general tone of his reflections on this theme resembles some of the claims we reviewed in Chapter 1. He is, however, particularly interested in one aspect of the problem of methodological nationalism. Bendix wants to comprehend why these kinds of theoretical frameworks emerged precisely in Western Europe and at the particular time in which they did. He puts forward his own version of the *critique* of methodological nationalism to nineteenth-century evolutionist thinking because

> It conceived of societies in isolation and saw in economic development and the division of labour the key to social change. This view had a certain plausibility. The social theories of the nineteenth century were developed in societies that pioneered the industrial and democratic revolutions of the modern world. These revolutions occurred in the center of the British Empire and in the great state of France, societies which could easily be considered in isolation. The theories developed in England and France depicted societies as self-contained units and focused attention on the major classes striving for social and political recognition.
>
> (Bendix 1978: 267–8)

There is clearly no interest in denying the obvious here. Methodological nationalism has been and still is part of the social sciences' conceptual equipment and Bendix concedes that the equation between society and the nation-state has accompanied social theory in its attempt at understanding the transition to modernity. Surely, no theoretically informed and empirically accurate account of the development of modernity can be given without proper consideration to the role and position of the nation-state in that wider picture and the question does not consist in obliterating the nation-state's main features and legacy either. But this partial presence of methodological nationalism does not crucially erode social theory's claim to universalism and its ability to try to understand the obscurities and equivocations of the nation-state.

In fact, the opening lines of this massive six hundred pages book make reference to how the 'anguish of nation-building' has become a constant experience 'around the world' (Bendix 1978: xi). An understanding of the expansion of nationalism and the nation-state throughout the globe must be made compatible with the anguish with which this process has been experienced and, partly at least, accomplished. And this last claim is in fact consistent with some of the accounts to be found in the secondary literature with regard to Bendix's idea of the nation. It has been argued, for instance, that Bendix saw nations as that 'complex mosaics of beliefs and tendencies produced by past conflicts and the domination of successive elites. Integration and consensus were always incomplete' (Smith 1991: 34). And in that sense, it has equally been pointed out that nation-building

does not refer to 'societies' understood as self-contained and 'clearly defined units' (Rueschemeyer 1984: 135). The general framework within which Bendix (1978: 4) tries to deal with the uncertainties that accompany social change 'combines an understanding of a country's historical particularity with its participation in a general movement of history'. On the one hand, the problem seems to be that of coming to terms with how individual countries 'have participated in a worldwide movement of nationalism and of government by popular mandate, though each country has done so in its own way'. And yet, on the other, the task is equally to produce an account that is able to explain how 'nationalism has become a universal condition in our world' (1978: 5).

The struggle for getting rid of the equation between the nation-state and society becomes all the more apparent because, towards the end of the volume, Bendix concentrates precisely on the limitations of methodological nationalism and the misrepresentations it carries on the conflictive, unfinished and ambivalent nature of the nation-state. He is now able to come to terms with its historical elusiveness, sociological equivocations and normative ambiguity:

> Terms like *state* and *nation* play down or ignore these persistent divisions, but political unity is never complete and serious challenges to it recur to this day even in old states [...] The direct juxtaposition between the central government and the individual and hence an antifamilial *tendency* is a general attribute of the nation-state, though this common tendency does not diminish the differences among legal, communist, and fascist domination, or the one-party regimes of the new states [...] nationalism, while a nearly universal phenomenon in modern history, is not in fact a force that easily unifies countries.
>
> (1978: 601–2, italics in original)

Traces of methodological nationalism can surely be found in Bendix's work on the nation-state. Yet, the extent to which he is able to control them, the richness of his historical descriptions, the abstraction of his conceptual tools and, above all, his wider concern with the rise and development of modernity point even more strongly towards a subtler and richer understanding of the nation-state.

Conclusion

The works of the three writers reviewed in this chapter do not converge into a unified theoretical framework but they do touch upon a number of similar issues. They are all concerned with the transition to modernity with regard to both the changes in the forms of political authority and the rise of industrialism. Equally, however, they tend to come dangerously close to methodological nationalism. This risk is rooted in these works because they have effectively attempted to conceptualise the rise and main features of nation-state in modernity. Not only that, but in trying to grasp the role and position of the nation-state in modernity they similarly point towards the theses that *there is no social theory of modernity*

without a social theory of the nation-state and indeed that *there is no social theory of the nation-state without a social theory of modernity*. They faced this inextricable connection as a serious intellectual challenge and, because of that, it was always possible to find traces of methodological nationalism. In all three cases, the nation-state plays the role of a frame which operates with a significant claim to autonomy, self-sufficiency and self-determination and they all show us that the actual opacity of the nation-state blocks any shortcut or secure path in its theorisation. But understanding its position in modernity requires playing out this historical opacity against social theory's own conceptual ambivalences: Aron understands the nation-state *within* the broader context of industrialism, Moore considers it always *within* the longer term of modernity's differentiated trajectories and Bendix conceptualises it *within* the wider transformation of authority relations. Methodological nationalism is never far off because it is somehow inscribed in the nature of the beast. Yet the very taming of the beast requires them as well as us to recognise that, without social theory's claim to universalism no explanation of the nation-state can work.

These writers' contribution to the move beyond methodological nationalism being attempted in this book can be assessed only if we take the difficulties they faced as seriously as they themselves did. The nation-state's historical elusiveness is reflected in their thesis that the nation-state evolves and does not remain true to itself. Its sociological equivocations transpire in the way in which it is under constant threats of regression or transformation into an alternative form of, equally modern, socio-political arrangement such as totalitarianism. And its normative ambiguity is expressed in the different ways in which the claim to national self-determination can be fulfilled and the rather undemocratic results it can indeed bring about. We can neither hope that the nation-state will evaporate into thin air so that it will unproblematically give room to more cosmopolitan and peaceful socio-political arrangements nor stubbornly defend it as a lesser evil so that democracy and modern social life in general are made dependent upon the future of the nation-state. It is my contention that current social theory still faces similar problems and to the exploration of this claim I shall devote the last section of this book.

Part IV

Contemporary social theory

8 Michael Mann (1942–present) and Eric Hobsbawm (1919–present)

Classes, nations and different conceptions of the nation-state

This chapter is similar to Chapter 7 in so far as there is an explicit effort in this more recent historical sociology to understand the development and main characteristics of the nation-state. In so doing, it continues some key themes advanced by the intellectual tradition of social theory we have so far reviewed. Early historical sociology arose in the nineteenth century to pursue a global understanding of the rise of modernity and thus it opposed the view of the ' "natural" histories of nations' (Delanty and Isin 2003: 2). And indeed, 'dispelling the illusions of false necessity' has remained one of historical sociology's major strengths (Calhoun 2003b: 384) – and this is exactly a core argument of this chapter.

The linkage between classes and nations highlights one very important characteristic of the nation-state: it discloses the *conflictual* character of the nation-state right from its origins. From the different forms of collective identity and consciousness that have troubled the nation-state's ideal of 'moral consensus', class identity has been especially important due to its connection with internationalism and the threat it poses to the unity of the nation. This link between classes and nations is addressed in this chapter's two sections devoted, respectively, to the works of Michael Mann and Eric Hobsbawm. Both Mann and Hobsbawm have explicitly made this link between classes and nations a central claim in historically understanding the formation of modernity. The route through which each author reaches that conclusion is, however, different. Whereas Mann sees this as a result of the intricate connections between the four sources of social power around which human life is constituted, Hobsbawm unfolds this relationship in the context of his original and influential reconstruction of the long nineteenth century. From this chapter, then, we come to the conclusion that nations, states, classes and society have a certain claim to converge but this has rarely been an accomplished fact. Both writers equally try to understand the nation-state's intriguing mixture of solidity and instability, the fact that the nation-state is constantly re-creating itself so that it can appear as if it has never changed, it has always been there and will never be extinguished.

Michael Mann: classes, nations and the four sources of social powers

Michael Mann's historical sociology is important to us here for two reasons. First, because he commences his impressive work on the *Sources of Social Power*

(1986, 1993a) by discussing whether the idea of society is the kind of analytical tool that may help him pursue his enterprise. Second, because he devoted explicit attention to the historical development of the nation-state via the linkage between classes and nations. On both grounds, I shall demonstrate, his arguments provide us with insightful resources.

Mann refers to 'society' as an overlapping and socio-spatial network of power that is structured around his four sources of social power: ideological, economic, military and political. The kind of concept of society he is after must help in empirical research without being naïve – society being used in everyday language – or voluntaristic – society consistently defined but useless for empirical research purposes. Mann thus criticises one of methodological nationalism's key presupposition: the uncritical assumption of a concept of society as a totality. In his view, most previous approaches to the idea of society have somehow fallen into that trap, as they tend to operate with a definition of society as a unitary conception. This charge is explicitly directed against the tradition of social theory and Mann criticises Marx, Weber and Parsons because they all – to a greater or lesser degree – have understood society in this close sense and they are thus guilty of methodological nationalism: 'the enormous covert influence of the nation-state of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the human sciences means that the nation-state model dominates sociology and history alike' (Mann 1968: 2).[44] Although he finds Parsons' conception of society 'admirable' he none the less reproduces the common criticism that Parsons overstressed stability and unity (Mann 1986: 13). For him, then, a better conception of society is the one rooted in its Latin origins, society as 'an asymmetrical alliance, society as a loose confederation of stratified allies [. . .] Human beings need to enter into social power relations, but they do not need social totalities. They are social, not societal, animals' (Mann 1986: 14). He emphasises that a tendency towards institutionalisation is not the driving force of human societies and that, as totalities, societies are never completely closed. Crucially, there is more a claim to achieving this kind of totality than it is an accomplished fact: 'social relationships have rarely aggregated into unitary societies – although states sometimes had unitary pretensions' (Mann 1986: 17). Societies cannot be regarded as totalities but are better understood as overlapping networks. A certain confederal rather than a unitary notion of society may be more efficient for the purposes of historical research: '*societies are actually federations of organizations*' (Mann 1986: 52).

From what I have argued in previous chapters, it is apparent that I do not agree with Mann's assessment of the canon of social theory in relation to its idea of society and this difference also may explain why I reject his conclusion of getting rid of the concept of society altogether (Mann 1986: 2). And in fact, not even Mann himself is really keen in completely abandoning the notion. He is willing to retain the concept as long as we can find an appropriate use for it. In the same way as society defined as the nation-state is too narrow, he says, society understood as capitalism or industrialism is too wide. Mann's (1986: 13) definition is as follows:

> *A society is a network of social interaction at the boundaries of which is a certain level of interaction cleavage between it and its environment*. A society

> is a unit with boundaries, and it contains interaction that is relatively dense and stable; that is, it is internally patterned when compared to interaction that crosses its boundaries.

These theoretical reflections on society translate well into Mann's substantive conception of the nation-state. The thesis of the 'rise and rise' of the nation-state and the nation-state system is the way in which he describes the formation of a 'modest' or 'mild' version of the nation-state in Western Europe from the end of the eighteenth century. This kind of nation-state is surely not the only possible version to have developed throughout the world, but it possessed most of the positive features we usually attribute to the more or less democratic and peaceful nation-state during the second part of the twentieth century. It is a type of modern socio-political arrangement with greatly enhanced infrastructural capabilities and which thus is increasingly able to shape key aspects of social life such as political decision-making, taxation, judiciary decisions, conscription, primary education and so on. In a way that resembles Hobsbawm's arguments on the nineteenth century in the following section of this chapter, Mann claims that this modest version of the nation-state needs to be seen as in competition with three other, equally modern but different, forms of socio-political arrangements: multinational empires, Fascist regimes and state socialism. In so far the nation-state is regarded in this sober version, it can effectively be said that it has been more successful than these alternative forms of socio-political arrangements. It has been able to provide minimum standards of social welfare whilst at the same time respecting individual freedoms and equality before the law.

The major strength in Mann's explanation of the rise of the nation-state as a modern form of socio-political arrangement is that he sees it as only one element, however important, in the development of modernity. He emphasises the relevance of taking into account the different scales at which modernity was and continues to be shaped – from local ties to global networks

> The expansion of these national and inter-national networks always proceed *alongside* the expansion of certain 'transnational' power relations, especially those of industrial capitalism and its attendant ideologies (liberalism, socialism), plus the broader cultural networks provided in the northwest by European/Christian/'white' sense of collective identity. National and inter-national interaction networks thus grew much more at the expense of local than of transnational networks.
>
> (Mann 1997: 476)

Mann is aware of the fact that the nation-state has had the claim to become modernity's key institutional development. Yet he is equally conscious of the extent to which that is precisely a claim rather than an accomplished fact. A complementary but much-less-mentioned feature of this modest nation-state is that it had to *withdraw* from certain domains of social life that before were located within the state's field of influence. If it is true that the nation-state was able to

cage social relations in the unprecedented way it did, it is equally important to acknowledge that when they were first being formed

> Most northwestern states also *lost* certain functions during the period of their expansion. As they became more 'secular', they relinquished powers over moral regulation, which they had in principles possessed in association with churches [...] Remember also that most economic life had never come into the realm of the state: we call it 'private' property [...] Capitalism and morality were substantially autonomous of the state.
>
> (Mann 1997: 477)

The key to understanding the historical development the nation-state – and therefore also the key features of its current transformation – is that it did not unfold in the way that methodological nationalism would have it. Rather the opposite, Mann's research shows that the nation-state is 'diversifying, developing, not dying: the nation-state is not hegemonic, nor is it obsolete, either as a reality or as an ideal' (Mann 1993b: 129). There is nothing automatic or necessary in its formation and it cannot be conceived of as an internally evolving monad. In Mann's (1997: 477) positive formulation, the argument is presented as follows:

> Indeed, nation-state growth *presupposed* a broader global expansion, most obviously to finance it, but also perhaps because a sense of nationhood may have presupposed the sense of European/Christian/white superiority which endowed all the classes and both sexes of the northwest with a sense of their own moral worth and equality [...] Thus the past saw the rise of transnational capitalism and cultural identities alongside the rise of the nation-state and its international system. They have always presupposed a complex combination of relative autonomy and symbiotic interdependence.

These arguments find further support in Mann's more recent research into the rise and main features of fascism as one of modernity's most important socio-political regimes. In his view, fascism must be defined as a 'distinctively paramilitary extreme version of nation-statism [...] the core fascist constituency enjoyed particularly close relations to the sacred icon of fascism, the nation-state' (Mann 2004: 2–3). Fascists believe in closed and homogenous nations as well as in strong and powerful states. In that sense, fascism endorses a thick conception of the nation-state that seems to know none of limits that apply to the mild nation-state already defined. Apart from pushing for a tighter relationship between nation and state, fascist regimes wanted, against the central feature that we just saw allowed the rise of the modern nation-state, to re-moralise politics. Fascists expected to give politics a new sense of transcendence, a project by which an ideal image of the good society can be not only conceived of but also put into practice. As a thorough rejection of modernism became increasingly unappealing for the masses, fascists tried to 'resacralise' the nation-state 'by managing to transfer some of the sense of the sacred from God to the nation-state' (Mann 2004: 86–7).

At the same time, the fascists' tightly compact conception of the nation-state required and effectively created a conception of a certain enemy from which the nation needed to be cleansed (Mann 2004: 12–17). In a way, it can even be said that by the time of the emergence of most fascist regimes in Europe – the late 1920s and early 1930s – these regimes were now expressing some of the difficulties of the yet-to-be fully developed modest nation-state to cope with the following crises: 'wars between citizen armies, severe class conflict exacerbated by the Great Depression, a political crisis arising from an attempted rapid transition by many countries toward a democratic nation-state, and a cultural sense of civilizational contradiction and decay' (Mann 2004: 23). Unsurprisingly, these four crises correspond, respectively, to Mann's four sources of social power: military, economic, political and ideological. The result of Mann's search for a more general explanation of fascism is that he explicitly rejects any form of methodological nationalism. Fascism cannot be explained if 'one treats countries as unique and provides with what is in effect a "nationalist" explanation'. He equally rejects the idea that in explaining fascism one can divide Europe 'into nation-states and treat each as a single case in a multivariate comparative analysis' (Mann 2004: 42). In other words, no conception of a German *Sonderweg* will ever explain the rise of Nazism. A wider explanatory framework is needed, one that includes a broader conception of the development of modernity and the problematic position of the nation-state within it.

It is in this context of positioning the nation-state within the development of modernity in the twentieth century that we can go back in time and look at Mann's conceptualisation of the link between classes and nations. In his view, modern classes and nations arose together because they both call for an abstract sense of community in an analogous universalistic way, which included the diffusion of similar patterns of social practices, identities and sentiments (Mann 1986: 530). Classes and nations are thus co-original and coeval; they both must produce some kind of link to political authority, that is, to frame their identity in relation to the state (Mann 1986: 435). So, Mann's approach reminds us of Benedict Anderson's (1991) thesis of the nation as an imagined community, as he argues that the major institutional setting for the expansion of both class and national consciousness was the expansion of literacy which went hand-in-hand with the development of better means of communication: 'if the nation was an imagined community, its main ideological competitor, class consciousness, might seem to have been even more metaphorical, an "imaginary community" [...] the two imagined or imaginary communities arose together, conjoined, in the same process of modernisation' (Mann 1992: 141).

