Introduction

The purpose of this book is to articulate, in different theoretical contexts and in response to a variety of theorists of political community, a notion of citizenship that can provide a normative standard for critical judgment concerning liberalism and critical judgment concerning nationalism. In the chapter devoted to Richard Flathman's work (chapter 2), I write that political philosophy "is a form of reflection that is uncompromisingly focused on an intellectual epicentre." I think that one could apply the same dictum to my own endeavours as a political theorist, except that in my case the gravitational centre is not the idea of individuality but the idea of citizenship.

The essays in this collection are intended to pursue a consistent line of reflection on themes related to the idea of citizenship. Chapter 12 is a new essay, not previously published. I have deliberately held back from updating two of the previously published chapters – chapter 7 and chapter 10 – in order to preserve the time-bound character of the context in which they were written. All the other chapters have been published previously in various versions but were revised for this book.

Chapter 1 airs the full range of themes concerning citizenship and nationalism that are treated in more detail and often with greater (but never perfect) clarity of understanding in the other chapters of the book.[1] It was written out of a sense of the crisis of citizenship in the early 1990s, the years immediately following the close of the Cold War: the collapse of several notable multi-nation states in succession; heightened concerns about large-scale migrations from poor oppressed societies to rich free ones; the redefinition of citizenship in the EU. Rather than taking advantage of the end of Cold War tensions to build up bonds of civic solidarity crossing ethnic and ideological divisions, many societies quickly succumbed to *intensified* conflict along ethnic and religious cleavages. It was and remains a shock to see those expectations of a civically healthier world broken so cruelly by harsh new ideologies. Writing at the present moment, when "McWorld" is literally going to war against

"Jihad" (to use Benjamin Barber's categories), one can hardly allow oneself to imagine that this crisis of citizenship is over.[2]

Chapter 2 considers the work of Richard Flathman, who offers a version of liberal theory that is at the opposite extremity from the kind of "civic liberalism" discussed in chapter 3. What drives Flathman is both a positive conception of individuality and a negative conception of the modern state; because he sees the idea of citizenship as aligned with the latter, he views citizenship not as expressive of individuality but as a threat to it. I think Flathman is right that we cannot embrace an affirmative concept of citizenship without also embracing a fairly affirmative concept of the state and of the citizen's duties and responsibilities toward the state. But I disagree with his view that an endorsement of the contemporary state is too bitter a pill to swallow, and that, in consequence, the notion of robust citizenship is poisoned by its association with the state. At least with respect to this militant version of liberal theory, appeal to the idea of citizenship helps to expose problems and deficiencies in certain important grounding concepts of liberalism.

In 1992 I published a book in which I claimed that there was something in the very nature of contemporary liberalism that seemed resistant to doing justice to the theme of citizenship and civic membership *(What's the Matter with Liberalism?* chapter 5). My point seemed to be proved by the chapter on citizenship in Bruce Ackerman's book *Social Justice in the Liberal State,* devoted as it was to trying to vindicate the civic credentials of talking apes. (Ackerman's point was to emphasize the minimalist requirements of liberal citizenship: if a talking ape could debate fair entitlements, one could consider it to have suitably surpassed the threshold of liberal civic membership.) In the decade since I published my book on liberalism, liberals have been writing books trying to prove me wrong, starting with John Rawls's *Political Liberalism* (published one year later: in 1993), which is a kind of treatise on liberal citizenship. Chapter 3 is devoted to Stephen Macedo's book *Diversity and Distrust,* which, it seems to me, goes a lot further than Rawls in proving me wrong.[3] Though it may seem a paradox to some, the civic critique of liberalism invites a more robust (that is, less parsimonious) version of liberalism (as the chapter on Macedo should help to make clear).

One important insight (or set of insights) to be drawn from Macedo's book is that we require a better understanding of possible tensions between multiculturalism and citizenship. Cultural diversity is the norm today in almost all societies, and it is a condition to be celebrated. But multiculturalist political philosophies don't simply celebrate cultural diversity, they also privilege it politically in ways that sometimes threaten to undermine the idea of shared citizenship. To be sure, cultural diversity should be embraced as a positive aspect of contemporary citizenship, but not at the cost of losing sight of the requirements of a common civic community. That is, we need a *reciprocal*

understanding of how the notion of citizenship is enriched by taking better account of differences of cultural identity *and* of how group identity and group allegiance should moderate their claims so that they do not derogate from an experience of what all citizens in a political community share in common.[4] As Brian Barry writes in his trenchant critique of the politics of multiculturalism, "political life presupposes citizens who think of themselves as contributing to a common discourse about their shared institutions."[5] What we desire is not a politics that divides citizens on an ascriptive basis, but rather a "politics of solidarity" where "citizens [are understood to] belong to a single society, and [to] share a common fate."[6] Insofar as multiculturalist politics undermines "this conception of politics as a society-wide conversation about questions of common concern," it must be challenged.[7]

