



Speciale om National Identitet (på engelsk)

Af Tristan Lorenz Ingwersen

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Abstract (Resumé)

In this thesis I try to answer the problem statement: *“What is it that determines ones national identity?”* In order to do this I will create a new and original theory of national Identity, which I will be calling the “descent theory”.

It states that what determines national identity is the criterion of descent. This implies that nations are the kind of groups, which we are born in to. Thus or national identity is a quality we acquire at conception.

I will be advancing 3 main arguments to defend this theory, and argue that it should be accepted above other alternative theories because it is less problematic and more plausible.

During this process of argumentation, I will analyze many possible alternative theories, and scrutinize them in an effort to show that they are implausible.

Amongst these theoretical stances will be Nihilism (about nations/nation-nihilism), Primordialism, Subjectivism, Relativism, Social constructionism and an offshoot from my own theory of national identity which I have decided to call Cultural Copying Theory. Of, these social constructionism will get the most thorough coverage, since it is the most formidable one of all the theoretical positions.

I will attempt to discredit these other possible theoretical stances on national identity by showing that they are problematic or implausible. I will do this by showing where they are internally inconsistent, incoherent or have implications which are problematic, implausible or for some other reason unacceptable.

I will then subject my own theory to that same level of scrutiny, after having laid out my other arguments for it. Apart, from this first argument, which I will be calling the exclusionary argument, I have two argument more, which I will be calling the two positive arguments, since they give reasons for why we should accept the descent theory, which are not based just on other theory being unsatisfactory.

The three biggest points of criticism which I will level at my own theory, are the questions of how my theory deals with people of mixed descent, how it explains how nations come into being and how it deals with the topic of adoptions.

I will solve these criticisms by arguing, that most peoples national identities are in fact mixed, that nations come into existence gradually, which means that we therefore cannot point out the moment in time were they begin and that adoption does not change a person’s national identity which they received at conception.

After this I will conclude that my theory is plausible, and that the answer to my problem statement which follows from the theory, is in fact that our national identity is something we have passed down to us from our parents.

Contents

PART 1

Problem Statement: Presentation and Explanation.....	6
Clarification of the terms Nation and National Identity.....	7
Overview.....	8
How I intend to answer my problem statement.	9
Structure of the paper: My plan on how to deliver the answer.	9
Methodology	10
Realism and Cognitivism.....	10
The case for cognitivism	12
Some more comments on realism	13
Strategies for argumentation	13
The Exclusionary Argument.....	13
The Positive Arguments Number 1 & 2	18

PART 2

Introduction to Part 2.....	20
The Nihilists	21
The Relevancy of the concept of the Nation.....	23
The Primordialists.....	25
The Subjectivists.....	26
The Relativists.....	27
The Social Constructionists	28
What would it mean for national identity to be socially constructed?.....	29
Laying out the social constructionist view on national identity.....	30
Andersons Imagined Communities	31
Miller "On Nationality"	33
The social constructionists criterion	35
Scrutinizing the Social Constructionist View.	36
Disagreement within the Collective	37
Disagreement between Individual and Collective.....	37
Disagreement between Collectives.....	38
The Delimitation Problem.....	38
The Social Contract Problem.	39
The cultural copying theory.....	40

PART 3

Introduction to the concept of “folkeslag”	43
Defining Folkeslag.....	44
The Loose Interrelatedness Hypothesis.	45
The concept explained	45
My reasons for believing in the concept.	47
Historical Association	48
Conclusion on the definition of the term folkeslag.....	52
Defining the Nation	53
Some comments of my theory of the nation	55
The demise of nations by the power of belief	56
The vagueness of the concept of nations.....	57
The Criterion for Identifying National-Identity.	57
On the Beginning of Nations	59
The first positive Argument.....	60
Some more pseudo-arguments.....	63
The second Positive Argument.....	63
Revisiting the justification for the concept nation.....	64
Asking the tough questions.....	65
People of mixed descent	65
Adoptions	68
On the Non-arbitrariness of <i>biological</i> descent	70
Conclusion	75
List of References	77

Part 1: Introduction, Methodology & Overview

In this first Part of the thesis, I will present and explain my problem statement, and give an overview over the Thesis' structure, and the methodology I will be using to answer my problem statement.

Problem Statement: Presentation and Explanation

Dane, American, German, Chinese, Nigerian; what do these words mean? What is it that makes a Swede a Swede and a Russian a Russian? National identity, is a complicated topic of philosophical discussion. The nation is an illusive concept, (Anderson 1983, p.3) which none the less bears massive relevance to many cultural and political discussions; immigration, citizenship, territorial rights and voting rights to name only a few. (Miller 1997)¹

Since our answer to the questions, what a nation is and by extension what makes one a member of a certain nation, is fundamental to these discussions, it is important that we get it right.² If we cannot come up with an answer to these questions, then we just don't know *who exactly* we mean, when we make statements such as "the Chinese should do Y" or "the French are entitled to X."

That is why in this thesis I am going to attempt to develop an original theory about national identity/nationality. This means that this thesis is relevant for anyone, who discusses issues in which national identity matters. The problem statement I will attempt to answer is:

What is it that determines ones national identity?

This is not to be taken as a judicial or sociological question. I am interested in the concept of National-Identity in a purely philosophical/normative sense. What I care about is, what we *ought* to understand by national identity, not what most people *usually* tend to mean by it.

To read this problem statement in a philosophical and normative sense means that we are going to be engaging in abstract reasoning about value judgements rather than descriptions of empirical facts. Let me briefly show you the contrast:

¹ He names some of these as being relevant, though I take Immigration to be self-evident as a relevant topic.

² ...except if we decide to abandon the concept of the nation entirely. I will address this position later, and give some reasons for why this would be unwise.

If we asked the question of what determines national identity as a problem of sociology, and tried to answer it, we would begin investigating what sociological or cultural circumstances make people identify with one nationality rather than another. This however is not what I am interested in.

On the other hand, if we viewed the problem statement above as a legal question for example, then obviously the answer would have something to do with citizenship, since in a legal context that's the only thing nationality can mean.³ Though national identity might have some relevancy for a judicial discussion about who gets to be a citizen of a given nation-state, resolving that discussion is not necessary for me to answer my problem statement. Which is why I will leave it alone.

In the following sections I will instead show you how I intend to answer my problem statement, structure this thesis and what methodologies I am going to use.

Clarification of the terms Nation and National Identity

Before I can begin answering my problem statement, I need to define a couple of key terms. First of which is what I mean by national identity and nationality. These two terms have their own histories of use of course. Today, the former usually refers to people's "self-identity", that is the way people feel about what nation they belong to (Ashmore et al. 2001, p.74-75) & (Tajfel 1986) whereas the latter is usually used to mean citizenship. (Vonk 2012, p.19-20)

I however, will be using the terms national identity and nationality completely interchangeably, to mean "belonging to a nation." So if I say that a person has nationality or national identity X, that means they are a member of nation X. That is what my problem statement is trying to get at; what makes one a member of a certain nation. So, I repeat that I am *not* using national identity, to refer to how someone feels about their own nationality. This I will instead refer to subjective self-identity.

Since we are speaking of membership to a nation here, it seems relevant to say something about what we mean by the nation itself as well. This is not quite the time for me to give my own formal definition; I will do this later.

But let me start here by setting up some very basic parameters for what qualifies as a nation, so that we can be clear about what kind of thing the term as such is referring to? Once we have such a broad agree upon understanding of what kind of thing the term *nation* is referring to, we can begin to start examining broad definitions. I will do this by giving some very uncontroversial examples of what a nation is and what it is not.

So the first thing which a nation is not, is a nation-state. This is one of the most important distinctions, and still these two terms are often conflated. A nation is a group of people, whereas a

³ I will be saying national citizenship or just citizenship, when referring to this.

nation-state is a territory controlled and a state run by a certain nation. (Paleri 2014, p.87-89) I will be speaking a lot about nations, and not so much about nation states in this thesis.

A national Identity, as implied above, is something which only *people* can have, which means that nations are necessarily made up of people and not objects or animals for example. When we are speaking about German beer or Swiss cheese, we don't mean to say that the beer and the cheese have national identities of their own of course, but rather that they came from (figuratively or literally) Germany and Switzerland. Something similar applies to the German Sheppard, which is the name for a breed of dog and not something indicating that this dog has a nationality of some sort. Even a German Sheppard that was born and raised in Germany wouldn't be considered "a German" alongside German human beings.

Nations are not just made up of one single person either, they are groups of people. No nations have ever only had one member.⁴

A nation is also not type of group which can encompass all human beings in the world, or is trying to do so, like some religions are. And some religious groups (but not all) are larger than nations.

Narrowing this down even further, we can also affirm that a nation is larger than just a family.

Most nations will probably, in terms of numbers of members also be smaller than any race.⁵

A nation is also an entity that persists over time. A span of time, which is (usually) longer than a human lifetime. However, no nation has always existed.

It is possible for new nations to come into existence. It is also possible for existing nations to go out of existence.

These are the kinds of qualities, which we understand nations to have. Anything more specific than this would no longer be uncontroversial, and would therefore warrant that we commit to some kind of theoretical stance. At the same time we can also safely dismiss any theory about the nation, which doesn't define it so that it falls within these parameters above. So I need to make sure that the theory I am making, at the very least falls within these boundaries.

Overview

I will now give an overview of the different Parts of the thesis, and explanations for why I decided to structure it in such a manner.

⁴ The only way nations can have one member at any one time, is if that person was the last surviving member. That is why I added the caveat "*have only ever had*".

⁵ In terms of „numbers of members“ of course.

How I intend to answer my problem statement.

Like I already stated I will attempt to develop an original theory of national identity. So let me say something about what the relationship between that and a theory of the nation is.

Any nation is going to have members, which means that those members will have a national identity. This would lead us to believe, that any theory of the nation would have something to say, either explicitly or implicitly about national identity as well. The same would work the other way around. So if someone is creating a theory of national identity, like me, there is no getting around having to create some theory of the nation as well.

Therefore, in this thesis I will do both to an extent.

I will frame the answer to my problem statement as a criterion or principle. So the question I am really trying to answer is, "what is the criterion that someone has to fulfill to be a member of a certain nation", or which "principle can we use to determine if someone is a member of a certain nation". The answer to my problem statement will come in both of those shapes. The only difference between a criteria and a principle here is simply that a principle would be more explicit and may have some degrees of complexity added to it. A criteria might be just one word.

The criteria which my theory will be defending, is going to be "the criterion of *descent*". This means, that it states that someone has to be *descended from* other members of a nation in order to be a member themselves. This stated as a principle would something like: "*To be a member of a nation, one needs to be descended from it.*" I will present a more nuanced version of this later. And this version will then be the final answer to my problem statement.

Structure of the paper: My plan on how to deliver the answer.

The paper will be divided into 3 sections. This first part, which is the shortest, contains the introduction to my problem statement, this section on the papers structure and hereafter a couple of sections on methodology; that is, the strategies of argumentation which I will be using throughout this project.

After this I will start arguing for my theory, which I shall be calling the "Descent Theory of National Identity." I will be presenting three main arguments for this theory. The first will be an argument by exclusion, meaning I am going to argue that my theory should be accepted over the alternative theories on national identity, because those alternative can be shown to have problems. The entire purpose Part 2 of this thesis is to establish the main premise of this argument, by presenting and criticizing these alternative theoretical stances on national identity which one could take.

After having scrutinized those other stances, and hopefully having shown that none of them are adequate, I will then in Part 3 finally present and argue for the “descent theory”. I will present two positive arguments in favor of my theory while, at the same time playing devils advocate and subject my theory to the same levels of scrutiny as I did to the alternative theories in Part 2.

My theory of national identity, will involve a new and original theory of the nation. During Part 3 I will partially develop this theory, in order to help my argue for the descent criterion. However, I will only develop those parts which I need in order to answer my problem statement. Developing a theory about nations all the way, is too ambitious for a thesis; it would require the length of a book. But more on that later.

Now on to methodology.

Methodology

I this section I will explain in more detail what the strategies of argumentation which I will be using to answer my problem statement. These strategies operate with the premise that I am speaking of national identity as being cognitivist and realistic, which is why I will start by giving an introduction to these concepts.

Realism and Cognitivism.

Notice that everything about the way I have framed the discussion so far, implies that the question of national identity, is a question to which there are definitively right or wrong answers. I have already stated that I will not use of the term national identity as meaning “subjectively self-perceived national identity”. And I did this, because one important aspect of the theory I want to defend, is that the individuals belief about their own national identity has no bearing on what their true national identity is. By this I mean that national identity is a mind independent property; which most will perceive as a staggering claim, when it comes to this particular topic. And if this is the correct way to think of national identity will depend on if, the theory which I will be advancing is correct.

This is a position known as realism. Being a realist about X means that one takes the position, that X and it’s properties exist and are real independent of anyone’s subjective judgements, beliefs, language or theories about them (Miller 2019, Intro). That at least is a very generic explanation of realism. There are of course many different types of realism, that all have their respective nuances. However, for the purpose of characterizing my own theory, this description should do.

I would add that, what is meant by *subjective* in here also includes inter-subjective. This would exclude something like *collective agreement*, from having any bearing on national identity. A social constructionist theory of national identity, which we will touch on later, could use collective

agreement as a criterion. But if national identity as something intersubjective is a realistic⁶, this would be a different kind of realism, than the one which I am going to be advocating.

From realism follows something called cognitivism, which is most often spoken about in the context of *moral* cognitivism, which holds that there are true and false answers about moral questions. (Van Roojen 2018, Intro) If a theory is realist, it is by implication also cognitivist. This is because anything that is real in a realist sense, must have mind-independent properties about which one can be correct or mistaken. Note however that realism doesn't visa versa follow from cognitivism; meaning that just because something has definite right and wrong answers, doesn't mean it is mind-independent.⁷ The value we attribute to money, for instance is a classic example of this. There are true and false answers to how much a given currency is worth. But those realities are *directly caused* by our beliefs about them. Money's value is thus not mind independent, and a perfect example of something which is cognitivist but not realist.

Thus to say that my theory on national identity will be a realist and a cognitivist theory, is to say that it holds that nations are mind-independently real things, and that statements which are made about any given person's national identity are thus either true or false.

But what exactly does it mean that nations are mind-independently real things?

I am of course not claiming that nations are real things in the world, the same way that objects and animals are. The kind of realism I am invoking entails that they do exist independently of our individual or collective beliefs about them, but not in the exact same way as physical objects. Nations only exist in the physical world by virtue of their members existing in the physical world.

But it is of course more apt to simply say that the nation is a way we choose to classify a group of people, similar to how we classify some molecules as organic or some plants as vegetables. These classifications are only valid however when there is a good reason for them. And as long as we can provide that reason, we can say that, organic molecules, vegetables and nations exist in some sense. Whatever this type of existence is, it is certainly going to be mind independent, because the reasons we are giving are valid or invalid reasons independently of anyone's opinions. These reasons why we call some molecules organic for example, could be because they have certain chemical properties. And I will be giving such reason for why nations are groups of people with certain properties later, as part of my theory. Since the only way I can prove realism when it comes to nations, is to simply create a realist theory and show that it is correct. Like I already mentioned, it would then follow that this theory would have to be cognitivist as well. But there is a more elegant way to show that

⁶ We are a realist about X, we are claiming that X is realistic; meaning mind independent.

⁷ All realist theories are cognitivist theories, but not all cognitivist theories are realist theories.

cognitivism probably holds true when it comes to the question of what nations are, and by extension what national identity is as-well. And it would help if we got the idea that all statements about nations are either true or false established at this point already. This would make the following analyses of the other theories much easier.

The case for cognitivism

How would I show that cognitivism is true when it comes to nations?

Let us think back to the generic uncontroversial statements I made in the section above, for example that nations have not always existed. If you accepted any of these statements, or even rejected them, you are granting that at least some statements we can make about nations are either true or false.

If for example someone claimed that nations have always existed, you would have to agree that this person is wrong to say so; since not even human beings have always existed, and perhaps even the universe itself hasn't either. Based on this I could claim that I caught you conforming to cognitivism. You may still reject cognitivism however, by postulating that we could in theory come up with a statement about nations which is not either true or false.

Let us consider a statement, which could be of this type: "Nations are good". Note that this statement is not however strictly speaking one which doesn't have a truth-value⁸. It could be true or false based on how we choose to interpret it. Many nations have historically, committed atrocious acts, so if we are reading this like a statements about the ethical integrity of specific nations, it is clearly false. But if we view it like an abstract statement, meaning something like "nationhood is a positive thing", then it can be argued to be true.

But ambiguity like this doesn't mean that the proposition that nations are good, is neither true nor false, it just means we have to determine what is meant by it, before we can assign a truth value to it. (Forbes 1994, p.243-249)

So the statement, we just considered did not constitute a counterexample to cognitivism about nations. It wasn't neither true, false and meaningless.

