

# The poverty of anti-nationalist modernism

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**ABSTRACT.** In this reply to Dr Özkirimli's article, after considering the relationship between modernist and ethnosymbolic approaches, I propose some arguments for, and explanations of ethnosymbolic accounts. I concentrate here on the four main points raised by Dr Özkirimli: (1) the restrictions on the role of elites, (2) the limitations of presentism, (3) the importance of collective passion and attachment and (4) the plurality of ethnic heritages. I conclude with an explanation of my normative stance in relation to the question of 'romantic nationalism'.

It is always gratifying when people take the trouble to read one's works, even better to receive a critique of one's approach, that promises to be at once witty, incisive and fair. Journals are so full of serious and learned articles that it comes as a relief to read an amusing and light-hearted attack on the work of an author, even when it fails to find any redeeming points in his oeuvre. Of course, one has to wonder why a critic should bother to devote any effort to perusing such clearly unrewarding works. But this is obviously no obstacle to Dr Özkirimli's enthusiasm for making a series of swift, good-humoured sallies on 'ethnosymbolism', all in the cause of his wider theoretical and normative project.

## **Ethnosymbolism and modernism**

Dr Özkirimli's critique begins well enough by scrutinising the ethnosymbolist, mainly my own, account of 'modernist' approaches to the study of nationalism. Here, Dr Özkirimli wishes to turn my method of 'internal critique' of modernism against ethnosymbolism. This might be taken to mean that Dr Özkirimli had once been a devotee of ethnosymbolism, but had now 'seen the light'. Unfortunately, such previous intimacy did not stand him in good stead; for it did not prevent him from falling victim to some serious misunderstandings and simplifications.

For example, nowhere do I say that modernists explain nationalism 'in terms of a single, all-pervasive factor'. That would be patently absurd. Nor do I

say that *all* modernists assert that nationalism is a recent artefact constructed by elites who influence the masses; Hobsbawm may think this, but not Gellner.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Dr Özkirimli quite misses the point and indeed contradicts himself when he claims (a) that I generalise from Gellner to all modernists and (b) that I reduce all modernism to instrumentalism; Gellner was no instrumentalist, nor are Nairn, Breuilly and Anderson, and in my book *Nationalism and Modernism*, I am at pains to differentiate the varieties of modernism (chs. 2–6). And, though I think that all modernists subscribe to the notion that nothing like the nation existed in pre-modern epochs, they clearly differ as to whether nations and/or nationalism will wither away, sooner or later. What I do hold is that, whatever particular theorists may have said, one can usefully distinguish a modernist argument, which holds that

- (a) nationalism is recent and novel,
- (b) nations are recent and novel,
- (c) both nationalism and nations are products of modernisation.

This third point is crucial; it distinguishes structural from merely chronological modernism, and here again, as in his book, *Theories of Nationalism* (2000), Dr Özkirimli completely misses the point, concentrating solely on the chronological dimension. I think most of the authors whom I would term ‘modernist’ do, in fact, subscribe to this account, even though they then go on to disagree among themselves, often quite strongly, about the definitions of the terms ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’ and the specific aspects of modernisation that accounted for the emergence and character of nations and nationalisms. In this, they stand opposed to perennialist accounts. On this point, too, Dr Özkirimli has, once again, failed to read my work properly: when I say that I have ‘deliberately magnified the differences’ between them (Smith 1998: 23 and table on same page), the differences in question are between modernism and *perennialism*, not between modernism and ethnosymbolism; for, as Dr Özkirimli recognises, the latter pair do indeed manifest important continuities and coexistences.<sup>2</sup>

Dr Özkirimli compounds these misreadings of my work when he asserts that I *assume* a link between the modernity of nations and their demise, in the context of Rogers Brubaker’s citation of Julia Kristeva (neither is cited by me as a ‘post-modernist’ – I generally prefer to use the looser term ‘post-modern’ for those interested in the most recent epoch). I do not. All I argue is that, if nations do not have ethnic foundations over the longer term, then it is easier to claim that they may be more easily superseded in the future. Nor do I think anything so crude as that ‘The modern era is over but nations are still around. Let us then send postmodernism to the dustbin of history instead of nations!’. Whatever could this mean? Such an extraordinary conflation of categories (of an epoch and an intellectual approach) reveals the confusion in the mind of our critic over the whole question of the ethnosymbolist critique of modernism and, by implication, of ‘post-modern’ approaches. In general, this section

seems to me to be full of errors of scholarship and to add little to our understanding of the issues at stake.