The title of chapter 4 ("From Community to Citizenship") is relevant here. The chapter is devoted to the work of Michael Sandel, the most forceful critic of the procedural liberalism of Rawls and the most eloquent advocate for a thicker "communitarian" understanding of civic and moral membership. But framing a critique of liberalism in terms of an appeal to community involves significant perils. It can lead in a variety of political directions, depending on the types of community that one relies upon to inject thicker substance into personal and political identity. If the locus of communal identity is the local community and its associated institutions (school, church, clinic, guild), then we have a "politics of local community" *à la* Alasdair MacIntyre (see chapter 5). If the locus of identity politics is the nation in an ethnocultural sense or the subnational ethnic or cultural group, then we move toward either the politics of nationalism or the politics of multiculturalism; therefore it isn't surprising that Charles Taylor's communitarianism has evolved into a philosophical defence of multiculturalism and liberal nationalism (the same is true of Michael Walzer). If what strengthening community means is beefing up the experience of citizenship in the modern state, then we have a politics pointing more in a civic or civic-republican direction (as is the case for Sandel and me). But each of these notions of community is grounded in a quite different normative vision of politics; in this respect, communitarianism as such presents itself as an incoherent political philosophy.

It is much clearer in *Democracy's Discontent* than in Sandel's earlier work that citizenship in the standard sense is the privileged site of constitutive community (although Sandel's talk at the end of *Democracy's Discontent* about "multiply-situated selves" and "diffusion of sovereignty" suggests renewed ambiguity about the location of politically relevant community).[8] However, as sympathetic as I am to Sandel's theoretical project, I think he understates the gap between civic republicanism as a critical standard and civic republicanism as a practical possibility. Sandel tends to suggest that the United States *could have* continued to remain faithful to a regime of robust citizenship had it not been lured astray by the kind of procedural-liberal

public philosophy eventually articulated fully in the political philosophy of Rawls. That is, Sandel characterizes the triumph of a procedural-liberal public philosophy in abstraction from the economic and sociological realities that are so powerfully at play in the evolution of a political way of life. Nor does he rule out – given the adoption of the right public philosophy – a possible return to a regime of "high citizenship."[9] We need to reflect more toughmindedly than Sandel does (and more toughmindedly than I have done in some of my writings on citizenship) on the utopian character of a civic-republican regime.

It is easy to see why the civic-republican vision of politics is normatively attractive, and why, having enjoyed a long and illustrious tradition of articulations within the history of political philosophy, it continues to find defenders today, or at least those reluctant to close the door on its ideals: citizens motivated by the apprehension of a common good rather than by merely private interests; civic unity rather than an aggregate of subcommunities at cross-purposes to each other; engaged citizens rather than passive and indifferent ones; citizens who treat each other *as* co-citizens rather than as strangers, competitors, or parties to a contractual arrangement – in short, an ideal of civic friendship played out within a shared public forum about which all the participants care deeply and genuinely. It's easy to see why all of this would be desirable as a theoretical ideal. The question is whether it's a meaningful option, given the conditions of modern life and the constraints of modern politics. Is it just a pipe dream?

It is not hard to grasp that ours would be a wonderful world if we were all committed and enthusiastic citizens concerned with a general good shared by all our fellow citizens, but it is no less readily discernible that basic features of social and political life in the modern world militate strongly against the realization of such an ideal. We live in large and complex societies. All of us are deeply immersed in the demands of our private lives, which rarely provide the huge measures of leisure and disinterestedness that a fully committed civic-mindedness would require. We belong to subgroups tied to particularistic and very real interests that draw us away from shared polity-wide interests. The intense pluralism of contemporary social reality means that members of a political community see the world very differently, and lack the time or motivation to enter deeply into the very different experiences and life horizons of citizens differently situated. Moreover, few people living in the kind of societies we now have possess anywhere near the kinds of expertise one would need in order to weigh alternative policies for the regulation of a modern economy, or the regulation of international affairs, or most other issues with which contemporary states must wrestle (biotechnology, global warming, nuclear defence systems, bio-terrorism …). Most of us are simply not equipped for informed deliberation about these issues, and lack the time and motivation to equip ourselves more adequately. People living in

modern circumstances are unlikely to view politics and public deliberation as the core meaning of their lives, since endless conversation about the public good would generate not "public happiness" (Hannah Arendt's phrase) but frustration with "too many meetings" (Oscar Wilde's phrase). Instead, we settle for arbitration of sectional interests delegated to politicians who we assume work for the interests of the constituents who elect them and the lobbyists who court them rather than genuinely debate a common good.[10]

