

Martha C. Nussbaum

Toward a globally sensitive patriotism

In 1892, a World's Fair, called the Columbian Exposition, was scheduled to take place in Chicago. Clearly, it was gearing up to be a celebration of unfettered greed and egoism. Industry and innovation were to be its central foci, as America planned to welcome the world with displays of technological prowess and material enrichment. Gross inequalities of opportunity in the nation were to be masked by the glowing exterior of the buildings that came to be called the 'White City.'¹

Advocates for the poor, upset by the plan, got together to think about how the celebration might incorporate ideas of equal opportunity and sacrifice. A group of Christian socialists finally went

to President Benjamin Harrison with an idea: at the Exposition the president would introduce a new public ritual of patriotism, a pledge of allegiance to the flag, which would place the accent squarely on the nation's core moral values, include all Americans as equals, and rededicate the nation to something more than individual greed. The words that were concocted to express these sentiments were: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands: one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."²

As so often happens with patriotic sentiment, however, the Pledge soon proved a formula of both inclusion and exclusion. Francis Bellamy, the Pledge's au-

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1 All of this is well portrayed in Erik Larsen's novel *The Devil in the White City*, a work of popular semifiction that has, at the same time, a serious historical thesis.

2 The history of the Pledge is exhaustively documented in Richard J. Ellis, *To the Flag: The Unlikely History of the Pledge of Allegiance* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005). The words "under God" were added to the Pledge in 1954, during the cold war. I discuss the Pledge and the legal conflicts surrounding it in *Liberty of Conscience: In Defense of America's Tradition of Religious Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), chap. 5, 8.

thor, was himself both a socialist and a xenophobe, who feared that our national values were being undermined by the flood of new immigrants from southern Europe. By the 1940s, required by law as a daily recitation in schools in many states, the Pledge became a litmus test for the 'good' American; and those who flunked the test faced both exclusion and violence. Jehovah's Witnesses, who refused to recite the Pledge for religious reasons, seeing it as a form of idolatry, soon found their children expelled from school for noncompliance. Then, in a Catch-22, the parents were fined or jailed for "contributing to the delinquency of a minor" because their children were not in school.

Patriotism is Janus-faced. It faces outward, calling the self, at times, to duties for others, to the need to sacrifice for a common good, to renewed effort to fulfill the promises of equality and dignity inherent in national ideals. And yet, just as clearly, it also faces inward, inviting those who consider themselves 'good' or 'true' Americans to distinguish themselves from outsiders and subversives. Perhaps more dangerous yet, it serves to define the nation against its foreign rivals, whipping up warlike sentiments against them. (It was for precisely this reason that Jean-Jacques Rousseau thought that a good nation needed a patriotic 'civil religion' in place of the dogmas of Christianity, which he found too meek and pacifistic.³)

For such reasons, people committed to the twin goals of a world in which all human beings have a decent set of life

opportunities, and a world in which wars of aggression do not mar people's life chances, typically turn a skeptical eye on appeals to patriotic sentiment. They see such sentiments as binding the mind to something smaller than humanity; and, in a way, they are not wrong.

Patriotism is a species of love that, by definition, is bounded rather than global, particularistic rather than universal. Although it calls the mind to many aspects of humanity that lead the mind beyond its domestic confines – for example, human need or the struggle for justice and equality – patriotism is also irreducibly attached to particular memories, geographical features, and plans for the future.

If, then, our political doctrine included the thought that duties to all humanity should always take precedence over other duties, or the thought that particular obligations are correctly understood to be derivative from universal obligations (as a way of fulfilling, locally, those general obligations), it would be inconsistent with giving a large role to patriotism.

In my earlier writing on cosmopolitanism, I tentatively endorsed those two claims.⁴ In the meantime, however, my ideas have changed in two ways.

First, having come to endorse a form of Rawlsian political liberalism, I now think it crucial that the political principles of a decent society not include comprehensive ethical or metaphysical doctrines that could not be endorsed by reasonable citizens holding a wide range

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3 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, book IV, chap. VIII ("On Civil Religion"). One good modern edition is in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 220–227.

4 Martha Nussbaum, "For Love of Country," in *For Love of Country: A Debate on Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996). I am extremely grateful to Paul Weithman for comments that showed me the need for this clarification.

of comprehensive doctrines. Clearly, a strong form of cosmopolitanism that denied legitimacy to nonderivative particular obligations could not be the object of an overlapping consensus in a political-liberal state. Many of the reasonable comprehensive religious and secular doctrines that citizens hold do insist on the importance of particularistic forms of love and attachment, pursued for their own sake and not just as derivative from universal duties to humanity. (Indeed, duties to God, in most religions, are particularistic in this way.) So even if I had continued to endorse cosmopolitanism as a correct comprehensive ethical position, I would not have made it the foundation of political principles for either a nation or a world order.

I do not, however, even endorse cosmopolitanism as a correct comprehensive doctrine. Further thought about Stoic cosmopolitanism, and particularly the strict form of it developed by Marcus Aurelius, persuaded me that the denial of particular attachments leaves life empty of meaning for most of us, with the human psychology and the developmental history we have. The dark side of Stoic thought is the conviction that life contains merely a sequence of meaningless episodes, once particular attachments have been uprooted; and the solution to problems of particular attachments ought not to be this total uprooting, so destructive of the human personality.