The explanation of the rise of nations and classes is twofold. On the one hand, Mann's (1992: 146) thesis is that high literacy, that is, the literary taste of the upper classes, was more open to ideological innovations than the lower classes' literacy. Elites were ready to receive new influences in which national *and* class-consciousness could arise.[45] In that sense, 'nationalism – like class ideology, the other great ideology of modern times – was capable of spreading across large social and geographic spaces only from the 18th century to the present day'

(Mann 1992: 138). On the other, he also argues that the rise of the modern state in Europe is related to the increasing costs of warfare. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the state's main function was, by far, warfare and most of the state expenditures (as much as 90 per cent) were related to the costs of war. Even though it is true that armies were actually used internally against the poor, the main reason for having strong armies was the external relations with other states. The state's main functions were not primarily class-related because during the medieval and early modern times the state had an 'infrastructural inability to penetrate civil society' (Mann 1986: 482). The formation of a truly modern nation-state means a change in terms of the state's main function: the shaping of *class* relations within the nation. The modernity of the relationship between classes and nations is represented by what Mann calls the rising of the English 'class-nation'. The installation of Parliament in Westminster by the end of the seventeenth century produces a class – composed by the gentlemen of the counties, lords, bishops and merchants – which started to see itself as the nation, the content of its class ideology was *to be* the nation (Mann 1986: 378–495; 1992: 152–5; 1993a: 96–132). From that moment, the social background of the membership to the nation started a process of differentiation in which eventually all classes in society would be able to see themselves as bearers of the nation.

The relationship between the elite and the masses becomes crucial in the explanation of how national movements turned to widen their support. There was a differentiated creation of national images, a differentiation that followed the lines of class division. Yet, this tendency had its counterbalance in the way in which all classes started to develop their own class identity by the very same process by which they built their national identification.

> After being early dominated by religion, discursive literacy then expanded in a first phase in two distinct ways, as a response either to the spread of commercial (not at first industrial) capitalism or to the expansion of states. Both routes encouraged the diffusion of broader, more universalistic ideologies. One centred on class consciousness and/or class collaboration through political reform; the other centred on state modernisation. Through the 18th century both were then affected in a second phase by the intensification of geopolitical rivalry between the Great Powers. As states vastly increased their rates of extraction of taxes and military manpower, they politicised emerging ideologies. Over matters of political representation and state reform, class and national consciousness developed and fused.
>
> (Mann 1992: 142)

In his second volume of *The Sources of Social Power*, Mann (1993a: 17–20, 214–26, 722–8) further develops this explanation of the relation between states, classes and nations in the context of his overall theoretical framework. He now links the rise of classes and nations to changes that occurred in the four sources of social power: *economic* (expansion of capitalism), *military* (state-militarism), *ideological* (secularism and literacy) and *political* (fiscal crises and the call for

democracy). Classes and nations arose as a combined result of the transformations experienced in all four forms of social organisation. As a result, the question to be explained turns now to the rise of classes and nation-states as two major containers in which modern social life crystallised. Mann (1993a: 225) argues that nations were formed, that is, they surpassed the proto-national threshold, only when a cross-class self-consciousness was achieved, and that classes, as emergent social actors, therefore arose before nations. The latter were only created with the processes of naturalisation pursued by states: 'As states transformed first into national states, then into nation-states, classes became caged, unintentionally "naturalized" and politicized' (Mann 1993a: 20).

As a closure to this section, we can see that the underlying universalistic programme in Mann's understanding of social life *in general* buttresses his more specific explanation of the rise and main features of the modern nation-state. He is interested in finding a general strategy for studying modes of social organisations at different historical times that, while keeping in mind its complex, multilayered and promiscuous nature, it is equally able to formulate more abstract statements on how social life is shaped during different epochs. The modern nation-state, in Mann's view, has a claim to closure and self-containment that is found in all forms of socio-political arrangements and conceptions of society. Of course, the nation-state has benefited from greater technical capabilities in all sources of social power to try to accomplish that claim to unity and closeness but this has none the less remained a claim rather than something definitive.

Eric Hobsbawm: the evolution of nationalism and the nation-state in the nineteenth century

The rise of modern nationalism is one of themes at the centre of Eric Hobsbawm's now classic trilogy on the long nineteenth century *The Age of Revolution 1789–1848* (2003a), *The Age of Capital 1848–1875* (2003b) and *The Age of Empire 1875–1914* (2003c). It is only in the context of the broader processes of formation of the modern world that his companion volume devoted directly to the problem of nationalism can be understood (Hobsbawm 1994). The democratic and industrial revolutions, the progressive widening of the political franchise, the rise of class consciousness, the internationalism of the workers' movement and the expansion of European Empires, to mention just a few, are all in Hobsbawm's view closely related to the rise of the modern nation-state. This section concentrates on Hobsbawm's account of the co-evolution of national and class-consciousness with the aim of complementing some of the arguments to which we have already paid attention. I shall also comment on the relationship between late nineteenth-century imperialism and the nation-state. The goal is there to lend further support to the claim of the elusiveness, equivocations and ambiguity of the nation-state's position in modernity.

Hobsbawm (1994: 3) locates the idea of the nation firmly in the context of modern politics: 'nations, we now know [. . .] are not as old as history.' In spite of repeated claims that this way of classifying groups of human beings is in some

way primary or fundamental for the social existence of its members, Hobsbawm (1994: 5) regards the nation as a 'very recent newcomer in human history' and even today as competing with many other forms of social identification: 'Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men [...] are a myth; nationalism which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that* is a reality' (Hobsbawm 1994: 10). This is the sense in which the 'creation' of the nation is a part of the wider nineteenth-century movement of inventing traditions (Hobsbawm: 1983a: 7–14; 2003b: 103–21).

To Hobsbawm, the nation is the product on the one hand of modern nationalisms which seek to make national identity supreme and on the other of the development of modern territorial states which asserted their own political unity and independence by organising the people who inhabited their territories as a singular nation. Once the idea of the nation came into being, its reference was the thoroughly modernist unification of an otherwise heterogeneous population across traditional divisions based on ethnicity, language and religion. In this sense, the idea of the nation was anything but conservative or traditional. Only later was it used in a more archaic sense to convey some sense of primordial unity (Hobsbawm 2003c: 144). He also points out that during a good part of the nineteenth century political appeals to the masses were made by combining national and class rhetoric, and he goes so far as to say that at the time one could hardly build a distinction between them (Hobsbawm 1983b: 263–7). Until the 1840s, no mass form of nationalism seems to have existed and only by the end of the century class and nation started to be regard as mutually exclusive (Hobsbawm 2003a: 164–79). He argues that scholars on the subject have generally been unable to notice 'the vast overlap between the appeals of national and social discontent', and maintains that, in the Marxist tradition, Lenin was the first to make the combined national-class platform the core issue of the agenda of communist parties.

> The well-known international Marxist debates on 'the national question' are not merely about the appeal of nationalist slogans to workers who ought to listen only to the call of internationalism and class. They were also, and perhaps more immediately, about how to treat working-class parties which simultaneously supported nationalist and socialist demands. [...] it is now evident that there were initially socialist parties which were or became the main vehicles of their people's national movement [...] One might go further. The combination of social and national demands, on the whole, proved very much more effective as a mobilizer of independence than the pure appeal of nationalism, whose appeal was limited to the discontented lower middle classes, for whom alone it replaced – or appeared to replace – both a social and a political programme.
>
> (Hobsbawm 1994: 124–5)

Hobsbawm frames very strongly the non-contradictory way in which class and national consciousness operated during the best part of the nineteenth century and

also maintains that one cannot understand modern political processes if opposing class and nation. He goes as far as to argue that 'the new mass political movements, nationalist, socialist, confessional or whatever, were often in competition for the same masses' and their 'potential constituency was prepared to entertain all their various appeals' (Hobsbawm 1994: 124). Therefore, if we take into account that the number of candidate nations for building a nation-state was far greater than those which eventually arrived at this stage,[46] and that the process of nation-building was therefore far from automatic, the achievement of this goal seems based upon the twofold character of its class *and* national platform (Hobsbawm 1994: 77–8). He demonstrates that proto-nationalist movements had to broaden their base of support along class lines if they wanted to be successful in building fully formed national movements, let alone a nation-state. Hobsbawm tried to understand the frequent fusion of class and national politics in mass protests and writes, for instance, that

> The very act of democratising politics, i.e. of turning subjects into citizens, tends to produce a populist consciousness which, seen in some lights, is hard to distinguish from a national, even a chauvinist, patriotism [...] the class-consciousness which working classes in numerous countries were acquiring in the last decade before 1914 implied, nay asserted, a claim to the Rights of Man and Citizen, and thus a potential patriotism. Mass political consciousness implied a concept the '*patrie*' or 'fatherland', as the history both of Jacobinism and of movements like Chartism demonstrates.
>
> (Hobsbawm 1994: 88–9)

A major strength of Hobsbawm's work is to recognise that the links between nations and classes are far from historically static. He argues that up to the end of the first half of the nineteenth century nationalists and socialists tended to share both the same mass constituency, the peasantry and urban proletariat, and the same political issues, including the widening of the franchise and the redistribution of taxation burdens. He grants that in this period ideas of French and British nationhood were shaped by feelings against other nations, but their respective nationalisms were relatively 'civic', albeit in a superior 'civilising' mode. They incorporated some enlightened, liberal and even cosmopolitan elements: 'the acquisition of national consciousness cannot be separated from the acquisition of other forms of social and political consciousness' (Hobsbawm 1994: 130) and he identifies a major change in the nature of European nationalism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and in the period leading up to the First World War. This change is characterised in terms of a movement from 'state (civic) nationalism' to 'cultural (racial) nationalism'. The contention is that state/civic nationalism prevailed for the fifty years following the French Revolution, but that with the defeat of the popular movements of 1848–9 cultural/racial ideas of the nation began to achieve supremacy. Henceforth an exclusive nationalism emerged which substituted itself for all other forms of political and social identification and explicitly rejected socialism for its internationalism. Concurrently, a new wave of

socialist movements arose that had little understanding of the meaning of national ideals. Even so, Hobsbawm argues that one thing that did not change is that nationalists and socialists were still aiming at, and proclaiming the interests of, the same groups of rural and urban poor and that a conglomerate national–social consciousness still formed the soil in which all political sentiments grew: 'the radicalisation of the working class in the first post-war Europe may have reinforced their potential national consciousness' (Hobsbawm 1994: 145). Even in this context nation and class are not readily separable.

> [I]f we accept that class consciousness in practice had a civic-national dimension, and civic-national or ethnic consciousness had social dimensions, then it is likely that the radicalisation of the working class in the first post-war Europe may have reinforced their potential national consciousness.
> (Hobsbawm 1994: 145)

This understanding of the changing nature of the links between class and nations is also the basis for the claim that national and class politics are mass politics (Eley and Suny 1996: 3–13; Llobera 1994b: 96; Poggi 1978: 121–2). Hobsbawm's argument is precisely that, at the time of the rise of the nation as a political ideal, the widening of the franchise and the claim for more participation were crucial in the success of both national and class movements. The idea of the nation becomes equally suitable for different classes precisely because it allows diversified claims for different bearers; the experiences and symbols related to the nation were and still are increasingly suitable for different class conditions. At the same time, the claims that the nation is appealing for all classes in society and the claim that national politics is mass politics do not say anything about who were the actual groups who pushed for bringing the nation to the core of the political agenda. Neither all classes and groups in society had the same influence nor were all classes equally committed to make their specific demands coincide with the national rhetoric. The building of a modern nation-state required increasing resolution by the elites to achieve mass support for the national idea, and that gap between masses and elites was not closed rapidly or smoothly. If different classes could and indeed made use of the rising national imagination to frame their specifically modern demands as classes, a subsidiary claim is that no class wins definitively the struggle for the hegemony of what is the nation. The competition and coexistence of different national images result in the nation-state having periodically to reinvent itself in order to face new challenges. A major strength of the national idea is precisely its ambiguity, the idea of nation can have different meanings that have to converge just minimally and this incredible suitability of the nation may also account for the sense of solidity and strength of the nation-state.

If we now look at the Ages of Capital (1848–1875) and Empire (1875–1914) less from the viewpoint of nationalism and national identity and more from the angle of the nature of the nation-state as a modern form of socio-political arrangement, new arguments also emerge. During the Age of Capital, first, a certain 'principle of nationalities' looked rather natural. The argument is that

there was as yet no necessary or automatic convergence between a certain form of social or political identity framed in national terms and the more explicit project of building up state institutions strictly along national lines.

> There was thus a fundamental difference between the movement to found nation-states and 'nationalism'. The one was a programme to construct a political artifact claiming to be based on the other [...] movements representing 'the national idea' grew and multiplied. They did not often – or even normally – represent what by the early twentieth century had become the standard (and extreme) version of the national programme, i.e. the necessity of a totally independent, territorially and linguistically homogeneous, secular – and probably republican/parliamentary – state for each 'people'.
>
> (Hobsbawm 2003b: 110–11)

We may need to remember that this is also the time when the world was being effectively regarded, mapped and acted upon as one single world. This novel form of human unity also took root in relation to nations so that the principle of nationalities started to expand to those places now clearly feeling European colonial influence. The paradox was that contemporaries failed to capture that the more a nationality conceived of itself as a nation, the more it 'automatically created the counter-nationalism of those whom it now forced into the choice of between assimilation and inferiority' (Hobsbawm 2003b: 120). Later, in the period leading up to the First World War the issue of imperialism was the central problem for the European powers (Hobsbawm 2003c: 56–83). The conduct of European states at the time was closely related to their understanding of the nature of economic and political phenomena – both nationally and globally. Economically, the rise of modern European imperialism results from a change in the nature of capitalism by the 1880s, which 'now consisted of a plurality of rival "national economies" "protecting" themselves against one another' (Hobsbawm 2003c: 69). Politically, this same imperialist strategy could be used to 'diminish domestic discontent by economic improvements or social reform'. The politically discontented masses could now therefore 'identify themselves with the imperial state and nation' (2003c: 69–70). As we have just seen, this means that there was not natural or necessary opposition between national and class forms of identity. Rather, they started to be seen as in opposition to one another only as it became increasingly difficult to hold in practice a similar attachment to both by the late nineteenth century (Hobsbawm 2003c: 143). Equally, the point is made that imperialistic policies made increasingly apparent that any one nation-state's win could only be achieved at the expense of another nation-state's loss. The translation of national politics into the power politics of empires makes interstate relations increasingly a kind of zero-sum game (Hobsbawm 2003c: 159). Moreover, the importance of empires in the expansion of nationalism and the nation-state is not restricted to core countries in northwestern Europe. Hobsbawm's (2003a: 177) claim is that the rise of the nation-state within as well as beyond Europe can only be explained *vis-à-vis* the rise of empires. The main difference between the processes in

Europe and elsewhere has to do with their timing. Thus Hobsbawm (2003c: 78):

> The Age of Empire created both the conditions which formed anti-imperialist leaders and the conditions which [...] began to give their voices resonance. But, of course, it is an anachronism and a misunderstanding to present the history of the peoples and regions brought under the domination and influence of western metropoles primarily in terms of resistance to the west. It is a significant anachronism because [...] the era of significant anti-imperialist movements begins for most regions at the earliest with the First World War and the Russian Revolution, and a misunderstanding, because it reads the text of modern nationalism – independence, the self-determination of peoples, the formation of territorial states, etc – into a historical record which did not yet, and could not yet, contain it.

Empires in this modern sense need not to be seen as in contradiction with the nation-state. Rather the opposite, empires seem to have helped in the internal consolidation as well as in the overseas expansion of older nation-states. Indeed, Hobsbawm's argument seems to be that the prevailing conception of the nation-state at this particular time could effectively draw symbolic and material resources from imperialism. To my purposes, this means that no methodologically nationalistic conception of the nation-state is able to account for the complicated relations between the empire and the nation-state. Furthermore, if we follow Hobsbawm in his assessment of the imperialist character of the late nineteenth-century nation-state, one may note that the period leading to the formation of classical social theory was marked by this particular imperialist conception of the nation-state rather than by one more closely associated with methodological nationalism. In other words, there seems to be something of an anachronism in the thesis that Marx, Weber and Durkheim could take for granted a certain notion of the world being neatly divided up into formally equal and fully sovereign nation-states. Rather, a subtler claim is that early social theory may have not experienced a strong contradiction between the modern empire and the modern nation-state and that, even if this is not in itself unproblematic, it none the less refutes the suggestion of classical social theory's immanent methodological nationalism.[47] The key methodological point to which Hobsbwam is drawing our attention here is simply to 'distinguish rather clearly between the formation of nations and "nationalism", in so far as this took place during our period [The age of capital], and the creation of nation-states' (Hobsbawm 2003b: 105).

In following this advice, I think we can now summarise the main arguments on the evolution of nationalism as a modern political ideal as discussed in this second part of the chapter. Table 1 summarises them on the basis of the periods Hobsbawm himself distinguishes. For each of the three ages of his long nineteenth century I think it is possible to find one predominant use of the nation as a positive political platform (column 1, 'the nation stands for') and in the constitution of a certain negative reference point that may prevent the democratic development of the nation (column 2, 'the nation stands against'). The last column of the

Table 1 The evolution of nationalism as a modern political ideal during Hobsbawm's long nineteenth century

	The nation stands for:	*The nation stands against:*	*The nation relates to the world:*
1789–1848 The Age of Revolution	The opening of political participation to the people	All inherited privileges that uphold the *Ancien Regime* and prevent the establishment of popular democracy	On the basis of the example set by the French Revolution
1848–1875 The Age of Capital	A restricted widening of the political franchise	Both social revolution from below and non-constitutional reactionary governments from above	As compatible with internationalism on the basis of their common liberal roots
1875–1914 The Age of Empire	A strong conception of national self-determination as the basis of an *imperial* nation-state	The presence and influence of aliens within the nation	As zero-sum game. Imperial competition among nation-states and increasing opposition between nationalism and internationalism

table relates the idea of the nation with some conception of its position in the wider world.