The utopianism of the civic-republican ideal is not something for which we should apologize, for political theory would fall short of its mission if it failed to supply utopian ideals. But it would also fall short of its mission if it failed to own up to them *as* utopian. The idea of citizenship appealed to in the following chapters therefore tries to preserve an echo of the civic-republican legacy (with a suitable awareness of the genuine radicalness of that theoretical legacy); at the same time, it tries to acknowledge that in practice we have no choice but to settle for scaled-down and less ambitious forms of civic life. Our purpose is to salvage a bit of civicness in the context of a political world where the odds tend to be stacked against citizenship. We can draw upon republicanism and civicism to criticize the "diluted citizenship" that is currently on offer, but we should temper our theorizing with realism about the objective constraints on a wholesale transformation of our civic practices.[11] The appeal to citizenship is both a residue of utopia and a grudging concession to social and political reality.

Alasdair MacIntyre certainly doesn't see himself as a liberal, and readers of his work are unlikely to view him as anything other than a trenchant critic of liberalism. Still, a focus on the question of citizenship exposes strange and paradoxical affinities between his theoretical position and familiar versions of liberalism. As an Aristotelian, MacIntyre believes that moral philosophy must orient itself according to conceptions of the good, not conceptions of the right. These conceptions of the good get realized in necessarily communal settings; yet the modern state is not, and cannot be, the kind of political entity worthy of being entrusted with the pursuit of collective goods. In fact, MacIntyre's hostility to the state as a dispensation of the modern world is no less fierce than that of Richard Flathman (though on the basis of social assumptions that are radically opposed to Flathman's). Therefore, although MacIntyre believes that liberalism's conception of the neutrality of the liberal state is a sham, he also thinks (unlike communitarians with whom he is usually grouped) that it would be better if the state *could be* neutral – since it habitually botches up whatever collective goods are placed in its clumsy hands. Hence he describes himself as an Aristotelian but not a communitarian. It is a human requirement that human beings deliberate together on the proper ends of life, and modern political community as we know it is not an eligible location for this moral deliberation. (This strikes us as a pretty harsh view of contemporary citizenship, but see the preceding

two paragraphs for considerations that arguably lend weight to MacIntyre's view.)

MacIntyre looks at other so-called communitarians (Taylor, Sandel, Walzer) and sees decisive theoretical differences between them and himself. However, rather than concluding that they are communitarians and he isn't, we might more reasonably consider that MacIntyre is, relative to this group, the *only* fully rigorous communitarian thinker. This is so, not because MacIntyre believes that community is an end in itself – a view that he (rightly) rejects – but because he thinks that moral practices that unfold within forms of local community are the uniquely privileged site for the virtues that he conceives to be humanly desirable.

In part 2 I switch my critical attention to the seductions of nationalism. The core argument in chapter 6 is that contemporary liberal defenders of nationalism shouldn't rush to assume that the concept of liberal nationalism fully captures what moves committed nationalists. Consider, for instance, what Will Kymlicka says in a recent treatment of nationalism: "Over the past few years ... an increasing number of theorists have been ... arguing that national cultures and polities provide the best context for promoting Enlightenment values of freedom, equality, and democracy. What we increasingly see, therefore, is not a debate between liberal cosmopolitanism and illiberal particularism, but rather a debate between liberal cosmopolitanism and liberal nationalism."[12]

As Kymlicka frames the contemporary debate about nationalism, then, the relevant normative debate is between liberal cosmopolitanism and liberal nationalism. But it may be that the more interesting normative horizons are opened up by forms of nationalism that aren't trying to satisfy liberal standards of moral legitimacy.[13] As Margaret Canovan sharply puts it, "When the sleeping dogs of nationalism first woke up at the beginning of the [1990s], quite a few political theorists were inclined to make pets of them"; to which we can add that undomesticated and undomesticable forms of nationalism can sometimes open up more interesting normative horizons (because they offer a more radical challenge to liberal moral-cultural horizons) than "the domesticated nationalism that liberal theorists wanted to support."[14] Nationalism, like contemporary theocracy, is in important measure a reaction against the banalities of liberal culture, and liberals will fail to see what is driving these nationalists and other anti-liberals if they simply liberalize on their behalf what is in fact a quite different view of the world.