It should be, instead, an uneven dialectical oscillation within ourselves, as we accept the constraints of some strong duties to humanity, and then ask ourselves how far we are entitled to devote ourselves to the particular people and places whom we love.

This, then, is my current comprehensive ethical position, and it makes plen-

ty of room for patriotism, especially in a form that accepts the constraints of global justice.

As it happens, this position allows me to incorporate – both in my political doctrine and in my comprehensive ethical doctrine – an insight firmly grasped by thinkers of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: that national sentiment is also a way of making the mind bigger, calling it away from its immersion in greed and egoism toward a set of values connected to a decent common life and the need for sacrifices connected to that common life.

Italian revolutionary and nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini, seeing the many ways in which the rise of capitalism threatened any common project involving personal sacrifice, believed that national sentiment was a valuable “fulcrum,” on which one could ultimately leverage universal sentiment toward the goal of a just world. He doubted that the immediate appeal to love all humanity could motivate people deeply sunk in greed, but he thought that the idea of the nation might acquire a strong motivational force even when people were rushing to enrich themselves.

Mazzini’s argument for patriotic sentiment goes something like this.

1. It is good, ultimately, for all human beings to care strongly about the good of all humanity.
2. Human beings are, by nature, somewhat narrow and particularistic in their concerns, and are not able to form a strong attachment to all humanity directly.
3. Human beings are, however, able to form a strong attachment to the nation, seen as the embodiment of both memory of past struggles and commitments to a common future.

4. The nation, because of its connection with common memory, episodes of suffering, and common hopes, is the largest unit to which such strong attachments can be directly formed.
5. Such national sentiments, if rightly targeted on things of genuine importance, such as human liberty and human need, will give people practice in caring about something larger than themselves, jolting them out of the egoism that is all too prevalent and preparing them for enlarged concern for the liberty and well-being of all humanity.
6. Human beings ought to cultivate patriotic sentiment, as a basis for global concern.

Mazzini offers an attractive route out of egoism to global concern through a rightly focused nationalism. These days, however, one might doubt premise 4. In the nineteenth century, nations looked very large. As Germany and Italy were unifying, pulling nations together out of disparate regional entities and the loyalties they had traditionally inspired, it seemed natural to think that calling the mind to the nation was already a way of calling it to something very vast. The success of that call seemed, to many people, to show that global concern was only a step away. John Stuart Mill even said that the world was simply a “larger country,”⁵ and that the strength of patriotic feeling showed that his “religion of humanity” was possible.

Today, we are much more skeptical about the nation. We think of it as smaller, not larger, as confining the mind rather than enlarging it. Many people believe that nations should not exist in a future decent world order, and many

5 J. S. Mill, “The Utility of Religion,” 1874 (posthumously published).

more doubt that the nation is the largest unit to which human beings are capable of feeling a strong and vivid loyalty. Any contemporary argument for sentiments that give the nation a special place must begin, then, by explaining why it ought to have any place at all.

My own argument for patriotism is rather different from Mazzini’s, but reaches a similar conclusion: national sentiment can play a valuable role in creating a decent world culture. I contend that:

1. The nation-state, including a strong form of national sovereignty, is an important good for all human beings, if the state takes a certain (liberal, democratic) form. Any decent world culture should promote the continued sovereignty and autonomy of (liberal and democratic) nation-states and protect the rights of citizenship associated with them.
2. Nation-states of the sort described cannot remain stable without moral sentiments attached to their institutions and their political culture.
3. The sentiments required cannot be supplied merely by allegiances to smaller units, such as families; cities; regions; and ethnic, racial, or gender groups: they must have the nation (under some description) as their object.
4. So, there is a good reason for nations of the sort described to engender sentiments of love and support in their citizens.
5. National states of the sort described need the moral sentiments even more if they are going to undertake projects that require considerable sacrifice of self-interest, such as substantial

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internal redistribution or copious foreign aid, the overcoming of discrimination against traditionally marginalized groups, or the protection of allies against unjust domination.

6. Such projects are good projects for nations to undertake. Therefore, we have even stronger reasons for the cultivation of nation-directed moral sentiments.

How would one defend premise 1? The classic defense is Grotian: a legitimate national state provides people with a role in creating the institutions and laws that govern them. It is thus a key expression of human autonomy. One may have a lot of autonomy elsewhere in one's life, but if one has no voice in the choice of policies affecting one's society's 'basic structure,' i.e., the set of institutions that governs one's life chances pervasively and from the start of a human life,⁶ one is cut off from an extremely important good.

Of course, other institutions might do this job equally well, or even better: the world state; the large NGO; the United Nations; the multinational corporation; the ethnic group; the state, the city, the family.⁷ All of these can be decisively rejected, however, on grounds of access and accountability. The contenders that have not been eliminated are a federation of nations, such as the EU, and smaller self-governing units within a federal nation, such as the states of the United States and of India. Such political entities do offer some reasonable degree of access and accountability. Both, how-

6 This definition of 'basic structure' is that used by Rawls in *Political Liberalism*.

7 On the world state, see Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 313–314.

ever, ultimately fall short of the nation-state in accountability and protection of basic rights, at least at the present time. We should keep reexamining these cases as new information becomes available. But currently, and for the foreseeable future, nations are critical for the promotion of people's well-being and life opportunities.