### **Ethnosymbolism as an approach**

In the second section, we are promised a serious encounter with ethnosymbolism. At this point, one would expect a comprehensive outline of the ‘theory’, followed by a series of criticisms, objections and counter-criticisms. But no such scholarly procedure is employed. Instead, four points are raised, and treated more or less cursorily. These are:

- (1) a critique of modernism’s exclusive elitism,
- (2) analysis over *la longue durée*,
- (3) the question of collective passion and attachment,
- (4) the plurality of ethnic pasts.

These in no way amount to a full statement of ethnosymbolism or of my own position – for which see the introduction to *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Smith 1999).

But, first, two general points. Dr Özkirimli insists on calling ethnosymbolism, and my own position, a ‘theory’. But, as I have been at pains to insist throughout, I do not have a theory. I wish I did, because I think an overall theory would be, in principle, desirable. But I don’t, partly because the subject is so baffling and multi-faceted, and partly because I can see that others in their theories have answered only some of the questions which a study of nationalism raises, and have omitted others. That was what I tried to say in the conclusion to *Nationalism and Modernism*. What I do have is a more limited perspective or approach which complements that of modernism, and it too covers only some aspects of this protean subject.

The second point concerns the uses of definition. Nowhere does Dr Özkirimli cite my definitions of the key terms: nation, nationalism and *ethnie*. Nowhere does he provide his own definitions. This omission seriously hampers the subsequent discussion, particularly in regard to the antiquity of nations and the ethics of nationalism. It is no use trying to date nations, or attack nationalism, if we don’t know what we are talking about. Here I will state my definitions of the terms ‘nation’ and ‘*ethnie*’, reserving that for ‘nationalism’ to the last section. By ‘nation’, I mean ‘a human population occupying an historic territory, sharing common myths and memories, a distinctive public culture, a common economy and common laws and customs’. By an *ethnie* (ethnic community), I mean ‘a human population with shared myths of ancestry, common historical memories, one or more elements of culture, a link with a territory, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites’. I discuss the differences, and overlap, between the two concepts in some detail in my recent book (Smith 2001: 10–15; cf. Smith 1991: ch. 1 and 1986: ch. 2).<sup>3</sup>

Now to Dr Özkirimli's four points. He starts by re quoting my headquote from *The Hymn to the Aton* (Smith 2001), and asserts that this 'quotation constitutes a concise summary of the ethnosymbolist position with regard to nations and nationalism'. Nothing more. We may ask: how so? Are we to infer that the Pharaoh Akhnaton was not, after all, a worshipper of the Sun-disc, but a covert ethnosymbolist *avant la lettre*?<sup>4</sup>

(1) Dr Özkirimli's first criticism concerns the antiquity of nations and the role of elites. He has three concerns. He takes me to task for switching the terms 'ethnie' and 'nation' very easily, when ethnosymbolists are keen to maintain the distinction between them, and he cites a few passages where I appear to do so. But, again, he has not read them carefully enough and, as he admits, the ethnosymbolist position on this issue is quite clear, viz: in pre-modern epochs, we find a variety of collective cultural identities, including many *ethnies* and a very few nations which I list (Smith 1998: 190).<sup>5</sup> It is indeed difficult, in practice, to draw a clear distinction in certain cases between *ethnies* and nations (see Smith 2001: 10–15). But Dr Özkirimli's thought does not allow for doubts and nuances of this kind.