We've adverted above to the fact that there are civic versions of liberalism; it's worth noting that there are also civic versions of the politics of nationality. The first and still-influential civic argument for nationalism (of an at least qualified liberal variety) is to be found in John Stuart Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government,* chapter 16.[15] A recent version has been offered

by a contemporary Millian: Brian Barry. Consider the following interesting analysis of how a multination state such as Belgium is difficult to sustain as a civic community:

> Belgium functions like a microcosm of the European Union, which is commonly accused of suffering from a "democratic deficit." The charge is certainly sustainable if the model of a democratic polity is taken to be one in which there is a single comprehensive realm of discourse giving rise to a unified "public opinion" – unified not in the sense that everybody thinks the same but in the sense that everybody is aware of what the others think and takes it into account. This model seems to me largely inapplicable to the European Union, now and for the foreseeable future. For even if the trend within the countries of the European Union toward ever more widespread knowledge of English continues until it is universal, most people will still read newspapers and watch television in their native language. There will therefore continue to be parallel national discourses, and governments will continue to be expected to pursue within the European Union policies arrived at through national politics.
>
> ... Political communities are bound to be linguistic communities, because politics is (in some sense) linguistically constructed. We can negotiate across language barriers but we cannot deliberate together about the way in which our common life is to be conducted unless we share a language.[16]

This is a powerful argument – in my view the *most* powerful argument – in favour of uni-national (or at least uni-linguistic) polities, an argument much more compelling than appeals to rights of national self-determination (see chapter 9). Yet Barry is no less committed than Jürgen Habermas to what the latter calls "the normative achievements of a national self-understanding that is no longer based on ethnicity but founded on citizenship."[17]

Anyone who wants to experience the full agony of nationalist conflict can scarcely pick a better society than Israel for fathoming what's at stake. In chapter 6 I quote Conor Cruise O'Brien, an unswerving opponent of Irish nationalism, to make the point that even resolute anti-nationalists can feel the tug of their own national identities. I experienced something of this in Israel, and chapter 7 offers a few personal reflections. I include this little piece in the collection more as a record of what prompted me to think about nationalism in the following decade than as an adequate analysis. As a non-Zionist Jew (not exactly an anti-Zionist Jew, but certainly a non-Zionist one), I cannot help being preoccupied with how the philosophy of nationalism applies to the civic life of Israel. An Israeli state defined in terms of Jewish national self-expression and clothed in the public symbols of Jewish national history inevitably impugns the citizenship of Arabs and other non-Jews who also happen to be citizens of the state of Israel, and who are therefore

also entitled to be included in its civic vision. (The people I have in mind here are not Arabs living on territory that will revert to what is already an incipient Palestinian state; rather, they are Palestinians and other non-Jews who are citizens of Israel and will continue to be citizens of Israel after the founding of a Palestinian state.) It's out of appreciation for this normative insight that some in Israel have begun to speak of a "post-Zionist" definition of the Israeli state.

The overall thrust of this book is Arendtian insofar as it is critical both of liberalism and of nationalism as comprehensive political visions, on the grounds that neither of these conceptions of political life fully honours citizenship as a normative standard. However, Hannah Arendt herself presented an account of nationalism that is in various ways confusing and less than fully fleshed out philosophically: on the one hand, for instance, she holds the strong conviction that nationally defined polities had outlived their usefulness in guarding the human rights of particular peoples, and, on the other hand, she makes the decisive admission that the Jews had obtained much greater security for their human rights by winning precisely a nation-state for themselves. But the most striking weakness of Arendt's theorizing about nationalism is that, for a thinker who was sanguine about very few things in political life, she was overly sanguine about what she conceived to be the inevitable eclipse of nationalist ideologies. As Judith Shklar revealingly writes: the strict distinction that Arendt erects between citizenship and nationality was "one of her blind spots. By the time she wrote *The Origins of Totalitarianism* she had made up her mind that nationalism was a thing of the past – it was dead and not to be confused or compared with the living ideologies of the age. This notion, which her Marxist inclinations reinforced, was immune to evidence; nothing could persuade her that nationalism was still a very great force in the present. On this point, I speak from personal experience."[18] Arendt offers powerful criticisms of the basic nationalist idea. But she never sufficiently clarified what she meant in claiming that the nation-state system had broken down in the twentieth century, and she never gave persuasive reasons for thinking that nationalism had spent its force as a modern ideology.