As for my premise 2, Rawls defends this in *A Theory of Justice*, especially since his state is very ambitious in the sacrifices it asks of its members in the name of justice.⁸ Habermas offers a similar moralized account of supportive sentiment, in his defense of a "constitutional patriotism."⁹

It is plausible, however, that the moral sentiments on which Rawls relies are a bit too transparently rationalistic to do the job he assigns to them. He fails to consider (although he does not deny) that an essential motivational role, in connection with the love of just institutions, may be played by more indirect appeals to the emotions, using symbols, memories, poetry, narrative. People are sometimes moved by the love of just institutions presented just as such; but the human mind is quirky and particularistic, more easily able to conceive a strong attachment if these high principles are connected to a particular set of memories, symbols, narrative, and poetry.

My claim is that the emotions of citizens in a Rawlsian well-ordered society

8 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 479–504. Although Rawls came to doubt the specifics of this section by the time he wrote *Political Liberalism*, he continued to assert that the just society needed to operate with a "reasonable political psychology."

9 Juergen Habermas, "Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe," *Praxis International* 12 (1992–1993): 1–19.

are, or should be, like this: that is, fixed on the moral meanings of the political conception (thus attaining stability for the right reasons, and not merely a tradition-governed type of stability), but held to those meanings by rituals and narratives of a kind that must be more particular, more uneven, more aesthetic, more tragic, and more silly than anything explicitly envisaged in Rawls's text.

These rituals and narratives might possibly be confined to what Rawls calls the "background culture" – but on the other hand, inasmuch as they are essential vehicles of public reason, there is no reason to confine them to that role. Candidates for election, legislators, and even judges might use such symbols and poetic references, and songs and stories, if they do so in a way that reinforces and deepens the moral meaning of the political conception. We just need to be sure that citizens develop a type of 'purified' patriotism that is reliably linked to the deeper principles of the political conception, that does not exalt the United States (for example) above other nations, and that focuses on suffering humanity wherever it occurs.¹⁰

In order to talk about the sentiments of a 'purified' patriotism, we need to have a normative conception of a decent society, since it is the institutions and entitlements of such a society that such sentiments would support. Let me, for the sake of argument, stipulate that the (national) society has committed itself to my capabilities approach, which guarantees to all citizens a threshold level of ten central opportunities, or capabilities, and that also assigns to the richer nations some definite, and rather exigent, duties of foreign aid in the pursuit of

global justice. Since my conception requires a high degree of sacrifice, it will need to call patriotism to its aid. If the patriotism in question is to be of the right sort, much thought must be given to questions concerning which sentiments should be fostered and which avoided.

Before I discuss these sentiments, I must add two preliminary notes. First, since the society I take as my starting point is a classically liberal one, with ample protections for freedoms of speech and association,¹¹ the public cultivation of sentiment will not be a form of coercive enforcement; later on I shall insist on a key role for a vigorous critical culture as part of what will make the whole enterprise work. So what I am talking about is public persuasion, about the many ways in which public leaders and educators cultivate sentiments through rhetoric and example.

Second, any nation is a narrative, a story in which memory of the past and aspiration for the future are salient. But any national narrative is an interpretation. Some past events are made salient and others are not. Some aspects of founding documents are brought forward and others are left behind. The moral form of patriotism that I am trying to articulate here will need to attend carefully to issues of interpretation, selecting from the many versions of a nation's history the one that makes best constructive sense against the background of the core moral commitments of the decent society. If the nation is a new one, the interpreter has somewhat more freedom of selection; nonetheless, this freedom is not total, since the creator of patriotism for a new nation still needs to link the nation to the past of its

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¹⁰ David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

¹¹ See Nussbaum, *Frontiers*, chap. 1, 3.

people, their memories of struggle, and their religious and ethnic traditions.

Which moral sentiments will help and which will hinder the creator of a purified patriotism for the decent society envisaged in the capability approach? There is a limit to how useful any general answer to this question can be, in advance of knowing what historical materials we have to work with, and what problems the patriot is facing. Patriotism, like and as a species of love, is particularistic. Nonetheless, we can say something about what is generally helpful or harmful – just as we can in the case of familial or romantic love.

Johann Gottfried Herder, in the eighteenth century, wrote well about the moral sentiments a wise leader would need to create.¹² Revealingly, he called these “dispositions of peace.” These dispositions, he said, would include a horror of war; a “reduced respect for heroic glory”; a loathing of a “false statecraft” that connects national glory to warlike expansionist projects; a “purified patriotism” that would breed contempt for aggression against other nations and, equally, for internal hatreds and group animosities; “feelings of justice towards other nations,” including sentiments of pain when another nation is disparaged or treated badly; humane feelings about international trade relations, so that people would feel upset when weaker nations “get sacrificed . . . for a profit that they do not even receive”; and, finally, a love of useful activity on behalf of human well-being, together with a dislike of attempts to promote well-being through war.