Nevertheless, I try to exercise care in matters of terminology and to follow my own definitions of key terms. Hence, the rather inelegant but, I believe, accurate distinction between, on the one hand, modern nationalist-based nations (that is, justified, if not created, on the basis of nationalist ideology) and, on the other hand, (the few) pre-nationalist nations – terms which afford Dr Özkirimli much amusement (Smith 2001: 118). The specific point, of course, is to agree with John Armstrong's contention that, *pace* the late Adrian Hastings, the emergence of nationalism as an ideology does indeed make a vital difference to the quality and content of nations, if not to their form (here I agree with the modernists). The larger point (as the next paragraph of Smith (1998: 190) clearly states, but which is again omitted by our critic) is one that Dr Özkirimli sweeps under the carpet, namely, to show that in pre-modern epochs there was a great variety of ethnic categories and communities, and that some of these formed the bases of subsequent nations.

A related issue is the question of the elite or mass basis of premodern collective identities. Here the charge is one of ambivalence: ethnosymbolists argue against the exclusive elitism of modernism, but rely almost exclusively on elite documents, and accept Walker Connor's observation that, given the state of our records, we can never know what the peasant masses thought or felt in premodern times (see Connor 1990). But there is no ambivalence. Once again, Dr Özkirimli confuses two quite different things: a methodology with an empirical observation. Certainly, it is difficult to know how the masses felt in premodern times, though we may make some inferences from our (usually elite) sources and from collective activities such as wars, trade, law, festivals and religious exposure. But that does not mean that we must therefore employ an exclusively elitist approach, and take no account of what other strata or the mass of the population felt. That would be simplistic and misleading. Nor is there any ambivalence in stating that 'religion' sometimes stood in for

‘citizenship’ in premodern times, and that significant numbers of people in premodern epochs were included in various institutions, including political ones, and possessed vivid ethnic identities. My point in reply to John Breuilly’s (1996) important criticism (which Dr Özkirimli fails to quote) was that there were many more premodern institutions that could carry ethnic identity over long periods than he (Breuilly) allowed.<sup>6</sup>

Again, there is no ambivalence here. Ethnosymbolism may stand ‘in-between’ perennialism and modernism, but being ‘in-between’ is not the same as being ambivalent. (Liberalism might be said to stand ‘in-between’ conservatism and socialism; but is it therefore ‘ambivalent’?) When, in a footnote, I express doubt as to whether certain late medieval and early modern ‘upper- or middle-class sentiments of collective cultural identity’ are to be considered ‘as cases of ethnicity tied to statehood or of a *national* identity or particularist *nationalism*’ (Smith 1998: 242, n.22, emphasis in original), this is quite different from saying that ‘a nation or nationalism exists as soon as a few visionaries start to dream about it’. How can one jump from the sentiments of classes to the dreams of a few visionaries – including those of our critic? Once again, Dr Özkirimli has failed to read the text closely and grasp its meaning. What I am doing is to raise an important issue for discussion, as to whether we can only speak of nations when the majority of the designated population feel that they belong to them and are involved in them, or whether one can legitimately speak about nations when (for all we know) only some of the population express their adherence to them. This is a large and ongoing debate, and I commend to Dr Özkirimli a recent issue of *Geopolitics* (vol. 7, 2) if he wishes to pursue the fascinating question of ‘when is a nation’?<sup>7</sup>

(2) Dr Özkirimli’s next charge is that, while ethnosymbolism acknowledges the pivotal role of elites, and more especially of intellectuals, in the formation of nations, it opposes the exclusive modernist focus on present-day elites. There are actually two issues here. One concerns what John Peel calls ‘blocking presentism’, the excessive emphasis on present generations and their view of the past, at the expense of the influence of that past (see Peel 1989). The other is the modernist overemphasis on the role of elites, of whatever generation. Now, the ethnosymbolist critique of the role of elites was directed mainly at Eric Hobsbawm’s and Terence Ranger’s notion of ‘invented traditions’ as it was applied to the formation of nations (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: esp. Introduction and ch. 7); that was the context of my insistence (Smith 1998: 129) on the strict cultural limits within which the ‘selection and reworking’ by elites of pre-existing cultural traditions must take place. There is nothing contradictory about believing that elites play a crucial role in selecting cultural materials and holding that the materials from which they select must be ‘pre-existing repertoires of ethnic symbols, myths and memories if they are to mobilise “the people”’ (Smith 2001: 77).

