THE HEGEMONY OF MULTICULTURALISM

A Comment on Will Kymlicka's Theory of Nationalism

Thomas König
Department of Social Sciences
Loughborough University

1 LIBERAL CULTURALISM

Will Kymlicka's new anthology "*Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship*" (Oxford University Press 2001) — a collection of previously published essays — is an excellent compendium to the thought of one of the most influential political philosophers of our times. While covering a number of disparate topics from the evolution of minority rights (section 1) over theories of ethno-cultural justice (section 2) and a defense of liberal nationalism (section 3) to the implications of the renaissance of nationalism and the emergence of multiculturalism for democratic citizenship (section 4), throughout the book one thread reappears over and over again: Kymlicka's concern with and approval of what he calls *liberal culturalism*, i.e. liberal nationalism cum multiculturalism.

Liberal nationalism for Kymlicka is the promotion of "the legitimate function of the state to protect and promote the national cultures and languages of the nations within its borders" (Kymlicka 2001: 38). It is distinguished from "illiberal nationalism" through the following characteristics:

- it uses no coercion to impose a national identity;
- it does not prohibit a mobilization against nationalism;
- it embraces a fairly inclusive definition of a nation and, consequently a thinner conception of national identity;
- it is non-aggressive, i.e. it does not try to dismantle institutions of other nationalities (Kymlicka 2001: 39-41)

Nationalism in Kymlicka's view is an integral part of a developed liberal democracy, because social justice, deliberative democracy, and individual freedom are most efficiently achieved within national political units (Kymlicka 2001: 225-229). Nationalism serves social justice, as the welfare state requires sacrifices, which presuppose a sense of solidarity, which in turn is achieved through national a national identity. Deliberative democracy requires a common language among all citizens, a condition that is met in pure nation states. Individual autonomy can only be attained, if one commands over the necessary cultural tools that enable

an individual to make choices. National cultures deliver these cultural tools. Nationalism is hence the twin brother of liberal democracy. Still, liberal nationalism will necessarily create (unjust) inequalities, as the promotion of a national culture will disadvantage members of ethnic minorities, which almost inevitably will exist within most, if not all states. Here is where multiculturalism comes in. It requires states to recognize the equally valid claims of ethno-cultural minorities. A just state consequently grants these minorities adequate institutional support and some degree of self-government assuming that their internal setup meets above restrictions on nationalism.

Kymlicka's liberal culturalism unifies two hitherto not always as incompatible regarded brands of collectivist thinking, nationalism and multiculturalism. Does he by merging the two most popular strands of political theory as well as political ideology create a new yardstick with which future theorizing on democracy should be measured?

2 THREE PROBLEMS WITH LIBERAL CULTURALISM

Let me be upfront with what I think of liberal culturalism: It is neither liberal, nor culturalist. It is not liberal, because it sacrifices the liberal commitment to individual rights on the altar of the valorization of ethno-national cultures, which become entitled to group rights (Barry 2001: 112-118; 127-131). It is neither culturalist but at best pan-nationalist, as it is solely concerned with national cultures.

Apart from the misleading label, Kymlicka's theory contains a number of serious weaknesses. Let me consider three of them, namely Kymlicka's tendency to discount alternatives to liberal culturalism, flaws in his functionalist justification of liberal culturalism, and his nonchalant treatment of empirical evidence.

2.1 All Multiculturalists Now?

Kymlicka is not shy about the appeal of liberal culturalism. According to him, there currently are no sensible alternatives to what he and all his alleged allies propose; "[l]iberal culturalism has won by default" (Kymlicka 2001: 43). This assessment not only exaggerates the coherence of the culturalist camp, it also seriously underestimates the potential of non-culturalist theories.

2.1.1 Heterogeneity of Liberal Culturalism

While it is true that liberal culturalism is currently the dominant paradigm in democratic theory, this dominance is to no small part an artifact of the multivocality of what has been subsumed under culturalism. Thus, while culturalism might be in the pool position, many individual culturalists will find themselves in less prominent rows when fighting for their particular causes.

