

RICHARD BOYD

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JOSEPH MAZZINI
AND THE NATIONALIST FALLACY**

This article explores the enduring tension between individual liberty and communal liberty in the writings on Robert Nisbet, Elie Kedourie, and the nineteenth-century Italian nationalist Joseph Mazzini. In different ways, all three of these thinkers appreciate that individuals may be disposed to foresake individual liberty in pursuit of the communal liberty promised by nationalism. If this longing for community and solidarity is a perennial feature of human nature, as all three argue, then what are the conditions that encourage the growth of nationalism, fundamentalism, and other expressions of collective solidarity, and what challenges does this present to individual liberty?



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ROBERT NISBET AND THE LONGING FOR COMMUNITY

In *The Quest for Community*, Robert Nisbet paints a compelling portrait of the psychological vacuum left in the hearts of citizens by modern liberal society. Philosophical critics of liberalism such as Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Michael Sandel have complained that these existential shortcomings may stem from classical liberal philosophy itself.¹ Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and even John Rawls grounded their liberal theories in hypothetical states of nature or original positions populated by solitary, egoistic, and purely rational individuals bereft of cultural or political attachments. Insofar as liberalism ignores the empirical reality of sociological community, liberal political philosophy rests upon an anthropological fiction. Notwithstand-

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¹ Crawford B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962; Charles Taylor, "Atomism," *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 2: *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982; Michael Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self," *Political Theory*, 12, February 1984, pp. 81-96; Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1981.

ing the occasional Robinson Crusoe, every real person is embedded in some particular cultural and moral tradition. But even if its philosophical principles were sound, critics allege that in practice liberal society gravitates toward possessive individualism, self-indulgence, narcissism, and political apathy. In the opinion of sociological communitarians such as Amitai Etzioni and Robert Bellah, modern individuals suffer from a lack of meaningful relationships and are starved for a morally cohesive community.²

As Nisbet points out, this longing for community may have less to do with the fact that our political life is distant, legalistic, and existentially uninspiring than with the declining significance of smaller, face-to-face communities that make up the fabric of everyday life. His observations prefigure those of contemporary sociologists, political philosophers, and public intellectuals who complain about the demise of “civil society,” particularly the disappearance of traditional intermediary associations such as the family, church, neighborhood or voluntary groups.³ Their common worry is that modern individuals confront one another and the state without benefit of mediating institutions or intermediary attachments. In the United States, the rich network of civic associations lionized by Alexis de Tocqueville has purportedly given way to a society where voluntary and fraternal associations have vanished and individuals “bowl alone.”⁴ Already in the 1950’s Nisbet worried that “a rising number of individuals belong to no organized association at all” and that modern society had pockets of complete social isolation and anomie.⁵ Modern history can be told as the story of the breakdown of organic, status-based communities and their gradual replacement by impersonal, legalistic, and instrumental organizations. While the rise of modern individualism and the eclipse of community may have been fueled by religious and economic causes—the advent of Protestantism, for example, and the forces of modern capitalist development—Nisbet insists that the real culprit is the “rise and development of the centralized territorial State.”⁶

It may be tempting to lump Nisbet with the so-called “communitarian critique of liberalism” of the 1980’s and 1990’s, but *The Quest for Community* has a sociological richness and political astuteness missing from many subsequent communitarians. Unlike many others, Nisbet is well aware that stark portrayals of society in terms of an unalloyed atomism are at best half-truths and at worst utter falsehoods. Strictly speaking, older forms of association never completely disappeared—there are still families, communities, neighborhoods, and churches. Despite the familiar rhetoric that the modern age is characterized by “social disorganization and moral isolation,” at no point in history has there been such “an extraordinary variety of custodial and redemptive

² Amitai Etzioni, *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in A Democratic Society*, New York: Basic Books, 1996; Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

³ See particularly Jean Elshtain et al., “Council on Civil Society,” *A Call to Civil Society: Why Democracy Needs Moral Truths*, New York: Institute for American Values, 1998.

⁴ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York: Touchstone, 2001.

⁵ Robert Nisbet, *The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order & Freedom*, San Francisco: ICS Press, 1990, pp. 63-64.

⁶ Nisbet, *Quest for Community*, pp. 85-89.

agencies,” with “so many organizations, public and private,” focused on helping individuals.⁷ As “older associations of kinship and neighborhood have become weakened,” their place has been taken by formal organizations such as government agencies, national charitable associations, and industrial unions.

The real problem is that while these new large-scale organizations perform some of the same technical functions as traditional face-to-face associations, their “rational impersonality” means that they cannot provide a “psychologically meaningful” link between “the individual and the larger values and purposes of his society.”⁸ Although the number of social contacts between individuals has actually accelerated in urban industrial society, both in number and intensity, the “casual, informal [sorts of] relationships which abound” are not “the kind of social groups which create a sense of belonging, which supply incentive, and which confer upon the individual a sense of status.”⁹ Traditional relationships of family, kinship, church, and neighborhood may still exist, but they are no longer well positioned to satisfy their core function of connecting individuals to the central value system. Their place has been usurped by newer organizations ill-equipped to supply an authentic sense of community or shared purposes. More than anything else, this functional transformation brought about by the growth of the modern state has yielded “a profound change in the very psychological structure of society.”¹⁰

The immediate costs are psychological, existential, and sociological—apparent in the unhappiness, alienation, and meaninglessness many people feel in modern society. But Nisbet’s argument is more nuanced and politically savvy than those of latter-day “communitarians,” who either wring their hands despairingly about the tragic loss of community, on the one hand, or campaign loudly and imprudently for its wholesale re-invention, on the other. The loss of community may be unfortunate in and of itself, but the most ominous parts of Nisbet’s story are the political dangers he sees accompanying the natural human longing to recreate traditional sources of community. Some kind of backlash against the impersonality and disenchantment of modern social life is inevitable. “The quest for community will not be denied,” Nisbet warns, “for it springs from some of the [most] powerful needs of human nature—needs for a clear sense of cultural purpose, membership, status, and continuity.”¹¹ Human beings crave meaning and proximity to higher purposes and transcendent values. If neither traditional institutions nor modern organizations can satisfy the longing for community, then individuals will clamor for new allegiances that better answer their needs. The most abominable political expression of this nostalgic longing for community was the advent of totalitarianism in the twentieth century. According to Nisbet, Fascism on the Right, and Communism on the Left, rested on similar existential cravings for meaning, communion, and transcendence.