At this point, Dr Özkirimli abruptly breaks off to quote a passage from *Nationalism and Modernism* (Smith 1998: 160), in which I pose a series of

critical questions about ethnicity, and he comments that this paragraph reminds him of Raskolnikov's confessions in *Crime and Punishment*. Unfortunately for him, the questions that I pose in this passage are not an expression of subliminal guilt, but are addressed specifically to Joshua Fishman's powerful but rather monolithic account of ethnicity. Here Dr Özkirimli has given us a short quotation from my discussion about ethnic perennialism which has been selected primarily for its superficial effect, and which has been torn completely out of context, to suggest dark inner musings totally absent from my work. This is selectivity at its most creative!

At last, the discussion becomes more serious. Dr Özkirimli argues that what matters is 'not the presence of premodern cultural materials, but the selection process, the ways in which these are used and abused, and this necessarily reflects present concerns'. But this, again, is quite simplistic. If you don't have cultural materials, what are you going to select? And if you do have them, what are you going to leave out, and what criteria do you employ for the selection? My point was that in order to appeal even to some of the population that the elites wished to mobilise, they had to select elements that possessed some meaning and significance ('resonance') for that particular population – something that Hobsbawm recognises at one point. At its most basic, this means that elites had to remain within the cultural traditions of the populations they wished to rouse; it was – it is – no good trying to rouse the English with appeals to French history or Russian literature or German football! No doubt there are other cultural boundaries, but this seems the minimum requirement. It is one that sets strict limits on much elite activity, which in turn helps to perpetuate ethnic and national divisions – as Europhiles find daily to their cost. Nor is it simply a question of 'present concerns' shaping our views of the past. Of course, these concerns influence the selection process, and of course the reconstructed past is very different from the past-as-experienced, if we could only know that past. But, between the latter and the present selection and reconstruction process, there may be a whole tradition of received views of that past, so obscuring it still further from present view. Those received views often condition our present views of the past. So we are not free to select as we please. Jewish elites of the nineteenth century, to whom Dr Özkirimli refers, did indeed have a vast reservoir of collective memories to draw on, but they had to stay within that reservoir if they wanted a collective response, *and* in addition, those memories were already organised by one or more frameworks of earlier selections, frameworks which in turn conditioned their own work of selection and construction. And I imagine that even Mustafa Kemal would have had a hard time of it if, instead of appealing to a hardy pre-Islamic Turkish past, he had invoked some Greek imperial traditions of 700 years ago – of Byzantium! As I put the matter four years ago:

There is always therefore a complex interplay between the needs and interests of modern generations and elites, the patterns and continuities of older cultures, and the mediating interpretations of 'our' ethnic pasts. (Smith 1998: 43)<sup>8</sup>

There is more continuity here, and less freedom for the elites than they, or Dr Özkirimli, fondly imagine.

Nor, again, is it simply an issue of the uses and abuses to which these memories and traditions are put by (manipulative and/or sincere) nationalists. Would it were all so simple! For one thing, this suggests that the people or masses are a passive *tabula rasa*. Even in premodern times, that was not the case. It usually took popular grievances for the elites to be able to exploit the masses for their benevolent or nefarious political ends. For another, if the premodern cultural materials are really rather unimportant, why bother to refer to their 'abuse'? If, on the other hand, the degree and type of these materials' 'abuse' by elites is important, then we shall have to restore to the past some independent role and weight, or at least explore how particular pasts and their symbols were regarded and felt by the generations of those whom the elites wished to mobilise. It is the *relationship* between the elites and the 'people' that is vital; it is not a question of which has priority, but of the nature of their links and, as Francis Robinson (1979) argued over twenty years ago in respect of the formation of Pakistan, the constraints that these links impose on elites.<sup>9</sup>

(3) This leads to Dr Özkirimli's third criticism: that the ethnosymbolists who stress the need for analysis of ethnic myths, symbols and memories – what Dr Özkirimli calls 'the Holy Trinity of ethnosymbolism'<sup>10</sup> – fail to explore the nature and limits of popular 'resonance' or appeal, or why it is possible (in Benedict Anderson's words) 'for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings', that is, their nations (Anderson 1991: 7)?