Consider the positions of two most prominent culturalists, Kymlicka himself and Iris Marion Young. Kymlicka considers Young (among others) as one of his allies. But while Young has groups based on gender, sexual orientation, and a number of other characteristics in mind when she talks about multiculturalism, Kymlicka almost[1] exclusively thinks of ethno-national groups when he talks minority rights (Barry 2001: 308). Indeed, Kymlicka does not even address the representation of all ethno-national groups equally, but reduces the applicability of his theory to those ethnic groups who are either recent immigrants or are intergenerational communities, who are "more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and history" (Kymlicka 1995: 18). Under these circumstances, African Americans, gypsies, or Russians in the Soviet successor states are adequately covered, as Kymlicka (2001: 56) himself admits. Surely, most other culturalists would like to cover these groups, while many others would — with a sense of prudence — include also non-ethnic groups as potential bearers of group rights. Thus, while culturalists may very well f o r m a l l y be on the same page when it comes to group rights, the actual beneficiaries of multiculturalist policies differ dramatically across advocates of group rights. The dominance of the culturalist paradigm is thus in no small part due to the high abstraction level of the term culturalism and does not necessarily indicate a high degree of agreement about the substantive policy implications of culturalism. The most important reason for the superficial agreement among culturalists is the extremely amorphous conceptualization of what exactly constitutes a minority.

Yet, we have to concede to Kymlicka that culturalism does have a wide appeal these days. That, however, has probably less to do with the intellectual weakness of the alternatives to culturalism, but is more likely rooted in the high cultural resonance of culturalism.

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[1] Kymlicka (2001: 298) in passing refers to gender, when he discusses genuinely liberal anti-discrimination laws, which do not entail and group rights. Apparently, gender is not on his agenda, but he does once acknowledges that "*even* non ethnic cultural groups such as gays and the disabled" (2001: 41, emphasis mine) also ask for state recognition.

2.1.2 No Alternatives to Liberal Culturalism Left?

Of course, it is easy to claim victory, when one ignores one's most formidable opponents. It might be understandable, if nevertheless regrettable, that Kymlicka does not address Dinesh D'Souza's (1992) widely read reactionary pamphlet that alleges that contemporary multicultural policies are deeply illiberal. After all, it is doubtful, if D'Souza's work should be included into *academic* discourse at all. At the other end of the political (and academic) spectrum, it might also be entirely possible that Kymlicka is unfamiliar with Michael Billig's (1995) devastating critique of contemporary Western nationalism, which unfortunately has not (yet?) become required reading in courses on nationalism. But Kymlicka's disregard of the academic "giants" whose writings are at odds with his theory is puzzling to say the least. On the more than 400 pages of his book, he not once mentions Brian Barry's (2001) insightful critique of liberal culturalism, which specifically aims at Kymlicka's theory.[2] He does also not consider any of Todd Gitlin's proliferate writings on the politics of difference. He does — once, on page 284 — refer to Rogers Brubaker, but he neither examines Brubaker's (1994) constructionist notion of nationality, which differs starkly from Kymlicka's own quasi-primordial[3] conceptualization, nor does he discuss the very different policy prescriptions, which follow from such a conceptualization (Brubaker & Laitin 1998).

If Kymlicka does not ignore non-nationalist thinking, he tends to redefine it as nationalist. For example, when Kymlicka asserts that nationalism is capable to transcend mortality and therefore facilitates the development of autonomous individuals, he refers to Benedict Anderson. Let us for the sake of the argument concur with the dubious claim that transcendence of mortality promotes autonomy. Then, transcendence could still be accomplished through any number of ideologies — among them religious belief systems or an enlightenment belief in progress — that would hardly qualify as being genuinely nationalist. In view of the fact that Anderson's writings exhibit a strong anti-nationalist component, the attempt to construe him as being in favor of nationalist propositions is misleading to say the least.

With Kymlicka's tendency to either ignore opposing views or embrace them as belonging to his camp, it almost follows that he dismisses the remaining alternatives to

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[2] The fact that the essays of this book were published before Barry's book was published does not explain Kymlicka's silence on Barry, since all chapters were clearly revised for the anthology.