And so now, I would simply argue that the burden of proof to debunk cognitivism with regards to nations is on those who are affirming that there are such statements about nations, which are not meaningless, but at the same time neither true nor false, by giving an example!

⁸ Meaning it is either true or untrue (false).

Until then we should accept cognitivism about nations as correct.⁹

Let me be sure not understate this however. I am going to make the case in this thesis that there is a true and false answer about what any given individuals national identity is, which is completely independent from their own or anyone else's beliefs about it. That's why I emphasize the point about realism and cognitivism so strongly.

Some more comments on realism

I am also going to argue that the existence of any given nation, or nations as such is not dependent on people's beliefs about them; which is going to be perceived as controversial by most.¹⁰ Let me explain what that would entail.

Let us imagine that somehow we were to wipe all memories about the nation of France from the minds of every person on earth, even the French themselves, and on top of that deleted any mention of it, from all books and the internet. Then, if the existence of the French nation was dependent on us thinking about it, or how we thought about it, then the nation of France, would cease to exist if this happened. You might think that this is an acceptable conclusion. I however do not agree. I will instead take the more nuanced position that if we all stopped believing that a certain nation existed, that wouldn't make this nations stop existing, at least not immediately. However, I do grant that this loss of belief may result in the nation ceasing to exist down the line, because of how people would act on this belief. I will show in Part 3 how this follows from my "descent theory".

Strategies for argumentation

I will make some important points about the main strategies I will use, to argue for my theory.

The Exclusionary Argument.

I have already mentioned that I will make three main arguments for why my theory should be accepted. The first of which I will call the "exclusionary argument", the second two I will just refer to as the Positive Arguments number 1 and 2.

In order to establish the first premise of the exclusionary argument I will have to show, that all competing theories on national identity are either problematic at best or implausible at worst.

⁹ Cognitivism is of course usually used in connection with moral philosophy. And I can of course see how, someone could argue that any statement which includes the words good or bad, have no true answers. But the burden to show this would be on their shoulders, since they are affirming the existence of such a statement. And getting into this particular discussion on moral philosophy is outside the scope of this thesis.

¹⁰ All the greatest scholars on the subject such as Miller 1997, Anderson 1983 and Gellner 1983 would certainly disagree with me here.

I will be showing this by analyzing the theories and showing how there are either internally inconsistent, incoherent or have problematic or implausible implications.

Note the subtle distinction here, that I am referring to two separate things as problematic and implausible. The theories I am analyzing in Part 2 can be problematic or implausible (or both) for two reasons. And one of those reasons is that, they have implications which are in turn problematic or implausible. But it could also be because they are internally inconsistent or incoherent, and if this is the case, we can call the theory as such into question as well, and say that it is problematic or implausible.

After establishing this first premise, I will go on to establishing the second in Part 3. This premise just states that my theory, doesn't suffer from any of these problems, or at least not to the same degree. I will show this simply by laying out a better theory, and then scrutinizing it in the same way. If it stands up to scrutiny better than the alternatives, I will conclude that it should be accepted over them.

This deduction would follow when we accept a third premise, which just simply states that we should accept whichever theory is the least problematic or most plausible.

Let me now go in to some more depth about, what exactly I take the terms, problematic, implausible, internally inconsistent and incoherent to mean.

When it comes to the plausibility of certain affirmations about nations and national identities, there are going to be statements at either extremes, which we are going to be quite obviously true, or quite obviously false. I have already provided a number of examples of obviously true (or at least very difficult to disagree with) statements about nations earlier. The somewhere in between these two ends, we will have a grey zone, where making judgements is more difficult. Now any theory on nations and national identity would of course implications about these topics, (some explicitly other implicitly). This by extension also means, that we can also take a certain theory on national identity and derive conclusions about what according to it, the national identity of a given individual is.

The Graduation Method

This allows us to do the following interesting trick. I will be referring to it as the "graduation method". I will use it to a degree in my arguments later. The idea of the graduation method is to create a hypothetical example of someone, give them certain characteristics and then ask: "according to this or that theory, what would their national identity be?" After this you can change their characteristics slightly and see if this gives a different result. This is a good way to find incoherencies and problematic implications, both of which I take to be ways of discrediting a theory.

Let me show you how the graduation method works.

Imagine we have two individuals. The first is Mr. Yamamoto. He was born in and lives in the heartlands of Japan he speaks no other language than Japanese, he “looks Japanese” and if you ask him about his national identity, he’ll tell you that he is Japanese.

If now someone has a theory of national identity, which identifies Mr. Yamamoto as Swedish, that theory is mistaken. This is because if a theory concluded or implied this, given these facts about Mr. Yamamoto, that would be an obviously unacceptable implication.

Now on the other hand, we can imagine Ms. Larsson. Her ethnicity is Scandinavian, she has lived in Sweden all her life, she speaks good English, but her mother-tongue is Swedish, her passport says that she’s Swedish, and if you look at her family tree you’d see Swedes all the way for 5 generations back.

Ms. Larsson is undoubtedly a Swede.

In the two examples above we have outline examples of two people (Mr. Yamamoto & Mr. Larsson), whose national identity is very clear cut and uncontroversial. These two people are at the extreme ends of the spectrum, where their national identity is very obvious. I will now proceed by giving examples of people with slightly altered traits, to find where the controversial grey areas of discussion are.

Imagine now that Mr. Yamamoto decided to move to Sweden, learned Swedish and was granted a Swedish citizenship. Now we have given him 3 traits that he didn’t have before. Is he now a Swede, or simply a Japanese man who speaks Swedish, lives in Sweden and is considered a citizen of that nation-state by law?

If you say that he is now a Swede (fully fledged or not), you must mean that one of the 3 new attributes which he got made him so. If you do, perhaps the principle to determine nationality which is guiding your intuition is: “National Identity is synonymous with citizenship.” Or maybe it could be: “Nations are linguistic communities, which you become a member of by learning the language.” And so if we were dealing with such a theory, it would imply that the second Mr. Yamamoto which I have just described would in fact be Swedish now.

At this point we could then argue that these theories are false. We could do this in a couple of different ways.

We could for example put forward the proposition that national identity is something which doesn’t change over the course of one’s lifetime. If the theory granted this proposition (in its full version, which we don’t have here), we could call it internally inconsistent. That way we could dismiss the theory.

If it didn't grant this proposition but we argued for it independently, we could say that the implication that Mr. Yamamoto number two was Swedish now, is problematic or implausible. This could also, depending on how well we argued for the proposition, be a reason to dismiss the theory.

Lastly then we could scrutinize the theory, by inquiring into the reasons it provides us with, why the principle it uses to assign national identity, is the correct principle. If these reason don't provide sufficient justification, we can call the theory incoherent.

This is essentially how I will be going about analyzing the competing theories.

To finish making the point about these grey-zones, in which national identity becomes extremely nonobvious, let us make the thought experiment a little more complicated. Let us say, that after Mr. Yamamoto moved to Sweden, he met Ms. Larson and they married and had a daughter named Karin¹¹. Is Karin Japanese or Swedish?

Let's even say she grew up in Sweden and fits perfectly into Swedish society and culture. She also has the added ability to speak Japanese, because her parents raised her bilingually and she knows everything there is to know about Japan, from her many trips there to visit her grandparents.

This could be another tough question, which we should expect a theory on national identity, to provide an answer to. This one in particular would make sense to throw at my own theory of national identity; the descent theory. The exclusionary argument doesn't just require me, to scrutinize the other theories of national identity in this manner (which I will do in Part 2) but also my own, in order to show that it can stand up to such scrutiny (which will be included in Part 3).

So let us consider briefly the criterion for national identity, which I will be trying to defend in this Thesis. If we said that we are members of those nations which we descended from, this would imply something like, Karin being half Japanese, half Swedish.

I will obviously not address this here, and save it for later in Part 3. But if I can't give a good explanation for what being half-and-half of a national identity would mean, my theory can be said to lack coherency; if I don't give an answer for the question of if national identities are mutually inclusive or exclusive, for example.

Or if this implication contradicted something else that the theory implied, it could be called internally inconsistent.

There will be many more of these though questions, in Part 3. If my theory can answer them all satisfactorily, the second premise of the exclusionary argument will have been established.

¹¹ Karin is a name used in both Japan and Sweden, though it is pronounced differently.

Using Reflective Equilibrium to explain implausibility

It should be clear from my examples above, what I mean by incoherent and internally inconsistent. But I feel that I need to say a little more about the terms problematic and implausible, since without more explanation, these they seem quite subjective.

I am going to make a suggestion about what implausible could objectively mean, to show that it isn't necessarily just a subjective opinion to call a theory implausible. However I do not think that this particular definition of implausible is the one I am using consistently all the time.

Implausibility could be defined in terms of something called "reflective equilibrium", a term which was coined by John Rawls in his famous "A theory of Justice". (Rawls 1973, p. 18) There is a variety of reflective equilibrium, known as "wide reflective equilibrium"; which is about creating coherence between our so-called considered judgements, principles and background theories about a certain topic. (Daniels 1979, p.258) When these three components are aligned, that's what we call reflective equilibrium. It is so to speak a test, where we pit different belief that we hold against one another, to see if they are mutually supportive. (Daniels 2016, sec.1)

Let me show you what this would look like if we used another example created with the graduation method.

Let us say that Mr. Yamamoto, married a Japanese woman (Mrs. Yamamoto) and they then immigrated into Sweden together. Then they have a son named Sato, who is completely ethnically Japanese¹², but grows up in Sweden, learns Swedish by interacting with his peers, and ends up being very well integrated in Swedish society. Is Sato Swedish?

This is a difficult question about national identity, which we could be interested in. We could now make a considered judgement about this. Let us say we deem Sato to be Swedish.

Now we could have principle about national identity, which states that national identity is about fitting in to the national society. This would align with our judgement, so the two are in equilibrium. On top of that we could have a background theory about the national identity, which states that it has something having to do with culture.¹³ This would also be in equilibrium with the other two.

Now let us modify the scenario.

Let's say right after Sato was born, Mr. and Mrs. Yamamoto moved to Denmark. When Sato turned 2 they moved to China, when Sato turned 3 they moved to the US and this continued on and every

¹² Yamato is the main ethnicity in Japan. That's what I actually meant, but omitted to avoid confusion.

¹³ Daniels, who elaborated Rawls concept, emphasizes that background theories are very loosely defined. See: Daniels 1979 p.258)

year of Sato's life until he was 18, where they eventually ended up in Saudi Arabia.

Sato would have grown up in 18 different countries.

There could have two results, A and B. Result A sees Sato becoming a total misfit, who doesn't really fit in well anywhere, result B sees him becoming a cosmopolitan polyglot, who is so well adapted to assimilating into different societies, that he fits in everywhere.

In both cases, our reflective equilibrium would be broken, since with result A we would have to make the judgement, that Sato didn't have a national identity, and in result B that he had 18 different nationalities (5,5555%: Swedish, Danish, American, Chinese ect. ect.).

With result A, calling him Swedish would be implausible, not just subjectively, but according to the background theories and principle which we earlier accepted. So if he is still Swedish after all, then we would have to discard those theories and principles.

In this manner we can show that implausibility can be anchored in something objective; that is other assumptions, which we have, or proposition, which we know to be true. The disruption of reflective equilibrium can be one reason to call something implausible.

The Positive Arguments Number 1 & 2

The details of how exactly I will make the other two arguments, do not have to be explained in great detail now, since I will be explaining exactly what I am doing when the time comes. Going through the strategy for the exclusionary argument was more relevant at this point, because this first argument will be the first which I am getting in to; after this section in fact. The exclusionary argument also is a little more complex.

But in the interest of completing this methodology section I will give a brief characterization of the two positive arguments as well.

The first positive Argument, is yet another argument for why the descent theory should be accepted, though in a comparative way.

While making this argument I will present a conflict between two facts about national identity. The first is that national identities can often be described surprisingly well in terms of something I will call typical attributes. But at the same time, it is also a fact (as I will show) that these typical attributes cannot serve as definitions in and of themselves.

I will argue that we should accept the descent theory because it resolves this tension, by providing us with a definition of the nation and national identity, which accounts for why these typical attributes are often so prevalent, and yet cannot be used to form a definition.

This is however not the strongest argument, because it could also be made for different theories on national identity.

That is why I have a second positive argument, which makes a much stronger claim. With this second positive argument I am not just trying to support the idea, that my theory is more plausible than other theories, and should therefore be accepted preferentially. I will in fact be trying to argue for the idea that my theory on the nation, and thus by extension national identity is correct.

The way I will do this is by first arguing for the existence of the concept of the nation as such. I will present an preliminary version of this argument early in Part 2, and then return to it later, when I incorporate it into the second positive argument for the descent theory of national identity.

I will argue that the nation is a meaningful way of describing people, for (at least) one specific reasons. I will then show that the descent theory, which I will have given a full account of at that point, defines the nation in such a manner, that it would be the kind of group for which this reason apply.

Given that these two reason are correct, I would argue that this justifies saying that the descent theory defines the nation "*correctly*".

You may wonder why I would include the first two argument, which only establish that my theory is comparatively better than any other, if I have an argument which makes the strong claim that it is straight up correct. The reason I decided to include the other arguments as well, is because that way, even if the last argument fails, or I make a mistake somewhere, I will still be able to say that my theory should be accepted because it is comparatively better.

Part 2: Analysis of Contemporary Theories

In this part of the thesis, I will lay the foundations for my exclusionary argument, by analyzing various already existing views on national identity, and scrutinizing their weaknesses.

Introduction to Part 2

As I mentioned earlier I will be presenting two arguments for my descent theory of national identity. The first of which I have dubbed the “exclusionary argument” or “argument via exclusion”. It is called that because I am trying to show that my theory should be accepted because it is the comparatively least problematic; so we can *exclude* the other theories. Formally stated it would go something like this:

1. Every other theory on national identity can be shown to be problematic or implausible to some degree.
2. The Descent Theory of national identity, is not (or at least less) problematic and implausible.
3. If a theory is more plausible and less problematic than its rivals, then we should accept that theory.

Conclusion: Therefore, the Descent Theory of National Identity should be accepted.

All of Part 2 is dedicated towards establishing premise 1. What I intend to do here is to go through all the possible theoretical stances on national identity, and attempt to show that they are problematic or implausible. I have outlined in the previous what exactly this entails.

Then in Part 3 I will do my best to create a new theory of national identity which hopefully is less problematic and more plausible than its rivals; thereby establishing premise 2.

Before I get into the analysis of the rivaling theories, I would like to make a comment about the third premise of the argument as well. You may notice that the conclusion is not a strong claim about my theory being correct; I noted this earlier. I am only trying to show at this point, that my theory is comparatively better than other theories, and should therefore be accepted as the currently most plausible theory available. This would then hold true, until someone came up with a better alternative, which I didn't address in this argument.

Had I tried to argue that my theory is *true* in a strong sense by using the method of exclusion, this argument would have been sound, since I would have had to use an untrue third premise, which claimed that my theory being the most plausible and least problematic would mean it was true. This would have been an invalid deduction even if, I could show that my theory had no visible problems

and was completely plausible, since it is in theory still possible for an alternative theory to exist for which the same is the case.

My point here is, that the kind of comparative analysis, which I am doing in this first argument, is a great way to establish that one theory should be preferred to another, but an unsuitable way to show that a theory is actually correct or true in strong sense.

It is now time to get in to the different competing theories of national identities, which one could hold instead of the descent theory. I will characterize them as “views on national identities”, because they are not actual theories from academics specifically about national identity. I will instead use the literature available to me, to lay out what these different theories/views could be.

Here a brief overview of the different kinds of theories which I will be addressing in this Part of the project:

1. The Nihilists
2. The Primordialists
3. The Subjectivists
4. The Relativist
5. The Social Constructionists
6. The Cultural Copying Theory

I will focus most of my efforts on looking into social constructionism, since it is the most widely held, and formidable one of the various positions. The other theories I will present and criticize in a more brief form.

The Nihilists

Before getting into the discussion about nations, we should obviously establish whether or not they even exist at all. A nihilist view of national identity, would state that nations don't exist, so if I can discredit the nihilist view on nations I will have established that nations do exist, at least in one form or another.

A generic definition of nihilism is, that being a nihilist about something is to assert that it doesn't exist. Thus to be a nihilist about nations means to take the stance that they don't exist. Moral nihilist for example would assert that nothing is immoral and that morality thus doesn't exist. (Sinnott-Armstrong 2019, sec. 3.4)

Note that this would actually make a nihilism a cognitivist theoretical position. To say that nations don't exist, doesn't mean that statements about nations aren't either true or false. It just means that all affirmative statements about nations are false.

So according to a "nation-nihilist", statements like...

Nations are continuous entities that exist for long stretches of time.

Nations have a right to a state of their own.

Nations consist of human beings.

...are all false, because nations don't exist.

Only negative statements like... Nations haven't always existed ...would be true.

How would we argue against nation-nihilism then?