Chapter 9 offers a sequel, relevant to the politics of nationalism, to the argument offered in chapter 4 of my book *What's the Matter with Liberalism?* There are many political contexts in which the language of rights is an indispensable protest against violence and illegitimate power. But there are also limits to this moral language that political philosophers haven't always appreciated. It is an adversarial language – the "sign of breakdown in a relationship," as Mary Ann Glendon puts it[19] – rather than a language of community. The liberal idea of rights is that individuals, even in a liberal society, need to be protected from each other (women need to be protected from abusive husbands, children need to be protected from neglectful

parents, and so on). The communitarian critique of rights flows from the idea that one will not be able to enter into satisfying moral relationships based on the premise that fellow members of one's moral community are to be thought of in the first instance as potential intruders upon one's basic personal integrity. Transposing this into the arena of philosophical debates about nationalism, we can say that although it's true that in some cases one nation inexcusably tramples on another nation's prerogative to decide its own destiny, it is not helpful to frame *all* situations of national conflict in this language of universal and inviolable rights. National self-determination framed in the language of rights is a dangerous idea because it absolutizes political claims that might otherwise be resolved in a spirit of compromise and accommodation.

In chapter 10 I make explicit the Canadian preoccupations that in fact run through the book as a whole. Pierre Trudeau's political career was a kind of living instantiation of Elie Kedourie's root-and-branch theoretical critique of nationalism, and the Trudeau-Lévesque agon from the 1960s to 1980s gave political embodiment to the debates about nationalism that continue to exercise political philosophers. No politically aware Canadian can be indifferent to the opposing conceptions of nationality wielded by a René Lévesque or Jean Chrétien, by a Brian Mulroney or Lucien Bouchard. Canadian citizenship is a perennial instruction in the political philosophy of nationalism. This is not to say that Canada as a political community is unique in this respect: many other political societies also contend never-endingly with their own "national question." But for me, as a Canadian, theoretical reflection on nationalism is inseparable from my civic membership in what Quebec sovereigntists refer to as an "abnormal" political community.

Politically speaking, I'm far from being a diehard opponent of Quebec nationalism: like Charles Taylor, I believe that francophone Quebeckers are quite legitimately anxious about their cultural survival within an anglophone North America, and are entitled to employ political instruments to promote their prospects of cultural survival; I'm not moved especially by the slogan of "anglophone rights"; and I would welcome a greater willingness on the part of English-speaking Canada to constitutionalize a recognition of franco-phone Quebec as a bona fide "people" or "nation." However, philosophically, I believe that the vocation of political philosophy requires the clarification of ultimate normative principles, and at this level of "first principles," Que-bec nationalism, like any nationalism, raises troubling normative questions about the ethnic definition of citizenship in multiethnic societies. Quebec nationalists are clearly anxious to portray their nationalism as expressing the aspirations of a nation that is *not* defined ethnically. On the other hand, those opposed to Quebec nationalism (especially anti-nationalists living within Quebec, including Aboriginal Quebeckers) see it as a bid for ethnic hegemony. What's at stake in this debate is a normatively crucial principle:

namely, whether certain members of a society should have a privileged citizenship (and correlatively, others should have a diminished citizenship) by virtue of the culture to which they belong.[20]

Those sympathetic to the idea of liberal nationalism will likely object to my identification of nationalism *per se* with an ethnic definition of citizenship. They might pose the challenge: What about civic nationalism? Doesn't it redeem the nationalist idea? I'm not without sympathy for the notion of civic nationality, as chapter 6 makes clear, but I worry that the term itself will simply add confusion to the debate, as I also explain in that chapter:

> A big part of the problem in pursuing [the] project [of upholding civic nationalism as an alternative to ethnic nationalism] is that different people use the term *civic nationalism* for radically different purposes (nationalists use it to fend off accusations that their nationalism is exclusionary and ethnocentric, whereas critics of nationalism use it to cast a moral cloud over "real" nationalism, i.e., ethnic nationalism). Wayne Norman rightly points out that when someone like Michael Ignatieff describes himself as committed to civic nationalism, it suggests, misleadingly, that this is a particular species of nationalism, whereas Ignatieff himself, of course, intends it as a reproach to all forms of nationalism strictly speaking ... Therefore it might clarify the debate somewhat simply to drop the term *civic nationalism* and replace it with references to citizenship (or Habermas's constitutional patriotism).