[3] By "quasi-primordial" I mean a nominally constructivist notion of nationality, which for all practical and theoretical purposes assumes primordial properties.

liberal nationalism on the grounds that the attacked nationalist propositions would be self-evident. For instance, he correctly observes that

> "few citizens in liberal democracies favour a system of open borders, where people could freely cross borders, settle, work, and vote in whatever country they desire. Such a system would dramatically increase the domain within which people would be treated as free and equal citizens. Yet open borders would also make it more likely that people's own national community would be overrun by settlers from other cultures, and that they would be unable to ensure their survival as a distinct national culture." (Kymlicka 2001: 215)

He — again, quite correctly — continues that most liberal theorists have i m p l i c i t l y also disbanded the possibility of open borders. However, Kymlicka's conclusion that therefore the nationalist regime of border controls is justified, betrays Kymlicka's training as a philosopher. Since when is the validity of philosophical propositions decided by majoritarian vote?[4] And since when does the frequent implicitness of a proposition confer credence to its adequacy? To the contrary, most propositions that have unconsciously been incorporated into political theory stem from a lack of self-reflexivity and thus mark (involuntary) ethnocentrism.

Kymlicka's liberal nationalism has not become the default position, because its alternatives are intellectually weak or inexistent, as Kymlicka interprets the situation. Instead, it is far more plausible to put Kymlicka's argument on its head. B e c a u s e liberal nationalism is the default position, alternatives a p p e a r as being weak. Like any "dominant perception of the political context" (Diani 1996: 1057), nationalism has become a *masterframe*, which enjoys high cultural resonances r e g a r d l e s s o f i t s e m p i r i c a l v a l i d i t y o r i t s m o r a l a p p r o p r i a t e n e s s (Gamson 1992: chapter 8; McAdam 1994: 41-43). After all, with the rise of the modern nation state, national identity has become a masterframe institutionalized on state and inter-state level as well as within the scientific community.[5] Claims for or legitimized with nationalism have therefore gained wide currency, even though their premise that nations are primordial communities is empirically flawed. To draw on the vitality of nations and

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[4] And if it is, last time I checked, this kind of moral positivism did not even pass the 5%-hurdle.

[5] That nation states promote the nationality principle shows Anderson's (1983) elaboration on "official" nationalism as well as Billig's (1995) insightful analysis of "cold" nationalism. For impact of inter-state nationalism, confer to Barkin & Cronin (1994: 126, 128), Brubaker & Laitin (1998: 425), Calhoun (1995: 253), Hobsbawm (1990: 97f), and Soysal (1996: 11f, 16f). With respect to the scientific community, see Billig's (1995) analysis of Richard Rorty's nationalism and Luhmann's (1992) and Elias' ([1976] 1991: XXXVII) observation of the frequent fusion of the concept of society and nation state. Finally, confer to Brubaker (1999) and Soysal (1994: 5) for the dominant mélange of national and citizenship identity in scientific discourse.

nationalism may (or may not) be a legitimate device of in politics, but in political philosophy such moral positivism has for long been disbanded.

2.1.3 Is Cosmopolitanism Outdated?

If liberal culturalism does not lack serious theoretical competition, then how does one of its major competitors, cosmopolitanism, of which Kymlicka is highly contemptuous, fare? Kymlicka is not only convinced that cosmopolitanism is a thought of the past, he also suggests that contemporary cosmopolitans are uprooted individuals, whose unease with the ethnic identities of the "common people" prevent them from becoming successful analysts of nationalism (Kymlicka 2001: 248). For Kymlicka, Michael Ignatieff is a case in point. A multilingual Canadian living in England, Ignatieff's experiences have made it difficult for him to come to terms with nationalism. Like many "cosmopolitans today [he] feels threatened and confused" (*ibid*., p. 249) when confronted with nationalism. But that certainly is not a reason, why Ignatieff's analysis of nationalism is deficient. After all, as one of the most insightful analysts of nationalism has noted, "no serious historian of nations and nationalism can be a committed political nationalist" (Hobsbawm 1991: 12). And, a liberal n a t i o n a l i s t is exactly what Kymlicka professes to be. On that count, it therefore could be at least as convincingly argued that Kymlicka's own ideological stance is much less suited for an analysis of nationalism. Of course, Kymlicka also emphasizes that he is not an undemocratic and illiberal nationalists and without doubt he is well meaning. But just how far are Kymlicka's theories from "bad" nationalism?