Let me first note that I am not discussing total nihilism here, that being the position that nothing at all exists.¹⁴ That is a debate which is not within the scope of this thesis to settle. I am discussing nihilism specifically with regards to the idea of the existence of nations and thereby by extension national identity. Let us assume therefore that the nation-nihilist is someone who still believes in the existence of the physical world.

So when he states that nations don't exist, what he could mean is that they don't exist in the same way as physical things, like animals, furniture and rocks for example.

This I am willing to grant actually. Nations only exist as things in the physical world, by virtue of their members existing in the physical world. But it is probably more apt to say that what we are really doing when we use the term nation, is that we are choosing to group together certain people and classify them under this term. This is similar to choosing to classify some molecules as organic for example, or choosing to call certain bodies of saltwater oceans.

For these kinds of choices however, there need to be good reasons. And if there are these good reasons, we can say that the categories are valid, and the things in the world they are referring to "exist"; so oceans exist, organic molecules exist and perhaps nations as well.

Now this leads to a tangential discussion, which I am afraid, I just have to touch on briefly. Just because a category is useful, doesn't necessarily mean that it exist in a strong sense. We could after all be speaking of useful fiction here. This discussion of the ontological status of nations, could get very long! And I am afraid I cannot do it justice. It also isn't a debate which is necessary for me to settle. In the end the answer to my problem statement won't change regardless if nations are real or

¹⁴ Which I am not sure, if anyone actually holds.

usefully fictitious. It would be fine to just say that all nations are a way of describing people, nothing more, the exact same arguments could be applied, and the same conclusions reached. But if I had to choose a side on in this debate, I would suggest, that nations could be real in the same way that numbers are real. There are things in the world, which we can count, and there are people in the world to which we can assign national identities, and certain molecules which we can, because of some chemical properties describe as organic. Like I already said, there need to be good reasons to justify these descriptions however.

Now a nation-nihilist could affirm then, that in the case of nations no such good reason exists. This however is a negative claim, which means that if I can give good reasons that the term nation is a meaningful way of categorizing people, then I can assert that nations *do* exist at least in *some* sense, and that nation-nihilism is mistaken.

The Relevancy of the concept of the Nation.

This is a good point to address this very important question. Why do we need the idea of the nation at all; which is a different way of asking the question above. Why is it a valid or useful way of categorizing people?

There are many good answers to this question. Some would argue that nations have certain rights and that members of nations have certain duties towards one another. (Miller 1997 for example. See: p.1-4) So the argument here would be that it is meaningful to group people into a nation, because people at that level they have a certain claim to be politically self-determinate.

I will of course have to give my own reasons. And ideally the theory I present later, should define the nation in such a way, that these reasons apply to it. This would establish my second positive argument by the way.

The nation is one of these types of groups which all of us are familiar with. Just like the family, it seems self-evident that there must be some reason for its existence, but when pressed to describe why, it can be hard to put ones finger on it. Let me briefly illustrate this.¹⁵

Let us ask for example, why do we think “families” is a valid way of categorizing groups of people?

We could say, well it’s not an arbitrary category, because your family is who you are related to. Here we could point out however, that first of all this is not the case with all families, and we could ask further, why would being “related” to certain people be relevant?

¹⁵ Nations are of course not like families. But they are similar in this one way, that they are both categories, which at first glance are difficult to explain the relevancy for, even though we can have a strong sense that they are definitely relevant. And that is the point I am trying to make here.

The true reasons for why the family is a valid/useful way of categorizing groups of people are surely numerous. And the same could be true for the nation. There might be many reasons, some perhaps too subtle for us to see or articulate, for why the concept has been in use. However will suffice with providing one good reason for why it makes sense to group people together at the level of the nation.

It is very similar to Millers point, that nations have a *good claim* to be politically self-determinant (Miller 1997, p.82). I would give a marginally varied version of that reason. I would argue that the nation is the most *sensible* level at which to assign groups of people political self-determinacy. And political self-determinacy means, that it is at the level of the nation (/as a nation) people should be able to create laws which affect others, through the political process. You might point to the existence of international laws, but when it comes to those, they are made by nations (or states more generally) as political entities who make agreements amongst one another. And I would argue that for this purpose the nation is also the most sensible level at which these political entities should exist (They should exist *as* nations/These political entities should ideally be nations). In other words I am saying that when it comes to drawing states lines (that means the line for political self-determination of groups + territory), the most sensible places to draw them, is around nations; everything else being equal of course. With this second aspect I am in agreement with Miller. (Miller 1997, p.1-17) An important nuance in this discussion however would be if any of this means, that nations have a *right* to a state of their own. Here one could side with Alisdair MacIntyre on the position, that all rights in any non-legally constructed sense are “moral-fictions”. (MacIntyre 1981, p.84) But this is yet another tangential debate, which I do not have to settle in order to answer my problem statement. Again, because the answer to it, wouldn’t be affected.

Also from what Miller writes he doesn’t entirely believe that nations have *right* to political self-determinacy; thought probably not for MacIntyrean reasons. I say this because he formulates it not as a *right* but as a *good claim* (Miller 1997, p.1-4, p.82), which implies, that there are many other factors that one needs to take into consideration, when drawing such state lines. Problems can arrive for example when nations co-exist on the same territory or when nations have no territory at all. Or any number of other utilitarian considerations. But nations are certainly one of the factors which should be considered when we assign political self-determination to groups of people.

The reason why I believe that these lines should ideally be drawn around the state, if there are not better reasons compelling us to draw them elsewhere, is that if the lines are drawn in this manner it will contribute towards society being more well-functioning and peaceful. Now this is obviously an empirical statement, which would warrant a thesis in its own right to verify it in manner that would convince those who are skeptical of this proposition. But for those who are not, it should be

apparent that having two nations mixed up in one state, could be a possible source of conflict. However, other such sources of conflict could be, having two religious or political groups in the same state.¹⁶ Then there is also conflict between socio-economic classes and even the genders. So making nations self-determining political units is by no means a guarantee for a peaceful society. At the same time we can also imagine a state in which multiple nations live together peacefully. But drawing the boundaries of states around nations, wherever possible would certainly help. Or said in another way, we can see that nations are a relevant concept, because we see people engaging in conflict with one another along nationalist lines. Relating this to the organic molecule analogy, one of the properties which nations have, is that they are groups of people which are often at conflict with groups just like them. And this can be staved off, by letting them having their own states.

The Primordialists

One of the oldest views on the nation and national identity is primordialism. It is however today regarded as discredited, since it is based in empirical claims, which have been shown to be untrue.

In primordialism the nation is defined as something like an extended family, which has roots reaching back far into its ancient history. Everyone in the nation is perceived to have descended from some kind of founding fathers, and thus to be connected by a kind of blood-tie. The actual historical patterns of human migrations however, don't bear this out in the case of virtually any nation¹⁷, which is why no philosophers, since Fichte (Fichte 1946) and Herder¹⁸ have taken this theory seriously.¹⁹

These days in academia primordialism seems to be used primarily as a term in ethnic and racial studies, for a theoretical position, which holds that ethnicity is a fixed characteristic about human beings, as opposed to a constructed one. (See: Murat 2009.)

I would have been amiss not to mention the primordialist view on national identity, but I will leave it at that, since it has been thoroughly discredited already.

¹⁶ They are sometimes at conflict even when they are in different state obviously.

¹⁷ For some examples of this in Europe, read about the great migration period in Heather 2007.

¹⁸ Primordialism is sometimes attributed to J.G. Herder, but I was unable to verify this.

¹⁹ At least Miller doesn't seem to take it seriously. See. Miller 1997, p.36. The other great writers on nationalism, such as Anderson and Gellner don't even mention it as far as I can see.

The Subjectivists

Another possible stance, which we could take on what determines national identity, is what I shall call the subjectivist view. This doesn't seem to be a position, which is widely endorsed by academics in the field nationalism either. In fact I don't know any philosopher who is a subjectivist when it comes national identity. However it is something that you might hear proposed as a possibility by non-experts, when discussion this problem. And there is no reason to say that it can't in principle be a serious contender, if it was argued for well enough. So it is interesting to look at, and necessary for me to address.

The subjectivist view would be that one's national identity is whatever one believes it to be. In other words the criterion to determine national identity would be "subjective self-identification" with a certain nationality and nothing else. While most scholars would probably argue that subjective self-identity plays a role at least, none would grant that it could be sufficient by itself.²⁰

But why is that? Let me use the graduation method to show this.

Let's take Mr. Yamamoto again from earlier, and say he is still the first Mr. Yamamoto whose entire recorded family-tree consists of people who have only ever lived in Japan. He speaks only Japanese, is ethnically Japanese²¹ and everyone else in Japan would say that he is Japanese. He has never been away from Japan his whole life.

Now let's say he acquires a deeply held belief that he is Nigerian. Given all the things we know about him, calling him Nigerian now would be highly implausible.

You could say at this point, "him being Nigerian is an unacceptable implication, therefore the subjectivist view is wrong, case closed!" But as an objection we could note, that something like this would never realistically happen. There is barely anything, that could actually trigger someone like Mr. Yamamoto, to become deeply convinced that he is in fact Nigerian. The cultural and social influences on him, are just too strong.

You could criticize my thought experiment for being impossible so to say, because it doesn't cohere with the psychological realities of what anyone would actually come to believe about themselves. Because if Mr. Yamamoto was all the things we described above, he wouldn't believe that he was Nigerian. Or, we could claim that since he became convinced that he was Nigerian, something important must be missing from the description about him, which we got to begin with.

²⁰ At least Miller says something which implies this. See Miller 1997, p.24

²¹ Ethnically Yamato, to be more precise.

First of all I would point out that if someone made this objection, then they are invoking some kind of social constructionism, because they would imply that what someone came to believe about their own national identity was subjected to some kind of social conditioning. And in this case I would refer to my criticism of the social constructionist view, which is incoming.

But even so, this is not a valid criticism of my criticism, since we could just introduce any numbers of things into the thought experiment, which could circumvent this. Perhaps all of Japan conspired to make him believe this, by telling him he was Nigerian all of a sudden, or he was hypnotized to believe it, or he believes that the subjectivist view of national identity is true, fell in love with Nigeria on a trip there, and just decided to change his national identity based on this.

The point remains that it would be highly implausible to call someone like Mr. Yamamoto Nigerian, at least without a very good argument in favor of the subjectivist view, which I am not aware of. We thus need something else to tie national identity up on, other than just subjective deeply held belief.

So, this should have firmly established that someone believing to belong to a certain nation, cannot be what makes someone a certain national identity, at least by itself, because people could in theory believe all kinds of absurd things about what nation they belong to. It cannot be a sufficient condition in other words.

As a side point I would suggest that subjective self-identification can't be a necessary condition either, because it is unclear what about subjective self-belief should grant one membership to a nation. Some who says something like: "I feel (for example) Russian", is probably referring to something that is not membership to a nation, but perhaps rather some kind of cultural conformity or sense of belonging. But in theory someone could still construct a theory in which subjective self-identity was one of many factors, give very good reasons for this and convince me otherwise. But until that happens we should assume that one's own belief about ones national identity has no bearing whatsoever on what nation one is a member of.

From this, it also follows that it is possible to be mistaken about one's own national identity!

The Relativists

Relativism, broadly speaking is the idea that the truth or falsity of something is dependent on who is assessing it or how it is being assessed. (Baghramian 2015, Intro) If we applied this idea to national identity, we could say that whatever determines national identity varies from nation to nation; it is relative to the individual nation in question, in other words. I will call this the relativist view of national identity.

According to this “open minded nations”, could include members based on subjective self-identity or based on them being sufficiently integrated into their society, whereas a nation with a more ethnically based perception of their own identity, might have descent be their criterion; which is the criterion I am trying to defend.

While all nations are of course unique in their own way, that doesn't mean that they are all in unique categories. The category of the nation is still just one category, which needs to have requirements for which groups it includes and excludes. But to be fair, this could still just mean that nations as such are things, which have their own unique requirements for membership.

So how can we show that this can't possibly be the case?

I will keep this short and simply point out, that the reason one nation would have a different criterion for what their national membership (identity) requires, at least from the way I have describe this theory, would be the result of something like collective agreement (conscious or unconscious) on the matter. And collective agreement is the criterion of the social constructionist. The relativist view, would therefore be a different flavor of social constructionism. So all the critics which I will apply to the social constructionist view, should apply to the relativist view as well. And the social constructionists are up next.

The Social Constructionists

Finally, I will get to the most widely represented stance on nations and national identity among academics, which is social constructionism (Miller 1997, Anderson 1983 & Gellner 1983 for example fall under this category). Since it is the most formidable of all the theoretical stances, it deserve the most thorough review.

There are two scholars in particular who I would like to focus on, and they are David Miller and his book “On Nationality” (Miller 1997) and Benedict Andersons and his book “Imagined Communities” (Anderson 1983). I will emphasize right at the beginning, that their theories were not designed to be used the way that I am going to try to use them, which is to determine the national identity of a given individual. Miller is trying to defend what he calls the principle of nationality (Miller 1997, p.1), and Anderson is trying to explain historically how nationalism and nations came into existence. (Anderson 1983, p.1-7) Neither of them trying to pin down exactly what it is that determines the national identity of a given individual, like I am trying to do in this thesis.

What I will try to do in this section is to figure out what a social constructionist view on national identity would be, so that I can show that national identity is not socially constructed. What I will use Anderson and Miller for, is to help me develop this theory.

What would it mean for national identity to be socially constructed?

Something important to point out before we get in to this, is that you can be a social constructionist about national identity in two ways; and that is as a social scientist, and as a philosopher. The social scientist would be interested to find out what makes individuals or collectives think about national identity the way they do. The philosopher would be trying to work out what national identity is. The two go hand in hand however, when it comes to social constructionism, since if we take a social constructionist view of national identity, we are claiming that national identity *is* something which was constructed through a certain process, social or historical.

I would like to note, that neither Miller nor Anderson use the term social constructionist to describe their own theoretical positions, but I don't think it is inaccurate to categorize them as such. This will become apparent as soon as I get in to their theories, but let me first say some things about social constructionism in general.

Social constructionism is a term used in a great variety of ways and a great variety of fields. So one would be hard pressed to give an exact definition of the term, which would be perceived as satisfactory across the board. The explanation of the concept which I will adopt is that of Viv Burr:

"The key tenet of social constructionism is that our knowledge of the world, including our understanding of human beings, is a product of human thought rather than grounded in an observable, external reality." (Burr 2015, p.222)

If this what social constructionism means, then a social constructionist theory of national identity would be one in which our *knowledge of nations*, and our *understanding of peoples national identity*, would also be a *product of human thought rather than grounded in an observable external reality*. And I would say it is fair to say that this is how those scholars I describe as social constructionist describe nations and national identity.

The big point of discussion here is of course what that means for the ontological status of the nation. Does the nation being a social construction mean, that it is entirely fictitious or that being a social construction *is* the way that it exists in the world? When it comes to social constructionism in general this divergence in thinking is referred to as the discussion of relativism and realism²². (Burr 2015,

²² Note that this is not realism in the sense that I have spoken about it earlier; as mind-independent existence.

p.225) Both Anderson and Miller seem to fall firmly on the side of the fence where one holds that the nation does exist *by virtue of* being socially constructed. (Anderson 1983, p.6) & (Miller 1997, p.11-12)

The alternative seems to be one, where we would have to say that the nation being socially constructed meant, that it had no true or false answers about it; that would be the relativist position. The way I read Burr here (2015, p.225) is that the real split is between a cognitivist and a non-cognitivist forms of social constructionism. I already addressed something similar in the section on the nihilist view of nations and national identity, so I will leave non-cognitivist social constructionism on the wayside and instead focus on the cognitivist version.

As a side-note before we continue: when you read Part 3 you might initially wonder if the “descent theory” I am going to be presenting isn’t a social constructionist one as well. But it won’t be, because the descent theory is not going to be defining national identity as a “*product of human thought*”, but rather as a product of human behavior. And it is thus making national identity something which is grounded in observable, external reality. Which also means it is completely unaffected by how we think about it²³, and thus not socially constructed.

Laying out the social constructionist view on national identity

I will now proceed to present Andersons and Millers theories and then use them to create a social constructionist case of national identity.

I will begin with Benedict Anderson theory. He famously gave the following concise and compelling definition of the nation:

“In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” (Anderson 2006, p.5-6)

Anderson elaborates on what he means by imagined:

“It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion... (...) ...In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined.” (Ibid.)

Notice that first of all, Anderson speaks here as an anthropologist, and not as a philosopher. I will therefore not dig too deep into this definition. The main take-away from this definition is, that nations are limited and sovereign groups of people, who despite not knowing one another

²³ At least directly. The way we think about it, by changing our behaviour could have an indirect effect.

personally, feel that they are a community. Anderson then uses the rest of his Book to lay out the historical, cultural and social reasons for this sense of communion. I will also emphasize once again that Anderson does believe, that these communities themselves do exist, despite their sense of familiarity being *constructed* through this process of imagining.