Nisbet is hardly alone among twentieth-century thinkers in foreseeing the dangers of an unrequited need for organic community. In his famous essay “The Bent Twig: On

⁷ Nisbet, *Quest for Community*, pp. 43-44.

⁸ Nisbet, *Quest for Community*, pp. 62-63.

⁹ Nisbet, *Quest for Community*, p. 63.

¹⁰ Nisbet, *Quest for Community*, p. 61.

¹¹ Nisbet, *Quest for Community*, p. 64.

the Rise of Nationalism” and elsewhere, Isaiah Berlin confronted the “world reaction against the central doctrines of nineteenth-century liberal rationalism” and the “confused effort to return to an older morality.”¹² Albeit in a more abstruse vocabulary, Nisbet’s fellow conservative Michael Oakeshott warned of the “individual *manqué*,” who gladly surrendered his freedom in the hope that some higher power would offer direction, and of the temptation of envisioning the modern state along the lines of a purposive association or *universitas*¹³. On the Left, and around the same time as Nisbet’s book, the Frankfurt School complained that the homogeneity and vapid conformity of capitalism made “mass society” susceptible to the influence of an “authoritarian personality.”¹⁴ Although lacking Nisbet’s sociological sophistication, even the self-proclaimed liberal F.A. Hayek acknowledged the “atavism” of “suppressed primordial instincts” that sometimes re-emerge when individuals are confronted by the abstract rules and extended order of modern commercial society. Using the idiom of evolutionary ethics, Hayek speaks of “long submerged innate instincts” toward tribalism based on millennia of life in small, face-to-face communities. Confronted by the liberty of modern commercial society and its abstract disciplining rules, mankind chafes under the pressures. The rule-based morality of modern society runs up against a more natural, intuitive morality based on “common objects” and giving particular things to particular people.¹⁵ For Hayek, these frustrated longings—for community, the nostalgic past, or a transformative future—represent perennial challenges to liberty.

Nisbet’s main concern is that a frustrated longing for community will lead to the deification of the state, and he is preoccupied with how the debilities of modern liberal society can give rise to something as awful as totalitarianism. But without discounting the horrors of Fascism or Communism, arguably no modern political ideology has so willfully conflated liberty with community as Nationalism. Nationalism appears to be a largely modern phenomenon, with origins in the romanticism of nineteenth-century Europe and the structural imperatives of modern capitalism and state-building, but the value of national self-determination and the notion of liberty as something belonging to a community can be traced all the way back to the ancient world. As Isaiah Berlin notes, “the need to belong to an easily identifiable group had been regarded, at any rate since Aristotle, as a natural requirement on the part of human beings.”¹⁶ Alongside the more familiar classical liberal understanding of “liberty” as a metaphysical attribute of individuals to which all human beings are entitled by virtue of their natural human

¹² Isaiah Berlin, “The Bent Twig: On the Origins of Nationalism,” in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, p. 254.

¹³ Michael Oakeshott, “The Masses in Representative Democracy,” in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1991, pp. 371-383; Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1990, Part 3.

¹⁴ Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York: Harper, 1950; Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.

¹⁵ Friedrich A. Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty*: volume 3, *The Political Order of a Free Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979, pp. 165-168.

¹⁶ Isaiah Berlin, “Nationalism,” in *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, London: Pimlico, 1979, p. 338.

rights, there is an older and still widespread notion that liberty is not the entitlement of abstracted individuals, but something that nations or peoples partake of collectively.

The nationalist principle that liberty is accessible only by means of communal membership in a self-determining nation, people, or civilization melds distinctively ancient and modern ideas. On the one hand, the idea that liberty demands collective self-determination harkens back to ancient participatory understandings of republican liberty—what Benjamin Constant famously described as the “liberty of the ancients.” In contrast to the “liberty of the moderns,” which consists only of “negative liberty,” or the absence of restraint, the older conception of liberty entails an active, participatory, and political dimension. Peoples or nations enjoy liberty to the extent that they are autonomous and self-determining. Aristotle contrasted the Greek achievement of *politikē*, or ruling and being ruled in turn, with the *despotikē* by which barbarians are ruled over by kings. On the other hand, the nineteenth-century conception of liberty as communal self-determination also rests upon what I take to be uniquely modern foundations. Whereas Locke and classical liberals had postulated liberty as a natural right inherent in individuals by virtue of their humanity and transcendent natural laws, nineteenth-century liberals such as François Guizot, Alexis de Tocqueville, and John Stuart Mill took a different, more sociological turn, theorizing liberty as a property to which individuals were entitled by virtue of membership in a particular nation, people, or civilization.

By dismissing the notion of natural rights and drawing attention to the empirical reality that liberty was in fact the product of concrete political and cultural institutions, the sociological turn in nineteenth-century thought provided a welcome rejoinder to the metaphysical abstraction of classical liberal ideas of natural rights. Nonetheless, the sociological understanding of liberty brought with it any number of troubling corollaries. First, there was the implication that there were potentially as many different species of liberty as there were different nations. American liberty, English liberty, Gallic liberty, Germanic liberty—all of these varieties of liberty represented true and authentic forms of liberty, whereas the natural “rights of man” spoken of by Locke and the French Revolutionaries were spurious, fictive, “nonsense upon stilts” at best, and caustic at worst.¹⁷ Second, if liberty is not something to which individuals are all equally entitled by virtue of their common humanity, then it followed for many nineteenth-century thinkers—even for good liberals like John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville—that liberty might be beyond the present capabilities of peoples at lower orders of civilizational development. By making liberty something to which different groups were differentially entitled, the sociological liberalism of the nineteenth century opened the door to assertions that certain kinds of cultural and political forms were superior to (and more deserving of liberty than) others. Lastly, by describing liberty primarily as the common heritage of a particular people or nation, nineteenth-century thinkers risked eliding the

¹⁷ Early “conservative” expressions of this insight may be found in the writings of Edmund Burke and Joseph de Maistre, but the apostasy of abstract human or natural rights in favor of a more institutional or sociological understandings of liberty came to fruition in the thought of Jeremy Bentham. More recently, Hannah Arendt made the “Burkean” repudiation of natural rights the centerpiece of her *Origins of Totalitarianism*.

distinction between communal and individual liberty, falling prey to the fallacy that communal liberty is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for individual liberty.