12 In “Letters for the Advancement of Humanity” (1793–1797), translated by Michael Forster in Forster, ed., *Herder: Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Letter 119, 404–409.

On one point, however, a modern patriotism must to some extent diverge from Herder: we must not base patriotic sentiment on any ethnolinguistic homogeneity, or on any religious sentiments that are divisive. It must appeal to sentiments that bind together the citizens of modern democracies that are diverse in religion and ethnicity, all of whom must be treated as fully equal citizens.

Moreover, we need to say much more than Herder does concerning the specific moral sentiments that a true statecraft and a purified patriotism should call to its aid. Central to the stability of any society that asks people to make sacrifices will be the sentiment of compassion, together with an ability to imagine vividly the predicaments of others. People will not be moved to address poverty constructively, or to give copious foreign aid, without a carefully constructed and moralized compassion that addresses the predicaments of the poor, seeing them as both serious and not caused simply by laziness or bad behavior. This compassion must learn a lesson from ancient Greek tragedy in the following sense: it must combine compassion for the plight of the suffering person with respect for that person’s agency, treating the person not as a passive victim of fortune, but as a human being striving, often heroically, against great obstacles.

Because compassion is not intrinsically reliable – for example, people usually feel compassion more strongly toward the near and dear than toward the distant – it must therefore be carefully constructed in connection with the nation’s moral norms.

Two other useful sentiments – within proper limits – are anger and hope. Anger may be misdirected, but no struggle against injustice can do without it. Leaders will need to try to construct an

anger that is targeted at injustices, not at people; that is firmly linked to nonviolent political struggle; and that offers, in the distance, possibilities of mercy and reconciliation. Hope is an essential comrade of a reasonable anger, since people will only stick with nonviolence, and hope for reconciliation, if they do not despair.

What, by contrast, does a wise statecraft need to watch out for and try hard not to construct? In *Hiding from Humanity* I argue that two of the most dangerous moral sentiments for a decent society are disgust and shame. Both arise in early childhood in a primitive form, and both take as their first object the insufficiencies of the human body, its necessary mortality, weakness, and dependency. These features of human life are difficult for ambitious and intelligent beings to endure, and are the source of much instability in the moral life. In disgust, people initially reject the effluvia and decay of the animal body. Usually, however, things don't stop there, as people find a group of humans onto whom they can project the discomfort they feel about their own bodies, calling them smelly, slimy, disgusting, and so forth. Much racial hatred, and most misogyny, has such elements, as does the hatred of homosexuals. A politician who appeals to disgust in the public realm is a dangerous person, one who is seeking to exploit for divisive purposes the discomfort that people feel at having a body that will die and decay.

Shame is more complex, since shame can sometimes call us to high ideals that we have let slide through laziness or obtuseness. But there is a type of shame, or 'primitive shame,' that focuses on the alleged shamefulness of the very fact of needing others, that seeks a rock-hard type of invulnerability and calls that manliness. A 'real man,' so we are

told, is able to be totally self-sufficient. Any kind of weakness or need is a sign of compromised masculinity. Studies of disturbed adolescents in the United States show how this sort of shame, in connection with diseased norms of manliness, leads to aggression against the weak and against women.¹³

In my recent study of religious violence in India,¹⁴ I found that shame was a key element in the violence of militant Hindus against Muslims, in the 2002 Gujarat pogrom and elsewhere. Hindu males tell themselves a story of centuries of humiliation – first at the hands of the Muslims, then at the hands of the British. Out of this collective sense that their virility has been compromised emerges a narrative of the shame-free nation of the future, one that will be so successfully aggressive, so efficient in cleansing the land of the ones who are blamed for the humiliation, that Hindu pride will reign supreme and inviolate. This story is a large part of what fuels violence against Muslims, as well as sexual violence against Muslim women.

So the good sort of patriotism will have to attend carefully to shame and to images of masculinity, seeking to cultivate an acceptance of bodily vulnerability as a part of daily life and to prevent the formation of diseased stereotypes of the real man. These ideas converge, clearly, with Herder's ideas about the need to discourage people from seeing glory in aggressive military exploits.

13 Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson, *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys* (New York: Ballantine, 1999).

14 Martha Nussbaum, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), chap. 6.

As my story of the Pledge of Allegiance shows, even a purified patriotism has its dangers. Although we turn to patriotism to render good institutions stable (for the right reasons), the good in patriotism may itself be unstable in times of anxiety. Law and institutional structure are therefore essential props to the good in patriotism. Five factors contribute to our getting the good out of patriotism without the bad.

The first is constitutional rights and an independent judiciary. Constitutional rights are bulwarks for minorities against the panic and excess of majorities. Because minorities are always at risk from patriotism, which can often stir majority sentiment against them, a purified patriotism needs to be advanced in conjunction with a firm and comprehensive tradition of constitutional rights protecting all citizens, and an independent judiciary, detached from public bias and panic, as these rights' interpreter.

A second factor is a separation of powers that makes going to war more difficult. Herder thinks of a horror of war as the very core of a purified patriotism. But a people's horror of war will not stop leaders from making war in the absence of political structure. War-making powers should reside in the legislature, and executive authority to initiate and continue wars should be severely contained.