In chapter 12 I coin the term *civicism* partly in order to avoid reference to civic nationalism, because both nationalists and anti-nationalists struggle to use the term for their own (conflicting) purposes. (My purpose is also partly to designate a strong concept of citizenship that doesn't presume to fulfill the full-blown ambitions of the civic-republican tradition.) It's true, for instance, that many people speak of "Canadian nationalism" as if a "civic nation" such as Canada can equally be an appropriate object of nationalist fervour. But here I think we have good reason to resist common usage of the term *nationalism.* I find it hard to see much that's interestingly in common between the fleeting and generally feeble episodes of "Canadian nationalism" (i.e., anti-Americanism), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the kind of hunger for ethnocultural self-determination that drives Irish republicans, Quebec sovereigntists, Zionists in Israel, or members of the Scottish National Party.[21] As I have already suggested, one of the most important theoretical motivations for reflecting philosophically on nationalism is to expand our view beyond the liberal horizon, and civic nationalism cannot contribute to this theoretical purpose for the simple reason that so-called civic nationalism is located squarely within the liberal horizon, not beyond it.

Interesting normative challenges to liberalism are offered only by forms of nationalism that make a much more robust appeal to culture and ethnos. In

Canada as a political community there is far too much cultural diversity to be able to do this in a meaningful way (and the same is true of the United States), which helps explain why Quebec nationalists find Canadian citizenship so unsatisfying and unimpressive. It's true, of course, that Canadian cultural identity does have some substance, and also true that this cultural identity expresses itself politically from time to time in relation to threats of American hegemony. Yet the aspiration toward the kind of uni-national basis of political community sought by Quebec nationalists and Scottish nationalists is meaningless for a type of political community as culturally diverse as Canada's. Therefore, in Canada any strong appeals to "the nation" as the focus of political agency sound rather inflated, whereas such appeals sound much less contrived in the Quebec context. It seems to me that it only makes sense to speak of "real" nationalism in cases where politics is driven by really deep cultural attachments of a kind that are untypical in contemporary liberal societies.[22] In any case, nationalism by definition (so I am convinced) does not apply to a binational state, and that is what Canada is.

The watershed year for political-philosophical reflection on nationalism was 1989. Starting in that year, hopes for post-Cold War global peace and political convergence rapidly gave way to new anxieties concerning ethnic conflict. World politics, instead of being defined by the confrontation between opposing economic systems, was now defined by the clash of opposing nationalities: no longer Karl Marx versus Adam Smith, but Azeris versus Armenians, Slovaks versus Czechs, Macedonians versus Albanians. In chapter 11 I juxtapose one radical defender of nationalism (Tom Nairn) and one radical adversary of nationalism (Eric Hobsbawm), drawing them into a somewhat more explicit dialogue with each other (although elements of this dialogue already feature in their own work). In this way, I deploy the time-honoured resource of political philosophers, namely the dialogical encounter (dialectic), in order to shed light on the philosophical challenge of nationalism. Ernest Gellner, a powerful theorizer of nationalism, also hovers over this debate between Nairn and Hobsbawm.

A Gellnerian sociology of nationalism certainly yields indispensable insights into modernity's privileging of nationally organized political units; but this same sociology involves a tacit deprecation of the *politics* of nationalism (i.e., nationalism conceived as a mode of civic agency expressing a set of political choices that could be other than they are). Consider the following apt summary by Nairn of Gellner's perspective on nationalism:

> Nationalism ... is not really about the past. It is about the difficult transition to modernity, a process in which people often have to recreate a more suitable past for themselves. To become modern (or postmodern) beings, they need a new identity, and to get that they must re-imagine their community as being (and always having been) worthy of the change. Thus new

nations and pasts are "invented" – but not by whim or arbitrarily. However cruel and uneven, modern development is inescapable and all societies are called to opt into it in their own way – predominantly the way of separate or independent growth. Where such development is abruptly reimposed – as in eastern Europe after 1989 – nationalism becomes as inevitable as it was at earlier stages of modernisation.[23]

If it were literally true that modern societies *must* re-imagine their community according to nationalist categories, nationalism would not present itself as a distinct political alternative, because all modern politics would be nationalist politics. But in fact nationalist outcomes ensue only when partisans of nationalist politics prevail over their non-nationalist or anti-nationalist adversaries. Slovakia's divorce from its Czech partner was not sociologically preordained (though Nairn may be of the opinion that it was), and if Quebeckers decide to secede from Canada, this will represent a triumph of one kind of politics over a rival politics, not the unavoidable dispensation of a sociologically determined fate. One can make similar points about globalization, for which there are, equally, various accounts presenting it as an inexorable and universal social process. But surely there are political choices here, a possibility of civic agency, that we cannot allow to be trumped by the claims of sociological determinism. To think of these phenomena strictly on the level of sociological explanation would be an insult to our nature as political beings.