JOSEPH MAZZINI AND THE PERILS OF COMMUNAL LIBERTY

Thus far, following Nisbet, I have considered some of the more general problems presented by the longing for community in the modern world. I have also briefly sketched out some of the dangers of confounding liberty and community. In order to better demonstrate how these two problems—the natural longing for community, and the fallacy of thinking about liberty as communal rather than individual—may be connected, I want to focus on the intellectual arguments associated with nationalism, which bring these two arguments together in troubling ways. If Nisbet is correct, the twentieth century saw the unsatisfied longing for community give rise to the twin horrors of Fascist and Communist totalitarianism, but his observations may have even greater resonance in the twenty first century, as traditional societies experience profound social dislocation, rationalization, and modernization. In particular, nationalism seems to be one of the clearest examples of the potentially illiberal longing for community.

I now turn to the nationalist writings of Joseph Mazzini as one expression of “the quest for community.” Three aspects make the nationalist turn toward community problematic. First, rather than understanding liberty and community as equally legitimate values which need to be balanced off of one another, community comes to be seen as all-encompassing, with individual liberty regarded as of negligible significance. Second, to the extent that nationalist thinkers such as Mazzini accord any significance at all to liberty, it is understood to be something achieved collectively, by means of communal membership in a group, people, or nation. The collective self-determination of a people or nation is seen to be both necessary as well as sufficient for protecting the liberties of individual members of that political community. Lastly, as Elie Kedourie points out in his brilliant and perceptive critique of nationalist ideas in the nineteenth century, the romantic longings that inspire nationalism have affinities for an ideological style of politics uncongenial to individual liberties.

For Mazzini and other nationalists, liberty or freedom is impossible outside the context of a particular cultural or national community. There may be a superintending idea of “humanity,” but the only way individuals can effectively contribute to humanity is through their nation-state. “Your first Duties—first, at least in importance—are ... to Humanity,” Mazzini concedes. Nonetheless, although “you are *men* before you are *citizens* or *fathers*,” the individual is simply too weak and isolated to have any tangible effect on a category as vast as all of humanity.¹⁸ The only means by which the individual can hope to satisfy his divine calling to labor for humanity is through the nation: “our Country is the fulcrum of the lever which we have to wield for the common good.” Without the nation as an instrument, “we run the risk of being useless to our Country and to Humanity.” Participating in the great army, family, or collective enterprise of Humanity (Mazzini employs all three metaphors) requires a “recognized collective exis-

¹⁸ Joseph Mazzini, “Duties of Man,” in *The Duties of Man and Other Essays*, Stilwell: Digibooks, 2007, p. 51.

tence,” “Before associating ourselves with the [other] Nations which compose Humanity” we must first “exist as a Nation.”¹⁹

Mazzini’s rhetoric has a visceral appeal, particularly given the arid, cosmopolitan, and “scientific” language of so much of nineteenth-century radical thought. As Georges Sorel insisted at the dawn of the twentieth century in his open call for proletarian violence, one of the failures of political socialism was its “utopian” inability to conjure up sufficiently powerful “revolutionary myths” and to captivate the Bergsonian vital spirit of the people.²⁰ Mazzini is clearly on to something in his contention that nothing could be more natural—indeed God-given—than the division of the human race into a multitude of different linguistic, cultural, and racial communities: “God gave you this means when he gave you a country, when like a wise overseer of labour, who distributes the different parts of the work according to the capacity of the workmen, he divided Humanity into distinct groups upon the face of our globe, and thus planted the seeds of nations.”²¹ National communities have a thick, organic, spiritual, and even biological basis: nations embody “the idea ... the sentiment of love, the sense of fellowship that binds together all the sons of that territory” into a seamless organic whole.²² Nationality rests upon subjective feelings and sentiments, objective geographical and linguistic factors, and even race. All of these serve to weave together a people into a community of shared destiny or purpose. A nation “is a larger or smaller aggregate of human beings bound together into an organic whole by agreement in a certain number of real particulars, such as race, physiognomy, historic tradition, intellectual peculiarities, or active tendencies.”²³ Despite the fact that this national myth is rarely true, even on its own terms, the longing for national community is every bit as real and natural as the primordial sentiments that bind together biological families. Indeed nationalist arguments frequently appeal to the metaphor of the nation as an extended family, united by filial affection, kinship, and shared blood.

The most cursory glance at a map supports Mazzini’s empirical claim. The world is populated not by isolated, interchangeable individuals but by culturally distinct, linguistically related, and more or less territorially circumscribed peoples, each of whom regards itself as constituted by common ancestry, collective memories of the past, and a shared notion of a future destiny. One sees this “divine plan” written across the face of Europe, marked off by rivers, mountains, and other natural geographical boundaries.²⁴ The political problem, according to Mazzini, is that “evil governments have disfigured the design of God.”²⁵ Peoples are split off from their ethnic brethren by arbitrary national borders, lumped together with peoples who are culturally distinct, and sometimes ruled over by foreign powers that are ethnically and linguistically different from themselves. Not until the “Natural divisions, the innate spontaneous tendencies of the peoples” come to “replace the arbitrary divisions sanctioned by evil governments,” and

¹⁹ Mazzini, “Duties of Man,” pp. 54-55.

²⁰ Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, Glencoe: Free Press, 1950, esp. pp. 48-65.