Next, protections for the rights of immigrants are necessary. Patriotism always risks veering into xenophobia, and xenophobia often takes new immigrant groups as its targets. In addition to protections for minorities who already enjoy citizens' rights, a purified patriotism needs to be advanced in conjunction with firm protections for the rights of legal immigrants who are not (or not yet) citizens, and decent arrangements for illegal immigrants.

Fourth, getting the good out of a purified patriotism requires education about foreign cultures and domestic minorities. Panic and xenophobia are always more difficult to sustain when people are acquainted with complex historical facts regarding the groups they encounter. For example, if schools in Europe and the United States were doing their job teaching people about the varieties of Islam, the current atmosphere of panic would be far more difficult to sustain.

Finally, purified patriotism requires a vigorous critical culture. Kant emphasized perhaps the most important factor: protection of the freedom of speech and dissent, and of the voices of intellectuals who play leading roles in shaping a critical public culture. Schools need to foster this critical culture from the earliest years, by teaching children that the ability to think critically is one of the most essential abilities of the democratic citizen, and that learning by rote and thinking by habit are the marks of the bad citizen.

Indeed, although the United States is far from having as vigorous a critical culture as it ought to have, my story of the Pledge of Allegiance owes its relatively happy denouement to the critical culture it does have. After the Supreme Court decision upholding the constitutionality of the laws mandating the daily pledge recitation and flag salute¹⁵ – notice that even the independent judiciary was led astray by patriotic fervor – there was a tremendous outburst of protest from the public, led by journalists and intellectuals, but joined by people of goodwill all over the nation. The Court reacted to the public critique of its arguments by hearing, only a short time later, a similar

15 *Minersville School Dist. v. Gobitis*, 310 U.S. 596 (1940).

case, taking that occasion to change its mind. In *Board of Education v. Barnette*, Justice Jackson observed that nationalism often seeks to “coerce uniformity of sentiment,” and insisted that we must be vigilant against all such attempts.¹⁶

History contains countless examples showing how bold projects requiring sacrifice derive support from moral emotions directed at the nation and its history. Let us look at two different cases: the attempt to end the injustice of slavery and racial discrimination in the United States, and the attempt to forge a new Indian nation dedicated to combating economic inequality. In each case I shall focus on political rhetoric – not because I do not believe that sculpture, music, public parks, and many other things are also important, but simply because political rhetoric is the easiest to describe in an essay. In the case of Gandhi, however, some description of his self-dramatization and his use of theater will prove essential.

Abraham Lincoln’s speeches insistently focus on the history of the United States, offering a constructive account of its core values that underwrites his request for continued sacrifice. The Gettysburg Address, for example, begins with memory, with the mention of “fourscore and seven years,” reminding people that the nation, so imperiled at present, had a beginning. It was “a new nation,” with a distinctive set of ideals focusing on liberty and equality. Lincoln observes that the present war tests whether any nation of this sort “can long endure.” Praising the sacrifice of those who died (in a battle that was one of the war’s bloodiest), he then says that the living cannot hallow the

ground: only the bravery of the fallen can do so. Living people are thus led toward an attitude of reverential emulation of the sacrifice of the fallen. Lincoln then asks that dedication of them: we are all to be dedicated to the task of preserving the American democracy, and to giving it “a new birth of freedom.” He ends on the note of urgency he has sounded throughout: the struggle is really over whether democracy itself can exist.

Lincoln’s speech contains appeals to a constitutional patriotism that would have pleased Rawls and Habermas. But it does much more: in its vivid invocation of the founding, its heartfelt mourning for the fallen soldiers, its appeal to renewed commitment, it puts historical and contemporary flesh on these moral bones.

Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address is another interesting Herderian document, because it carefully positions the Union as the side that wanted and desperately tried to avoid war. The survival of the nation is the starting point: the South would rather “make war” rather than see it survive, while the North was willing to “accept war” rather than see it perish. The two sides are asymmetrical in their relationship to the nation: the secessionist struggle of the South is a war of aggression against the body of the nation, and the Union’s response is a just response to aggression. Thus the speech does what Herder wanted, nurturing a horror of war and a reluctance to make war.

The situation of the slaves now enters the picture, and the fact that the South is motivated by greed is emphasized. On one side, then, we have people motivated by self-interest, who “wring their bread from the sweat of other men’s faces” and even ask God to help them do it. On the other are those who would

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16 *Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943).

include the slaves as human beings and citizens *who count*, “one-eighth of the whole population.” The nation is now allied with respect and inclusion, the secessionist movement with egoism and false religion.

Finally, however, the speech appeals, famously, to mercy and forgiveness – “With malice toward none, with charity for all” – since the nation is wounded and its wounds must be “bound up.” Mercy does not compromise “firmness in the right,” but it gives us a way of going on together into an uncertain future.

This speech contains admirable principles, but its use of image and narrative, and its rhythmic cadences of language, are what make the moral principles come alive, in ways that could be internalized by children, forging their deepest images of what their nation is. Said together in schools by black and white children together, it reminds them of the history of pain and struggle, but also of Americans’ capacity for respect, love, and sheer endurance. It constructs an interpretive patriotism, using general ideals to criticize historical wrongs.