Leaving aside the question of 'collective imagination', there are two issues here. The first concerns the nature of 'the people' and of 'collective memories'. Dr Özkirimli claims that ethnosymbolists 'never ask the questions "which people" and "whose memories"'. This is simply not the case. As even a cursory glance at my work will reveal, the class divisions within ethnic communities and the political divisions within states are well noted. Not only do I speak frequently of ethnic and regional cleavages, but also of strata, classes and occupational groups, as well as of different kinds of 'elite' (a term that obviously eluded Dr Özkirimli's scrutiny). The appellation 'the people' is regularly placed in inverted commas in my work, to refer to the nationalist understanding of the majority of the designated population whom they wish to rouse. For myself, this majority is always subdivided in economic, social and political terms, as well as culturally. As to the collective memories and their bearers, I have been at pains, in my discussions of myths of chosen peoples and memories of golden ages, to identify which elites and which sections of 'their' populations adhered to different versions of them, for example, in my discussions of competing modern Greek memories of classical and Byzantine 'golden ages' or of modern Egyptian memories of their Islamic and Pharaonic 'golden ages' (Smith 1999: 78–9; Smith 1997: 44–5). There is no question of ethnosymbolism taking either 'the people' or 'collective memories' for granted.

The second contention is that ethnosymbolists take ‘resonance’ for granted. Again, this is not so. We all know that many people – and not just peasants – refused to fight in national wars, or if they did fight, did so for mixed motives. Yet, the fact remains that significant numbers of people have been mobilised by nationalists and have, often enough, responded to the nationalist summons to battle, from Valmy to the Great War; and there is some evidence that they have often identified their nation with other collective goods like family and locality. This is a large and complex subject, and it cannot be dealt with in a brief critique or in so cursory a manner (see O’Brien 1988; Marwick 1974; Smith 1981b).

In this context, Dr Özkirimli raises the question of the relationship between construction or imagination and ‘reality’. He agrees that nations are communities of *both* emotion and will, and at the same time of imagination and cognition. He then, without any explanation, drops this issue for a related one, asserting that: ‘According to Smith, artefacts cannot generate passion’. Of course, they can: works of art or architecture, drama or music, can induce strong emotions, and some artefacts have a tangible strong physical presence. But will people make sacrifices, will they die, for them?<sup>11</sup> As they may indeed be prepared to die for ‘love’. Here Dr Özkirimli treats us to a charming excursus on the reality or constructedness of individual love, even if we may not in the end wholly agree with his conclusion that the fact that ‘our feelings are the product of some complicated cognitive processes does not make them less real for us’. Love as the product of cognition? Surely, a cosmopolitan philosopher’s dream.

Dr Özkirimli then sets out his own explanation of the appeal of ‘nationalist discourse’. He invokes Hroch’s three-phase process of nationalist movements, their institutional reproduction, and everyday, individual experiences – of what, we are not told. Throughout, Dr Özkirimli quotes from my *Nationalism and Modernism*, but only to complain that ethnosymbolists mention these factors simply to debunk modernist explanations. Nothing could be further from the truth. I am not sure whether Miroslav Hroch’s work should be considered altogether modernist, but I am in general agreement with his theses and much indebted to his work, as I am to that of Michael Billig. I also agree that we need to invoke different factors to explain the nationalism of the first intellectual visionaries and that of the later intelligentsia, and have attempted to do so in a much earlier work (see Smith 1981a: chs. 4–6). That my views turn out to be ‘not incompatible with a constructivist approach’ can only be regarded as a bonus.