²¹ Mazzini, “Duties of Man,” p. 52.

²² Mazzini, “Duties of Man,” p. 58.

²³ Mazzini as cited in Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, p. 101.

²⁴ Mazzini, “Duties of Man,” p. 52.

²⁵ Mazzini, “Duties of Man,” p. 52.

every ethnic or national community becomes a sovereign and self-determining state, can nations ever feel that they are truly free.²⁶ Every national community is at least imminently deserving of becoming a political community. Nation and state must correspond, and the “map of Europe will be redrawn.”²⁷

Underlying the nationalist logic is the assumption that it is impossible to be truly “free” or to have “liberty” when one is a member of a cultural or ethnic group that is denied the status of a sovereign and self-determining nation: “Without Country you have neither name, token, voice, nor rights, nor admission as brothers into the fellowship of the Peoples.” Such orphaned peoples are the “bastards of Humanity”—left alone without family, faith, or security.²⁸ “Do not beguile yourselves with the [vain] hope of emancipation from unjust social conditions if you do not conquer a Country for yourselves,” Mazzini exhorts.²⁹ True freedom consists not so much in being able to partake of natural rights or negative liberties—the “freedom from” upon which classical liberals focused our attention—but in being able to actively participate in one’s collective self-government as a free and equal citizen of a sovereign nation.

Despite his republican conviction that one of the main purposes of a national existence is to bring about equality and emancipation, Mazzini holds classical liberal doctrines of natural rights in contempt. He extols “duties” and decries the selfishness and partiality of bourgeois liberal rights. While “the theory of rights may suffice to arouse men to overthrow the obstacles placed in their path by tyranny,” doctrines of individual rights can do nothing “to create a noble and powerful harmony between the various elements of which the nation is composed.”³⁰ Following Marx and other radical critics, the “so-called rights of man” are tools of egoism, divisiveness, inequality, and even dependency.³¹ True or “higher freedom” requires the apostasy of bourgeois understandings of freedom as the absence of restraint.³² The language of natural rights has served as a rallying cry since at least the French Revolution, and yet it has done little to bring about true freedom and equality. What is needed for true liberation is a redirection of human energies through the language of duty, fellowship, and communion. “The true country,” Mazzini notes, “is a community of free men and equals, bound together in fraternal concord to labour towards a common end.”³³

One should be wary of Mazzini’s apostasy of the language of individual rights and his embrace of the language of community, but there is also something quite compelling about the nationalist rhetoric. The vocabulary of “Humanity” and “natural rights” are empty abstractions, whereas the language of land, territory, family, hearth, and blood resonate on a deeper register of human experience. There is not just a practical, but also a psychological chasm between the individual and the broader notions of “human-

²⁶ Mazzini, “Duties of Man,” p. 52.

²⁷ Mazzini, “Duties of Man,” p. 52.

²⁸ Mazzini, “Duties of Man,” p. 53.

²⁹ Mazzini, “Duties of Man,” p. 53.

³⁰ Mazzini, “Duties of Man,” p. 15.

³¹ See especially Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker, New York: Norton, 1978, pp. 40-46.

³² Cf. Nisbet, *Quest for Community*, p. 195.

³³ Mazzini, “Duties of Man,” pp. 56-57.

ity” to which our ultimate loyalties ought to be directed. For better or worse, the rhetoric of nationality serves as one of the most effective and psychologically meaningful bridges between them.

The power and resonance of nationalist rhetoric is a testament to the longing for community identified by Nisbet. People will willingly forsake their property, rights, and even their lives in pursuit of common purposes and shared ideals. But rather than making it explicit that freedom, liberty, or natural rights are being sacrificed to quasi-rational, mystical psychological imperatives to belong to a totality, nationalism blurs the pursuit of collective or communal liberty with individual liberty. Subordinating himself to the freedom of the nation, devoting himself unquestioningly to destroying its enemies, and sacrificing his own life for that of the nation, the individual can achieve “true” freedom. This nationalist fallacy—namely, that national self-determination is both a necessary as well as a sufficient condition for individual liberty—is at the center of Elie Kedourie’s critique of Mazzini and other nationalists in his classic 1960 book on *Nationalism*.

As Kedourie points out, Mazzini’s grievances centered quite rightly on the inability of the Italian people to organize themselves into a sovereign nation of free and equal subjects. During Mazzini’s lifetime this was mainly due to Italy’s political domination by the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the defeat of Napoleon by the European Powers and the settlement of 1815. There could be no doubt that Italy was not “free” in the sense that it was politically divided and dominated by foreign powers. While they might partake of certain basic privileges, immunities, and protections as Austrian subjects, Italians were not yet free, equal, and self-determining citizens. According to Kedourie, however, Mazzini’s antipathy toward the Austrian government may have been disproportionate to the oppressiveness of its rule: Mazzini “was living under a government which, as governments go, was not really intolerable: it did not levy ruinous taxation, it did not conscript soldiers, it did not maintain concentration camps, and it left its subject pretty much to their own devices.”³⁴ Regardless of the degree of political liberty afforded under the Austrian rule, the nationalist principle holds that something vital is lacking.

The nationalist faith in the intrinsic desirability of national self-determination may be valid without it following, either logically or in practically, that emancipation from foreign rule will necessarily be more congenial to individual rights, or result in a recognizably popular form of government. Yet the national principle assumes that communal freedom is both a *necessary* as well as a *sufficient* condition for individual freedom. Individual Italians (or by extension, Basques, Corsicans, Quebecois, Afghans, etc.) can never be *truly* free even under the most benign and benevolent empire or multinational state. There is some essential quality of true freedom that can only be achieved collectively through shared participation in the process of governing one’s own community. Ethnic Corsicans or Basques who are French citizens—even if they are entitled to all the extensive economic, social and cultural benefits that this legal status confers—can never be truly free until the cultural community of which they are members becomes sovereign and self-determining. According to Mazzini, a nation, people, or social class

³⁴ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 92.

can not be free when they “have not the rights of citizens, nor any participation, by election or by vote, in the laws which regulate [their] actions and [their] life.”³⁵

This notion that collective freedom is a necessary condition for individual freedom is not confined to the arguments of nineteenth-century nationalists such as Mazzini. It abides in interesting theoretical ways in the implicit relationship between the first and second paragraphs of the American Declaration of Independence. Even before the Declaration’s famous assertions of the “self-evident” natural rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” in the document’s second paragraph, the Declaration’s less cited first paragraph stipulates the existence of Americans as “one people” and supposes that this status of peoplehood—dubious as it may have been among the thirteen colonies in 1776—somehow justified the “separate and equal station” of the American colonies among the powers of the earth. As much if not more than subsequent complaints that the British government has violated particular rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” the assertion of peoplehood underlies the American revolutionary claims. According to the document’s logic, community precedes liberty—both ontologically and rhetorically.