It is telling that Kymlicka quotes Max Boehm when rejecting cosmopolitanism. In the 1920s, Boehm belonged to the so-called "young conservatives" (Mohler 1950: 83) within the intellectual movement *Konservative Revolution* (Conservative Revolution), which *inter alia* hoped for the abolition of Weimar Germany's liberal constitution (*ibid.*, p. 91f) in favor of a morally partial state. This state would promote eternal Prussian virtues without simply reinstating the Wilhelminian *Kaiserreich*. Boehm and his collaborators shared with Nazis, under whose regime Boehm continued to publish his works on minority rights and nationalism,[6] and the fascists, whom Boehm (1932: 179) admired for their drive to unify leadership of state and people, a disdain for liberalism, individualism, and enlightenment. Cosmopolitanism, according to the avid nationalist Boehm (1932: 183, 307) has lead 19th

century Germans and Italians, who cut across state borders, to self-alienation. For the same reason as Kymlicka, Boehm (1932: 15) assumes that cosmopolitans lack the tools to understand nationhood.

To become an honorable person it is necessary to consciously embrace one's ethnic belonging. Persons who too easily abandon their *völkisch* grounding, on the other hand are "unprincipled and unscrupulous" (Boehm 1951: 33). Not surprisingly, Boehm shares his faith in ethnicity with the contemporary *Nouvelle Droite* and *Neuer Rechte* ("New Right"), who explicitly rely on the thinking of revolutionary conservatism.

> "A human cannot be separated from his [ethnic] culture, not from his (spatial) environment and not from his (temporal) heritage, which have been engraved onto him by his culture." (Benoist 1981: 89f)

A rootedness in one's nationality is thus "for the development of the European human of utmost importance" (Binding 1981: 46). That is altogether not too far from Kymlicka, who approvingly quotes Ronald Dworkin writing that societal culture "provides the spectacles through which we identify experiences as valuable" (Dworkin 1985: 228).

> "For this reason, the foundational liberal commitment to individual freedom can be extended to generate a commitment to the ongoing viability and flourishing of societal cultures. [… The thence derived] rights and powers ensure that national minorities are able to sustain and develop their cultures into the indefinite future." (Kymlicka 2001: 210).

That Kymlicka calls Revolutionary Conservatives into his witness stand is thus not merely accidental, but simply illustrates the elective affinity between the proto-fascism of Revolutionary Conservatism, present-day ethno-pluralism and multiculturalism Kymlicka style.

2.2   The Democratic Functions of Liberal Culturalism

Of course, there could exist mitigating circumstances that would justify the affinity between Kymlicka's multiculturalism and right-wing ideologies. After all, Kymlicka claims to have adopted his culturalist stance not (only) because of the intrinsic value of national minority cultures, but also because state protection of minority nations would be instrumental for a functioning liberal democracy. Kymlicka claims that there are essentially three functions that collective rights for national minorities would fulfill. Such a policy would

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[6] Max Hildebert Boehm: "Der Werdegang des polnischen Nationalismus," in: Max Hildebert Boehm (ed.): "*Der befreite Osten*," Berlin 1943, p. 87-111.

(1) enable deliberation through a common language,

(2) advance individual freedom by enabling the development of autonomous individuals,

(3) promote social justice through fostering solidarity. (Kymlicka 2001: 225-229)

We do not need to concern ourselves in detail with the first function here, as it is clearly at odds with much of Kymlicka's own writings. For one, it applies only to linguistic minorities and would thereby have little to offer to Serbs in Croatia, Catholics in Northern Ireland, or Amish in the US, all of which are clearly captured by Kymlicka's own minority concept. More importantly, for those national minorities that are linguistically defined, the *lingua franca* argument would n o t lend itself to multiculturalist policies Kymlicka style, but to state nationalism the XVIII century French way. Kymlicka's multiculturalist policy prescription can therefore not serve the function of the strengthening of deliberative politics through a common language.

2.2.1 National Minorities and Culture

Let us now examine the second function of liberal culturalism. Does the importance of culture for individual development redeem for culturalism's affinity to romantic nationalism? It is, of course, true that the development of an individual self presupposes a cultural repertoire, into which the individual can tap. But to view nations as the only or even the most important source of this repertoire not only underestimates the cultural resources of non-national groups — such as the working class, the hip-hop movement, or lawyers for that matter — and overestimates the coherence of "national cultures." It also posits a false necessity of state support for the development of culture, ignores the role of state and state-like institutions in the emergence of "national" cultures, and it, finally, stifles possible venues for protest.