(4) Dr Özkirimli’s final criticism is that because it recognises a plurality of ethnic heritages, ‘the whole ethnosymbolist project’ is undermined. This is because ‘the ethnosymbolist account is one of authenticity, a story of what is “distinctive, unique and truly ours”’ (Smith 1998: 43). This last quotation from *Nationalism and Modernism* is unashamedly lifted from a long discussion of Gellner’s theory, in particular his belief that present needs and circumstances shape the (national) past. My criticism here is that Gellner’s theory does not take seriously



The modern desire to *authenticate* the past, to select from all that has gone before that which is distinctive, unique and 'truly ours', and thereby to mark out a unique shared destiny. (Smith 1998, 43)

It is clear from this passage that the desire for authentication is a modern one, and further on we see that this is the hallmark of nationalism. But here we have Dr Özkirimli, on the basis of this passage, wrongly attributing this desire to ethnosymbolism.

Dr Özkirimli is seriously confused on this point. For the ethnosymbolists, 'authenticity' is an object of investigation, not a mode of analysis, let alone the goal of their approach. Throughout, ethnosymbolists have been at pains to emphasise the plurality of ethnic pasts, ethnic myths and ethnic cultures, and the way that such plurality encourages rival nationalist mythologies and memories (see, for example, Smith 1997 and 1999: ch. 2). It is not the business of ethnosymbolists to tell us what is authentic, or 'where we are and where we are going'. We leave that to the nationalists – and the anti-nationalists.

### **Nationalism or anti-nationalism?**

We now come to the real point behind all this manoeuvring: to castigate ethnosymbolists as politically naive, 'reticent nationalists' and 'latterday Romantics' – in contrast to Dr Özkirimli who, like his named patron saints, Martha Nussbaum, David Held and Fred Halliday, is an anti-nationalist cosmopolitan, in touch with 'reality'.

Let me deal first with Romanticism. I have to admit to a certain fondness for Romanticism. It gave us Wordsworth, Keats and Schiller, Schubert and Chopin, Turner and Delacroix, Tolstoy and Dostoevski, and many others. Even Dr Özkirimli might concede that the world would be a poorer place without them. Romanticism also gave us the legacy of cultural diversity and of commitment to individual will and choice (see Berlin 1999). But perhaps Dr Özkirimli wishes to expel these, too, from his brave new cosmopolitan world?

But, of course, this is not what Dr Özkirimli has in mind when he calls ethnosymbolists latterday Romantics. What he means is that they 'suffer from a deep sense of nostalgia, which I take to be, following Steinwand, "a sort of homesickness, a pain or longing to return home or to some lost past"' (Smith 1997: 9). It is difficult to know how to interpret this comment. If it is meant to be biographical, Dr Özkirimli would perhaps be embarrassed to know just how wide of the mark he was. If it is meant to be a general characterisation, then once again Dr Özkirimli has confused his categories, conflating the object of analysis (for example, a 'golden age') with a mode of analysis (of ethnic myths, memories, values, symbols, traditions and rituals).

Romanticism, nostalgia, the return to the past: all these are important objects of ethnosymbolists' analysis, but in no sense can ethnosymbolists be said to suffer from romantic nostalgia or to recommend a return to the past,

even if that were possible. It is not even true to say that nationalists *as such* wanted to return to the past. Perhaps a few did, but for most of them it was a question of the past serving as a model and an inspiration for national revival in which they were active.

Now to the question of naivete and ‘reticent nationalism’. As Dr Özkirimli rightly remarks, I have generally treated the ethics of nationalism as outside the scope of a sociological and historical enquiry, preferring to follow Weber’s advice to leave value-preferences at the door of the analysis. After all, from a professional standpoint, what matters is the insight and rigour of the analysis, not any value-preferences of the analyst. This is not the same as claiming ‘political neutrality and scientific objectivity’. No ethnosymbolist – no theorist – could make such absurd claims.

Nevertheless, I think it is Dr Özkirimli who is suffering from an embarrassed reticence, or should I say, excessive modesty. There is none on my part. From the first chapter of my earliest book, *Theories of Nationalism* (1971) to the latest, *Nationalism* (2001), I have never sought to hide my views about nations or nationalism. Dr Özkirimli has only to consult chapter six of my *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (1995), entitled ‘In Defence of the Nation’, to gauge them. Of course, it all depends on what one means by ‘nationalism’. Dr Özkirimli, as I said before, gives us no inkling of his own definition, a significant lacuna. But, if he were to follow my definition of nationalism as ‘an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential “nation”’ (Smith 1991: ch. 4), then it would have to be shown that ethnosymbolists were partisans of this or that ideological movement of nationalism. And, since there are different kinds of nationalism, and each nationalism has special characteristics, it really makes little sense to claim that one is for or against an abstract ‘nationalism-in-general’.