Something to remind ourselves of once more, before we get in to Andersons theory, is that his book *Imagined communities* is a historical account of the phenomenon of nationalism.

Nationalism in philosophy usually refers to the idea that nations and national identities are valid and important concepts and that nations *deserve* autonomy/sovereignty. (Miller 1997, p.1 & 82-119) Historians and anthropologists such as Anderson however use this term as referring to a political movement, in which a nations *demand* autonomy/sovereignty. (Anderson 1983 p.1-7) The main distinction here being between *deserve* and *demand* here. Andersons book is doing mostly the latter, while Millers book is doing mostly the former. So *imagined communities* is not strictly speaking a philosophical text, but it is necessary to go through it, to establish the empirical premise for the social constructionist case. And on top of that I do not feel like I would be doing the field justice if I didn't include the history of the idea of nations. Much of the discussion around nations, nationalism and national identity revolves around historical events, so it would be amiss not to address them.

Andersons *Imagined Communities*

So according to Anderson, how where nations constructed²⁴?

The phenomenon of nationalism is something historically recent. This is a fact, which I will not dispute. (Anderson 1983, p.1-45, Miller 1997, p.31-3) So what I am going to do now is to give a very brief account of the historical events, which according to Benedict Anderson led to groups of people beginning to imagine themselves as nations, and demanding sovereignty; which is nationalism.

According to Anderson what kicked it all of was the invention of the printing press, in the 15th century, which allowed for decentralized publishing. (Anderson 2006, p. 7-37) Anderson calls this the lexicographic revolution, (Anderson 2006, p.84) and it led to a number of cascading events, which eventually resulted in nationalism. (Anderson 2006, p.36) That was the short version, now let me give you some more detail.

During the time when the printing press was invented most countries in Europe were governed by either lords, kings or were parts of some empire or another. These ruling classes often spoke different languages than the people they were ruling over. And written works at that time were mostly in those languages of court, such as Latin. This created a situation in which the general

²⁴ I would like to remind you once more, that *constructed* is a term which I have attributed to Anderson, not himself. Though I would be taken aback if he had been completely opposed.

populous, who only spoke their respective vernaculars, didn't have access to what was written by the learned in the monasteries and workshops of the time. However, when the printing press came along it allowed for publishing in the vernacular languages. This then led to a rise in new kinds of publishing which gave the vernacular speaking population a voice, which ended up creating these national identities. (Anderson 2006, p.1-67)

How exactly did this happen? David Miller put it best:

"How do I know what it means to be British, what the British nation is supposed to be like? I find out from newspaper editorials, or history books, or films, or songs—and I take it for granted that what I am ingesting is also being ingested by millions of other Britons whom I will never meet. So nations cannot exist unless there are available the means of communication to make such collective imagining feasible." (Miller 1997, p.33)

This is Anderson's theory about how the lexicographic revolution shapes national identity, applied to a modern example. So the collective process of imagining a national identity, happened via and because of this new medium of print. Today of course the media we have is much more varied. But the nations of the world came about according to Anderson, when publishing in their respective languages began to instruct them on how to imagine their national identity.

This was then combined with the erosion of the belief that *"...society was naturally organized around high centers..."* (direct words from: Anderson 2006, p.36) such as monarchs, and high ranking church-members, who were perceived to be of greater importance than any individual. These two main changes created the fertile ground needed for the creation of the kind of group identities which would eventually, become nations and nation-states. (Anderson 2006, p.36)

Let me illustrate this with a more specific example from Anderson's book.

Hungary was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until it split up after world war one in 1918. Until then it was ruled over by the Habsburg dynasty. And they, just like all other dynastic leaders in Europe had no clear national identities. As Anderson puts it:

"Romanovs ruled over Tatars and Letts, Germans and Armenians, Russians and Finns. Habsburgs were perched over Magyars²⁵ and Croats, Slovaks and Italians, Ukrainians and Austro-Germans. Hannoverians presided over Bengalis and Quebecois as well as Scots and Irish, English and Welsh." (Anderson 2006, p.83)

The Hannoverians for example are from what is today the city of Hannover in Germany. The Habsburgs original Habsburg is located in modern day Switzerland, not Austria. On top of that it is a

²⁵ Autonym for Hungarians.

historical truism, that these dynastic families intermarried with members of other powerful families from across the continent, making them more related familiarly to each other than their respective subjects. They also spoke languages of court (before the 18th century often Latin) which were often different from the vernacular languages of their subjects. (Anderson 2006, p.83-5))

All this contributed to dynastic families like the Habsburgs to have very unclear nation identities. But their subjects on the other hand did perceive themselves as Germans, Hungarian, Croats, Czechs, Romanians ect. ect. as a consequence, so argues Anderson, of their respective languages creating separate identities via the lexicographic revolution. (Ibid.)

In the specific example of the Habsburgs, they stopped using Latin as their language of court in the 1780's, and switched to German instead. This of course made it appear as if they sided more with their German subjects, and created a loss of identification from the rest. Their other subjects would end up feeling as if they were ruled over by a foreign power, rather than an impartial ruler, with no distinct national identity and a heavenly mandate. By choosing a language for their court, the emperors had implicitly given themselves a certain nationality, and declared themselves a member of one of the groups of subjects they were ruling over. (Ibid.)

All this in short led to nationalism, the wish of the various peoples of the Habsburg-empire to secede and create their own nation states. And in 1918 Hungary did so, though mostly due to a mandate from a world war one settlement.

So this was a brief account of Andersons theory. To conclude, nations are groups of people who because of certain historical circumstances, such as the possibility for mass communication through print began identifying with one another and imagining themselves as a political community. And when these nations begin demanding sovereignty, that is what we call nationalism. And when nationalism succeeds we get the nation-state.

Miller "On Nationality"

Miller in his book "On Nationality" defends what he calls the "principle of nationality", which according to him is that:

"...national identities are genuine forms of personal identity, that we have special duties to fellow-nationals and that nations have a good claim to be politically self-determining." (Miller 1997, p.1)

A big objective of the book is to show that national identities come with certain ethical attachments. I however am most interested in the first part of his theory, where he gives us his account of what the nation and national identity are.

Millers gives the following definition of the nation in this quote:

"Nations must be clearly distinguished from states on the one hand and ethnic groups on the other. A nation is a community (1) constituted by shared belief and mutual commitment, (2) extended in history, (3) active in character, (4) connected to a particular territory, and (5) marked off from other communities by its distinct public culture. The modern idea of nationality is distinguished from older beliefs about cultural differences between peoples by its emphasis on collective self-determination." (Miller 1997, p.18)

The first thing we notice is that this definition is more elaborated than Andersons. Where Andersons definition had just three main elements (imagined, sovereign and limited), Millers has five (or six depending on how you look at number 1. He also makes clear that nations are not state or ethnic groups, and implies that the belief in nations is something new, by contrasting it to "older beliefs".

We could already show that Millers theory is social constructionist based on this quote, but it is even more obvious when he elaborates on point number 1 a little later:

"...national communities are constituted by belief: nations exist when their members recognize one another as compatriots, and believe that they share characteristics of the relevant kind..." (Miller 1997, p.23)

Notice that all of the above are a "product of human thought", which is how we define social constructionism above; (See quote from: Burr 2015, p.222) recognition of the other as a compatriot as well as belief in shared characteristics.

Miller's theory can therefore reasonably be called a social constructionist theory. And the important take away from this, is that much of Millers definition of the nation is depend on certain collective human thought processes. This becomes even clearer when Miller gives us his theory of national identity.

It is a very detailed explanation. According to Miller national identity has five aspects, which are actually the five things named in his definition of the nation above (Miller 1997, p.18). For him the two concept of the nation and national identity, seem to be very closely linked; the description of one mirror the other²⁶. The first of these aspect is what actually what was just mentioned in the most recent quote (Miller 1997, p.23), namely that having a national identity involves recognition of the other as a compatriot and belief in shared characteristics.

The second aspect which he mentions, that about the nations extending backwards into history, does not have the same social constructionist connotations however, which means that his own theory is

²⁶ This seems to be that the way Miller uses the term national identity, isn't referring to "membership to a nation", which is how I am using it.

not entirely based in social constructionism.²⁷ Neither are the third and the fourth, which demand that nations engage in certain activities and are tied to a certain geographical region. (Miller 1997, p.25)

The fifth aspect is interesting for the purpose of this analysis. It is a common public culture, which members of the nation ought to partake in. (Miller 1997, p.26) Culture can be argued to be the product of human thought. Though it is not strictly speaking anchored in peoples beliefs but rather in people behavior, at least if you don't make culture about something like common values. Miller however does point out that it would be unreasonable to expect everyone to partake in this culture. (Miller 1997, p.23)

One more aspect to national identity which Miller presents us with, but which for some reason he doesn't list (perhaps because it is implied in some of the other aspects, especially nr.2), is the aspect of myth. Miller says that national identities bear elements of myth about them. (Miller 1997, p.18, 33-4, 36-40, 42-3, 48) Some of these myths may be concerning the nations past. And myths may play an important role in *"building and sustaining the nation"* (quote from: Miller 1997, p.36-40) Myths as well should be categorized as "products of thought".

This being said, Miller of course provides us with no criterion for determining national identity, since just like Anderson, that was not what he is trying to accomplish by writing his book. So I will have to find out what the criterion in a social constructionist view of national identity would be. Which I will do next.

The social constructionists criterion

So what would the criterion to determine national identity, in the social constructionist view be?

Given that the two theories we just looked at were social constructionist theories, I believe that we can begin making some conclusions about that, based on what we just learned.

Let us go back to Anderson.

His definition of the nation was:

"...an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."
(Anderson 2006, p.5-6)

So if that's what a nation is, then what makes you a member of one? Logically from what it says in Andersons definition, and the elaboration he provides after presenting it, what makes you a member is that you are *imagined to be a member*. And I believe it is safe to assume, that Anderson doesn't

²⁷ Which is not a problem, since I am going to use the socially constructed parts, to create a Steelman of social constructionism, to beat down afterwards. If I succeed in doing that Millers theory will not be a viable alternative to mine, since it wouldn't make sense with the social constructionist parts discredited.

mean, that it is sufficient if you just imagine *yourself* to be a member. It would therefore be necessary that the imagining has to be done by the collective. I will call this “*collective agreement*”, and it would be a strong contender for a social constructionist criterion for national identity. This is at least one possible answer to what a social constructionist criterion could be. There could be others, but in the interest of space, I will only address this one, which is the most compelling. A different one could be about conforming to certain cultural traits. But that would be a lot less convincing, and I am going to address it in my first positive argument.

Let us see if we can deduce this criterion of collective agreement from Millers theory as well.

Miller’s theory of national identity was a little more complicated, but there were some elements in there which were clearly relevant to social constructionism. And one of these was aspect nr.1 which was speaking of “*shared belief in mutual commitments*” (Miller 1997, p.18), and which Miller later elaborated to having something to do with recognition of the other as a compatriot and belief in shared characteristics. (Miller 1997, p.23)

I have already mentioned (in footnote 26) that I don’t think Millers means exactly the same as me by the term national identity. I take it to mean “membership to a certain nation”, but for Miller it seems to mean something like the characteristics of a particular nation itself.²⁸

I would still say however that things like shared belief in mutual commitments, (shared) belief in *shared* characteristics and the recognition of one another as compatriots all imply that the views of multiple people are involved here.

So if I claim to be a member of the German nation for example, that means that both me and other Germans need to believe that all these things above are the case; we and they especially, need to *agree*, so to speak.

Therefore I would say that collective agreement is the criterion here as well. This is of course not to say that the criterion for Millers theory would be collective agreement only. Miller clearly requires other things as well. But in the purely social constructionist view of national identity, I will be focusing exclusively on the criterion of collective agreement.

Scrutinizing the Social Constructionist View.

I have 5 points of criticism, which I would like to level at the social constructionists view. Since it is the most formidable position, it deserves the most formidable critiques. I also feel that it is necessary

²⁸ I am not sure about this however, see: Miller 1997, p.22-26

to try to discredit the position in more than just one way, since not every point of criticism is going to be convincing to everyone. But note that if you find one of them convincing then you should take this a good reason to dismiss the idea that national identity is socially constructed, at least as far as it is based in collective agreement.

Stated as a principle this criterion would be the following:

“A person is a said national identity if the members of that nation collectively agrees that he is.”

Disagreement within the Collective

The first thing we would like to know obviously is, what exactly collective agreement would look like in practice. Are we assuming that *if* we polled everyone in the collective about what they would say the national identity of a given individual is, that they should “agree” on it? What does agree mean then? Surely unanimous agreement would barely ever be had, neither would unanimous disagreement probably. But perhaps we could say that as long as the vast majority of people agree on someone’s national identity, then it is confirmed. But the issue here is of course, where exactly the cut-off point would lie then. Of course any number except at least 1 more than half, would be arbitrary. More than 50% wouldn’t be arbitrary because that is the majority; but the problem there would be, that a situation in which a nation is divided almost in half over something, can hardly be referred to as collective *agreement*.

I will grant however, that this may not be the most hard hitting criticism, since it doesn’t discredit the concept of collective agreement as such, and instead is more a complaint about the fact that it isn’t a cut and dry concept which is easy to apply.

So let us come up with something better.

Disagreement between Individual and Collective

This second point of contention, is also not massively hard hitting, it is more a matter of a lack of clarification, which could maybe be given. However, if you become convinced that this clarification cannot be given, then this criticism was successful.

It would be interesting to challenge the social constructionist view by asking: What would happen, if the collective says the person is something, but that person themselves disagreed?

Imagine a situation in which everyone in Japan says that Mr. Yamamoto is Japanese, but only he disagreed. And at the same time Mr. Yamamoto believes that he is Chinese, but all the Chinese disagree and say that he is not? Does that make him Japanese then? That comes down to if you believe that a person *can* fundamentally be mistaken about their own national identity, which a

cognitivist social constructionist would believe. Then it also follows that the opinion of individuals in question doesn't matter when it comes to one's own national identity.

Disagreement between Collectives

That then lead us to the question of what would happen if two collectives disagreed.

Let us take Mr. Yamamoto again.

And let's say that both the Korean nation and the Chinese nations are of the collective opinion that Mr. Yamamoto is a member of their nation. Which collectives opinion will win out? Or will he perhaps even acquire both national identities?

This points out an internal inconsistency, or at least an incompleteness in the criterion of collective agreement.

But there is a second issue which was raised here. And that is the question of, whether or not collectives can be mistaken about someone's national identity, the same way an individual can. The social constructionist view would obviously have to answer no to this, since collective agreement not only is what we should use to identify someone's national identity, but it *is* what is granting them that identity (membership to the nation) in the first place. So according to the social constructionist view, the collective cannot be wrong. But then what do we do when to collectives have opinions, which contradict one another? Well then we must conclude that at least one of them is mistaken, which means that collectives can be wrong, which means that collective agreement is not what determines national identity.

The only way out of this would be to argue that national identities are not mutually exclusive. But let me modify the thought experiment slightly so that even this didn't save the criterion.

Let us say that the Chinese and the Koreans were in fact in a war about the question, which nations Mr. Yamamoto belonged to. Then each collective would not only be of the opinion that Mr. Yamamoto belonged to their nation, but also that he most definitely didn't belong to the other.

Then the same argument applies. They would both be wrong, and thus the social constructionist view is internally inconsistent and implausible.

The Delimitation Problem.

A significant issue when it comes to the idea of collective agreement is delimitating who is part of the collective and who isn't. The problem arises from the fact that we don't know who gets to be in the population of decision makers, without already having made a decision about it. It's a vicious circle in a sense.

Allow me to illustrate.

How do we figure out who is a member of the nation? By having the other members of the nation collectively agree on it! But who collectively agreed on the national identity of those members in the first place? Wouldn't we have to apply the same method to them as well, and have each one of them be approved collectively? Now if we do, then it would be impossible to run this thought experiment, because we can't determine any of their nationalities, without having determined the everyone else's first. Which we can't do, because we don't have a agree upon collective yet. Which we cannot get without a collective which can grant the members of the collective their membership to the nation and to the collective; and so on and so forth.

This is yet another way, in which the criterion of collective agreement is problematic.

This problem could be solved however, by arguing that the nation had founding moment. Anderson and Gellner both give compelling accounts of how nations come into existence. (Anderson 1983 & Gellner 1983) However, if they are mistaken, then this defense at the delamination problem falls apart.

The Social Contract Problem.

For the next criticism we draw inspiration from social contract theory. Social contracts in political philosophy usually refer to the idea that people can subject themselves to some kind of authority. Two famous examples of this kind of social contract theory are found in Thomas Hobbes's "Leviathan" (Hobbes 1651) and in John Locke's "Two Treatises of Government" (Locke 1689).