Let me simply comment on a few issues to close this section. We can see that no single idea of the nation prevailed over the period of time to which Hobsbawm directs his attention. Both the positive and negative references that have structured the idea of the nation change and evolve. The main trend of the first period centres on the impact of the French Revolution: the positive use of the nation as 'the people' and, negatively, in opposition to inherited privileges. During the Age of Capital, the main question seems to have been whether some thicker conception of the nation could be made compatible with a more liberal conception of national democracy and decision-making. The nation could be used in support of a restricted widening of the franchise which in turn would hopefully be able to control revolutionary excesses from the left as well as a conservative reaction from the right. As long as the nation and internationalism could still be based upon some kind of liberal framework, moreover, they needed not to be seen as in mutual opposition. Finally, a rather extreme version of the principle of nationalities leading to the formation of an imperial nation-state applies only to The Age of Empire.

Conclusion

A more systematic reconstruction of the changes in the *conceptual* understanding of the nation-state is probably the major weakness of the authors discussed in

this and the previous chapters. They seem to have isolated their historical reconstructions from the history of political thought so that we are still in need of a historical sociology of the *concept* of the nation-state in which the changes in normative claims are more systematically linked with the social processes that are at their base (Wagner 2003). To an extent, the lack of these studies may have helped to reinforce the idea of the unity and necessity of the nation-state that is so widely and wildly present in current debates. In their failure to address the link between social and intellectual history, Mann and Hobsbawm may unintentionally have prevented the best of their own contributions from being more clearly understood. In a way, the specificity of the *social theory* approach in which I am interested here has to do with trying to connect both dimensions. The move beyond methodological nationalism that is at the centre of this book aims precisely at the linkage between the historical, conceptual and normative dimensions in our understanding of the opacity of the nation-state's complicated trajectories and legacies.

The concepts of class and nation are central in the social sciences' understanding of the modern world. What Mann and Hobsbawm show us is that a historical understanding of the formation of modernity has to incorporate both classes and nations as they are equally forms of social organisation and cultural identities. The first images of the nation were built upon an equally emergent class identity in the elites and the principle that one's own class is the nation. At the same time, for the lower classes, the idea of class had to be attached to some form of political community. Historically, classes and nations are crucial for the interrogations into the long-term shaping of modernity. Theoretically, they have been used to try to grasp the constitution and meaning of the modern worldview. Politically, these concepts represent major sources in the struggle for political legitimisation. Both classes and nations have made their claims on the basis of principles of representation that become actualised through particular groups of people: actors themselves have made sense of their identities through these concepts. Neither nations nor classes can be understood except in relation to one another. Or, to put this proposition affirmatively, nations and classes are conjoined both as forms of *social organisation* and as *imaginary communities* that arose together in the same historical processes and period. It is a strength of historical sociology to bring together two concepts that arguably should never have been separated out in the first place. A central argument of this chapter is then what can be called the *co-originality* of classes and nations.

Finally, one explanation to the image of solidity of the nation-state emerges from this chapter. In combining class and nation, the nation-state may have found a way of resisting the tendencies that threat to pull it apart. Right from the start, and not only now because of the pressures of globalisation, the nation-state has been in competition with alternative forms of modern socio-political arrangements – and this is yet another expression of its sociological equivocations. At the same time, as soon as we question the image of the solidity and strength of the nation-state, the thesis of its historical elusiveness also comes to the fore. The recognition of these two features of the nation-state, historical elusiveness and sociological equivocation, is these writers' stronger contribution to moving beyond methodological nationalism.

9 Manuel Castells (1942–present) and globalisation theorists

The 'definitive' decline of the nation-state

Some of the arguments to be advanced here were already introduced in the section of Chapter 1 devoted to Ulrich Beck's critique of methodological nationalism. Beck's conceptualisation of recent globalisation processes is seen as broadly compatible with the arguments of several writers. Although special attention will be devoted to the work of Manuel Castells, arguments by John Urry (2000), Anthony Giddens (1999), Zygmunt Bauman (1998) and Martin Albrow (1996) are also included in this chapter's revision. Taken together, they all constitute what Robert Fine and myself have referred to as social theory's new orthodoxy on globalisation (Chernilo 2006b; Fine and Chernilo 2004). Although the general tone of this chapter is critical, it is only fair to acknowledge that I could hardly have written this book without their arguments and insights. Their description of emergent social trends and phenomena, plus their particular critique of methodological nationalism, helped create the framework around which my own arguments arose and developed. Somewhat ironically, that is, despite their scepticism about the current state of social theory and its (in)ability to capture recent historical transformations, this recent literature is close to social theory's intellectual and institutional core: they are already part of the tradition that this book is interested in reconstructing.

A first reason to explain the rise of the new orthodoxy in social theory is a reaction against a Parsonian type of 'general-theory' (Giddens 1977: 106–29). There is a generalised distrust in the implicit metaphysics of any form of grand theory – this disbelief is, in itself, their own 'meta-narrative'. And they equally criticise theory-building as a valuable activity on its own – both as formalised theory or as the reconstruction of the canon of social theory. Although Giddens' (1971, 1984) early work is widely known for having dealt with social theory's intellectual tradition and John Urry (Keat and Urry 1982) also pursued this type of sociology in the 1970s, it is difficult to make sense of their most recent writing in connection with their own previous work. On the one hand, social theory incorporated with them some of post-modernity's concerns as it became aware of gender, environmental issues as well as 'post-traditional' ways of life. In linking the alleged decline of the nation-state with the obsolescence of society as one of social theory's key concepts, they have been described as the belated *sociological* expression of post-modernism (Shaw 2000: 2–14; Wagner 2001b: 75). On the

other hand, these writers see themselves as a 'scientific' or empirical reaction to the grand theory which dominated social theory in the 1980s (see Chapter 10). Their research is based on empirical research: a new sociology is needed, they say, because the real world itself has radically changed. Thus, for instance, Albrow (1996: 2, 106–11) claims that, rather than being concerned with the 'theory' of modernity his focus lies in 'the reality of the Global Age in which we now live', whereas Castells (2001: 543) – arguing against claims that his *social theory* is flawed on the grounds that his work is *not* social theory – presents his research as being focused on 'the real world as it is configured nowadays' and Urry's (1990, 2000a) empirical research on tourism leads him to a radical revision of social theory so that it now concentrates on 'mobilities' rather than places (Szerszynsky and Urry 2006). One could indeed see these references to the real world as rhetorical, as if they only point to emphasising the role of empirical research and avoiding the possible metaphysical fallacies of 'grand theorising'.

The complication lies, it seems to me, in the rather odd way in which their critique of positivism is supposed to work *vis-à-vis* their narrow empirical comprehension of sociology and the role of theory in it. In rejecting the kind of claim to universalism that is at the core of the intellectual tradition of social theory they misrepresent the role of theory in it. They are thus unable to account for the substantive theoretical underpinnings of social theory since its beginning in the late eighteenth century (Wagner 1998). And they tend to be blind to such roles of theory in the social sciences as the definition of meta-theoretical frameworks (Mouzelis 1995: 1–11; Ritzer 1988), the scrutiny of epistemological presuppositions (Outhwaite 1983), the reconstruction of philosophical origins (Sica 1998), the explication of ontological implications (Archer 1995) and the assessment of normative implications (Strasser 1976). In fact, at the centre of sociology's intimate relationship with social theory is the fact that 'alone among the disciplines of social science, sociology has retained its relations to the problems of society as a whole. Whatever else it has become, it has always remained a theory of society as well' (Habermas 1984: 5). The new orthodoxy requires a bolder conception of theory that cannot simply be based on the rather naïve belief that sociology has become finally true to its own scientific image so that we can actually claim that we live in the type of society that empirical research can confidently prove that we actually live in. Let me now briefly reconstruct some of these problematic underlying theoretical commitments.

Understanding epochal changes

Surely, a major contribution of these writers is to have introduced into social theory's research-agenda a number of new themes approaches. Their theoretical frameworks are the result of generalisations based on years of empirical research into, among other new issues, ecological risks, economic globalisation, the social impact of the internet and tourism. It is hard to dispute their finding on empirical grounds and they surely represent the most sophisticated sociological accounts of current globalisation processes. The paradox they face, however, knows of no

easy solution. On the one side, they do not consider enough simply registering these changes empirically and want to understand and conceptualise these transformations as a radical epochal change. On the other side, this comprehension of epochal changes requires a bold conception of social theory that cannot be pursued within the narrow limits of a purely 'scientific' self-comprehension of social research. What they need, but are not prepared to grant, is a systematic attempt at the simultaneous reconstruction of *social* and *intellectual* changes. This is apparent, for instance, in the fact that their claim of trying to understand the current epochal change echoes the many-times heard claim that recent historical changes are so dramatic that the intellectual tools at our disposal are no longer of much use. Thus Urry (2000a: 1–2; 2000b: 186) invites us to think of and deploy (after both Durkheim and Giddens) 'newer' rules of the sociological method and Castells (2000: 6) prescribes that sociology should once and for all stand up to its scientific vocation and clearly distinguish theory from facts.

This way of referring to historical transformations as radical epochal breaks is, however, rather conventional. They believe they claim something novel or unprecedented whereas in fact they are just locating themselves *within* the tradition of social theory that systematically has sought to grasp the nature of those dramatic social changes brought about by modernity. Their arguments for historical novelty may make the challenge to some of their views to look as if it is caught in a world that no longer exists. They have internalised intrinsically modern claims that social change is inevitable and progressive, that it brings with it more positive than negative effects and that the current epochal change is always more pronounced than any previous one.

In relation to the theses on the obsolescence of the canon of social theory, therefore, their claims about the cognitive deficits of the intellectual traditions in which they themselves were brought up, as well as their idea of experiencing a radical historical break in which everything has to be rethought, are not at all new arguments. Social theory's epochal diagnoses are attached to some idea of crisis, and crises have therefore become a standard way in which the present makes its presence and urgency felt within social theory (Habermas 1969). Moreover, the idea of the crisis of sociology because of its inability to keep pace with the changes in society is as old as sociology itself (Marshall 1963).[48] From a *social theory* point of view, then, there is nothing intrinsically new or radical in claiming that one important feature of modernity, in this case the nation-state, is in crisis neither is it unprecedented to argue that the *pace* of social change gets quicker by the day. Scholars usually claim that they live in hectic times, and that they are the privileged observers (and participants) of an epochal change. What else have we said in this book about say, Marx or Parsons? It is as though intellectuals need to believe that they live in hectic times, they hardly experience their own times as unhistorical, as moments when history is not or cannot be made. How can intellectual activity possibly find personal and social legitimacy in a historical context without major social issues to be tackled? Of course, intellectuals nowadays duly feel that current events are dramatic and have no problem in finding major events that catch the public eye as signs of a new epoch.[49] Here,

however, there seems to be a major difference between the new orthodoxy and the rest of the tradition of social theory I have been reconstructing. The discrepancy lies in the fact that this group of scholars advance the thesis that the current study of social change can only be done if we reject and disregard the claim to universalism that constitutes the core of social theory's intellectual tradition.

Revisiting the transition from *Gemeinschaft* (community) to *Gesellschaft* (society)

The new orthodoxy's belonging to the tradition of social theory is however immediately apparent if we consider how the old transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* is now re-emerging as the transition from the *nation-state society* to the *global society.* Indeed, these transitional constructions have long ago been subject to severe criticisms (Gusfield 1967) and these authors concur that antinomies such as these are in need of revision. In the standard version, classical social theory's concept of *Gemeinschaft* described those forms of communal life that were not mediated by abstract forms of social coordination. The market and monetary exchanges were thus taken as the paradigmatic representation of *Gesellschaft*-like social relations. A fully developed nation-state, as both a national market and a national political community, was the closest we could get to that version of *Gesellschaft* – thus, for instance, Beck's concept of the nation-state society. Similarly, Albrow (1996: 172) maintains that 'the delinking of the ideas of state and nation has been the most important aspect of the transition from the Modern Age to the Global', and it then emerges a renovated version of the *Gemeinschaft–Gesellschaft* antinomy. The argument works, however, only because they treat the nation-state in the way methodological nationalism would have it. In unreflectively considering it as the new *Gemeinschaft* because of its alleged homogenous, harmonious and self-sufficient features, the new *Gesellschaft* can be introduced with the different names these sociologists give to the social forms that are allegedly coming to replace the nation-state: Albrow's global society, Giddens's runaway society, Urry's mobile society, Castells' network society and Beck's world-risk society.

No doubt, the new version of the antinomy is implicitly formulated and never formally advanced but the argument works all the same. The new global *Gesellschaft* is thought to be radically different from the nation-state *Gemeinschaft*. The change is supposed to be so dramatic that it turns obsolete all previous forms of social theorising: the passing of the nation-state marks also the passing of social theory itself. As already said, the radical historical break we now allegedly experience is in itself presented as something new, whereas in fact this kind of claim is at the very core of the classical formulation of *Gemeinschaft–Gesellschaft.* Indeed, this mode of thinking still involves a form of 'romantic fallacy' in the way in which the past social structure is conceived (Gellner 1996). In paraphrasing Reinhard Bendix (1967: 320), if classical as well as modernist sociology reconstructed historical transitions 'by contrasting the liabilities of the present with the assets of the past'; we can now say that the new orthodoxy echoes this by contrasting the

liabilities of past *and* present – the old nation-state community – with the assets the future should, hopefully, provide – the new global society.

The critique of methodological nationalism

The critique of the equation between society and the nation-state is one of the new orthodoxy's most recurrent and important arguments. The reference to 'national societies' just as societies becomes in their view the simplest manifestation of social theory's deep-seated and unsolvable methodological nationalism. Thus, for instance, political scientist Edgar Grande (2006: 86) is arguing along Beckian lines that a wholly new political science is needed to cope with challenges posed by cosmopolitanism. He favours 'a *re-invention of political science* in the age of globalization, comparable to the behavioural revolution of the 1950s'. Similarly, his colleague Jan Art Scholte (2000: 56–8) has claimed that the rise of globalisation not only means the end of the nation-state but also gives a 'farewell' to the 'methodological territorialism' of *all* social sciences. Scholte's thesis is interesting but sadly he is just extracting the wrong consequence from a good insight. Whereas it is only fair to say that social relations need not to be made dependent upon geography this is quite different from mistaking the changes in the nation-state's circumstances with the obsolescence of all forms of geographically relevant references (see the section on Luhmann in Chapter 10).

As we reviewed it in Chapter 1, Ulrich Beck radicalised the critique of methodological nationalism put forward by the previous generation. Surely, the extent to which methodological nationalism had permeated into the social sciences makes his effort highly valuable and most needed. He has however turned the critique into a catch phrase and has overextended its use. Recently, in his collaborative work with Natan Sznaider, Beck radicalised the argument even further. We are effectively left in an impossible situation because, even if the researcher explicitly avoids the use of national metaphors, concepts and institutions she may none the less remain subject to methodological nationalism: 'not using the adjective "national" as a universal language does not falsify but might sometimes even prove methodological nationalism. That is the case when the *practice* of the argument or the research presupposes that the unit of analysis is the national society or the national state or the combination of both' (Beck and Sznaider 2006: 2–3). We are left in a lose-lose situation: the social sciences can say nothing about the nation-state because methodological nationalism arises as soon as they *try* to say something on it.

John Urry (2000a: 5–7; 2000b: 190–5) maintains what is probably the most radical version of this argument, by rejecting the possibility of attaching *any* relevant meaning to society and Martin Albrow (1996: 43–50, 167, 212) refers to such concepts as human, world and global society, all of which transcend what he calls the core of the modern project, that is, the 'nation-state society'. The argument is that as we no longer have the 'nation-state society' another form of empirically distinguishable society has to come in its place – thence Albrow's 'global society'. These references to the world or the globe are not however based on the social reconfiguration of modernity but simply on an ever-wider territorial reference.

The problem for us here is that the idea of society is a necessary part of social theory's tools to capture the nature of social relations in modernity. In trying to unlock the equation between the nation-state and society, the new orthodoxy ends up reifying what society has meant for social theory. In other words, they fail to provide a satisfactory account of society's more abstract role as a regulative ideal. A central theme of this book, however, has been that we avoid throwing the baby with the bathwater: in rightly criticising the theoretical defects and implications of equation between society and the nation-state we also pay attention to the roles of the idea of society *beyond* the nation-state.

A new form of Eurocentrism?