Chapter 12 attempts to offer a re-statement of the themes and problems addressed in the rest of the book, while remaining vividly conscious that these theoretical dilemmas are anything but satisfactorily resolved. In response to chapter 11, Margaret Canovan sent me a postcard in which she posed the following challenge: "I wonder ... whether you are right to conclude that the issue is 'normative-philosophical'? What strikes me is (1) that views on nationalism seem to be a matter of personal experience and identity, and (2) that the pros and cons of particular cases are a matter for political judgment ... rather than philosophical generalisation." Chapter 12 begins with a response to this challenge; and this book as a whole only makes sense if Canovan's challenge can be answered. In fact, one can state parallel challenges with respect to *all* political phenomena and the political philosophies that respond to them. *All* aspects of political life draw on "personal experience and identity," and call for the exercise of contingent political judgment. But there is nonetheless an indispensable role for the philosophical generalizations offered by (or at least considered by) political philosophy.

Despite the endless complexities we encounter in working through a philosophical position – distinguishing it from rival views, identifying tensions and inconsistencies in our own theoretical perspective, and trying to

fashion a consistent view – an essentially simple core idea lies at the base of every political philosophy. The liberal idea is that individuals should not face unfair impediments in pursuing the lives they choose for themselves, and the purpose of politics is to guarantee that such impediments are removed. The nationalist idea is that membership in an ethnos is an essential aspect of a properly human life, and the purpose of politics is to open up a space of collective sovereignty where such membership can be given political effect. The communitarian idea is that the attainment of character in one's moral life and full engagement in one's civic life require thick identities, and that the liberal conception of the free agency of individuals pulls up short with respect to this normative standard. The multiculturalist idea is that it is with respect to differences of power between cultural groups, not individuals, that the idea of social justice is most importantly tested, and that politics should be subservient to this standard of justice in the relationship between majority and minority cultures. The civic idea is that citizenship is an essential human calling, and that insofar as liberal, nationalist, communitarian, and multiculturalist understandings of politics cramp the idea of shared citizenship, they must be called before the bar of judgment provided by the ideal of citizenship as a critical standard. And so on. Each of these ideas has a significant normative attraction, yet political philosophy would be a vain pursuit if it supplied no intellectual resources for weighing the relative attraction of each vis-à-vis the others. What defines political philosophy as a non-trivial intellectual activity is the hope of discerning decisive reasons for preferring one of these normative conceptions (or some other one not included here), and subsequently apprehending the truth of political life in the light of that philosophically triumphant idea.

Notes

1   One question that is not sufficiently clarified in chapter 1 is why I subsume nationalism under the rubric of a "communitarian" vision of political community. The reason for this is spelled out better in chapter 8: "If ... a properly communitarian argument emphasizes the collective constitution of selfhood, and the political salience of the shared identity so constituted, one would expect communitarians to exhibit significant sympathy for the politics of nationalism – a form of politics that places shared identity and thick communal attachments at the very core of its understanding of political life."

2   For an excellent supplement to the themes concerning citizenship surveyed in chapter 1, see Alan C. Cairns's introduction to *Citizenship, Diversity, and Pluralism: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives,* ed. Alan C. Cairns et al. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 3-22. For reasons that should be obvious to readers of the following chapters, I'm heartened by Cairns's claim that "societies in the midst of a major paradigm shift concerning the fate and rehabilitation of a troubled institution such as citizenship can gain more assistance from scholars who do not profess to have found the answers than from the simplifiers who pretend to have done so" (17).

3   Other excellent liberal theories of citizenship are offered in Jeff Spinner, *The Boundaries of Citizenship: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in the Liberal State* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); and Richard Dagger, *Civic Virtues: Rights, Citizenship, and Republican Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

4   Cf. Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (London: Macmillan, 2000): "[Multicultural societies] need to find ways of reconciling the legitimate demands of unity and diversity, achieving political unity without cultural uniformity, being inclusive without being assimilationist, cultivating among their citizens a common sense of belonging while respecting their legitimate cultural differences, and cherishing plural cultural identities without weakening the shared and precious identity of shared citizenship" (343).

5   Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 301.