Social contracts invoke a kind of collective agreement, either of an explicit or implicit kind. They suffer from a number of issues, which are relevant to the social constructionist view of national identity as well. One of them is, that collective agreement cannot be given by people by people who are yet unborn.²⁹

The issue is that when it comes to determining people's nationality by collective agreement, there is no guarantee that this collective will not change its mind. This could happen in the following manner. Let us imagine for example, that at time A, the Japanese nation agreed that Mr. Yamamoto is Japanese. But then for some reason, 20 years later at time B a new generation of Japanese, who have since been born and grown into adulthood, to not agree that he is Japanese. To make it easier, let us even say that almost all Japanese people over the age of 20 mysteriously vanished. Now it is just Mr. Yamamoto and the young generation, who do not agree that he is Japanese. If we accept collective

²⁹ Or the dead for that matter; but I will ignore them.

agreement as our criterion, then we would have to grant that Mr. Yamamoto would actually cease to be Japanese.

This could of course also happen if people simply changed their minds, which of course they do, about all kinds of things all the time. So if we make national identity about something like collective agreement, then being a member of a nation is something which could suddenly change. People could for example decide to take someone's nationality away as punishment for an unpatriotic act, and then restore it if they liked. National identity is not usually understood to be the kind of attribute, with which can be granted and taken away from one day to the other. And if you agree with this, then you have to grant that the collective agreement principle is problematic. This would be similar to the point I made in my methodology section about disrupting reflective equilibrium.

The cultural copying theory.

I would like to propose one last possible theory of national identity, which is reasonably plausible, and thus needs to be addressed. I will call this the "cultural copying theory of national identity". It is, as far as I know not a theory on national identity, which anyone else has written about. This theory is, as will become evident later on, an offshoot of my own theory.

I took inspiration for the "cultural copying theory of national identity" from Marion Goodman's concept of "culturally reproduced historical kinds". In her text "Gender as a historical kind", she argues that gender is such a culturally reproduced historical kind. This means that it is a model which is being reproduced from generation to generation, by people interacting with the old "model" and taking on its characteristics. (Goodman 2018, p.4-8)

A similar point could be made about national identity; it could also be plausibly described as a historical kind, which is culturally reproduced. Nations in this theory could be a large cluster of associated people, who differentiate themselves from outsiders by a certain model (their national identity) which is passed down to each successive generation. This model could be a combination of culture, language and values, all things we usually think about when, trying to describe our national identities. And what makes someone a member of a nation, is to be part of this unbroken chain of transmission; this would be the criterion.

I have two points of contention with this theory.

When I am referring to national identity, I mean membership to a certain nation and not a "model". The first point is, that it isn't clear how this model conveys membership. Someone could imitate it, and just get access to the nation that way. Which may of course be completely acceptable. But I will

argue later for why this chain of transmission, needs to have *biological* component. And to the degree to which I can show this, I will have discredited the cultural copying theory.

The other point is that this model which is being passed down, could be characterized as a list of (typical) attributes. And trying to define nations or national identities by typical attributes is a fallacy, which I will return to when presenting my first positive argument.

But to sum up briefly why it is a fallacy, there are 3 reasons why typical attributes cannot be used to define a national identity. Because 1.) not everyone is going to have all of these attributes, 2.) these attributes are not going to be unique to the nation in question, but could equally enter in to the definition of some other nation, and 3.) it is hard to show why they are not arbitrary.

Part 3: The Descent-Theory of National Identity

In this section I will present and argue for my own original theory of National Identity.

The first argument which I wanted to present is the exclusionary argument. It has three premises.

1. Every other theory on national identity can be shown to be problematic or implausible to some degree.
2. The Descent Theory of national identity, is not (or at least less) problematic and implausible.
3. If a theory is more plausible and less problematic than its rivals, then we should accept that theory.

Conclusion: Therefore, the Descent Theory of National Identity should be accepted.

I have attempted to show previous sections that my premise 1 applies to the main theoretical stances on national identity. I take premise 3 to be a given; at least for normative/conceptual theories. (See: Introduction to Part 2, for an elaboration of this.)

Now it is time to present my own theory, and my other arguments for it. This will hopefully establish premise 2, and thereby complete the exclusionary argument.

The criterion for the determination of national identity, which I wish to defend, derives from a certain theory of the nation. The argument for my criterion in the end will be a more nuanced version of the proposition that:

Descent is the criterion to identify national identity because nations are such things that we are born in to!

So what I will actually be presenting here is a certain theory of the nation, from which my criterion will logically follow. So if one accepts my definition of the nation, one will have to accept my criterion for the determination of national identity as well.

Introduction to the concept of “folkeslag”

To begin with, I would like to propose the idea, that it would be more meaningful to think of nations the way we think of what in Danish is called a “folkeslag” and in German a “Volk”. The English translation for these terms is “A people”, but I will be using *mostly* the Danish version of the term “folkeslag”. I have two main reasons for this.

First of all I feel like the English version of the term, would be confusing to use, since I will be using the word “people” in its regular sense as well. The second reason is, that the three words are not used in exactly the same way across all 3 languages. One word can be used in some contexts in one language, but it’s translation can’t necessarily be used that way in it’s own language. That’s another way of saying that “folkeslag” has different connotations than “a people”.³⁰ One difference is that folkeslag stands out more clearly as an ethnographic term.

I am not saying that all nations are equal to folkeslag. As far as I am concerned the concept of the nations has more levels of nuance and complexity added to it, as you will see once I give my definition of the nation. These nuances in the conceptualization of the nation, which I will be arguing for, do for example allow one folkeslag to be divided into multiple nations, and one nation to be made up of people from multiple folkeslag. But they will often overlap. And this I would say suggest that thinking about nations in the same manner we think about folkeslag would be helpful.

Let me show you an example of what I mean, by going back to a quote which I have used previously in Part 2:

“Romanovs ruled over Tatars and Letts, Germans and Armenians, Russians and Finns. Habsburgs were perched over Magyars³¹ and Croats, Slovaks and Italians, Ukrainians and Austro-Germans. Hannoverians presided over Bengalis and Quebecois as well as Scots and Irish, English and Welsh.”
(Anderson 2006, p.83)

When Anderson is using the terms Tatars, Letts, Germans, Armenians, Russians, Finns, Magyars ect. what is he referring to? Surely not nations, because according to his own argument, nations didn’t yet exist at this point.

Thus it seems logical to assume that when Anderson is referring to Russians, he is referring to the Russian people (the Russian folkeslag), since they are, according to him, technically not a nation yet.

³⁰ While folkeslag and Volk mean virtually the same thing in Danish and German, as a native German speaker I feel that the word Volk has an unpleasant ring to it. In Danish it is easier to unashamedly use the term in an ethnographic sense whereas in a German cultural context this has become a little taboo.

³¹ Different word for Hungarians.

The same goes for all of the other groups named above. He must be referring to something akin to folkeslag, with these words.

I am trying to make the point here that we already use the words for many national identities the same way we speak of folkeslag. If you think that, I am putting words into Anderson's mouth here, then consider this other example instead.

Let's say that we adopt a child from Russia³² and someone in the neighborhood hears about it and comes by and asks, "where is the Russian child?". In this case the person is probably referring to the child's heritage; in other words, which folkeslag this child has descended from? Since if they just meant to distinguish the child by its country of origin they would've said: "where is the child *from Russia*?" You could also say that Russian here simply signifies the child's nationality, but then I would ask you, if you didn't feel that the child being adopted had changed its nationality.

Now think back to one of the very first questions that I posed in this Thesis. I was asking: "*Dane, American, German, Chinese, Nigerian; what do these words mean? What is it that makes a Swede a Swede and a Russian a Russian?*" Well in the two cases I have just mentioned, these words seem to mean something akin to folkeslag, or at least seem to be used similarly. The point I am trying to make is that thinking of nations as folkeslag in very many cases makes a lot of sense. Often much more than anything else. And I would suggest that we are often using the words for many national identities in this manner already, without being entirely aware of it.

In any case, these are not supposed to be arguments, for why it makes sense to equate some nations to folkeslag. I was simply giving two examples, which show that in some cases when we use the words for certain national identities we are or could well be referring to folkeslag.

This is why I believe that it makes sense to define the nation in *terms of* folkeslag. The only problem with this is just that folkeslag are almost as difficult to define as nations.

Defining Folkeslag

There is no one agreed upon definition of the term Folkeslag³³, though sometimes it is defined in terms of ethnicity, race or even territory. (Schaefer 2008, p.1036) Races and ethnic groups however, are in turn not defined clearly either. Sometimes the term ethnic group for example seems to denote something having to do with cultural traits, sometimes perceived racial characteristics and kinship.

³² Adoption is a topic which I will return to later.

³³ Or if there is, I certainly was unable to find it.

(Murat 2009, p.1640-1)) The latter definition seems to take hold only, when we speak of ethnicity as in ethno-nationalism. Whereas the first, makes sense of the fact that immigrant communities are sometimes referred to as ethnic minorities, even though they did not necessarily all integrate from the same place, and are thus not as genetically related as one would think. So, when speaking of ethnic groups in West Africa for example the term *ethnic* seems to mean something different than when we are speaking of ethnic minorities in the US for example. (Concerning the latte see: Green 2018)

For this reason, I believe it is necessary that I give my own definition of the term Folkeslag, to clarify what it means in this thesis, when I use it. This definition will be a stipulative one however. The concept of Folkeslag is an elusive one after all.

What I mean by folkeslag is: *"A loosely interrelated and historically associated group of people, that speak a common first language."* ³⁴

Let me explain my reasoning for adopting this definition. It has two main components to it; I will go through the "loosely interrelated" part first.

The Loose Interrelatedness Hypothesis.

The concept explained

The idea I am trying to describe with the concept of "loosely interrelated", is basically that there is probably some way in which the genealogical structure³⁵ of a folkeslag, is relevant in the definition of the term. By that I mean, that there is some property of the genealogical structure of a group like a folkeslag, which we can use to distinguish it by.

My best guess for how we could describe this property is that for *most* people in a given folkeslag the following will apply:

If you took a person A from folkeslag X, and traced how many people there are alive today who person A has at least 1 common ancestor with within a given timeframe (from a point in time "t" to present), then as you moved t closer towards the present, the following would happen. 1.) The

³⁴ A massive exception to this is of course the Han-Chinese, who should of course be perceived as a folkeslag, but who do not speak a common *first* language. While Mandarin can be understood by the vast majority of Han Chinese, but the first languages of many Han people are local Chinese dialects (such as Hakka, Shanghainese and Cantonese) which are often mutually unintelligible. They are an exception which shows, that this definition is not perfect. However I would point out that instead of having a common first language, they have a common writing system, the Chinese characters, which are a unique writing system since they can be read independent of which dialect is spoken by the reader. (Karpaska 2010, especially p.4-8)

³⁵ Genealogy is the study of family ties, and lineage history.

number of people who person A shares an ancestor with within the timeframe would obviously dwindle, but most importantly 2.) they would aggregate within folkeslag X.

Let me illustrate this by using an extreme example. Let us start with a really small timeframe and slowly extend it backwards in time, to see if the aggregation reverses. We begin with just 1 year, and look at everyone who was born within this timeframe. The only people who these newborn share common ancestors with, are going to be their siblings, if they have any. And for most of those newborns it will be the case that their siblings, are part of the same folkeslag as them, which should be quite obvious since they are in the same family. And if their siblings are firmly outside the folkeslag in question, then we can safely assume that the same is the case for newborn. Now if you go back a couple decades to include their parents generation, the picture will not have changed much. Most people are still only going to have their closest family show up as being the people they share at least one ancestor with within this short timeframe. The point at which even for members of the folkeslag in question, people on the outside will start showing up more frequently, would be if we took the timespan a couple of generations back. That's when more and more people are going to have distant relatives outside their folkeslag. And then of course if we extended the timeframe over a 1000 years into the past, virtually everyone on the same continent will show up, as having at least one common ancestor within this timeframe with the person in question. Going through this in reverse as a thought experiment should make the idea a little more intuitive, that as you shrink the timeframe, people who one shares a common ancestor with will begin aggregating within one's own folkeslag.

This is my best attempt, at formulating this concept of loose relatedness. The idea I am trying to find words for here, is like I said that there is something about the genealogical structure of a folkeslag which can be used to define it, or is at least relevant to its definition. This is one possible, way in which this could be described, but by no guarantee the correct one.

Note that, genealogy is the study of family ties, or family lineages. And the sense in which I am using it, it means *biological* family ties more specifically. It doesn't have anything to do with genetics however. When I am talking about genealogical structure being relevant to the definition of a folkeslag, I am saying that something about how the peoples family trees are interwoven, could be relevant to defining the folkeslag. This is not to be conflated with a requirement for a primordial genealogical structure in which everyone in the folkeslag can trace their lineage back to a group of original members. The loose interrelatedness hypothesis is not making that strong of a claim. So whatever the best way of defining loose interrelatedness is, it obviously will not require that *everyone* in the folkeslag is related to one another, or has common ancestry within any relevant timeframe. In addition to this, of course intermingling of people will also have happened at a higher

rate with people from outside the folkeslag, at the edges of its territory, than between people of the same folkeslag from across their territory. This should be evident from the historically low levels of mobility. At the edges of territories, people's family ties are inevitably going to be more mixed. Therefore the addition of the adverb "loosely" to the term.

My reasons for believing in the concept.

I am not sure, if I did the best possible job at pointing out or formulating what the nature of this loose interrelatedness really is. So remember, that when I am using the concept of loose interrelatedness, what I am referring to is, just the idea of a certain yet undefined genealogical structure, which is relevant to the definition of the term folkeslag. The empirical proposition I made above to exemplify what this structure could be, is just my best guess at how we could describe it.

My specific guess is a testable claim of course. However, it would require a very resource intensive genealogical study to validate it. I of course didn't do this study. You might wonder then, what led me to believe that this property of loose interrelatedness, whether in the form I have described it, or in some other form, exists at all.

I have two reasons to assume that there is such a property, which is relevant for distinguishing folkeslag.

One reason is, that it just seems apparent to me, that people would historically have intermarried at a higher rate with people of their own folkeslag, for the simple reasons of proximity and cultural similarity.

The second reason is an inference I made based on the following assumptions. I will refer to this as the "inference from common first language".

The first assumption is, that most of us learn our first language from our parents.

As an important side-note, I need to add here, that *all* of us learn our first language from our primary caregivers. And we only learn our first language from our parents if and because they are our primary caregivers. But luckily most people's primary caregivers will end up being their biological parents. Thus the above statement, with the qualifier *most* added, is still true. And for the following line of reasoning, it is them being the *biological* parents that is relevant, since I am trying to use this indication of common first language to infer a *biological* genealogical structure.

The second assumption is that: Languages change over time. This is also rather uncontroversial.

This leads me to believe, that people who speak the same first language as me, will share at least one *recent* ancestor³⁶ with me, more often than people who do not speak the same first language as me. This is because, one reason for why we share the same first language could be, that it was passed down to us (perhaps changing all the while), by ancestors who have been historically associated with one another (by for example being part of the same societies or cultures).

From this historical association of our ancestors, which we can infer is likely, based on us speaking the same first language; we can further infer that there is a certain probability, that within a relevant timeframe we share one of these ancestors. And by relevant time frame I mean one, within which we can see this effect of aggregation³⁷ show up.

This is of course not true, for everyone, and this will be obvious from many peoples genealogy. But for many groups of people, having a common first language *could* point out *in some cases*, that some kind of loose interrelatedness exists. In modern times of course, languages such as English, French, Spanish and Portuguese are huge exceptions to this. Therefore, when we apply this argument, we should obviously apply some basic understanding of history, to check if we are making sense here.

Note however that the common ancestry, if existent, is never going to be *the reason* a given individual shares a first language with anyone. The fact that one share a language with someone only *points out* that there is a chance they are both part of a group of people, for which this loose interrelatedness exists, which in turn means there is a certain probability that they share a common ancestor within the relevant time. And by certain probability I just mean, that the probability is higher than for any given person outside the folkeslag. The “historical association” of their ancestors however, can more plausibly be postulated to be the actual *reason why* they share a language with someone. I will get to this next.

Historical Association

The concept of loose interrelatedness is merely a hypothesis, and there are very good reasons to doubt it. It is after all just an inferred guess. And when looking at the patterns of human migration throughout history, we see that it is all a lot more complicated than people intermingling with one another in nicely separated communities, creating measurable genetic differences. Populations have frequently braches apart and assimilated. Large flocks of individuals, families and tribes have migrated around, resettled and left again. (See for example: Halsall 2007, Brown 1995 & Heather

³⁶ Recent here indicates that the t, in the time frame: a point in time “t” to present, has been moved sufficiently close to the present, for this effect to be observed.

³⁷ By aggregation I mean: people who ones shared at least 1 common ancestor with aggregating within ones own folkeslag.

2007) So changes in the groups of people I call folkeslag, have historically not always been tidy and gradual.