The speech ends on a strongly universalistic note: “To do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.” This comes easily, because when a nation is conceived around ideas of inclusion and human dignity, it can easily lead to a struggle for these ideas everywhere.

The Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1863. One hundred years later, its promise was not fulfilled. Martin Luther King’s great “I Have a Dream” speech, delivered in Washington, D.C., on August 28, 1963, is another of the most formative documents of American education: all young Americans have heard it thousands of times, in King’s

extraordinary voice. Nobody could doubt that it is a masterpiece of rhetoric, and that its achievements go well beyond the abstract sentiments that it conveys. Its soaring images of freedom and revelation, and its musical cadences, all give the bare ideas of freedom, dignity, inclusion, and nonviolence wings, so to speak. What I want to study more closely here is the way in which King appeals to the history and traditions of the nation, and to sentiments connected to an idea of America that is, once again, interpretive, using general ideals to criticize an unjust reality.

The speech begins with an allusion to the Gettysburg Address – “Five score years ago” – positioning itself as its next chapter. Just as Lincoln looked back to the founding as a moment of commitment to ideals that he sees as gravely threatened, so King looks back to Lincoln’s freeing of the slaves as a moment of commitment whose promise is still unrealized. He uses a mundane, and very American, image for that failure. The Constitution and the Declaration of Independence were a “promissory note,” but the nation has “defaulted,” giving the Negro people a “bad check” that has come back marked “insufficient funds.” King constructs an image of America: the virtue of fiscal rectitude on which Americans pride themselves is inconsistent with their past and current behavior toward the country’s Negro citizens. And it is the virtues that must and will win the battle with selfishness: “[W]e refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation.”

Throughout the speech, King sounds a note of urgency: the “sweltering summer of the Negro’s legitimate discontent” means that there will be no peace in America until justice is done. But he

also cultivates in his followers a purified patriotism: they must, in Gandhian fashion, attain moral superiority by forgoing violent deeds. Like Gandhi, he makes nonviolence seem “majestic,” and violence sordid. (“Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.”) And he also, like Lincoln, appeals to trust between the races, reminding his followers that many white people are present and have joined the struggle for justice: “We cannot walk alone.” By cultivating hope and trust, along with legitimate anger, he defuses the urge to violence. This is Herderian purified patriotism, based on a strong denigration of violence and a refusal to bow down before false idols of aggressive masculinity.

The visionary and well-known “I have a dream” section of the speech is central to its construction of an image of a morally decent nation, in which all may join together on terms of equality. But then, immediately following upon this vision of a new America, King returns to national memory and national tradition, by quoting in full the famous song “America,” or “My Country ‘Tis of Thee.” Significantly, he now says, “And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.” In other words, the song, which people usually sing complacently, as the account of a reality, is itself prophecy, and its words of freedom must be *made* true by committed action for justice.

The next section of the speech can best be described in the language of jazz, as a series of riffs on the song, as freedom is asked to ring from a series of regions of America. The abstract image of America is being made concrete and physical by being linked to well-known features of geography. At the same time, geography is being moralized: the mountains of

New York are now not just mountains; they are sites of freedom. Meanwhile, the body of the nation is being personified in a sensuous, indeed sexy, way: the “heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania,” the “curvaceous slopes of California.” Thus the invitations to disgust so ubiquitous in malign patriotism are replaced by an embrace of the sensuous reminiscent of Walt Whitman.

But also: the end of the Civil War is finally at hand, as freedom is asked to ring from a series of sites in the South. In a way reminiscent of the Second Inaugural, King expresses malice toward none and charity toward all. The note of sly humor, as he gets in his dig at Mississippi (“let freedom ring from every hill and every molehill of Mississippi”) is a reminder that bad behavior has not been forgotten; it has, however, been transcended in a surge of joy whose object is the purified patriotic nation.

Like Lincoln’s speech, King’s ends on a global note: the victory of integration in America will “speed up that day when *all* of God’s children” will enjoy freedom. Thus purified patriotism melds naturally into a striving for global justice and an inclusive human love.

Let us now turn to India’s founding. When a new nation is founded, there are no canonical documents or traditions, no memories of long past struggles, that will command the agreement and sentiments of all. Indeed, to this day, a struggle continues over the proper image of the nation and its history, as partisans of the Hindu Right endeavor to characterize that history as one of indigenous Hindu peace and alien domination, first by Muslims and then by Christians. Gandhi and Nehru, setting out to forge the image of a pluralistic India, united by commitment to a truly shared history of struggle for self-rule and to the na-

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tion's people, had an uphill battle, since colonial humiliation bred in many a strong desire to perform deeds of manly aggression. Their struggle involved, then, a conception of true manliness and truly strong patriotism that was controverted by a more warlike form of patriotism.