The charge that previous social theory has been unable to distinguish modernity from westernisation is endorsed by the new orthodoxy: they follow some well-known arguments against Eurocentrism (Amin 1989; Randeira 1999; Said 1978). They duly criticise the kind of *normative* Eurocentrism that was undoubtedly part of classical and modernist social science. Earlier theorising of modernisation processes has taken – to some extent at least – Europe and the United States as the model of what could be regarded as the most desirable form of social order and the rest of the world was theorised in this scheme not simply as an empirical deviation but also as an undesired one. Rather than overcoming these shortcomings, however, I believe the new orthodoxy reproduces some of them within their own frameworks and thus inaugurates a new form of *empirical* Eurocentrism.[50] With the partial exception of Castells (see later in this chapter) their depiction of current tendencies in modernity is, phenomenologically at least, that of the rich West: when they talk about mobility, one can hardly include asylum seekers in that group, when cosmopolitanism is described, imperialism is not really being considered, where they see networks, they are hardly thinking about people lacking drinking water. In using Craig Calhoun's (2002, 2003a) fortunate expression, this looks like 'the class consciousness of frequent travellers'. In this novel kind of empirical Eurocentrism, the social sciences have not made much substantive progress as they remain unable to see social patterns different from the West without making sense of them in terms of the consequences they have for the West. The understanding of social patterns different from Americans and Europeans is relevant only if and when they can be translated into their possible consequences for Europe and the United States. For instance, the idea of an inverted mirror explicitly underlies Beck's (2000b: 93) thesis of the 'Brazilianisation' of the West: 'in a striking reversal, countries of so-called "premodernity", with their high proportion of informal, multi-activity work, may reflect back the future of the so-called "late-modern" countries of the Western core.'[51]

To summarise, then, a certain 'foundationalism' – the claim that a radical transformation of social theory is the only way forward to understand our radically transformed world and age – is the new orthodoxy's most problematic feature. My critique, however, does not arise out of conservatism (fear of history and change), intellectual purism (trying to achieve the 'correct' and 'definitive' reconstruction of social theory's canon) or some kind pathological Freudian Oedipus complex

(a necessity of surpassing the achievements of one's own predecessors). Rather, I think that current social theory might be more instrumental in grasping the opacity of the nation-state if it locates itself more clearly within and not beyond the intellectual tradition of social theory. They have been confounded by the ambivalent position of nation-states in modernity so that, instead of using its opacity to account for the troubled history of the nation-state, they dismiss social theory's legacy as inadequate and the nation-state as obsolete. And instead of trying to renovate social theory's claim to universalism, they simply decide to abandon it.

Manuel Castells: the transition from industrialism to informationalism

Manuel Castells' (1996, 1997, 1998) three-volumes on the *Information Age* are arguably the most impressive empirical depiction of the social transformation of the last quarter of the twentieth century. His work is interesting here because it connects the thesis of the *rise* of the network society with that of *decline* of the nation-state. Moreover, in the same way as Chapter 7 reconstructed Raymond Aron's conceptualisation of industrialism, it is necessary now to describe the transition from industrialism to informationalism. According to Castells, the current technological revolution has been much faster than any previous trend of technologically driven social change and the pace at which transformations have taken place in the last three decades of the twentieth century makes apparent that we effectively experience a dramatic epochal change (Castells 1996: 33–4). The rise of the network society means the emergence of new types of social relations and social structures:

> A new society emerges when and if a structural transformation can be observed in the relationship of production, in the relationships of power, and in the relationships of experience. These transformations lead to an equally substantial modification of social forms of space and time, and to the emergence of a new culture.
>
> (Castells 1998: 340)

The characterisation of this new historical scenario operates with two different arguments. The question of whether we live in a new age – and, equally importantly, how we actually learn about its novelty – is measured against sociological and historical co-ordinates. Sociologically, there is Castells' comprehensive depiction of how 'the logic of the network' transforms all realms of social life. He has travelled and researched throughout the world and from the results of these experiences he expects to persuade the reader about the truly *global* condition of these changes. Although differently implemented around the globe, the impact of informationalism groups together his comparisons from all corners of the world: Japan, Bolivia, France, the United States, China, Rwanda and my native Chile (Castells 2005). On the historical side, however, Castells' analyses are rather short-term. His historical reconstruction has to do with the technologically driven revolution of the last few decades and he rarely goes back in history before the

rise of the information age. For my purposes, the most substantive result of this double – sociological and historical – argument is that Castells advances a rather homogenous image of the past in which the European world after the Second World War, allegedly dominated by Mann's mild nation-states, is now simply fading away. Despite all its undoubted merits as a depiction of worldwide recent social changes, there is an unhappy mixture between extensive sociological descriptions and narrow historical accounts that contaminates Castells' general argument on the current epochal change: the thinner the description of the past, the more radical its break with the present. In fact, he seems to fall into a kind of fallacy of presentism and commentators are anything but impressed by Castells' emphasis on historical discontinuity. They agree on the fact that he overstates the newness of both the social changes being analysed and the conceptual tools with which to theorise these changes: the notions of information age and network society.[52] In fact, his description of the 'truly fundamental social cleavages of the Information Age' are similar to a rather conventional understanding of the social consequences of capitalism, both past and present: fragmentation of labour markets, social exclusion of significant segments of individuals and 'the separation between the market logic of global networks [...] and the human experience of workers' lives' (Castells 1998: 346).

In fairness, however, Castells explicitly compares the recent technological revolution with the late eighteenth-century industrial revolution. The argument is that both revolutions show a similar tendency: 'the closer the relationship between the sites of innovation, production, and the use of new technologies, the faster the transformation of societies, and the greater the positive feedback from social conditions on the general conditions for further transformation' (Castells 1996: 37). A further analogy between the two technological revolutions is that in the same way as the expansion of trains triggered the British economy during the nineteenth century, information technologies during the late 1970s and the 1980s have made possible the recent transformation of capitalism. What started as a localised event in certain quarters of the United States and Japan was then launched directly into the global scene (Castells 1996: 80–8).

But the differences between the two technological revolutions are more important than their similarities. To begin with, there is the fact that the period in which the new informational technologies have expanded around the world has been much shorter than during the industrial revolution. More dramatically, the novelty of the current informational revolution has less to do with the use of knowledge and more with 'the application of knowledge and information to knowledge generation and information processing/communication devices, in a cumulative feedback loop between innovation and the uses of innovation' (Castells 1996: 32). An informational economy has thus the novel capacity to generate, process and apply efficiently knowledge-based information (Castells 1996: 36). This new economy can therefore be characterised as both *informational* and *global*. With regard to the former,

> The shift from industrialism to informationalism is not the historical equivalent of the transition from agricultural to industrial economies, and cannot be equated to the emergence of service economy [...] what has changed is not

> the kind of activities humankind is engaged on, but its technological ability to use as a direct productive force what distinguishes our species as a biological oddity: its superior capacity to process symbols.
>
> (Castells 1996: 92)

In relation to the latter, the argument is that the new economy's core activities and components are *globally* organised: 'a global economy [. . .] is an economy with the capacity to work as a unit in real time on planetary scale' (Castells 1996: 92). Asia Pacific countries join now the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) zone and the European Union most as the economically developed regions of the world: 'the emergence of Asian Pacific fast-growth capitalism is, with the end of the Soviet Empire and the process of European unification, one of the most important structural changes taking place in the world at the turn of the century' (Castells 1996: 112). The economic development of these countries (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan) represents a successful case of a new wave of developmental states. It is a history of success in comparison to alternative and previous developmental strategies in Communist countries, Latin America and Africa. This trend equally marks the truly multicultural condition of the new global economy at the highest level of its functioning. The fact that Europe and the United States are no longer at the centre of capitalism is another expression of the novelty of the information age (Castells 1998: 308). Indeed, even if not 'all dimensions and institutions of society follow the logic of the network society', the 'pervasive logic of the network society' gradually encompasses all the processes and contradictions of the network society (Castells 1998: 350). The argument is that a new form of social structure – the network *society* – gives rise to a new epoch – the information *age*.

If these arguments can be said to work rather well as the empirical representation of a number of recent and important social changes, their theoretical justification is more problematic. For instance, towards the end of the third volume of his book, Castells (1998: 336) declares that although his work attempts to make sense of the current epochal change, he is not primarily concerned with proving this grand thesis. He argues that each of his empirical analyses stands regardless of whether one shares with him the assessment of how dramatically the world as a whole is actually changing. This is contradictory, however, with the major aims against which the work sets itself up. Thus, for instance,

> In a broader historical perspective, the network society represents a qualitative change in the human experience. If we refer to an old sociological tradition according to which social action at the most fundamental level can be understood as the changing pattern of relationships between Nature and Culture, we are indeed in a new era.
>
> (Castells 1996: 477)

Castells' three volumes cover many different subjects and geographical areas but as a whole their merits do not seem to stand in relation to factual details in dealing

with any particular topic. They were written in the conviction that a thorough and coherent explanation of this emergent age was as possible as it was needed. This ambivalence between empirical descriptions and a more theoretical understanding of epochal changes may be accounted for, I believe, if we look back at the two levels – the sociological and the historical – that were introduced earlier in this section. As said, Castells echoes the claim that most categories we have inherited from previous generations of social thinkers 'have proved to be completely obsolete' and thus they are of no use to depict the current age (Castells quoted in Smart 2000: 53). In fact, he upholds the position that theories are only 'tools' for doing empirical research and believes in a disposable type of theorising that can be discarded as soon as it stops fitting with empirical data (Castells 1997: 3). This is a conception of theory that pretends to contain no further ontological or normative commitments for the researcher and yet, with this weak form of theorising one just cannot make the case for the much bolder thesis of an epochal change because their study has more to do with interpretative frameworks than with specific events. The conception of theory that informs Castells' work is unable to substantiate the thesis of the information age as an epochal diagnosis beyond an aggregated result of individual empirical analyses.

Further problems arise when he presents the more general statement about the rise of the network society as the result of the 'development of new information technologies, and the old society's attempt to retool itself by using the power of technology to serve the technology of power' (Castells 1996: 52). These arguments with regard to the role of technology in the transition from industrialism to informationalism do not leave the nation-state untouched: 'the nation-state confronts three major, interrelated challenges: globalization and interlocking of ownership, flexibility and pervasiveness of technology; autonomy and diversity of the media [. . .] Everything has changed in a decade. The change was technology driven' (Castells 1997: 254). Indeed, Castells (1996: 5) has explicitly rejected the label of technological determinism but this has been assessed as rather too formal to avoid the substantive results of his own research. As it happens with the thesis of the epochal change, the conception of 'theories as disposable tools' cannot control the more general implications of his own empirical research.[53] Castells' work results in a type of technological determinism 'in spite of itself' (Stehr 2000: 85).

Let me now move on to what Castells has to say about nations and states. In the information age, the nation-state is weakened because nationalism becomes only one possibility in the formation of social identities. A plurality of identities would now be the norm rather than the exception and this would represent the most important threat to the nation-state's claim to indivisible loyalty (Castells 1997: 271). This is a 'legitimisation crisis' for the state because 'what started as a process of re-legitimizing the state by shifting power from national to local level, may end up deepening the legitimisation crisis of the nation-state, and the tribalization of society in communities built around primary identities' (Castells 1997: 275). Against methodological nationalism, Castells (1997: 27–32) rightly argues that the expansion of the nation-state around the world has not been a

repetition of the early processes of nation-state formation that followed the French Revolution. He endorses the view that the rise of the nation-state in modernity has followed different historical trajectories and that historical variability must be accounted for. In so doing, Castells not only transcends some core principles of methodological nationalism but also departs from some of the shortcomings of the recent literature we just reviewed. Moreover, we have just seen that three major units for understanding the Information Age are not nation-states: the Pacific Area, the NAFTA Zone and the European Union.

Yet, Castells falls back into some of the new orthodoxy's arguments as he derives from this assessment the thesis that the current epochal change represents the *definitive* crisis of the nation-state. As already argued, this seems to be related to the lack of historical depth of his account. For instance, in the case of Europe and the United States, he takes too quickly for granted this image of the solidity of the nation-state that I have suggested is at best only partly true for their recent past (Chapter 6). Castells argues that the nation-state has now lost a great deal of its power and that although it still holds some political influence its economic autonomy is severely diminished. The claim is that while there is no such thing as the definitive demise of the nation-state

> The price paid by nation-states for their precarious survival [...] is that of their decreasing relevance, thus undermining their legitimacy, and ultimately furthering their powerlessness [...] so, while nation-states do continue to exist, and they will continue to do so in the foreseeable future, they are, and they will increasingly be, *nodes of a broader network of power*.
>
> (Castells 1997: 269, 304)

This diagnosis of the precarious survival of the nation-state is interesting but Castells misrepresents the key fact that there is little new in this. The current configuration of the challenges now facing the nation-state is of course novel and thus needs to be accounted for empirically. The nation-state must now come to terms with events and trends that are dissimilar to those of the past. It confronts a legitimisation crisis and is under severe pressures to provide with welfare to its population but the fact that it is under threat is neither novel nor unprecedented.

It is in this context that Castells introduces the new forms of states of the information age: the developmental and network states. The new kind of developmental states focuses on those nation-states that have achieved a high economic success over the past three decades on the basis of their position on the informational revolution – the Asian Tigers. The analysis of their achievements in Asia is done *vis-à-vis* the collapse of the Soviet Union, their bleak success and later decay in Latin America and their rather dramatic failure in Africa. The network state, embodied in the project of the European Union, represents the adaptation of the European nation-state to the challenges of the information age. In what follows, I shall briefly deal with the two concepts separately.

Castells (1996: 7) argues that states are crucial in the information age because they have the biggest role in promoting technological and economic development.

This is a new developmental state because it enhances technological development 'as a way of fostering productivity and helping "its" forms to compete in the world market' (Castells 1996: 89). The crucial question for new developmental states is that the set of policies being implemented relates less to the strengthening of national markets and more to these markets' engagement with the global economy: 'a state is developmental when it establishes, as its principle of legitimacy its ability to promote and sustain development, understanding by development the combination of steady high economic growth and structural change in the productive system, both domestically and in its relationship to the international economy' (Castells 1998: 270–1). For its part, the collapse of the Soviet Union exemplifies how states can fail during the early stages of the informational revolution. While the state, and the state alone, would have been enough to enhance the transition to *industrialism*, on its own state action proved unable to elicit the transition from industrialism to *informationalism*. If states fail to find a good relation with their civil society the transition to informationalism just does not occur. The Communist experience becomes, for him, an example of the ways in which the state can suffocate developmental experiences. It shows that state action needs to be matched with incentives towards innovation and market institutions.

Successful developmental states in Asia have dealt with their populations by combining state repression with free-market institutions (Castells 1998: 266). They emerged, in the post-war period, in a situation of emergency and thus *survival* was their most important task: 'the first reflex of state apparatuses [. . .] was to ensure the physical, social, and institutional viability of the societies they came to be in charge of. In the process, they constructed and consolidated their own identity as political apparatuses' (Castells 1998: 273). The second characteristic of these developmental states is the form of their internal *societal arrangements*. They based their national project on 'an outward orientation of the economy, and, more specifically, on their success in exporting manufactured goods' (Castells 1998: 268). This was matched with the 'ability of these economies to adapt to the informational paradigm and to the changing pattern of the global economy' (Castells 1998: 269). Economic development became a means to the end of the survival of society, and on this the developmental state challenged traditional (that is, Western) forms of state legitimisation such as political democracy. Legitimisation was attached to economic success and the Asian developmental state created a type of nationalism primarily based on economic development: 'at the roots of the rise of Asian Pacific economics lies the nationalist project of the developmental state' (Castells 1996: 183). The third characteristic of the Asian developmental states follows from this: its autonomy in relation to civil society. They formed of a technocratic, efficient and loyal state apparatus, whose main feature is a 'political capacity to impose and internalize their logic on their societies' became crucial (Castells 1998: 278). Conversely, African states represent the failure of the nation-state. Africa's weak industrialisation started to collapse at the same time that the technological revolution began in the 1970s – and along it went the ideology of the strong African nation-state (Castells 1998: 96). The nation-state in Africa has been a predator of its own population and this has meant

its disappearance for all practical purposes. On a comparative scale, Castells (1998: 111–12) argues that

> One of the key features explaining why a developmental state emerged in the Asian Pacific, as well as, with lesser fortune, in Latin America, and not in Africa, is the weaknesses of the nation in the African nation-state [. . .] The crucial difference was the ability of Asian Pacific countries to mobilize their nations, under authoritarian rule, around a developmental goal, on the basis of strong national/cultural identity, and the politics of survival. The weak social basis of the nationalist project considerably debilitated African states, both *vis à vis* their diverse ethnic constituencies and *vis à vis* foreign states competing for influence over Africa in the framework of the Cold War.

In relation to the concept of the network state, finally, Castells (1998: 311) refers to the European Union as the main political strategy with which individual European nation-states try to face their current challenges. In his view, what tends to be seen as inefficiency and lack of clarity in state procedures at the European level can at the same time become a major strength of the process of European Union building as an open-ended process that contains no blueprint for its further development (Castells 1998: 330). This is the reason that makes 'the network' the right image for representing the relationships between EU institutions: a multilayered form of organisation in which sovereignty is shared between different levels. The network state:

> *Is a state characterized by the sharing of authority (that is, in the last resort, the capacity to impose legitimized violence) along the network* [. . .] the network state, with its geometrically variable sovereignty, is the response of political systems to the challenges of globalization, and the European Union may be the clearest manifestation to date of this emerging form of state, probably characteristic of the Information Age.
>
> (Castells 1998: 332)

The main problem for the EU is that the notion of *Europe* still evokes a rather 'defensive political project' (Castells 1998: 311). For European integration to move forward it requires some kind of European identity that can fulfil at least partly the roles 'national' identities played during the rise of the nation-state. Castells (1998: 332–4) argues that this European identity cannot be based on sources such as religion, ethnicity and democracy. Not too distant from some of Habermas' arguments (see Chapter 10) he proposes that the formation of a European identity requires the combination of welfare-state institutions, universal human rights plus a reaffirmation of social, political and civic rights. Castells' (1998: 328) view on the European Union is ambivalent. While he recognises that the type of state institutions being formed respond to some current core social trends of the information age, he also acknowledges that there is no easy bridge for the gap between Federal European institutions, which increasingly adopt a republican

and civic colour, and the rather exclusionary forms of nationalism that are still prevalent at the levels of local and national politics.