But Dr Özkirimli’s real objection to ethnosymbolism is what he terms its political naivete and irresponsibility. This comes out particularly in the context of my recent discussion of the differences between national ‘homogeneity’ and ‘unity’. There I present a theoretical argument to the effect that, rather than insisting on cultural homogeneity, most nationalists ‘sought to unite individual desires through sentiments of love and fraternity’; for nationalists, members of the nation should *feel* a bond of solidarity and act in unison, not *be* alike (Smith 2001: 26–7). Here I am talking exclusively about political theories and ideals, not about political events or practices. We need no instruction about the often brutal consequences of such sentiments of ‘love’ and ‘fraternity’, and the implications of nationalist ideals and demands for ‘those who are deemed not to belong to the particular nation’, nor about the persistence of strong ethnic elements within even those (Western) national states that seek a more ‘civic’ type of nationhood<sup>12</sup>.

But the climax of Dr Özkirimli’s attack is reserved for my critique of what I consider to be Elie Kedourie’s overly negative portrayal of nationalism. Concentrating on ‘hot’ nationalisms, to use Michael Billig’s term (1995),

Kedourie gave us, in my opinion, a one-sided picture. He failed to see how, outside of these areas, nations and nationalisms have

become part of the very structure of modern society, and ... have been absorbed and assimilated by the vast majority of the world's populations for whom the colourful rhetoric and slogans of some intellectuals are at best decorative extras, 'icing on the cake'. (Smith 1998: 115–16).

This for Dr Özkirimli is no longer 'a naive and romantic description, but an utterly irresponsible and dangerous one. Here nationalist propaganda which caused so much anguish and suffering all around the world becomes a "colourful rhetoric", a "decorative extra", "icing on the cake"'. This outburst is as misguided as it is disproportionate. It is clear that, once again, the passage which causes Dr Özkirimli so much pain has been torn out of its context. Quite obviously, 'hot' nationalisms can cause immense suffering and have extremely destructive effects. But, as Billig says, for most people outside these areas (he is speaking mainly of the West), nations and nationalism have become habitual and ingrained, and nationalist rhetoric is no longer taken so seriously, unless it threatens the social order. In contrast, the cases that Dr Özkirimli cites – Kosovo, Bosnia, Kurdistan, Nazi-occupied Poland – were or are all areas of 'hot' nationalism. So that all Dr Özkirimli's distress here is predicated on yet another misunderstanding of my meaning.

Now, we are each of us entitled to our value-preferences. If Dr Özkirimli chooses to fight with the cosmopolitan angels against the dark forces of nationalism, who shall gainsay him? But, in doing so, he might pause to consider that he will also be fighting against the clearly expressed value-preferences – in some cases, the democratic will – of large numbers of individuals all round the world, for whom their nations and cultures are objects of devotion and attachment. This seems to be a piece of popular political 'reality' with which Dr Özkirimli and the cosmopolitans are curiously out of touch. Or do they really imply that this is a massive case of more than two centuries of false consciousness? In this respect, I am reminded of that ancient elite, the Stoics, who had so fallen in love with the cosmopolis of Roman global imperium that they quite forgot – or disdained – the desires and aspirations of ordinary men and women around them, until it was too late.

## Conclusion

In his conclusion, Dr Özkirimli returns to the theoretical argument. He makes two points. In contrast to my position, he contends that a general theory of nations and nationalisms is not only impossible, but undesirable. Instead, he says, we need a limited 'theory of nationalist practices' – what this entails, he does not vouchsafe to us – and he then declares that such partial theories may only illuminate a small part of the broader canvas – 'but so what, as long as we make progress'? To what end we 'progress' is not apparent.