Nonetheless, as I have suggested above, it is by no means self-evident that communal freedom is really a necessary condition for individual freedom. So long as the government under which one lives is able to secure the basic economic, political, and civil rights of individual citizens, what is missing when communal liberty is absent? Or, put differently, what added freedom comes from collective self-determination? Were Canadian Tories or Australian subjects of the Crown who remained loyal to the British Empire any less “free” as a result of their continued political allegiance and eventual membership in the Commonwealth? Other than cultural recognition and political sovereignty, is the would-be Basque or Corsican separatist really disadvantaged by the laws of Spain or France? Would he be better off, necessarily, as a citizen of a politically sovereign Corsica or a Basque homeland?

In this regard, one thinks of the (relative) freedom of the people of Afghanistan under the United States military occupation or Soviet domination (relative, of course, to the oppressions they suffered as a sovereign nation through decades of civil war and the indigenous despotism of the Taliban); the relative freedom of French Algerians, especially secular and minority groups, under French colonial rule in light of the bloody civil wars and genocide that raged for decades in the wake of decolonization; or the tragedy of any number of failed African states after the departure of European colonial powers. In these cases, not only was some degree of individual liberty possible in the absence of collective liberty, but one could plausibly argue that the political movements toward national self-determination represented a decided step backward—in the short or even middle-term—from the liberties individuals previously enjoyed. To be clear: Kedourie’s point is not that colonial or imperial government is a desirable or even tolerable state of affairs, but rather—contra the nationalist—the more modest, conservative acknowledgment that there is simply no guarantee that principles of national self-determination, however emotionally appealing, are going to result in a more humane and democratic regime than the status quo, whatever that status quo happens to be.

³⁵ Mazzini, “Duties of Man,” p. 17.

Instead, the very same conditions that made life detestable under the previous regime—corruption, underdevelopment, lack of education, poor natural resources, ethnic animosities, inequalities, etc.—are likely to persist under the new one.³⁶

These historical examples raise questions not only about whether communal liberty is really a *necessary* condition for individual liberty, but also and maybe more importantly whether it is a *sufficient* condition. Kedourie notes that the complaints of nationalist thinkers “dwelt on two grievances: [first] that nations were not popular, and [second] that they were not national.” Mazzini and other nationalists assume that there is some essential connection between national self-determination and political liberty: “[it] could, of course, be reasonably argued that governments were not popular because they were not national, that because governments were controlled by foreigners, they could not minister to the welfare of the ruled.”³⁷ There is some truth to this, as Kedourie concedes. However, the converse proposition is faulty: namely, “that once governments became national, they would come under the control of the citizens and become agencies for their welfare.”³⁸ Indeed as the case of Mazzini’s Italy demonstrates, there may be no necessary relationship between these two kinds of liberty. After the war to expel the Austrians, Italy was unified under a king, Victor Emmanuel II, much to the consternation of Mazzini and other republicans. Rather than national liberation leading to equality, popular sovereignty and a greater respect for individual liberties, Mazzini and other republicans felt betrayed. Kedourie notes with grim irony Mazzini’s tragic fate of being condemned to a “lifetime of poverty and exile, always engaged in feeble conspiracy and wordy exhortation,” appealing to foreign powers for help in establishing a popular government.³⁹ What Mazzini ignores is “the truth established by experience, namely, that the triumph of the national principle does not necessarily entail the triumph of liberty.”⁴⁰

One might respond that all other things being equal, “native oppression is preferable to foreign oppression,” but what about cases where all other things are not equal? The nationalist may still contend that even in cases where the national principle has failed to safeguard individual liberties, this shortcoming is more than compensated by the existential satisfaction and psychological pride that comes from being a part of a sovereign and self-determining nation. But is this anything more than a deeply-rooted prejudice founded in some psychological aberration of the human mind? In his classic plea against the fallacy of confusing the true “negative liberty” with intoxicatingly vague notions of autonomy, development, respect, or dignity, Isaiah Berlin is greatly perplexed by how the desire for recognition and community “leads the most authoritarian democracies to be, at times, consciously preferred by their members to the most enlightened oligarchies, or sometimes causes a member of some newly liberated Asian or African State to complain less today, when he is rudely treated by members of his own race or nation, than when he was governed by some cautious, just, gentle, well-

³⁶ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, pp. 103-104.

³⁷ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 100.

³⁸ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 100.

³⁹ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 92.