All of these are good reasons to doubt that any meaningful interrelatedness, whether in a loose sense or not, exists in these populations. On top of that, the way I formulated my specific version of the concept, can also be criticized, for being virtually inapplicable from a practical standpoint. We would already need to know who was part of a given folkeslag, before we could even run this test. It is in this sense not a way of testing if someone is a part of a folkeslag or not, but just a property that a folkeslag in general should have.

You can doubt my hypothesis on loose interrelatedness in two ways. You can criticize my particular attempt of articulating this concept, or you can take the position that no such relevant genealogical structure exists, which we can use in our definition of the term folkeslag. Both *could* be valid criticisms.

Which is why for those readers who are highly skeptical, of the loose interrelatedness hypothesis, I added the “historically associated” part to the definition. Loose interrelatedness, if it exists in some way, could in theory be used as a definition for folkeslag by itself. But a definition based on historical association, can do the same. It might even do it slightly better, since the concept of historical association is more accessible and not as empirically dubious as loose interrelatedness. So combining both in one definition seem like the smartest thing to do. And even if we didn’t it is actually possible, to argue that descent is still the proper criterion to identify national identity, even when using a version of the term folkeslag in the theory, which just means: *“A historically associated group of people, that speak a common first language.”* I hope I can show down the line, that while these two definitions, would slightly change some implications in my theory, they won’t change the answer to my problem statement. So you can take this alternative definition on board, if you strongly object to the first. I am thus not one hundred percent committed to the first definition, when it comes to defending the criterion of descent only. But I include the first one because I think that a descent theory build on the first definition is more accurate, which I will do my best to show throughout the rest of the Thesis.

So what do I mean by historically associated?

Again it is something which is indicated by a common language. You may doubt that it is likely that two people have a recent common ancestor, just based on them having the same first language³⁸, for

³⁸ We need to be making historically informed judgements here of course. I take this to be implied. Of course common sense tells us that recent common ancestry is unlikely between native English speaker from Nigeria and one from Canada.

the reason that people could pick up new languages which they transferred to their children in other ways. But if this transfer of language would have occurred in a different manner, it would have been through some kind of association between the people in question. They didn't need to have intermingled sexually in order to influence each others, cultural behavior and language. While some intermingling would obviously occur when populations meet and conjoin, this doesn't need to be an across the board phenomenon, as much as the merging of culture and language. In other words, languages and cultures can merge far quicker than, people across the board can mix their genes with one another. Intermingling could be said to simply be another form of historical association.

If you ran the "inference by common first language" argument to try to infer historical association between peoples ancestors, rather than common ancestry, you would see that the same argument is even more compelling for historical association.

Now this might make you wonder, which I would then attribute significance, to the *biological* association between people; which would be common ancestry. This is a very important point, and showing the significance of descent needing to be biological, is not easy, and takes a long time. This is why I have decided to make that argument in a later section.³⁹

It is much less controversial, and empirically dubious, to define folkeslag I terms of people who have been historically associated with one another and for that reason speak a common first language. What I mean by two people being historically associated is, that their ancestors where associated with one another, by for example being part of the same communities, speaking the same language or partaking in the same culture. This doesn't mean, just two of their ancestors, at any given point in time, but a long lineage of people, who however don't need to be intermarried between them, and don't even need to have ever met or been in proximity to one another. This is what I mean when I say "historically associated"; it means that people's ancestors have been associated in the sense I just described.

Now to finish this section, let me just clear up some possible points of confusion. Historical association in the sense I described it doesn't require that these ancestors have to ever have met one, because what matters here is just that they were born in to a group of people who had a common culture, language and so on. They can be part of the same society, speak the same language and live out the same culture without ever even being in proximity to one another. But what associates them with another is the fact that they are part of a community which shared these things; culture language, ect. You could call this a *cluster* of association if you will.

³⁹ See: Under Adoption, On the Non-arbitrariness of *biological* descent.

You may find this to be a bit of stretch of what we usually understand by association, but consider the following. Culture and language are passed down and across generations/lineages of people by association. A long line of people could for example pass a new term on to one another. They would all be “associated in the proliferation of that term”, even though each one of them has only met two of the others. In this sense, wherever we see a shared language and culture, we must conclude that there must have been some association of some kind between people’s ancestors. And no, this of course doesn’t mean that they all must’ve have met each other. This too, plays into the idea of a cluster of association.

I will also just clarify that when I say that one’s ancestors need to have spoken, the same language and lived in the culture, that only applies between those ancestors who are contemporaries, since language and culture are always undergoing constant change.

I feel like it would also help if I elaborated on what exactly I mean by *society* here. By society I don’t mean the same local community, but something more akin to “the same territory”. The reason for not using “territory” is that first of all two folkeslag could live in the same territory, and we can imagine a folkeslag which doesn’t have a territory; they could always be on the move for example. That is why I thought society, was a more fitting term, which I am however using in a larger sense, referring to something like... *“people living a certain way of life together, often on a certain territory but not always.”*

You may ask then, what would happen if the members of one folkeslag were divided in some manner, and began living in something we could only describe as separate societies?

I would argue, that this would mean that they would eventually diverge and become two different folkeslag. Over time, since they stopped associating with one another, their languages would become mutually unintelligible and their cultures too dissimilar. If enough time passes by we won’t be able to say anymore that the current members of both are historically associated anymore, since those of their ancestors who were associated, are too far in the past. In this case, you may think that it would still sound perfectly reasonable to call them historically associated, but then I would point out, that if you go far enough back all human being are going to be historically associated in this manner.

There is an interesting side point to this issue of divergence, which has to do with the age old and famous problem of the ship of Theseus, which we know from Plutarch was being used by ancient Greek philosophers to discuss the problem of identity over time. (Plutarch: *Vita Thesei*, chapters 23.1)

The problem goes something like this.

Theseus has a ship A which is made from 1000 planks and no other components.

Every day he takes out a plank and replaces it with a completely new one.

After a thousand days, all the planks have been replaced, and we are left with ship B.

The question is: are we still looking at the same ship; are ships A and B identical?

Thomas Hobbes modified this thought experiment, by asking further, what if someone had collected all the planks, which had been removed and reassembled a ship C. If ship A is identical with one the resulting two ships B or C, which one is it? (Hobbes 1655)

Now the way this related to the question of diverging folkeslag is the following: If a folkeslag diverges into two parts, those two resulting parts, would be equal to B and C whereas the original united folkeslag would be like A. We now have a number of differing possibilities. It is possible to say that folkeslag A, B and C are all different. But this would then imply that if folkeslag A existed for long enough by itself, even without diverging, it could become a folkeslag B just as function of enough time passing by. Then the obvious question would be, how much time has to go by for this to happen?

If we do not accept this outcome, we would instead have to admit that one of the two folkeslag B and C remains identical to A while the other doesn't. This consideration takes us back to the cultural copying theory. And it would be at this point where it offshoots from my own theory. The cultural copying theory would imply that whichever folkeslag B or C, or both ends up not resembling the culturally reproduced model which A had seized to be identical to it.

Now the way that I will solve this problem, later when it comes to nations, is by showing how diverging groups of people lose their common national identity gradually. I will show how this follows from my theory of the nation in a later section.

Conclusion on the definition of the term folkeslag.

A last question you may have, is why I would include the criterion of sharing a common first language in my definition, if it is implied in "historically associated".

To explain this, I would note that this definition, is not one which is intended to be used to identify which folkeslag specific people belong to. I wanted to define the term broadly. Who belongs either in or out is in many cases going to be very ambiguous. And a common first language could not be used to determine this. While children learn their first language from their parents, that doesn't necessarily mean that this was the parent's first language as well. People can change what languages they speak for all kinds of reasons. But a group of people can only qualify as a folkeslag according to

this definition if they have a common first language that is typical for members to speak. And that is the reason why I added it in there.

So that leaves us with a definition for folkeslag which goes: *"A loosely interrelated and historically associated group of people, that speak a common first language."*

This is the way I will be using the term. And in case you strongly disagree with the loosely interrelated part, I will show later how the alternate version:

"A historically associated group of people, that speak a common first language."

...can give the same answer to my problem-statement. This functions as a failsafe, so that I don't have to fully commit to just the first definition.

Defining the Nation

Now obviously the question arises, why wouldn't we just directly equate nations with folkeslag? With many national identities this would make a lot of intuitive sense, Danes being one of them. But with others it wouldn't. Here are two examples. Multi ethnic nations such as US-Americans, would not be a nation under those conditions. Neither would the Chinese be considered a nation, since all over the country of China the Chinese people have various mutually unintelligible dialects as their first languages. (Kurpaska 2010, p.4-8) And if we checked this idea for reflective equilibrium, we would have to admit that a considered judgement could be that Americans and Chinese are national identities, since they are both large self-determining political communities who ostensibly claim to be nations. If you held Anderson's theory of the nation as a background theory here, and believed in the principle of collective agreement, then you would break reflective equilibrium by denying that America and China were nations.

What do we make of this?

One way of solving this dilemma is to propose the idea that there are more than just *one* type of nation. This could be one way of saying that not all nations are the same, which at first glance seems obvious. So when we are saying words like: Danes, Nigerians, Americans, Chinese, Germans, these terms are not necessarily all referring to exactly the same kind of thing.

So what could these different types of nations be?

We could say for example that there is a difference between multi-ethnic nations, and mono-ethnic nations. *Ethnic groups* could be equal to folkeslag in some cases, but since that is not necessarily the case I will keep saying mono/multi-ethnic.

Now consider the following. Given that a multiethnic nation existed for long enough, the various different ethnic groups would eventually have assimilated into each other so much, that they would become indistinguishable from one another, when it came to their culture, language and given enough intermingling even superficial physical characteristics. They would in effect end up becoming one folkeslag. I would therefore argue that in a sense multiethnic nations are “early stage mono-ethnic nations”, or *young nations* as I will call them.

A mono ethnic nation like the Danes for example didn’t always consist of people who viewed themselves as Danish, but rather various tribes of people, who eventually melted together into what we know today as the Danish people. (See: Price 2015) Historically speaking something like this would probably have been the case for almost any other mono-ethnic nation we see around these days.

But this did not happen from one day to the next of course. Therefore I would conclude that nations are things that come into existence gradually, as the various members begin assimilating into a cohesive community⁴⁰. This would place them on a continuum, on one side of which are what I will call *young nations* and on the other side is what I will call *mature nations*. A nation is a mature nation when the degree assimilation of the various groups has become so is so high, that it is equivalent to a folkeslag; meaning that everyone in the nation could trace their lineage back to a line of ancestors who have been associated with the ancestors of his or her fellow nationals.

In other words a mature nation *is* a folkeslag.

Young nations however would be *communities*, that have the prerequisites to become mature nations eventually. So as long as we can see that they are moving along the “continuum of assimilation”, they are nations as well. And what I mean by assimilation is that they are slowly building this historical association and the common culture and language that come with it, and also an increasing degree of loose interrelatedness.

So what is the factor that creates the movement along this continuum? I will call this factor *cohesion*. And what would make the communities “*cohesive communities*”? The first criterion would be that they are communities which have boundaries around them, which have the result that the people of this community associate more with other people of this community than with people from outside it. These boundaries could be physical boundaries, like an enforced territorial border, or just them naturally separated by mountains or oceans from other communities. The boundaries could also be

⁴⁰ I am of course speaking about very large communities, more akin to societies the way I described them. However nations are not required to always live in one and the same society, so I thought the word community would be more fitting, this it doesn’t apply attachment to any territory.

entirely cultural. People could simply choose to associate less with outsiders because they have a different culture or speak a different language. These boundaries could also come in the form of political ideas. If some colonial overlord lumped different people together into a certain jurisdiction they might eventually assimilated for that reason.

This would only happen however, if the second criterion for cohesion was also granted. And that would have to be that people did not preferentially associate with other members based on some other factors, to the degree that it would make the community diverge noticeably into different groups.

When those two criteria are granted, you have *cohesion*. And when the community is cohesive, it will move along the continuum of assimilation towards becoming a folkeslag. And once such a community is far enough along, or moving towards higher degrees of assimilation, you have yourself a nation.

I therefore propose the following definition(s):

"A nation is a cohesive community, which either is or is on its way to becoming a folkeslag."

"A mature nation is a folkeslag." (A cohesive community with a certain degree of assimilation. Enough so that we can say that the members are historically associated and they are loosely interrelated.)

"A young nation is a cohesive community which is moving along the continuum of assimilation in the direction of becoming a folkeslag."

Some comments of my theory of the nation

One thing which I wasn't sure whether to include in this definition was a demand, that the community in question be of a certain size.

We can ask ourselves, if folkeslag are equal to nations, wouldn't that make isolated uncontacted tribes nations as well? They certainly would be even more easy to define in terms of genealogical structure than any other group of people, and their culture and history of association would obviously be very distinguished as well, since they may not have met outsiders for many generations. So they would fit both my definitions for folkeslag and nation very well indeed. However, what we usually understand by a nation is a community that is larger than tribes, where everyone knows one another personally.

My issue here is thought, that if I had to added a criteria based on size, I couldn't make it non arbitrary. And it is also not important to answering my problem statement. If tribes are nations, well then certainly the way to become a tribes-member would be descent as-well. So it wouldn't change anything with regards to the criterion, if they are included. Therefore I will leave this discussion here.

The demise of nations by the power of belief

A very important point I was trying to make in this thesis, was that peoples belief about their national identities and their nations, do not make a difference when it comes to the reality about these things. This may seem hard to believe, since we find it difficult to imagine a nation of people in which no one consciously identifies with this group identity. What if they even completely rejected it?

I have promised that I will make an argument for why according to the descent theory, if people stopped believing in nations, that would not make them stop existing immediately, but it *might* make people act in ways which would make the nation stop existing down the line.

The reason I believe this should be clear now that I have presented my theory. The way that nations continue to exist, is that the criteria for cohesion, named above are maintained. So the boundaries need to be kept in place, which make sure that people associate to a higher degree with their fellow nationals than with outsiders, and internal divergence has to be prevented as well. This is the only way that the historical association can continue on into the future.

Now we could imagine a scenario, in which perhaps due to some anti-nationalist political ideology, everyone in the nation becomes convinced that their national identities are fictional, and they simply "decide to give them up". If they did this, they wouldn't lose their national identities, according to the descent theory. But they *might*, though this is in no way guaranteed, begin behaving in ways, which would lead to them failing to maintain the physical and cultural boundaries, which make sure they stay differentiated from other communities. This could because believing in the nation period is a prerequisite for believe that it is valuable. And in some cases a certain number of people might need to believe that the nation is valuable to maintain, for example a physical border or continue to engage themselves in the national community. Down the line this would mean that their descendants, if for this reason their ancestors association with one another had stopped, would no longer have the national identity in question.

I do however think that this is highly unlikely to ever happen.⁴¹ Even if they for example decided to open their borders to whomever, and they began associating with the newcomers to the exact same degree, as with their fellow nations, in an attempt to rid themselves as much as possible of the residues of their national identity, it wouldn't make a difference. Then all that would happen

⁴¹ It is however possible, that no such thing would happen at all.

generations down the line would be an assimilation, and their descendants and the descendants of the newcomers would become a new nation. But the generation in question here, would still be the nationality they are due to their descent.

Here a different scenario. If they were trapped on an island for example, with no other people coming in, there is nothing they could do. They could change all their language and culture all they want, which happens gradually anyway, and the theory accounts for this. Then of course there would be the “ship of Theseus problem”, which we addressed earlier. We could of course argue that due to gradual change the nation staying on that island will no longer be the same after a certain span of time. However this wouldn’t then be the result of peoples belief about it. And I would argue that if we are talking about an unbroken chain of descent here, it would be the same nation, regardless of how drastically different its culture, language and values or culturally reproduce model, would be.

Another possibility on how nations could be brought to their demise, would be separatism. Imagine a nation, in which a political ideology of religious separatism begins to spread; people wish to secede from the nation because of their religious beliefs.

They certainly could try. If this happened for example in Germany, and the catholic south decided to become their own nation the following would happen according to the descent theory. They could obviously create their own state, that’s up for the politics of the day to decide. But they would still be Germans, for a long time, until perhaps eventually in the future the catholic and protestant German states had grown so far apart that we couldn’t call them nations anymore. This is possible, but not for the first generation of southerners. They won’t be able to shake their German national identity, no matter what they do or believed.

The vagueness of the concept of nations

I would just like to point something out. The definition of national identity the way I will account for it is very clear-cut, and thus also the limits of any nation in question. So if we asked who for example the Japanese are, we could give a clear account of who every single Japanese person was, given we knew all the facts about the world.

What is vague however, are two things. The first is when exactly nations come into existence. The second is, when a young nation becomes a mature nation. I will address these points in more detail in the next sections.

The Criterion for Identifying National-Identity.

What this whole thesis is about is to find out how we can determine the national identity of a given individual. The reason I have developed my theory of the nation, is to show that the criterion I am

trying to defend follows from it. But before I will present the final argument for my theory, I will show you how exactly descent as the criterion, follows from my theory of the nation.