This seems to be the quintessence of that ironical despair typical of so many 'post-modern' approaches, to the criticism of which Dr Özkirimli takes such exception (Smith 1998: ch. 9). In support of his theoretical despair, he quotes me as saying that the protean nature of nationalism makes the search for certainty in this field implausible and untenable (Smith 1998: 67). Quite so, but the latter observation lends no support to his despair. For here Dr Özkirimli has leapt from hypotheses to certainty. The fact that we may never be able to attain certainty does not mean that we cannot, or should not try to, advance and test theories.

Second, Dr Özkirimli maintains that ethnosymbolism boils down to the proposition that 'each case should be studied in its own specificity', and hence that this concurs, apparently, with Craig Calhoun's ('post-modernist') strategy of enquiry. If that is so, well and good. But it is not so. Certainly, as ethnosymbolists would argue, we need to grasp the specificities of each case and their 'inner worlds' of subjective meaning. But we need to do so in order the better to compare them in the light of our general hypotheses. It is the neglect of subjective elements in modernist and perennialist approaches and theories that ethnosymbolism aims to criticise and repair, but not the shared aim of providing causal-historical analyses and, ultimately, of formulating theories of nations and nationalism.

Let me conclude by saying that I am indebted to Dr Özkirimli for his entertaining critique of ethnosymbolism. Would that his wit were matched by a more scrupulous scholarship and a deeper grasp of his subject matter!

## Notes

1 Nor can this be said of Karl Deutsch, or Paul Brass, as my analyses in *Nationalism and Modernism* (1998) make clear.

2 I spend five whole chapters of *Nationalism and Modernism* detailing the differences between modernists, and in the course of these analyses I clearly address the issues they raise.

3 Recently I have been rethinking my definition of the concept of the nation (Smith 2002). Does this make me open-minded, confused or 'ambivalent'?

4 Why have I quoted *The Hymn to the Aton*? Because it supplied early, admittedly very elite, evidence of a perception of ethnic differences, this time in a religious, even cosmic, context; and as I argue throughout the book, ethnicity has furnished an important basis for subsequent nations.

5 This is actually a passage in which I trace the development of my thinking on nations and nationalism, not an argued and supported conclusion.

6 John Breuilly had written:

Pre-modern ethnic identity has little in the way of institutional embodiment beyond the local level. Almost all the major institutions which construct, preserve and transmit national identities, and which connect those identities to interests, are modern: parliaments, popular literature, courts, schools, labour markets, et cetera...National identity is essentially modern, and any useful approach to the subject must begin from this premise. (Breuilly 1996: 154)

My criticism was twofold: that pre-modern institutions were more varied and more inclusive of a population than Breuilly allows, and that vivid ethnic identities were, as a result, more durable. (Smith 1998: 197–8).

7 This is a debate initiated by Walker Connor (1990); see also Smith (2000:chs. 2–3).

8 Incidentally, Dr Özkirimli returns to this point later on, and also quotes me as saying that the Jews 'constituted the original ideal and prototype of the nation' (Smith 2001: 103). Actually, this is Adrian Hastings' (1997) view, and it only holds for the Christian West, for whom ancient Israel did appear as the model and prototype of a nation.

9 Robinson (1979) was replying to Paul Brass' (1979) modernist and more elite-oriented analysis of the role of Islamic values and symbols in the formation of Pakistan.

10 Already in Smith (1986), I regularly included 'values', in addition to myths, symbols and memories, so that it was possible to speak of a 'quartet'. More recently, I have added 'traditions' and even 'rituals', so that the original quartet has become a quintet and a sextet!

11 Even in the case of temples and cathedrals, it is for the religious ideals they symbolise and embody that people may be prepared to lay down their lives, not for them as artefacts of the imagination.

12 There is a large literature on civic and ethnic nationalisms, on which see, for example, Miller (1995) and Clarke and Jones (1999); and the debate cannot be dismissed by invoking a couple of recent headline examples of ethnic discrimination and racist populism, both of which actually provoked huge outcries against them all over the West.

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