By conflating national culture and culture at large, Kymlicka disregards the fact that there undoubtedly exist a myriad of proto-national cultures that share with actually existing nations their c u l t u r a l distinctiveness, but nevertheless have not and will not become nations (Gellner 1983: 44f). What distinguishes them from nations and national minorities is their lack of any institutional arrangements that validate that culture as a claimholder within states and international organizations. Why would we deny these proto-national cultures the same protection and support, national minorities should enjoy? Is there in other words a rationale, why we put a premium on the establishment of national i n s t i t u t i o n s , a

development that facilitates ethnic conflict (Oberschall & Kim 1996)? Indeed, why would we privilege national minorities over all other cultural minorities? That leads us to the question about Kymlicka's minority concept.

Kymlicka does acknowledge that groups based on gender or sexual orientation also share a common culture, but that does not entitle these groups to the same protection ethnicities should benefit from.

Not even all ethnic minorities are according to Kymlicka entitled to the same sort of protection. At the top of the hierarchy there are long-established national minorities, who live on a compact territory. Examples include Flemings in Belgium, Croats in Bosnia, or autochthonous communities like Native Americans in Canada. Next come those long-established communities who do not live on a compact territory, such as gypsies or Berbers. Further down the ladder are refugees, who fairly recently were displaced from their home countries and who live dispersed throughout their host countries. Finally, immigrants who "voluntary" migrated have the least claims for minority rights. Apart from the fact that this hierarchy replicates the existing pecking order of ethnic minorities in most countries, there seems to be no rationale for its adoption.[7]

Even if one were to justify or eliminate Kymlicka's typology of ethnic minorities, many cultural minorities would find little in Kymlicka's writings that would validate their claims for minority rights. For queers, fundamentalist Christians, hip-hoppers, or feminist separatists would search in vain in any recognition that these are cultures that would be important for the development of an individual. So, I guess, it's bad luck for feminists with Amish background, or South Tyrolean gays. Supposedly, the patriarchal and homophobic "cultures," in which they grew up were key in their individual development, but the "subcultures" — a term that itself is deeply nationalist — they later joined had little to contribute to their development. Thus, Amish and South Tyrolese would qualify for minority rights, while feminists or homosexuals would not. Kymlicka practices a kind of moral positivism that should comfort conservative politicians but make philosophers shiver.

Culture, Kymlicka seems to have forgotten, can and does develop without state support. Indeed, from the early worker's movement to contemporary queer nation, cultural resources have been successfully elicited to win concessions from the state. It is only so-called

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[7] Parekh (2000: 103), for instance, quite rightly asks, why, if national cultures are essential the development of autonomous individuals, should migrants be allowed to waive their right for national cultures.

n a t i o n a l culture that can hardly survive without state support, because the state is built into the concept of nationality.

The privileging of national culture over other cultures furthermore stifles the capacity for oppositional cultures that cannot define themselves as ethnicities, as the dispension of state support is naturally a strong material resource. For anybody but romantic nationalists that is bad news.

2.2.2 Does Democracy Require Collective Identity?

Kymlicka brings up yet another justification for the privileging of national cultures over other cultures, that is their relation to the welfare state. As T.H. Marshall (1949) has taught us, effective democratic citizenship presupposes the implementation of social rights. Therefore, any democratic state is to some extent also a welfare state, in which citizens are required to "sacrifice" in Kymlicka's terminology part of their income for a common good. Therefore, so his argument, the welfare state presupposes solidarity among its citizens. But that is just another of Kymlicka's myths. It is true that a welfare state is a public good and therefore requires the elimination of the free rider problem (Olson 1965). Solidarity is certainly one way to overcome this dilemma, but solidarity is only required, if the free rider problem has not already been solved through the establishment of an organization that can dispense selective incentives (Olson 1965: 51, see also his by-product theory), a finding that to date has not been refuted (Kim & Bearman 1997: 72). Was there ever a more powerful organization than the modern state? Probably there was not. Therefore, just as one needs not to share any solidarity with other insurance members when one enters a life insurance scheme of a renowned company, there is no reason to recur to solidarity to implement a welfare state in consolidated states. Only weak states like Moldova or Bosnia require "thick identities" to overcome a free rider problem. But these are not the states Kymlicka has in his mind when he develops his theory on the Canadian case and, indeed, efforts of the two mentioned states to thicken, read: ethnicize, their identities would likely lead to ethnic conflict rather than a welfare state.[8] In essence,