My problem statement is to find out what determines an individual's national identity.

I stated that it was descent.

My reason for this is that a nation is such a thing, which you are essentially born in to.

I have just given you my theory of the nation.

So how does *descent* follow as the criterion for identifying national identity from this theory?

It follows because, if what makes a cohesive community a nation is the building of historical association of its members through a lineage over time, then members at any point are only members because they are descended from this lineage of associated ancestors.

This is not the most obvious of deductions, so let me explain it in a different manner.

We define a folkeslag as a group of historically associated people. We can ignore the part about loose relatedness, and common first language for now.

We define a nation as a cohesive community, which either is a folkeslag or which we can see is on its way to becoming a folkeslag.

Then what it means to be a member of a nation, is that you are a member of such a community. And if the community is on the continuum of assimilation, that means it's members already have a certain number of ancestors who were historically associated.

Which means that if you are such a member you have such ancestors. And if you have such ancestors, then you have descended from them!

Thus, the reason you are a member of your nation is that you are descended from another member.

Notice that this is the outcome, no matter which of the two definition of folkeslag you insert into the line of reasoning. This is because in both definitions rely on biological descent still being required, otherwise we would end up with the offshoot cultural copying theory, which I have already shown is problematic. What the significance to the descent being *biological* is I will address in the section on adoption, which will come soon. It seems fitting to place it there, because it the last piece of the puzzle.

On the Beginning of Nations

Now another big point of contention here, will obviously be how exactly the first members of a nation came to be members. No matter where this discussion goes, I will end up having to grant one of two things.

Either, that there is a way to become a member, which does not entail descent. Which also means that the criterion is not *necessary* but only *sufficient* (at least for the founding members).

Or, that we cannot possibly pinpoint the beginning of the nation, because nations come into existence gradually.

To clarify this issue, let us imagine a group of people who are trying to create a new nation. Could they become members of their own nation without descent, or are nations just simply not the kinds of things, which a group of people can just decide to create?

I would lean towards the latter, because if we are speaking of people in such early stages of creating a nation, that they need something like collective agreement to establish their membership, then we are speaking of a nation which is so young, it can hardly be classified as such. They would certainly be members of the group/community, which they decided to create. But I wouldn't refer to this group as a nation yet, because no loose interrelatedness or historical association has been built so far. So we cannot say that they are on the continuum of slowly becoming a folkeslag. They would just be a cohesive community, but not a young nation.

For this reason I find the answer, that nations come into existence so gradually that we cannot point out exactly where they began, more compelling. Or we could say, that there is a point at which they are definitely a nation, we just don't know where it is. But with regards to the nations which we know for sure exist already, we know that the criterion for membership is descent. I don't think this is an entirely implausible position to take.

This notion of something gradually changing from one state into another is something we often see in nature. When do we begin calling a stream a river for example? Or, when do we call a valley a canyon? When do we start calling a sapling a tree, or an adolescent boy a man? People have always tried to nail the distinction onto something specific; often something arbitrary so that the transition happens in a moment. So the boy becomes a man after completing a certain test, the sapling a tree when it reaches a certain height and the stream a river when it carries a certain volume of water. But perhaps it is more honest to acknowledge that in reality these concepts bleed in to one another, without saying that sapling and trees or boys and men don't exist, or aren't meaningful distinctions. We could take the position that the same applies to nations. We may not be able to tell exactly when

a community or society becomes a nation, but we can know for sure that once it is a nation, it's members are members due to their descent.

We could also look at this problem in the following way. Let us remind ourselves of the explanation which I have now given multiple times, for why the concept of the nation is meaningful; likened it to organic molecules for example on many occasions. Some molecules have chemical properties which constitute a good reason why we should conceptualize them as a class of molecules of their own. The same is true, for certain groups of people; some have properties which make it meaningful to describe them as nations. I elaborated on this earlier, and will touch on it again soon.

Now we could affirm that a group of people turns into a nation gradually, because over time it becomes more and more meaningful to categorize them as such. It isn't just from one moment to the next, that this group of people gains the kind of properties, which mean that it would be best if they were granted political self-determinacy. Rather them being a self-determining political community makes more and more sense gradually while they undergo the kind of changes which turn them into a nation.

And that is why I would argue that nations should be perceived as things which come into existence gradually. And because of this, the inability of the descent criterion, to explain how the first members became members, isn't problematic. It is simply more correct to say, that members are descended from members, which had that national identity slightly less, or it was a slightly less significant thing about them.

The first positive Argument

I will now present my second argument for why, the descent theory should be accepted. I will begin by returning to the "typical attributes fallacy", which I used to argue against the cultural copying theory at the end of Part 2.

One could attempt defining a given nation or national identity by creating a list of attributes. In many cases these typical attributes could be stereotypes for example, but also values or cultural aspects could be listed. Speaking a certain language and taking part in certain traditions would also be obvious things to put on this list.

We could say for example, "a German is someone who speaks the German language, feels that they are German, grew up in German culture and shares German values (fill in the blank of whatever that would be)". This could be an attempt at defining the German national identity.

We will soon see however, that trying to define national identities in this manner will always be fruitless. The reasons for this are plenty.

First of all, there are in many cases going to be massive cultural differences between different classes of people in any given nation. So an educated young upper class German will have many more of these typical attributes that we could mention in common with someone of the same class and age from America, than with one of his fellow nationals from a different generation or socioeconomic background. We could also formulate this by saying: the differences between nations are often going to be smaller than the differences within nations.

A second reason why a national identity can't be defined by typical attributes is exactly because they are just *typical* and not *universal*. You cannot make a list of attributes, or name any attribute which will apply to all members of a given nations. And even if you could you would be hard-pressed to explain why the list of attributes you gave is not an arbitrary list. The only attributes I can think of that would work, (in a one item list) are descent⁴², and self-identity. Descent being the criterion which derives from my theory and self-identity being the criterion which derives from subjectivism, which has other problems, as we have discussed already.

On top of that, many of the typical attributes which you use to define one national identity, you could use to define another as well. They would in other words have to be both *universal* and *exclusive*, to even come close to work as definitions.

However when describing certain nations, some of the attributes are going to be largely accurate. So for example "Danes... speak Danish, live in Denmark, have a Danish passport, have Danish names and feel Danish" are going to be accurate to some very large degree. Even drinking beer could technically be on this list, since that applies to the vast majority of Danes. You could also put certain values on this list, which would match an astonishing amount of members of the Danish nation. This is in fact how some would go about describing Danish national identity. Take the "danmarkskanon"⁴³ for example, which is not an attempt of describing Danish national identity with attributes per se, but a similar undertaking attempting to define something like "Danish-ness" in terms of Christian culture, Danish language, open mindedness, equality before the law ect. So it is fair to say that these typical attributes are often what we think about when we try to describe our national identities and nations.

But then how can we reconcile the fact that many of these typical attributes describing for example a national culture, often have some generalized validity, meaning they often apply to the vast majority

⁴² I am using the general word for descent here, but with any given nationality it would obviously have to be, being descent from that specific nation. So descent would work as an exclusive and universal attribute.

⁴³ Can be found on the internet at danmarkskanon.dk

of people in the nation, while they at the same time cannot be used to define the national identity in question.⁴⁴

The first positive argument is, that we should accept the decent theory *because* it reconciles this tension. It explains why what we usually define national identities by, or what we often think of when we think of certain nations, (their language, culture, values, traditions and even self-identity), are so intimately connected to the nation that they can often be generally applied, but at the same time can't be used to define any given nation by themselves; for their lack of universality, exclusivity and non-arbitrariness.

Said in another way, we should accept the descent theory of national identity, because it is based on a definition of the nation, to which all the typical attributes we think about with regards to our national identities (language, culture, values, traditions, etc. etc.) are tied without there being any typical attributes being used in the definition itself. (Which would be committing the typical attributes fallacy.)

The reason the typical attributes are tied to the descent theory's definition of the nation, is because it defines nations as communities which have, in part, cultural boundaries; and many of these things (language, traditions and values) are going to be associated with culture. But it does this, without relying on any aspect of the distinct culture itself to enter into the definition.

This also holds up with place of birth and subjective self-identity. If both your parents are of a certain national identity, you will likely feel subjectively that you have that same national identity as well. And you are also highly likely to be born on the territory of your nation.

In that all the various cases where such a list of typical attributes cannot be made, however, of which there may be a few⁴⁵, do not actually present a problem to my argument. They actually strengthen it, because they just support the idea of the typical attributes fallacy, being a genuine fallacy.

This is a reason why we should accept the descent theory, though not a strong one, since many other theories could easily live up to it as well. If what I have written above, hasn't made it clear why it follows from a theory resolving this point of tension, that this is a reason why it should be accepted, just imagine the opposite. Imagine say that we had a theory which defined the nation in such a manner, that it wasn't possible, not even for mature nations, to make a list of typical attributes that would achieve some reasonable amount of fit, we could safely assume that this theory is false.

⁴⁴ I am exempting from this, the kind of attributes which within a different theoretical framework could be consistently used. In those cases I would scrutinize that theoretical framework as such.

⁴⁵ Most likely young nations.

So any theory which wants to be accepted needs to cross this, admittedly very low bar, of defining the nation in a way, so that the thing we usually use to describe our national identity, do actually apply to most of us.

Some more pseudo-arguments.

If you need any more reasons to favor this theory, here are some peripheral benefits of adopting the descent theory.

The descent theory of nationality doesn't define the nation by a certain culture or certain values, which in a beautiful way leaves much more room for a diversity of personalities, values and traditions within one Nation. It gets rid of the idea that having a certain national identity means you need to be, feel, or think in a certain way or do certain things for your nation. The descent theory says absolutely nothing about, who should be friends with, love or have loyalty to.

It also doesn't perceive nations as inherently politically motivated entities. I do of course grant that most nations will act politically, and that nations are the kind of groups which are usually the best candidates for receiving political self-determinacy. I don't define nation by their politics however, or in terms of being communities which *should have* or *need to have* such political aspirations. They are, just like culture, something that just follows along without entering into the definition.

Because of this, the descent theory also takes the energy out of toxic kinds of nationalism. Since any nationalist ideology which is trying to justify their beliefs about how nations should behave, will have a hard time using the descent theory to do this. To argue for none toxic forms, such as Miller nationalism, which states for example that nations simply have good claim to organize in their own states (Miller 1997, p.82) arguments from outside the descent theory would have to be introduced.

The second Positive Argument.

I have one more argument which I would like to present. And in this one will not just try to argue that the descent theory should be "accepted as true, as long as no other coherent alternatives are available", but this time I will try to argue that the descent theory is in fact correct.

During the section on the nihilist view, I gave a reason for why I think that nations are a valid way of grouping people in. In that section I said that I would show that my theory defined the nation in such a way, that fits this reason. And the time for that has now come.

Note that this was a reason for why the nation can be said to "*exist*" (at least in some sense). And so if I can show that I have defined the nation in a way for which this reason applies, then that should mean (given that the reason is good enough) that my definition is the correct way of defining the term. This would mean then, that nations exist *the way I have defined them*; which means that my

theory defines the nation correctly. And if my argument for why descent follows as the criterion for this theory is sound, then that would mean that my criterion is the correct one as well. This is granted of course that every single chain in this argument is flawless, which is probably not the case. But if I can get this point across relatively convincingly, we can at least agree that I must be on somewhat the right track in my endeavor of finding out what it is that determines national identity. My theory of the nation is, like I already emphasized, not complete; there are many not fully explained variables, and much of the following reasoning simply relies on the assumptions that those variables could in theory be filled correctly. The only thing that matters to me here, is to show, that the best, most well formulated version of my theory would be the “correct theory of the nation”. Because this would by implication mean that my criterion for determining national identity would also be the correct criterion.

[Revisiting the justification for the concept nation.](#)

Earlier I presented a reason, which I believe justifies the use of the concept of the nation. I did note however, that there may be other, so if the following argument doesn't hold up after all, not all hope for my theory is lost. Someone could come along and make the arguments better than me.

I stated that nations don't exist the same way that physical objects do. They are a way of grouping people together. And only if there is a good reason for grouping people together in this manner, can we say that nations exist/are valid ways of categorizing groups of people. They would then of course only exist by virtue of their members existing. I likened this kind of existence, to oceans and organic molecules, which are also terms used for the purpose of categorizing certain molecules and bodies of saltwater.

I then gave my reasons, for why I believe the nation was a valid concept. My first reason was inspired by David Miller. It was that at the level of the nation would be the most meaningful place to assign political self-determinacy to groups of people.

My argument for this was, that if political self-determinacy is granted to nations, that will be a factor (in an obviously multifactorial equation) which would *contribute* to society being more peaceful and well-functioning.

I will now have to show, that this would be the case if we used the theory of the nation which I have created to figure out who to include and exclude in this self determining group of people.

Here is why the descent theory would categorize people in a way where this would apply. Think back to the first positive argument for a minute. I made the case there, that while nations couldn't be defined in terms of their shared culture, values or language ect., these things would none the less be extremely prevalently shared by their members, especially in mature nations.

And in societies where culture, values and language are shared as much as possible, are likely to be the most peaceful and well-functioning, and they would also function best as political entities.

You might then object, and say that this wouldn't necessarily apply for young nations. And you would be correct. But in young nations per definition people would have to associate with one another in a peaceful manner (despite not sharing these things to the same degree yet) for them to qualify as a nation. Otherwise we obviously couldn't call them a cohesive community in which historical association was building over time and they wouldn't live up to my definition of a nation.

To conclude, this is then why I think we can say that my theory of national identity defines the nation, and thus by extension the criterion for national identity correctly; because it defines the nation as the kind of community for which political self-determinacy is reasonable.

Now, some of the other theories which we have looked at will full-fill this criterion as well, but in the cases where we have discredited them by other means, during the exclusionary argument, this could be argued to disqualify them, for being considered as contenders for this argument.

If this is not convincing however, there are still the other 2 other arguments, which do certainly establish that the descent theory is very much an acceptable theory of national identity, if not the most acceptable one.

Asking the tough questions.

It is time to play devil's advocate to my theory, and try to shoot it down the same way I shot down all the other theories in part 2. Only if it can withstand the same types of criticism that all the other theories were exposed to, should it be accepted obviously. In a sense I am still trying to show that premise 2 of the exclusionary argument is the case. I will do my best in this section to address all the possible questions that a reader could have about my theory, one after the other, and show what the descent theory would answer. I will also employ a number of cases to help me do this.

Note: From now on I will begin to speak about the topics of nations and national identity, as if the descent theory is fact. I am doing this because at this point I have advanced all arguments for my theory, and because it simplifies the use of language.

People of mixed descent

One of the biggest question on everyone's mind, all throughout this project, must have been: If my criterion descent, then what does that mean about people who are descended from parents with

two different nationalities. I have ignored this point on purpose, because I felt it was best not to muddy the waters with it from the beginning, and get everything in place first.

The answer is that obviously, yes you can be descended from two different nations, let's say Swedish and Japanese like Karin Yamamoto, who you'll remember for part 1. Karin is half Swedish and half Japanese.

Now the question arises of course, what it would mean to half-and-half of two national identities? Are national identities mutually exclusive like hair color, in the sense that one can be 50% blue haired and 50% black haired, but not 100% blue and 100% black haired? Or, are they inclusive so that one can be two national identities 100%, the same way one could be for example 100% a father and 100% a brother at the same time.

When we say being a national identity, we mean of course that one is a member of that nation. So now the question arises, if it is possible to only be half a member of something?

We can take two possible stances on this.

We could take the stance that calling someone half a member of a nation, would be meaningless and that membership is therefore something which one either has or doesn't have; it's either all the way in or all the way out. Then we would have to grant that someone can belong in two nations or even four or eight at the same time.

Here however we could object by saying that this would lead to too many people being members of too many nations, and that this in turn would be implausible. We could instead take the stance that membership is not something which one either has or hasn't but which is turned up like volume nob.

To settle which possibility is the case, I will have to (for the first time in this thesis) go deeply into the issue of what is meant by membership to a nation.

What it meant from the beginning was the word we should call you, when referring to your national identity; that is American, Dane, Russian, German, Italian ect. Now there is of course a sense in which one can be half Italian and half German, in this case referring to their descent. The whole point of the descent theory is that this is how we should define national identity, in terms of descent. And if we look at peoples actual genetic histories or genealogy we will quickly realize that virtually no one is 100% descendent from only one nation. And demanding this would be invoking primordialism, and we already established that that sense of purity was an illusion. At some point, when people have one national identity, which dwarfs all the other's percentages that we don't take note of these other marginally existing identities anymore.

The second stance is therefore correct. Descent is like a volume knob and therefore so is national identity.

The real confusing arises when we start understanding the term membership of a nation in terms of belonging to, because a sense of belonging into a nation is nonsensical. What we really mean by that is a sense of belonging to that nation's society.