Conclusion

In one crucial way, we must welcome the contemporary re-emergence of the critique of methodological nationalism. Current attempts to de-nature the nation-state seem increasingly conclusive and social theory is in this particular sense *explicitly* cosmopolitan maybe for the first time (Fine 2007). Without endorsing the claim that the end of the nation-state is in sight, one must recognise the need to face seriously the questions of how it is now being fundamentally reshaped. Yet, it seems to me that the new orthodoxy has misrepresented the 'historicity of the nation-state'; it has gone one step too many. In losing the critical impetus of the original formulation of methodological nationalism its current proponents have reinforced a mythical image of the nation-state as society. The arguments on the current dissolution of the nation-state are backed up by exaggerating the alleged solidity of the nation-state's recent past, so that we end up with the worst of both worlds: the more solid the image of the past of the nation-state the more spectacular its path towards extinction. My critique of social theory's new orthodoxy in this chapter can be read as a defence of the relevance of the nation-state in the shaping of the modern world and, not without caution, of its current relevance as well. This is certainly not to undo what we have already achieved as a critique of methodological nationalism. Rather, I try to reach a position that can depart from both competing views: that of the nation-state as the necessary container of modern socio-political relations and that of the nation-state, finally and luckily, fading away.

The broader assessment of Castells' work has also produced ambivalent results. In relation to equation between the nation-state and society, Castells' analysis of the information age requires, but does not generalise, the nation-state. Castells does not regard the nation-state as the final or highest stage of modernity so that his view on the nation-state is closer to a critique than to an endorsement of methodological nationalism. The comparative analysis of the experience of developmental states in Asia and Africa, moreover, is rather a critique of the argument that the nation-state is the only modern form of socio-political arrangement and is bound to succeed in fostering development. At the same time, the concept of the network state points in the direction of transcending the nation-state as the ultimate frame of modern social relations. He analyses different types of states and historical trajectories and points in the direction of understanding forms of states that could eventually replace the nation-state. His conception of theory and his idea of epochal change, however, produced a number of problems that end up undermining his more interesting arguments.

Furthermore, the assumption that this plurality of socio-political arrangements is something new and can be used to distinguish the current era from previous ones is also problematic. I have been arguing throughout this book that the nation-state has permanently coexisted with other modern forms of organising social life

and Castells' failure to realise this weakens his overall case. On this count at least, his arguments still surrender to the methodologically nationalistic image of the internal cohesion and stability of the nation-state's recent past. The shortcomings in his understanding of theory similarly prevent him from setting up a framework within which to locate and control the thesis of the epochal change. The ambiguities in Castells' work illustrate well that social theory is in a place where it has been many times (has it ever been somewhere else?): at a crucial crossroad. It faces the problem of making sense of the past from the viewpoint of a changing present and, in so doing, it needs to keep in touch not only with the changing social world but also with its own troubled conceptual history. Social theory's new orthodoxy – and its critique of methodological nationalism – may have helped revise some of social theory's own problematic practices and assumptions, but the price we are asked to pay for this is unnecessarily close to giving up social theory's claim to universalism.

10 Niklas Luhmann (1927–1998) and Jürgen Habermas (1929–present)

World society, cosmopolitanism and the nation-state

With this chapter, we now reach the end of the reconstruction of a social theory of the nation-state being pursued in this book. In contradistinction to what occurred in Chapter 9, the works of Niklas Luhmann and Jürgen Habermas are important here not because of what they empirically tell us about current globalisation processes and the way in which these affect the nation-state but because they put forward two abstract theories of modernity. Despite their differences, both social theories equally aim at the constitution of general theoretical frameworks within which an understanding of modernity's evolution and key features can be achieved. I would hold that, in so doing, neither Luhmann nor Habermas reified the nation-state and its position in modernity. Rather, even if their theorisation can be criticised for not having paid enough attention to the nation-state (Beck 2006; Wimmer and Schiller 2002), this does not provide sufficient ground to argue that they are guilty of methodological nationalism *in absentia*.

Luhmann, first, describes the rise of modernity as the expansion of functional differentiation processes on a global scale. His notion of society is that of a single world society that is grasped, universalistically, as an endless horizon of communicative meanings and not as a geographical reference to the whole globe. Luhmann's conceptualisation of the world society on the basis of the strictly *social* character of the expansion of communication processes in modernity becomes in this way substantively different from, and more sophisticated than, the territorial image of a unified world that comes with those globalisation theories reviewed in the previous chapter. True, Luhmann does not seem to have deployed much systematic work to understanding the evolution of the nation-state's position within his idea of modernity. Yet, his social theory helps us understand that, from a truly social theory point of view, geographical determinations always remain subordinated to the social dynamics of modernity.

Habermas, second, developed his theory of communicative action throughout the 1970s within the context of a number of social (the student revolts of 1968) and intellectual (the linguistic and pragmatic turn of philosophy) developments that do not seem to bear direct connection with, or implication of, methodological nationalism. In his more contemporary works, Habermas' concern with cosmopolitanism unfolds as a continuation rather than a break with the intellectual tradition of social theory and they also try to renovate the universalistic legacy that is at the

core of the project of this book. The tension between description and normative assessment, which is so central to Habermas' theoretical project, is translated in these most recent writings into the thesis of the importance of cosmopolitanism as equally a descriptive and a normative marker of our present epochal condition. Similar to some of the arguments we have reviewed in relation to Durkheim (Chapter 5) and Parsons (Chapter 6), Habermas is not only aware of the normative ambiguity between national self-determination and cosmopolitanism but he is also able to use that relationship to understand contemporary social and political events.

Niklas Luhmann: world society as horizon of meaning

After the decline of the Parsonian influence by the end of the 1960s, by far the most radical and influential attempt at the reinvigoration of a system theory approach within social theory is that of German sociologist Niklas Luhmann. In a way, the intellectual relationship between Parsons and Luhmann evokes that of Marx and Hegel. Similar to how Marx claimed to have honoured Hegel's dialectic by having placed it 'back on its feet', Luhmann offers a reading of Parsons which centres on taking the original thrust behind the latter's functionalism and radicalising its consequences. Yet, even if we are unsure of the mistakes both Marx and Luhmann may have committed in interpreting their respective masters, the fact remains that merits and difficulties are equally instructive.[54] Here, however, I will not compare Parsons' and Luhmann's versions of system theory. Rather, I shall try to explicate the reasons that led Luhmann to radicalise the use of the idea of society in contemporary social theory as world society and unfold the consequences of this change for Luhmann's understanding of the nation as modernity's key 'semantic of inclusion'.

In his last and major work, *The Society of Society*, Luhmann (1997: 24–5) distinguishes four epistemological obstacles which, in his view, have prevented sociology from reaching the required level of abstraction to produce a proper *theory* of society. Each obstacle is introduced in polemical fashion to highlight a specific aspect of the canon of social theory that has hindered its conceptual development as well as its ability to reach an adequate understanding of modernity. These four obstacles work independently but reinforce one another. The first obstacle is based on the claim that 'society' is composed of concrete individuals and the relationships between individuals. Luhmann's (1990: 176) argument here is that the operation of this obstacle carries with it the absurd consequence that there is no society independent from the birth and death of particular individuals. In contradistinction to that, he argues that a proper theory of society overcomes this by highlighting the fact that the *continuity of social life* does not depend upon the existence of concrete human beings. Indeed, human beings are necessary for the existence of society but no particular individual is required. The second problem Luhmann finds in previous social theory is the claim that society is constituted via the consensus between individuals' intentions and their complementary purposes. His argument here is that theories based on consensual motivations or congruent goals end up upholding the implausible claim that

disagreement is somehow less social than agreement. This, for instance, would lead to difficulties in explaining the long-lasting presence of conflicts and wars in the historical record. In opposition to that, Luhmann's argument is that we understand society as *improbable social coordination* so that consensus and conflict are both equally social.

The third obstacle to which he refers could not relate more directly to our problem of understanding, and transcending, methodological nationalism. This difficulty points to the erroneous attempt at defining society by its territorial integration so that individual countries effectively become individual *societies* (Luhmann 1990: 178). This slippage from an everyday use of society into its technical usage within the social sciences reflects not only a certain sloppiness in the conformation of social theory's conceptual frameworks but equally implies the impossible result that we would produce a different *theory* of society for each individual country. For Luhmann, therefore, the notion of society can have theoretical purchase only in so far as it relates to the idea of the world unit. Crucially, as we shall see, the idea of the world society is defined here less as a single unit encompassing the whole globe but more as an *endless horizon of meaning* within which all communicative events take place. The fourth and final obstacle is that, because of the difficulties provoked by the working together of all three previous obstacles, it can still be naïvely assumed that society can be observed externally or, in a more political version of the same argument, that there remain privileged groups or positions from which to reflect upon society as a whole. This last impediment refers less to what society actually is and more to the problem associated to the illusions that society can somehow be studied objectively and from the outside. On this count, the problem for Luhmann is how to advance cognitive procedures upon which to establish his system theory without having to resort to metaphysical support of any kind – progress, the end of history or the belief in the immutable nature of nature. The theory of society Luhmann is after attempts to *explain society from within*. The resolution of these four obstacles must, therefore, include the following positive statements:

- Society is *continuous in time* because it does not depend upon the actions or presence of concrete individuals (obstacle 1);
- Society is *improbable social coordination* because it exists regardless of the actors' intentions and exists also when conflicts and disputes prevail over agreement and consensus (obstacle 2);
- Society is as an *endless horizon of meaning* that refers to all possible communicative events rather than to the definition of any geographical reference (obstacle 3) and;
- Society can only be *explained from within*. Every description of society (Luhmann's included) is part of the same social relations that are being observed and accounted for (obstacle 4).

The first ontological result to be highlighted here is that society is an emergent reality. Society requires of individuals for its existence but *as society* its functioning

can never be explained by the actions of these individuals. Society stays when any one individual is gone; society is social coordination even if that coordination goes against the individuals' will or produces unintended results; society is the infinite horizon of meaning within which all possible communication can take place. The second more methodological outcome is that social theory is neither more nor less than one possible description of society that always takes place within society itself. The social condition of social theory makes its knowledge self-referential. The knowing-subject (social theory) and the object of knowledge (society) share the feature that they are equally constituted within meaning – and this may be also be a reason why Luhmann's final opus is paradoxically entitled *The Society of Society*. Communication becomes the ultimate component element of social systems because society reproduces *itself* only as communication and meaning becomes the particular condition that expresses the self-referential condition of society because it is only with the idea of meaning that we realise that, in fact, all knowledge of society takes places within society.

Luhmann's particular attempt at the renovation of social theory's claim to universalism works therefore both in relation to what society is and how knowledge about society can be produced. His reflections on society at these different levels lend further support to the thesis introduced in Chapter 2 of society's role as a regulative ideal as he maintains that the kind of systemic sociology he is after requires a notion of society 'as a limiting case' (Luhmann 1990: 176). Surely, Luhmann would want to avoid the 'small metaphysical commitments' that come with the use of regulative ideals but his notion of society as a limiting case gives it an equally strong role in the renovation of social theory's claim to universalism. The rest of this section unfolds some of the consequences of this approach on the idea of society with, of course, a special focus on trying to grasp Luhmann's understanding of the nation-state.

Similar to Parsons, Luhmann defines modernity with the thesis of the functional differentiation of subsystems. Modernity's key structural feature is the emergence of a number of generalised symbolic media of communication that favour the increasing autonomisation of a number of social fields within which specific tasks can be fulfilled more efficiently as well as more autonomously: 'the concept of generalized media refers, then, to the interchange processes between of the social system of society. Generalized media are conceived as specialized languages regulating interchange processes between sub-systems' (Luhmann 1977: 507). Each of modernity's subsystems – politics, the economy, science, family and so on – specialises in one and only one function – decision-making, distribution of scarcity, legitimisation of knowledge, regulation of intimacy – via one and only one generalised medium of communication: power, money, truth, love (Chernilo 2002). When modernity is defined in this way, the consequence is that, within it, the idea of society becomes

> [T]he encompassing social system and the only system which is complex enough to institutionalize the functional differentiation of generalized media [. . .] there exists today only one society on earth: the world society. The

> environment of this one global society cannot consist of other human society, and it can no longer be marked by territorial frontiers.
>
> (Luhmann 1977: 526)

When Luhmann argues for the concept of the world society as though the only theoretically consistent use of the idea of society, he means it. With the rise of functional differentiation during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the possibility of referring, in any strong theoretical sense, to partial or individual territories as societies looses its purchase because the social (i.e. communicative) nature of functional differentiation has already become modernity's driving force. As said, this question should not be understood as if geographical references play no role whatever in explaining the rise and main features of modernity. It does, however, bear the consequence that the inclusion of the geographical or territorial organisation of modern social life must now necessarily remain subordinated to the growing importance of the reorganisation of communicative processes. The process of functional differentiation, therefore,

> Has changed the conditions under which a social system can operate effectively as society. If we continue to think in terms of old European tradition, the place of society seems almost void today. Even the most formalized abstraction from this tradition (the principle of self-sufficiency of the society, the definition of system in terms of wholes and parts, the postulate of the hierarchical priory of normative over cognitively conditioned mechanism, and communal solidarity, which Parsons carries on) has become questionable. If we are unbiased in our observation, the emergence of a new global system of world society appears as an undeniable fact. This requires corresponding changes in the concept of society. And if we are right in our assumption that the reorganization of media has propelled society up to this new level of evolution, the further exploration of these generalized media may contribute, on the conceptual as well as the empirical level, to an adequate understanding of this new phenomenon.
>
> (Luhmann 1977: 527)

Luhmann's conceptualisation of modernity carries with it the recognition of its original global vocation although he shares the standard view that classical social theory was unable to grasp the ultimate global locus of modernity (Luhmann and de Georgi 1998: 72–5). The specificity of Luhmann's dissatisfaction with the canon of social theory is twofold. On the one hand, his point is less that previous social theory as such had been confused by methodological nationalism and more that it has been unable to produce a strong theory of society as world society (Luhmann 1997: 155–61). On the other hand, he advances the idea that the *world* aspect of the world society has nothing to do with a geographical reference to the globe as a whole but rather points to the limitless growing of communicative possibilities that the rise of functional differentiation brings with it. The forcefully theoretical way in which Luhmann phrases his critique of previous social theory

makes it somehow different from others we have encountered in this book. It seems to me, however, that Luhmann exaggerates the extent to which he actually breaks with past social theory because the universalistic orientation behind his analysis of the global vocation and impact of modernity has surely accompanied us throughout this book.

If in evolutionary terms the idea of the world society means the primacy of functional over previous segmental and stratified forms of differentiation, in terms of the architecture of Luhmann's theory it refers to an infinite horizon of meaning within which the functional differentiation of subsystems is always expanding and finding new ambits. The world society is thus defined as an open horizon within which social relations based on meaning can endlessly unfold: 'The world society is the self-occurrence of the world within communication' (Luhmann 1997: 150). Therefore, his idea of the world does not refer to any concrete entity that holds individuals or natural things within it. Rather, the world is more aptly defined as an endless horizon of possible meanings (Luhmann 1997: 153). The self-referential nature of the world society is based upon the assumption that meaning always 'refers to further meaning' so that it forms a closed system that, 'in its unity', can only be apprehended

> [A]s the ultimate horizon of all meaning: as *the world*. Consequently, the world has the same inevitability and unnegatability as meaning. Any attempt to go beyond it conceptually only extends it; any such attempt would have to enlist meaning and the world and this would be that it was trying not to be.
> (Luhmann 1995: 69)

Luhmann's idea of the world society is therefore doubly social. The *world* is social because it points to the self-referential, all-inclusive and endless nature of meaning: all meaningful relations take place within meaning only within it. The world in this social sense knows of no other limits than those thus far achieved by the ever-growing expansion of communication. And its reference to *society* is of course also social because it refers to communication as the only one element that is able to encompass all the features that make society an emergent reality: social life understood as continuous, improbable and meaningful. In Luhmann's (1990: 178) own words: 'modern society is, therefore, a world society in a double sense. It provides one world for one system; and it integrates all world horizons as horizons of one communicative system [...] a plurality of possible worlds has become inconceivable. The worldwide communicative system constitutes one world that includes all possibilities.' It is now apparent why Luhmann's conception of the world society is different from any idea of globalisation as defined in the previous chapter. Even if other writers have also emphasised that it is only in modernity that one can speak of the world society, it is Luhmann who has made the point that the spatial reference of the idea of the world society is not the *explanans* of the theory but rather its *explanandum*. The territorial growing of world interconnectedness is, for Luhmann, a result of modernity's truly social reorganisation under the primacy of functional differentiation steered by generalised symbolic media of communication.