This struggle is neatly exemplified by the ongoing dispute over which of two songs should be India's national anthem. The actual national anthem, "Jana Gana Mana," was written (words and music) by poet, novelist, and theorist of global justice Rabindranath Tagore, a determined critic of most existing forms of nationalism.¹⁷ Its addressee is an immortal spirit of righteousness, equivalent to the moral law, and the anthem describes all Indians as seeking the victory of that moral principle. Like King, Tagore enumerates all the regions from which Indians come together: people from all regions seek the blessings of justice.

The Tagore anthem puts beautiful sensuous poetry and music underneath inclusive and egalitarian moral sentiment. Its notion of victory is a moral, not a warlike, notion. Very different is the anthem preferred by the Hindu Right, known as "Bande Mataram," ("Hail Motherland"), taken from a novel by the nineteenth-century Bengali novelist, and early nationalist, Bankimchandra Chatterjee.¹⁸ This anthem depicts the

17 See Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism*, lectures delivered in 1917. "Jana Gana Mana" was not written as the national anthem; it was written much earlier, as Tagore's form of indirect protest against the visit of George V to India. What he was basically doing is to state that India's diverse citizens owe their ultimately loyalty not to the colonial ruler, but to the moral law. I discuss the anthem's history in the introduction to *The Clash*.

18 Chatterjee is one of the targets of Tagore's mordant critique of warlike nationalism, in

citizen as bowing down to the motherland, which is then identified with a series of Hindu deities. (Thus the not-too-subtle suggestion is that India is a Hindu nation, in which Muslims will always be outsiders.) This uncritical devotion ("Mother, I kiss thy feet") is closely linked to warlike aggression against the enemies of Hindu India: "Who hath said thou are weak in thy lands / When the swords flash out in twice seventy million hands / And seventy millions voices roar / Thy dreadful name from shore to shore?"¹⁹

This controversy about the national anthem is a debate between the form of patriotism Herder loathed and a form that would have been very congenial to him. There is a parallel debate about the Indian flag. The existing flag has at its center the wheel of law, a symbol associated with the Buddhist emperor Ashoka, who fostered religious toleration. It is, then, a symbol of religious inclusiveness, nonviolence, and the supremacy of law. The flag preferred by the Hindu Right is the saffron banner of the eighteenth-century Maharashtrian hero Shivaji, who conducted a briefly successful rebellion against Muslim rule. It is an aggressive and exclusionary symbol, a symbol that says that Hindus will strike back against centuries of humiliation and seize power for themselves, subordinating others.

The world has known no more canny creator of purified patriotism than Mohandas Gandhi. Gandhi wrote copious-

his 1916 novel *Ghare Baire*, or *The Home and the World*. Its hero, who favors an inclusive conception of citizenship based upon justice, declares himself unable to understand the spirit of "Bande Mataram."

19 I cite the well-known translation by nationalist philosopher Sri Aurobindo.

ly, but his success in forging a purified patriotism for the new nation, a vast majority of whose inhabitants could not read and write, owes little to his writings. What Gandhi brilliantly did was to make his own body a living symbol of a (purified conception of the) nation. This self-fashioning expressed his idea that the essential site of national struggle is inside each person, a struggle to conquer greed and anxious desires for domination of others.

Gandhi did not fashion himself in a vacuum: he relied heavily on traditional Hindu images of asceticism, and he therefore had to be very careful lest his image of the nation seem Hindu in an exclusionary way. He took care to put Muslims in central positions in his freedom movement, and to turn to them at what we might call key ritual moments. His famous fast unto death in 1947, for example, was broken when he turned to Maulana Azad, a Muslim cleric and Congress Party leader, asking him for some orange juice and some bread. He thus broke with traditional Hindu ideas of purity, which were exclusionary along lines of both caste and religion. Wielding the enormous power of traditional asceticism, he diverted it to an utterly new cause.

At the same time, Gandhi constructed his body as a symbol of unity across lines of wealth and caste. If one examines the change in his physical appearance between the early days in South Africa and the height of his influence in India, one sees a deliberately cultivated solidarity with the lowest and poorest, into which the force of his moral authority also led the elites around him. To see an elite Kashmiri Brahmin such as Jawaharlal Nehru spinning his own thread, or marrying his daughter Indira in a homespun sari, is to see the magnitude of the transformation Gandhi was able to accom-

plish. His half-naked persona, draped only in a loincloth and propped up by a walking stick, etched itself indelibly into the mind of the nation, and the world.

Gandhi constructed purified patriotism above all through his theater of civil resistance. Both supremely moral and strategic, Gandhi knew that when the eyes of the world were on India, dignified nonviolent behavior both seemed and was strong and self-governing, and that British thuggishness seemed and was puny and ugly by contrast. In the process, he made both his followers and countless others see manliness in a new way: the body that stood with dignity, taking blows, looked strong and proud. The body that kept dishing out the blows looked utterly at sea, hopelessly weak, not able to touch what it was trying to control.

Gandhian patriotism asked a lot of people. It asked the rich to live in solidarity with the poor and to make huge sacrifices of personal comfort. It asked all men to adopt a new type of nonviolent manliness that entailed a great deal of sacrifice, since revenge is pleasant. Only the use of symbols, Gandhi repeatedly said, could succeed in making people willing to take on these difficult tasks. Fortunately, he was a brilliant forger of symbols, symbols that moved because they were old and yet included because they were utterly new. He was also a brilliant wielder of humor, who found ways to include through a kind of loving childlike play. Thus, a common reaction to meeting him was to be surprised that he was not forbiddingly austere or saintly, but puckish and delightful.