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[8] In fact, not even the much weaker collective identity that is elicited in Habermassian constitutional patriotism fosters democracy in my view. Sure, the adherence to a common set of rules that governs democratic deliberations and decision making processes. But most existing states are very much equipped to enforce such rules without the recourse to collective identity. Any collective identity that overlaps with existing states and statelets merely clutters existing interest conflicts and serves to exclude non-nationals.

"there is every reason for making deliberate attempts to draw up geographically based administrative units that cut across communal boundaries. Gitlin, it may be recalled, emphasized the importance of everyone's having 'a stake in the commons', and the most basic way of providing people with one is to ensure that there actually is a 'commons' in the form of shared institutions upon which all depend alike." (Barry 2001: 89)

Liberal culturalism, thus, also fails in its third goal. Kymlicka hence stays on shaky theoretical grounds. Can he consolidate his position with empirical data?

2.3   Nationalism and Liberal Democracy: Revisiting the Evidence

Much of Kymlicka's theory is dubious from a theoretical standpoint, but does not the benign success of Canadian multiculturalism speak for itself? Here we come to the question of the empirical grounding of Kymlicka's theory. Despite all the goodies nationalism supposedly supplies for democracy, there are still some universalist fossils who think that nationalism is to the detriment of liberal democracy. In Kymlicka's eyes, these are well-meaning intellectuals who are out of touch with the every-day reality of "ordinary citizens." But is it not Kymlicka himself who is out of touch with reality?

Kymlicka thinks that

"the assumption that minority cultural nationalisms are a defensive and xenophobic reaction to modernity is often overstated. This maybe true of the current situation in Rwanda or Bosnia, but I think there are many cases of minority nationalisms around the world today which […] are forward looking political movements for the creation of free and equal citizens. They seek to create a democratic society, defined and united by a common language and sense of history. I think that's what most Québécois nationalists seek, as well as most Catalan, Scottish, and Flemish nationalists." (Kymlicka 2001: 246)

I call that a bluff. Consider the *Vlaams Blok*, the main Flemish nationalist party. It is forward looking in the sense that it legitimizes its demand for Brussels as the future capital of an independent Flanders by pointing to the fact that "before the year 1500 only 5% of all official documents of the city of Brussels were written in French" (Vlaams Blok 2000a). The *Vlaams Blok* expresses its "xenophilia" by demanding

- a free debate about the foreigner p r o b l e m
- an immigration stop through a repeal of the family reunion policy, a tighter control of the authenticity of binational marriages, a limitation of political asylum to Europeans, and required return of non-European university students upon graduation
- the actual expulsion of criminal and illegal foreigners
- an "own *Volk* first" policy, which restricts unemployment and social benefits mainly to nationals. (Vlaams Blok 2000a; 2000b: 1f)

Of course, the *Vlaams Blok* is one of the more zealous organizations of Flemish nationalism, but with a share of about one sixth of the Flemish vote,[9] it is far from being on its fringes. Flemish nationalism is not chiefly concerned with liberal democracy, but primarily pushes the agenda of ethnic homogenization.