Let me finalise this section by making some brief comments on Luhmann's understanding of the state and the nation. In his view, the idea of the nation-state is fully modernist as it is a fundamental semantic result of the rise of functional differentiation. Above all, it gave a chance to orientate the 'de-aristocratisation' of politics that increasingly took place after the French Revolution. With regard to the state, Luhmann (1990: 165–6) argues that the notion of the state as a 'person' may be necessary in political science and law but that 'from the point of view of the social sciences this is at best a legal fiction' and he rather refers to the state as the 'self-description of the political system [. . .] it is the political system reintroduced into the political system as a point of reference for political action.' This notion of the state as the self-description of the political system means that the state can be treated as though politics' self-identity. In Luhmann's (1990: 169) view, only the modern state can be duly referred to as a state because it is only in modernity that the political system no longer considers itself as 'the total society'. From the eighteenth century on, the political system takes the state as its legitimate space and leaves civil society increasingly alone. The state thus becomes the locus of political communication around which actors fight for the acquisition and distribution of power as a symbolic generalised media:

> The formation of political power is not only relevant to politics, it changes society as a whole. With the formation of special political systems able to base themselves on permanently superior physical violence, a certain systemization and specification of purpose may be achieved [. . .] but not complete monopolizaiton of power in the hands of the 'state' [. . .] This observation makes it clear, on the one hand, how much politics has again, particularly today, usurped distributional functions and in so doing even uses money to neutralize counter-power; and it makes clear, on the other hand, the extent to which power which cannot be politicized tends to become socially obsolete.
>
> (Luhmann 1979: 168–9)

In relation to the nation, Luhmann's argument is that modernity means the increasing primacy of functional specialisation in such role-complementary distinctions as producer/consumer, teacher/student or doctor/patient so that these distinctions start to take precedence over previous forms of strata based on land, military might or religion. The idea of the nation provides individuals with a form of identity, a form of inclusion, within which the lost transcendental legitimisation of life of the stratified society could now be regained in the form of the private and public fulfilment of a particular task for the betterment of collective life. The nation becomes modernity's key concept of inclusion to deal with the novel kind of differentiation modernity has brought about: role rather than strata based.

Luhmann pays attention to the nation as modernity's most important semantic of inclusion. His analysis is based upon a tension between universalism and particularism because the nation can allegedly be applied to most aspects of

modern social life by discriminating between those who belong to it and those who do not. Interestingly, he acknowledges that the very ambivalence and plasticity of the nation allows it to deal with a number of forms of differentiation that were emerging in mid-eighteenth century Europe. Among others, he mentions distinctions: (1) between religious, linguistic or cultural communities; (2) between different roles and their tasks; (3) between personal and collective forms of identities; (4) between political and ethnic uses of the national semantic; (5) between the facticity and normativity of national politics; (6) between the inward homogeneity and outward heterogeneity of the nation; (7) between past – the nation as common origin – and future – the nation as common project (Luhmann 1997: 1045–55). The conceptualisation of the nation as semantics of inclusion within Luhmann's work is, therefore, consistent with the kind of critique of methodological nationalism in which I am interested. In so far as modernity is conceived of a functional differentiation, it cannot be effectively understood without paying attention to the nation as its key way of naming and symbolising inclusion. Equally, the semantic position of the nation in Luhmann's theory points to the thesis that the nation's *claim* to unity and self-containment is precisely that, a claim.

Even if roughly unproblematic and consistent with the key elements of his theoretical approach, Luhmann's brief comments do not seem to improve fundamentally our substantive comprehension of the nation and the nation-state: there are only ten pages devoted to the nation within Luhmann's (1997) massive 1,100-pages-long *opus*. His account of the nation is, if not in itself unsatisfactory, rather insufficient. Yet, his understanding of the world society helps us think beyond methodological nationalism because it duly locates geography as one dimension of social life. Luhmann's contribution is the reminder that problems of scale and boundary are to be considered within rather than outside of the kind of social relations that social theory attempts to study.

Jürgen Habermas: the rise of the 'post-national' nation-state

The question of understanding the nation-state's position in modernity was not part of Habermas' (1972, 1984, 1987) earlier theoretical projects. Over that last decade or so, however, the problem of the legitimisation of democratic national politics within the context of a broader cosmopolitan or post-national constellation has become more and more prominent in his writings. Even if this concern with the nation-state's current transformations and possibilities is relatively recent and has not reached the level of abstraction of his previous work, it seems fair to argue that there is no major break between Habermas' earlier theoretical work and his recent, more political, reflections.

Despite certain problems, gaps and shortcomings in his assessment of the current post-national constellation and the future of the European Union (Fine and Smith 2003; Turner 2004), it remains true that his political interventions are to be understood within the context of the normative commitment provided by the theory of communicative action. His move from a sociologically centred

reconstruction of the canon of social theory to a reassessment of contemporary theories of law and democracy (Habermas 1996), shows that the claim to universalism of his theory of communicative action is not based on any particular disciplinary tradition. The kind of 'social theory of contemporary politics' in which he is now interested is still framed within the tension between the empirical description and the normative assessment of modernity's development that has been at the core of his work throughout. To Habermas (1969), social theory is at its best when it keeps its descriptive and normative concerns together so that they can mutually complement and regulate each other. In this book, this is translated into the view that the current situation of the nation-state focuses equally on the *efficiency* and *legitimacy* in the functioning of its democratic procedures and institutions.

Habermas' (2001a: 60) understanding of the Western nation-state's current position centres on what he considers is its 'paradoxical situation'. On the one hand, it is only at the level of national institutions that democratic procedures and decision-making can be said to have worked reasonably well. On the other, current economic and socio-cultural trends are undermining the nation-state's capacity to provide welfare to its citizens. Even if these tendencies seem for us more acute now than in the past, Habermas explicitly acknowledges the fact that, as modern forms of socio-political arrangement, the nation and the nation-state have always been rather ambiguous with regard to their normative basis and democratic potential.

> The nation is Janus-faced. Whereas the voluntary nation of citizens is the source of democratic legitimation, it is the inherited or ascribed nation founded on ethnic membership that secures social integration [...] The tension between the universalism of an egalitarian legal community and the particularism of a community united by historical destiny is built into the very concept of the national state.
>
> (Habermas 1998: 115)

The current version of this paradox lies in the fact that democracy seems to work best within a national framework that looks increasingly less able to secure, both pragmatically and normatively, its own democratic core. Indeed, the tension between formal equality guaranteed in the formation of a universal citizenry within the people and the factual particularism of the inequality of ethnic belonging and social class, is not itself new. Yet, in its present intensified form, this problem takes the following shape: 'On the one side, the democratic constitutional state is better equipped than other political forms to handle this pluralisation; on the other side, the problems arising from immigration and pluralisation of life forms pose a real change for nation-states' (Habermas 2001a: 73). It is in this context that the question of the future of the nation-state arises with all its urgency. For Habermas, the current situation implies the challenge of trying to retain those elements in the universalistic core of democratic decision-making that may be able to work outside the framework of national politics. And, conversely, it equally means the opportunity of thinking anew some of the underlying presuppositions behind

democratic *national* politics that may have started to undermine its own universalistic thrust. Habermas does not conceive the connection between cosmopolitanism and the nation-state as one of opposition. Rather, they both stand in a relationship of mutual interdependence. As he describes the current epochal condition, Habermas pays attention not only to those positive signs that point in the direction towards cosmopolitan developments but also to those equally real trends signalling fundamentalism and regressive nationalism. The question is, therefore, how the universalistic normative core of national democratic principles and procedures can start being deployed under novel historical conditions and give shape to new institutional arrangements.

Within Habermas' work, these reflections have taken the route of a reconsideration of the extent to which cosmopolitanism can be regarded as the best normative framework for a reconceptualisation of democratic politics beyond the nation-state. The cosmopolitan outlook is now clearly established as one of contemporary social sciences' most promising research agendas (Fine 2006b). Arguably, Habermas is neither the most original of cosmopolitan thinkers nor the most fervent believer in cosmopolitanism but the fact that he has contributed to the discussion may have given it a new impetus and helped improve its credentials.[55] Here, the question takes its paradigmatic formulation in the reassessment of Kant's project of perpetual peace. Habermas starts from the fact that the most important conceptual innovation in current notions of cosmopolitan law is already present in Kant's original formulation. Inscribed in the very concept of cosmopolitan law is that claim that it: 'bypasses the collective subjects of international law and directly establishes the legal status of the individual subjects by granting them unmediated membership in the association of free and equal world citizens' (Habermas 1998: 181). The key aspect that makes cosmopolitan law substantively different from international law is therefore its recognition of individuals and not only states as right-bearing subjects. Also following Kant, Habermas does not focus his enquiry on how or whether cosmopolitan law will eventually be able to turn state-centred international law obsolete. Rather, the question Habermas poses is that an adequate comprehension of cosmopolitan law requires that we understand it against the broader issue of conceptualising the nation-state's normative foundation in modernity. Cosmopolitan law is another layer in which modern political life expresses itself rather than its definitive culmination. Surely, the fact that the nation-state is loosing ground, both empirically and normatively, makes the question of understanding current versions of cosmopolitan thinking and institutions all the more urgent (Vertovec and Cohen 2002). Yet, Habermas (1998: 189) is not confounded by the nation-state's current crisis and explicitly states the intrinsic connection between cosmopolitanism and the origins of the nation-state as expressed in the idea of basic human rights.

> Human rights in the modern sense can be traced back to the Virginia Bill of Rights and the American Declaration of Independence of 1776 and to the *Declaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* of 1789 [...] It is no accident that human rights first take on a concrete form in the context of

> these first constitutions, specifically as basic rights that are guaranteed within the frame of a national legal order. However, they seem to have a double character: as constitutional norms they enjoy positive validity, but as rights possessed by each person *qua* human being they are also accorded a suprapositive validity.

The universalistic normative foundation of the idea of human rights constitutes the core of the democratic legacy of modern politics in which Habermas is interested. He understands that there is a fundamental ambivalence in the way in which the question of the validity of modern human rights arises and then operates. Human rights 'enjoy "validity" in the dual sense that they are not only valid de facto, and hence are enforced by the sanctioning power of the state, but can also claim normative legitimacy, that is, they should be capable of being rationally justified' (Habermas 1998: 190). The question thus opened is whether it is possible to find a political actor or institution that can now incarnate the project of reinvigorating democratic politics as the nation-state did in the past. Thus Habermas (1998: 117):

> In its heyday, the nation-state founded a domain of political communication that made it possible to absorb the advances in abstraction of societal modernisation and to re-embed a population uprooted from traditional forms of life in an extended and rationalised lifeworld through the cultivation of national consciousness. It could play this integrative role all the better in that democratic citizenship was connected with cultural membership in the nation. Today, as the nation-state finds itself challenged from within by the explosive potential of multiculturalism and from without by the pressure of globalisation, the question arises of whether there exists a functional equivalent for the fusion of the nation of citizens with the ethnic nation.

This equivalent Habermas finds it now in the project of the European Union. He establishes a direct connection between the more theoretical debates on cosmopolitanism and the more political discussion on future of the European Union. To begin with, he conceives of the European Union in very similar terms to Kant's idea of a Federation of nations (Habermas 2001b: 15). Yet, he equally understands that for the project of the European Union to work, pragmatic and strategic considerations will alone not suffice and normative arguments are also needed. The question, as usual, is one of striking the balance between facts and norms: 'normative orientations move majorities of voters only to the extent that they can make a straightforward appeal to "strong" traditions inscribed in established political cultures' (Habermas 2001b: 10). Indeed, the question of constitutional patriotism is precisely that of combining the 'attractions of a way of life' with the normative authority that can only emerge from Human Rights. Habermas' focus is apparent here in the fact that he decided to concentrate his political engagement with the European Union mainly on the question of the EU constitution. With regard to the act of political creativity being required for the establishment of a political

constitution for a novel body such as the European Union, Habermas warns, yet again, against any exaggeration in the assessment of the nature of the task at hands. However radical our current epochal transition may seem to us now, the present challenge is not comparable to the one faced by those taking part in Philadelphia or Paris conventions of the late eighteenth century: 'For the challenge before us is not to *invent* anything but to *conserve* the great democratic achievements of the European nation-state, beyond its own limits' (Habermas 2001b: 6).

It is the recreation – both socio-culturally and normatively – of the kind of 'painful processes of abstraction' through which a 'solidarity among strangers' was once able to help creating the nation-state and can move on to a wider European level (Habermas 2001b: 16). The resources upon which the European Union can draw for this task are those institutional achievements that have become part of 'a European way of life'. Europeans may want to stick, again on both empirical and normative grounds, to their social-democratic arrangements, their egalitarian and universalistic rule of law and their channelling of political disputes and demands via political parties (Habermas 2001b: 12, 20). If a novel kind of socio-political arrangement is in the making, this is above all a result of a long and painful learning process through which Europeans have allegedly learnt from their own mistakes. And indeed, this capacity for self-criticism is in itself part of the normative legacy Habermas is interested in rescuing (Habermas 2001b: 20–1).[56]

A further instantiation of Habermas' politics is found in his publications on such recent political events as North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)'s intervention in Kosovo in 1999 and the UK–US invasion of Iraq, in 2003 (Chernilo 2006a: 135–7). The normative basis behind his support of NATO's action is consistent with what we have discussed so far, the emergent 'leap from the classical international law of states to a cosmopolitan law of a global civil society' (Habermas 1999: 264). Even without an explicit UN Security Council resolution to back the use of military force, Habermas assessed the situation in Kosovo as so grave that the intervention was justified *as an exception*. Yet, the very fact that this needed to be treated as an exception highlighted the fact that there is an ambivalent relationship between international law based on the principle of national self-determination and an emerging cosmopolitan legal order based on human rights. The kind of normative optimism that is found in the Kosovo paper seems to have been widely shared at the time and yet, less than five years later, this optimism is severely weakened: 'for half a century the United States could count as the pacemaker for progress on this cosmopolitan path. With the war in Iraq [. . .] the normative authority of the United States of America lies in ruins' (Habermas 2003: 365). Normative standpoints have indeed remained the same but their congruence with political events is now less apparent: Habermas' own view of the institutionalisation of an embryonic cosmopolitan legal order seemed, if anything, more distant in 2003 than it looked in 1999. Had Habermas (1969) applied more consistently some key lessons of his own view of the history of social theory on this particular problem – the progressive and conservative forces

that shape modernity are deeply rooted in social theory's history – he would have realised that neither the principle of national self-determination nor cosmopolitan ideals are naturally or automatically attached to any particular form of politics. The illusion of methodological nationalism is here that of a nation-state which successfully manages its own affairs internally whilst, at the same time, it unproblematically finds its place in a neatly divided world composed only of formally equivalent nation-states.

Table 2 summarises the main aspects of Habermas' theory of the nation-state and human rights that have been introduced so far. Columns represent the double form of validity Habermas recognises for human rights: they can be regarded as either moral norms that are justified only if applicable to all human beings without exception or enacted positive laws that need to be enforced by an executive power within a territory. Rows point to the fact of whether the application of human rights takes place within or beyond the nation-state.

The main result of Table 2 is that there is no clear-cut solution for the claim to universalism underlying Habermas' conception of human rights. As moral norms and positive law, human rights need to be thought of as legitimate and efficient both within and beyond the nation-state's borders. The granting of basic rights within the nation-state is thus as important and necessary a cosmopolitan development as the institutionalisation of cosmopolitan principles at the global level. Habermas' conceptualisation of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and the nation-state points in the direction of the *normative ambiguity* in the nation-state's position in modernity. On the one hand, the nation-state is no self-contained monad because, from its very inception, it is in need of the kind of normative universalism that is *simultaneously* founded within its borders as democratic self-determination and outside them in the realm of a cosmopolitan understanding of human rights. On the other, the admittedly emergent cosmopolitan institutions will only be able to work effectively – at least for the foreseeable future – if upheld by nation-state. In order to become practical and useful, human rights need to permeate into local and national politics as enforceable positive laws.

Indeed, we have seen that Habermas acknowledges one of the tendencies that have duly attracted attention in the literature: the fact that the democratic legacy that once unfolded within the nation-state now needs to be renovated and

Table 2 Fields of application and form of validity of human rights in Habermas' theory

Field of application/ form of validity	*As moral norms*	*As enacted positive law*
Internal to the nation-state	Basic legal, political and social rights granted by the constitution	Democratic procedures of law-making
External to the nation-state	Cosmopolitan law and institutions	European Parliament and reformed United Nations (approximate examples)

reshaped beyond its borders (Held 1995). He also points to a second tendency which, although it is less mentioned in the literature, is possibly more important for this book's purpose of envisaging a social theory of the nation-state beyond methodological nationalism. In the same way as in the eighteenth century the beginning of democratic national politics required of a wider 'cosmopolitan' framework upon which its universalistic appeal could rest for normative support, current attempts at the cosmopolitisation of politics require a democratic national political arena for its universalistic core to be actualised in really existing and pragmatically effective institutional arrangements (see Chapter 5). This is the complementary rather than oppositional relationship between cosmopolitanism and the nation-state. The antidote against methodological nationalism offered by Habermas is a reflection upon the nation-state's normative ambiguity: the problematic internal and external legitimacy on which the idea of the nation-state rests. The opacity of the nation-state should make us aware of the fact that the distance between enlightenment and deception; between knowledge and propaganda; between legitimate reconstruction and deceitful hindsight, is shorter than we might wish. The troubled *conceptual* history of the nation-state that I have reconstructed seems to reflect its disturbing *actual* history.