⁴⁰ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 103.

meaning administrator from outside.”⁴¹ There is something both natural—and yet incomprehensibly paradoxical—about the “ideals and behaviours of entire peoples” who “suffer deprivations of elementary human rights” and yet still, “with every measure of sincerity, speak of enjoying more freedom than when they possessed a wider measure of these rights.”⁴²

Berlin’s characterization of colonial rule is obviously euphemistic, but at the same time, most of the “new states” in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East after World War II struggled, in varying degrees, with precisely the dilemma he described, just as numerous contemporary nations in the developing world continue to struggle today with the problem of “illiberal democracy.”⁴³ Kedourie points out that the most important preconditions for “efficient, humane, and just government” have little or nothing to do with existential feelings of community, national solidarity, and spiritual redemption for which humans long so deeply. Instead, the real prerequisites for liberal democracy and responsible government abide in admittedly prosaic factors such as working institutions of constitutional government, economic and technological resources to combat poverty, a culture of efficiency and probity in public service, and practical habits of self-government on the part of average citizens.⁴⁴

NISBET, KEDOURIE AND THE CAUSES OF MODERN NATIONALISM

Kedourie’s *Nationalism* is a case study in the dangers of confounding communal liberty with individual liberty, casting light on some of nationalism’s most vexing and illiberal tendencies. The argument is primarily a cautionary tale about the “ideological” dangers of nationalism and its threat to “civil” or “constitutional” politics, but it rests on many of the same assumptions about the natural human longing for community as Nisbet’s *Quest for Community*. Although their subject matter seemingly varies, Kedourie’s arguments confirm Nisbet’s penetrating insights into the dangers to liberty from an unrequited longing for community.

Some of the leading contemporary scholars of nationalism have contended that material inequalities, historical resentments, blocked social mobility, linguistic differences, and other structural causes have stoked the fires of nationalism.⁴⁵ Sentiments of collective identity and national self-determination may be perennial—if not primordial—elements of the human condition, but nationalism as a political movement appears to be a quintessentially modern phenomenon, a product of the unique economic and political conditions of nineteenth-century Europe. The age of nation-states and the growth of capitalism on a national scale; the rise of public education, literacy and mass publics;

⁴¹ Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” in *Liberty*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 203-204.

⁴² Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” p. 204.

⁴³ For an influential contemporary description of this dilemma, see Fareed Zakaria, “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy,” *Foreign Affairs*, November 1997, pp. 1-17.

⁴⁴ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, pp. 103-104.

⁴⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983; Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

the self-conscious efforts of elites after the French Revolution to remake Europe along lines of national principles; the creation of “modular” human beings who regarded themselves as more or less equal, if not interchangeable—all of these factors surely played a key role in the rise of modern nationalism.⁴⁶ But while these economic and structural changes are undeniable, “modernist” theorists of nationalism such as Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, and Benedict Anderson discount the timeless psychological longings for community and collective identity that underlay the rise of nationalism as a political ideology. By way of contrast, Kedourie’s appreciation of the link between the structural and psychological factors—very much in line with Nisbet’s analysis—makes his analysis of nationalism stand out from purely structural explanations.

For Nisbet, as we have seen, individuals naturally yearn for stability, continuity and psychologically meaningful relationships. The growth of the modern state has destroyed or displaced traditional institutions such as the family, neighborhood, church, or community, which once connected individuals to a society’s central value system. Consequently, human beings are in danger of throwing themselves at the feet of any higher power that promises to quench these unrequited spiritual and psychological needs. Nisbet does not want to rule out the failure of modern liberalism to resonate with the symbolic basis of reality, but he insists that modernity’s purely “symbolic disruptions” and “dislocations of prejudgments” are secondary to the “centralization of social function and authority” in the hands of the modern state.⁴⁷ These major changes stem from “a system of power which has converted the historical plurality of allegiances and meaningful memberships into...a kind of social monolith.”⁴⁸ With the traditional roots of community and allegiance “made dessicate,” and the modern world disenchanted, we are left with no alternative but to worship Society, Equality, the People, Nation, or State.⁴⁹ The fundamental causes of these developments are political.

Kedourie’s description of the conditions of social breakdown which make nationalism so appealing to nineteenth-century intellectuals is highly reminiscent of Nisbet’s. For Kedourie, the root causes of this movement are attributable to a “breakdown in the transmission of political experience” and the “spiritual restlessness” to which this crisis gives way.⁵⁰ When political, moral, and religious traditions are exposed to the novel ideas of both the Enlightenment and Romanticism, traditional ways of life lose their ability to defend themselves and to perpetuate themselves from one generation to the next.⁵¹ Bereft of traditional ways of making sense of the world and of organizing moral and political life, intellectuals adopt abstract philosophical or literary ideals as a surrogate. The fundamental causes of nationalism, then, stem from a generation losing touch with its own authentic traditions and, consequently, trying to re-enchant the world

⁴⁶ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals*, New York: Viking, 1994; Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1991.

⁴⁷ Nisbet, *Quest for Community*, p. 198.

⁴⁸ Nisbet, *Quest for Community*, p. 199.

⁴⁹ Nisbet, *Quest for Community*, p. 199.

⁵⁰ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, pp. 93, 97.

⁵¹ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, pp. 94-95.

by bringing those traditions back to life in violent, destructive, and ultimately tragic ways.

Above and beyond the genesis of new intellectual movements such as “Enlightenment” or “Romanticism,” nationalism’s roots go deep into the human psyche. Like Nisbet, Kedourie appreciates that nationalist movements reflect a deeply rooted, even primordial human longing “to belong together in a coherent and stable community.” Under ordinary circumstances this need is “satisfied by the family, the neighborhood, the religious community.”⁵² But in circumstances where these traditional institutions have been assailed by the forces of modernization, the aspiration for community assumes violent, illiberal, and ideological forms. This accounts for the character of “desperate struggle” so commonly associated with nationalist movements. Anything smacking of compromise, moderation, or half-way measures is an affront to the ideological intolerance of these movements. Attitudes such as these, Kedourie observes, are rarely kind to political liberty.⁵³

In the face of a modern world that had lost touch with its own traditions, nationalism marked the reinvention of those traditions in self-conscious and sometimes violent ways. Inspired by the revolutionary eschatology of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment more generally, and frustrated by the inability to instantiate those revolutionary ideals, Mazzini and his fellow conspirators were intoxicated by what Kedourie calls “political bovarysme.” Like the novelist Flaubert’s tragic Emma Bovary, who lived her life like a character in one of her own romance novels, Mazzini and other nationalist revolutionaries fell victim to a romantic intoxication with conspiracy that would have been amusing were its consequences not so potentially deadly. This ideological style of politics “tends to blur and sometimes entirely obliterate the boundary between literature and life, between dreams and reality.”⁵⁴ “The reading of books,” Kedourie notes, “became a political, a revolutionary activity. Many a young man found himself advancing from the composition of poems to the manufacture of infernal machines.”⁵⁵