Conversely, Kymlicka's guess that Bosnian nationalism is a xenophobic reaction of backward-looking folks is also not in tune with empirical reality. Researching nationalist mobilizations in the Krajina region, Bougarel (1999) shows that the appeal of nationalism was not necessarily higher in the "backward looking" rural areas than in the urban centers. And the "tribal organization [of the warring factions] and their culture of violence, cannot be understood without taking into account their relations with the state," (*ibid.*, p. ???), a decidedly modern actor. A different study finds that the Yugoslav elites utilized nationalist populism to mobilize rather apathetic people, who before the outbreak of the war were not particularly interested in their ethnicity (Oberschall 2000). A third study documents that nationalism was a rather low key priority among Serb minorities in Bosnia and Croatia, and was indeed only reluctantly imported through elites based in Belgrade (Gagnon 2001). Possibly, the claim that "Yugoslavia's death and the violence that followed resulted from the conscious actions of nationalist leaders who co-opted, intimidated, circumvented, or eliminated all opposition to their demagogic designs" (Harvey 2000: ???) is a too sweeping statement. But even a scholar who derides the "tendency among social scientists and others to interpret the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia Hercegovina as the result of a political policy carefully orchestrated from above and systematically carried out" (Bax 2000: 28) acknowledges that "it is difficult to maintain that the [war] was the outcome of primitive balkanism, age/old tribalism" (*ibid.*, p. 28f). Kymlicka has apparently fallen prey to the orientalism that prevails in many analyses of the Balkans (Baki≡-Hayden 1995; Todorova 1994).[10]

Of course, Kymlicka is a political philosopher and not an anthropologist or sociologist with a sweet tooth for empirical research. But shouldn't we still expect a little more care,

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[9] In 1999, the *Vlaams Blok* captured 15.5% of the vote in the regional elections in Flanders (http://www.vub.ac.be/POLI/elections/5000.html, April 27, 2001).

[10] Although the conflict in Rwanda is unsurprisingly under-researched, prospects that backward-looking peasants rather than modern political elites have engineered the Rwandan genocide are dim, too (Harvey 2000), as the meager evidence points to a "very well planned, organized, deliberate and conducted campaign of terror initiated principally by [Rwanda's] Presidential Guard" (Booh Booh in Carlsson, Sung-Joo & Kupolati 1999: 40).

when he attempts to illustrate his theses with empirical examples? It seems that he is far more entrenched in the academic ivory tower than the cosmopolitan liberals he accuses of debasement.

3 A MANUAL FOR THE STATUS QUO

In the end, neither Kymlicka's empirical, nor his theoretical case seems compelling. There is very little in his concept of national minority that does not seem to be inspired more by existing political arrangements than philosophical thought. But Kymlicka's empiricism is unfortunately limited to the construction of his conceptual framework. Where empiricism would be in order, namely in the justification of his empirical hypotheses, Kymlicka resorts to mere prejudice or hearsay.

Why are Kymlicka's theses nevertheless so popular? I already mentioned Kymlicka's tendency for moral positivism. Despite its unpopularity among philosophers, Kymlicka seems to have no qualms about validating contemporary practices. He writes:

> "[I]nsofar as [multicultural policy] patterns have been worked out by legislators and jurists within liberal democracies, and have become widely accepted by influential commentators and everyday citizens, then they provide useful clues about what a liberal theory of minority rights should look like."

Such approach to political philosophy is, of course, extremely susceptible to affirm existing Gramscian hegemony patterns. Indeed, one may argue that Kymlicka does his part to enforce the current hegemonic approach to multiculturalism, which, as been shown elsewhere (Hage 1998: chapter 4), has not departed too far from the supremacist ideology of straightforward ethno-nationalists.

Politics in the Vernacular is an effective reading for the current establishment from Tony Blair to George W. Bush, who proclaim themselves multiculturalists and have no qualms about attributing the suffocation of a group of migrants workers solely to "organized criminals"[11] and the 28% lifetime likelihood of incarceration for black males[12] to individual character shortcomings[13] rather than to ethno-nationalist immigration regimes and ineffective welfare regimes, respectively. At the same time Kymlicka also caters to the growing numbers

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[11] BBC (June 19, 2000): "Lorry deaths 'warning to others'," http://news2.thdo.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk_politics/newsid_797000/797524.stm, July 1, 2001.

[12] US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (ed.): "Criminal Offenders Statistics," http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/crimoff.htm#lifetime, July 5, 2001.

of those contemporary multiculturalists who have merely reversed xenophobia into xenophilia without overcoming the former (Tibi [1998] 2000: 78f) and who thereby do not relinquish their claim to exclusively define the substance of the "other" (Hage 1998), even if they -- unlikely genuine ethno-nationalists -- affirm rather than denounce the "other." For the political philosopher, Kymlicka has little to offer, though.

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