Conclusion

Contemporary social theory needs to consider seriously the challenges being posed by the changing circumstances currently affecting the nation-state. The works of Luhmann and Habermas are not usually seen as mutually compatible but I have tried to demonstrate here that we can make profitable use of their works to conceptualise different aspects of these transformations of modernity *vis-à-vis* the nation-state. In a way, both Luhmann and Habermas underscore the claim to universalism with which social theory has systematically tried to come to terms with the rise and main features of modernity. Whilst Luhmann points to a strong programme of descriptive universalism – an explanatory programme to account for the rise of functional differentiation as world society – Habermas focuses on a kind of normative universalism based on the ideas of cosmopolitanism and human rights (Chernilo and Mascareño 2005).

With regard to the substantive theses on the opacity of the nation-state – its historical elusiveness, sociological equivocations and normative ambiguity – either work sheds some light on a relevant aspect. Luhmann's conceptualisation of the world society understands the nation as one of modernity's key semantic developments. Its focus on the problem of inclusion as a counterbalancing tendency to functional differentiation processes may not be enough to account fully for the role of the nation-state in modernity but this by no means turns his work into a representative of methodological nationalism. His idea of the nation-state neither encompasses nor exhausts the core of what makes a modern society modern; that is, the fact that functional differentiation endlessly expands communicative processes. Luhmann's abstract conceptualisation of society explicitly refuses to equate it with the nation-state or indeed with any other modern form of

modern socio-political arrangement. In defining society as continuous, improbable, meaningful and emergent, Luhmann's arguments are not far apart from this book's claim on the regulative function of society. On the other side, Habermas' reflections on cosmopolitanism make apparent the normative ambiguity that underlines the nation-state's position throughout modernity. Habermas has been systematically interested in pursuing the kind of reconstruction of the intellectual canon of social theory that this book rehearses and this was made apparent here in the way in which he dealt with Kant's conception of cosmopolitanism as one of modernity's key normative foundations of modern political life. The current understanding of this normative discourse centred on the idea of Human Rights is thus seen as one permanent aspect of, rather than the most novel of challenges to, the nation-state. No kind of methodological nationalism is able to grasp the way in which Habermas expects to maintain, but in a renovated post-national form, the democratic legacy upon which the normative foundation of the nation-state first emerged.

Closing remarks

I shall not try to recapitulate the main arguments of the individual chapters in these last few pages. That would be not only futile but also rather inconsistent with the purpose of letting the ambivalence and complications of the nation-state to emerge from the history of social theory itself. We can, however, try to draw together some of the main arguments running through this book and make explicit some of their consequences for a future research agenda. As I see them, there are three substantive planes that require further summation. First, we must still fully assess the implications of having refuted the charge of social theory's immanent methodological nationalism. Second, we need to unpack the consequences of the social-theory approach advanced in this book for our understanding of the nation-state. Finally, there is the issue of reassessing social theory's claim to universalism in general and the thesis of society's role as a regulative ideal in particular.

The charge of methodological nationalism has been thrown rather widely and wildly against social theory. We have seen that soon enough the indictment started to be regarded as one unquestioned feature of social theory and became incorporated into the standard narratives on social theory's problematic relationship with the nation-state. The difficulty is that it eventually became tautological: social theory is simultaneously accused for having made too much *and* too little of the nation-state. Social theory is criticised in equal measure for having totally neglected the nation-state and for having overstated, to the level of reification, its position in modernity. As this reconstruction of social theory on the nation-state moved from Marx to Luhmann and Habermas, however, the image that has been emerging proved subtler and richer than any form of methodological nationalism would grant. We have shown that the charge lacks almost all specificity and is backed up with very little textual support. It just did not resist closer critical scrutiny.

But this book does not advance either the thesis that the canon of social theory is faultless and that its propositions on the nation-state can simply be taken at face value. The point I have made throughout is slightly different. Precisely because it has not been obsessed with the nation-state, because it can only think of the nation-state within the wider context of modernity's structural evolution, because it systematically faces the tension between empirical description and normative assessment and indeed because of its claim to universalism, social theory has proved to be better equipped than usually granted to come to terms with the

nation-state's position in modernity. Without holding any illusion of fully avoiding or prematurely resolving methodological nationalism, social theory seems to offer the *opportunity* of somehow riding on the opacity of the nation-state so that we can grasp its elusiveness, equivocations and ambiguities. We therefore require neither to develop a whole new kind of social theory – such as methodological cosmopolitanism – nor to abandon the very project of social theory with a universalistic orientation. If I have tried to reassess and reconstruct social theory's history is because it seemed to me that, at its best, it provides us with useful resources for explaining modern social life in a way that it is empirically sound, theoretically sophisticated and normatively informed.

The working definition of methodological nationalism in this book has been that of an equation between the nation-state and society – the nation-state as the natural, necessary and even automatic form of society in modernity. We have reviewed how, since the 1970s, a number of criticisms have been levelled against methodological nationalism and they all seemed to agree on the fact that it blocks our understanding of the nation-state's position in modernity; it prevents us from understanding the nation-state as a key but not the key political form of modernity. Contemporary debates on methodological nationalism have however moved on a long way from those early days. This book's attempt at transcending it finds inspiration, but differs in crucial respects, from the one proposed in contemporary social theory – most saliently but not exclusively by Ulrich Beck. The main difficulty with Beck's critique is that it presupposes that the nation-state remained true to itself for almost two centuries but that now, quite abruptly, it is no longer the key player it unquestionably had been. An important reason for going back in time here to the origins of both social theory and the nation-state was, however, the conviction that a soberer account of that past was required to make sense of the nation-state's current situation. Moreover, both as an idea and as a socio-political arrangement, the nation-state has been evolving alongside the wider transformations of modernity itself. We have reviewed how the nation-state has faced a number of important challenges such as the global expansion of capitalism, the rise of class consciousness, the development of empires, the outbreak of the First World War, the menace of authoritarianism and totalitarianism, the rise and decline of Cold War blocs and the evolution of information technologies, to mention only the most salient cases.

This book's critique of methodological nationalism tries thus to avoid a rather normalised – or even reified – view of the past. It holds that one can only grasp the nature of the challenges to the nation-state if one is simultaneously willing to acknowledge the fact that the nation-state *permanently* faces crises that threat to undermine its alleged homogeneity and severe its supposed unity. Surely, the different threats that unfold from the individual chapters make apparent that the nature of the processes having an impact upon the nation-state has itself been changing. But the fact that the nation-state is consistently besieged by various historical trends and normative challenges remains one of its most salient and enduring features. The question for social theory is being able to account for these processes empirically – allowing space for assessing differences as much as

similarities among them – whereas recognising the fact that, in the present, they are *always* regarded as unprecedented, radical and epoch making.

The second theme to be addressed now is this book's thesis that its opacity constitutes the nation-state's most salient feature. The three claims on its historical elusiveness, sociological equivocations and normative ambiguity became the core of the social theory of the nation-state beyond methodological nationalism being attempted here. To acknowledge this opacity, however, does not mean that nothing certain can be said about the nation-state. Rather, the argument has been that as soon as we acknowledge it and let it unfold we have already started to account for it. One important feature of the nation-state is precisely the fact that its historical representations have changed and evolved, its sociological forms have reached equivocal results and its normative foundations and justifications have been more ambiguous than expected. At least part of the strengths of the nation-state depends upon the way in which it manages to hide its internal inconsistencies and divisions and reinforce its integrative symbols and inclusionary solutions.

These reflections on the nation-state have still another theoretical consequence. They allow us to recognise that one important feature of the nation-state is its ability to hide, first, and then try to bridge the gap, between its claim to achieving full sovereignty over its population and territory and the necessarily partial way in which that claim is always realised. There is no way of grasping the opacity of the nation-state – and therefore of transcending methodological nationalism – if we remain unable to assess the distance between the claim and its historical actualisation. This book defends the idea that social theory possesses not only the tools to provide a balanced narrative of continuities and discontinuities in the history of the nation-state but also the resources to advance explanations about the distance between the nation-state's ineluctable claim to unity and its more modest and ambivalent ways of accomplishing that claim.

Having firmly established why I believe the charge of social theory's immanent methodological nationalism is unfounded, and indeed why methodological nationalism in general must be rejected, one note of caution is still needed. This reconstruction of social theory makes apparent that there is no way of totally avoiding methodological nationalism because it is somehow inscribed in the nature of the beast itself. In almost any single individual chapter we have witnessed how writers have effectively struggled to make sense out of the nation-state's claim to embody the kind of unity, solidity and homogeneity that it so patently lacks. Scholars have also battled with the tension between the idea that the nation-state has remained true to itself and the fact that it has changed and evolved as much as any other important aspect of modernity. And we also had to come to terms, rather painfully at times, with the idea that the 'national society' is no illusion in modernity – especially during the immediate aftermath of the Second World War – which in turn may explain why the term became incorporated into social theory. In a way, it is as though a 'small dose' of methodological nationalism is required to hold a chance of *beginning* to understand the nation-state. This book's reconstruction of the canon of social theory expresses that as soon as we are interested

in conceptualising the nation-state we are never far off methodological nationalism itself. We cannot really theorise the nation-state with it but neither can we totally do without it. We may have to resign ourselves – for the time being at least – to the fact that in small portions, and under strict doctor's supervision, some form of methodological nationalism may be a necessary evil.

The thesis of social theory's claim to universalism plays a key role in justifying the relevance of social theory as an intellectual tradition; it is what makes social theory relevant and contemporary. It is as an antidote not only against methodological nationalism itself but also against the deficiencies of current attempts at transcending it. If one is serious about rescuing this claim to universalism, however, one must acknowledge the fact that it imposes heavy demands upon social theory. The task of a social theory of the nation-state is to face the fact that there is no such thing as a pure nation-state as well as the fact that one must remain committed to the possibility of referring to it in the singular; the nation-state as only one form of socio-political arrangement. Indeed, we have seen that some claim to 'nation-statehood' has become crucial for all modern types of socio-political arrangement; there have been different conceptions of the nation-state in modernity and it is inscribed in the nature of the nation-state itself to develop features that effectively exceed and overflow any representation of it in the style of methodological nationalism. This dialectic between promising and betraying the *idea* of the nation-state is crucial to understanding the conceptual complications that to such an important extent have confounded the social sciences in general and social theory in particular. The development of the nation-state in modernity is anything but the journey towards the earthly realisation of a heavenly ideal – we need to accept the fact that the nation-state is one crucial but not the exclusive political form of modernity. Whereas all modern socio-political arrangements need to be able to claim that they resemble a nation-state, in so doing they also give up some other, equally important, features of this same condition. The nation-state has coexisted with different socio-political forms in a rather promiscuous fashion; it has never been the only kind of modern socio-political arrangement and no single version of it has ever been hegemonic. And yet, the more apparent its changes and evolution, the more the nation-state claims to have remained the same.

Social theory's claim to universalism is similarly present in a more explicitly normative spirit. Admittedly, this theme has only emerged rather intermittently but I believe that it has none the less accompanied us throughout. For most writers in this book, this normative claim to universalism has been seen as at least partly compatible with the project of the nation-state. It has thus been related to the nation-state's upholding of the rule of law, its commitment towards avoiding unnecessary human suffering, its cosmopolitan foundation upon Human Rights, the democratic core of the claim to national self-determination or indeed as a stepping stone towards human emancipation. Surely, social theory's responses to these difficult normative challenges have been tentative, equivocal and at times less sound than might have been expected or demanded. Despite all the problems and uncertainties, however, we have seen how social theory has not shied away

from the challenge and I propose we learn from this and persevere along this path. Rather than trying to find normative shortcuts or already-made moral solutions, this book has tried to play the ambivalence between empirical description and normative assessment that inhabits within social theory against the opacity that characterises the nation-state's position in modernity.

And social theory's claim to universalism finds finally expression in the thesis of society's role as a regulative ideal. This was thought as a way of setting up the most abstract dimension of this research; namely, the explication of the 'quasi-transcendental' equipment with which social theory *actually* operates in its efforts of comprehending the modern word. On the one side, the thesis of society's role as a regulative ideal fulfilled a critical role in this book's argument as it provided theoretical grounds on which to sustain the rejection of any narrow definition of society based on a geographical reference. The assessment of the equation between society and the nation-state resulted in the negative formulation that society and the nation-state have not been elided in social theory. On the other side, the more positive thesis that the idea of society ultimately refers to an abstract reflection upon the nature of modern social relations was also put forward. This line of argument not only opens up the possibility of thinking about the nation-state *beyond* methodological nationalism but also invites us to think further afield. What other systematic conceptions of society can be found in social theory? And more importantly, what roles do these concepts play in understanding modern social life? Some hints of the path towards which this enquiry may lead were given in Chapter 6 with the reconstruction of Parsons' translation of a rather vague notion of society into its threefold conceptualisation as the nation-state, modern society and social system. To me, a theoretical research agenda focused on the reconstruction and assessment of the different modes of operation of society in social theory – under the banner of society's role as a regulative ideal – becomes thus officially inaugurated.

We have, at the end, come back to where we started. We reconstructed a certain version of the canon of social theory of the nation-state that points beyond methodological nationalism. In so doing, we have equally tried to grasp the opacity that has characterised it in modernity and reflected upon the history and functioning of social theory's own key concepts. Social theory and the nation-state mirror each other in that they both try to square the circle of modernity – the progressive and conservative forces that consistently threat to pull it apart. Social theory's reflective vocation consists in its attempt at better understanding the rise and current features of modernity by permanently reconstructing, renovating and indeed refining the concepts and theories with which it actually explicates and assesses the world and age we live in.

Notes

Introduction

1 As selective as any reconstruction must be, this brief history of the social theory of the nation-state can be criticised for leaving out more than it should. As readers are bound to be dissatisfied with my selection, I can only hope that this difficulty is kept in check as I have tried to construe a rather conventional version of the canon of social theory.

1 The critique of methodological nationalism: a debate in two waves

2 Influential accounts of methodological individualism were at the time those by Crawford Macpherson (1962) and Steven Lukes (1973). Interestingly, no systematic exploration into the relationship between the methodological individualism and methodological nationalism is available yet. See, however, Margaret Archer's (1995: 33–64) and William Outhwaite's (2006: 17–33) reflections on the theoretical consequences of methodological individualism with regard to a strong conception of society such as the one pursued here.

3 Although it did not prove consequential, one can refer to the work of American sociologist Wilbert Moore, who in 1966 published an article in which the idea of society was already decisively related to the notion of 'world society'. See Chapter 10.

4 In fairness, comments on an excessive 'internalist' concern in recent (i.e. Parsonian) sociology were already rather widespread (Dahrendorf 1958; Poggi 1965).

5 A few years later, Anthony Smith (1983: 26) came up with a personal version of the combination of logical and historical arguments that has made social theory's methodological nationalism so transparent and the nation-state's position in modernity so opaque. Let me quote him in full: 'It is, therefore, as if its own thoroughly evolutionist background and impetus made sociology, as the study of laws of social order and social change, unable to distance itself sufficiently from its own basic premises, which are also those of nationalism, and from so essential an aspect of the modern laws of change, i.e., the growth of nations. If this is the case, then it would go far in explaining why nations and nationalism were so long accepted as a sociological "given"; and why the study of society was always *ipso facto* the study of the nation, which was never disentangled as separate dimension or issue [...] the difficulty for a discipline so impregnated with the selfsame assumptions as those held by its object of study, to stand back and realize its historical peculiarity, has prevented sociologists till quite recently from devoting the attention to that object which it clearly deserves; with the result that the growth of nations and nation-states, and of their ethnic core from which most sociologists are normally recruited, are topics and features of society 'taken-for-granted'; they are part of the basic furniture of the mind carried as much by students of society [!] as by any other of its members.'

6 A decade or so later, Giddens (1985: 1, 17) still held similar views: 'Modern "societies" are nation-states, existing within a nation-state system [...] "societies" have often

been understood by sociologists, implicitly or otherwise, as a clearly bounded system with an obvious and easily identifiable set of distinguishing traits.' In the 1990s, Giddens advanced an influential account of the rise of globalisation that is not readily compatible with these earlier views. Although I do not assess his work on globalisation in any detail, I review the wider movement to which it belongs in Chapter 9.

7 Beck's view are taken here as a representation of a wider range of scholars. Further references and a more general assessment of this group of writers are found in Chapter 9. More sympathetic assessments of Beck's social theory than the one advanced here can be found in Elliott (2002) and Levy (2004). On methodological nationalism more broadly, it is worth visiting the report of the workshop on methodological nationalism prepared by Centre for the Study of Global Governance (2002) at the London School of Economics and William Robinson's (1998: 564–72) critique of the 'reification of the nation-state in existing paradigms'. Finally, on some of the problems methodological nationalism poses to empirical social research, see Aksoy and Robins (2003); Berndt (2003); Brubaker (2004); Gore (1996); Levy and Sznaider (2002); Lythman (2003); Pries (2005); Stone (2004) and Wimmer and Schiller (2002).

8 According to Bernard Yack (1997: 6), social theory's analytical tools are turned into a fetish when there is a conflation between their substantive and temporal dimensions. A concept – Yack thinks of modernity but the argument works equally well for the nation-state – becomes a 'social myth' as soon as it 'unifies many-sided social processes and phenomena into a single grand object'.