It is no surprise that segments of modern society who find themselves most thoroughly alienated from traditional ways of life—in particular, urban intellectuals or intelligentsia—would be the ones to long most nostalgically for a communal alternative. Kedourie’s prototypical intellectuals found “society as it was then constituted” to be a “cold, heartless place.”⁵⁶ Just as the growth of the modern state and its displacement of traditional mediating institutions is the independent variable in Nisbet’s account, Kedourie appreciates how nationalism rests on a simultaneous critique and deification of the state. Far from a source of spiritual inspiration, nineteenth-century romantics such as Fichte, Schiller, and Schleiermacher found the modern European state to be harsh, legalistic, and alienating. Schiller in particular complains bitterly of a modern bureaucratic state “which crushes with its lifeless weight [all] spirit and liveliness in the individual, and transforms him into a machine.”⁵⁷ And yet even as these romantic souls blamed the modern state for its formality, bureaucracy, and legalism, the supreme irony

⁵² Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 96.

⁵³ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 102.

⁵⁴ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 80.

⁵⁵ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 98.

⁵⁶ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 36.

⁵⁷ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, pp. 36-37.

is that the political community—if not the state itself—became the locus of their unrequited longing for community. Grievances against the impersonal forces of modern society and the state culminate in a new, transfigurational style of politics. Everything political comes to be invested with spiritual significance. It was only natural for them to transpose these sentiments onto the political community, as they had before their very eyes the “absolutist state from whose control and regulation no aspect of life, no social activity, was immune.” Given that the state and modern politics were the most obvious sources of the problem, they invested “extravagant hopes of spiritual fulfillment” in their transformation and re-enchantment.⁵⁸

The blurring of public and private, social and political, spiritual and temporal is one of the hallmarks of this kind of ideological politics, as “rulers have tried to persuade the ruled that relations between citizens are the same as those between lovers, husbands, and wives, or parents and children, and that the bond uniting the individual to the state is religious, similar to that which unites the believer and his God, the prophet and his followers, or the mystic and his disciples.”⁵⁹ Nothing less than the “destiny of man is accomplished, and his freedom realized by absorption within the state, because only through the state does he attain coherence and acquire reality.”⁶⁰ Nisbet and Kedourie concur that such a transfigurational model of politics has purchase only in a world where authentic intermediary relationships of family, church, or neighborhood have been destroyed or severed from their original function. For if these forms of human association were viable, and continued to do what it they were supposed to do, then what need would there be to turn to the state or some romanticized vision of the political community? Why would someone who already enjoyed an authentic and healthy relationship to his religion, family, or neighborhood need to seek solace in some romanticized notion of the nation?

In addition to the ideological character of “desperate struggle” that characterizes the nationalist movement, its affinity for the “politics of assassination” in favor of the “politics of the ballot box,” a further tragedy of nationalism is that the elements of “community” and “traditionalism” with which nationalists seek to re-enchant the world are rarely authentic or organic. Rather, these new visions of “community” tend to be distorted, contrived, or even wholly invented myths and symbols based on either a romanticized past that has never existed or some imagined utopian future that has yet to come into being. Nisbet appreciates the inauthenticity of these kinds of total communities quite well. Indeed one of his defining characteristics of totalitarianism is the creation of a “new symbolism to replace the symbolism that has been destroyed” by the forces of social change. As he notes in his analysis of totalitarianism, “Even new ‘memories’ must be fabricated to replace the memories which, by their continual reminder of a past form of society, would ceaselessly militate against the new form.”⁶¹

This is substantially the same distinction Eric Hobsbawm proposes between “custom” and “tradition.” In Hobsbawm’s terms, “custom” describes the spontaneously evolving, unreflective, and largely taken-for-granted patterns of activity that human

⁵⁸ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 38.

⁵⁹ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 40.

⁶⁰ Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 44.

⁶¹ Nisbet, *Quest for Community*, p. 184.

beings use to order their lives, whereas “tradition” signifies something that is self-consciously invented (albeit sometimes from the *bricolage* of custom) by self-interested elites in order to satisfy contemporary political imperatives.⁶² Peasants are transformed into Frenchmen, according to a wholly new and contrived iconography that suppresses or obliterates regional, indigenous customs.⁶³ Likewise, in his memorable nationalist parable of the peasants of “Ruritania” who secede from the empire of “Megalomania,” Ernest Gellner notes the paradox of Ruritanian folklore, handicrafts, and traditional music coming to be eagerly consumed by upper middle-class Ruritanian expatriates living in Megalomanian cities, even while the fabled pastoral valleys of Ruritania are being developed into coal mines and iron foundries.⁶⁴

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, I want to raise some broader questions about the contemporary implications of the longing for community identified by Nisbet and Kedourie. We have seen that their respective accounts of the rise of modern nationalism and totalitarianism are generally consistent. Rather than being the intrepid, self-reliant, restless, and perpetually enterprising individuals liberal political theory takes as its anthropological starting point, human beings are creatures of tradition, naturally rooted in particular spiritual and political communities. Above all else they long for certainty, order, continuity, and meaning, and under optimal circumstances this function is fulfilled by an abundance of intermediary attachments such as family, religion, neighborhood, and community. Something about the modern condition has disrupted this healthy sense of tradition, however, and the consequences of this disruption are dire for individual liberty. They seem to agree on this much.

We should not lose sight of the fact that their explanations also differ in significant ways, especially with respect to the main causes they attribute to the breakdown of community and traditional ways of life. In Kedourie’s case, the social dislocation is not a uniquely twentieth-century phenomenon, as Nisbet seems to assume, but rather goes back to the dawn of the Enlightenment itself. For all of his appreciation of underlying structural changes, Kedourie is predominantly focused on the history of ideas, especially the counter-reaction of nineteenth-century European intellectuals that gave ideological support to nationalism. The Enlightenment’s hubristic values of rationality, progress, development, and autonomy are dangerous in and of themselves, but political Romanticism unwittingly incorporated some of the very same Enlightenment notions of will, progress, and development it set out to refute. By way of contrast, Nisbet’s main complaint has to do with the absorption of traditional functions of intermediary institutions by the modern state. Not surprisingly, for the political sociologist Nisbet, the state and the presence, absence, and function of various social structures prove to be the independent variables, whereas for the intellectual historian Kedourie,

⁶² Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions” and “Mass Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914,” in Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*.