6   Ibid., 300.

7   Ibid., 302. What Barry says about the British political community applies to the attenuated experience of citizenship in liberal societies more generally: "The problem is ... that the criteria for membership in the British nation may be so undemanding as to render membership incapable of providing the foundation of common identity that is needed for the stability and justice of liberal democratic polities" (ibid., 83). Barry clearly doesn't intend this as a warrant for a more nationalistic conception of citizenship.

8   Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1996), 350, 345-7.

9   See Richard E. Flathman, "Citizenship and Authority: A Chastened View of Citizenship," in *Theorizing Citizenship,* ed. Ronald Beiner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 105-51.

10   For an incisive discussion of problems such as those summarized above, see Daniel A. Bell, "Is Republicanism Appropriate for the Modern World?" (forthcoming in a volume of essays devoted to the work of David Miller).

11   "Diluted citizenship" is a phrase borrowed from the essay by Daniel Bell cited in the previous note.

12   Will Kymlicka, "From Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism to Liberal Nationalism," in Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 204.

13   Kymlicka writes: "Liberals cannot endorse a notion of culture that sees the process of interacting with and learning from other cultures as a threat to 'purity' or 'integrity,' rather than as an opportunity for enrichment" (ibid., 211). But Kymlicka doesn't acknowledge that there are elements of this tendency toward closure in *all* nationalisms, including the kinds of liberal nationalism that he is defending.

14   Margaret Canovan, "Sleeping Dogs, Prowling Cats and Soaring Doves: Three Paradoxes in the Political Theory of Nationhood," *Political Studies* 49, 2 (2001): 206, 207. For one example of the contrast between domesticated (theoretical) and undomesticated (real) versions of nationalism, consider what Margaret Moore writes about Charles Stewart Parnell in her book, *The Ethics of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 40.

15   See the discussion of Mill's argument in chapter 12.

16   Barry, *Culture and Equality,* 227. Citizenship is problematical in multilinguistic political communities because in such states (Barry refers not only to Belgium but also to Switzerland and Canada), "the linguistic communities tend to carry on parallel conversations confined largely to their own members" (ibid., 226). Cf. Kymlicka, "From Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism to Liberal Nationalism," 212-16, 217-18. Kymlicka notes the discouraging outcome of efforts to promote personal bilingualism in multination states: "The goal was that Belgian citizens, for example, would read a Flemish newspaper in the morning, and watch the French news on television at night, and be equally conversant with, and feel comfortable contributing to, the political debates in both languages. However, these efforts have been uniformly unsuccessful" (ibid., 217; cf. 214 n. 9).

17   Jürgen Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition,* ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 148. Cf. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*: "A multicultural society cannot be stable and last long without developing a common sense of belonging among its citizens. The sense of belonging cannot be ethnic or based on shared cultural, ethnic and other characteristics, for a multicultural society is too diverse for that,

but political in nature and based on a shared commitment to the political community" (341).

18 Judith N. Shklar, "Hannah Arendt As Pariah," in Shklar, *Political Thought and Political Thinkers,* ed. Stanley Hoffmann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 367.

19 Mary Ann Glendon, *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 175.

20 The principle at stake here is well stated by Will Kymlicka: "The boundaries of state and nation rarely if ever coincide perfectly, so viewing the state as the possession of a particular national group can only alienate minority groups. The state must be seen as equally belonging to all people who are governed by it, regardless of their nationality." "Misunderstanding Nationalism," in *Theorizing Nationalism,* ed. Ronald Beiner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 139. Cf. Cairns, "Introduction": "The number of ethnic groups and nations will for any foreseeable future be vastly greater than the number of states. Coexistence of more than one ethnic group, people, or nation within the same state is, therefore, the inescapable norm. To think of citizenship as if its holders did, should, could belong to a single people who can view the states as 'theirs' and turn it into an instrument to express their culture alone is to live in an imaginary world, or to be willing to sacrifice democracy for the sake of those who have gained control of the polity" (18).

21 Perhaps of some relevance here is the fact that the National Party in Canada, referred to in chapter 1, no longer exists.

22 It is not without reason that Michael Walzer refers to contemporary neo-nationalism as "the new tribalism" (*Theorizing Nationalism,* ed. Beiner, chapter 11) – and note that this label isn't intended by Walzer as pejorative. The basic idea of nationalism is that each "tribe" demands and gets its own state. Therefore, Walzer is of the view (rightly, I think) that the category of nationalism doesn't apply to a fundamentally immigrant society such as the United States.

23 Tom Nairn, "Nationalism Is Not the Enemy," *Observer Review,* 12 November 1995, 4.