Because Gandhi was so charismatic, his crusade on behalf of purified patriotism temporarily disabled the struggle of the Hindu Right on behalf of exclu-

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sionary patriotism. Gandhi's assassin, Nathuram Godse, justified the assassination for posterity in the name of a (correct) love of country. Godse remains a hero for the Hindu Right, not least for the Gujarati Hindus who, in December 2007, reelected by a large margin as chief minister Narendra Modi, a leader whose complicity in the killings of innocent Muslims during riots in 2002 has now been proven beyond doubt.²⁰

Gandhi's version of patriotism, however, is the one that won out at the founding, enshrined in India's constitution and in the founding principles laid down in Jawaharlal Nehru's famous "tryst with destiny" speech on the night of India's independence, yet another example of the public construction of a purified patriotism of inclusiveness and equality. Imagining Indian citizens not as aggressive warriors, but as mothers laboring to bring forth a new and just nation ("Before the birth of freedom, we have endured all the pains of labor, and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow"), Nehru drew a map that linked proper patriotism to a universal commitment to justice and the eradication of poverty and misery: "[A]s long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over."

For the popular idea of an aggressive warlike India, Nehru then substitutes the idea of an India at work, characterized by incessant labor and striving toward the goal of eradicating human suf-

fering – not only in India, but everywhere: "And so we have to labour and to work, and to work hard, to give reality to our dreams. Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world, for all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine that it can live apart."

Unfortunately, where patriotism is concerned, both India and the United States have recently taken a turn from the purified toward the malign. In today's India, patriotism shows her Janus-faced nature. The Hindu Right, building on sentiments of ethnic purity, has created a climate of violence and fear for minorities, especially Muslims. Although the Gandhi-Nehru vision in some ways prevailed in the 2004 elections, it is hanging on by its teeth, and still faces strong opposition from the malign patriotism of "Bande Mataram," egged on substantially by nonresident Indians in the United States, who made a large financial and emotional contribution to Narendra Modi's recent victory.

Meanwhile, a new technological middle class focuses on the patriotism of national enrichment, repudiating the Nehruvian ideas of striving and of solidarity with the poor. The Congress Party has tied itself into knots trying not to alienate these voters, and this has meant that only Sonia Gandhi continues to speak out resolutely in favor of sacrifice and against a patriotism that divides. On this account she is repeatedly attacked for her allegedly 'Italian' ideas. (Her Italian birth is a trope used to undermine her claim to represent the nation.) Every day, in the weeks leading up to the Gujarat state elections, I received e-mail denouncing her, from a group that calls itself "Indian media bias." Titles such as "Is Sonia Losing Her Marbles?" and

20 On the evidence that led to a denial to Modi of a visa to enter the United States, see Nussbaum, *The Clash Within*, chap. 1; since that time, interviews by the investigative magazine *Tehelka*, conducted with hidden camera, have given even more overwhelming evidence of his guilt; see the special issue of *Tehelka*, "The Truth: Gujarat 2002, In the Words of the Men Who Did It," *Tehelka* 4 (43) (November 3, 2007).

“It is not Muslims, It is Islam, stupid!” show a malign exclusionary patriotism making its way, through mockery of ideals of peace and demonization of the different.

As for the United States, a politics of fear has convinced many Americans that they need to curb civil liberties in the name of a never-ending ‘war on terror,’ while politicians increasingly help themselves to a language that demonizes Islam and Muslims (‘Islamofascism,’ ‘war against Islamic terrorism’). At the same time, political actors from Antonin Scalia to Mike Huckabee rally around an exclusionary vision of America, with Scalia holding, with Mitt Romney, that we should prefer the monotheistic religions and disfavor other religions and nonreligion, and Huckabee going so far as to assert that the United States is a Christian nation. Acute fear has typically led Americans to characterize the nation in narrow and exclusionary terms. As with Congress Party members in India, Democrats in the United States are not standing up for the Hindus, Buddhists, agnostics, and atheists whom the rhetoric of the Right invites us to consider second-class citizens. Nobody dares to alienate the powerful evangelical movement by pointing to the way in which current Republican rhetoric violates an idea of equal standing and fair play that lies deep in the history of the nation. The demonization of illegal immigrants is yet another ugly part of this politics of anxiety.

Obviously, then, patriotism in and of itself is not a good thing; often indeed it is a very bad thing. It might, then, seem perverse of me, at such a time, even to mention the idea of patriotism.

What I have argued, however, is that a nation that pursues goals that require sacrifice of self-interest needs to be able to appeal to patriotism, in ways that

draw on symbol and rhetoric, emotional memory and history – as Lincoln, King, Gandhi, and Nehru all successfully did. This is all the more true when a nation pursues not only internal justice but the goal of global justice as well. If people interested in economic equality, justice for minorities, and global justice eschew symbol and rhetoric, fearing all appeals to emotion and imagination as inherently dangerous and irrational, the Right will monopolize these forces, to the detriment of democracy.

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