When you are half one nationality and half the other, like Karin Yamamoto, what determines which society you "most belong into" or "would thrive best in", are obviously going to be dependent on secondary criteria, like which language you speak best, where you grew up, which culture you feel most connected to and even where you feel most at home. This could be one place or two places. Note that these things don't change anything about your true national identity, they only inform your choice of where it would be best for you live.

The truth is of course that virtually no one is 100% any nationality, so when it comes down to it most people will just end up living in whichever nations they are "descended from the most". For someone who are for example 85% Japanese, that is not a difficult choice, but for Karin Yamamoto it would be. Only people like her make the fact virtually every one of us is mixed to a degree apparent.

So in conclusion, one's national identity is usually not something that one is 100%, and it doesn't have to be. At a certain (unspecified/unspecifiable) point it is no longer meaningful to refer to yourself by anything other than the national identity which you are vastly more than any of the others you carry small bits of. So we just don't talk about the small bits⁴⁶, but they are most certainly there for the vast majority of people. Only when they are not small bits but big halves or quarters, is when they need to be spoken of. When they are small enough, that they are no longer relevant to speak of, I will remain agnostic about. I would only say: "at the point at which I is no longer meaningful for you to identify yourself as the member of the nation which you carry a small bit of national identity around from.

And that is what the descent theory has to say about people of mixed descent: almost everyone⁴⁷ is of mixed descent!

⁴⁶ They could become relevant when it comes to assimilation of people from one nation into a neighboring nation, since they are likely to have some parts of that national identity already, and their descendants could be argued to be "fully" members of that new nation earlier, than had they come from somewhere very far away.

⁴⁷ If that is actually "almost everyone", or just "very many people" will depend on a very complicated discussion about whether some of these small residue national identities, which people may carry with them, decay after a while; which could be argued to be the case, based on how nations and folkeslag come into existence and go out of existence gradually.

Stated as principle thus the criterion for descent will take the form: *"It is sufficient for ones parents to have had a certain national identity for one to have this nationality as well (at least in part)."* This would constitute the answer for my problem statement.

Adoptions

The second very important question that needs answering when it comes to national identity and the descent theory is: what about adoptions? I have course promised every time where I emphasized that my theory called for *biological* descent, that I would argue for why this biological factor was significant in this section. So now the time has come to fill in this last piece of the puzzle. Then the decent theory will be completed, my problem statement answered, the answer fully defended and the thesis main text will be over.

I will once again outline, that the reason I am determined not to let go of this *biological* descent requirement, is because without it my theory would turn on to some version of the cultural copying theory. Which is unacceptable because the cultural copying theory suffer from the typical attributes fallacy.

So now to the question of what happens not national identity in the case of adoption. The answer to the question, based on everything I have said about the descent theory in this thesis, is that: No, being adopted does not change your national identity. Your national identity (or as we have just seen, probably combination thereof) is something which you get upon conception, and which doesn't change. Adoption is obviously a good thing, and any reasonable nation-states would have laws in place which would allow children who were adopted from outside the nation, to live and be treated by their new society as equals and fellows. But for this to happen we don't need to pretend that their nationality changed, since our national identities do not obligate us to treat our fellow nationals any differently than people who are not members of our nation.⁴⁸

One reason why it follows that adoption does not change ones national identity, is that a person being adopted from another nation will already have a national identity via their own descent.

If you still find this highly counterintuitive, allow me to illustrate by using a thought experiment.

Imagine that in Denmark, by some accident a chemical got into the Danish water-supply which rendered every Dane, to the last man, woman and child infertile for life.⁴⁹

This would without a doubt mean the Danish nation would soon cease to exist, once the last Danes had died off.

⁴⁸ This may seem, like a very non-nationalistic form of nationalism. But I would affirm that that's a good thing.

⁴⁹ Please ignore that there would be some Danes living abroad as well.

Now the Danes however feel that it would be a shame to leave their beautiful country, culture and society behind and do something, which will make sure that all these things won't die with them. So they decide to adopt every last orphaned child in Russia. They teach these children, the Danish language, Danish customs, Danish culture ect. ect., so that these children will be able to carry the society and its values into the future. This would work. But the Danes would still be gone. Once the last one of them is dead, they will have handed everything that their nation owned over to the orphans.

These orphans carry with them their Russian heritage, so they would not be Danes. But since they are no longer living in association with the rest of the nation of Russia, they would in time of course become a nation of their own via divergence, after a couple of generations. Let therefore call them the "New Danes". The New Danes would however be a different nation than the original Danes, even though they were identical in every other way.⁵⁰

This must be the case, because as I have shown already, defining national identity in terms of all the above named things, such as language, culture, inhabiting a certain territory, doesn't work; that would be the typical attributes fallacy. But what the Danes are passing down to the orphans are merely their cultural artefacts. So we could make an exclusionary argument then, and say that *not* requiring biological descent, would be implausible.

The second reason as I have state above, why the Russian orphans will remain Russian, is that according to the descent theory these children are already carrying the Russian national identity with them. Why viewing it like this makes the most sense, may not be entirely obvious to you; so try to view it this way:

What if all this was done by the Danes coercively. Let us say they just decided to and got away with, stealing Russian infants at a massive scale and raising them like their own children. In that case would it not seem out of place to call these children Danes when they grow up rather than just describing them for what they are; abducted Russian children. Should the people of Russia not accept them as fellow Russian if they returned to them as adults? If you said no biological descent bears no relevance, your answer to this would have to be no, which shouldn't be an easy implication to accept.

These were how two negative / exclusionary argument for why biological descent is necessary. Again, in the interest of a having fail safe to fall back on, I will try to make a third. This time a positive one. That however, is a lot more difficult, and may not be quite as convincing. I do however feel obligated

⁵⁰ ...Other than their skin color of course, but that doesn't matter, since the same would have been the case if they had adopted only Swedish and Norwegian orphans.

to at least attempt to provide a good positive explanation for why descent needs to be biological, since otherwise that proposition could be knocked down, just someone just coming up with a rivaling candidate, which appears slightly more plausible. But if I have a positive argument, then that will need to be discredited in its own right.

On the Non-arbitrariness of *biological* descent

So why is it, that adoption could not just constitute an exception to the rule of biological descent. When it comes to the lineages of historically associated ancestors, which fellow nationals have, why couldn't we just say that one being adopted at a young enough age would make one a fully fledged member of such a lineage. Why is it not simply *primary caregiving* that matters, when it comes to passing national identity down through the generations, but rather *biological* descent?

I will try provide 4 reasons for this, the last of which will be that positive reason which I promised. None of these however, will constitute an airtight argument. I do thus acknowledge that the definition of descent as necessarily having to be *biological* descent, is the weakest part of my theory. Note that we could also create an alternative theory of national identity, which would give us the same answers about peoples national identities in the vast majority of cases, where we simply use primary caregiving as the criterion instead of descent.

Which one of the two theories is then more conceptually accurate, comes down to a disagreement about this fundamental assumption: the relevance of *biological* descent.

The first reason I would mention is a small problem with primary caregiving as a criterion. And that is, that it wouldn't be as stable of a criterion as descent would be.

The simplest way to show this, is if we imagined an infant which was just being passed around to be take care of, between people of different national identities. We would end up with a child, and eventually an adult for which it would be very hard to pinpoint what national identity he had. But this is of course more a point of lacking clarification for the primary caregiver criterion, than a defense per se of the descent criterion.

The second reason, is that it isn't clear what primary caregivers are supposed to pass down the adopted child, which would give them their national identity, if national identity is *not* something acquired through descent. They would be handing down their culture, language, values ect. But as we have already shown, this leads us to the typical attributes fallacy. So again here we can see how, at least without further development a theory using primary caregivers as a criterion cannot explain how national identity is conveyed.

The third reason for why we should accept the descent criterion over the primary caregiver criterion is that the latter would eliminate the possibility for people of mixed nationalities to exist. Let me show you how.

If you take away the *biological* descent criterion, and replaced it with just being raised in the community, it would have the consequence, that there would be no more partial nationalities, which I addressed just before. So someone who has, say a Japanese and a German parent, but is raised in Germany only, can't be said to be "half Japanese", because he was raised by German primary caregivers (let us imagine the Japanese father didn't get involved in his child's life). This seems like a problematic implication.

Now the objection from someone who opposes the descent theory might be here, that the person in question could be of "half Japanese *descent*" but "full German *nationality*". But the descent theory advocates, as you know, that we should use these two terms (descent and nationality) interchangeably, because defining national identity in any other way, is problematic for the reasons I outlined in Part 2.

Lastly then, one could raise the objection, that emphasizing that descent has to be *biological*, is arbitrary. Let me illustrate why this would seem so?

Let us imagine that a Gini, switched out two very similar looking infants from two different nations, and the parents raised them as their own, passing down their language and culture to someone that isn't their biological child. Why wouldn't we just accept that this child now adopts their national identity? The descent theory, just to make this clear, would in this case imply that the children's *true* national identity, given that they were truly indistinguishable and no genetic testing was done, would never be known.

So now let try to give a positive reason for why something descent in the *biological* sense is relevant to national identity.

This, I must admit, is a challenging thing to do, and I am not sure if I did it convincingly enough.

Regardless of if, this attempt at providing such a positive reason is successful, I would like to suggest that there might still be very a good reason for why biological descent would be relevant, which just happens to be beyond my skill to articulate in a convincing manner. What is written below is thus a grossly oversimplified best attempt, which a charitable reader will imagine a better version of.

Before I argue for why *biological descentance*, is relevant for national identity, let me first establish the idea, how it could ever relevant for at all. Consider the following:

People who were adopted do often try to seek out their biological parents, so they seem to place some significance in the concept of biological descent.

But as a counterpoint we could also explain this, not by them being biologically related to the people they are seeking out, but by them instead just looking for “the people who brought them into this world”. We could for example imagine that a man, who was completely lab-created and therefore had no ancestors, might still be interested in meeting the team of scientists, who created him; despite them not being related to him biologically.

Therefore, another perhaps more compelling example would be parents by mistake having their newborn child swapped with someone else’s at the hospital. This is known to happen from time to time, and when it does happen, parents do seem to care very much about it. It is in fact hard to imagine that any parent would be completely indifferent about such a thing. Of course parents may decide to keep the child which they have been raising, since there are of course many other things than just biological relatedness entering into the consideration. But the truth about which child was their biological one, would for the vast majority of parents be something which *mattered to them*.

The reason for why this matters would then have something to do with human psychology, biology or culture, and is outside the scope of this thesis to explain properly. But in the interest of giving a justification for the descent criterion, I will give a *stipulative* explanation for why this *may* matter to people, simply to use as an example in the argument that follows. Other possible reasons (which may be more empirically accurate) could be inserted in this argument, might still yield an acceptable justification.

Let us say that the reason parents cared if their children were theirs biologically, was an evolutionary instinct. What organisms have evolved for, is to reproduce in order to successfully get their genes in to the future. And as human beings to make sure that our offspring survives, just reproducing is not enough, due to the dependent nature of human children. Thus we need to take care of them, which also involves “caring about them”. And especially also caring about if the offspring we are raising is actually ours, and not somebody else’s. Because otherwise we wouldn’t be investing resources into *our* offspring and thus helping *our* genes to get into the future, but someone else’s.

Human beings will of course remarkably also care for and about offspring which is not their own. One example of this are communities; in which people pool their resources, those being both material and human resources, to make it easier to care for each other to care for their children.

What I have done so far is to give two examples, which should show that biological *descent* is significant to people, and a possible explanation for why. Note that I am not that saying that *that’s*

why it is significant in an ethical sense, because then I would be committing a naturalist fallacy. I will remain morally non-judgmental here. All I want to show, is that descent is relevant when it comes to nation identity.

For this is have the following stipulative argument, which is an attempt at saying something which perhaps, with the help of an anthropologist and an evolutionary biologist, could be said much better.

Let us grant that it is relevant that one's children are one's biological children, for the reason I have given above. In *what* way would it then be significant? The answer is, it would be significant for the parents, because they invest resources in those children, to get their *own* genes into the future.

In communities, people pool their (material and human) resources together, in order to help each other's genes to get into the future.

Then it would also be significant for any other member of the community, if anyone of their fellows' children is biologically descended from this community or not; because otherwise this community would be helping to get the genes of someone into the future, who has not invested back into the community.

Nations are communities build on the historical association. Which means that what the nation is, is a long line of ancestors investing in ones another's offspring in some manner. Which means that you are in part the product of some of your fellow nationals, ancestors helping your own ancestors, to get you here.⁵¹

If that is one aspect of what nations are, a community of people helping each other, by virtue of them simply being a community to get their genes into the future, then if someone adopted a child from outside this community, this child would stand outside this unspoken deal of evolutionary utility. Adopting a child into such a community is without a doubt an act evolutionary altruism, which in this matrix of evolutionary cooperation is a net negative, when it came to the competition of their genes with that of the group from which they adopted. And since nations are things which contain this implied element of evolutionary cooperation, between the members, someone not being biologically descended is means they are not a member of the nation.

That is my best attempt of articulating this reason. One way of describing this argument is, to say that I simply describing and aspect people behavior. People behave in way which imply that

⁵¹ Note, we could be speaking about a completely unconscious and unintentional process.

biological descent is significant. And since the definition of the nation which we give, should be accurate, we need to have *biological descent* be a significant part of it as well.

This of course, would only explain *why* people care about biological descent, not if the *ought* to care about it. If I tried to argue somehow that the latter followed from the former here, we would be committing a naturalist fallacy. In principle though a second candidate for an alternative positive argument for the relevancy of biological descent, could be based on some increased kind of obligations which people have towards their biological offspring in particular. I would assert that it possible to make such an argument, but it require a thesis of its own, and is thus outside the scope of this once.

A last comment on this, before we process to the conclusion. Remember that the word community is here referring to this very abstract concept of a cohesive community, which enters in to my definition of the nation. When it comes to the community (in the colloquial sense) that is the little local society, which a child is adopted in to, they should of course be loved, accepted and respected. But that is a separate issue, from the nationality.

Conclusion

In this thesis I tried to find an answer to the problem statement: *“What is it that determines ones national identity?”* To answer this, I created with the “Descent Theory of National Identity”, which states that, in order to become a member of certain nation you need to be descended from that nation.

To show that this criterion was correct I creates a new theory of the nation, which defined nations in terms of a concept called folkeslag, which I borrowed from the Danish language.

I defined a folkeslag as: *“A loosely interrelated and historically associated group of people, that speak a common first language.”*

And based one this I defined the nation as: *“...a cohesive community, which either is or is on its way to becoming a folkeslag.”*

I showed that from this theory of the nation my criterion of *descent* followed, because it defined the nation as something one is born into.

I created 3 arguments to defend this theory.

The first I referred to as the exclusionary argument, which argued in essence, that the descent theory should be accepted because it is less problematic and more plausible than any alternative theory.

In order to show this I did two things. I first of all, in Part 2 of the project I analyzed and criticized the various possible theoretical stances on national identity which one could hold, most formidable amongst them was the social constructionist view. I attempted to discredit them by showing they were problematic or implausible. I did this by showing where they were internally inconsistent, incoherent or had implications which were problematic, implausible or for some other reason unacceptable. After that I presented my own, in Part 3 and subjected it to the same level of scrutiny.

The second argument was the first of two positive arguments. It stated that the descent theory should be accepted, because it managed to resolve the tension between what I am calling the typical attributes fallacy, which states that typical attributes, which nations or their members may have cannot be used to define a given national identity, and the fact that these typical attributes are nonetheless still highly prevalent.

The third and second positive argument, was supposed to show, that the descent theory of the nation is correct because it defines the nation in a way which lines up with a different argument I had made earlier for why the nation is a valid way of categorizing groups of people.

My theory of the nation is not a complete theory, since I haven't presented arguments for all the details of it and it leaves many things unexplained. My main ambition in developing the parts of it, which I have developed, was simply to defend the criterion of descent. And even if I got some of the details of what nations are wrong in my attempt at coming up with an original definition, the answer to my problem statement likely wouldn't change if these mistakes were corrected.

I argued as well that the criterion for determining national identity, couldn't just be a kind of cultural lineage reproduced generation after generation by caregiving, but that it had to be descent in a *biological* sense! This I made several arguments for. Since they are however not beyond scrutiny, I do acknowledge that this requirement, is one of the weakest links in my theory.

I also argued that nations come into existence gradually, to solve the problem that arises when one attempts to use the criterion of descent to explain, how the first members of a nation acquired their membership.

Most importantly, I solved the problem of what happened to the national identity of people of mixed descent. This helped me formulate the final answer to my problem statement: "What is it that determines ones National Identity?"

My answer is, that: "It is sufficient for ones parents to have had a certain national identity for one to have this same national identity as well (at least in part)."

The descent theory of national identity is an original, plausible new theory of national identity, and therefore of relevance for anyone who is dealing with issues in which the questions surrounding nations and nationality are raised.

Tristan Lorenz Ingwersen

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