⁶³ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976.

⁶⁴ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 57-62.

movements of ideas—Enlightenment, Romanticism, Reaction, etc.—are independent causal forces.

This raises many further questions, for if I am correct—and Nisbet and Kedourie are really just describing two different faces of the same phenomenon of re-enchantment in a disenchanted modern world—then how can Nisbet's explanation, which appeals to the growth and centralization of the modern state and its absorption of functions previously accorded to intermediary associations, be reconciled with Kedourie's notion that it was developments at the level of ideas that provoked the counter-reaction? Does Nisbet's theory imply that nations without a tradition of intermediary institutions, or a rational modern state, can never give expression to this longing for community? Or that their expression of these longings will take on different forms and be directed toward different objects or entities? Similarly, with respect to Kedourie's focus on ideas, does this mean that nationalism is destined to die out as the appeal of romanticism wanes in the twenty first century? Or if, as Kedourie hints, there is a political explanation that lurks beneath his account of a breakdown in the transmission of political knowledge from one generation to the next, does the same story he tells of the romantic disillusionment of young intellectuals in nineteenth-century Europe also hold for the young intellectuals who led post-colonial movements in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America in the second half of the twentieth century, or for disaffected Muslims around the world today who have fomented Islamism and led terrorist attacks against the forces of modernization and secularism represented by the West? If so, who are their Herders, Fichtes, Schillers, and Goethes?

Interestingly, while both Nisbet and Kedourie complain about the assault on traditional structures and intermediary associations, neither assigns much of a role to the forces of economic modernization. For both, the causes of modern disenchantment and longing are fundamentally political, psychological, and intellectual—rather than material. But it would be interesting to consider whether their theories are inconsistent with a different, more materialist narrative of modern disenchantment. If, as for both, the longing for community is triggered by the evisceration of traditional institutions and ways of life, we know that nothing does a better job of destroying tradition and stimulating social dislocation than the unfettered forces of the free market and economic globalization which seem to have become the defining characteristic of the modern world. Assuming they are correct about human nature and psychology, it seems reasonable to expect phenomena such as traditionalism, nationalism, and other wholesale attempts to re-enchant the modern world to arise in the face of the profound social dislocations generated by the spread of capitalist market economies throughout the developing world.

Put more sharply, the independent variable—what it takes to trigger this longing for community written in the human heart—remains fuzzy. If what counts is the ability of traditional forms of meaning and existence to perpetuate themselves from one generation to the next, then does it really matter whether this process of transmission is disrupted by intellectual causes (the reception of the radical ideas of the Enlightenment or Romanticism by a strata of disaffected intellectuals), or political causes (the growth of the modern state and the sociological breakdown of pluralism) or by economic causes (the growth of global capitalism and the rise of globalization)? Wouldn't the

illiberal consequences of this disenchantment (whatever its sources) be the same? Likewise, if the independent variable is, as Nisbet contends, the viability of intermediary institutions, then can't the breakdown of these institutions have a wide variety of causes that defy any simple narrative about ideas, the growth of the state, or economic modernization? Identifying what are the more specific cause of this "breakdown in the transmission of political knowledge" or the conditions by which intermediary institutions come to be "displaced and dislocated" would give a clearer picture of the conditions most likely to activate this longing for community.

Specifying the precise mechanism gestured at by Nisbet and Kedourie is absolutely crucial if we accept the account of human nature they offer. For if humanity requires some connection to transcendent sources of meaning, and modernity jeopardizes those connections, for whatever reason, then we can expect more instances of backlash and counter-reaction in the near future. We can only speculate about the forms this perennial quest for community will assume in the twenty first century. Obviously it would be naive to turn our backs on Fascism and Soviet-style Communism, or on the dark forces of Nationalism that continue to rear their ugly heads, but it is also worthwhile considering what original and unexpected forms this longing for community might assume. We know all too well that the forces of modernization are disrupting traditional societies, religions, and institutions all around the world. Could the rising tide of religious fundamentalism (not a subject explored in any great depth either by Nisbet or Kedourie) be an expression of this same longing for community? In what many have declared (rightly or wrongly) to be a post-national age, with nation-states declining both in economic, political, and symbolic significance, will the longing for community be transposed onto a world religion such as Islam or Christianity, taking the form of a worldwide call for re-enchantment, moral rejuvenation, or purification? Does the rise of various sorts of religious fundamentalisms around the world in the last few decades have any place in Nisbet and Kedourie's story?

Lastly, we should also consider what can be done to address the problems and pathologies these keen social critics have described. If they are right, preventing a backlash against disenchantment and social dislocation requires us to maintain, as vibrant or at least viable, our society's basic traditions and institutions. But how are we to do so, especially when traditional ways of life are under assault from so many directions—intellectual, political, economic—and when many emancipationist versions of liberal political theory reckon tradition and traditional institutions to be barriers to intellectual and political liberty, rather than resources for freedom? Moreover, in cases where traditional institutions have already been irremediably destroyed, is it possible to reinvent new and meaningful forms of association without falling prey to the very problems Kedourie and Nisbet identify with "invented" traditions: namely, their hollowness, formality, and inauthenticity, which only exacerbate disenchantment? Navigating this problem of how to confront the natural backlash against the loss of authentic and meaningful traditions in the modern world is a thorny dilemma, but Nisbet and Kedourie's insights into the naturalness of the human longing for community are an important first step. For if we do not begin with an anthropology that acknowledges, and takes seriously, mankind's spiritual and political needs to belong to meaningful communities, all of our best efforts will be for naught.