9 See, however, Roger Brubaker's (2004: 119) counter argument: 'if the methodological critique is coupled – as it often is – with the empirical claim about the diminishing relevance of the nation-state, and if it serves therefore to channel attention away from state-level processes and structures, there is a risk that academic fashion will lead us to neglect what remains, for better or worst, a fundamental level of organisation and fundamental locus of power'.

2 A claim to universalism: breaking the equation between the nation-state and society apart

10 The term 'opacity' is chosen in this book because it highlights the fact that the object we are interested in understanding is difficult to grasp with clarity and yet one does not have to give up the hope of being able to capture its inner core. The idea of opacity is also elastic enough to accommodate equally well a reference to the *object* (the nation-state) and to the *lenses* that observe that object (social theory). In a beautiful formulation, Margaret Canovan (1996: 2) expresses well this in relation to the nation-state's position in modernity: 'nations are extraordinarily complex political phenomena, highly resistant to theoretical analysis. The features that make them politically effective also render them intellectually opaque, repelling philosophers who come to them in search of clear and distinct ideas. But those same obscurities not only enable nationhood to generate powerful political communities; even more momentously, they make those communities seem natural, so that the task of generating collective power is made to look deceptively easy.'

11 Neil Smelser (1997: 52) has forcefully made this point: 'this "strong" and "closed" notion of the national society was a product not only of the intellectual efforts of social theorists and social scientists. It also emerged from the more or less organized projects of modern national societies themselves [...] national societies themselves have worked toward that fusion, or unity of national economy, polity, society and culture.'

12 For a conceptual history of the term *societé* in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries France, that is, before the rise of classical social theory, see Baker (1994). The question of the role or position of society within social theory has been raised many times so, in chronological order, the following works can be mentioned: Simmel (1910 [1908]); Parsons (1956 [1934]); Nisbet (1967: 3–7); Adorno (2000 [1968]: 5, 28–34); Mayhew (1968); Parsons (1971); Tilly (1984: 20–6); Giddens (1985: 1–22); Frisby and Sayer

(1986); Mann (1986: 1–32); Freitag (2002 [1995]); Albrow (1996: 43–50); Crow (1997: 9–19); Smelser (1997); Luhmann (1997, 1998); Calhoun (1999: 218–21); Urry (2000a: 1–20); Rigney (2001); Wagner (2001b); Touraine (1998, 2003) and Outhwaite (2006).

13 This is indeed coincident with Simmel's (1909, 1910) efforts to link an understanding of the role and position of society within sociology with Kant's question on the conditions of possibility of the knowledge of nature. To Simmel, the foundation of sociology as a scientific discipline required that 'modernity' has its own regulative principle – society as a regulative ideal (Chernilo 2007). See Frisby (2002: 45–55); Frisby and Sayer (1986: 54–67); Outhwaite (1983: 135–55) and Schrader-Klebert (1968) for further discussion.

14 These comments on the nature of society as both concept and reality are greatly influenced by Margaret Archer's (1995) and William Outhwaite's (2006) works.

15 Most explicitly, towards the end of Chapter 3 (on Marx), in the second part of Chapter 6 (on Parsons), and in the first part of Chapter 10 (on Luhmann).

3 Karl Marx (1818–1883): the rise of capitalism and the historical elusiveness of the nation-state

16 I do not argue here for a connection between the critique of the Enlightenment of the early German romantics and twentieth-century German nationalism. Rather, I feel closer to Hans Kohn (1961: 69) when he claims that: 'the concern of the German romanticists was not with politics and national power, but with the national mind and poetic character.' The idea of an unproblematic transition between early nineteenth-century philosophical romanticism and extreme twentieth-century political nationalism exemplifies, rather, the kind of methodological nationalism I am interested in criticising.

17 Jorge Larraín (1989: 57–62) has systematised and criticised the use of the concept of peoples without history for the case Latin America and Derek Sayer (1991: 14–15) has also commented on this subject in relation to Asia.

18 It has also been suggested, however, that these comments on the class structure of Slavic peoples reflected Marx's and Engels' insufficient knowledge of the actual living conditions in Eastern Europe at the time (Himka 1986–7: 4; Rosdolsky 1986–7: 149–52).

19 Marx is not alone in having made the claim about an early decline of the nation-state. A century later, for instance, Hannah Arendt (1958: 267–302) similarly argued that the beginning of the Age of Imperialism marked the decline of the nation-state. See Chapters 8 and 9.

20 I make no claim here about whether Marx's reading of Hegel is fair or accurate but only that Marx's critique of Hegel echoes the critique of methodological nationalism in which I am interested. On Marx's ambivalent relation to Hegel, see Simon Clarke (1991: 52) and Robert Fine (2001: 79–85).

21 Whether Marx's analysis of Judaism is found fundamentally accurate (Draper 1977: 591–608) or rather misleading (Carlebach 1978: 148–84), my viewpoint is that, in *On the Jewish Question*, his reflections on the subject have more to do with the Jews' social position in capitalism than with a racist conceptualisation of them.

22 The same programmatic argument is found in Marx's (1987) preface of 1859, where he argues that the world-market is the final unit in the analysis of capitalism.

4 Max Weber (1864–1920): politics and the sociological equivocations of the nation-state

23 See, Aron (1971); Beetham (1974); Bendix (1966); Collins (1986); Gerth and Mills (1970); Giddens (1972); Jaspers (1989); Mommsen (1984, 1992, 1993); Parsons (1965); Roth (1965); Schluchter (1996). More recently, the question of Weber's nationalism has also been subject to debate (Barbalet 2001; Palonen 2001; Roth 2002).

24 Against this one may point out that in *The Protestant Ethic* Weber repeatedly emphasised that national differences were insufficient to explain the issues on which he is interested. For instance, in relation to the differences between Puritanism and Lutheranism, Weber (1992a: 47) argues that

> the appeal to national character is generally a mere confession of ignorance [. . .] To ascribe a unified national character to the Englishman of the seventeenth century would be simply to falsify history [. . .] a difference of character between the English and merchant adventurers and the old Hanseatic merchants is not to be found; nor can any other fundamental difference between the English and German characters at the end of the Middle Ages, which cannot be easily explained by differences of their political history. It was the power of religious influence, not alone, but more than anything else, which created the differences of which we are conscious to-day.

25 It is Weber himself who uses the term nation consistently within inverted commas. In my view, this supports the argument that Weber doubted of any foundational claim by which racial differences could be taken as the distinctive element for the definition of the nation (Manasse 1999).
26 Weber wrote in the middle of the *Age of Empire* (Hobsbawm 2003c) so his views on the tensions between imperialist and nationalistic policies seem to have reflected the common views of the German middle-classes and the National-Liberal Party at the turn of the twentieth century (Langewiesche 2000: 124–49; Mommsen 1974: 25–6).
27 The thesis of the differentiation of value spheres has been understood as Weber's theory of social change in contradistinction to the thesis of the primacy of material factors in historical materialism (Weber 1970c: 269–70; Schluchter 1981). Here, however, my interest lies only in understanding the position of politics within Weber's diagnosis of modernity.

5 Emile Durkheim (1857–1917): moral universalism and the normative ambiguity of the nation-state

28 According to Eric Hobsbawm (1983b: 269–71), the French Third Republic was particularly active in the question of 'inventing traditions' and his references point towards what we may call here a 'Durkheimian agenda': a secular replacement for church symbolisms; state organisation of primary education, public ceremonies and extensive constructions of public monuments (Clark 1968).
29 This makes particularly misplaced earlier claims about Durkheim's extreme nationalism (Mitchell 1990 [1931]) and even fascism (Ranulf 1939).
30 See Anthony Giddens (1978) and Alvin Gouldner (1959) for the thesis of Durkheim's radicalism and Lewis Coser (1964) and Robert Nisbet (1965) for accounts of his alleged conservatism.
31 In the language of Durkheim's (1992: 30, 50–1) body metaphors, the state is the 'social brain' while these officials represent the 'nervous system'.

6 Talcott Parsons (1902–1979): the totalitarian threat to the nation-state

32 It is probably true that Parsons' (1968) *The Structure of Social Action* inaugurated quite a characteristic mode of enquiry within social theory; namely, a certain reflective vocation by which social theory systematically reconstructs and then re-launches the claim to universalism that is inscribed in its canon: 'if contemporary sociology is a language game, albeit one with rational and scientific aspirations, it is *Structure* that gave to this language some of its most important words' (Alexander 1988: 97).
33 To Gerhardt, the former position is represented by Jeffrey Alexander (1985) and the latter by Charles Camic (1991). It seems to me that, although Gerhardt is right in

claiming that the issue has not attracted the attention it deserves in secondary accounts on Parsons' work, she exaggerates the case against Alexander (1987) who in fact has paid some attention to the ideological context of Parsons' sociology.

34 On this, Parsons seems to have followed a view strongly established in the United States. Already during the First World War the prevalent position among American scholars was that the US involvement in that war took the form of 'a struggle between democracy and autocracy' (Joas 2003: 73).

35 This is most apparent in Parsons' (1963) analysis of McCarthyism. He explained the emergence of the McCarthy movement as *social strains* that were the result of rapid US modernisation and its changing situation both internally – its unprecedented level of industrialisation – and externally – its leading role in the Cold War. The question Parsons is indirectly answering here, however, was whether the rise of McCarthyism in America in the 1950s resembled in any way the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1930s. See Buxton (1985: 146–64) for further discussion.

36 In the introduction to the new edition to *Structure*, Parsons (1968 Vol. 2: vi) still held a similar view: 'It is important to the story of the book that it dealt *empirically* with some of the broadest questions of the nature of modern industrial society – notably with the nature of capitalism. Moreover, it did so at a time when the Russian Revolution, the Great Depression, the Fascist movements, and the approach of World War II were events and phenomena that raised many fundamental questions' (my emphasis).

37 See, for instance, Parsons (1961: 33–43; 1966: 9–10; 1977a: 156; 1977b: 182).

38 Parsons' (1967d) four evolutionary universals are differentiation, adaptation, inclusion and value generalisation. Nicos Mouzelis (1999: 149) has argued that, in modernity, these four evolutionary universals are bounded to the nation-state, which then becomes 'the prototypical institutional embodiment of political modernity'. Yet, in what otherwise seems to me an excellent discussion of Parsons' theory of evolution, this link between the evolutionary universals and the nation-state is one aspect on which I do not agree with Mouzelis. His interpretation misses Parsons' historical uncertainty and fails to notice that these four evolutionary universals are successfully achieved in modernity only when the modern society is seen as one single historical formation.

39 See Parsons (1961: 56; 1977b: 182) and Mayhew (1982: 47–8). This focus on solidarity also explains why Parsons named this subsystem as a form of *community* (Cohen and Arato 1994: 117–39; Gerhardt 2001; Parsons 1967a,c). But it is also a *societal* community because it is based on a pluralistic and universalistic form of integration. Democratic national integration requires a truly impartial functioning of the rule of law to secure effectively individual freedoms. Parsons (1969a) is therefore opposed to any a restrictive treatment of ethnic, religious or gender affiliations by which: (a) certain groups impede freedom of choice to some of its own members and (b) the majority systematically denies certain rights to individuals or minority groups.

40 Such conceptualisations as 'post-industrial society' (Bell 1974; Touraine 1971), 'post-modern society' (Kumar 1995), 'risk society' (Beck 1992), 'network society' (Castells 1996), 'global society' (Albrow 1996) and 'world society' (Luhmann 1977) all come to terms, explicitly or implicitly, with the concept of modern society. Peter Wagner (2001a) has recently suggested that the decline in the use of the concept of modern society has to do with the fact that it lacks a self-critical insight into the past trajectory and current functioning of modernity in the West.

7 Raymond Aron (1905–1983), Barrington Moore (1913–2005) and Reinhard Bendix (1916–1991): industrialism and the historicity of the nation-state

41 Debates on this issue were carried out in the *British Journal of Sociology* (1994) 45 (1) and the *American Journal of Sociology* (1998) 104 (3).

42 This is the sense in which, for instance, it has been argued that Bendix is as close to Marx when he speaks about class and as he is to Weber when he construes ideal types (McCormick 2000: 591).

43 It has been amply documented that Bendix explicitly rejected evolutionary arguments such as those he attributed to Parsons (Bendix 1967: 313–18; 1988: 133–43; Rueschemeyer 1984: 133–8). Interestingly, however, their concepts were quite close at times. For instance, when Bendix (1963: 535) argued that 'sociological universals' – 'the range of "solutions" that men have found for a given problem in different societies' – were a methodological device for the type of comparative analysis in which he was interested, he immediately recognised the kinship between these 'sociological universals' and Parsons' (1967d) own 'evolutionary universals'. Although Bendix (1963: 535) emphasises that he is not interested in these universals 'as if they were logical attributes of all societies conceived as "systems"', the argument remains that their disagreement looks less acute as soon as we consider that they were equally committed to social theory's claim to universalism. See Caldwell (2002) for further discussion on Bendix's methodological considerations as a kind of third way between comparative and evolutionary social theory.

8 Michael Mann (1942–present) and Eric Hobsbawm (1919–present): classes, nations and different conceptions of the nation-state

44 On this, Mann sadly stills follows the orthodox view I am interested in refuting: 'the late nineteenth-century rise of sociology was implicitly nationalist. Weber, Durkheim, Pareto and Mosca [...] were insulated behind their own national boundaries' (Mann 2004: 81). What this comment leaves unanswered, as we saw in Part II, is the *kind* of nationalism underlying classical social theory.

45 In fact, according to Mann (1986: 525–6), the first expressions of class-consciousness can be traced back to the Greek landed classes by about AD 300–700. The crucial issue in the rise of the *modern* class-consciousness is, on the one hand, the link between class and national consciousness, and, on the other, the expansion of class identity and consciousness to the subordinated classes.

46 Thus Charles Tilly (1975: 15): 'the Europe of 1500 included some five hundred more or less independent political units, the Europe of 1900 about twenty-five.'

47 In Chapter 1, I already criticised Connell's (1997) view that classical social theory is nothing but an instrument in Europe's imperialist expansion. Hobsbawm (2003c: 56) himself opens the chapter on imperialism with a quotation from Max Weber's (1994a) opening Lecture of 1895, which is arguably Weber's most imperialistic piece.

9 Manuel Castells (1942–present) and globalisation theorists: the 'definitive' decline of the nation-state

48 In fact, with the image of the owl of Minerva here, Hegel (1991: 23) depicts this as the tragedy of all forms of intellectual activity. According to him, philosophy 'always comes too late to perform' the function of prescribing 'how the world ought to be' and it 'appears only at a time when actuality has gone through its formative process and attained its completed state [...] When philosophy paints its grey in grey, a shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated, but only recognized, by the grey in grey of philosophy; the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk.'

49 See, for instance, Bauman (2002); Beck (2002a) and Urry (2002) on the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001. A critical assessment of this literature is found in Rosenberg (2000).

50 The distinction between normative and empirical Eurocentrism is freely adopted from Miguel Centeno's (2002: 275) work on a historical sociology of the Latin American state.

51 Such novel concepts as 'multiple modernities' (Eisenstadt 2000), 'trajectories to and through modernity' (Larraín 2000; Therborn 1995) and 'entangled modernities' (Therborn 2003) have all been proposed to address directly the problems of Eurocentric conceptualisations of modernity.

52 See, Boli (1999: 1843); Halci and Webster (2000: 73); Melucci (1997: 522); Smart (2000: 59) and Webster (2002: 95). It is surely right to argue that the theory of the network society is another form of 'theory of modern society' (Stehr 2000: 83), but one would also have to acknowledge the fact that Castells himself fails to locate his thesis of the information age within the long-standing social sciences' tradition of understanding modern epochal changes.

53 Castells' views on technology contrast heavily with those of Ulrich Beck (1997: 27–32; 1998: 84–5). While Castells believes in the possibilities opened by technology for a fairer world, Beck's view of technology is gloomier as the faith in technology is at the core of the ideology of progress, 'the more-of-the-same-dogma', he criticises. It is interesting to note how Beck and Castells, for whom the categories and debates of previous social sciences are becoming increasingly obsolete, clearly resemble here long-lasting disputes about the role of technology in explaining modernity's main features and assessing its future trends (Misa 2003; Schot 2003).

10 Niklas Luhmann (1927–1998) and Jürgen Habermas (1929–present): world society, cosmopolitanism and the nation-state

54 Richard Münch (1987, 1992a,b), in his interesting but rather orthodox continuation of a Parsonian agenda, understands that Luhmann's revision of Parsons' functionalism is a step backward rather than forward in the pursuit of a properly systemic theorisation of modernity.

55 Over the last few years, special issues of leading scholarly journals have been devoted solely to cosmopolitanism: *Theory, Culture & Society* (2002), 19 (1-2) edited by Mike Featherstone, the *British Journal of Sociology* (2006), 57 (1) edited by Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider, and the *European Journal of Social Theory* (2007), 10 (1) edited by Robert Fine and Vivienne Boon.

56 Charles Turner's (2004: 300) largely sympathetic analysis of Habermas' view on Europe points to the changes in Habermas' conception of the public sphere as it moves towards a European or even cosmopolitan model that resembles less and less a nation-state: 'The public sphere which emerges when communicating subjects seek the argumentative redemption of validity claims is not, as it was in his earlier work, an identifiable social space: rather it emerges as a potential feature of any form of human collective life.' Habermas' account may or may not be criticised as Eurocentric – and I am prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt on this – but the important point Turner makes in his piece is that the argument of constitutional patriotism contains its own problems even *within* the European context.

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